

# A Community-Based Activities Survey: Systematically Determining the Impact on and of Faculty

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## Abstract

*As a descriptive case study from Western Carolina University (WCU), this article describes the development of a measuring, monitoring, and tracking system (the WCU Community-based Activities Survey) for faculty engagement in, adoption of, and impact through community engagement practices both internal and external to their courses. This paper will outline the process for developing and refining the WCU Community-based Activities Survey and will highlight the goals and perspectives that informed the survey design, the approach to administering the survey across the institution, and approaches for generating buy-in from and recognition for faculty. Clearly, an essential element in the equation of institutionalized community engagement is the professoriate, and faculty assessment of mutually beneficial outcomes is imperative. Finally, this paper identifies the transferable lessons learned through the development, distribution, and assessment processes associated with this case and offers both the process and survey as resources to the field of community engagement and service-learning.*

This article, a descriptive case study of Western Carolina University (WCU), focuses on the development of a measuring, monitoring, and tracking system for faculty engagement in and impact through community engagement practices both internal and external to their courses. This survey is called the WCU Community-based Activities Survey. As a Carnegie Community Engaged classified university (2008, original classification; 2015, reaffirmation), the concepts, practices, and mechanisms for measuring community engagement are pervasive across the institution. These practices and mechanisms include systems for obtaining a clearer picture of the impact on the community and partners, the institution, students, and faculty. The focus of this article is not necessarily on the development of faculty in the practice of community engagement as much as it is the involvement and inclusion of faculty in the measuring, monitoring, tracking, assessing, and evaluating of the practices and impacts of community engagement work within an institution. When it comes to institutional adoption of community engagement practices, Boyer (1990) identified faculty priorities in academic pursuits (e.g., teaching, scholarship and research, service, and engagement) as being essential for producing a greater spectrum of approaches and an improved awareness and reaction to the needs of society.

An essential element in the equation of institutionalized community engagement is the professoriate (Ward 1996). Considering that an institution's faculty is such a large, productive, and integral variable of this equation, it is essential to know where and to what extent engagement is occurring across faculty members and their home departments, colleges, and whole institutions. While the practice and implementation of community-engaged pedagogies are pervasive at WCU, an organized, systematic approach for the measurement and monitoring of those practices was not customary until the 2010-2011 academic year. Since then, great strides have been made to foster a culture that values the importance of the measuring, monitoring, and tracking of community engagement specifically from a faculty perspective.

Initially, an overview of the institution's mission, vision, core values, and strategic directions as they align with the conceptualization of community engagement will be addressed. Following this, literature pertaining to motivations of faculty and the underpinnings of community engagement assessment will be discussed. The WCU case will describe the theoretical underpinnings associated with the measuring and monitoring of impact and address the process for soliciting and incentivizing faculty participation. A description of how the survey was designed and the process that was implemented at WCU will be presented and transferable recommendations will be identified. This article will address one faculty-centered approach to information collection that has helped in the following ways:

- created an evidence-based standard or baseline of faculty engagement,
- prompted the development of a recognition program for determining and sharing exemplar practices/cases,
- established a database valuable for future interdisciplinary collaboration, public relations, reporting, and storytelling, and,
- framed much of the engagement work across campus in a clearer more well-defined context.

## **Institutional Context and Framing a Community-Engaged Institution**

To begin, a clear conceptualization of what is meant by the term community engagement must be identified. Since WCU is a Carnegie community-engaged classified institution, it is appropriate to frame community engagement through the following definition from the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification description.

“Community engagement describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and 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.”

Juxtaposing this definition with the relevant components of the WCU Vision 2020 strategic plan demonstrates a clear connection between the university’s purpose, goals, and vision and the key components of community engagement being supported specifically through the Carnegie application foundational indicator of ‘Institutional Identity and Culture.’ The cornerstone of WCU’s Vision 2020 (Western Carolina University 2012, 3) strategic plan is formed by the institution’s mission and vision.

WCU Mission: To improve individual lives and enhance economic and community development in our region, state, and nation through engaged learning opportunities in our academic programs, educational outreach, research, and creative and cultural activities.

WCU Vision Statement: To be a national model for student learning and engagement that embraces its responsibilities as a regionally engaged university.

In the foundational indicator of ‘Institutional Identity and Culture,’ an institution’s mission and vision statement, strategic plan, and accreditation/reaffirmation documentation are identified as integral foundational imperatives (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching 2015). Driscoll (2014) found that of the 120 institutions classified as community engaged in 2008, 119 of them had an explicit connection between community engagement and their strategic plan. Moreover, “in most cases, community engagement represents a substantive component of the plan with descriptions of an increase/expansion/enhancement of community engagement activities; particular emphasis for community engagement such as economic development, sustainability, and education; and/or support for increased faculty development and participation in community engagement” (Driscoll 2014, 6). WCU’s strategic plan (Western Carolina University 2012) aligns with each of these descriptions (Driscoll 2014) and serves as a fertile soil for cultivating an environment conducive for community engagement (see Table 1).

