

PROCEEDINGS

University Roundtable on Transformative Regional Engagement

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PENNSTATE



University Roundtable on Transformative Regional Engagement: Intentional Partnerships, Leadership, Programming, and Policy October 6, 2008

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Preamble

The University Roundtable on Transformative Regional Engagement (TRE) gathered forty-eight participants to an event preceding the National Outreach Scholarship Conference held in State College, Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania State University and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) Council on Engagement and Outreach co-sponsored the Roundtable. The six-hour discussion spanned topics that included: developing a scholarly framework for regional engagement; the dialectic formed by the purpose and potential of the evolving mission in relation to pressures to maintain the status quo; lessons learned from pioneering efforts by universities and US Department of Labor WIRED regions; and finally, the implications for this work. The distinguished gathering brought together participants from fifteen states, sixteen universities, and ten or more state, federal, or national organizations. The following statements were expressed as the Roundtable's mission and definition for TRE:

Mission of Roundtable: Defining the 21st Century Regional Engagement Mission for Universities.

University and WIRED pioneers gather to share learning from new leadership opportunities in transformational regional economies; re-scope the evolving university engagement mission originally laid out in the Morrill Act for land grant colleges; and forge consensus around scholarship needed to advance new university roles, responsibilities, and opportunities to impact public policy and expand engagement.

Transformative Regional Engagement (TRE): Transformative Regional Engagement brings together university, education, government, and private partners in coordinated efforts to transform the prosperity of a region (i.e., mega-community) through education, economic, workforce, and community development.

Narrative Summary of the Roundtable

Purpose and Potential of the Evolving Mission versus Pressures to Maintain the Status Quo

The Call to Action: A Resource or a Relic...the Role of Higher Education in Regional and Global Stewardship? - Universities do and should play a critical role in the reinvigoration of our national economy. Many universities, particularly land-grant institutions, are already deeply engaged, from small, local projects through significant, systemic and regional initiatives. We posit, however, that a coherent, aggregated approach, fortified by clear hypotheses about economic effect, robust metrics, multi-dimensional model program efforts, and rigorous evaluation, can do more—more to advance our scholarship, more to expand the pipelines of K-12 and adult learners ready for family sustaining employment, and more to build the innovation infrastructure for our economic future. Our collective creativity, disciplinary expertise, and staff capacity can serve as a foundation for new constructs toward economic health and stability. We are at a tipping point, however. We can respond to the realities and challenges threatening America and be a well spring of solutions or we can reside as a 20th Century relic doing business as usual.

Our national economic turmoil is a call to action. The contexts that conditioned us as scholars and practitioners have changed; we are living in a different world than even just a few months ago. In a global economy with more strong nations and competitors, the US hegemony on innovation leadership is more in question. As our industrial economy evolves into an innovation economy, both regions and the nation compete less and less on costs and more and more on assets. Our universities produce those assets as a function of their core mission, putting higher education at the crossroads of opportunity and responsibility. Consequently, universities must rethink their posture and structures to bring the future into the decision making of today. The intensity of our country's economic challenges combined with a shift in leadership in Washington present a unique window to bring intention and innovation as we respond as individuals and institutions to the realities of the 21st century.

The University Response: Mission, Will, Capacity, & Constraints - Higher education institutions have always played a central role in the economic health of our respective regions. We boom and wither together, but for the land-grants, our interconnectedness is deliberate and fundamental. In fact, the essence of the land-grant mission is a responsive institution with a curriculum tied to practical need. Beyond mission, enlightened institutional interest suggests that healthy regions make for better campus locations. For some campuses, their economic context as the only remaining lifeline for a region in decline thrust them into the role of regional stewards. Higher education's current challenge arises from the speed with which our society is changing. The academy's ethic hasn't shifted, but our world does constantly. The critical context we now face demands that universities condense their cycle-time for their transformation, making adaptability and fast evolution core competences of their organizations.

Critical Economic Inputs and Connections - University products provide critical inputs that nourish a region's innovation economy. They serve as focal locations of distinctive innovative activity, boast tremendous talent banks and advanced research infrastructure, and spawn creative class amenities. With histories of practical application of new knowledge and a culture of service, public institutions offer a foundation of critical resources for economic development. Universities possess a capacity to convene stakeholders as regional fair brokers and connect communities to actors and opportunities across the world. Their dual nature as local and international institutions enables them to serve as stewards of place within the context of globalization. Universities are embedded in their local economies, but connected to the outside world in a myriad of deep relationships—with other institutions, industry sectors, professional associations, and diverse employers.

