



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

Community Engagement Task Force

Process, Findings and Recommendations



Our Charge

- **President Simpson Charged the Task Force with the following:**
 - Create a comprehensive, coordinated and integrated plan that will allow UB to realize its public service and community relations missions
 - Develop a campus wide strategy for integrating all public service and community relations efforts and programs
 - Develop processes, organizational structures and other support elements required to achieve the strategy

Task Force Members

- **A Community Engagement Task Force was created and staffed with a cross section of the University's leading public service, community relations, communications and community service experts and resources**
 - **Dennis R. Black, Vice President for Student Affairs**
 - **Ruth D. Bryant, Assistant Dean, School of Architecture and Planning**
 - **Thomas B. Burrows, Jr., Director, Center for the Arts**
 - **Brian Carter, Dean, School of Architecture and Planning**
 - **Danis J. Gehl, Director, University Community Initiative**
 - **Mary H. Gresham, Vice President for Public Service and Urban Affairs and Dean, Graduate School of Education**
 - **Donald J. Jacobs, Director, Center for Applied Technologies in Education**
 - **Peter S. Killian, Assistant Vice President for Marketing and Creative Services**
 - **Ryan A. McPherson, Assistant Vice President for Government Affairs**
 - **Peter R. Pitegoff, Vice Dean, Law School**
 - **Kathleen A. Wiater, Senior Director/Development, School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences**

Working Definitions Established by Task Force

- Community Relations – *Relationships with and within the community both locally and well beyond Western New York*
- Public Service – *Application of scholarly expertise for the public good*
- Community Service – *Sharing our assets/resources with others (volunteerism)*
- Community – *People, groups and entities with whom we have a shared or common interest*

