
The Klein-Wells Committee

Engaging Excellence

A Report Concerning Civic Engagement
at Duke University

January 15, 2010

Executive Summary

Duke University is a recognized leader among research universities in many spheres. It is in a unique position to become the recognized leader in civic engagement among research universities by capitalizing on new and longstanding programs of excellence.

In particular it should become known as a university in which

- civic engagement is explicitly linked to the core mission of the university, namely education and research
- there is faculty-centered visionary leadership for civic engagement
- civic engagement is backed by recognizable and tangible institutional commitment
- undergraduate and graduate students are offered developmental pathways to navigate civic engagement opportunities and to integrate them with their educational and research experience
- all knowledge is alert to its social sources and implications, and all social engagement has an appetite for academic reflection on its methods and outcomes
- civic engagement stands alongside interdisciplinarity and internationalization as groundbreaking ways in which Duke is modeling the future of the American research university

This is a crossroads moment for civic engagement at Duke. Duke has made civic engagement a significant part of its identity. But as yet there is no meaningful infrastructure to ensure excellence in the field. In 2007 the Duke Center for Civic Engagement was established. But the Center has yet to grow into its full potential. It remains largely a synonym for DukeEngage. Thus Duke has significant rhetoric and a nominal center. These have attracted interest. But that interest could soon lead to cynicism. It will not be clear that Duke is serious about civic engagement until it puts institutional reality around its highest social ideals.

Either Duke strives ahead in pursuit of excellence in the field, or it continues to deliver a host of programs, that, though in most cases impressive in themselves, are part of no coordinated strategy, share no common definition of civic engagement, have no common perspective or conversation about best practices, and are only loosely connected to the core missions of the university. A decisive step is needed. This report outlines what that step might involve.

Introduction

The Committee's Context

The Last Decade

Duke has long had a constellation of outstanding curricular and co-curricular programs in civic engagement, housed within numerous schools, departments and offices, and partnering with community groups locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

Previous University committees have overseen and explored civic engagement at Duke, overlapping and evolving in their efforts to provide a unified understanding of (and access to) Duke programs with service opportunities for students. In recent memory, these include:

- the Dean's Committee on Service Learning, formed in 1997 by Dean William Chafe and housed in the Kenan Institute of Ethics until 2006.
- the "Duke Community Outreach" Report by consultant Alan Peterfreund, Executive Director of SageFox Consulting, submitted to Elizabeth Kiss, Larry Moneta, and John Burness on May 6, 2004.
- the Council on Civic Engagement, formed in December 2004 under the direction of Dean Bob Thompson.
- the Big Idea Task Force in 2006, resulting in the Provost's task force report in 2007, which led to the establishment of DukeEngage and called for the creation of a Center for Civic Engagement as the umbrella for civic engagement at Duke.

Despite these efforts, it seems to have proved difficult to translate committees and reports into decisive action to provide an over-arching vision and coordination mechanism for civic engagement at Duke.

Current Levels of Civic Engagement at Duke

A conservative estimate suggests that more than 700 Duke undergraduates are actively engaged in the Durham community each semester. In addition, more than 800 students have participated in DukeEngage over its first 3 years. Large numbers of graduate and professional students are also involved in civic engagement activities, often as an integral part of their graduate/professional training. A recent alumni/ae survey suggests that 62% of Duke undergraduates participate in community service at some time during their college careers, with positive impacts on skill development and participation in service activities later in life (see Appendix A).

Recent Events

In 2007 DukeEngage was established as a signature co-curricular program, and quickly attracted high levels of undergraduate interest and off-campus attention. At the same time that DukeEngage was

established, the Duke Center for Civic Engagement (henceforth DCCE) was created. It was intended to be “the administrative umbrella organization for all undergraduate civic engagement activities at Duke.” Further, it would act as “a loose coordinating confederation of new and existing civic engagement programs,” particularly those “that connect service and learning.”

