



Proceedings of the International USR Summit 2022

# EDUCATION & ACTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

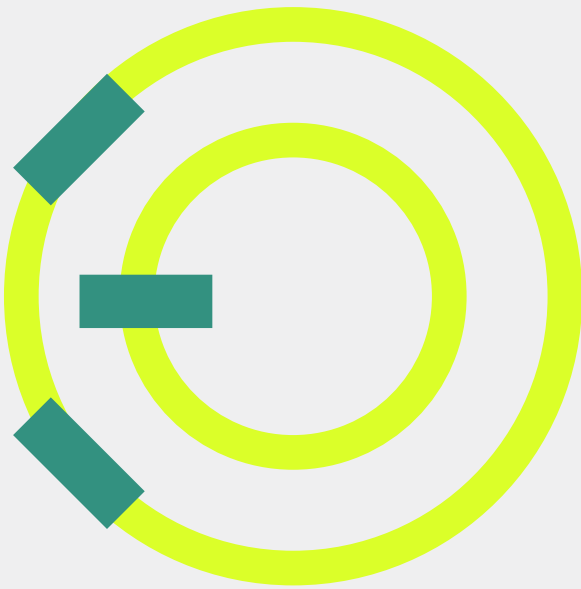
16 – 18 NOVEMBER 2022

 VIRTUAL

**Proceedings**  
of the International USR Summit 2022

Organised by:





# Proceedings

## of the International USR Summit 2022

**16 – 18 NOVEMBER 2022**  
**🌀 VIRTUAL**

Copyright ©2023  
The University Social Responsibility Network Secretariat  
Global Engagement Office  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
All rights reserved.

---

No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, transcribed, stored in a retrieval system, or translated into any language, in any form or by any means without written authorisation from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

The organisers and editors of this publication assume no responsibility or liability for the statements or opinions expressed in papers or presentations by the contributors to this Summit or Proceedings.

September 2023



## INTERNATIONAL USR SUMMIT 2022

The International USR Summit is a biennial flagship event of the University Social Responsibility Network (USRN). The Summit brings together higher education leaders, academics, students and practitioners from all continents to exchange ideas and foster partnerships among universities and to advance the global USR movement – to share insights in advancing university social responsibility, generating social impact and driving sustainable development around the world.

In 2015, the United Nations Member States defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is a universal call for action by all countries to tackle climate change, end poverty and build a more sustainable and inclusive world by 2030. Higher education plays a unique role in creating knowledge and cultivating talent. None of the 17 SDGs can be achieved without major contributions by university education and research.

This action-oriented Summit, themed “Education and Action for a Sustainable Future”, aimed to nurture and guide generations of new leaders who will drive social change, and translate innovative ideas into concrete steps for a better, inclusive and sustainable future. The Summit also provided opportunities to accelerate University Social Responsibility (USR) globally, and to share insights and innovative strategies to elevate institutions’ contributions to achieving the SDGs.



## Preface

The International USR Summit 2022, co-organised by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the University Social Responsibility Network (USRN), was held from 16 to 18 November 2022, bringing together more than 140 speakers and over 640 online participants from 78 countries/regions to exchange ideas, foster partnerships among universities and advance the global USR movement.

The Summit, themed “Education and Action for a Sustainable Future”, comprised 57 plenary and parallel sessions that delved into six sub-themes: Assessing and Reinforcing USR Impacts; Collaborative Research to Address Global Challenges; Driving Institutional Changes for USR; Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility; Elevating Sustainable Development through Regional and Global Collaboration; Social Innovation for Inclusive Communities. This Proceedings, consisting of five full papers and 12 presentations, offer supplementary materials for some of the highlighted Summit sessions. [Session recordings](#) of the full [Summit programme](#) are available for viewing separately online.

The high-quality and inspiring presentations at the International USR Summit 2022 serve as an extraordinary source of guidance for the next phase of USR movement. The Organising Committee greatly appreciates the invaluable contributions of the invited speakers, paper authors, paper reviewers, and the Summit’s supporting organisations and partners. We thank all the speakers and participants for making the USR Summit 2022 an engaging and successful event.

The University Social Responsibility Network Secretariat  
September 2023



# International USR Summit 2022 Organising Committee

## CHAIR

### **Prof. Ben Young**

- Vice President (Student and Global Affairs)  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### **Prof. Robert Hollister**

- Professor Emeritus, Tufts University
- Senior Advisor, University Social Responsibility Network

### **Dr Mark Anthony D. Abenir**

- Associate Professor, Development Studies Program  
Ateheo de Manila University

### **Prof. Zhou Zuoyu**

- Vice President  
Beijing Normal University

### **Prof. Geoffrey Q.P. Shen**

- Associate Vice President (Global Partnerships), Director of Global Engagemnet and Chair Professor of Construction Management  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

### **Prof. Faisal Azaiza**

- Dean, Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences  
University of Haifa

### **Prof. Lara Johannsdottir**

- Professor of Environment and Natural Sciences  
University of Iceland

### **Prof. Marylouise McLaws**

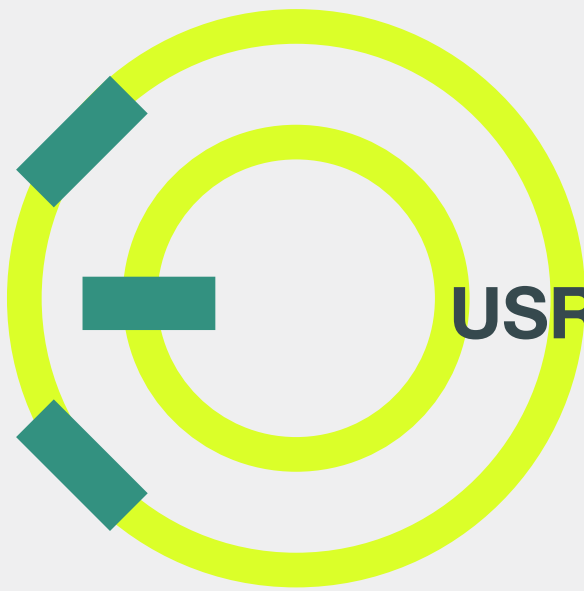
- Deputy President Academic Board  
University of New South Wales

### **Dr Martina Jordaan**

- Head: Community Engagement Research and Postgraduate Studies  
University of Pretoria

### **Dr Andrea Bandelli**

- Head of International Relations  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam