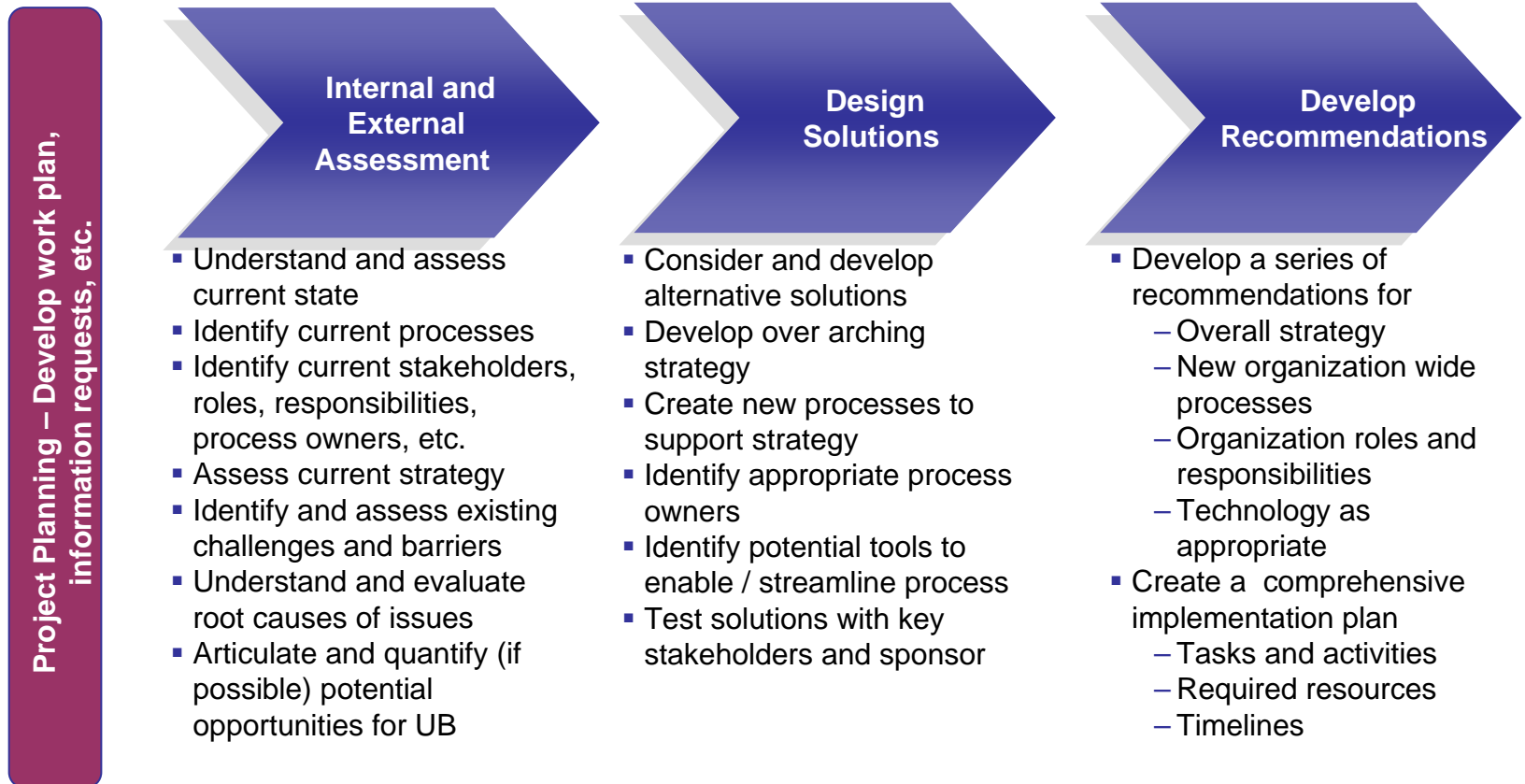


Project Scope

- **The scope of our project included all campus programs, organizations and efforts that are presently involved in, or that in the future can support, UB's public service and community relations objectives**
- **Included within the project's scope were public service and community relations efforts performed by the following offices and units:**
 - Public Service and Urban Affairs
 - Government Affairs
 - Student Affairs
 - Advancement
 - Schools / Faculty
 - Others as appropriate
- **Scope did not include inventory of all existing efforts or establishment of key service focus areas for the future**

High Level Approach

The Task Force relied on the following work plan to carry out its charge





Internal Assessment Process & Findings

- Our Internal Assessment involved detailed reviews of current public service and community relations programs
- We asked Task Force members to provide overviews of the efforts within their organizations
- We invited other campus leaders to provide overviews of their efforts as well (e.g., Margaret Paroski, John Sheffer)
- Task Force members raised questions and presentations were summarized and documented
- We developed a set of definitions to create a common frame of reference to guide future discussions

Summary of Internal Assessment

- There are many examples of extraordinary public and community service efforts at UB
- Robust public service is provided from many corners of the university, but with inadequate linkage to broader university objectives and strategies
- Our Internal Assessment yielded the following findings:
 - UB has robust *Public Service* offerings which deliver significant economic and social benefit to the community
 - *Public Service* offerings are successfully being delivered within some, but not all, of the schools
 - Such programs are effectively aligned to research and teaching objectives
 - *Public Service* offerings, however, are not being capitalized upon to support or strengthen broader community relations objectives

Summary of Internal Assessment

- **While Public Service offerings are effective, broader based *Community Relations* at UB lack several critical elements**
 - There has been a lack of appreciation for the relevance and importance of defining community relations goals and objectives. As a result:
 - There is no stated (nor widely shared) purpose or goal
 - There is no articulated strategy for community relations
 - There is no unifying theme or common message
 - There is inadequate integration and/or coordination of efforts
 - There is no leveraging and/or capitalizing on public service offerings
 - There is no dedicated marketing / public relations strategy or plan to advance community relationships
 - There is no clear focus of responsibility in the university for community relations

Summary of Internal Assessment

- **The significant overall finding from our internal assessment is as follows:**
 - *Strategy* – There is no UB community relations strategy
 - *Organization* – There is no organizational entity charged with fostering constructive community relations
 - *Process* – There are no institution-wide processes to coordinate, integrate or promote UB community relations
 - *Technology* – There are no systems in place to support or measure community relations activities or goals
- **Thus, while some schools and departments are fostering good relations with the community, UB as an institution is failing to be recognized for the breadth and depth of its social and economic contribution to the community**



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External Assessment and
Findings

Background

- **During this phase of the process, the Task Force identified key stakeholders within the community to provide feedback, views, and opinions about UB and its role in the community**
- **Key stakeholders were divided into two categories**
 - Elected / Public - officials
 - Non-elected community leaders
- **Interviews were held with key stakeholders**