Since 2007 DukeEngage has made huge strides and has gained national prominence to match its notable success. Yet the DCCE continues to exist virtually in name only. It has successfully applied for external recognition, in the form of the Carnegie Classification and the National Corporation for Community Service Honor Roll. In July 2009 the DCCE assumed responsibility for the Durham programs of the former Community Service Center. But the DCCE’s coordinating potential remains largely dormant. Therefore, as our survey of stakeholders revealed, Duke has yet to deliver on its administrative commitment to best practices in civic engagement, despite its central vision of “knowledge in the service of society” and the prominence of DukeEngage. This suggests Duke thinks civic engagement is almost entirely about program delivery and hardly at all about strategic planning and coordination. It is a situation that cannot be allowed to continue. DukeEngage should be a dynamic passenger in a car driven by the DCCE. It cannot be allowed to drive the car. There is no single person currently charged with overseeing and leading the strategic dimension of coordination at Duke. There needs to be.

A Significant Moment

Civic engagement is not just a frequent talking point for Duke administrators and campus advocates. The majority of new student groups are focused on civic engagement; there is a new, well-resourced student coordinating group, the Duke Partnership for Service; Teach for America has become the number one destination for students upon graduation; the university is now part of Campus Compact; the Sanford School has highlighted civic engagement as a key part of its vision, and expanded the Hart Leadership Program accordingly; and the Obama administration has incorporated these themes in a new Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation.

Thus there is a critical moment of opportunity to make the DCCE the energetic, visionary center for civic engagement that was foreseen in 2007 and continues to be required. Civic engagement at Duke has an unprecedented chance to become so much more than a gesture of service or an impulse to “give something back.” This is a moment those who have striven so long and so well have yearned for: it must not be missed. Likewise the DCCE has a chance to become so much more than a synonym for DukeEngage. The abundance of civic engagement initiatives across the campus have created a deep well of students, staff and faculty who, while engaging with local and international partners, have studied, reflected, and written about how to do this well – i.e. with both excellence and ambition. In the words of Eric Mlyn, Director of DCCE/DukeEngage, in his remarks to the committee, “The work of the DCCE should be guided by a vision of civic engagement that focuses on the development of our *students* as democratic citizens and the centrality of the *communities* we serve.” This is a vision all can share.

Now is the time to develop a powerful, compelling, and coherent vision for civic engagement at Duke. The profile is high; participation is buoyant; the wisdom exists; the campus leadership

has integrated civic engagement themes into the Duke brand. If civic engagement is not given a robust academic and institutional place at Duke, disillusionment, confusion and cynicism could result. Duke cannot go on presenting itself to the world as an engaged campus while not backing that image with an infrastructure that facilitates the highest standards of operation. The consequences of doing nothing may be crystallized in the pejorative connotations of the term “window dressing:” the impact on partner communities may become negative, the intellectual development of students may become further detached from their personal development, and the attitude of the majority of the faculty toward engagement in general and DukeEngage in particular may become seriously mistrustful.

What is needed is a model for civic engagement at Duke that capitalizes on its current high and positive profile, while enhancing opportunities for coordination and sharing of knowledge, and meanwhile clarifying lines of connection and accountability. The committee recognizes that in the current economic climate it may be necessary to phase adoption of its recommendations. But the heart of what is required is *not about money*. It is about Duke’s commitment to a level of excellence in civic engagement that matches its aspirations in every other area of its curricular and co-curricular life.

Civic engagement is where the world sees what all the energy and ambition of a research university really stands for; what the passions and convictions of students, staff and faculty really amount to; what Duke’s desire to put knowledge in the service of society really means. Now is the time for Duke to put institutional reality around its highest social ideals. This report seeks to help it do so.

The Committee’s Charge

The Klein-Wells committee was charged in March 2009 by Steve Nowicki, Dean of Undergraduate Education, to refine and articulate the mission for the Duke Center for Civic Engagement (DCCE). It was commissioned to solicit ideas and recommendations from all stakeholders as to the current and future needs and potential of the DCCE.

The two key elements of the charge were:

1. To explore and propose *functions and activities* that should be incorporated directly into the mission of the DCCE.
2. To propose a model for how the work of the DCCE should be *coordinated with* (or serve as a coordinating mechanism for) *other units that support civic engagement activities* at Duke.

In addition Dean Nowicki asked the committee to consider how Duke might further enhance connections between civic engagement, service learning, and the undergraduate curriculum, and to garner and distill experience and wisdom on the most appropriate models for individual and collective engagement locally, nationally, and internationally across social and economic divides.