Building from our Essence - Our roles as educators and researchers, rather than policy creators and regulators, position universities as mediator organizations. Unlike the bounded responsibilities and task orientation of a public service agency, our fundamental assumptions build organization around knowledge creation and dissemination. Universities are organized for scholarship, creativity, and learning and that "secret sauce" fuels innovative regions. As a result, we have unique opportunities to convene conversations and broker relationships, serving as a bridge between local, regional, and international constituencies. Our loosely-coupled, but coherent, organizational structures through campus systems, cooperative extension, technology transfer, and other organizations, provides networks of relationships from which to build partnerships. However, if universities step forward for an expanded regional role, how do we handle what universities do not do and cannot do well within our current organization? Our capacity for effectiveness is necessarily more limited in regions distant from our campuses. The specter of tacit public expectations needs to be carefully sized and managed. The inability of citizens to understand that the innovation, knowledge, and ability to partner produced by universities is a long-term investment signals caution. Efforts to impose agency-like responses inconsistent with our institutions' fundamentally creative nature and values will quickly stunt TRE efforts.

Intentionality and Integration - With the many positive attributes comes a tremendous responsibility to serve our national need for workforce and economic development. But it remains to be seen if we will embrace our collective role with intentionality. How do we evolve in a way that pulls the traditional parts of our institutions into being with its newer parts? How do we integrate our engagement missions with the rest of the university? The fountain source for the many positive roles identified here stems from what universities do best: teaching, scholarship, and public engagement. A central question within TRE's framework is engagement for what purpose? Can our programs generate these positive societal effects more intentionally and systematically? Are our purposes for engaging university- or region-centric? Engagement too frequently seems a dialogue premised in university-centric purposes and language. At its core, the TRE dialogue relates to the prospect of designing our engagement mission in a way that elevates regional objectives as the primary lens through which to focus our programs to affect -- in greater abundance, in more places, with benefits to those places -- program efforts that simultaneously strengthen and integrate our university's education, research, and engagement missions.

Who Benefits? Who Pays? - Universities see their way more clearly when there are incentives. Despite evidence of its potential and impact, public funding is episodic. Clear public policy to engage and integrate universities in regional economic development leaves some to conclude that the call for a broader public university role is merely a "more-for-less" attempt to do economic development on the cheap. In an increasing number of cases, states are using public policy to encourage universities to play an increased role in regions. However, in the context of university experience over the past generation, as public commitment has given way to private tuition as a dominant proportion of public institution revenues, requisite questions for TRE efforts are who benefits and who pays. While a college degree may be considered a private good, regional economic development is not; and it should not be funded from student tuition.

Public Funding and Geographic Benefits - Universities also must be responsive to parameters of public investment; new public funding must address public need with a responsible, transparent program response. In designing program proposals, consideration has been given too infrequently to the fact that the direct effects of university programs on regional economies are generally constrained to a commuting distance from campus. The simple truth is that University-led economic development strategies have not received broader public support not because they are ineffective but because they are not effective in enough places to be recognized and supported by a simple majority of state or federal legislators.

Developing a Scholarly Framework: Assessment of Transformative Regional Engagement and the Land Grant Mission

The following concepts and research informed the Roundtable participants.

First and Second Wave Engagement - Long before the Morrill Act, educators wrestled to define the role of educational institutions in their broader societal context. Since the Kellogg Commission's *Returning to Our Roots: the Engaged Institution*, higher education has pushed itself, with mixed success, to embody the values and attributes of reciprocity and mutual respect in community and curricular engagement. Arbo and Benneworth (2007) have catalogued various university approaches to regional development and suggested that such involvement can be broadly categorized into one of two forms. In "first wave" models, universities perform "straightforward" roles, generally by supplying local leaders with expert information. Alternatively, in "second wave" approaches universities bring external resources to a region and combine it with other external resources. This, in turn, creates a "local buzz" and energy that has a transformatory effect on the regional economy as compared to the very limited impacts of first wave approaches (p. 35).

Nancy Franklin's (2008) taxonomy for first and second wave engagement efforts looked at five categories of university effort: approach to engagement, roles and relationships, teaching, research, and public service. Second wave engagement represents a profound evolution in reciprocity, mutuality and co-creation of knowledge. It shifts efforts to regional, strategic initiatives conceived in partnerships and targeting causes not symptoms. The implications of the taxonomy suggest that the "transformatory" effects stem from: (a) multiple programs integrated for maximum effect, (b) the systematic and reasoned selection of activities to increase impacts, and (c) long-term, place-based people and program sites.