Public Representatives Interviewed

- **Senator Dale Volker**
- **Senator Mary Lou Rath**
- **Assemblyman Sam Hoyt**
- **Assemblyman Paul Tokasz**
- **Deputy County Executive – Carl Calabrese**
- **Amherst Town Supervisor – Susan Grelick**
- **City of Buffalo Mayor’s Chief of Staff – Eva Hasset**
- **Executive Director Strategic Planning City of Buffalo - Tim Wanamaker**
- **City of Buffalo Councilwoman - Bonnie Russell**
 - Councilwoman Russell’s staff – Joanna Cole and Sandra Munson

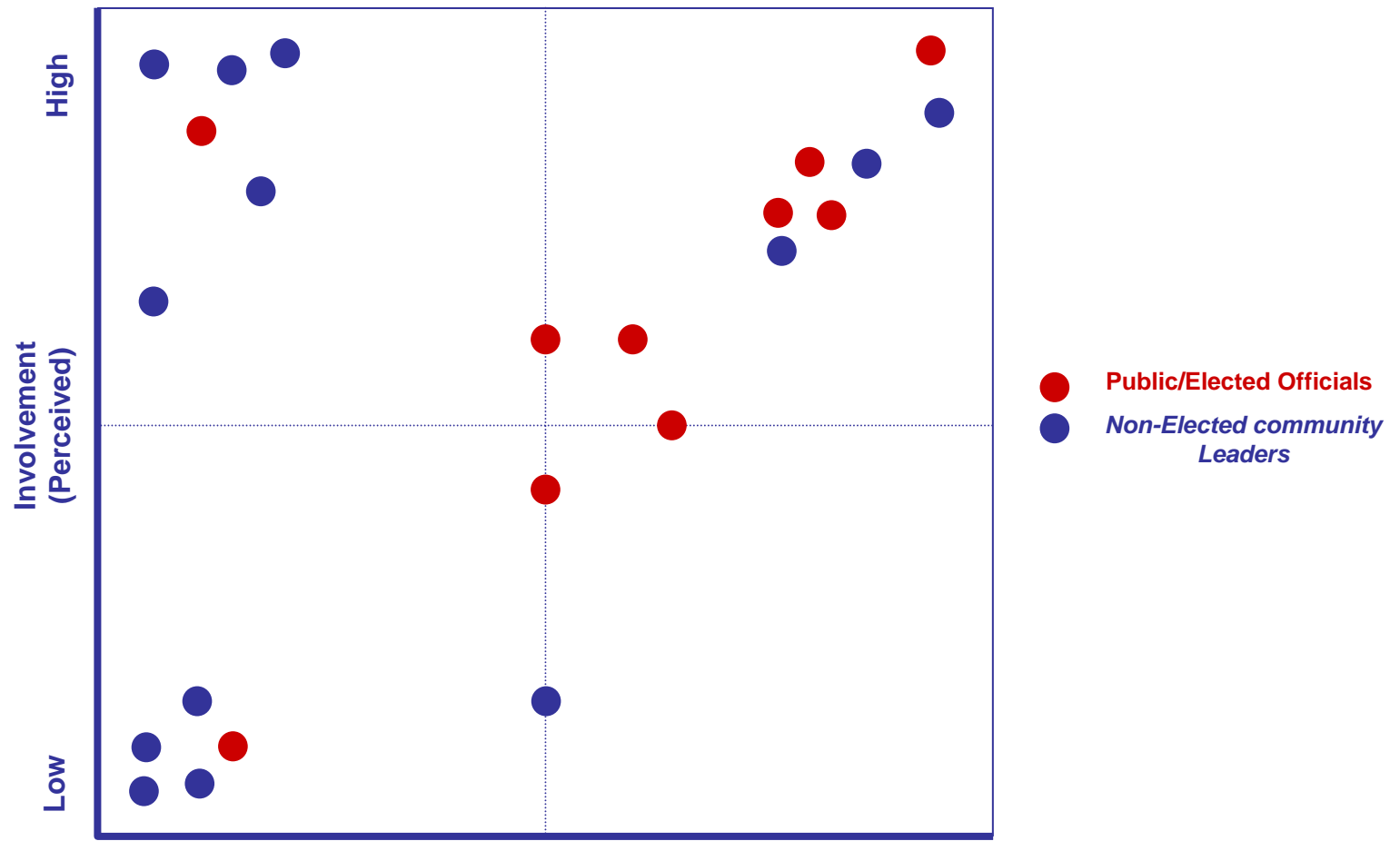


Non-Elected Community Leaders Interviewed

- Arlene Kaukus – CEO United Way
- James Magavern – Lawyer, Civic Leader
- Doug Bean – Managing Partner EMA (Ad agency)
- Cindy Abbott-Letro – Arts, Community Leader (media)
- James Pitts – Former Buffalo Council President, Civic Leader
- Gail Johnstone – CEO Community Foundation
- Tucker Curtin – University Heights Business Owner
- Thelma Roberts – Stockbridge Block Club
- Fred Brace – University Heights resident
- Jim Wadsworth – Lawyer, Oishei Foundation Chair
- Alyce Cuddy – Executive Director Gloria J. Parks Community Center
- John Huber - University Heights Business Owner
- Bernie Huber – University Heights Business Owner
- Lou Jean Fleron – Cornell SILR
- Reverend Chapman- St John Baptist Church
- Sister Jeremy- St Josephs University Church
- Diana Quaye – University Heights resident
- Sharon Murphy – South Campus employee and St Josephs University Church parishioner

Community Perceptions

- Interviewees were asked to provide their perceptions about UB's *Involvement* and *Impact* in the community



Role of a Public University in the Community

- **Elected Officials responded as follows when asked to define the appropriate role of a public university in its community**
 - Provide community leadership
 - Support economic development
 - Provide access to jobs
 - Strengthen public service mission
 - Serve as partners with other community institutions and leaders
 - Educate young minds
 - Bring forth the best ideas in the community
 - Serve as an impartial and neutral facilitator of community issues

General Findings from Elected Officials

- General perceptions about UB were mixed
- Elected officials who represent districts in or around University Heights were more critical than those outside
- General impression is that UB could serve as a catalyst for change in the community but hasn't demonstrated the interest or leadership for doing so
- UB is seen as an underutilized community asset
- Positive feedback about public service in some of the professional schools (Law and Architecture and Planning in particular)
- Near unanimous view that UB needs to invest in stabilizing the University Heights neighborhood

General Findings from Elected Officials

- **Significant comparisons were made to Canisius College**
 - General belief that Canisius is doing more and has made a better impact in the community
- **Most felt that UB has not done a good job of telling its own story**
- **Unanimous belief that the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth has been exceptional**
 - High credibility
 - Neutral