The Committee's Membership

The committee was composed of representative Duke stakeholders in civic engagement, as follows.

Dr. Emily Klein, co-chair; Senior Associate Dean, Professor of Geology, Nicholas School of the Environment

Rev. Dr. Sam Wells, co-chair; Dean of the Chapel and Research Professor of Christian Ethics

Todd Adams; Associate Dean of Students and Director, New Student & Family Programs, Student Affairs

Ben Dean; Trinity '11

Dr. Sherman James; Susan B. King Professor of Public Policy and Professor of Sociology; Community and Family Medicine; African and African American Studies

Dr Kimberly Jenkins; Alumna, Board Member, Chief Executive Officer of Women on the Verge Network

Rev. Abby Kocher; Community Minister, Duke Chapel, recordist

Dr. David Malone; Associate Professor of the Practice of Education, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Director of Service Learning Program, Program in Education

Rev. Dr. Sam Miglarese; Director of Community Engagement, Office of Durham and Regional Affairs

Adam Nathan; Trinity '10

Dr David Schaad; Associate Professor of the Practice and Associate Chair of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Pratt School of Engineering

Dr. Suzanne Shanahan; Associate Director, Kenan Institute for Ethics; Associate Research Professor of Sociology

The Committee's Approach

The KW Committee undertook its investigations, beginning in April 2009. It

- identified core concerns and commitments of committee members.
- met individually with key administrators, e.g. Eric Mlyn, Elaine Madison, Larry Moneta, Steve Nowicki.
- solicited submissions from 25 stakeholders (programs, schools, constituencies). These submissions furnished a wealth of data for the committee to analyze, evaluate and consider for inclusion in the report.
- synthesized and discussed issues raised by the submissions.
- identified key choice points, e.g. faculty role in civic engagement, connection between civic engagement and the curriculum, where civic engagement should be housed, centralized center vs. thousand flowers bloom approach, should a center run DukeEngage, should it run curricular programs.

- met with individuals and bodies that particularly sought to make their perspective known, including staff of Spanish Service Learning, the DukeEngage Board, the DukeEngage Staff, the Community Service Roundtable, and the DukeEngage Student Programming and Advisory Committee.
- produced and modified a draft report in consultation with senior administrators.
- submitted a final report to Dean Steve Nowicki.

Key Questions

The committee identified five key questions, as follows:

- What is civic engagement in a university setting?
- What is the campus asking for?
- What does the committee believe is fundamentally required?
- Where should the DCCE best be located in the university’s administrative structure?
- How should the DCCE itself be structured?

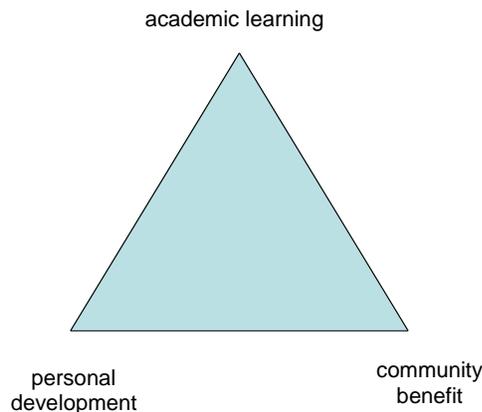
The committee’s answers to these five questions now follow.

1. What is civic engagement in a university setting?

The committee proposes the following definition for civic engagement in a university setting.

Civic engagement refers to activity that integrates academic learning, personal development and community benefit.

The various examples of civic engagement at Duke offer different emphases within the three sides of this triangle:



But for an activity of the university or its members to be described as civic engagement, all three elements must be present.