# USR Member Institutions

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

Ateneo de Manila University

Beijing Normal University

Clare Hall, University of Cambridge

Kyoto University

Peking University

Rhodes University

Sichuan University

Simon Fraser University

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

The University of Manchester

Tufts University

University of Haifa

University of Iceland

University of New South Wales

University of Pretoria

University of São Paulo

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Washington University in St. Louis

Yonsei University



ATENEO DE MANILA  
UNIVERSITY



北京師範大學  
BEIJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY



CLARE HALL  
CAMBRIDGE



京都大学  
KYOTO UNIVERSITY



北京大學  
PEKING UNIVERSITY



RHODES UNIVERSITY  
*Where leaders learn*



四川大學  
SICHUAN UNIVERSITY



SFU SIMON FRASER  
UNIVERSITY



THE HONG KONG  
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY  
香港理工大學



MANCHESTER  
1824  
The University of Manchester

Tufts  
UNIVERSITY



אוניברסיטת חיפה  
University of Haifa



UNIVERSITY  
OF ICELAND



UNSW  
SYDNEY



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA



VU  
VRJIE  
UNIVERSITEIT  
AMSTERDAM



Washington  
University in St. Louis



YONSEI  
UNIVERSITY

# Table of Contents

---

## PRESENTATIONS AND PAPERS

### PARALLEL SESSION II-A

*Track 2: Collaborative Research to Address Global Challenges*

- 10** **Epistemic Justice: Journey from Traditional Researcher to Engaged Researcher. An Autoethnography**  
*René Oosthuizen*

### PARALLEL SESSION II-B

*Track 3: Driving Institutional Changes for USR*

- 19** **Diverse Responses of USRN Members to COVID-19: Diversity and Trends beyond the Academia**  
*Fernando Palacio and Paola Sanoni*

- 31** **Collaborative Research in the 21st Century: Strengths and Challenges of Sub-Saharan African Universities**  
*Titilayo Olubunmi Olaposi*

### PARALLEL SESSION V-A

*Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility*

- 41** **Strengthening Faculty Engagement and Partnerships through a Community of Practice**  
*Audrey Falk, Barrett Brenton and Martina Jordaan*

### PARALLEL SESSION V-B

*Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility*

- 48** **Responding to the Signs of the Times: Opportunities for Civic Engagement with the Health Sciences Program During the COVID-19 Pandemic**  
*Ma. Criselda Dana Buñag, Erika Keith Mendoza and Syra Marie Norin Petalio*



# Table of Contents

---

## PRESENTATIONS

### PARALLEL SESSION I-B

*Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility*

**58 Promoting Food Justice through Religious Education: Towards Faithful Imagination of Regenerative Food Systems**

*Justin Joseph Badion*

### PARALLEL SESSION II-A

*Track 2: Collaborative Research to Address Global Challenges*

**59 Aurora SDG Research Dashboard: Gaining Insights in Co-author Collaboration of SDG Related Research Papers**

*Maurice Vanderfeesten*

### PARALLEL SESSION II-B

*Track 3: Driving Institutional Changes for USR*

**60 Reflections on Transformative Change towards Sustainability in Universities**

*Ivar Maas*

### PARALLEL SESSION III-A

*Track 5: Elevating Sustainable Development through Regional and Global Collaboration*

**61 Advancing Sustainable Development through Partnerships: Challenges and Opportunities in Collaboration**

*Joanne Curry and Julian Skyrme*

### PARALLEL SESSION III-B

*Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility*

**63 Promoting Social Responsibility through Service-Learning in Higher Education**

*Nina Rösler, Charoula-Maria Fotiadou and Iris-Niki Nikolopoulos*

### PARALLEL SESSION IV-B

*Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility*

**65 Embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals into Postgraduate Level Business Programmes – A Case Study**

*Joe Houghton*

### PARALLEL SESSION VII-B

*Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility*

**66 Fostering Students' Empowerment to Address Global Challenges**

*Elisabetta Magnani*





# PRESENTATIONS AND PAPERS

---

**PARALLEL SESSION II-A***Track 2: Collaborative Research to Address Global Challenges***Epistemic Justice: Journey from Traditional Researcher to Engaged Researcher. An Autoethnography****AUTHOR****René Oosthuizen**

Rhodes University, South Africa

She holds a DPhil in Public Administration from Nelson Mandela University (NMU) in South Africa. Her research and work experiences focused extensively on developmental and transformative community engagement, disaster risk management, social and economic development planning and policy analysis as effective tools for sustainable development. She is a certified UNESCO Knowledge for Change Mentor. She has been in academia for more than 20 years.

Email: [r.oosthuizen@ru.ac.za](mailto:r.oosthuizen@ru.ac.za)**PRESENTATION**

- [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- [Video playback](#)

# Epistemic Justice: Journey from Traditional Researcher to Engaged Researcher. An Autoethnography

---

**René Oosthuizen**, Rhodes University, South Africa

## Abstract

This paper presents an autoethnographic account that explores the transformative journey of an academic researcher, who transitioned from conducting traditional research to engaging in community-based participatory (CBPR) engaged research. The researcher's shift was influenced after completing the UNESCO Knowledge for Change mentor training programme. In turn, this led to the development of a CBPR-based engaged research short course for academics, postgraduate students and community development practitioners at the researcher's university. This autoethnographic account highlights the researcher's shift towards conducting research collaboratively with communities, aiming to address societal challenges and co-create new knowledge. The paper also discusses the implementation of a two-tiered ethics application process within the researcher's university, which involves initial scoping approval and community-informed proposal submission. Furthermore, the inclusion of a community member into the Human Research Ethics Committee of the researcher's university exemplifies the latter's commitment to epistemic justice and community engagement in research.

Keywords: Epistemic justice, engaged research, community-based participatory research, autoethnography, transformative research

## 1. Introduction

Achieving epistemic justice in research calls for a fundamental departure from conventional researcher-focused methodologies towards a practice of engaged research—one that proactively involves and collaborates with communities throughout the entire research journey. This paper presents an autoethnographic account of an academic researcher's transition from applying traditional research practices to using an engaged research approach, guided by the UNESCO Knowledge for Change mentor training programme she successfully completed in 2021.

Traditional research methodologies have often been characterised by a top-down approach, where researchers determine the research questions, design the methodologies and interpret the findings without substantial involvement from the communities being studied (Gaudry, 2011, pp.113–114). While this approach has contributed valuable insights, it has limitations in terms of addressing real-life societal challenges and ensuring the relevance and applicability of research outcomes to the affected communities.

