TOWARDS AN ENGAGED UNIVERSITY

President's Task Force Report on Community Engagement

FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

February 5, 2010

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I.   Introduction

1. The mission statement of York University reads as follows:

The mission of York University is the pursuit, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge. We promise excellence in research and teaching in pure, applied and professional fields. We test the boundaries and structures of knowledge. We cultivate the critical intellect.   York University is part of Toronto: we are dynamic, metropolitan and multi-cultural. York University is part of Canada: we encourage bilingual study, we value tolerance and diversity. York University is open to the world: we explore global concerns. A community of faculty, students and staff committed to academic freedom, social justice, accessible education, and collegial self-governance. York University makes innovation its tradition.

2. The commitment to accessible education and social justice espoused in that statement have shaped our institution and are reflected in our academic programs and research activities. The 2005-2010 University Academic Plan (UAP) reaffirms these institutional values by including among its priorities the promotion and expansion of community education initiatives both domestically and internationally, and they continue to inform a wide range of new strategic partnerships being established in the urban environments of York, Peel and Durham Regions.

3. York University's reputation as a socially responsive and engaged university has continued to grow perhaps especially so over the last 10 years.   The University has been particularly involved, through outreach and education access initiatives, with the Jane-Finch community. Programs and initiatives such as Osgoode Hall Law School's Community Legal Aid Support Program (CLASP), the Women's Studies Bridging Program, York Youth Connection Summer Day Camp, the Faculty of Education's Westview Partnership and the new York University-TD Community Engagement Centre continue to strengthen relationships between the university and its closest neighbours. Bargaining members within the University, such as York University Faculty Association's Community Projects Committee, have made significant

financial and volunteer contributions to initiate and support numerous access and outreach initiatives.

4. York's community outreach also extends internationally including, for example, strategic research collaborations on pressing global concerns and international internships (YIP) that provide undergraduate and graduate students with opportunities to apply their academic knowledge in an international work environment, enhance their job-related skills in an international and intercultural setting, and contribute to their sense of global civic responsibility.

5. As the University Academic Plan (UAP) was approaching its final year, and in preparation for a new planning cycle, it seemed timely to benchmark our community engagement activities, and to assess opportunities for us to expand and/or for York to offer leadership in responding to the social and economic needs of our society.

6. Other events at York offered further incentive. In particular, there were several incidents that raised concern over the climate on campus including, as an example, the racist graffiti that was discovered outside the office of the York University Black Students Alliance (YUBSA) in February 2008. While a separate Task Force on Student Life, Learning and Community was established to address student conflict and student groups in particular (see the Final 2009 Report), there was also an acknowledgement that effective community engagement requires that the "inside be onside" – embracing diversity, responsibility for social justice, and democratic citizenship starts at York. The Task Force on Community Engagement was an opportunity for us to reflect on our sense of community and responsibility for one another both on and off campus.

7. Externally, the social transformation of universities as public institutions with the mandate to respond to global concerns has never been more evident. Research activities and granting agencies (such as the Tri-Council) increasingly emphasize the application and exchange of

knowledge (i.e., knowledge transfer and knowledge mobilization) between universities and other community partners.

8. Reviews of academic programs (e.g. undergraduate program reviews or UPRs, the Rae Report) and student satisfaction surveys (e.g., NSSE) indicate that there is growing interest in engaged learning such as community service learning (CSL) or community based learning (CBL). Students are seeking experiential education opportunities and practicum placements that integrate into the curriculum learning acquired outside the classroom while volunteering and building capacity in the community. There is a burgeoning literature that speaks to the value of hands-on learning opportunities that allow students to integrate theory and practice.

9. Most recently, the new VPA/Provost has embarked on a consultation process to develop a White Paper that will provide a renewed strategic vision describing where York University wants to be ten to fifteen years from now. It asks and seeks to answer the most basic of questions: what do we hope York University will be, what are our aspirations and hopes for this great institution, in the year 2020? Its purpose is to provide a careful, evidence-based and realistic assessment of our future prospects and challenges with the goal of defining how we can substantively differentiate ourselves from other post-secondary institutions. The University is thus at an important juncture of its own evolution and tasked to redefine its role and priorities, to align its community engagement activities with the University's Mission and academic plans (e.g. the new UAP, faculty plans) and to foster an institutional culture that supports engagement.

II.   History of the Task Force

10.   With the announcement of the *President's Task Force on Community Engagement*, an initial round of preliminary consultations was conducted by the Chair of the Task Force to determine the membership of the Task Force and to identify issues for discussion. The Task Force was formed in September, 2008 with senior-level representatives from government, not for profit organizations, business, the college sector and alumni as well as York divisions, faculties and students (refer to www.yorku.ca/commeng/membership for Task Force membership). Secretariat support has been provided by Yvette Munro, the Manager of Community Relations in the Office of University Events & Community Relations.

11.   The Task Force has been meeting over the past year and exploring three foundational questions. What is a community engaged university? What purpose does community-university engagement serve? Moving forward, how might York University become and sustain its future as a leading community engaged university? The Task Force's Terms of Reference may be found at www.yorku.ca/commeng/mandate).

12.   Presentations were provided by members of the York community in the three areas of engaged teaching, research and service. A draft Report was prepared in August 2009, and throughout the fall of 2009, a further round of consultations were done with the aim of presenting the Final Report with recommendations to Mamdouh Shoukri, President and Vice-Chancellor in the new year 2010.

