

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Randy Smith

FROM: Francille Firebaugh  
Art Dunning

DATE: April 15, 2004

RE: External Review of Outreach and Engagement Initiative

Enclosed is our report of the External Review of Outreach and Engagement Initiative at Ohio State. Please express our appreciation to the administrators, the faculty and staff who took the time and effort to meet with us to discuss the issues that you raised. To a person they were forthright and genuinely committed to Ohio State and its future.

We hope that you will find the report useful.

With best regards,

## **OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE**

### **THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

March 28-30, 2004

Arthur Dunning and Francille M Firebaugh

#### **Rationale for an Office of Outreach and Engagement**

The Ohio State University appears in the earliest documentation of University extension work and the land grant mission of American Universities. In most traditional areas of agricultural extension, it continues as a national leader. The documents provided and the campus, visit which included extensive interviews of university leaders, demonstrate that tradition and quality continues. A defining feature of The Ohio State University has been its partnership with the State of Ohio in advancing the economic and social well being of the State.

The positioning of The Ohio State University with many of the larger issues affecting the citizens, organizations, and communities has resulted in extraordinary good will and mutual benefit for the University and State. However, The Ohio State University and other land-grant universities face challenges that require constant vigilance concerning societal changes that demand or suggest new approaches to structure and operations of outreach and engagement.

Two specific documents provided to the External Review Team, the Academic Plan and the Program Review Report of The Ohio State University Outreach and Engagement Initiative offer factual and substantial evidence that such issues have been examined at The Ohio State University.

At least three of the core strategies in The Ohio State University Academic Plan relate directly to the focus of this report on outreach and engagement. The first of these is “develop academic programs that define Ohio State as the nation’s leading public land-grant university;” the second is “enhance the quality of the teaching and learning environment;” and the third is to “help build Ohio’s future.” In the case of academic programs that define OSU as a leading public land-grant university, the importance of multi-disciplinary centers and initiatives that “build on existing capabilities and capture opportunities specific to Ohio State and Ohio”. The plan notes that world-class centers connect with the community through outreach and technology transfer. The potential of distance learning at the University and literally around the world was noted in enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning environment.

In the discussion of the strategy of helping build Ohio’s future, the Academic Plan recognizes the extensive outreach programs underway, such as those through OSU Extension, and recommends strengthening P-12 public education, a wide range of efforts by multi-disciplinary centers such as the John Glenn Institute for Public Service and Public Policy, community health care delivery and neighborhood programs such as Campus Partners. The regional campuses have long been exemplars of programs in outreach and engagement, and we were impressed that their current leadership is supportive of further development in this aspect of the land grant mission. Developing an Office of Outreach and Engagement that contributes to the goals of the Academic Plan rather than competes with it is not only possible, but also essential to its success.

## **Organization and structure of the Office of Outreach and Engagement**

The Program Review Report of The Ohio State University Outreach and Engagement Initiative of September 2003 recommend the re-definition of the structure and basic activities of the Office of University Outreach and Engagement. They propose three alternative titles for a stand-alone leadership position: Vice President, Vice Provost or Director. The Leadership Agenda of December, 2003 stated that over the next two years, OSU will create a free-standing administrative structure for outreach and engagement, but did not specify the title or other detail.

By its very nature, the Office of Outreach and Engagement must have a close working relationship with the Office of Academic Affairs and the Deans of the colleges. The intellectual resources of OSU for outreach and engagement rest with the academic units. The complex nature of the university and the external nature of outreach and engagement also call for a direct relationship with the President and the President's Cabinet. We recommend the appointment of a Vice President for Outreach and Engagement, who reports on an on-going basis to the Provost, but who is also a full participant in the President's Cabinet.

We further recommend that initially the Offices of Continuing Education, Distance Education, WOSU stations, P-12 Project, and Service Learning report to the Office of Outreach and Engagement. These offices already have a commitment to outreach and to the concept of engagement; synergies between and among the programs associated with the offices should contribute to strengthening their effectiveness. Although the Program Review Committee mentioned technology transfer as an example of what might be included in this Office, we urge close working relationships between the two offices, but not a reporting relationship.