In comparison, engaged research represents a paradigm shift towards more participatory and collaborative research practices. In particular, it involves active engagement and partnership with communities throughout the research process, including problem identification, data collection, analysis and knowledge co-creation (Holliman, 2017, pp.5–7). Furthermore, engaged research aims to address societal challenges by integrating community perspectives, local knowledge and everyday experiences, thereby fostering greater social relevance, inclusivity and impact (Stellenbosch University website, n.d). One of the fundamental aspects of engaged research is the recognition and valuing of all forms of knowledge, including community knowledge (Tembo, 2021, p.3).

The journey from being a traditional researcher to becoming an engaged researcher often entails personal and professional transformations. It involves recognising the importance of community knowledge, building trust and relationships with community members and adopting methodologies that provide a platform for the diversity of voices and perspectives. The transition to engaged research also requires a deep commitment to shared decision-making, ethical considerations and a willingness to challenge traditional power structures in research.

## **2. The UNESCO Knowledge for Change Mentor Training Programme**

The UNESCO Knowledge for Change mentor training programme has played a pivotal role in shaping the researcher's journey from practicing traditional to engaged research. This section of the paper focuses on the mentor training programme's core principles, emphasising the significance of engaged research and community-based participatory methodologies (Lepore et al., 2021, pp.347–370).

### *2.1 Core Principles*

The UNESCO Knowledge for Change mentor training programme is founded on the principles of participatory, collaborative, inclusive and transformative learning. The programme emphasises the importance of recognising and addressing social inequalities in knowledge production and dissemination. Furthermore, it encourages researchers to critically reflect on their roles, power dynamics and ethical responsibilities, while fostering a commitment to social justice, community engagement and knowledge co-creation.

### *2.2 Methodologies and Approaches*

The programme incorporates a range of methodologies and approaches that challenge traditional research paradigms. In particular, it introduces participants to community-based participatory research (CBPR), which promotes collaboration and active engagement with communities throughout the research process (Horowitz et al., 2009, pp.2633–2635). CBPR emphasises shared decision-making, reciprocal learning and the integration of community knowledge, ensuring that research outcomes are both relevant and useful to communities (Burke, 2013, pp.3–5; Rubin et al., 2012, pp.4–5). Furthermore, the programme incorporates incisive pedagogical approaches, encouraging participants to critically analyse and challenge existing power structures, biases and epistemological assumptions in research. It also fosters reflexivity by encouraging researchers to acknowledge their positionalities and biases and to engage in ongoing self-reflections to ensure a more equitable and ethical research practice.

### *2.3 Transformative Impact*

Her participation in the UNESCO Knowledge for Change mentor training programme has had a transformative impact on the researcher's perspective and practice. Specifically, the programme has provided the researcher with a theoretical and practical foundation for understanding the significance of engaged research in addressing societal challenges and promoting epistemic justice.

By engaging in online and in-person critical discussions, interactive workshops and collaborative learning experiences, the researcher has gained a deeper appreciation for the importance of community voices and local knowledge in shaping research agendas and methodologies. The programme has likewise facilitated a shift in the researcher's mindset from a researcher-centred approach to one that values and centres communities' perspectives, needs and aspirations.

The programme has also inspired the researcher, her colleagues and a community partner who successfully completed the mentor training programme to develop a CBPR-based engaged research short course for academics, postgraduate students and community development practitioners. The short course promotes a transformative learning environment that encourages participants to critically reflect on their roles as researchers and advocates for social change.

### 3. Development of an Institutionally Accredited CBPR-Based Engaged Research Short Course

Motivated by her training, the researcher worked with a team that successfully completed the mentor training programme to develop a short course on engaged research that aimed to equip academics, postgraduate students and community development practitioners with the necessary knowledge and skills for conducting collaborative research. This section discusses the course's curriculum, its pedagogical strategies and its impact on fostering a community-centric research paradigm.

#### 3.1 Motivation and Rationale

The development of the CBPR-based engaged research short course stemmed from the emergent need to equip academics, postgraduate students and community development practitioners with the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct collaborative and socially responsive research. The course aims to bridge the gap between traditional research practices and the growing demand for engaged research approaches that prioritise community involvement and knowledge co-creation.

#### 3.2 Curriculum Design

The short course's curriculum was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of CBPR principles, methodologies and ethical considerations. It incorporates theoretical frameworks, case studies and practical exercises to enable participants to critically reflect on their own research practices and explore alternative approaches.

#### 3.3 Pedagogical Strategies

The pedagogical strategies employed in the course emphasises active learning, participatory methods and experiential activities. Specifically, the course encourages participants to engage in critical dialogues, group discussions and collaborative problem-solving exercises. Interactive workshops, role-plays and case studies are also incorporated into the course to facilitate the application of CBPR principles and methodologies in real-world contexts.

Structured as a 5-week programme, the course incorporates a blended learning approach, where each module comprises detailed online self-study components, including pre-recorded lectures and readings. Participants are expected to engage with these materials at their own pace before joining the weekly plenary discussion sessions held every Friday. This format allows for flexibility and enables participants to delve into the course content, deepen their understanding and come prepared to actively contribute to the interactive sessions.

#### 3.4 Impact and Outcomes

The CBPR-based engaged research short course challenges conventional research paradigms, fostering a shift towards more collaborative and community-centred approaches. In course evaluation responses, participants reported an increased awareness of the importance of community engagement, ethical considerations and knowledge co-creation.

The course also provides a platform for participants to share their own research experiences and engage in critical discussions about power dynamics, social justice and the role of research in addressing societal challenges. A sense of empowerment can also be developed through the course, as participants acquire practical skills and strategies for conducting engaged research that is responsive to community needs. Importantly, the short course facilitates the formation of a network of researchers and practitioners committed to engaged research.

### *3.5 CBPR Series of Workshops for Community Partners and Members*

In addition to the short course, the academics and the community partner embarked on piloting a series of CBPR workshops tailored for community partners and members. These workshops aimed to empower community members with the skills and knowledge necessary to actively participate in the research process as equal partners. By equipping such stakeholders with the tools to engage in research, the pilot workshop that took place in 2022 sought to foster a sense of ownership and agency, thereby promoting epistemic justice within the research paradigm.