III.   Relevant Literature

i.   *Introduction*

13.   An increasing number of universities have started to explore and integrate the concept of "engagement" into their institutional missions. In many institutions, engagement most commonly takes the form of outreach and community partnership activities, often with communities adjacent to the university campus. Throughout the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia, post-secondary institutions are re-imagining themselves as "engaged" institutions, and in some countries, this has been the catalyst for a expanded conceptualization of engagement and a renewed dialogue about the role of higher education in civic society (Garlick and Langworthy, 2008; Maurrasse, 2001; Watson, 2008).

14.   The purpose of this review is to examine recent academic literature on the concept of engagement in higher education to frame the *Task Force Report on Community Engagement* and to inform the recommendations. The review aims to explore several key questions. How is 'engagement' defined and institutionalized within post-secondary contexts? What purpose does engagement serve as it relates to the traditional activities of universities (e.g. teaching, research and service) and beyond the university? And finally, what approaches and/or elements are commonly associated with leading engaged universities?

15.   The term 'engaged university' has often been credited to Russell Edgerton, Past-President of the American Association of Higher Education. Throughout the 1990s, other prominent leaders in higher education, most notably Ernest Boyer, referred to the 'scholarship of engagement' – a concept arising from his earlier work *Scholarship Reconsidered* which challenged universities to pursue a civic purpose and to develop students as citizens for the common good (Boyer, 1990; Hartley et al. 2006). While the term

'engagement' may still be considered relatively new, the concept that a university should aim

to establish relationships and connections with their surrounding community or region, is not

a new idea. Throughout the 19th century, American Land-Grant Universities were established

primarily to meet the growing educational needs of rural communities and agrarian

workforces. In 1905, William Harper (inaugural University President) set forth a vision for the

University of Chicago as an urban university, a new kind of university able to adapt, respond

to and transform itself through urban influence (Harper, 1905; Zimpher et al. 2006).

ii. Methodology of Review

16. The literature chosen for this review focuses on engagement, community-university

engagement and community partnerships in higher or post-secondary education. Searches

for recent publications on these topics were conducted through ERIC database. The

literature selected includes journal articles/books and on-line reports/ papers from

universities/major philanthropic organizations published within the last ten years.

iii. Definition of Engagement

17. While several descriptors of engagement exist, the following definitions developed by

the *Committee on Institutional Co-operation – Committee on Engagement* and the *Carnegie

Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching* are most commonly used throughout the

literature:

> Engagement "is the partnership of university knowledge and
> resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich
> scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum,
> teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens;
> strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical

societal issues; and contribute to the public good" (Committee on Institutional Cooperation – Committee on Engagement, 2005)

Engagement is "the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national and global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2008).

18.   The Carnegie definition is perhaps most widely accepted given Carnegie's Classification System to recognize engaged universities with the U.S. Under the Carnegie system, universities interested in national recognition submit applications and are assessed based on established criteria. Institutions are able to apply based on their curriculum and/or outreach & partnerships.   In January 2010, the Carnegie Foundation announced a long-term partnership with the New England Resource Center for Higher Education to continue the engagement classification program, signalling continued and growing interest in this area (Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, 2010). A similar initiative is underway through the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance to develop a common definition and benchmarking framework to support Australian universities and their engagement with local and regional communities (Garlick and Langworthy, 2008).   At present, a common definition or set of recognition criteria has not been established across Canadian universities.

19.   Reciprocity or 'mutual benefit' frequently appear as key descriptors within definitions of community partnership and engagement (Committee on Institutional Cooperation – Committee on Engagement, 2005; Maurrasse, 2001; Weerst and Sandmann, 2008). The literature highlights the importance of reciprocity and mutual benefit possibly in recognition of the inherent imbalance of power that often exists between universities (perceived to be well-

resourced and privileged) and neighbouring communities (often more impoverished), the negative and historical image of universities as inaccessible "ivory towers" or the negative experiences that communities may have had with researchers whose interests in communities were limited to data collection (Weerts and Sandmann, 2008). Weerts and Sandmann (2008) describe engagement as a "two-way approach" that moves away from the model of the university as sole expert towards a more collaborative model of creating and sharing knowledge in mutually beneficial ways.

iv. Engagement in Action

20. Curricular engagement activities encompass experiential/community-based learning (and may also include internships, co-op placements, community service learning, simulations, etc.) and civics education. Outreach activities often support increased access to post-secondary education among local, regional and international communities as well as special populations that face barriers. Partnership activities include collaborative research, partnerships with other education partners (K-12 schools, colleges, international universities), participation of university faculty/units in local/regional committees/initiatives, resource sharing, community-capacity building, etc.

21. In Australia, university engagement is primarily focussed around co-operative/service learning, curricular design to meet local needs (e.g. workforce), and integration of civics/democracy in university curriculum. More recently, Australian universities have started to demonstrate interest in engaged research, private sector partnerships, educational/schools partnerships, economic engagement and citizenship (Winter et al, 2006).

