A Report on McMaster’s Network for Community-Campus Partnerships
The Network at Two Years: Launching a Strategic Planning Process
JUNE 2015

McMaster University is a committed member of the greater Hamilton community and broader society and recognizes that true excellence can only be achieved when we are working together with our community partners.

Established in September 2013, the Network for Community-Campus Partnerships was created to facilitate the achievement of the University's community engagement goals by bringing together community involved representatives from across the university to move forward with strategic and coordinated action.

This report provides a summary of the Network's achievements thus far, while also suggesting work that remains to be done to further support a culture of community engagement at McMaster. It begins with an overview of the Network's mission and goals before noting broad outcomes achieved since launching in 2013. The report concludes by identifying areas still to be addressed. Overall, the goal of the report is to provide the McMaster community and our community partners with context and a foundation upon which a strategic plan for community engagement at McMaster can be developed over the remainder of 2015.

What is Community Engagement at McMaster?

Community engagement at McMaster University values the expert knowledge and passion that members of the community (from local to global) have about their communities and issues affecting them; it fosters ongoing collaboration between University and community partners on how to better understand and consider the issues identified as priorities by local and global communities. Community engagement at McMaster involves performing research, teaching and service for or with community members and partners for the public good.

McMaster’s Principles of Community Engagement*

1. Community engagement will be aligned with all facets of the mission of McMaster University.

2. The University will value collaborative endeavours such as research, teaching, service and advocacy activities with community stakeholders.

3. McMaster University will value working with the community for mutual benefit, build relationships based on reciprocity, trust and respect, and recognize global interconnectedness.

4. The University will respect that there are multiple definitions of “community” and that different disciplines/communities will experience, value and learn about community engagement differently.

5. The University will support, recognize and reward community engagement among faculty, staff, students, alumni and retirees.

* Network for Community-Campus Partnerships, Community Engagement Task Force, June 2013
Mission

McMaster University is a committed member of the greater Hamilton community and broader society and recognizes that true excellence can only be achieved when we are working together with our community partners. We are mindful of the interconnectedness of our globalized world. We value community and public engagement that is mutually beneficial, supports our academic, research, service and civic outreach missions, and collaboratively leads to meaningful outcomes and sustained actions and relationships. Regardless of the discipline, graduates of McMaster will be citizens engaged in multiple communities in multiple ways but we recognize that our relationships within the community we call home are paramount to supporting the vitality and well-being of the greater Hamilton area.

Network Functions & Goals

The Network was formed in September 2013 to provide a shared framework for the University to support its goals related to community engagement. Comprised of members from across campus, the Network was formed to limit duplication of efforts, identify synergies, and develop an understanding of McMaster’s shared expertise and interests in community engagement. The following functions were proposed to support this work:

- **Area Liaison:** Serve as Faculty/area liaison, facilitating dialogue and collaboration within and between Faculties/areas and with community members and partners.
- **Advisor:** Provide feedback on ideas and proposals, serving as a sounding board for consultation and expertise related to community engagement, while assisting in the development of strategies to operationalize the community engagement directives of the University.
- **Sponsor:** Potentially participate in formal vetting of proposals and give endorsements or allocate funding, while also sponsoring community-campus events that create opportunities to interface with the community.
- **Knowledge Broker:** Share best practices and facilitate the preservation of existing knowledge in community engagement while maintaining an awareness of activities and opportunities and sharing these with Network members and partners in order to reduce duplication of efforts.
- **Facilitator:** Facilitate collaboration and dialogue across Faculties/areas, streamline processes to facilitate integration of community engagement into academic activities, and provide a forum for dialogue about challenges, opportunities, and issues.

Though colleagues from across the University and from different communities have varying understandings of community engagement, through these functions the Network has sought to support a broad and meaningful understanding of community engagement while acknowledging and respecting differing definitions. The overall goal, the one we continue to strive towards, is to develop mutually-beneficial partnerships both in the community and across campus that lead to research, education, and service outcomes that make a positive impact on the greater good of society. Though much work still remains to be done, the Network has managed to achieve a number of positive outcomes to date.

* Network for Community-Campus Partnerships, Community Engagement Task Force, June 2013

Interested in learning more background information about the Network?

Many colleagues at McMaster and in the community contributed a great deal of time and energy towards the formation of the Network. For more background documents that capture these efforts please visit the following page on our website: http://macconnector.mcmaster.ca/macconnect/about/about-us-home
Outcomes to Date: The Foundations of a Common Framework for Community Engagement

Guided by these functions, Network members have worked closely with community and campus partners to achieve the following outcomes:

• **Formal Framework:** A Director and Coordinator role have been created to support Network activities and the broader community engagement agenda at the University. Community engagement has been added to the portfolio of the Associate Vice President Faculty.

• **Developing & Enhancing Relationships with Local Communities:** The Network has been actively involved in multiple conversations and partnerships with a broad range of communities and community partners in the Hamilton area.

