

## *Engagement Scholarship and Social Enterprise*

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### **Abstract**

Business schools have been teaching entrepreneurship for years. However, the more complex tasks of teaching social enterprise and contributing to the conversation around social innovation has come to the universities only recently. Although leadership in these methodologies has been primarily from practitioners and other non-university sources, the scholarship of engagement, within universities, can now make a useful contribution to advancing both social enterprise and social innovation. In this case report, we present a model of engagement scholarship that has been emerging within an interdisciplinary Faculty at a public research-intensive university. We also present a new graduate degree in community engagement that, uniquely, continues to be guided by a multisectoral curriculum advisory committee. Ongoing initiatives in research, learning, and knowledge mobilization related to social enterprise and social innovation will also be explored.

Keywords: engagement scholarship, community-university partnership, social enterprise, social innovation.

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## **Introduction**

The foundation of higher education was imbued with a civic mission that called upon faculty, students and administrators to address important issues affecting communities, the nation and the world (Stanton, 2008). Over time, however, higher education has become increasingly disconnected from this mission. More recently, universities are being called upon to return to the founding mission of being relevant and making an impact in their communities. Such a return is not without challenges, particularly given that relevance and impact are generally not rewarded in terms of tenure and promotion requirements (Barker, 2004). However, one way that universities can make an impact on important issues affecting communities is through community-engaged scholarship. This paper shares a successful model of engagement scholarship through which the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta has achieved both relevance and impact. Highlights of the model that are presented in this paper include a new Master's degree program in community engagement and a community-university partnership with a focus on social entrepreneurship and social innovation.

The paper is structured by first providing an overview of the history of the Faculty of Extension, along with overviews of the new Masters of Arts in Community Engagement (MACE) and the Faculty of Extension's Community-University Partnership (CUP). In closing, two case examples of community engaged scholarship, related to social entrepreneurship and social innovation, will be presented.

## **History: Faculty of Extension**

The Department of Extension at the University of Alberta was the first in Canada to be concerned with areas apart from agriculture. The Department was also the first to replicate the Wisconsin Idea, following a visit to the University of Madison-Wisconsin by the University of Alberta's first president, Henry Marshall Tory, in the early twentieth century. Clark (1985) described the Department as "the single most influential adult education agency in the province" (p 13) for its 375,000 rural inhabitants that were mostly widely scattered. The Department was, according to Clark, "pragmatically organized to ensure, first, the survival and, then, the ascendancy of the university in the province" (p 14). A number of milestones mark the development of the department including the establishment of Canada's first public broadcasting station, CKUA; the Banff Centre which was internationally recognized; and the film library and travelling book service; the Khaki College for enlisted men in 1917; and later by the first technology-enabled distance delivery of university programs in Alberta.

Charged with "bringing the university to the people" for "the public good", programming for the Department was originally determined by its director, along with the President of the University and the Board of Governors. The Department reflected and enacted Tory's philosophy of a service-oriented public institution for the people. The mandate and scope of the Department was laid out in a Senate "bulletin", made public in 1912. The bulletin declared that the Department was "to take the lead in every movement having for its object the betterment of conditions in the province". Although motivated by political factors, the bulletin foreshadowed the evolution of the Department as a key agent of outreach in the province.

Two primary examples of this outreach include providing rural populations with both written and visual learning and enrichment. Beginning in 1913 and operating until 1987, the Extension Library provided boxes of books to any settlement in Alberta that would otherwise have been without literature. The Extension Library also provided scripts for drama productions and "package libraries" which were packets of information on single topics that were used by debate teams. The Magic Lantern program provided slideshow programs on a wide range of topics. In 1917, the Magic Lantern program became the first educational film library in Canada after being awarded a \$4,000 grant from the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. Eventually, the Magic Lantern program offered film presentations in addition to slideshows.

Tory's successor, Dr. Robert Charles Wallace, was a strong supporter of the Department's work. Wallace's primary interests were in adult education as an educational and social movement. He committed to the University of Alberta's leadership role in developing adult education not only in the province but also nationally (Clark, 1985, p 150). In 1956, A.E. Corbett was appointed Extension Director. Together, Corbett and Wallace, dealt with financial pressures that began after World War I. Financial support was eventually provided by the University Senate, which allocated operating costs to the Department. This support was supplemented with other grants including funding from the Carnegie Foundation to establish the Banff Centre. Although scant, revenue-generating programming generated enough resources for re-investment into the Department. During this period, the Department developed and maintained various innovative pedagogical and delivery models for the University. Over time, these models were adopted by other Faculties.

