

Event Three

An online chat sponsored by the UCEA Outreach and Engagement Community of Practice on 7/25/02

Speaker Bobby Moser

Topic: The New Community of Practice Outreach and Engagement in UCEA

Facilitator

Welcome everyone. This chat session's speaker is Bobby Moser, Vice President University Outreach at Ohio State. It is a follow up to his breakfast session at the conference called "The New Community of Practice Outreach and Engagement in UCEA. I want to welcome Bobby and thank him for his willingness to participate. I also want to thank his staff and Ted for arranging this session. So with out further delay...lets begin...

Speaker-Bobby

I'm looking forward to discussion today. The on-line chat is an excellent means for continuing the dialogue that takes place annually at the Outreach Scholarship conference. By continuing this discussion on-line we can develop a community of scholars across the country, and across the disciplines, who advance the scholarship of engagement and lead the way in broader university engagement. Since the conference, we've received a number of comments about the number of disciplines involved with outreach. How is outreach viewed on your campus? Is there one unit that has primary responsibility for outreach, or is it integrated into the mission of multiple units and departments? How are you building partnerships with other units across your campus to broaden the scope of involvement in effective outreach/engagement? What ideas do you have on how we can expand the involvement in the Outreach Scholarship conference? I'm glad to be here. I've entered some introductory comments and would appreciate your comments. I'd like to hear your thoughts on the scope of involvement in engagement on; your campuses. How broadly are colleges involved, or is this an activity of one unit.

Participant J.C.

At our campus our president is an advocate. Most colleges are involved in outreach. We have an associate dean or other representative responsible for advocating outreach in each college. Recently our faculty senate has approved changes in promotion and tenure policies that will further emphasize the role of outreach for each faculty member.

Participant T.S.

We have a central outreach organization at my institution. It includes units representing international, continuing education, economic development, public service programs, and the on-campus hotel and conference center reporting to it. The challenge is that this org structure does not acknowledge outreach that is happening in the colleges, e.g., applied research, and outreach that gets defined only by the units on the outreach org chart. Thus, we work closely with the

colleges to do outreach work, but this structure inhibits our ability to count very well.

Participant W.S.

At my institution, we have Outreach with an "O" and outreach with an "o". The Outreach organization drives the "O"utreach activity but all colleges are also involved in "o"utreach. One challenge is that the colleges vary significantly in their commitment to Outreach. Some are very active and others are not. This seems tied to two issues---their natural constituencies and the leadership within the college.

Participant T.S.

The colleges are centrally involved in our outreach effort. The current challenge, in these difficult financial times, is to get a share of the faculty member's attention. Some institutions are also facing a 'return to the core' thrust that may position outreach on the outside looking in. Thus, it is incumbent to identify stimulating, professionally rewarding outreach work to insure faculty interest, attention, and rewards.

Speaker-Bobby

At Ohio State we have incorporated outreach into our academic plan, integrating it into research, teaching and service, As a result, colleges are being held accountable

Participant T.S.

Bobby: Can you say something about the measures being used to hold the various colleges accountable? Maybe an example.

Participant W.S.

What are the accountability measures used at Ohio State? What about your organization TS?

Participant M.D.

We have a similar situation here, Ted, in that WE often distinguish "little-o" or college outreach activities and "big-O" or those activities that happen within our Outreach units. However, at the college level (with the exception of our Associate Deans who understand the system quite well) faculty do not naturally differentiate between outreach and Outreach.

Speaker-Bobby

Colleges are reporting on their outreach/engagement at the request of the Provost. It is then discussed with the dean, by the provost, at each annual review. Having key leadership (deans, presidents, provosts) brings outreach/engagement to the forefront. Our new president is speaking of outreach and engagement many times as tech transfer and commercialization of research. How do you see this as outreach/engagement?

Participant S.T.

The challenge we face (other than football, of course) is in interesting faculty in working with "big O" Outreach units. From the faculty's perspective, outreach is outreach, and not infrequently, "little-o" outreach may appear to have more community impact (working directly with children in an at-risk neighborhood, for example) than the big-O variety, such as a conference.