22. Schools-university collaboration is the most commonly documented partnership in the literature on community university collaboration. The Partnerships for College Access and

Success (PCAS) is an initiative of the Lumina Foundation that aims to improve access to post-secondary education across eight American cities through partnerships between local "university-schools-community" organizations. The University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education also has a successful model of schools-university partnership with the local school district to support a public lab school and engage students/faculty in local schools and school clusters. Finally, *Music Alive* is a partnership between university music-education students/faculty and Mexican-American migrant farm communities to provide culturally-representative music to the children of migrant farm workers. Partnerships between K-12 schools and universities aimed at improving public education and improving postsecondary access continue to grow (Collins et al. 2009; Soto et al., 2009). Universities recognize, through these K-12 partnerships, that university students are often more privileged in comparison to the children/youth residing in the surrounding school district.   The involvement of university students in local volunteer/community partnership initiatives also becomes an extension of the university's social justice or civic mission and provides opportunities for students to gain practical skills (Soto et al, 2009).

23.   While many university engagement activities (particularly partnerships) may focus on the surrounding campus community, a growing number of universities are envisioning engagement with a broader geographic scope. San Francisco State University (SFSU) has been undergoing an evolution to redefine itself as a 'metropolitan university.' SFSU's Urban Institute, in collaboration with city departments and local resident groups, has been involved in a wide range of interdisciplinary neighbourhood-based projects throughout the city. SFSU also acts as an incubator and convenes discussions among academics, community activists and municipal planners/policy makers on urban policy issues (Maurasse, 2001).   Levin, past President of Yale University, calls upon urban universities to do more than individual acts of

volunteerism and participate as "institutional citizens" and "help cities become what we hope our campuses are – places where human potential can be fully realized" (2003:98)

v.   Benefits of Engagement

24.   Most of the current literature on engagement does not focus on the empirical evaluation of the impacts and outcomes of engagement and as such there is a growing recognition of the need for more qualitative and quantitative research. However, the Committee on Institutional Cooperation – Committee on Engagement (2005) has documented several scholarly outcomes and community partner benefits related to teaching, research and service initiatives. Selected highlights include the following:

- Morgridge Center for Public Service Learning (University of Wisconsin-Madison) assisted the School of Ecology in providing more experiential education learning opportunities to its students. Twelve percent of the School's courses now include service-learning or community-based research components
- Michigan State University's 'Design Day' brings together mechanical engineering students/faculty and manufacturing partners to develop innovative medical assistive devices for persons with disabilities. This specific community-university initiative was named as one of the reasons why Michigan State University's engineering program was externally ranked as one of the country's best university programs. The initiative has also benefited the community by introducing over 4200 middle and secondary students to engineering and resulted in numerous innovations within the local manufacturing sector.
- Ohio State University's Wonders of our World improves science education by training teachers, local scientists, parents, and undergraduate students to introduce interesting hands-on science learning to elementary students. In addition to enhancing the profile of the university among the broader community, participating schools have seen their Ohio 4th Grade Science Proficiency tests increase by 20-40%.

25.   Positive correlations between institutional commitment to outreach/engagement and increased research funding increased legislative support for higher education and new opportunities for revenue streams (Blanton, 2007; Weerts and Ronca, 2006; Weerts and Hudson, 2009), in turn, strengthening the institutional commitment to engagement. Although more research is needed, the literature also identifies a broad range of potential benefits for students, faculty and the institution. For students, opportunities such as community-based learning and experiential education promote problem-solving, informed practice, critical analysis, independent thought and communication skills (Anyon and Fernandez, 2007; Buys and Bursnall, 2007; Ostrander, 2004). For faculty members, community partnerships have the potential to generate new knowledge/ innovative research and improve and/or re-energize teaching (Buys and Bursnall, 2007; Strategy Group on Civic and Academic Achievement, 2005). Finally for institutions, engagement enhances international appeal, expands recruitment reach, improves student retention and provides opportunities for new revenue streams (Maurrasse, 2001; Strategy Group on Civic and Academic Achievement, 2005).

vi.   The Civic Role of Universities – the Case for Engagement

As the university community (including faculty, senior administration, alumni and students) increasingly embraces partnership and collaboration in its core values, the conversation on the civic responsibility of universities has expanded. In the 1990s, the NASULCG Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities brought together past and present university presidents to examine the capacity of higher education to respond to needs of modern society. The Commission subsequently called upon public universities "to renew their commitment to society and to redesign their teaching, research, service and

extension, if appropriate, functions to become more productively involved with their communities within the context of the institutional mission and faculty reward structures" (Community on Institutional Cooperation – Committee on Engagement, 2005, p. 2).

26.   Networks such as Campus Compact (which includes membership of over 500 American post-secondary institutions with interest in engagement and service-learning) have also called for a "recommitment of higher education to its civic purpose" (Campus Compact – Presidential Leadership Declaration on Civic Responsibility of Higher Education, 1999). Similarly the Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education (2005), led by Tufts University (France), now includes over 100 university/college signatories committing their institutions to educating for social responsibility and civic engagement.   The National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good (University of Michigan) continues with its mandate to "significantly increase awareness, understanding, commitment, and action relative to the public service role of higher education in the United States" (National Forum website). And in 2005, the University of California-Berkeley (a university with a long history of community partnerships) convened a university-wide symposium on civic and academic engagement resulting in its Report/Recommendations for Promoting Civic Engagement at the University of California.