Prior to offering the upcoming series of CBPR workshops for community members, the academics who completed the engaged research short course and those who participated in the pilot CBPR workshop series came together in July of this year to collectively pave the way forward. This collaborative gathering served as a platform for meaningful dialogue and shared decision-making, thus ensuring that the upcoming workshops aligned with the needs and aspirations of the community. By combining the academic expertise and the lived experiences of community members, this inclusive process will contribute to the co-creation of a workshop framework, which promotes genuine community engagement and epistemic justice. Furthermore, this collaborative gathering provided an opportunity for community members to actively contribute to problem identification for future research. Thus, such a participatory approach to problem identification fosters a sense of ownership and empowers community members to shape the research direction, ultimately enhancing the relevance and impact of the academic research within the community (Horowitz et al., 2009, pp.2633–2635).

## *4. The Researcher's Transition to Engaged Research*

Drawing on the researcher's autoethnographic reflections, this section explores the personal and professional transformations that occurred during the transition from traditional to engaged research. The researcher's evolving roles, relationships with communities and the emergence of a more inclusive and responsive research practice are examined in this section. The transition from traditional to engaged research represents a transformative journey for researchers, as it requires a shift in mindset, methodologies and collaborative approaches (Horowitz et al., 2009, pp.2635–2638).

As the researcher embarked on her path to becoming an engaged researcher, she has proactively strived to incorporate the principles and methodologies of engaged research into her own research. Furthermore, she has embraced a collaborative and equitable research paradigm by consciously acknowledging the limitations of traditional research approaches. In this section, the researcher sheds light on several noteworthy strategies and experiences that illustrate her unwavering dedication to embedding engaged research in her work.

### *4.1 Collaborative Research*

In a departure from the traditional unilateral approach to research, the researcher has embraced a collaborative research approach. Recognising the importance of inclusive participation, she engages community members, stakeholders and relevant organisations right from the beginning of the study, starting with problem identification by the community. Through open and ongoing dialogues, all parties collectively shape the research questions, objectives and methodologies. This inclusive process ensures that the research is firmly grounded in the needs, interests and priorities of the community, thereby fostering a sense of shared ownership among all participants.

### *4.2 Meaningful and Authentic Community Engagement*

To foster genuine inclusivity, the researcher strives to ensure meaningful and authentic community engagement throughout the research process. Despite efforts to foster inclusivity, it remains an area that demands further attention and progress. While the researcher aims to achieve meaningful and authentic community engagement throughout the research process, there is a continued need to enhance and refine these practices. Building trust and cultivating strong

relationships with community members through open communication is essential, but the use of more comprehensive strategies is necessary to ensure the genuine inclusion of diverse voices. Creating spaces for dialogue, knowledge sharing and active participation through community meetings, workshops and focus groups is a positive step, but ongoing efforts are required to address power imbalances and amplify marginalised perspectives.

#### *4.3 Ethical Considerations*

At the core of the researcher's engaged research practice lies a profound dedication to ethical considerations. She takes great care to ensure that the research process respects community values, norms and cultural protocols. Culturally appropriate procedures are implemented for obtaining informed consent, and steps are taken to mitigate power imbalances between the researcher and the community. Ethical dilemmas and challenges are also openly acknowledged and addressed through collaborative discussions. Furthermore, the researcher strives to maintain ethical integrity throughout the entire research journey by continuously reflecting on her own positionality and the potential impacts of the research on the community. However, ongoing attention and progress in ethical considerations remain crucial in maintaining the researcher's commitment to conducting research in a manner that aligns with the highest ethical standards.

#### *4.4 Co-Production of Knowledge*

The researcher acknowledges that knowledge co-production is an area that requires significant improvement and attention. By recognising the invaluable insights and contextual understanding of community members, the researcher understands the importance of integrating community perspectives to enhance research findings. However, it is clear that further development and progress are necessary to fully realise the potential of co-producing knowledge. The researcher is also committed to continued efforts in this direction, with the goal of achieving mutual learning, empowerment of community members and the generation of more accurate and culturally relevant research outcomes.

#### *4.5 Dissemination and Knowledge Mobilisation*

The researcher acknowledges that there is still much room for development and improvement in the area of dissemination and knowledge mobilisation. Indeed, she places great emphasis on ensuring that research findings effectively reach and benefit the communities involved while recognising the importance of actively involving community members. By collaborating with community partners, the researcher also explores diverse avenues for knowledge mobilisation, such as community workshops, policy briefings and public presentations. Through the active engagement of community members in these activities, the researcher aims to amplify their voices and empower them to influence decision-making processes. However, it is crucial to note that further development is necessary to effectively disseminate research findings and maximise their impact on communities. The researcher remains committed to continuous efforts and advancements to enhance the processes of dissemination and knowledge mobilisation, guided by the ultimate goal of benefiting the communities involved.

### **5. Institutional Progress and Transition**

The university has undertaken substantial efforts to improve ethical practices and promote engaged research, including the inclusion of a community member in the university Ethics Committee, as well as the use of a two-tiered application process for engaged research studies (initial phase). Furthermore, the researcher's university has also included the promotion of engaged research into its 2023–2025 Strategic Goals and Institutional Development Plan (Rhodes University n.d).

### 5.1 Inclusion of a community member on university Ethics Committee

Recently, the University Ethics Committee has recently embraced an inclusive approach, thereby recognising the significance of community engagement and diverse perspectives in decision-making. By incorporating a community member into its composition, the committee aims to advance ethical practices and foster accountability.

The addition of a community member to the University Human Ethics Committee also signifies a notable stride in promoting meaningful collaboration between the university and the communities it serves. Moreover, such an inclusion acknowledges that the committee's decisions hold implications not only for the academic realm but also for society at large. Through the involvement of a community member, the committee gains invaluable insights into the concerns, values and expectations of the local community.

Meanwhile, the community member serves as a representative voice, offering diverse perspectives and essential inputs regarding ethical matters that directly affect the community. Their unique viewpoint helps ensure that the committee's decisions align with the broader community's values and interests, thereby fostering transparency, fairness and mutual understanding.

The involvement of the community member likewise facilitates greater accountability from the university and serves as a mechanism for checks and balances. This helps ensure that ethical guidelines are not solely influenced by internal academic perspectives but also reflect the needs and concerns of those directly impacted by the university's actions. This dual accountability strengthens the university's ethical fabric while simultaneously fostering a deeper sense of responsibility towards the community.

### 5.2 Two-Tiered Ethics Application Process

Recognising the need for a revised ethics framework to support engaged research, the researcher's university implemented a two-tiered ethics application process.