The Ohio State University seems to be using some of the best thinking in redefining the land-grant mission and making the university more relevant to the State of Ohio. One very simple and effective model for university outreach and engagement is investigation (innovation), validation and replication. In other words, tying research more closely to engagement. For most of the activities and efforts in the supporting documents and from our campus visit, we can see the strong presence of investigation, but much less on validation and replication. If economic development or health and safety or improving public education are core issues for the state, then individual efforts may provide new ideas but without validation and replication, there will not be much impact on a statewide problem. At worst, it will only encourage individual efforts driven more by faculty interest than by local or statewide needs.

All land-grant universities have struggled with the balance between guidance from external stakeholders who may actually have a better sense of community and state needs. Obviously, this often clashes with the faculty culture of independence and academic freedom. We do not think this is an "either-or" dichotomy. One of the key components to almost every model for outreach and engagement offered in the documents is some element of responsiveness. While this brings together the intellectual capital of The Ohio State University in areas in which faculty may be most interested, most competent and most informed, it tends to leave unanswered, or possibly even unexplored, the question of what the citizens of Ohio want from their state university in terms of outreach and engagement. Like most of the top tier land-grant universities, The Ohio State University has moved from being state funded to state supported. Most public medical schools find themselves funding medical education with less than 25% of their budgets coming from state dollars. On the one hand, that seems to promote a disincentive to provide services focused on the state. That begs two important questions: what do the citizens, and their elected representatives, expect? And which comes first, the contracts and grants to fund outreach and

engagement or a pattern of outreach and engagement that attracts more public funding? Our other concern is for populations unfamiliar or even suspicious of university faculty and their efforts in communities. One university faculty successful in community development efforts said she often sat and listened to community members and exploring the community for “up to a year before offering advice.” That level of time commitment to build trust in communities of immigrants, the poor, or people of color may not fit the standard research and teaching model of university faculty.

The supporting documents provide significant examples of services as different from other outreach and engagement strategies. Much of the student service learning activities provide services to others, but are really not extending research and new knowledge from university to community. Likewise, the delivery of health services by The Ohio State University medical center provide a significant benefit to recipients, they are not all educational. We raise this point to underscore a common tension in the structure of university outreach and engagement: is it to provide direct services or to educate and build capacity?

A topic of considerable discussion during our review was the appropriate organizational location of the OSU Extension system. The system is at the core of the extant OSU outreach programs. It is housed {and should continue to be housed} in a single large college, where ties with faculty and staff in other colleges are growing and should continue to expand. The system is cognizant of the continuing economic, geographic and social changes that create needs that can be addressed through the re-alignment of resources, while maintaining the essential agricultural and rural life programs.

### **Focus and Functions of the Office of Outreach and Engagement**

The Leadership Agenda calls for the Office of Outreach and Engagement to foster college-level initiatives, and provide leadership for central initiatives. We recommend that the Office of Outreach and Engagement foster cross-college level initiatives and support college-level initiatives, as appropriate, and effectively communicate these initiatives to the public. The Office should develop crosscutting issues in conjunction with OSU deans, faculty and administrators and outside constituencies. An internal and an external advisory group could play an important role in this process and is recommended later in this report.

The crosscutting initiatives should address local, regional, state, and, in some cases, international needs for which OSU has a comparative academic advantage. In the near future, the Vice President should be encouraged to follow the recommendation of the Final Report of the Program Review of The Ohio State University Outreach and Engagement Initiative (September 2003) and “determine whether the University should continue to pursue, and therefore support” the existing cross-cutting issues of P-12, economic development, and health and safety or identify new ones. Lack of new funding for economic development and health and safety was given as the reason for limited progress on them, although the OSU outreach across the campus related to the two issues is extraordinary.