Regional Engagement Model - Franklin's (2008) model for regional engagement held that both regions and universities possess needs and assets relevant to each other. A positive cycle of needs satisfaction occurs in a partnership in which each partner's assets are directed at the other's needs satisfaction. The role of regional stewards and university engagement leaders is critical to developing this alignment. Public policy and funding directed to accelerating and amplifying the partnership reinforces the upward spiral of impacts. Partnership structures must be developed to frame and sustain the partnership expectations, responsibilities, and agenda. The model holds that when each of these elements is in place, the velocity of mutual needs satisfaction accelerates into a vortex of reciprocity with benefits to the region, university, and state emanating from the regional engagement.

Regional Efforts – What Defines a Region and Effective Regional Policy? - Drs. Amy Glasmeier and Irwin Feller both placed the current interest about regional development in context with previous efforts. Previous thrusts, dating to the Tennessee Valley Authority and later the Area Redevelopment Act, grew from the need to coordinate infrastructure development and data showing that almost one third of US counties were in deep economic distress, with little ability to participate in economic opportunity. The advent of the Economic Development Administration brought, among other things, the recognition that planning capacity was fundamental to economic development. WIRED has been unique from past efforts because it has emphasized cooperation and spatially explicit public policy. While it emphasized regional labor policy, WIRED stepped out of its own domain to exert a much needed leadership component to regional economic change. However, in doing so, it may risk a similar fate of previous federal policy thrusts by pursuing goals that are difficult to attain in a timely manner.

Lessons from the Past - Some additional lessons from the history of regionalism: As universities contemplate their role in regional development, how can their aspirations be shaped to address worthy, relevant goals without reaching beyond domains that are politically feasible to maintain? Clearly, the need for cooperation in practice, addressed by WIRED, aligns with universities' capacity to sponsor collaboration and suggests a clear role. The possibility of unintended consequences in regional development calls out the need to build evaluation frameworks from the beginning of programs so strategic information is available as funding winds down. Past efforts that worked at the state and county level miss the most serious issues, calling for the need to build nested program models. Several of the university-led regional efforts (notably Purdue, University of Georgia, and Virginia Tech) were built around nested programming and collaborative leadership roles.

Context is Important - The parameters of regions, as well as the higher education institutions serving each, vary by context; they are whatever constitutes a unit of business in the global economy. For localities that can no longer compete on cost, there is a need to think differently and leverage resources collaboratively. Unlike Asia or Europe, the U.S. does not practice regional development. Fortunately, technology facilitates dynamic definitions of regions regardless of the complexity and varied political constituency. Organizing around industry clusters offers a path for the future with spatially relevant constructs from which to build policy and program. Several of the WIRED and university pioneers designed, organized and aligned program efforts with one or more industry clusters in their region.

The Pioneers' Stories: What are the Lessons?

A Portfolio of Models - While we may lack a coherent response across the higher education sector, many institutions can boast transformative, engaged projects.

- The University of Georgia's Archway Project serves as a portal to bring not just their resources to bear in specific regions, but also leverages assets from across the Georgia system.
- Virginia Tech's Institute for Advanced Learning and Research has built a broad collaboration well beyond higher education, leveraging resources (over \$80M from 2001-2007) into distributed research, innovation, and engagement program and governance model that provides a virtuous circle of benefits for both region and university.
- Michigan State's "from birth to work" targets state need through an integrated response to the question of what does it take to develop a child to become a successful adult.

The U.S. Department of Labor Employment Training Administration's Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) program has been a federal catalyst for innovative engagement. Working from the intersection of regionalization and cooperation, WIRED's diverse projects have served as a testing mechanism for regionalization and, in several cases, for models of university engagement.