The *first tier* is the scoping approval stage. This stage allows researchers to initiate engagement with the community. This creates the platform for community identified research issues and facilitates the formulation of solutions that can address such issues. The scoping approval stage recognises the importance of early community involvement in shaping the research agenda and methodology. Currently, researchers submit an application to the chairperson of the Human Ethics Committee to obtain scoping approval for initial engagement with community members. Once approval is received, scoping approval is granted for three months. This is still an ongoing process that the Human Ethics Committee seeks to improve on.

During the scoping approval stage, researchers also engage in discussions and consultations with community members to gain a deeper understanding of their concerns, aspirations and the potential ethical implications of the research. This collaborative process ensures that the research is aligned with the focal communities' needs and values, thus enhancing the relevance and ethical integrity of the study.

The *second tier* of the ethics application process involves the submission of a formal research proposal that is informed by the community's input and the feedback gathered during the scoping approval stage. This proposal details the research objectives, methodologies, ethical considerations and the intended impact of the study.

The proposal submission stage provides an opportunity for the researcher to demonstrate how the research design incorporates community perspectives, protects community interests and ensures ethical conduct throughout the research process. This stage requires researchers to articulate how they will address power imbalances, obtain informed consent, protect confidentiality and adhere to cultural protocols and ethical guidelines (Rhodes University website, n.d.).



## 6. Recommendations

Based on her experiences and commitment to engaged research, the researcher offers the following recommendations to fellow researchers:

- Embrace a collaborative approach: Involve community members from the beginning, especially during problem identification, promoting shared decision-making and power distribution.
- Prioritise authentic and meaningful community engagement: Foster ongoing communication, trust and respect, as well as provide opportunities for community members to contribute their expertise.
- Foster knowledge co-production: Involve community members in data collection, analysis and interpretation to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered.
- Uphold ethical considerations: Prioritise ethical practices, such as obtaining informed consent, assessing power dynamics and minimising harm to the community.
- Promote knowledge mobilisation: Disseminate research findings to communities and engage community members in knowledge mobilisation efforts.
- Build institutional support: Provide resources, training and infrastructure to support engaged research practices and incorporate them into institutional policies.
- Foster a culture of reflection and learning: Encourage researchers to reflect on their biases, assumptions and positionality, as well as facilitate learning from each other's engaged research practices.

It is crucial to acknowledge and address the limitations associated with engaged research, such as time and resource constraints, power dynamics, generalisability, representation and diversity, researcher capacity and training and potential conflicts of interest. Awareness of these limitations can help researchers navigate challenges and ensure the integrity of their engaged research efforts.

## 7. Conclusion

The shift from traditional to engaged research represents a transformative journey in the way research is conceptualised, conducted and valued. Engaged research promotes a collaborative and reciprocal relationship between researchers and communities by recognising and acknowledging the expertise and knowledge that communities possess. It requires researchers to actively involve community members in problem identification, research design, data collection, analysis and knowledge dissemination. Through this process, research becomes more relevant, inclusive and impactful in addressing societal challenges and fostering positive social change. Meanwhile, epistemic justice serves as a guiding principle throughout this journey, ensuring equitable knowledge production, recognition of diverse forms of knowledge and the empowerment of marginalised communities. The adoption of the CBPR engaged research approach also plays a pivotal role in facilitating this transition.

Looking towards the future, the principles of epistemic justice and engaged research will continue to shape the research landscape. Efforts to promote equitable knowledge production, recognise diverse forms of knowledge and empower marginalised communities will pave the way for research that is more inclusive, responsive and transformative.

## 8. Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the support and guidance received from the UNESCO Knowledge for Change mentor training programme, as well as the communities and individuals who contributed to her transformative research journey.

## References

- Burke, J. G., Hess, S., Hoffmann, K., Guizzetti, L., Loy, E., Gielen, A. C., Bailey, M., Walnoha, A., Barbee, G. & Yonas, M. A. (2013). Translating Community-Based Participatory Research principles into practice. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships*, 7(2), 115–122. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cpr.2013.0025>
- Gaudry, A. “Insurgent Research.” *Wicazo SA Review* 26, no. 1 (2011): 113–36. Accessed Jun 26, 2023. [https://www.academia.edu/619243/Insurgent\\_Research](https://www.academia.edu/619243/Insurgent_Research)
- Holliman, R. (2017). Supporting excellence in engaged research. *Journal of Science Communication*, 16(5). Accessed Jun 26, 2023. [https://jcom.sissa.it/article/pubid/JCOM\\_1605\\_2017\\_C04/](https://jcom.sissa.it/article/pubid/JCOM_1605_2017_C04/)
- Horowitz, C. R., Robinson, M. & Seifer, S. D. (2009). Community-Based participatory research from the margin to the mainstream. *Circulation*, 119(19), 2633–2642. <https://doi.org/10.1161/circulationaha.107.729863>
- Engaged Research. University of Stellenbosch website. (n.d) Accessed Jun 26, 2023. <http://www.sun.ac.za/si/en-za/Pages/Sub-menu.aspx>
- Rhodes University website. Research Ethics. (n.d) Accessed Jun 27, 2023. <https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/>
- Rhodes University website. Institutional Development Plan 2023–2025 (n.d) Accessed Jun 27, 2023. [www.ru.ac.za › content › Rhodes\\_University\\_IDP2023-2028\\_final](http://www.ru.ac.za/content/Rhodes_University_IDP2023-2028_final)
- Rubin, C. L., Martinez, L. S., Chu, J., Hacker, K., Brugge, D., Pirie, A., Allukian, N., Rodday, A. M. & Leslie, L. K. (2012b). Community-Engaged Pedagogy: a Strengths-Based approach to involving diverse stakeholders in research partnerships. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships*, 6(4), 481–490. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cpr.2012.0057>
- Tembo, D., Hickey, G., Montenegro, C., Chandler, D., Nelson, E., Porter, K., Dikomitis, L., Chambers, M., Chimbari, M. J., Mumba, N., Beresford, P., Ekiikina, P. O., Musesengwa, R., Staniszewska, S., Coldham, T. & Rennard, U. (2021). Effective engagement and involvement with community stakeholders in the co-production of global health research. *BMJ*, n178. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n178>
- Lepore, W., Hall, B. L. & Tandon, R. (2020). The Knowledge for Change Consortium: a decolonising approach to international collaboration in capacity-building in community-based participatory research. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 42(3), 347–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2020.1838887>

**PARALLEL SESSION II-B***Track 3: Driving Institutional Changes for USR***Diverse Responses of USRN Members to COVID-19:  
Diversity and Trends beyond the Academia****AUTHORS****Fernando Palacio\***

Higher Education Consultant, Japan

Fernando Palacio served as a Program-Specific Senior Lecturer at the International Strategy Office of Kyoto University until 2021, where he contributed in the design and development of policy on internationalization and inclusion. He engaged with the promotion of University Social Responsibility and partnerships.