27.   The institutional understanding of engagement also appears to be expanding from engagement originally thought about as predominantly outreach/partnership activities to include curricular and research activities and now to a re-articulation and re-envisioning of the civic role of universities and higher education. Ostrander (2004) sees the civic engagement role of universities rooted in preparing students as citizens in the modern world (e.g. service learning), supporting democracy through community building and impactful scholarship/research. Saltmarsh and Gelman (2006) describe the imperative to renew the civic purpose of higher education parallel to the mission imperative (historically grounded in

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Dewey's concept of education as democracy building), pedagogical imperative (new ways of teaching/learning) and epistemological imperative (new scholarship/knowledge).

vii.   Institutionalizing Engagement

28.   The literature consistently identifies common elements of highly engaged universities. These include engagement as core value/mission alignment, visible and strong leadership, faculty engagement/rewards, marketing/communications, resource allocation and strategic coordination (Buys and Bursnall 2007; Driscoll, 2009; Gillian, 2006; Maurrasse, 2001; Soto et al. 2009; Weerts and Sandmann, 2008). These elements are particularly well demonstrated among American universities with international and public profiles as engaged universities (e.g. Michigan State University, University of Pennsylvania, University of California Berkeley, California State University, University of Minnesota) and it may be interpreted that these common elements have contributed significantly to the institution's capacity to implement, sustain and publicly articulate its engagement values and activities.

29.   For many institutions, institutionalizing engagement includes a reconfirmation or realignment of engagement in congruence with the university's mission/core values. For universities with missions grounded historically in access, social justice or service, the relationship to engagement may be inherently more obvious and thus easier to embrace. For example, Nancy Zimpher (Chancellor Emerita) describes the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's experience of institutionalizing engagement as a "mission-driven strategy to achieve institutional alignment and excellence" implemented over a five year period resulting in "harmonious integration of all the different components of the university so that they increasingly functioned in ways likely to help achieve the university's primary mission" (Zimpher et al., 2006, p. viii). Similarly, the University of Minnesota's Ten Point Plan for

Advancing and Institutionalizing Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota (2009) positions engagement as an institutional priority in line with the university's overall goals.

30.	Among urban research universities, Gillian (2006) notes that engagement is more likely if the university president or chancellor is supportive, there is a strategic and central locus of coordination headed by a visible senior administrator; and strong connection to research activities. However, despite strong championing of engagement by senior administration, the process should not be limited to a top-down approach. Rather, engagement agendas, priorities and opportunities should be identified through ongoing community consultation and collaboration (Driscoll, 2009; Sandmann and Plater, 2009; Zimpher et al. 2006).

31.	The literature also highlights an increasing trend for universities to establish central units or an office to support and/or co-ordinate engagement efforts. Campus Compact's survey of member universities and colleges indicated that 80% of its member institutions had an office that supports community service and/or service learning (Campus Compact, 2003). Weerts and Sandmann's (2008) study of community engagement at research universities identified challenges faced by external community partners and ultimately led the researchers to recommend that large, research universities as part of their engagement strategies create centralized structures to facilitate community partnership access to the university and to serve as a central clearinghouse of information and resources (p. 20). Deans, directors of research/policy units or schools and senior faculty also played important leadership roles both within the university and externally in major engagement initiatives (Weerts and Sandmann, 2008).

IV.   What We Heard

i.   *What is a community engaged university?*

32.   Faculties and other divisions in the University were asked to submit information on their community engagement activities in the areas of teaching and research and an *Inventory of Community Engagement* was prepared to highlight for the Task Force examples of community engagement and the diversity of partners across all sectors in the community who collaborate with York. The Inventory (www.yorku.ca/uecr/inventory) continues to be updated but it is not yet comprehensive (e.g., there are community research and service activities not yet captured). It was telling however how few of the activities were actually familiar or known by members of the Task Force and, to some extent, within the University community. The limited profile of the depth and breadth of current engagement activities signaled both the value of comprising the York Inventory and the need for more coordinated approaches to profile engagement activities and to support ongoing internal communication and information sharing.

33.   Three important issues were identified by the Task Force in relation to this initial question:

1) the value of reaching some consensus at an institutional level on definitions – what we mean by "community", "collaboration" and "community engagement" (as well as other related terms such as community based learning and community based research);

2) the need for principles of community engagement to help clarify what activities it encompasses (and prioritize requests that York receives from the community); and;

3) what might York do to better promote its activities both internally and externally.

34.   There was considerable commentary on the issue of definition both by the Task Force

and during the consultation phases that addressed the types of engagement that might be

included under the term of 'community engagement' as well as the university's role and/or

ability to respond to community expectations. Some of our colleagues identified strongly with

community engagement as educational and research partnerships with local 'not for profit'

organizations for the purpose of social advocacy. Concern was expressed that this specific

type of partnership might become secondary to partnerships with the corporate sector

especially in a context of increasing accountability for knowledge mobilization and limited

research revenue from public sources of funding (e.g., Tri-Council). Others however maintain

that community engagement is about the role that universities play in educating students to

be democratic citizenships, and that universities necessarily must extend their outreach

across sectors and globally in order to prepare students for the modern world. It will likely be

difficult to formulate a definition of engagement that satisfies everyone but too broad of a

definition risks lacking focus. It is nevertheless important to say what we mean by community

engagement. The Task Force coalesced around the view that the public good needed to be

broadly defined, and able to incorporate a diverse range of partners, in order to more

squarely align with York's Mission statement, and reflect the interdisciplinary, collaborative

approach required to address global concerns (consider climate control and economic

sustainability as examples). A potential draft statement on community engagement was

proposed:

> **York University's Statement on Community Engagement (Proposed)**
>
> *York University strives to be a recognized and leading community engaged university. York University values the diversity of knowledge and expertise within communities and among its many cross-sectoral partners. As an engaged university, York is committed to*

fostering and sustaining community-university collaborations for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources that address pertinent societal issues, build community capacity, enhance learning and discovery, strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility, and prepare educated, engaged citizens.

ii.   *What purpose does community-university engagement serve?*

35.   York University is situated in a political, social, economic and cultural milieu that calls upon it to be an active and responsive agent of public good. Strategic partnerships and engagement facilitate collaboration with community, private, public and non-profit partners in a reciprocal context with the aim of addressing common areas of concern or interest, strengthening our communities, and supporting academic excellence, the student experience, and innovative research. Students develop critical inquiry, interdisciplinary perspectives and emerge as engaged and informed citizens.