During the 1950s, the Department began to develop non-credit courses, classes, seminars and conferences. These diverse offerings were prompted by a period of intense industrialization in Alberta after the discovery of an oil field in Leduc, Alberta. Soon after that discovery, the first of many credentialed programs was developed. On November 1, 1975, the University of Alberta granted full faculty status to the Department of Extension, which then became the Faculty of Extension and continued to experience increased enrolment. The granting of faculty status was based on the expectation that the Faculty contribute to theorizing the evolving discipline of adult education.

In 1999, the Master of Arts in Communications and Design (MACT) became the Faculty's first credit-bearing graduate program. Credit-bearing courses and certificates followed, as did the emphasis on the development of learning pathways. In 2016, the Faculty developed the Master of Arts in Community Engagement (MACE), which we will go into more detail below. Only in its second year of operation, MACE is already attracting international students.

### **The Scholarship of Engagement**

Jackson (2008) conceptualized university continuing education (UCE) as a dynamic triangle comprising community engagement as community-based continuing education, community-based experimental learning and community-based research. Another Canadian scholar, Bud Hall (2009), in his paper about community-engaged

practices of Canadian higher education, mentioned that the first dimension of Jackson's triangle, namely continuing education, is the basis of all community engagement initiatives. Hart and Northmore (2011) described university community engagement in a more detailed way, under seven dimensions encompassing public access to university services, public access to knowledge, improving participation, encouraging economic and social engagement, student engagement and staff engagement. In this view, engagement becomes the ethos of publicly funded universities but also becomes somewhat diminished as an intellectual domain as scholars and practitioners struggle to codify a universal understanding of the term. The Committee on Institutional Cooperation (2005), in defining university-community engagement scholarship and practices (UCES), highlighted the *outcomes* of the processes, rather than the processes themselves. The outcomes identified by UCES include: enhancing scholarship, research and creative activities; addressing societal problems; enriching curricula and the associated teaching and learning; strengthening social responsibilities; and fostering more educated and engaged citizens.

Attempts to conceptualize and develop frameworks for UCES practices and strategies have included proposed benchmark frameworks for UCES (c.f. Langworthy, 2009; Hartand & Northmore, 2011; Goedegebuure and Van Der Lee, 2006; Ostrander, 2004). One such framework is the Carnegie Classification of Community-Engaged Institutions (<http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu>). To date, the focus of UCES has been on specific countries, such as the UK, US, Canada or Australia. Nevertheless, scholars in the area of engagement scholarship continue to contribute to a global understanding of the social responsibilities that a university has to its communities (Esfijani et al, 2013).

In 2007, the Faculty of Extension moved to the city's urban core, taking up residence in the University of Alberta's new downtown campus at Enterprise Square. The move accomplished several institutional goals including the opportunity to better articulate, in both theory and practice, the evolution from outreach practice to engagement scholarship as a unifying intellectual domain. The Faculty's new academic plan, approved in 2008, proposed that this more directed focus would underline all organizational decisions in research, teaching, and service (i.e. curriculum development, graduate programs, students, course delivery, facilities planning, governance, partnerships, advancement). Because UCES is not an easy cultural fit for public research universities, in particular because of its reward structures, the Faculty developed new tenure and promotion guidelines to include scholarly service and an integrated cycle of engagement scholarship. Faculty recruitment is now contextualized these guidelines and faculty members are evaluated annually for the community/social impact of their work.

The Faculty also adopted the Carnegie language of "engagement", to wit: "Community engagement describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (APLU, 2016, p 20). Further, the epistemology of engagement, at its core, has two interwoven qualities: 1) it is transdisciplinary, and 2) it is asset-based (APLU, 2016). The latter quality of transdisciplinary acknowledges that legitimate and valuable knowledge assets exist outside the university, a concept that academe, in

general, struggles with. However, with vexing national and global problems creating immense economic, environmental, social, and psychological consequences, it is increasingly recognized that no single entity (i.e. the university) can discover and mobilize appropriate solutions. Consequently, universities are expected by their stakeholders to build and foster meaningful community engagement through reciprocal, mutually beneficial and mutually respectful partnerships. By recognizing, and helping to mobilize, different forms of knowledge (community, experiential, and academic; Escrigas et al., 2014), and by promoting solution-focused engagement approaches to solving complex societal problems (Fitzgerald et al., 2012), community-university engagement is a central component of effective higher education, research, and policy development. The Faculty of Extension's research, in particular, is driven by a fierce commitment to fulfilling its founding mandate of "uplifting the whole people" by "bringing the University to the people".

