

This poster highlights often-unvoiced community perceptions about higher education engagement with local communities.

- researchers gathered data in 2008 from an evaluative component of institutional engagement practices focused on one local community
- researchers asked interviewees questions about the challenges and success of working in the community, with the university, and what they would do differently
- researchers openly coded all of the data and created categories based on the unique emergent themes
- ten community members were interviewed by National Forum staff to assess the community-campus relationship and how they perceived the university's role
- researchers transcribed the interviews to more than 300 pages of interview data
- researchers identified five complementary roles of partners in community-campus partnerships

PRACTICING PARTNERSHIP

Community-Voiced Roles & Expectations

Visionary

Creates and sustains the ideals for the partnership

- focus on long-term aims of the community

“So we do a two-year project or a one-year project when the issues are systemic? So the whole sense of saying, “Well fine, we have some dialogue,” when you have a systemic issue within communities and you need to have systems that can be systemic to continue to work on certainly a one year project is not sufficient...”

Believer

Keeps up group spirits through active or passive engagement

- making lists of “incremental steps” of change
- staying involved with the partnership’s aims and goals

“One main challenge that we have is getting people... to buy into the fact that progress is going on because the community has been in such a disarray for such a long period of time, it’s hard to get people to see change. So... on a monthly basis, printed out all of the progress that has taken place each month, so that people can have a documented, hands on view of what some of the great things that are going on in the community.”

Empowerer

Encourages community voice in the partnership process and allows room for marginalized voices to emerge

- let communities know their voice will impact change
- allow room for marginalized voices to emerge

“They gotta feel like they’re being listened to, and they gotta feel like they’re talking to somebody who can affect changes, who can affect the policy. So I think that’s an effective partnership if you can - I don’t know how you can measure that - but I people like to feel that they are given the opportunity to talk and that they’re talking with somebody who can, indeed, effectively go about making changes.”

Convener

Brings together groups from the community toward a locally defined goal

- convene groups from the community toward a locally defined goal
- tap into existing social networks

“All they have to do is make a request, and we have, whether it’s [the electric company], whether it’s lending, whether it’s the downtown development, we’re already networking with a number of other organizations. I don’t know if anybody new came into that. We just turned to those existing partners and said, “What do you think? Want to participate?”

Resource Sharer

Trades the university’s human and financial resources with the community organizations’ human resources, local expertise and real-world context.

- work with community to spend resources in a way that aligns with their needs
- combating competitiveness for grants that leads to redundant efforts and resource waste

“It’s bringing people resources in [for]... lot of these schools just don’t have the money for... People can see right in front of their own eyes a role model.”

“Being able to keep out those individuals who want to come and just receive money because there’s grant opportunities, but have no vested interest in the community.”