36.   Significantly, a commitment to engagement also aligns with York's sustainability mandate and commitments. York researchers, Faculties (including Schulich, Osgoode and the Faculty of Environmental Studies) and the University as a whole have been recognized for leadership in sustainability. Commitment to engagement could provide a catalyst for the creation of a truly sustainable campus – one that harnesses its expertise to advance its local and global responsibilities to protect and enhance the health and well-being of humans and ecosystems by focusing on climate change, sustainable development, and sustainable communities.

37.   Adopting the principle of university engagement would introduce a new chapter in the story of York's ongoing commitment to social justice. It would recognize the potential for engagement to be a tool for positive social change and re-affirm the potential role that universities play as active agents.   It would reflect the view that integrating teaching and research with the world outside the university would enhance the quality of the student

experience, help students become more responsible and engaged citizens, and maximize the benefits of scholarship and discovery for local communities, the region, the province, Canada and the international community.

38.   The Vice-President Research and Innovation's presentation to the Task Force on July 8th, 2009, provides a concise summary of the primary purposes served by community-university engagement as identified by the Task Force:

- Improving access to post-secondary education

- Enhancing student learning/curriculum through the integration of theory and practice

- Supporting community outreach including volunteerism

- Leveraging shared resources

- Building community capacity including sustainability, economic development and civic engagement

- Enhancing research partnerships, innovation and knowledge exchange (that makes us more globally competitive).

   iii.   ***Moving forward, how might York University become and sustain its future as a leading community engaged university that seeks to work collaboratively and advance the public good?***

39.   The Task Force finds that York University is uniquely well-positioned to become a leading community engaged university. Community engagement activities at York University are broad and diverse in scope, discipline, purpose and geography. At present, the University has over 100 pan-university examples of community-university partnerships that include collaborative research, experiential education, community outreach/service, and community capacity building initiatives. The University's Mission also recognizes its unique and advantaged position in a dynamic, metropolitan and multicultural urban environment.

The University's founding principles uphold values of social justice, accessible education, inter-disciplinary and innovative approaches. Its history and mandate as a socially responsive institution along with its current range of engagement activities creates a unique opportunity for York University to emerge as a national and international leader in community-university engagement.

40.   If York were to embrace community engagement as a core value, it would join the ranks of a growing number of universities worldwide that have identified engagement as a key commitment. At the same time, however, while many Canadian universities have relevant initiatives (e.g., CSL, CBL, internships/co-op, collaborative research partnerships) there is not the same infrastructure as exists in the United States and Australia where there are consortiums of engaged universities and formal recognition. While a great deal may be learned from observing international trends and consortiums, there is also a need to initiate our own national dialogue. Given York's past and current engagement efforts and York's willingness to engage in a dialogue about community engagement through the Task Force process, the Task Force sees a unique opportunity for York to take leadership in creating a consortium of engaged Canadian universities with the potential for a more far-reaching impact locally, regionally, and globally.

V.   Recommendations

41.   In formulating a set of recommendations for York to distinguish itself as an engaged university, the Task Force reviewed the original Terms of Reference. The recommendations outlined below speak directly to the issues and outline some possible next steps. The Task Force thinks it important to emphasize that while it has offered a range of recommendations for consideration, further consultation is necessary among its members and with community partners to assess their potential.

i.   *Principles*

42.   The Task Force recommends that engagement activities undertaken by York University should be guided by six principles:

- *Focus on community issues.* There is an appreciation that activities conducted at York must be consistent with the mission and priorities of the institution. At the same time, however, engagement needs to be reciprocal. Community-university collaborations including but not limited to research, service learning, teaching/training and outreach, should therefore be primarily guided by and responsive to issues identified by and within communities. While we are necessarily engaged in the global arena, York should ensure that it pays specific attention to local concerns.

- *Mutual benefit.* Activities undertaken should have clear and mutual benefits for all parties. For the community, activities undertaken may meet current and emerging community issues, support community capacity building among

community residents, groups and organizations, increase educational attainment, and support the evaluation of community-led initiatives. For the University, activities undertaken may support research, enrich the student experience, support recruitment of prospective students, enhance the profile of the University, etc. Efforts should be made to ensure that knowledge and expertise gained through such collaboration enhances local capacity and supports the public good.

- *Shared knowledge and expertise.* The Task Force emphasized the need to ask who was framing the questions of engagement, and the importance of recognizing the knowledge and expertise of all partners. Universities contribute empirical knowledge and make an important contribution to building research capacity in the community and testing assumptions. At the same, however, the University is not the sole generator or transmitter of knowledge. Community partners bring valuable knowledge and expertise often based on years of practical experience. Community-university collaboration should value the distinct strengths that each partner brings and pay special attention to ensure that concerns for collaboration are identified and framed by all partners. It is necessary within this framework to be aware of the power dynamics among the participants and how they shape university-community relationships.