Email: [dr.fernando.palacio@gmail.com](mailto:dr.fernando.palacio@gmail.com)*\* Corresponding author***Paola Sanoni**

Kyoto University, Japan

Dr. Paola Sanoni Ph.D., M.A., B.B.A. has worked for over 20 years on internationalization strategy in Higher Education (HE). Until recently she served as a Senior Lecturer at the International Strategy Office of Kyoto University focusing on policy design and support for internationalization, promotion of University Social Responsibility, and addressing the outreach for the Oceania region.

Email: [psanoni@gmail.com](mailto:psanoni@gmail.com)**PRESENTATION**

- ▶ [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- ▶ [Video playback](#)

## Diverse Responses of USRN Members to COVID-19: Diversity and Trends beyond the Academia

---

**Fernando Palacio**, Higher Education Consultant, Japan

**Paola Sanoni**, Kyoto University, Japan

### Abstract

The University Social Responsibility Network (USRN) promotes civic engagement in higher education through a broad understanding of the concept of University Social Responsibility (USR). In 2019, the USRN launched a joint initiative to raise awareness about the importance and diversity of good practices among universities in their engagements with society. The project resulted in a Massive Open Online Course, titled *Introduction to University Social Responsibility*, that introduces general theory and practices. The Coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic slowed down the course implementation but also created a new opportunity for universities to demonstrate their commitment to addressing pressing social issues in all corners of the world. A *Special Session on Universities' Response* was added to the original course, portraying several of the strategies that universities took to address the challenges brought by the pandemic. A total of 13 USRN members shared their academic and non-academic projects. These initiatives demonstrate very diverse forms of engagement as research, education, advisory role, outreach, information management, provision of support, institutional reforms and extended services. By reflecting on these experiences, this study classifies the kinds of engagements that can in turn facilitate the decision making of universities' leaders for their own USR strategies.

Keywords: University Social Responsibility, COVID-19, response, higher education, non-academic, civic engagement

### 1. Introduction

During its 4th Executive Committee Meeting in 2018 in Haifa, Israel, the members of the University Social Responsibility Network (USRN) agreed to collaborate on producing a joint Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) to raise awareness on the concept of University Social Responsibility (USR) while promoting the visibility of good practices carried out by universities in the network. Kyoto University and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University led the production of the MOOC, titled *Introduction to University Social Responsibility* (hereafter stated as the MOOC), organized in four modules<sup>1</sup> that cover general theory and practices of social engagement by institutions in the higher education sector. The syllabus and information shared for the Special Session are available in the MOOC's website in edX<sup>2</sup>.

The production of the MOOC was underway when Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) hit and started to spread in early 2020. Many universities around the world stepped up their civic engagements to face the emerging challenges as the pandemic unfolded, and in July of 2020, the USRN decided to add a new module to the MOOC to present the responses of universities to COVID-19.

---

<sup>1</sup> MOOC's syllabus <https://www.edx.org/course/introduction-to-university-social-responsibility>

<sup>2</sup> MOOC <https://www.edx.org/course/introduction-to-university-social-responsibility>

The new module followed the structure set by a project initiated by the USRN Secretariat as a mini website<sup>3</sup> that showcased members responses. This module was added to the MOOC as a stand-alone unit called *Special Session on University Response to COVID-19* (hereafter stated as Special Session). As a result, the MOOC is currently structured as follows:



**Graph 1: Structure of the MOOC on USR**

The Special Session was the source of inspiration and data for this study, and encompasses the narratives describing initiatives shared by the following universities: Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (AFKNU) in Kazakhstan; Beijing Normal University (BNU), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU), and Sichuan University (SU) in China; University of Haifa (UoH) in Israel; Kyoto University (KU) in Japan; The University of Manchester (UoM) in the United Kingdom; University of São Paulo (USP) in Brazil; University of Pretoria (UoP) in South Africa; Tufts University (TU) and Washington University in St. Louis (WUSL) in the United States; University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Australia; and Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Canada (Palacio & Sadehvandi, 2022).

Based on the notion that USR can be defined as the shared responsibility of universities to address challenges and to advance societies, and that USR permeates all aspects in the life of universities (Shek & Hollister, 2017), the following pages identify areas and dimensions of how universities in the USRN faced the pandemic. The different kinds of USR initiatives that can be replicated in other universities beyond the USRN are identified, thereby offering an analytical framework to facilitate policy design at the higher education sector when approaching risk and disaster management with a comprehensive and proactive mindset.

## 2. Literature Review

COVID-19 reaffirmed the notion that universities have a key role in the society; the calamities brought about by the pandemic increased their academic contributions and research in related areas has grown since 2020 (Cai et al., 2021). Universities, however, have also served other key functions such as identifying and synergizing resources while having to ensure safety and continuity in their own services (Cutter et al., 2021). As social distance protocols were set in place, universities produced various reactions, such as through pedagogical innovation and curricular development to face lockdowns, especially through the implementation of online education (Hale et al., 2020; Yang & Huang, 2021).

For universities, the pandemic represented major challenges but also opportunities for new research, innovative education, and renewed approaches to management and engagement (Beech & Anseel, 2020). COVID-19 also helped expand and deepen the existing knowledge and to rethink the role of universities in disaster situations (Marinoni et al., 2020).

<sup>3</sup> USRN' COVID-19 Response minisite <https://covid19.usrnetwork.org>

As socially sensitive institutions, universities face and address emerging social and environmental challenges by reinventing themselves through reform. These reforms tend to bring a sense of social responsibility not only into their academic work but also into other functions that connect them with real problems (Larrán & Andrades Peña, 2017). Universities act responsibly in how they behave and govern themselves, by offering quality services, applying ethical rules, or by engaging in philanthropic projects (Tetřevová & Sabolova, 2010).

Universities may also be reacting to introducing more USR-oriented policies due to the growing relevance as an indicator in university rankings (Shek & Hollister, 2017). In this sense, the pandemic represented a new opportunity for universities to promote their social engagement. Examples of this are the universities' interest to deepen exchanges with society, reinforced creativity, or new training spaces for students (Rababah et al., 2021).

