Community Engagement - School of Education 2017

This document presents a basic plan and policy regarding Community Engagement in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

1. Seating Community Engagement at the School of Education within the context of UKZN

Community Engagement at UKZN is stated in the mission and goals of the university:

Mission

A truly South African university that is academically excellent, innovative in research, critically engaged with society and demographically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past.

Goal 2 - Responsible Community Engagement:

To contribute through knowledge to the prosperity and sustainability of our province, and to nation-building, by connecting with and committing ourselves to the communities we serve in a manner that adds value and earns their respect, admiration and trust.

2. Localised at the School of Education

In the College of Humanities there are two Academic Leaders for Community Engagement, in the School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics and School of Education.

The underlying premise

Community engagement intersects with and is seated across teaching and learning and/or research. Every student should complete a community engagement activity during their professional development as pre-service teachers. The form could be: integrated in a module; part of a recognised organisation on campus – Edgewood Environmental forum; aligned to a business/community/municipal organisation.

Defining the Community and the nature of the engagement

The School of Education has diverse and widespread influences with communities. To grow these will enhance our community engagement, teaching and research for the School of Education community, including many KwaZulu-Natal communities, extending into the rest of South Africa. So, our community are the students, staff, community organisations, business and government sectors. The nature of the engagement will be underpinned by our needs and that of the sectors aligned to our major project – Environmental Sustainable Action AND Community Enhancement.

Tagline

In engaging with communities we ALL grow. How can we grow WITH YOU?
Operational structure
This focuses on the constitution of a committee, scheduling of meetings, administrative sectors and a time schedule.

Constitution of a committee
This will comprise of a standing and alternative representative for each cluster.

Meeting Schedule
Once a month and the date to be planned at least a week before the School Management Committee meeting. Dates to be planned at the beginning of each year.

Administrative sectors
Three administrative sectors - Innovation and possibilities; Project coordination and Events organization. The three sectors will work collaboratively.

Leadership, innovation and possibilities
This is a student focused sector.
Leadership development for the 21st Century, indicates that the university has a “social responsibility to equip the members of the society with necessary competencies, knowledge, understandings, and new skills so that they can constantly negotiate the changing nature of work, the labour force, information technologies and cultural identities of people” (Welikala, 2011, p. 4). In this regard, creativity in leadership will be promoted and practiced where students seek “creative solutions that are context-driven and innovative” (Patel, 2012, p. 474). To this end, students will be engaged in Service-related activities, using an experiential learning approach. The introduction of a Service-Learning module to be completed by every student will be explored, as well. So, business and community partners will be enlisted.

Innovation will be in two forms - learning about and enacting it. Programmes/sessions learning about innovation will be presented (details in planning). Enacting innovation concerns students as either individuals or with communities presenting their ideas/designs in collaboration with UKZN InQubate and other partners. This is for the enhancement and success of innovative entrepreneurial endeavours by students. Possibilities is linked to part-time student employment. The Community Engagement office will facilitate this, but will not be instrumental in any contractual manner between the employer and employee (student). This initiative is working in line with student funding needs.

Project coordination
Actions on campus with students and with communities will be project based, as each will have a particular focus, purpose and outcome. Also, funding will be sought for all projects and funding applications are linked to projects.
The nature of the projects will be linked to the needs of both students and communities at no cost, and this will include the following:
Student projects on campus - greening campus, exploring creative arts - music and others, radio station, literacy groups, leadership and motivation, campus newsletter;
Community-focused projects (staff and/or student participation) – school partnerships (programmes on the quality of teaching and learning, special needs education, physical fitness, literacy development – spelling bees etc., greening schools, governance and leadership, winter schools for learners and teachers); community-based organisations and businesses – this in many instances will be linked to the leadership aspects stated above where students could be engaged in sustainable developmental activities of making bricks from glass (local company), recycling initiatives, being of service in old age homes, children’s homes etc.
This is evolving and with time will be re-conceptualised and re-developed.

Events organisation
This sector will work with the other sectors and it will be entirely concerned with the planning, including the resourcing for the various activities of the Community engagement office. The creation of a database, the application of funding and the planning and communication with both staff, students and external community.

Time Schedule – Each month a special focus and designated dates for specific functions will be planned (See Appendix A for example).

Finances for operational aspects
Work undertaken will require finances, the nature of which will vary. The plan is to source funding through UKZN Foundation Community Engagement sector, NRF Community Engagement funding, business and other means.
A policy re petrol re-imbursement for staff who have conducted recognised and approved Community Engagement activities, planned and requested from the office should be approved and implemented.
Students will be asked to be of service in the office and there is one administrative staff shared with two other Academic Leaders – Teaching and Learning, and Research.

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Appendix A - Time Schedule (example)

February (Getting to Know and Finding out)

March (Conference - Sustainable Development)

April (Business leaders and community organisations)

June and July - Winter Schools