- *Study and Evaluation.* The outcomes and processes of collaboration should be studied and evaluated for their potential impacts both at the community-level and within the university and offer valuable insights for future collaborations. Acknowledging and learning from the dissonance are valuable tools in developing stronger partnerships and best practices for collaboration.

- *Transparency and accountability*. As a public and democratic institution, the University has a responsibility to ensure that community-university partnerships are developed and managed in a manner that is open, transparent and accountable to the community, University and the broader public.

- *Transformation*. The process of engagement has the potential to generate important lessons and knowledge that encourages and results in a re-examination of existing or traditional structures within the University, among post-secondary institutions and/or within communities. There should be a continual evaluation of the impact of our partnerships and engagement both on the community and on us. At the same time, there should be room for transactional engagement (e.g. a group seeking space for a public lecture) as well as transformational engagement.

ii.   *Embedding community engagement within the University*

43.   Institutionalizing engagement occurs in two stages – first conceptual and then operational – but it should be approached with intentionality. York has already demonstrated its commitment to engagement through the many activities and programs that it supports. It has furthered that commitment through a willingness to grapple with what it means to be an engaged university through the establishment of the Task Force on Community Engagement and more recently as the focus of one of the Green Papers that are informing the development of the Provostial White Paper and thus the future of York. If the University sees education as a tool for social change and developing democratic citizenship, then an

engaged University also looks at its own business and operational practices to see how it can be more democratic and support social and community change.

44.   The Green Paper Working Group on Community Engagement speaks to the important issue of "being recognized as a good neighbour" by our closest neighbors. At the same time, a heightened emphasis on engagement carries corresponding demands for identifying appropriate levels of support, evaluation criteria, and for responding effectively to the different needs and priorities of the multiple stakeholders who share common concerns.

45.   The University's community engagement activities are numerous and there is a general sense of institutional readiness to support community engagement. At the same time, there are inconsistencies/ unevenness throughout the University both in what is being done and how engagement is implemented. To achieve meaningful and sustainable engagement, and enhance transparency and consistency across the University, engagement should be institutionalized and firmly embedded as a core tenet of the University's Academic Plan, resource planning processes and future strategic directions.   By institutionalizing engagement within and across the University, there is improved coordination and evaluation of community-engagement activities, greater assurance that engagement activities align with academic priorities and the opportunity to transform the culture of the university. An engaged University has the potential to become an active partner and agent in building a civic society while providing direct benefits and opportunities for students and faculty. The Task Force had discussed that a next step might be a broader consultation phase on the recommendations in the Report and in particular on engagement as a core feature of the University's Academic Plan.[1] As previously stated, this next step has already begun in that the theme of engagement has been integrated into the White Paper process initiated by the President and

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[1] As one Task Force member said, "Detailed and careful planning is critical. We need to set real, achievable and measurable goals over the next 5 years."

led by the VPA/Provost. As the White Paper will provide a renewed strategic vision describing where York University wants to be ten to fifteen years from now, the Task Force believes that this is the best possible outcome to ensure a consultative process about the potential for the institutionalization of engagement in the next University Academic Plan.

46. There was discussion about the relationship between community engagement, accessibility, and life-long learning. York has many examples of community-university partnerships that facilitate access to post-secondary education including, for example, the Women's Studies Bridging Program, the bridging programs for Internationally Educated Professionals (i.e., in Nursing, Business and IT), the Faculty of Education's Westview Partnership and the new Transition Year Program (TYP). These transformational potential of these initiatives, particularly for communities and the students involved, need to be documented and recognized. York's success in these areas and the significant contribution that these programs make both locally and internationally is also thought to enhance York's reputation. The Task Force recommends that these programs, as well as the potential for further related initiatives, might be facilitated by a coordinating council.

47. There are also a growing number of local and regional initiatives led by external networks/organizations that support access to post-secondary education or youth education attainment. In some instances, York is a partner or member (e.g. United Way Community of Practice on Youth Educational Attainment, Jane-Finch Caring Village's Promoting Excellence Program) and in other instances these external initiatives serve as "feeder" programs into York's existing access programs (e.g. Jane-Finch Women Moving Forward, City of Toronto youth employment programs) . York should explore feasibility of establishing strategic scaffolding partnerships with external programs that have the potential to connect with or enhance York access initiatives.

48.   Related to the above suggestions is the recommendation that York extend the above

initiatives by reviewing the relationship between *community engagement and continuing

education.* There is educational research that shows that community-engaged continuing

education can meet the learning needs of diverse learner communities (e.g. newcomers,

internationally-trained professionals, medical devices sector), become a catalyst for both

community based learning and research while producing revenue for the institution that can

be reinvested into other engagement activities.

49.   The successful embodiment of engagement as a defining characteristic of the University

will require the support of the senior administration but at the same time it is important to

remember that engagement occurs on the ground and a "bottom up" approach is therefore

critical. The Task Force recommends that faculty, students and staff be encouraged to

participate in community engagement activities and programs. It is equally important to

explore and implement the means to facilitate participation on the part of community

members and organizations.

50.   Students need to have easy access to opportunities including involvement in community

research projects (CBR), community service learning, and volunteerism.