- **Unanimous view that UB can and should serve as a neutral and impartial unifier within the community**

Suggestions from Elected Officials

- **Elected officials provided several suggestions**
 - Invest in stabilizing the University Heights neighborhoods
 - Take a leadership role in uniting community diversity and interests
 - Create a community roundtable
 - Expand the campus' reach through financial investments (property, buildings, etc.)
 - Provide employees with low cost housing loans
 - Reflects lack of knowledge of existing UB programs
 - Assume broader leadership role in health related issues in the community (overweight, high heart attack rate, teenage pregnancy, etc.)
 - Pick 5 outcomes that serve the community's and UB's interest and go after them

Summary of General Findings – Non Elected

- **General Findings from Community Leaders**

- There is a perception that the University has not lived up to its responsibility as a public university
 - Many view the University as having abandoned the community
- There was a common feeling that the housing issue within University Heights needs to be addressed
- There was a general agreement that UB needs to identify a critical few things within the community where it can have a major impact, even if it means that other areas are not fully supported
- There is high regard and high expectations for Bioinformatics
- Very positive views about the new medical campus and what it will mean to the community
- There was an overwhelming view that UB is just “there”
- Business leaders interviewed have a positive view of the University
- Positive feedback about public service in some of the professional schools (Law and Architecture and Planning in particular)
- Near unanimous view that UB does not effectively promote itself

Positive Themes

- **Community Leaders had several positive comments about UB**
 - UB is seen as a driving economic force in the community
 - UB considered to have the ability to make a positive impact in the community
 - There has been very positive feedback about President Simpson
 - UB is the higher education institution of choice in the community
 - The significance and importance that UB has in the economic well being of the community exceeds the reliance that other communities have on their local university
 - UB is seen as a highly credible and significant research institution

Negative Themes

- **Community Leaders also had several negative comments about UB**
 - UB could be doing more in the community
 - Everyone wants and expects UB to be a major player in the community
 - UB is seen as a major community asset but most people are unaware of the significant contributions UB is making
 - UB has been seen as unfriendly
 - UB used to have a broader visible presence in the community
 - UB is distrusted by many in the community
 - People felt that UB should be in a class of its own, at no time should it be compared to Canisius, Buffalo State, etc.,
 - Many view Canisius and Buffalo State as having more impact in the community than UB
 - Several concerns were voiced about what they perceive as a decline in the medical school