- Purdue University provides leadership for a 14-county Indiana WIRED project. Leveraging \$80 million of investments in the last four years, the partnership pursues four primary transformational strategies (1) Creating Globally Competitive Industries, (2) Building an Entrepreneurship Super-Region, (3) Developing a Workforce with 21st Century Skills, and (4) Weaving Supportive Civic Networks.
- The University of Maine's North Star Alliance is creating a new regional economy by integrating their world-renowned composite materials research center with the strength of a centuries-old boat building industry. Manufacturing the strongest and lightest boats is reversing a catastrophic economic downturn in the region.
- The Metro Denver Regional WIRED Partnership involves eight counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson and Larimer.
- The University of Colorado-Denver joins multiple regional partners to serve The Metro Denver Regional WIRED Partnership. Responding to the "Colorado Paradox" of a booming economy propelled by growing technology sectors confronting a low high school graduation rate and leaking talent development pipeline, the partnership targets aerospace, energy, bioscience, secondary and post-secondary education initiatives.
- The University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Triangle focuses on micro-competitiveness across diverse clusters including renewable energy, bioscience, agriculture, and related manufacturing sectors. Serving 36 rural counties, the partnership is facilitating the transitioning from a traditional commodities base to a value-added agriculture economy.

Collaboration and Shared Agendas - While definitions of a region may be elastic, the spirit of reciprocity in collaborations is not. Partnerships with a clear structure from which to develop shared agendas increase impact and stability in sharp contrast to those in which a University dominates or dictates. Across the pioneers' stories the theme emerged that great projects require committed and distributed leadership from higher education and community collaborators with a specific focus on capacity building.

Creating Partnerships for a Shared Agenda Setting - Mutuality and reciprocity are not new concepts in higher education, but they are a central ingredient in successful transformative regional engagement. Universities which function as full regional partners make a commitment to cultural immersion; they do not stay at the edges of issues. They bring intentionality to the connections they build between themselves and the community, facilitating two-way communication and explicit matching of needs and assets to build a shared agenda. For many, such as Virginia Tech's Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, the immersion is expressed both by their physical presence in Southside, but also by the governance of the initiative.

Relational versus Transactional Models - Because trust is elemental in deep partnerships, engaged leaders bring a relational, not transactional focus to their work. They create space for shared ownership and distributed management, modeling collaboration across departments, disciplines, and other institutions of higher education. This dispersion of power and control is integral to sustained commitment and continued responsiveness. Georgia's Archway Partnership policy and structures reflect their fundamental commitment to transformative engagement. Specific regional agendas are launched by conducting extensive listening sessions from which they set collaborative priorities. In doing so, the University has shifted itself from the role of the paternal expert, making room for new solutions and understanding. Michigan State invests heavily in partnerships that develop regional self-sufficiency.

University Engagement Leaders - Such partnerships have profound implications for our organizations. They require strong internal champions who are able to transcend the preoccupations of the immediate to reap rewards in the long-term. Engagement leaders guide their organizations from the programmatic to the strategic, even when it causes the university to shift its way of operating and thinking. Partnerships may challenge us to redefine how we conceptualize the promotion and tenure process or what it means to do research. They challenge us to rethink disciplines, styles of leadership, and the loci of authority and expertise.

Finding and Developing Regional Stewards - Along with pushing universities' development and evolution, transformative regional partnerships require attention to building local capacity. Just as we navigate shifts in our ways of knowing, we are asking our local jurisdictional collaborators to abandon their historical competitiveness with each other. The educational agenda may include educating local leadership and their constituents about regional development and how it serves their interests. Some areas, such as greater Denver, created new mechanisms for communication and shared agenda development. Their caucus of mayors is completely consensus-based and although it has no official regional authority, the caucus makes an enormous difference in getting things done.

Building Community Capacity - Partnerships can also be tools for social empowerment, creating a precedent for distributed community involvement in defining agendas and solutions. Just as the micro-finance movement has engendered social consequences of inclusiveness and equity, transformative regional engagement can create new leadership networks and capacity that bring stability and strength to an area. What may start with educating constituents about projects to gain their support for regional investment can evolve into creating new cohorts of community leaders. New leaders can learn through agencies like Cooperative Extension and non-profits, but also in more formal offerings, such as the University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute's eight-day training course.

Lessons Learned Offered by the Pioneers – Each of the pioneers reported on lessons learned that should be continued and on emergent issues needing to be address for future success.

Critical Actions for Effective Partnerships:

- Listen: To co-create the vision of the collaborations, universities must heed the voices and concerns of regions.
- Share power: Functional governance systems for regional partnerships reflect multiple organizations and perspectives.
- Expect investment: For a partnership to be true, all of the players need to invest, even if their contributions are not equal.
- Immerse: If you aren't embedded in the region, you are not integrated; partnerships require direct, frequent contact.
- Attend: Regional economic development includes both cultivating what is already in a region as well as what might emerge.
- Build internal structures: By developing efficient mechanisms to connect faculty and staff to specific initiatives, you can respond to diverse challenges confronting a region.
- Build to scale: Partnerships must develop infrastructure and investments correlated to the scale they aspire to impact.