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**Table 1. Aligning WCU’s Strategic Plan with Community Engagement Best Practices**

**Driscoll Descriptions**

*Community engagement represents a substantive component of the strategic plan with descriptions of...*

“... an increase/expansion/enhancement of community engagement activities;...”

“... a particular emphasis for community engagement such as economic development, sustainability, and education;...”

“... and/or support for increased faculty development and participation in community engagement...”

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**WCU Vision 2020 Strategic Plan**

Goal 1.1: Deliver high-quality academic programs designed to promote regional economic and community development.

Goal 1.3: Ensure that all programs included cross-curricula, experiential, applied, and international/global awareness opportunities for all students.

Goal 1.1: Deliver high-quality academic programs designed to promote regional economic and community development (key curricular focus areas – creative arts, education, environment, health, innovation and technology, and recreation and tourism).

Goal 3.2: Position the university as a key leader in regional economic and community development efforts.

Goal 3.3: Align internal processes and reward systems to foster external engagement.

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A clear connection between community engagement and the mission of an institution is imperative. Holland (1997, 9) recognized that many of the challenges experienced within institutions pursuing a formalized approach to community engagement were “linked to real or perceived misalignments of the campus mission and institutional actions regarding service.” These particular misperceptions, of which a lack of institutionally supported discussion and dialogue was cited as the most influential, led to confusion and “engagement anxiety,” and seemed to inhibit a more extensive and committed development of community-engaged practices across campus. Stated more explicitly, “campuses with the most success in achieving their plans are those in which the plan is congruent with a broadly understood and accepted mission, and is articulated in the language of the campus” (Campus Compact 1996, 6). Additionally, Holland (1997) characterizes the highest level of integration of the mission as when “service is seen as a central and defining characteristic” for the university. According to Driscoll (2008, 39), to be identified as a Carnegie community-engaged institution, an applicant must demonstrate that its mission communicates “that community engagement is a priority.”

The importance of campus-based support is clear, but it seems that a lesser degree of focus has been put on the influence of wider institutional systems on community engagement at member campuses. WCU is one of seventeen University of North Carolina system institutions. As a member of the UNC system, each campus is responsible for operationalizing the UNC strategic plan, “Our Time, Our Future.” This document calls for an annual engagement report and community engagement is a key focus of the strategic plan and the annual report. The primary focus of this report is to identify the myriad ways that “UNC campuses, students, and faculty are connected to and engaged with local/regional community partners via experiential courses and initiatives, research, and public service” (University of North Carolina n.d.). This report is based on data submitted annually through the UNC Economic and Community Engagement Metrics system (UNCCEM). Of particular value was the UNCCEM’s delineation between *community-based* and *community-engaged* academic learning. Simply stated, *community-based* is defined “broadly to include any type of course in which students are asked to work with community partners and/or in the community context” (Janke et al. 2013, 2). The *community-engaged* definition is explicitly aligned with the Carnegie definition presented previously. The emphasis on the measuring, monitoring, and tracking of community engagement at the UNC system-level demonstrates that it is a priority. For UNC member institutions, not only is it a priority to implement community-engaged practices, but to measure and monitor them.

These perspectives were pertinent to the value placed on the measurement and monitoring of faculty community engagement at WCU. The process of measuring and monitoring community engagement approaches has an inherent way of determining what is defined as community engagement. The mechanisms developed have a capacity for operationalizing and refining what is really meant when an institution claims to be community-engaged. We measure and monitor what matters most. In order to measure and monitor this phenomenon as an institution, what matters most must be determined and this juncture dictates when the true meaning of community engagement begins to take shape for each institution.

## **Faculty Motivation for Adoption of Community Engagement Practices**

Recently, the body of empirical research on faculty motivation for the adoption of community engagement has been framed through three lenses similar to Astin's (1993) input-environment-output (IEO) model. These modified lenses – individual factors, institutional factors, and environmental factors – are codified in this article as the individual-institutional-environmental (IIE) model (O'Meara 2013). These three factors serve as a frame for understanding the starting point for motivation and involvement of faculty in community-engaged activities. While the individual factors (e.g., gender) and environmental factors (e.g., disciplinary-based paradigms and epistemologies) are difficult or, in some cases, impossible to influence, the institutional factors (e.g., recognition/rewards) that incentivize or encourage faculty adoption of community-based activities and engagement can be heavily shaped and influenced by policy, strategic plans (mission and vision), and leadership.