Suggestions

- **Community leaders had several suggestions for UB**
 - Alternate sporting and other activities between the North and South Campus to give inner city youth access to special programs
 - Set short term specific goals with defined and communicated timelines
 - Work on building trust within the community
 - Bring programs into the city
 - Encourage students be a part of their community
 - Communicate the results of the Community Engagement Task Force back to the community
 - Take more of interest in the University Heights neighborhoods
 - Follow-through on commitments

Rising issues within the Community

- **Community Leaders responded as follows when asked to identify the leading issues in the community**
 - The economy
 - Lack of jobs
 - Peace Bridge
 - Community self-image
 - Health Care
 - Education
 - Better land use
 - Better water use

Following an assessment of current internal programs, and interviews with both university and selected community representatives, the Task Force formulated its mission and goals.



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Community Engagement Goals

Community Engagement Mission

- ***To make a positive difference in our broader communities by:***
 - *applying our collective expertise for the public good,*
 - *sharing our leadership, creativity and capabilities, and*
 - *fostering a culture of community awareness and engagement in our students, faculty and staff*

Community Engagement Goals

- **In support of this mission the Task Force has developed the following five community engagement goals for UB:**
 - **Strengthen and sustain UB's impact as a public institution serving diverse communities here and abroad**
 - **Build stronger community partnerships that enrich and enhance UB's mission of teaching and research**
 - **Transform and promote UB's identity as a connected and committed member of its communities**
 - **Cultivate a culture of community engagement in our faculty, staff and students**
 - **Be a good neighbor to the communities adjacent to UB campuses**

Strategies

- **Strengthen and sustain UB's impact as a public institution serving diverse communities**
 - Establish clear responsibility within UB for the collection, analysis and measurement of public and community service efforts
 - Design organizations and processes that successfully coordinate public and community service efforts and information
 - Create an inventory of all internal activities and continuously assess their impact in the community
 - Proactively seek to understand the needs and interests of diverse communities
 - Develop a unified university-wide public and community service plan
 - Create opportunities and incentives to apply research and scholarship for the public good
 - Commit sufficient financial and other resources to achieve public and community service goals

Strategies

- **Build stronger community partnerships that enrich and enhance UB's mission of teaching and research**
 - Create meaningful structures, mechanisms and ways for the community and UB to interact
 - Continuously evaluate the impact of existing partnerships and identify potential institutional partnerships including a focus on geographical areas
 - Establish and implement focused and selected programs that have mutual benefit to the community and UB
 - Create organizations and processes that successfully coordinate and manage key institutional partnerships
 - Develop a community partnership plan with targets, tasks, resources, responsibilities, timelines and measures for success

Strategies

- **Transform and promote UB's identity as a connected and committed member of its communities**
 - Create a focused and long-term awareness and image building campaign aimed at both internal and external audiences
 - Promote UB as an excellent institution nationally and globally
 - Implement state-of-the-art tools and processes that continuously monitor, measure and assess UB's identity and image in the community
 - Proactively and regularly solicit the views, needs, and issues across diverse community
 - Communicate widely (internally and externally) information about UB's public service, volunteer and community relations activities and results
 - Create opportunities and forums for senior UB leaders (e.g., President, Provost) to be visible in the community

Strategies

- **Cultivate a culture of community engagement in our students, staff and faculty**
 - Provide rewards, recognition, incentives and institutional support for focused community engagement
 - Accommodate reasonable time demands for staff to support institutional community priorities
 - Make community service a requirement for undergraduate graduation
 - Continuously promote community engagement to faculty, students and staff
 - Educate people about the importance and relevance of public and community service
 - Further integrate service learning into the curriculum
 - Foster a sense of civic responsibility in our student population through education, marketing, etc.
 - Reconsider role of service in tenure/promotion