Partnerships often struggle to:

- Shift from programmatic to strategic responses.
- Build sustainability into projects from their inception.
- Develop metrics that inform future action, capture true impact, and align expectations.
- Include and integrate minority and immigrant populations.
- Manage different expectations of agency, impact, timelines, and urgency.

Implications of the Dialogue for Future Learning and Action

Building Stewardship of Place - Community stewardship involves institutional or individual commitment to caring for a place. Community stewards bring with them ideals about the quality of community in which they will live and work. At one time, industry was connected to a specific location. Companies reflected their sense of responsibility to their home community in their investments in community infrastructure, both hard and soft. In our current global environment, each state can relate many stories of how "place" is no longer a concern for an international company. Universities, however, are fundamentally local. While we may open

new campuses, we cannot relocate for cheaper labor elsewhere. We are in, and of consequence to, the places where we exist.

Organizing Around Industry Clusters - As TRE agendas develop for local and non-local regional initiatives, an important consideration relates to organizing principles for designing engagement efforts. Industry clusters provide a framework from which to identify opportunities for economic and community health. Industry clusters, particularly in rural environments, constitute a significant ally in filling the vacuum left by disappearing manufacturing leadership. Like us, industry clusters trade and live in regions. Clusters become a critical conceptual tool in redevelopment, particularly in rural environments. Through a cluster, we can discover orientation and scale considerations, be it for educational initiatives or crafting research agendas.

Creating a Community Vision for Soft Infrastructure – The economic and community development value of talent, technology, and place resonate as dominant trends for the new century. Quality of life and interesting jobs correlate strongly with locations that aggregate college educated adults. A strategy of recruiting talented people is replacing recruiting companies as smart development. In older economic development models, hard infrastructure - such as sewers, roads, industrial parks, and shell buildings - was developed to attract companies and jobs. While hard infrastructure is still important, particularly technology infrastructure, we submit that communities need to develop a vision for the innovation, or soft, infrastructure required to attract the talented workers, and the high paying jobs that follow them. These assets include good schools, research and development assets, cluster-aligned commercial testing and engineering services, cultural and recreational amenities. Universities are particularly well suited to contribute to strategies that develop a community prepared to host innovation economy employers.

Building from Local Strengths - Development of industry clusters and innovation economy investments are aspects of building soft infrastructure, but there are others. The process of developing asset maps, including both university and regional features, enables a broader understanding of the resources and hidden opportunities that can serve a region. Their creation is also a step in building connections between communities. Asset maps capture systems of relationships, networks of venture capital and innovation systems. They clarify gaps to cultivating an appropriately trained workforce. They inform the construction of structures supportive of partnerships as we work to match respective university and community needs and assets.

Resources: The False Constraint - As our economy falters, it is all too easy to cite a lack of resources as an absolute impediment. Funding or lack thereof is the perpetual excuse to shun engagement activities. However, current projects individually and collectively challenge this assumption. Many of these projects, though they required significant investment, reframed funding strategies for astounding and accelerating returns on investment. Purdue University has secured \$80 million in the last 4 years, but not through traditional RFP's. In six-and-a-half years, Virginia Tech's IALR project generated more than \$80 million in funding. A \$50 million bond is enabling the University of Maine to invest in the state economy and the creation of jobs. The South Carolina General Assembly has invested millions in the Centers of Economic

Excellence that support transformative work through Clemson University, the Medical University of South Carolina, and the University of South Carolina. But money alone is not an exclusive answer.

Understanding the Metrics of Success - We must bring the same high standard to our metrics as we do to our scholarship. We cannot be satisfied with counting the numbers of people who walk through a door or participate in a program. Instead, we must investigate how the collective work impacts a place and promotes better work. As we cultivate our partnerships, we must collaboratively develop metrics that reflect the impacts to which we aspire. We must purposefully measure our efforts and success at sustainability. Thoughtful metrics can provide incentives for new behaviors as well as demonstrate our accountability to ourselves, funders, local, state, and federal partners and investors.