Participant W.S.

What types of incentives are being used to stimulate participation in Outreach? Here, there is a significant faculty driven effort to incorporate Outreach activities into the Teaching, Research, and Service categories and to help faculty articulate the value of their contributions in these areas. In addition, we have the Program Innovation Fund that we use to stimulate some level of interest. This seems to have had a positive impact at higher levels of the institution. In terms of the faculty issues, however, the progress being made has not filtered down to the departments and to individual faculty. We're still working on that.

Speaker-Bobby

The grants seem to be a common incentive, and we have found success in using grants as small as \$1,000 or as large as \$20,000. But in tight budget times we need additional incentives. To measure O/E we use the same measures as you would for teaching, research and service.... but people seem to want something different to measure just outreach

Participant M.D.

Bobby---I'm curious, when you say to "measure just outreach," what does that mean? As opposed to outreach and extension?

Participant T.S.

We are all products of our experience. Thus, I'm not surprised that research-related activities are high on your President's list as part of the definition of outreach. I've just started a new position in economic development. One of my first activities is to ask different individuals from across the university to define it. I suspect we have a similar issue with O&E. For example, I include applied research in my definition of outreach. If this is acceptable, then we are already doing a significant amount of research. We need to help faculty understand that outreach may not be a new effort ... in some instances, it can be a labeling issue.

Speaker-Bobby

When we use the term outreach, we are talking about research, teaching and service that occurs beyond the campus walls. It is a process.

Participant W.S.

Tech transfer and commercialization of research happen at my institution but are only loosely connected to Outreach. We probably need to work at creating

stronger ties with those groups. We could probably create some synergy by doing that. Are these groups (tech transfer and commercialization of research) under one umbrella at Ohio State and Virginia Tech or any other institution that is involved in this chat session?

Speaker-Bobby

I agree with what the president is saying. Outreach does include the commercialization of research. I wanted to hear your thoughts. Part of the problem is we don't have a common language for outreach

Participant T.S.

Here, we have one organization that is concerned with intellectual property. However, the bigger picture of what you are describing is not centrally organized ... it seems to be happening across the campus

Speaker-Bobby

WS, tech transfer and commercialization are out of Ohio State's Office of Research, of which we are attempting to build a close working relationship.

Participant T.S.

We just recently revised our guidelines regarding faculty activity to support greater commercialization. For example, the old consulting limited faculty to one day a week. If someone wants to start a new business, and if the university wants to support it, the person may need more than one day a week. The new policy encourages this kind of activity.

Speaker-Bobby

What other policies do we need to move outreach deeper into the core of the university?

Participant T.S.

Several institutions have operationalized the definition of outreach, e.g., applied research is an outreach research activity. Is anyone aware of a parallel effort applied to engagement as a way to help define this new arena and explain it to faculty?

Speaker-Bobby

Key to this at Ohio State has been integrating outreach into teaching, research and service...the challenge is helping people understand what it means for their work. The challenge is it takes a lot of conversation, and education.

Participant M.H.

Is it a matter of policy or culture? or both?

Participant W.S.

I've heard that Purdue is very focused on making Engagement (collaborative relationships with communities) a key component of their Outreach efforts. We have not taken this step here. Some of us are trying to figure out how to best articulate the Engagement idea and how to best approach faculty. We're willing to take all of the suggestions that we can get.

Speaker-Bobby

You have to have a cultural change before you can change policy

Participant M.H.

Is there any cultural intervention to achieve this objective in a U that you know about?

Participant T.S.

I can't think of new policies to move outreach more into the core. My hunch is that we need mechanisms to find/develop more exciting, professionally stimulating, scholarship-generating projects external to our institutions and then take these opportunities to the faculty. I think these alone will move us significantly forward.

Participant J.C.

We have a number of great engagement projects that are active, however, I don't think that faculty or staff share a common definition. There is a focus on teaching scholarship here and by comparison few mechanisms for engagement activities as defined by Purdue.