• **Cross-Campus Alignment & Dialogue:** Meeting on a regular basis, two internal networks of Experiential Education Directors and Research Facilitators have the goals of sharing knowledge and opportunities across campus while also identifying campus-wide issues for consideration and action.

• **Advocating for Institutional Practices to Support Community Engagement:** The Network has played an active role in raising campus-wide issues for broader discussion in order to develop clarity and alignment of practices to support community engagement.

• **Website & Database:** To support the coordination and alignment of community engagement at McMaster, the Network’s website provides information on a variety of resources and opportunities for community involvement, while also serving as a portal for community members to contact McMaster regarding research, education, or service partnerships.

• **Undergraduate Course and Minor:** The level 2 course, Foundations of Community Engagement, will be launched in September 2015. This interdisciplinary course will serve as the launching point of a minor in community engagement that is currently under development.

• **Communications:** A variety of approaches—including meetings, newsletters, stories, and promotional materials—have been used to communicate broadly about community engagement news and opportunities, both at McMaster and in the community.

• **Ongoing Dialogue:** The Network has made a concerted effort to be responsive to feedback and ideas from campus and community partners. This open dialogue has helped to identify strengths and weaknesses, while also providing space for new opportunities and ideas to arise.

• **Learning from Others:** The Network has reached out to colleagues at a variety of universities and organizations to learn about various approaches to community-campus engagement.

• **Partnered Events:** The Network has worked hard to develop a mutually-beneficial approach to partnered events, focusing on topic-specific dialogues and broader community-campus events (see sidebar for details).
Overall, the Network has managed to achieve a number of outcomes related to its initial purpose and function, however, much still remains to be done to fully integrate a culture of community engagement into all aspects of the University.

Remaining Areas: Building on Our Efforts

Along with continued work on the outcomes listed above, additional areas to be addressed include:

- **Database**: The structure of a community engagement database to support coordination, recognition, and an understanding of our capacity was completed in Spring 2015. Filling this database with information over 2015 is a crucial next step for the Network in order to identify our current expertise and capacity, which will help in identifying priority areas of focus for community engagement going forward.

- **Recognition**: The Network is continuing to explore a variety of avenues to recognize and reward exemplars in community engagement. Building on a community engagement teaching award launched by the McMaster Students Union in 2015, the Network plans to launch additional rewards to recognize community engagement over 2015-2016 while continuing to discuss how to recognize community engaged research, teaching, and service more formally at the University.

- **Role of Network Members**: Network members serve a number of roles including communicating back to their Faculty/area, contributing to Network priority projects, and serving as an advisory group for community-engaged initiatives and proposals. Clarifying the role of membership on the Network and confirming the necessary support mechanisms for Network members in their Faculty/area is a priority.

- **Identifying Strengths & Priority Areas of Focus**: Community engagement efforts at McMaster University have been underway for many years and cover a broad range of themes and disciplines. Having a clear understanding of the University’s current strengths and areas of focus will help the University to support areas of strength in research, education, and service.

- **Alignment of Local & Global**: Whether they’re based locally or globally, research, education, or service partnerships take place in multiple communities. Improved alignment to bring colleagues and partners together across this broad spectrum will help to provide the necessary resources and supports to faculty, staff, students, and community partners regardless of whether they’re working in Hamilton or on the other side of the globe.

- **Funding**: Funding agencies are increasingly looking to support partnered approaches to research and education at local, provincial, national, and international levels. Working closely with colleagues at McMaster who coordinate and share funding opportunities will help to identify upcoming funding opportunities while also providing guidance for partners on how best to approach and develop partnership proposals.

Though the Network has already started to work towards addressing these gaps, much work still remains to be done. In order to continue the Network’s current momentum—building on successes and identifying strategies to address broader institutional challenges—the Network will be using the remainder of 2015 to develop a long-term strategic plan to align McMaster’s community engagement goals with the broader mission and vision of the University.
Next Steps: Developing a 5 Year Strategic Plan

In September 2015 the Network will be two years old. During its formative years, the Network has achieved outcomes on a broad range of the issues it was formed to address, though many areas remain to be addressed. To move forward in a coordinated effort, the Network will be using the remainder of 2015 to review these outcomes and gaps in more detail in order to develop a formal strategic plan to focus our efforts going forward. During this time we will seek feedback from campus and community partners in order to ensure we are working towards a common vision that supports a long-term approach to mutually-beneficial community-campus partnerships. Steps within this process will include:

- **Information Gathering:** We will use the summer of 2015 to input information from across campus into our new community engagement database. This information will form a foundation of knowledge about community engagement activities and capacity at McMaster and will be shared with the McMaster community and our partners in a Fall 2015 report that will contribute directly towards setting strategic directions and priorities.

- **Strategic Retreats:** As a result of broad consultation and dialogue, Network members and partners have identified a number of campus-wide issues related to community-engaged research and education that have both short- and long-term implications at McMaster. The Network will be facilitating research and education-specific retreats to raise these issues and identify action strategies to move them forward.