2. What is the campus asking for?

The committee's survey asked stakeholders how their efforts might benefit from a more active, centralized, civic engagement body (see Appendix B). The majority of respondents expressed the view that *improved coordination* and *enhanced visibility* would be of significant value. A number of submissions expressed this as a passionate plea:

- “We would benefit greatly from *visionary institutional leadership* that supports the principles and practices of *high quality* civic engagement programming.” (Hart Leadership)
- “We need to develop a *compelling, coherent vision* which can *solidify bonds between stakeholders* by aligning and supporting their unique missions.” (Durham and Regional Affairs)
- “We must make Duke a *listening partner*.” (Documentary Studies)
- We need the DCCE to coordinate the emergence of a *rigorous, cohesive, interdisciplinary academic culture* of civic engagement at Duke. (Student Perspectives)

Civic Engagement is not a priority for everyone at Duke. For tenure and tenure-track faculty, for example, it is seldom associated with appointment, rewards or promotion. The submissions did not, however, see Duke's aspiration for excellence in civic engagement as requiring that all or even most of the campus be actively engaged. What seems more important is that the following stakeholder aspirations are met.

- Civic engagement at Duke should be widely known and endorsed as being an *institutional priority*. This is something for which Duke is proud to be known.
- Initiatives in civic engagement should be part of a *coordinated strategy*. The “thousand flowers bloom” approach encourages energy but does not sit well with Duke's aspirations for excellence in all areas that have become institutional priorities.
- Duke's civic engagement activities should be known for embodying *best practices*. Duke should be continuously seeking, rather than assuming, an honored place in the wider academic and cultural discourse on civic engagement, service, social entrepreneurship, and social justice.
- Duke's civic engagement activities should reap profound benefits for participants and *community partners* alike. Programs that benefit only one party (e.g. student/faculty/staff) while failing to enrich or enhance the other fall short of the aspirations of civic engagement.

3. What does the committee believe is fundamentally required?

The submissions gave evidence of much very fine work, a rich and diverse array of programs, a widespread desire to embody best practices, particularly in relation to community partners, and an abiding sense of there being more energy and commitment than is currently being most deftly channeled. Having digested these reports, the committee has distilled the following seven general aspirations for the values of civic engagement.

- a. University Strategy. Duke has high ideals of service to global, national and local communities. Meanwhile it has core commitments to education and research. It needs a vision and specifically a *strategic plan for civic engagement* that integrates its noble ideals with its existing commitments.
- b. Curricular Engagement. Duke has signature programs, high participation rates, and strong institutional endorsement of civic engagement. Yet some of its most prominent programs have a relatively small impact on and relationship to the undergraduate or graduate curriculum. Duke needs to develop and emphasize ways in which *faculty may appropriately contribute to and capitalize on the range and quality of programming* already in hand.
- c. Faculty Ownership. Civic engagement is currently identified with a number of faculty, almost entirely in Professor of the Practice appointments, who make it a priority. Duke needs to find ways of encouraging a much larger number of tenured and tenure-track faculty to connect with civic engagement in appropriate ways.
- d. Student Navigation. There is enormous willingness and desire among the student body to be involved in civic engagement. Instead of students “collecting” numerous, but seemingly disconnected, civic engagement experiences, Duke needs to provide students with models and guidance in developing increasingly deep and more integrated sequences of civic experiences. Just as an academic major is much more than a random collection of courses in one department, the Duke undergraduate (and graduate) experience can be much more than a resume-building collection of service experiences.
- e. Institutional Assessment. There is much wonderful work taking place. There is not always the same degree of evaluation and assessment to ensure all of that work embodies Duke’s aspirations toward excellence. Duke needs a central body to *handle assessment requirements* and encourage best practices in civic engagement throughout the institution.
- f. Central Focus. A largely decentralized model has enabled a rich diversity of civic engagements to flourish at Duke. Yet the university aspires to make civic engagement a part of its core identity and thus to become renowned for the quality of its work in this area. It therefore needs a central body to act as a *spearhead, champion and focus*, leading to a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.
- g. Financial Resourcing. There are many dreams for civic engagement at Duke. But there are challenging economic realities. Duke thus needs to empower a group of appropriate stakeholders to work with the Development Office to fund civic engagement and ensure that the strategic vision, once articulated, becomes operational.

4. Attributes of the Director of the DCCE

The current joint Director of the DCCE and DukeEngage reports both to the Provost and to the Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. It seems logical to us that that the Director of the DCCE should continue to report to the Provost, because the Provost oversees the education and research missions of the university at undergraduate, graduate, and faculty levels, and because the Director of the DCCE needs to be at the table where strategic decisions affecting undergraduates, graduate and professional students, and faculty are made. It could be that when economic conditions are more favorable, the role of Director of the DCCE might grow into one of a Vice Provost. The Director should at least participate in the various forms of faculty governance and have access to the Development Office.