Due to its interdisciplinary nature, the primary strengths of the Faculty include multiple disciplinary approaches to the scholarship and practice of engagement, capacity building, knowledge mobilization, social justice, and community development. The depth and breadth of these collaborative experiences has fostered many sustainable local, regional, national, and international relationships and partnerships across sectors, two of which are highlighted in this paper.

The Faculty incorporates community knowledge and feedback in order to identify and address significant social and community issues (e.g., poverty), and to help generate solutions that are evidence-informed and implementable by communities themselves. As a "boundary organization" or "experimental incubator", the Faculty's research promotes innovation in engagement scholarship and seeks to address the full spectrum of university-community engagement. By doing so, the Faculty's research fills, in a strategic and innovative way, the ontological, epistemological and methodological gaps that previously existed in community engaged research (CER) literature, policy, practice, and evaluation.

Promoting social justice and reconciliation through a priority of research within the Faculty of Extension. The Faculty also prioritizes mutually respectful relationship building and collaboration across sectors, seeking to build capacities for both academic and non-academic partners, while helping develop evidence-based approaches to improving policy and practice in their communities. Thus, Faculty research very explicitly honours the diverse sources and forms of knowledge that emerge from the perspectives and experiences of community members, practitioners, knowledge keepers, learners, and staff, as well as academic researchers and teachers. As noted above, the integration of research, teaching, and service provides meaningful opportunities to advance integrated forms of scholarship, in which research, teaching, and service inform each other in a reciprocal way.

In summary, The Faculty of Extension mobilizes disciplinary knowledge, through an engagement scholarship lens, to emphasize a shift away from an expert model of delivering university knowledge to the public and towards a more collaborative model. In this collaborative model, community partners play a significant role in creating and sharing knowledge to the mutual benefit of institutions and society (Boyer, 1996; Kellogg Commission, 1999). Two examples of this principle, which we will discuss next, are the MACE program and the work in social innovation and

social enterprise supported through our Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth and Families (CUP), a research centre led by a steering committee equally balanced with community and university membership.

### **Master of Arts in Community Engagement (MACE)**

The *Master of Arts in Community Engagement* (MACE) is an interdisciplinary, thesis-based degree program that offers students an opportunity to develop an understanding of the field of community engagement and the practices and processes that inform it. In the program, students undertake an in-depth examination of the conceptual and philosophical underpinnings of community engagement, as well as learn about research and engagement methodologies. Students also gain practical experience working with community, as they complete an individual thesis research project with the support and guidance of academic experts.

The MACE program consists of seven courses on community engaged scholarship, research methods, and electives. The program also includes a thesis and practicum. The learning objectives of the practicum are to negotiate an agreement with community partners that result in reciprocal and mutually beneficial outcomes, to develop reading, writing, and research skills, resulting in the integration of academic resources (literature reviews and interviews) and experience in written works (journals, reflections, papers).

### **Community-University Partnership (CUP)**

CUP is a unique community-university partnership model that uses an engaged research approach through which partners from the community, university, and/or government are empowered to share their voices, collaborate, and develop projects that support mutually beneficial outcomes. Partners bring their own strengths to the process, develop principles for working together, and jointly determine the scale and scope of their projects. The mission of CUP is to nurture environments where evidence is used effectively to develop practices, programs, and policies that support the healthy development of children, youth, families, and communities. CUP's research falls into four key areas: Early Childhood, Evaluation, Policy, and Poverty.

CUP's work is undergirded by five key principles:

<i>Engagement</i>	Building and maintaining meaningful relationships with our partners.
<i>Leadership</i>	Leading discussions and research on issues related to evidence-informed policy, and practice.
<i>Knowledge Mobilization</i>	Interpreting, contextualizing, and disseminating evidence to end-users (i.e., practitioners, policymakers, researchers etc.)
<i>Research &amp; Evaluation</i>	Conducting and facilitating projects, compile and synthesize existing evidence, and generate analyses of policy and practice.
<i>Capacity Building</i>	Providing opportunities for scholarship and skill development in evaluation and research methods.

## **Engaged Scholarship Case Briefs: The Grocery Run and the Alberta Flavour Learning Lab**

Both the Grocery Run program and the Alberta Flavour Learning Lab provide case examples of community-engaged scholarship through CUP that led to social innovation and social entrepreneurship. The Grocery Run program began as a research project lead by Dr. Maria Mayan in partnership with Multi-Cultural Health Brokers (MCHB), a non-profit organization that provided support for immigrant women. The project was supported by colleagues from the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry.