51.   Finally, the Task Force emphasized the importance of ensuring that engagement

activities were embedded in the teaching, research and service activities of the University in

order to ensure the sustainability of our collaborations with partners, enhance the quality of

the engagement, and to provide a basis upon which to evaluate our participation.

iii. *Promising practices for increasing our capacity for community engagement*

52. Based on the consultations, the Task Force recommends that opportunities be created to share information about promising practices for engaged learning (e.g. community based learning), research (e.g. community based research) and service (e.g. the tax clinic) involving consultation between the different divisions of the University (e.g., Academic, Students and Research). In addition, opportunities for faculty development and support need to be a priority. The Centre for the Support of Teaching is a resource that would be able to provide leadership and work with champions and/or students from across the faculties.

53. Develop a more coherent approach to experiential education (EE) that will bring together faculty, staff and students from across the campus to share EE strategies, curricular needs, expectations for learners, organization and support. Opportunities to combine engagement with youth leadership/development would be particularly valuable.

54. As one Task Force member eloquently phrased it, there was a strong recommendation for the need to bring the "inside onside." This point is not only about ensuring that the internal community at York has been fully consulted and endorses engagement as a core theme. It is also about appreciating that the principles of community engagement apply to the York community equally well. The Task Force recommends that this document be integrated with reports from other committees including, for example, the *Task Force on Student Life, Learning and Community*. It also relates to recommendations in the Report from the *Council on Sustainability* as university-community partnerships are essential in promoting environmental sustainability, social justice (e.g. needs of marginalized groups, providing equal resources), and sustainable academic planning.

55.   Encourage and support the development of on-going relationships between York researchers and those who rely on the university for the generation of knowledge and creative contributions.

56.   Recognize the engagement activities of faculty, students and staff

iv.   Developing strong and sustainable partnerships

57.   It is fair to say that there was a strong sentiment throughout the consultation phases of the Task Force on Community Engagement that York had a central role to play in responding to the requests for research collaboration, community capacity-building support, and educational opportunities from the diverse communities within our local regions. York University's ongoing relationship with its closest neighbour, Toronto's Jane-Finch community, remains one of its most important ones. Identified as one of the City of Toronto's thirteen priority neighbourhoods, the University has a civic responsibility to maintain close ties with the Jane-Finch community to support collaborative community-based research, improved access to post-secondary education, community-capacity building initiatives and sharing of University resources. Engagement as an agent for social change that would assist the youth in accessing university education is an important priority that should be highlighted. However, the future viability of the University and its scholarship requires that it not be limited to one geographic community. Rather, the University's activities must engage and encompass other communities where need and/or strategic opportunities exist. York Region was also identified as a strategic priority area because of: 1) its growing population (particularly newcomers/immigrants) and the need to work with local groups on addressing educational needs such as the bridging programs for internationally educated programs that include community based learning; 2) the potential risk to those communities that arise when

the development of adequate community/social infrastructure does not match the region's growth and needs; and 3) the potential to establish York University as the research university of York Region, and to build sustainable research partnerships that will facilitate technical, social, and economic innovation. The Task Force also stressed that University engagement activities, with current and new geographic communities, be conducted in a manner that recognizes the unique opportunities, strengths and dynamism residing in communities and avoid viewing communities from a 'deficits perspective.'

58.   There are opportunities to make connections with new communities and/or to deepen existing connections through local inter-agency networks and city-wide initiatives and/or tables. For example, the City of Toronto also has other priority neighbourhoods located throughout the city's northwest (e.g. New Heights, Rexdale) that could benefit from collaboration with the University, York Region also has numerous planning committees that the University could be become a partner in (e.g. Town of Markham's Diversity Plan)

59.   The University should develop a set of protocols for responding in a transparent and equitable way to requests from the community for assistance and/or access to the facilities. As it is anticipated that requests may exceed York's capacity to fulfill, the institution should use the principles of engagement as a means by which to prioritize requests. The opportunities and criteria should be easily accessible to potential community partners. At the same time, there should be room for both transactional engagement (e.g., a group seeking space for a public lecture) and transformational engagement (e.g., activities that change the social fabric of communities, make the university more accessible).

60.   While community engagement should include both private and public sector partners, the selection of partners might consider whether the organization has a proven record of social responsibility. In addition, some potential partners are non-Canadian firms that may have limited interest in or commitment to partnering in Canada. Partnership development and

management is becoming an area of its own as different organizations have different organizational cultures and/or rules of engagement. Opportunities to share information about building strong partnerships should be an emphasis. Develop and disseminate information on best practices in community engagement and outreach.

61.   There is the potential for York to build on its partnerships/relationships with other post-secondary institutions and to perhaps take a more coordinated approach to college-university collaborations that meet students' changing learning and career development pathways

62.   Ensure sustainability of existing collaborations with local schools (K-12 partnerships) and explore feasibility of expanding community-schools-university initiatives aimed at youth educational attainment. There is well documented research that supports the case for credit-based transfer programs and outreach to local schools as effective models that encourage youth from marginalized communities to see themselves as capable "learners" and imagine themselves as post-secondary students. Such collaborations, leading to increased enrolment of marginalized communities/youth in university programs, will also require the University to provide adequate social and academic supports to ensure student retention and success in post-secondary environments.