Such institutional considerations are important, but they will not automatically secure the key priority. And that priority is that civic engagement at Duke has faculty-centered visionary leadership. The DCCE Director needs to provide leadership and advocacy for the place of civic engagement in the present and future core mission of Duke University. This leadership must

- be entrusted to a scholar of sufficient standing to command the respect and trust of the faculty;
- have sufficient administrative and civic engagement experience and facility to oversee those delivering complex programs closely identified with Duke’s public profile;
- be oriented towards long-term commitments. If civic engagement is to be of genuine benefit to community partners, it must rest on the personal involvement and commitment of significant numbers the faculty – because the faculty represents those members of the university that are anticipated to hold a long-term presence at the institution. It is essential that the DCCE Director makes a priority of encouraging the faculty as a whole to see the value and significance of civic engagement at a research university;
- ensure that the diversity of programming across the university is harmonized and maximized, and that the connection between service and learning is emphasized;
- employ an active understanding and deep commitment to the key partners in civic engagement: students, faculty, staff, and the communities they serve;
- play a strategic role, and thus not be combined with the operational role of Director of DukeEngage; and
- be given the opportunity to develop a fully-fledged strategic plan based around the values articulated in this report.

5. How should the DCCE itself be structured?

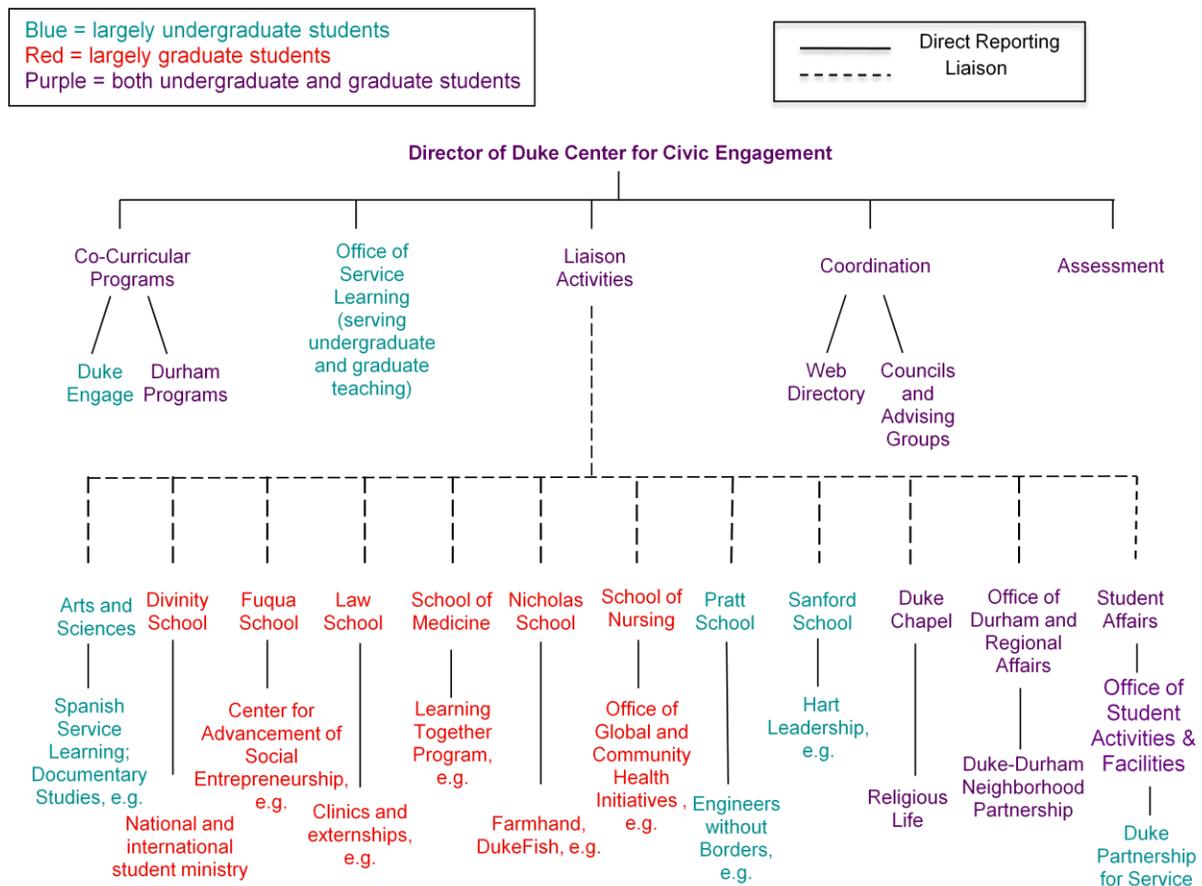
The Center should have five core functions, as noted in the chart below:

- Delivering co-curricular programs
- Delivering curricular programs (e.g. the Office of Service Learning)

- Acting as a liaison and communications hub between campus programs and between community partners and the campus
- Connecting students to programs, offering developmental pathways, advising, convening advisory panels, and stimulating reflection on best practices
- Ensuring the provision of assessment and evaluation

While fundraising is clearly required, if civic engagement is an institutional priority, fundraising would best be done centrally by the university development office.

In the chart below, the hard lines represent coordinating functions of the Director. These are diverse functions the Director should seek to bring into coherent interaction. The dotted lines represent the schools and departments where existing activities will continue to be housed and in which their primary reporting structure will continue to lie.



Functions of the Center for Civic Engagement

A full list of desired functions for the DCCE appears in Appendix C. Here the committee lists, in order, its top priorities for functions not currently in existence, based on a balance of limited

financial outlay, urgent need, likely ease of implementation, and degree to which aspects of the function are already in place.

1. **Pathways for student engagement.** Move away from the current “horizontal” model of students transitioning laterally from one service experience to another. Create several intellectually “vertical” models and pathways for those students who wish to integrate the academic, civic, intellectual, ethical, and spiritual aspects of their lives. Make these pathways known to students at matriculation and through graduate and undergraduate advising systems. Provide an advising center for students similar to the Health Professions Advisory Center.
2. **University Council.** Convene a civic engagement leadership group that meets regularly with leaders of the various civic engagement organizations on campus to coordinate activities.
3. **Faculty Engagement.** Establish a faculty advisory board specifically to oversee the DCCE, the primary goals of which would be to increase faculty participation and link civic engagement to the core research and teaching missions of the university.
4. **Visibility and Accessibility.** Articulate to Duke community and its community partners all the forms of civic engagement at Duke via a community engagement registry, searchable via the DCCE website (or using existing sites).
5. **Evaluation and Assessment.** Take the lead on evaluation and assessment of programs, including contributing to the University’s SACS assessment.
6. **External Funding.** Represent Duke externally as the central civic engagement office for grant purposes; provide assistance to other organizations seeking external funding.
7. **Community Partner Liaison.** Maintain a community partner database and inventory. Work with Office of Durham and Regional Affairs in its role as primary contact for community partners.
8. **Research Program.** Foster and promote the publication of research arising from civic engagement and research on civic engagement.

Conclusion

Duke is ideally placed to make civic engagement an integral part of its university culture and quest for excellence. It has lively programs with high participation rates. It has a host of community partners. It has a significant level of discussion about how to harmonize academic learning, personal development and community benefit.

What it needs is a leader to take these energies beyond program delivery and to coordinate the diverse energies to integrate learning, coordinate opportunities for personal development, and enhance community benefit. Such an initiative will be well placed to connect and coordinate the excellent programs that already exist to maximize their potential – a relatively low-cost venture that should save money and produce higher impact.

We believe the key is to empower a visionary leader as the Director of the DCCE to achieve these goals. This leader needs recognizable and tangible institutional commitment and resourcing. The leader then needs to articulate the aspirations of high quality civic engagement, convening and maximizing the programs already in place, facilitating the most dynamic forms of student, faculty, staff and community interaction, and becoming a champion for these activities at Duke. With these steps in place, we believe Duke will rightly become famous for the quality of its civic engagement, and turn its attractive rhetoric into genuine institutional reality.