There are already a variety of frameworks that can inform our thinking. These include traditional indicators of reductions of poverty, salary ranges of employment markets, per capita income raises, etc. NASULGC's Commission on Innovation, Competitiveness, and Economic Prosperity is working to define metrics to describe the ecology of an innovation economy. In addition, the Carnegie Elective Engagement Classification can serve as a starting point for additional metrics—our own internal conceptual and structural shifts in response to the collaborations, how we conceptualize and distribute internal resources, including creating new faculty lines.

Building Our Agenda – The complexity of regional issues aligns well with University capabilities to suggest we are well positioned to act. Much is already being done. However, much remains to be learned from each other and defined with our partners to move into more systemic and structured responses. Universities are not social service agencies. For our involvement in regional redevelopment to make sense, we must be functioning in our role of learners and educators – not regulators or policy implementers. The ultimate criteria of our involvement: projects must provide opportunities for scholarship as well as impact. But engaged relationships and projects represent a profound opportunity for scholarship for students, staff, and faculty across the disciplines. By intentionally testing our hypotheses, we can simultaneously co-create new knowledge and identify solutions with diversely conceived communities. From this new understanding we can both restructure ourselves for the era in which we live and provide leadership for a prosperous and sustainable future.

Categories for Future Discussion and Focus – In an effort to suggest a framework for constructive future learning and action, the following categories are offered as topics for in-depth discussion and focus:

1. *Partnering Roadmaps*

- Identifying opportunities from local assets
- Aligning the needs and assets of universities and regions
- Building shared agendas and partnership agreements
- Building internal university capacity to have an engagement interface from which to be effective in TRE

- Clarifying university lines of responsibility to regional stewards for engagement impact
- Developing effective guidelines for engagement with communities (i.e., new money for new programs)
- 2. *High-Impact Regional Program Models*
 - Understanding the purpose and design of multidimensional programs in relation to economic and community change theories
 - Aligning scale and program types (i.e., innovation versus education) with agency to effect the desired change
 - Identifying how different program models compare in terms of impact, integration of partners, and financial viability.
 - Building networks, connecting the global economy to place
 - Understanding techniques to develop world-class programs on a distributed community scale
- 3. *Partnership Structures and Governance*
 - Identifying effective frameworks for structuring partnerships
 - Understanding the governance needs and models that encourage investment and sustain program effectiveness
- 4. *Theories of Applied Economics to Guide Program Development and Evaluation*
 - Identifying a theoretical framework to understand the impact universities, and their programs, have on regional economies
 - Determining which local factors enhance or impede effective engagement models.
 - Studying factors related to industry clusters, universities, and economic geography
- 5. *Program Evaluation and the Metrics of Success*
 - Developing both formative and summative evaluation frameworks from which to set expectations and measure success
- 6. *Funding, Collaborative Policy and Financial Models*
 - Identifying cooperative funding models
 - Developing federal and state policy agenda supportive of TRE
 - Understanding financial models from which unique and effective programs are established
 - Developing research findings and associated outreach and education materials for state, local, and private sector leaders
- 7. *Developing Leadership*
 - Understanding the characteristics of and requisite knowledge for regional and university engagement leaders
 - Developing leadership development programs for regional stewards
 - Developing leadership development programs for university TRE leaders
- 8. *Characteristics of University Cultures of Engagement*
 - Embracing promotion and tenure policies relevant to engaged research
 - Sharing power with partners
 - Identifying effective institutional engagement postures and styles
 - Collaborating internally/transcending disciplines and internal power structures

And from here.....

We stand at a crossroads. Will we respond to the challenges confronting our country or fade in relevance? Will we cultivate our resources in partnerships with shared agendas and collaborative learning or will we turn our focus inward, preoccupying ourselves with the intricate facets of the disciplines and internal politics? Will we contribute to the national conversation and play a role in bringing the next generation of WIRED-like efforts to the national agenda? Will we contribute to the multi-level structures and nested systems of programming spanning federal, state and local participation? The Roundtable participants embody both the high engagement and the high impact nexus; our integrated experience can and should inform national policy and funding agendas.

Transformative Regional Engagement will be the central topic for the NASULGC Council on Engagement and Outreach's June 2009 meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. Another University Roundtable will be held in conjunction with the National Outreach Scholarship Conference to be held in October 2009 in Athens Georgia. If you are interested in being added to the mailing list, please contact Sue Witherite at svw2@psu.edu. Additional materials and an audio record of this Roundtable can be found at <http://oewd.psu.edu/tre/>.

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