Engagement and Regional Taskforce Meeting 3/2/2020

Welcome and Recap: Scott Wituk

During the previous taskforce meeting, President Golden presented his initial thoughts and ideas related to engagement and prosperity. Several resources were introduced, including other universities, colleges and national resources related to community engagement and prosperity. The purpose of the taskforce is to develop an inventory, gap analysis of WSU programs, and create an initial set of recommendations to more effectively coordinate efforts and address gaps by April 20, 2020.

It was stated that the taskforce should understand the goal or purpose for focusing on engagement and prosperity. What do we hope happens as a result? Is it more students or visibility? It was noted that marketing or visibility is a part of it but also the recognition of WSU serving as a primary anchor institution for south-central Kansas. It is and can be further recognized as an essential educational, cultural and economic driver for Kansas. What does it look like for us to be fully engaged in south-central Kansas.

Furthermore, it’s about how we align WSU resources, including faculty, staff and students so that we can more readily partner with communities that are trying to address tough problems. It could include taking applied learning, practica and putting it together with a name. It is about recognizing, highlighting, promoting and developing WSU’s impact on the community, including the near neighborhood, school districts, industry, the non-profit sector, and others.

Another member noted that the university is already doing community engagement in some way or another but there isn’t a collective effort. The university is missing the opportunity to exchange, explore and get excited about what is being done. The intentionality is missing.

Several questions were addressed in the taskforce meeting:

If you had an opportunity to review the resources sent in advance (other university websites, materials, etc), what stood out to you? The hope is that by reviewing these and other resources the taskforce will learn from others and help us consider possibilities for WSU.

* The Stanford web news noted an affordability task force that was undertaking the differing needs of communities in their area. (https://news.stanford.edu/2019/05/20/affordability-task-force-digging-needs-various-communities/).
* The James Madison website defines community engagement and lists stakeholders and a collection of activities. It’s public and transparent.
* Centennial Campus https://centennial.ncsu.edu/centennial/partners.php shares the “Strong Partnerships,” the campus life and business industry along with the maturity of the campus.
* Increase the connection with small businesses and increase opportunities with non-profits.
* Multiple disciplines involved – across departments.
* Centralized structure to support and elevate the work.
* Outreach efforts to community.
* Clear place to go.
* One gets a strong sense of “who they are” and what is important to them.

What could an effective, coordinated effort focused on Engagement and Prosperity look like at WSU?  What would that look like from the perspective of students, faculty, staff, administrators, community partners, and others?

* Clear point of entry or one that can coordinate or connect with others across university.
* Match maker – bring together multiple departments, faculty, centers with community needs, interests. Some place to work beyond the traditional academic silos. Someone/something that can facilitate the connections, help launch. A developer, builder, including creating new opportunities for students throughout the community.
* Create and elevate the relationship(s) with the chambers, local school districts/institutions, business, health organizations, and others.
* Staff, faculty, centers, departments working together in a coordinated way on signature or identified areas that are important to southcentral Kansas. Finding out the needs, disparities, creating recommendations, and pulling together those who want to make an impact.
* Supporting faculty who want to do engagement and prosperity type-work. Create the structure by which faculty can be incentivized, rewarded, acknowledged for this type of work. This work is “messy”. Faculty need time, encouragement, and support to do it.

What do Engagement and Prosperity efforts currently look like at WSU? Think of WSU programs, offices, activities, connections, coordination efforts, and communications, individual and collective efforts.  What do these look like from the perspective of students, faculty, staff, administrators, community partners, and others?

* Now is the time to capitalize on WSU. Great momentum going on in multiple areas of the university.
* Currently doing well in retail, innovation, housing and research.
* Partnering with USD 259 and YMCA on Anchor Institution for the 67214 area and beyond as a result of Project Wichita.
* WSU continues to create a national profile with the growth of its Innovation Campus.
* There are several pipelines of students into various industries and companies. How to highlight, create more, etc?
* Community doesn’t always think of WSU as a partner – how do we make WSU a default?
* There is some fragmentation of efforts – good stuff happening, but don’t know where/what is happening.

What are possible ideas, suggestions, or initial steps to move WSU toward what it could be?

* Bring faculty, staff, centers together – awareness internally of those who “do this type of work”.
* Greater awareness by the community of these types of efforts – additional branding, highlighting, and elevation of this work. What is the front facing aspect of this work?
* Someone/entity who can coordinate partnership efforts and lead the charge.
* Build on current resources and relationships (including staff, students and current campus partners).
* Research and develop additional pipelines for students.
* Define the quality of life on campus. How does Innovation campus integrate into the WSU community and vice-versa?
* Initiate a culture change and stay the course.
* Move forward with the mindset of strategic enrollment management with the goals of community engagement & prosperity.

Next Steps

* Next meeting: if you have not yet, respond to the doodle poll. Watch your email for a finalized date.
* Continue learning / WSU / outside WSU