Strategies

- **Be a good neighbor to the communities adjacent to UB campuses**
 - Educate students about residential rights and responsibilities and increase their awareness of personal safety
 - Enhance communications between UB, permanent residents, and off campus services
 - Reduce disruptive off-campus student behaviors
 - Encourage faculty and staff neighborhood home ownership
 - Open the campus and programs to the surrounding communities
 - Focus appropriate UB service and research initiatives on the neighborhoods
 - Involve local government and community engagement in exchanges about “town-gown” issues and opportunities
 - Focus appropriate UB education, service and research initiatives on key geographic areas
 - Develop campus properties with sensitivity to area neighborhoods

Structure

- **To enable these strategies, the Task Force recommends that UB create a new Community Engagement Unit that is:**
 - Directly responsible for overseeing the development and execution of community engagement goals and strategies
 - Directly responsible for developing and managing a Community Engagement budget and personnel
 - Directly responsible for overseeing the creation of tools and processes for collecting and assessing data
 - Directly responsible for coordinating the institutional community relations effort
 - Directly responsible for creating high visibility and presence on and off campus
 - Responsible for creating strong academic link with Provost, Deans, and close relationships with Government Affairs and Communications

Structure (con't)

Community Engagement Unit should have:

- Shared responsibility for facilitating the development of public service programs
 - Liaison with public service representatives in the schools and units
- Shared responsibility for developing community service activities
 - Liaison with Student Affairs and other units
- Community Engagement leader must have sufficient authority to execute Community Engagement plans

Structure (con't)

- **The execution of strategies will be delivered in part by the new Community Engagement Unit and in part by other campus entities, including:**
 - Decanal Units for Public Service
 - Student Affairs for Community Service
 - Marketing and Communication
- **The Community Engagement Unit will have sufficient authority to develop and apply incentives**
- **Community Engagement Unit will report to External Affairs**
 - External Affairs leader is responsible for coordinating efforts of the various administrative units (i.e., Government Affairs, Communication, Development and Community Engagement) and working with the academic units through the provost and the deans
 - Community Engagement leader is given appropriate autonomy and authority to successfully develop and execute the Community Engagement Goals and Strategies