Literature on universities' responses to COVID-19 suggests that USR is multi-layered and includes a wide range of engagements beyond the academia (Ifijeh & Yusuf, 2020). For example, universities addressed human rights that denounce the stigmatization of people infected, whose personal information was disclosed by governments and the media (Yoshioka & Maeda, 2020).

USR programmes are often closely tied to the values, priorities, and specific circumstances of each institution. This recognition emphasizes the need for USR to be tailored to any university's capacities, willingness to adopt management principles, teaching, research practices, and engagement efforts that address real-world challenges (Sánchez et al., 2013). The approaches and programmes related to USR highlights that its interpretation varies significantly across universities. This diversity underscores the notion that each university has its own unique context and vision, influencing how they understand and implement their USR strategies (Palacio & Choy, 2019).

Given its context, this study follows the same line of thought of the USRN members, who agree in understanding USR as a wide-ranging and evolving concept that describes the shared responsibility of universities to contribute to social betterment by integrating social responsibility policies into their institutional management, teaching, research, services and public activities (Shek & Hollister, 2017).

### 3. Method

The data for this article consists of the initiatives of USRN members in response to the pandemic. Data collection occurs in two steps. First, the USRN Secretariat gathered information from the members to share their responses and good practices, and showcased them in a mini-site at the USRN portal<sup>4</sup>. The second step relates to the decision to add the Special Session on Universities' Responses to COVID-19 to the MOOC when the production team invited USRN members to provide further information. Universities were free to choose and submit the data they deem relevant in any format.

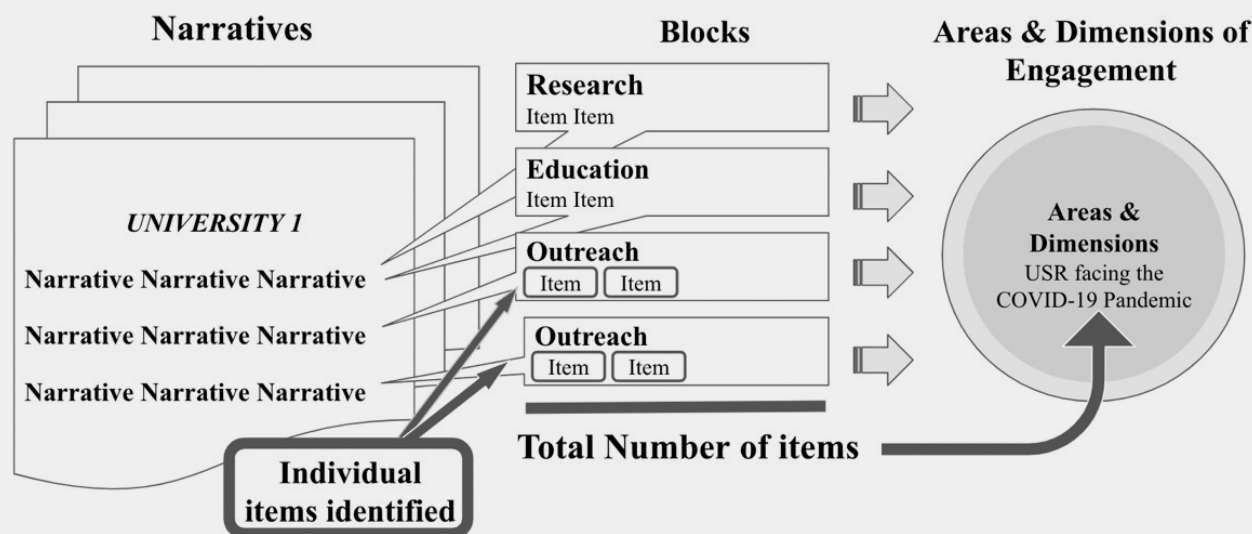
The data consists of materials such as videos, websites and texts describing universities' efforts to address the pandemic and were organised by resource persons in each university. The information shared by each institution represents a stand-alone unit in the Special Session, but when integrated and analysed transversally, can offer an overview of trends regarding universities' responses, motivations and priorities.

The starting point of the study are the narratives shared by the universities in the Special Session, that are first divided into blocks of text (describing areas of engagement) and then into items (individual actions) that help to quantify and identify priorities through a trend analysis.

---

<sup>4</sup> USRN mini site on Universities Response to COVID-19 <https://covid19.usrnetwork.org/>

Texts with related information are grouped into the following areas of engagement: Research, Education, Advisory Role, Civic Engagement, Information Management, Provision of Support, Structural Reforms and Extended Services. Subsequently, several areas are divided into dimensions and sub-dimensions to offer depth in their details. The quantification of data occurred as follows:



Graph 2: Quantification of data from narratives to block, items, and areas

#### 4. Observations: Diverse USR approaches

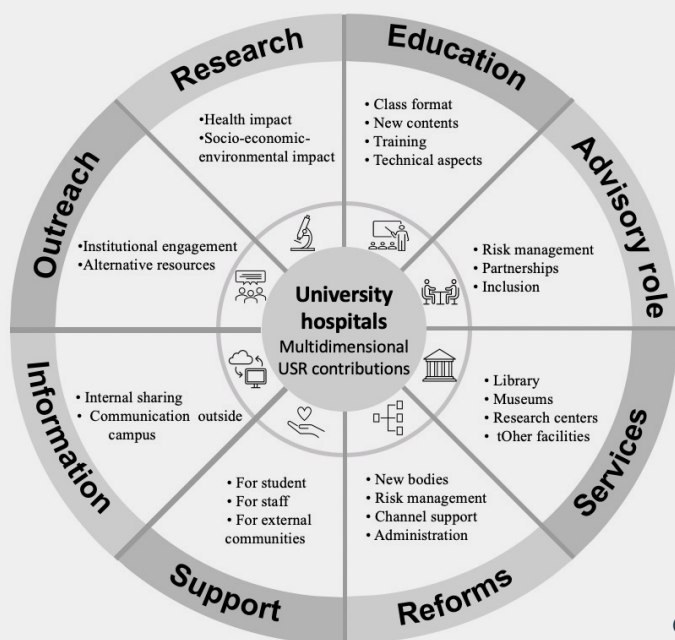
Based on the projects enacted to address the COVID-19 pandemic by 13 universities in the USRN that are located in five different continents and engage with different contexts, this study accomplished global representation. The study systematises areas of engagement with dimensions and subdimensions, identifies individual actions that can be quantified and shows trends regarding the priorities of the selected universities.

