The School of Nursing was awarded funding from the President's Office to hold a three-day invitational think tank of students, faculty across campus, members of the University's Forward with Integrity Community Engagement Task Force, resident leaders from the three priority neighbourhoods currently involved in Health in the Hubs (McQuesten, Crown Point and South Sherman), community development workers, service providers and representatives from the City Manager's Office.

The overall goal was to explore ways for the University as a whole to engage in priority Hamilton neighbourhoods by building upon the experience and knowledge gained by the SON in working with residents through the Health in the Hubs Charter and the Neighbourhood Action Plans.

Results and Achievements of the Think Tank

The think tank was an opportunity for fostering community-campus collaboration through the development of draft guiding principles and a shared vision of engagement, and the identification of key priorities for the next one-two years.

Guiding Principles

The following statements are intended to reflect our preferred ways of working together. This is a living, breathing document that will evolve as our collaboration deepens.

- **Mutual Respect/Shared Accountability**: Our work together is grounded in mutually beneficial partnerships whereby all members share responsibility and are accountable

- **Recognize the voices not heard and current lived experiences and facilitate their engagement.** Commitment to a broad consultative process that is inclusive with attention to marginalized groups.

- **Challenge the existing way of doing things (status quo) in a safe environment respecting policies while promoting innovation.**

- **We value partnerships that build bridges across constituencies for mutual benefit; we are not university, resident service provider, non-profit or student-centric, we are “we” centric.**

Vision of Shared Engagement

All partners are committed to:

- improving the quality of life in our neighbourhoods;
- enriched campus-community experiences;
- doing cool stuff

- **Effective Structure and Processes**: connect neighbourhoods to specific resources in the university community (a go-to place, navigation, etc.).

- **Maintain a list of shared priorities**: Regular audits of neighbourhood action plans to highlight good potential fits between campus (faculty & departments) and community

- **Support for building Community Service Provider (CSP) capacity**: Connect CSPs to available educational opportunities to expand the capacity of communities & CSPs.

- **An open & cooperative co-existence/collaboration**: The university-community culture is open and accepting of everyone (from residents to presidents).

- **A Central Strategy to conduct better early outreach for Hamilton youth.**

- **Promote the University’s commitment to expand opportunities for open, accessible education.**

- **A campus-community innovation and opportunity exchange available through different formats.**

- **Welcoming physical access.** All university buildings & facilities are welcoming to the public (expand to all post-secondary institutions)

- **Spread our outreach**: campus-community linkages with all Hamilton neighbourhoods to work together.
Priority Projects to Enact the Vision commitments.

Task: In the summer 2013, strike an organizing team to develop a five year plan to design, develop and implement the Vision Commitments. The team will consist of a core group of residents, community development workers, faculty, service provider staff and students with Ad Hoc membership to achieve specific goals.

Step 1: Reconvene interested Think Tank participants June 21/13 to discuss process and strike the team.
Step 2: One meeting to establish mandate and terms of reference.
Step 3: Review commitments in detail and articulate priorities, tasks and responsibilities.

Summary
➢ The project sought to and succeeded in inviting individuals from a variety of academic, professional and community roles in attending the event. The event promoted collaboration between researchers, community members, policy makers, students, service providers and educators. All participants were given an opportunity to contribute insights and towards identifying community-campus engagement values and future projects.
➢ The awards letter recommended that we clarify how the activity will impact the student experience. Students were actively involved in all aspect of the planning and delivery of the think tank, including the preparation of this report. The students noted the following:
  • they benefitted from the number of academics, community leaders and community organizations that participated in the think tank. Each described current projects, partnerships, successes and difficulties within their faculty and across the community giving students an opportunity to learn about research beyond the campus. Students also benefitted to the exposure of research methodologies that involve community members who research alongside academics grounded in real world experiences to the betterment of all members in a particular community.
  • They were provided an experience beyond the traditional borders. Undergraduate and graduate students from five disciplines attended the event that was away from campus into the heart and history of the City of Hamilton. Students had the opportunity to connect with other academic disciplines and community leaders to discuss matters pertinent to residents and students. Students were able to provide input and insights from their perspective and participate in an evolving collaboration between McMaster and Hamilton communities. This project particularly emphasized the community that exists beyond campus borders, to think and expand on current understanding of community.
➢ The project challenged the confines of existing programming and advanced new paradigms of research or education. The project has contributed to the transformation of community engaged education as an alternative form of education towards being a normative function. The focus of the discussion was on establishing mechanisms for the growth of the concept. The projects identified will increase contact between the campus, city and community to the end of offering more research and educational opportunities.
➢ The results of the think tank included the identification of seven potential projects that will expand on community engaged education in the City of Hamilton.
➢ The desire of all participants is to move forward with the work begun at the think tank. A fourth meeting was held on June 21, 2013 to bring together the think tank participants to continue planning activities that will move on the identified projects. A work plan is under development with invitations distributed for further presentation. The work plan will detail the identified projects and set clear tasks and timelines with monitoring indicators.
➢ We believe we achieved the goals and objectives of the project in full, however, we recognize a couple of challenges:
  • Scheduling: Planning of any project is a compromise. Our preference was to create a forum that allowed for full and consistent attendance of all participants. We found that student scheduling in particular posed a challenge in achieving a full three day commitment from student participants. We were pleased with student representation but understand the impact of student academic scheduling. Perhaps future campus/community planning would offer specific incentives or academic allowances to facilitate more student attendance at these types of events.
  • Compression of material: With the recognition that the primary aim of the project was to initiate deeper dialogue on campus/community engagement there was a sense of the objectives of the event being compressed into the tight time frame. We found that adjusting the expectations of the agenda to match some participants’ group desires to walk slowly through less material improved the outcome of the project and would make a similar recommendation to any other successful candidate for this fund.

Thank you for the financial support to conduct the invitational think tank.