The project's initial aim was to explore the perceptions and experiences of migrant women related to their health during pregnancy and postpartum. As Maria began to talk with the MCHB employees about their work with pregnant mothers, it became apparent that the employees felt their work was overshadowed by food crisis situations for these mothers and their families. This realization led to the development and deployment of a survey of migrant women and their families (n=217). Survey responses clearly identified that food insecurity was a significant issue for these families.

- 33% indicated that their children had missed meals due to lack of money for food
- 41% indicated that they, as parents, had reduced their meal sizes or skipped meals all together due to a lack of money for food.

In conversation with several community partners, the research team developed the Grocery Run program as a starting point to address these issues. Grocery Run is a food rescue model in which surplus food that is generally non-saleable is collected from grocers, as a donation, on a weekly basis and re-distributed to families in need. As a result of the Grocery Run, food is supplied, each week, to 90 individuals, which, in turn, feeds approximately 450 individuals. Additionally, women are provided with opportunities to connect with other women who are going through similar experiences and to learn about available resources and support within their community. Another outcome is that food waste - one of the biggest contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions - is greatly reduced.

Building on success of the Grocery Run, CUP is now entering the Community Economic Development (CED) space by expanding the Grocery Run to incubate social enterprises. The development of food-based social enterprises is aimed at supporting immigrant women in developing and running their own sustainable and scalable enterprises. This is being accomplished by identifying ideas, provided by women who participate in the Grocery Run, that have the potential to be developed into productive enterprises. A Community Economic Development (CED) Committee was developed to work directly with immigrant and refugee women. The role of the committee is to solicit social enterprise ideas, to identify the existing capacities of the idea proposers, and to facilitate a match between needed and existing resources and support from within the community.

The Grocery Run case provides an example of a progression model within community-engaged research (Figure 1). During the first stage of the model, the

*research stage*, scholars engage in the community with a research interest. A transition to the *service stage* can occur when the ethical dimension of the researcher is engaged through observation, during research, that the research subjects have substantial, basic needs, like the need for food. During the service stage, the researcher coordinates resources to address real and immediate needs within the community. Through addressing these needs, the issue of sustainability arises. The need in the community appears likely to outlast the period of the research and so the researcher and community explore the possibility of developing a social enterprise to help meet some of the needs that were initially met through charitable service. This leads to the next stage in the model, *social enterprise*, as a potential way to provide for a more sustainable solution for meeting the identified needs of community members. Upon the development of social enterprises, it is recognized that other communities face similar issues and the next step is to consider scaling the social enterprise model and replicating it in other communities thereby entering the model stage of *systems change*. Finally, although some system changes can be made at the community level through scaling and replication of the social enterprise models, policy change may be necessary and may be supporting by the successful scaling and replication of social enterprise models. The *policy development stage* may be required to more fully address deeply imbedded and complex challenges, particularly those with a human rights dimension including racism, systemic injustice, abuse.

The second case example that arose from the Faculty of Extension's model of community-engaged scholarship, this time leading to social innovation, is on the Alberta Flavour Learning Lab. The Learning Lab is a unique community of practice (Wenger, 2000; 2011) co-developed by Dr. Mary Beckie and, Jessie Radies, an industry partner. The purpose of the Learning Lab is to help institutional food buyers (i.e. food buyers from hospitals, universities, conference centers) increase their procurement of local foods leading to economic, environmental and social benefits. Although primarily focused around institutional food buyers, other members of the Learning Lab include government representatives, distributors, producers and researchers. Designing the Learning Lab as a multi-stakeholder initiative has been important due to the complex nature of the food system. To achieve its goal of increasing the amount of local foods purchased by institutions, the Learning Lab focuses on building social infrastructure, which has recently been shown to be more important than physical infrastructure in the development of local or sustainable food systems (Connelly & Beckie, 2016).

## **Conclusions**

Universities are increasingly being called upon to return to their founding mission of being relevant and making an impact. Community-engaged scholarship is one way that universities can make an impact on important issues affecting communities. In this paper, we have shared a successful model of engagement scholarship through which the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta has achieved both relevance and impact. Highlights of the model were also presented, including a new Master's degree program in community engagement and a community-university partnership with a focus on social entrepreneurship and social innovation.

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**Figure 1: Conceptual Progression Model of Community-Engaged Scholarship**