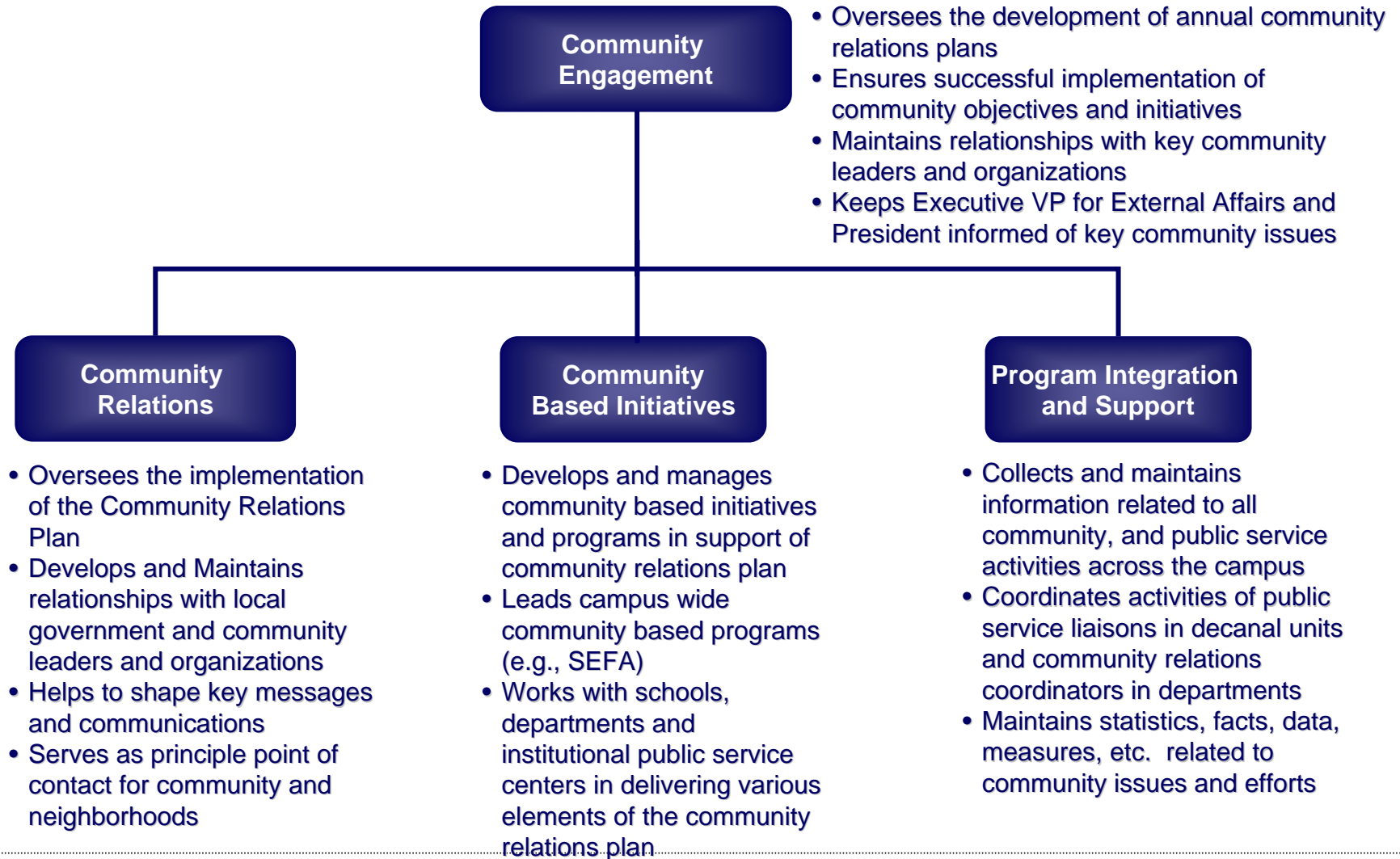
Community Engagement Delivery



Community Engagement Delivery

- **Direct Responsibility**
 - Functions and people directly reporting into the Community Engagement Unit
- **Collaboration with Schools and Units**
 - Joint Development of Strategy (Community Engagement Unit and each school / unit)
 - Joint Development of Implementation Planning (Community Engagement Unit and each school / unit)
 - Marketing
- **Communication**
 - Better sharing of information between units and Community Engagement Unit
 - Creation and utilization of effective, efficient, and formalized communication tools/processes

Proposed Community Engagement Organization



Collaboration / Liaisons

- **The Community Engagement Unit will rely on structured relationships and liaisons with several key units**
 - Within Each Decanal Unit and Vice Presidential Area
 - Propose to create Public Service Coordinators in each of the schools and units
 - Principal liaison with Community Engagement Office
 - Support the development of community engagement goals, strategies and tactics
 - Marketing/News
 - Government Affairs
 - Student Affairs
 - President's Office
 - Provost's Office
 - Development / Alumni

Organizational Support

- The new Community Engagement Unit will also be aided by a Community Engagement Advisory Committee