63.   Extend and/or develop the mechanisms to ensure that community partners have a voice that recognizes that there are sometimes imbalances in the resources that different partners may bring to the table. In some instances, the University may be expected to contribute at a greater level. Create opportunities for community members to come on campus including advertising events to targeted groups.

v. *Communication and Coordination*

64. The Task Force was impressed by the range of activities and surprised at how little exposure these activities had in the community. The Westview Partnership was identified as an exception and more recently the York University-TD Community Engagement Centre. The Task Force was of the unanimous view that the University's profile would be enhanced by sharing and communicating engagement successes. There is immeasurable intrinsic and extrinsic value in telling and sharing the accomplishments and lessons learned. While there is always more we could do, it is also evident that the University has a long history of engagement and that the range and depth of engagement activities are impressive. There has moreover been a concerted effort in recent years to build meaningful and sustainable partnerships with other educational institutions, the public and private sectors, as well as a collaborative research project focused specifically on the development of promising practices for community-university engagement based on an evaluation of lessons learned from previous collaboration. A communication strategy that positions engagement as one of York's key messages would increase awareness of what we are doing and may well have the impact of enhancing the overall reputation and profile of the University while raising awareness among community members about the potential to partner with York. What became evident during the consultations is that there have been lost opportunities for further collaboration because of a lack of awareness that York had relevant expertise and/or experience in an area.

65. Specific recommendations included the importance of linking the words with the activities, telling our stories and sharing our successes in making a difference.

66. Based on the literature and the consultations, the Task Force recommended that York consider the best organizational structure that might support and signal a strong commitment

to engagement across the institution. We do a lot but our efforts are fragmented. . More needs to be done, perhaps with the support of a central and visible Office of Community Engagement, to provide a point of contact for members external to the university who are interested in developing a relationship with us but who do not know how or who to contact. Such an Office might also support the development of networks, resources and information on best practices, and better promote the engagement activities of the university. It is important to remember however that the aim is to support greater connectivity among the many programs, activities and relationships that are occurring and will continue to be created across the institution so that the University will have a clear concept and coordinated organizational model for outreach and community engagement. The activities necessarily must be located in the faculties, the Organized Research Units and divisions responsible for teaching, research and service.

67.   Develop and update a user friendly web portal to support the promotion and delivery of engagement programs and activities.

68.   Develop a broad communications strategy to better inform the community, locally, regionally and internationally about our engagement activities.

69.   Informed by the presentation provided by Vice President Research and Innovation, Stan Shapson, it was recommended that there should be a much tighter coordination of community based learning and community based research (e.g. the KM initiative in the Office of VPRI) in order to leverage our resources and reputation as an engaged university. York University remains one of a few universities with knowledge mobilization units (supporting community-university collaborative research and knowledge sharing) and there are clear parallels between York's research and community engagement agendas. These include purposeful geographical outreach, potential to contribute towards a more comprehensive university, focus on strategic and measurable impacts and the desire to balance

local/international efforts. York Region offers unique and strategic opportunities for York University (e.g. demographic profile, high concentration of medical device research and development). The long-term impact and sustainability of collaborative research/knowledge mobilization is moreover contingent upon public policy. In particular, public policy investments and directions must support social and economic infrastructure which in turn strengthen the foundation for research/intellectual growth.

v.   Evaluation

70.   The Task Force emphasized the need for establishing measures of community engagement and then benchmarking our progress on an annual basis. There is *a substantial literature on engagement measure*s including, for example, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). In addition to establishing indicators of engagement, the literature also stresses the value of evaluating the impact. A very informative piece on how NSSE results have been used to assess the impact of experiential education, for example, has just been published (Peter T. Ewell, *Using NSSE to Assess and Improve Undergraduate Education, Lessons from the Field 2009*, National Survey of Student Engagement, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems). We recommend that York University develop a mechanism by which to establish measures of engagement and assess the impact of engagement activities.

71.   Include evaluation as a component of outreach programs.

72.   Develop an institutional process for collecting and reporting data on the quality and impact of engagement activities.

VI.   Summary

73.   The literature review confirms a growing and international interest among higher education institutions towards engagement. While there is no singular definition of an engaged university, definitions of engagement are generally grounded in democratic and civic principles and encompass collaboration with a diverse range of sectors, partners and disciplines. The rationale for universities to institutionalize and integrate engagement into its core activities of teaching, research and service no longer appears to be a disconnected relationship; in fact, there is a strong argument that engagement enriches and advances scholarship, academic inquiry and the student learning experience. As cited by the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (2005), engagement transforms teaching into learning, research into discovery, and service into citizenship.

74.   Community engagement therefore contributes significantly to the revitalization of higher education's civic role in a modern and changing world, building community capacity and enhancing accessibility to post-secondary education. These goals align well with York's mission and hold promise for strengthening our community partnerships, enriching learning, and extending the impact of our scholarly and creative contributions. We believe that an engaged university will improve quality of life in the community, quality in the student learning experience, research quality, and enhanced service quality.

75.   The Task Force consultation makes clear that leadership, strategic coordination, planning, and dedicated resources are key factors that will need attention. Engagement on the part of faculty members, students, community members, alumni and staff must be encouraged.

76. We close by noting that the academic literature on engagement is predominantly American and as such the majority of examples of engaged universities highlighted in the review are also American. The prevalence of American research and activity in this area is undoubtedly the result of significant investments made by major philanthropic organizations (e.g. Carnegie, Kellogg) to support engagement which have been subsequently supported by numerous policy/research centres and national networks with similar interests. There are examples of similar movements being established in Australia and the United Kingdom. In Canada, while several universities have histories and examples of engagement, engagement in higher education has not been championed at a significant public or national level. This perhaps may provide a timely and unique opportunity for York University to distinguish itself and lead the dialogue with our community partners in shaping the role of higher education in building stronger communities.

VII.   References

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