As included in the Leadership Agenda, we recommend, with a caveat, the early involvement of the Office of Outreach and Engagement in the “live, learn, create, work community” initiative noted in the 2003 Leadership Agenda. Having a role in the more developed Campus Partners program is another initiative that fits well with the proposed Vice President of Outreach and Engagement. A cautionary note is important--that the VP should not become so enmeshed in these major initiatives and the resource commitment to them so great that other functions of the Office are overtaken. The Office very much needs to have some early successes, because the Office is not universally seen as necessary or even desirable.

## **Qualities of the first Vice President of Outreach and Engagement**

We recommend the appointment of an OSU tenured faculty member to the position of Vice President of Outreach and Engagement. It is especially important that the Office is initially lead by a recognized academician whose commitment to outreach and to the concept of engagement is recognized. That person should have the ability to

- o serve as a catalyst for change,
- o act as a broker between university colleges and faculty members and the many external constituencies,
- o should be an advocate for collaboration and mutuality of benefit of outreach program
- o form short-term and long-term coalitions, and
- o effectively deal with the tension that can exist between the goal of academic excellence and outstanding outreach and engagement

## **Qualities of the Office of Outreach and Engagement**

We recommend that the Office of Outreach and Engagement be located in proximity to the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of the President because of the relationships with the offices and the statement of that relationship that location can make.

## **Resources**

The financing of the Office of Outreach Engagement must have multiple sources and approaches to acquiring the resources necessary to support its programs. Historically, funding for outreach and engagement has been connected to research and instruction with a direct intent to strengthen the agricultural sector. This pattern will not enable The Ohio State University to respond to the diverse knowledge demands and new groups. Therefore, the university must develop a comprehensive funding strategy from many sources.

Many of the funding strategies based on the experience of many land-grant universities are well known to OSU: government budget allocations at the local, state, and federal level; public agency contracts and grants at the federal, state and local level; contributions, gifts, and contracts with non-profit foundations; special purpose relationships, joint ventures, and education, training, and development budgets; revenue from sales, services and fees including technical assistance, training and consulting to groups and organizations.

The level of resources committed to a centralized university effort at an institution as large as The Ohio State University is inadequate. The heavy dependence on the Kellogg Foundation grant is an admirable start, but certainly does not bode well for sustainability of this effort. One notable commitment is the presence of a mini-grant program that encourages more outreach and engagement activities. The variety, creativity and breadth of these efforts suggest they have been successful in increasing teaching and research faculty participation. We recommend that OSU develop a comprehensive funding strategy for outreach and engagement.

## **Diversity**

In the exchanges about outreach and engagement during our campus visit, no mention of diversity arose, except for progress on the Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in the Americas. In the Academic Plan, one of the strategies is to create a diverse university community. We

recommend that the Academic Plan strategies for increasing the diversity of faculty, for increasing the transfer of minority students from community colleges, and increasing the climate for diversity be kept in the forefront of outreach programs. Demographic changes that include increased racial and ethnic diversity in Ohio reinforce the merit of increased commitment to outreach and engagement.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

1. The appointment of a Vice President for Outreach and Engagement, who reports on an on-going basis to the Provost, but who is also a full participant in the President's Cabinet.
2. That initially the Offices of Continuing Education, Distance Education, WOSU stations, P-12 Project, and Service Learning report to the Office of Outreach and Engagement,
3. That the Office of Outreach and Engagement foster cross-college level initiatives and support college-level initiatives, as appropriate, and effectively communicate these initiatives to the public.
4. That, with reservations, the Office of Outreach and Engagement should be engaged in the "live, learn, create, work" community initiative.
5. The appointment of an OSU tenured faculty member to the position of Vice President of Outreach and Engagement.
6. The Office of Outreach and Engagement be located in proximity to the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of the President because of the relationships with the offices and the statement of that relationship that location can make.
7. The development of a comprehensive funding strategy for outreach and engagement.
8. The Academic Plan strategies for increasing the diversity of faculty, for increasing the transfer of minority students from community colleges, and increasing the climate for diversity should be kept in the forefront of outreach programs.