If a key motivation for faculty is influenced by recognition and rewards systems (Gelmon et al. 2001), then it is important that an institution knows and understands where community engagement is occurring (and occurring well) on its campus. This approach can help promote a broader awareness of best practices, identify areas for improvement, clarify the goals and expectations of what community engagement looks like in practice (Holland 2013), and provide high-quality assessments that can support institutions' prudent investment into community engagement activities (Waters and Anderson-Lain 2014). A key factor in fostering a culture for community engagement is faculty members' perceptions of the rewards associated with this practice.

## **Approaches to Measuring and Monitoring Community Engagement within the Faculty**

There has been a clarion call for more robust and, specifically, quantitative data collection mechanisms. Mechanisms which can generate data that are comparable across institutions and that could contribute to “generalizations about practice, theory, and policy” within the field of community engagement (Waters and Anderson-Lain 2014, 90). Additionally, due to many compounding factors contributing to the understanding of community engagement and its impact, this area has consistently received greater attention over the past decade (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Contextual Examples of Various Approaches to the Measurement and Monitoring of Community Engagement**

Demonstrating Resource/Organization	Context	Citation
Carnegie Community Engagement Classification	National	Driscoll 2014
Campus Compact	National & Regional	Waters and Anderson-Lain 2014
University of North Carolina-General Administration Community & Economic Engagement Metrics	State (North Carolina)	Janke et al. 2013
Community Engagement Highlights - Western Carolina University	Institution	Farmer et al. 2014

Compare this to the concern offered by Van Note Chism, Palmer, and Price (2013, 208) that “particularly within the arena of assessing the impact of faculty development, both general faculty development studies and those on service-learning have used relatively informal methods, such as faculty satisfaction questionnaires, or have focused on issues other than authentic evidence of faculty growth and the processes that facilitate it,” and it is clear that more robust assessment mechanisms are necessary. This conclusion creates a situation that calls upon an approach that does not simply measure satisfaction of faculty in their community engagement endeavors, but seeks to include them as assessors of the impact, educational value, and personal significance associated with community engagement and its systematic measurement across campus.

Additional concern is demonstrated in a review of 121 Campus Compact member institutions’ online surveys being utilized to evaluate service-learning impacts for students, faculty, and community partners, where Waters and Anderson-Lain (2014) concluded that the concepts of “professional development” and “impact/influence of scholarship” were not found in this review of surveys. The WCU Community-based Activities Survey design can mitigate this specific gap and in conjunction apply Gelmon and others’ (2001) assessment matrix for faculty surveys (Gelmon and others’ 2001 matrix in connection with Holland’s 1997 matrix will be reviewed in the following section as integral elements/resources in the development of the WCU Community-based Activities Survey).

When it comes to measuring and monitoring community engagement, Holland (2013) offers the following pragmatic practices to consider when developing appropriate mechanisms:

- Focused – Trim and Fit to Purpose
- Reinforcement of
  - ◆ institutional goals and strategies
  - ◆ external goals and strategies
  - ◆ any plans or principles associated with engagement

- Educational and Developmental
  - ◆ reinforce best practice
  - ◆ encourage reflective practice
- Useful – Internal and External Reporting
- Linked to rewards, recognition, visibility, planning, and funding

These specific factors offered by Holland (2013), among others, have been considered in the development (and modification) of the WCU Community-based Activities Survey.

The WCU mechanism sought to “go beyond counts of participation...[or] satisfactions” (Van Note Chism, Palmer, and Price 2013, 201) and to make a connection between a specific course; the clarity in course design and connection to established community-engaged pedagogy criteria; the associated benefits to the community and students; and the level of internal, external, and professional development support provided an individual faculty member. The process, underpinnings, and decision strategies that were made to develop the WCU Community-based Activities Survey will be discussed in the next section.

In conclusion, if community engagement is to become and *remain* a part of an institution’s culture, then it is imperative that effective measuring and monitoring practices are also adopted. When it comes to this type of information there is perhaps no other constituent group than faculty with as much stock and voice in community engagement’s pervasiveness, adoption, application, and ultimately impact in practice.

## **A Case Description: Developing, Administering, and Evaluating the WCU Community-based Activities Survey**

This section outlines the process for organizing and structuring the WCU Community-based Activities Survey and demonstrates the special emphasis placed on establishing goals that informed the survey design, the approach to administering the survey across the institutions, and approaches for generating buy-in from faculty.