- **Campus and Community Dialogue:** Over the remainder of 2015, Network members will be raising our strategic planning process in a variety of contexts in order to gather a broad range of feedback and to ensure that the strategic planning process is as participatory and wide-ranging as possible.

- **Seeking Feedback & Input:** Where dialogue is not possible, the Network will be seeking feedback and input via short and straightforward online surveys that will encourage community partners, staff, faculty, and students to contribute feedback and ideas about how the Network can support their community-engaged efforts going forward.

Information and ideas gathered from each of these approaches will be summarized and shared back with our community and campus partners. This information will then be used by the Network to inform the development of a 2016-2020 strategic plan that will set clear directions and strategies to guide the future of community engagement at McMaster.

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We Want to Hear from You!

To ensure that this process is as broad ranging and collaborative as possible, we want to hear from and involve as many colleagues as possible. Yes, that means you!

Though we have worked hard to identify colleagues both on campus and in the community who are involved in campus community engagement, we will be looking to our partners and collaborators to help share information about this process with those who have not yet engaged with the Network. If you know of colleagues—from either McMaster or the broader community—who would be interested in this process but are not sure whether they’re connected with the Network, please share this document and ask them to connect with us at community@mcmaster.ca to ensure that they’re added to our contact list. Additionally, when receiving information from us in the coming weeks and months, please pass this information along to those who may be interested.

Thank You!

We know you are doing great work and we want to continue learning from you to help support this work into the future. We appreciate that for many of our colleagues this work has been taking place for many years and we want to acknowledge and recognize this reality. The collective passion for contributing to the greater good of colleagues both on and off campus, local and global, has laid an incredibly strong foundation of community-engaged research, education, and service at McMaster University. Thank you to everyone who has contributed time and energy to this work. More recently, thank you to all of those who have shared their work with us, provided feedback on our efforts, and patiently supported this cultural shift at McMaster. Our work thus far has been guided by your ideas and suggestions, and we hope to continue learning from your collective wisdom and ideas for the future of community engagement at McMaster University.
THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

The Network would like to thank the many partners from the broader community that have helped to shape our collective efforts, including:

Art Gallery of Hamilton
Bay Area Restoration Council
Beasley Neighbourhood Association
CAA South Central Ontario
City of Hamilton
City of Hamilton, Neighbourhood Action Strategy
CityStudio Vancouver
Civicplan
Cobalt Connects
Community Engaged Scholarship Institute, University of Guelph
Crown Point Community Planning Team
Davis Creek Community Planning Team
Environment Hamilton
GALA Community Planning Team
Hamilton Administrators of Volunteers
Hamilton Arts Council
Hamilton Burlington Trails Council
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce
Hamilton Community Foundation
Hamilton HIV
Hamilton Public Library
Hamilton Sustainability Professionals Network
IBI Group
Industry-Education Council of Hamilton
Jamesville Community Planning Team
Keith Community Planning Team
Laurier Centre for Community-Service Learning, Wilfrid Laurier University
Mark Preece House
McQuesten Community Planning Team
Mohawk College
Neighbourhood Campus Network
Office of Public Engagement, University of Minnesota
Raise the Hammer
Realtors Association of Hamilton-Burlington
Redeemer University College
ResearchImpact
Riverdale Community Planning Team
Rolston
Sherman Community Planning Team
Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton
Stinson Community Association
Student Open Circles
Toms & McNally Design
UrbanSolutions
Volunteer Hamilton
Wesley Urban Ministries
Workforce Planning Hamilton
YWCA Hamilton
100in1Day Hamilton

We would also like to thank our colleagues from across the McMaster community who have engaged with the Network. The McMaster community is represented on the Network by the following members:

Gord Arbeau, University Advancement • Karen Balcom, Faculty of Humanities • Kathy Ball, University Library • Sean Beaudette, Student Success Centre • Cynthia Belaskie, Research Office for Administration, Development and Support • Andrea Cole, School of Graduate Studies • Josh Dockstator, Indigenous Studies Program • Laura Harrington, FWI Project Director • Elkafi Hassini, DeGroote School of Business • Rob Heenan, Institutional Research & Analysis • Dave Heidebrecht, Network for Community-Campus Partnerships • Kim Jones, Faculty of Engineering • Kris Knorr, McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning • Lucia Lee, Graduate Students Association • John Maclachlan, Arts & Science Program • Kathleen Martin Ginis, Faculty of Science • Spencer Nestico-Semianiw, McMaster Students Union • Brittany Reifenstein, Housing and Conference Services • Sheila Sammon, Faculty of Social Sciences • Ruta Valaitis, Faculty of Health Sciences • Sherisse Webb, Research Office for Administration, Development and Support • Sarah Wojkowski, Faculty of Health Sciences • Gay Yuyitung, McMaster Industry Liaison Office

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