Participant W.S.

This is a good point TS. Perhaps if we really worked at identifying some very good opportunities that involved Engagement, we could work to identify faculty who would find them interesting to work on. That might be a lot more productive than just trying to get faculty to indicate that they want to work on an Engagement project.

Participant J.C.

I agree that creating a focus and early successes will help all involved learn and begin to share common definitions and see common benefits.

Speaker-Bobby

For changing the culture, we need to find the informal activities that are working in our units, and formalizing them. These faculty and staff have found the systems needed to make outreach work. How do we support them?

Participant T.S.

I think identifying these activities and formalizing them represents an important first step. I'd also suggest that we need to do a much better job of tooting our

horn ... not a long suit for most universities. In short, we need a strong dose of marketing zip to our programmatic successes.

Participant J.C.

We have a new mechanism that is allowing units and colleges to work in a cross-functional format on issues that have high social impact. We are just getting started. This process identified potential theme areas and moves them forward. Many of the aspects of these larger projects are what I would define as engagement projects.

Speaker-Bobby

We are creating a culture where outreach is an accepted and valued activity. Then we identify those activities underway, and bring them to the forefront.

Participant M.H.

Yes indeed, activism is necessary.

Participant A.F.

Bobby - one of your earlier questions was regarding expansion of the Outreach Scholarship conference. The conference has obviously gained momentum nationally, and perhaps these questions about defining engagement & outreach could be part of the focus. I'm not sure if the conference attendance is large enough to support special interest groups, but certainly more faculty are attending & presenting --- and this is another way to get faculty involved with O/E.

Participant W.S.

Bobby, what efforts are you using at Ohio State to publicize the Outreach effort? We use an Outreach magazine and a faculty awards program. Are you using other approaches? What about at your organization T.S.?

Speaker-Bobby

Annette These comments are extremely helpful. Wayne, we too are using these ways to publicize. This is a very valuable tool in creating an understanding of what outreach means.

Participant T.S.

We have separate outreach and research publications. We made a run at combining them, since the research stories frequently have an outreach spin. We were trying to build an alliance and save a few bucks, but it didn't work (at least yet). Still hoping.

Speaker-Bobby

We have partnered closely with University Communications. For us it has been key to include as many units as possible in outreach so that it is integrated into the core of the university.

Participant J.C.

How are OSU or other organizations using the support of grant writing as a "hook" to involve faculty or to make faculty aware of outreach? Increasingly, the big funders are requiring outreach components in grants.

Speaker-Bobby

This can be a good excuse to bring new partners together. As much benefit sometimes comes from that initial work together....more benefit if the money comes.

Participant T.S.

The program development faculty in Continuing Education are all assigned to colleges. As part of their responsibility, they meet regularly with their counterparts from Sponsored Programs. We developed a cheat sheet for the Sponsored Programs person to give to PIs who rush in the door at 4:30 for a 5pm deadline. This sheet explains the incentives from some agencies to integrate dissemination into their proposals. In general, we have developed a much closer working relationship with Sponsored Programs, and each year submit our research dissemination conference activity to count toward the overall NSF rankings.

Participant T.S.

Bobby, as chair of the O&E COP in UCEA, I want to thank you for your support of this chat session. Good information, and it helped me to get further down the technology road.

Participant W.S.

As JC notes, we are making a concerted effort at our institution to make faculty aware of how Outreach staff can help them prepare proposal components that address the outreach requirement. We have a group of staff, all with advanced degrees, who we hope can really begin to make connections with faculty on this issue. We are giving consideration to the cheat sheet idea--really thinking about developing a web site that faculty can use in order to access information that might be useful in their proposals. Ultimately, however, we hope we can have face to face sessions with faculty so our staff can demonstrate their creativity with regard to developing outreach solutions related to research projects.

Speaker-Bobby

Thank you all for participating in this chat. Please keep this dialogue going. Many universities have addressed some of these issues we are all facing.

Facilitator Nice job, Bobby Thanks for coming everyone! Our time is up!
To logout press the logout button on the right.