### **Goal of the Survey**

The overall goal of WCU’s Community-based Activities Survey project was to obtain a more complete picture of the institution’s engagement efforts in support of its vision “to be a national model for student learning and engagement that embraces its responsibilities as a regionally engaged university.” While community engagement is the highest standard of partnership, this survey sought to capture all community-based activities occurring within WCU’s faculty with the intent to determine which are classified as community-engaged. The survey results provided essential data for WCU’s 2014 Carnegie Community Engagement Re-Affirmation application and the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 UNCEM reports. The UNC system now requires its

seventeen constituent members to complete annually the UNCEM survey which assesses the UNC system's "collective progress in community engagement and economic development." Additionally, specific findings from the survey have been disseminated among both internal and external audiences to increase awareness of WCU's strong community engagement profile.

## **How the Survey Was Developed**

An interdisciplinary team composed of both faculty and administrators was charged with developing and implementing the WCU Community-based Activities Survey, analyzing the results, and sharing the findings. The team included a faculty member serving in the newly created position of provost fellow for engagement, the director of the Center for Service Learning, the director of assessment, and the associate provost of undergraduate studies. Each team member's perspectives and skill sets contributed significantly to the success of the project and serves as a powerful example of the advantages of interdisciplinary and faculty/staff collaboration. Support was provided from the Office of the Provost, the Office of Undergraduate Studies, and The Office of Assessment. The faculty fellow for engagement received either a one-course release or a stipend per semester. While the primary focus for this position initially was to lead WCU's Carnegie community engagement re-classification effort, helping create and manage the Community-based Activities Survey was part of that process.

As is good form for any research project, the team started by reviewing existing literature on measuring and monitoring community engagement. The team also identified and reviewed several other universities' surveys related to faculty community engagement. The team's next order of business was to heed the advice of Hanover Research (2011, 6) offered: "Clearly defining 'community engagement' and specifying in detail what types of activities will be accounted for is essential to accurate data gathering and reporting." This enabled the team to craft survey items that essentially underpin the conceptualization of community engagement.

The WCU Community-based Activities Survey utilized the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's definition for community engagement (highlighted previously). WCU sought to track the range of teaching/learning and scholarly activities occurring under this umbrella definition, but also wanted to identify a "gold standard" or Stage IV of community engagement specifically tied to the curriculum (see Figure 1 and the listed criteria for description of what this stage includes). At the heart of the Carnegie Foundation's definition of community engagement is the idea of mutual benefits and reciprocity for both university members and community partners. Consequently, WCU sought to measure whether faculty members believed their community-based activities were resulting in benefits for both their students and their community partners, as well as for their own scholarship and learning. Figure 1 seeks to break down each aspect of the definition of community engagement and from each individual's responses determine at what stage each of their courses align (note: a separate survey of community partners and students served to help better understand this perceived benefit).



Each faculty member received a specialized link to the survey that presented the courses they had taught during the semesters they were responding. At that point in the survey respondents were provided the opportunity to select the radio button that indicated each course’s alignment with the survey’s definition of community-based activities (e.g., for each activity where you and your students interacted in meaningful ways with community partners within the nonprofit, business, education, governmental, health-related, or other sector). If the radio button was not selected, then that indicated that the course had no integration of any community-based activities and the respondent would not have to respond to any of the follow-up course-based items. If the respondent selected the radio button, they would then complete five follow-up items that align with the stages identified in Figure 1.

To achieve this Stage IV “gold standard,” faculty members needed to:

- indicate there was a community-based activity (and identify and describe the community partnership),
- affirm and demonstrate that the activity was connected with learning outcomes,
- indicate that the student learning activity also included reflection,
- agree that the activity benefitted the community ( $\geq 5$  on 1-10 scale), and
- agree that the activity benefitted the students ( $\geq 5$  on 1-10 scale) (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. A Representation of Each Level and Corresponding Factor to the WCU Community-based Activities Survey**

Stage	Community-Based Activity	Student Reflection & Course Project	Benefit to Community Partner	Benefit to Engaged Students
I	•			
II	•	•		
III	•	•	•	
IV	•	•	•	•

For example, a nutrition professor (Dr. Smith) teaches five course sections over the semesters under review. She selects two of the courses (NUTR101 and NUTR303) as having community-based activities associated with the course experience. For both courses, Dr. Smith answers five follow-up items. In the NUTR101 course, Dr. Smith arranged for a panel of community and public health nonprofit directors to come to class and discuss the current state of affairs of nutrition in the local community. As a project in the course, the students were required to research a community nutrition-related issue, connect the concepts presented by the directors on the panel, and provide a personal critical reflection on the congruence between the two sources (Stage II). As a more intensive example, in the NUTR303 course, Dr. Smith arranged site visits to five different community and public health nonprofit organizations. She set up these partner sites before the semester began based on an explicit request from each partner. As an assignment at each site, a group of six students conducted an appreciative inquiry that resulted in an asset map of resources, opportunities, and partners associated with the partner organization. In addition to the asset map, each student group served ten documented hours at each site in order to better understand the extent

and type of work the partner organization provided in the community and completed a critical reflection assignment framed using Clayton and Day's DEAL model demonstrating the benefit to the student (Stage IV).