Role and Responsibilities

Community
Engagement
Advisory
Committee

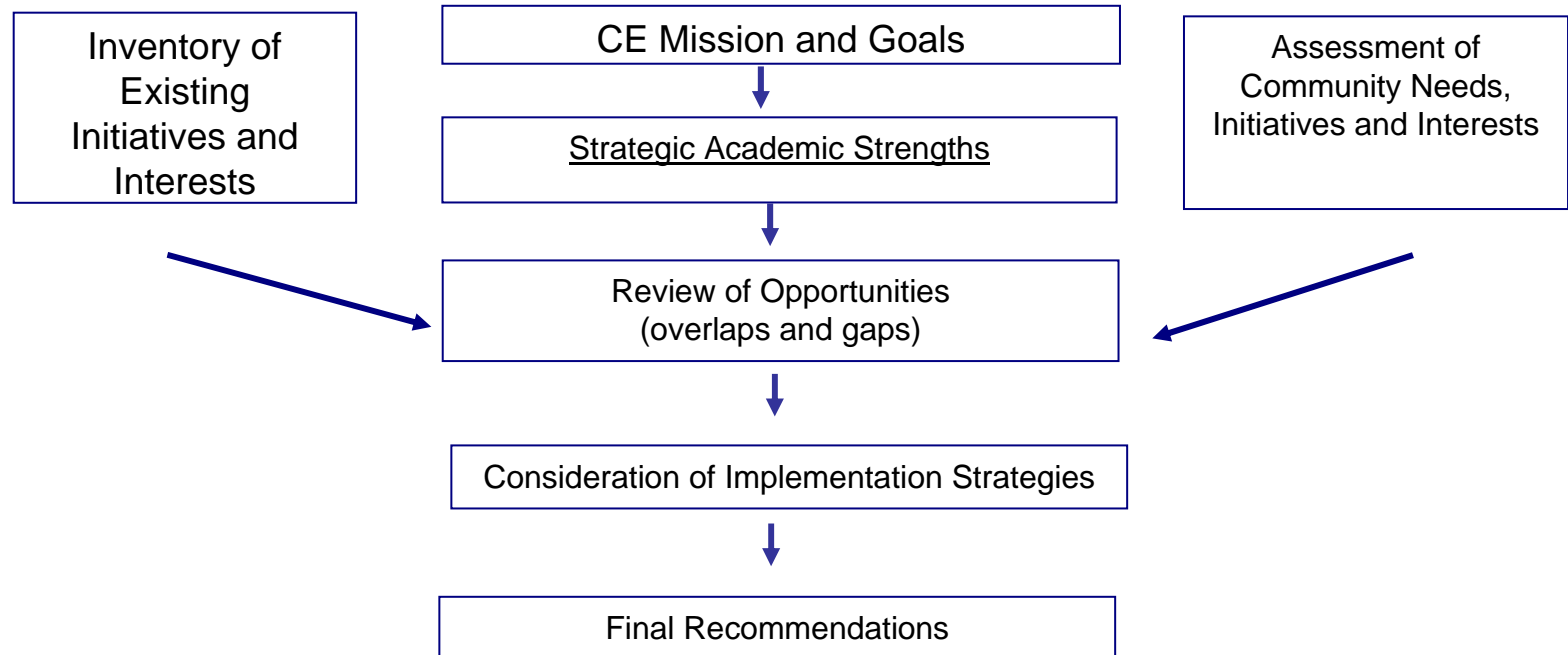


- Serves as strategic advisors to Community Engagement Unit
- Maintains integrity of Community Engagement Plan, Goals and Strategies
- Consider appointment of Community Engagement Task Force as initial Advisory Committee
- The Advisory Committee is to include both internal and external members in the future

How can UB focus service efforts?

- Need to understand current strengths and interests,
- Need to consider areas of academic investments in future (developing strategic academic strengths), and
- Need to understand community needs, initiatives.

Identification of Key CE Service Themes



Sought Campus and Community Input on Findings and Recommendation

- **Community Reception – January 2005**
- **REPORTER article**
- **Campus-wide email**
- **Open Forums – February 2005**
 - Community Stakeholders
 - North/South Campus
- **Community organizations/individual consultation – March 2005**
- **UB 2020 website/feedback - ongoing**

Stakeholder Observations on Report

- Encouraged by effort and focus
- Questioned possible impacts of centralization
- Promoted better partnerships/ better understanding of on-going community initiatives
- Concern over what would be key areas of focus in future

Campus Community Observations on Report

- Focus on geographic areas, not particular issues
- Make them measurable
- Address urgent social problems
- Address tenure/promotion issue
- Keep consulting with others; on and off campus
- Elevate CE in UB organization structure
- Partner with community/grassroot initiatives
- Wanted more input in process to date
- How will structure fit into existing UB organizations?
- UB can help “by not hurting community”
- Need involvement of community

Campus Community Observations on Report (con't)

- Can this effort be financially supported and sustained?
- Need to add student focus
- Need to centralize marketing
- Need to overcome obstacles to people coming to campus or wanting to program on campus
- Need to pro-actively help local government
- Need to focus on urgent social concerns



Community Observations on Report

- To be added on or about March 4; based on responses to mailing to 550 organizations/individuals

Next Transition Steps:

Next Steps:

- ☒ Present initial findings, recommendations to President/ Executive Committee
- ☒ Appoint Community Engagement Transition Team
- ☒ Develop plan to share draft findings / recommendations, internal and external
- ☒ Seek campus/community input on findings, mission, goals
- ☒ Develop Community Engagement organization/structure
- ☐ Develop Community Engagement leadership position description
- ☐ Revise Community Engagement report based on inputs
- ☐ Promote interim leadership for Community Engagement pending hiring of Executive Vice President External Affairs
- ☐ Make Final recommendations to President/Executive Committee



Next CE University Steps:

- ☐ Adopt/Revise CE Report
- ☐ Place proposed unit in existing or new university structure
- ☐ Create unit and appoint leadership
- ☐ Identify necessary resources for CE success
- ☐ Establish process/conduct inventory of existing service efforts/opportunities
- ☐ Lead process to develop of key CE focus areas for future service