In addition to determining a 'gold standard' (from the data collected in the survey) for community engagement tied specifically to academic courses, the team also sought to determine the degree to which faculty members' course-based community engagement activities were tied to their scholarly productivity and professional development. Through their review of 121 Campus Compact member institutions' online surveys, this particular connection is one that Waters and Anderson-Lain (2014) identified as important, but was not currently being measured or monitored.

The Holland Matrix for Community Engagement (Holland 1997) identifies four levels of community engagement ranging from level one, low relevance to level four, full integration across seven dimensions (mission; promotion, tenure, and hiring; organization structure; student involvement; faculty involvement; community involvement; and campus publications). As a point of clarification, Holland's matrix informed WCU's survey design, but utilizes different language to describe the levels (Holland) or stages (WCU Community-based Activities Survey). Moreover, Holland's work focused on the institution as a whole while the focus of this survey is the individual professor and respective courses they teach. While all of these dimensions are important, two of these dimensions – promotion, tenure, and hiring/faculty involvement – are relevant here. To achieve level four, or full integration in the promotion, tenure, hiring category, according to the Holland matrix, "community-based research and teaching are [would be] key criteria for hiring and evaluation."

WCU adopted the Boyer (1990) model of scholarship in 2008. Since that time, the institution has continued to refine and enhance its support for scholarship across the Boyer model. WCU has an institution-wide definition of faculty scholarly work that uses community-engaged approaches and methods. This definition can be found in the faculty handbook and is included in the departmental Collegial Review Document template provided to all departments by the Office of the Provost. While departments retain flexibility in how they recognize and reward scholarly products, the faculty handbook enjoins departments to recognize and reward faculty work in multiple areas of scholarship, including the scholarship of engagement.

Given the emphasis on and support for community engaged scholarship, both in the engagement literature and in WCU policies, the team devoted a section in the survey to measuring how much support faculty were receiving, both internally and externally, to pursue community engagement scholarship. The team also sought to arrive at a baseline measure of faculty productivity in community-engaged scholarship, including the "scholarship of teaching and learning," since no institution-wide assessment of this variable had been conducted to date.

After the team was satisfied with its draft, the survey was piloted with several faculty members from across the colleges who had expertise in both survey design and

community engagement. Those faculty members provided invaluable feedback that was incorporated into the final version of the survey questionnaire which was first administered in fall 2013.

### How the Survey Was Administered

The first version of the survey was administered three times, with slight adjustments to the schedule to accommodate feedback from faculty. The first administration occurred in October 2013 and included all courses taught in the previous spring and summer semesters. The survey for the fall courses occurred at the end of the fall semester, just two months after the previous survey. The final administration of the first version was administered in June 2014 for the previous spring and early summer courses (see Table 3).

**Table 3. WCU Community-based Activities Survey Distribution Overview**

	Survey 1a	Survey 1b	Survey 1c	Survey 2a (beta version)
<b>Population Surveyed</b>	Faculty & Instructional Staff	Faculty & Instructional Staff	Faculty & Instructional Staff	Faculty & Instructional Staff
<b>Semesters Responding</b>	Spring 2013, Summer I & II 2013	Fall 2013	Spring 2014 Summer I, 2014	Summer I & II 2014, Fall 2014, Spring 2015
<b>Time of Semester Administered</b>	October 10, 2013 – November 1, 2013	December 13, 2013 – January 21, 2014	June 19, 2014 – July 11, 2014	April 13, 2015 – May 15, 2015
<b>Incentive</b>	Free coffee	Free coffee	Free coffee	STAR Project Program

In preparation for administration, a list of faculty and courses was built such that each row represented one faculty member’s courses. This data was then loaded into a Qualtrics Panel to use for distributing the survey. For the first two administrations, multiple sections of the same course were combined in an effort to simplify faculty data entry. The increased complexity and confusion created by doing this ultimately resulted in the decision to list all courses for the third administration of survey one (in the most recent administration, faculty with over twenty-five courses were contacted and asked specifically which courses they wanted listed, vastly decreasing the complexity of the survey). (For a more technical description of how the design of the Qualtrics survey was done, please contact the lead author.)

### Getting Buy-In and Inspiring People to Respond

To emphasize that the survey was an institutional priority and supported at the very highest levels of WCU’s administration, the team asked that the survey be released from both the chancellor’s and the provost’s emails with a cover letter signed by both. During the survey administration timeframe, WCU welcomed a new provost who

seized the opportunity to encourage faculty to complete the survey. The provost also asked the deans to encourage department heads to urge their respective departments to participate. Department heads then encouraged their individual faculty to complete the survey. The survey team set a goal for 100 percent of faculty to complete this survey. *This did not mean that we expected all faculty to have community engagement activities to report.* Rather, if a faculty member did not have curriculum-based community engagement activities to report, he/she simply needed to start the survey and click on the link indicating such. That constituted completing the survey. This option was provided to help distinguish between people who had no relevant activities to report versus people who simply didn't want to complete another survey.

As a minor additional incentive, a Starbuck's gift card and signed note of appreciation, sponsored by the Office of the Provost, was mailed to each respondent to the survey. This provided one tall drip coffee as a sign of appreciation from the institution (see the beta version section for a more robust demonstration of additional incentives that helped increase faculty commitment to complete the survey).

The response rates for the first two administrations were 38.9% and 40.9%, respectively, but the response rate dropped dramatically, to 20.5%, for the third administration. The poor response rate for the third administration was most likely due to it being administered during the summer when many faculty are off-campus and not monitoring campus email. This survey administration was also only open for three weeks while the first two were open for four week, and it had only two reminders while the first two had three reminders. Clearly, timing is an important consideration when administering surveys that include faculty respondents.

## **Building a Beta Version: Processing Feedback and Crafting an Improved Mechanism**

After administering the WCU Community-based Activities Survey three times, there was a substantial body of feedback that had been acquired from the survey participants. Feedback was obtained through open-ended feedback questions offered at the end of each survey administration, through constant direct feedback to the design team, and through facilitated conversations with key faculty members (e.g., the provost's Advisory Board for Academic Community Engagement, former service-learning faculty fellows, and other key constituents).

This feedback was categorized into four themes and was the focus of the beta version modifications to the survey:

1. Time commitment and survey length
2. Repetition associated with course-based partner descriptions
3. Clear incentives for faculty beyond simply tracking data, including recognition and reward
4. External-to-course community engagement by faculty

Two consistent issues emerging from the feedback from faculty was associated with time. The first issue related to the length of time it took faculty to complete the survey, particularly given the frequency of the survey. Many faculty members asked that the survey be shortened so that it would be less time consuming. The team discussed shortening the survey but ultimately determined that the data being collected was critical to the institution's community engagement profile. The team determined the survey could be offered once a year (open from mid-April through mid-May), reducing the frequency faculty are asked to complete the survey from three times to one time, while maintaining the survey's original purpose. Also, the survey was left open for five weeks instead of four, including the three weeks before final exams, final exam week, and the week after finals. In this way, faculty members were able to respond to the survey during a window that best fit their schedule. The second time-based issue faculty reported was around the repetitive nature of reporting their courses' community engagement partners, descriptions, and respective alignments which meant that many of the faculty who completed the survey and had more than one course integrating community-based activities identified that the community partners associated with their courses (read: course 1, course 2, course 3...) were typically the same, or at least similar. In this, faculty members were required to type and retype the same information 2-3 times. This issue was mitigated by adding a function to prepopulate subsequent course profiles with previously completed course profile descriptions, thereby reducing the time it took faculty to complete the survey. This was specifically valuable to those faculty members who were teaching 2+ courses with substantive community-based activities.

One of the most complex issues realized in the development of the beta version of the WCU Community-based Activities Survey was the clear connection and alignment associated with the incentivizing of faculty participation in a relevant and consistent way. For example, the simple distribution of a Starbuck's gift card or a raffle for an iPad did not seem to bring with it the cachet or intention the team wanted the survey (and its completion) to carry. The team realized that the incentive had to be something credible and seen as relevant to the work the respondents were submitting. This is how the STAR Projects concept emerged and became a key component of the beta version of the survey. STAR Projects indicate those exemplars from the faculty that specifically meet the following criteria in order to be considered: description and contact information of those involved in the project, including a mutually beneficial and collaborative community partnership; students must be clearly involved in a curricular or co-curricular manner; and intentional faculty/staff engagement and commitment must be evident. Respondents submitted their STAR Projects through 150-word project descriptions and were assessed by a committee of faculty and administrative staff. The top STAR Projects were identified across the seven 2020 Vision curricular categories of the institution (creative arts, education, environment and sustainability, healthcare, innovation and technology, recreation and tourism, and an open category) and each of the seven projects was awarded a \$500 professional development support grant in connection with their engagement projects. Each of these seven STAR Projects are to be showcased on a monthly basis on WCU website's homepage, and all seventy-eight identified projects are included within the "engagement at WCU" section of the webpage.

The survey team realized that some engaged projects were not being captured by the survey. Specifically, by design, the survey was only capturing course-related community-based activities because respondents had to select courses that included an engagement component from a drop-down menu before being prompted to enter additional information for those courses. Community-engaged activities that were taking place outside of courses were, therefore, not being reported. In order to remedy this, a section was added to the survey that allowed respondents to enter information for their non-course-based (or, external to course) community-engaged activities. Ninety-six out of 284 survey respondents reported external-to-course engagement activities when this new survey section was piloted, thus allowing a more complete institutional profile of engagement activities and also providing clear recognition of those activities. The first administration of the beta version (April – May 2015) generated an overall response rate of 33.8% (though still short of the high of 40.9%). It is hoped that after the announcement and awarding of the seven STAR Projects has been made public and the showcasing of the other seventy-one submitted projects on the engagement website, the faculty response rates to the survey will continue to increase.

Notably, through the beta version of the survey, WCU has increased its support for faculty who wish to pursue engaged scholarship and the WCU Community-based Activities Survey is now an important mechanism in supporting and advocating this work.

## **Analyzing and Applying the Data**

The data that have been collected through this process has illuminated a substantial body of information that would have otherwise been unknown to UNC-GA system administrators, WCU administrators, faculty, students, and the external community. While the focus of this article is to describe and illuminate the process associated with survey development, there were interesting data collected that provided insight into a range of areas in which the institution previously had no systematic knowledge. In particular, the number of intellectual contributions and the awards and recognition received by faculty related to their engagement activities were pleasantly surprising. Through this survey, WCU administrators learned that there were eighteen unique peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters published (or in press) by thirty-three different faculty in connection with their engagement activities. In addition, there were seventy-five presentations and sixty-seven creative works or projects. In total, over 60 percent of respondents reported scholarly productivity related to their community engagement activities. Thirty-two faculty members reported having received at least one award or recognition, with nine of those reporting having received more than one, and nine reporting receiving at least one external award or recognition at the community, state, regional, or national level. These data are rich with information that previously existed in files and databases spread throughout the university, but now has been brought to light and connected with the university's mission of engagement with the community. In sum, engaged scholarship emanates from all of WCU's colleges, runs the gamut from creative projects to technical reports to peer-reviewed publications; addresses a wide range of community engagement issues; and benefits faculty, students, and community partners.

These findings were compiled as part of a summary of WCU’s Carnegie Community Engagement Re-application and distributed in the form of a full-color booklet to all departments and to new faculty during new faculty orientation, summer 2014. With the new, beta version of the survey, the university is able to showcase STAR projects using the faculty member’s own words, from over seventy-five submitted community engagement activities. This showcase is included on the university website and summarized in a full-color brochure and, like the findings from the first survey, distributed to all departments and to new faculty during new faculty orientation, as well as to state legislators, friends of the university, alumni, and community partners. In addition to being a dynamic tracking and measuring mechanism, the WCU Community Engagement Faculty Survey is now an important mechanism for also supporting and recognizing that work.

## Lessons Learned and Next Steps

An overarching goal in this process of developing a systematic approach to monitoring and measuring community engagement from the faculty perspective was not only to seek information from faculty regarding their work, but also to educate and inform faculty of what is meant by community-based activities. Additionally, the inclusion of faculty in the measuring and monitoring of community engagement has seemed to have sparked interest across campus. The gamut of projects identified as STAR projects in conjunction with those that were submitted for consideration serve as living examples of community engagement across the disciplines. The data collected seems to have generated a common experience around the meaning of community engagement. Administration has facilitated forums where data from various student, faculty, and community engagement surveys are presented and discussed. The survey has served as a common point of discussion and is leading to a more informed understanding of our community engagement profile while creating a space for dialogue to occur. The seven potentially transferable lessons learned around *survey administration consideration and associated benefits of survey use* are as follows:

**Table 4. Selected WCU Community-based Activities Survey Considerations in Design and Benefits of Implementation**

<b>Survey Administration Considerations (the process)</b>	<b>Associated Benefits of Survey Use (the ends)</b>
Align and inform the survey with the institution’s strategic plan, mission, and vision	Created the first ever evidence-based standard or baseline regarding the extent of faculty engagement
Obtain buy-in at the action level and include key faculty and staff in the survey’s development	Prompted the development of a recognition program for determining exemplar practices/cases
Obtain buy-in at upper-administrative level from the outset	Established a database valuable for public relations, reporting, and storytelling
Frame surveys using simplified language as this can help clarify purpose and create a consistent language around complex topics (e.g., community-based activities)	Framed much of the engagement work across campus in a clearer, better defined, and more positive context

Administer the survey once a year (maximum) and leave the survey open for response for at least five weeks (minimum)	Systematic approaches of data collection, analysis, and dissemination (distribution) brought the community engagement conversation out of the margins and into an institutional-wide context
Increase response rates through appropriate rewards and recognitions, but be systematic and intentional (e.g., the beta version of the survey)	Simplified internal/external reporting processes to the UNC system (UNCCEM survey)
Disseminate high quality reports from the data collected and showcase exceptional examples through website, marketing, public relations, and other channels (respondents will want to see the outcomes)	Provided opportunity for faculty and staff to empirically see, not anecdotally imagine, the depth and breadth of the engagement profile and has helped put WCU's community-engaged efforts within a larger perspective/context

Our next steps are to continue to modify the WCU Community-based Activities Survey and administer it each year in hopes of consistently increasing response rates. The showcasing of the STAR project submissions is also an excellent way of explicitly demonstrating the great work in which a campus is engaged. Finally, the most influential next step will be when the survey is embedded into Activity Insight/Digital Measures, a faculty database for annual faculty activity and evaluation, and all input variables can be included and collected on an ongoing basis. WCU is currently on a staggered implementation plan across its six colleges with two colleges coming on board each year with the Digital Measures software over the next three years. Under these conditions the survey will not have to be distributed and open for a specific period of time because faculty will be able to simply input all of their information through the Digital Measures system. As noted previously, the measuring and monitoring of community-engaged approaches have an inherent way of determining what is considered part of the community engagement profile of an institution. The mechanisms developed have a way of operationalizing and refining what is really meant when an institution claims to be “community engaged.” This has been evident at WCU and the survey has been one of many initiatives developed in the past four years to develop a personal habit and campus culture of service, engagement, and learning.

## Conclusion

What we choose to measure matters. Intentional, collective efforts to measure faculty members' community engagement across an institution demonstrate commitment, value, support, and, perhaps most importantly, the idea that the *doing* of community engagement work is not only acceptable, but valuable. In this, the ends (measuring and monitoring) truly help justify the means (the doing of community engagement activities). The WCU Community-based Activities Survey has not solved all of the challenges associated with community engagement at WCU, nor has it answered all of the questions.



Essentially, the survey does not seek to provide all the answers; in fact, it serves as a key resource for our campus to ask more pointed, informed, and pressing questions – the types of questions that an institution would not know to ask unless it has this type of baseline information. The complexity of community engagement is consistently increasing, and the demand for informed measuring and monitoring practices and output has never been higher. Simply stated, WCU now knows better than ever before where, what, and by whom community engagement activities are occurring across the complex campus. The system is developed and there are still modifications to be made, but when it comes to obtaining faculty perspectives and documenting the gamut of their engagement activities with the community, WCU is now more informed. Being more informed is the first step to making better decisions. Better decisions lead to a wiser use of resources, and a wiser use of resources benefits everyone.

### **Additional Resources:**

- Qualtrics Survey (link): [http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/OIPE/Community-based\\_activities\\_at\\_WCU\\_Faculty\\_Survey-201405-201504.pdf](http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/OIPE/Community-based_activities_at_WCU_Faculty_Survey-201405-201504.pdf).
- STAR Projects (link): [http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/ugstudies/engagement-at-wcu/Examples\\_of\\_Engagement\\_at\\_WCU.asp](http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/ugstudies/engagement-at-wcu/Examples_of_Engagement_at_WCU.asp).
- WCU Carnegie Report (link): [http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/PDFs/WCU\\_Carnegie\\_Community\\_Engagement\\_Summary\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/PDFs/WCU_Carnegie_Community_Engagement_Summary_Report_2014.pdf).
- E-mail used to solicit response (link): [http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/OIPE/Community-based\\_activities\\_at\\_WCU\\_Faculty\\_Survey\\_Letter\\_Invitation\\_2015-04-01.pdf](http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/OIPE/Community-based_activities_at_WCU_Faculty_Survey_Letter_Invitation_2015-04-01.pdf).

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Dr. Carol Burton, a twenty-five-year veteran of higher education administration, has extensive experience in implementing and assessing institutional initiatives related to student-learning outcomes including civic literacy and liberal studies; supporting faculty engagement with the community via teaching, service, and scholarship; and academic program review. As associate provost for undergraduate studies, she has also directed WCU's reaffirmation for regional accreditation and overseen two successful applications for the university's designation as a community-engaged institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. She currently serves on the Steering Committee for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' (AASCU) Civic Learning Democracy Education initiative.

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