The universities reacted to the pandemic in different yet related ways, depending on what each institution values the most in terms of their meaning of *being socially responsible* means, thus corroborating the notion that USR is relative to each university’s vision, priorities, and context. At the same time, based on the diverse nature of the initiatives shared in the MOOC, a clear line can be drawn differentiating *traditional academic contributions*—research and education—from *non-academic forms of engagement*, which in turn demonstrate these universities’ drive to go the extra mile (Palacio & Sadehvandi, 2022).

Despite limitations in terms of its potential for generalization (given that the data comprise a list of curated responses) rather than an exhaustive compilation of policies and initiatives, this study presents a significant contribution through its innovative method to reduce and analyse qualitative data into quantitative and measurable actions. Beyond treating the responses as mere narratives, the study quantified the information by breaking down their texts into measurable elements that can reflect trends about the universities’ options to design and implement USR policy and activities.

##### 4.1 Diverse Forms and Depths of Engagement

The first empirical observation from the data in the MOOC was the diverse mindset and strategies of universities to address different aspects of the pandemic and the needs of the communities they serve. For easy comprehension, the different approaches were categorised according to their shared features. Once identified, these areas of engagement were then divided into dimensions based on different aspects.



**Graph 3: Areas and Dimensions of Engagement**

Graph 3 integrates all the identified areas and highlights the role of universities as a source of social responsibility, where their policies result from the rational decision of their managers and staff, and where the areas of engagement are connected to each other. The areas were organised as follows:

1. Research: a) Health impact, and b) Socio-economic-environmental impact
2. Education: a) Class format; b) New contents; c) Training; and d) Technical aspects
3. Advisory role: a) Risk management in universities, b) Partnerships, and c) Inclusion
4. Outreach: a) Institutional engagement, and b) Alternative resources
5. Information management: a) Internal sharing, and b) Communication outside campus
6. Support: a) For students, b) For staff, and c) For external communities
7. Reforms: a) New bodies, b) Risk management, c) “Channel” support, and d) administration
8. Extended services: a) Library, b) Museums, c) Research centers, and d) Other facilities

The graph shows that civic engagements greatly exceed academic contributions and take several forms as non-academic contributions. Data in the study revealed that from the areas of engagement, only two—education and research—are academic in nature, and the combined items identified for these areas accounted for 31% of the total. The other six areas portrayed non-academic initiatives and made up the remaining 69% of all items.

#### 4.2 Trends in USR Engagements as Response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The blocks of text from the narratives used above to identify the areas and dimensions were then divided into smaller segments (items) depending on the nature of their information. Thus, 751 individual items were identified and then distributed back into the areas and dimensions to which they belonged.

Based on this quantification of narratives, the analysis of trends highlighted the relative priorities of universities and revealed the relative significance of each kind of engagement in the responses. Table 1 shows the distribution of items per area of engagement, their dimensions and their relative participation to the entire set of contributions.

Table 1 provides evidence about the areas of engagement these universities prioritised and how they distributed their resources and efforts. Although outside the goals of this study, by applying this process to the data provided by each individual university, the priorities and areas of interest of each institution can also be identified and analysed individually and in the context of the USRN.



When comparing the absolute number of items identified (751) to those that were allocated to each area of engagement, the largest contributions fell under Research with 182 entries and Outreach with 138 entries. The rest follows in order: Support with 104, Advisory role with 91, Information management with 81, Structural reforms with 69, Education with 52, and finally Extended services with 34.

Areas of engagement Items / Percentage to the total	Dimensions of engagement	Items per dimension	Trends
Research 182 / 24.2%	1.1 Health impact	86	11.5%
	1.2 Socio-economic-environmental impact	96	12.8%
Education 52 / 6.9%	2.1 Online class formats (safety and access)	7	0.9%
	2.2 New, and in-focus contents	26	3.5%
	2.3 Training for teachers	10	1.3%
	2.4 Technical aspects of moving online	9	1.2%
Advisory role 91 / 12.2%	3.1 Risk management internally in the universities	26	3.5%
	3.2 Partnerships with other organizations	48	6.4%
	3.3 Inclusion of minorities and communities at risk	17	2.3%
Outreach 138 / 18.4%	4.1 Institutional engagement and partnerships	82	10.9%
	4.2 Alternative resources: volunteers and fundraising	56	7.5%
Information management 81 / 10.8%	5.1 Internal mechanisms for information sharing	34	4.5%
	5.2 Communication with partners outside university	47	6.3%
Support 104 / 13.8%	6.1 Alternative relief for students	25	3.3%
	6.2 Alternative relief for staff	21	2.8%
	6.3 Support for external communities	58	7.7%
Structural reforms 69 / 9.2%	7.1 New bodies and mechanisms	28	3.7%
	7.2 Risk prevention and crisis management	17	2.3%
	7.3 Channeling support	9	1.2%
	7.4 Administrative bodies to channel external support	15	2.0%
Extended services 34 / 4.5%	8.1 Library and academic resources	7	0.9%
	8.2 Museums and cultural facilities	4	0.5%
	8.3 Research centers and related facilities	8	1.1%
	8.4 Other facilities	15	2.0%
Total		751	100%

**Table 1. Estimation of trends by areas and dimensions of engagement**

Graph 4 visually shows the distribution of the items per area, which is indicative of the relative priority each area of engagement received from the universities in terms of items (as individual actions or efforts) and percentage to the total items identified based on the information shared in the Special Session of the MOOC by the USRN members. Academic contributions (research and education) have been marked in dark colour for emphasis.

<b>Research</b> 182 / 24.2%	<b>Information management</b> 81 / 10.8%	<b>Structural reforms</b> 69 / 9.2%	<b>Outreach</b> 138 / 18.4%	<b>Support</b> 104 / 13.8%
	<b>Education</b> 52 / 6.9%	<b>Extended services</b> 34 / 4.5.%		<b>Advisory role</b> 91 / 12.2%

**Graph 4: Priority areas engagement in the responses to COVID-19**

Observable trends that can be depicted from the graph refer to the relative smaller number of academic contributions as compared with non-academic ones. As shown by the darker colour in the graph, academic contributions (research and education) combined account for approximately 31% of the initiatives reported while non-academic contributions represented approximately 69% of the remaining initiatives presented in the Special Session.

From such information, universities cannot be inferred to give less priority to their academic work and the value of their contributions; however, these figures (31% versus 69%) are very telling in terms of the efforts the universities decided to share as their most representative forms of response to the pandemic in the Special Session of the MOOC.

When looking in detail into the specific information in each area of engagement, the data show that Research, as an area of engagement, achieved almost a quarter (24.2%) of all items identified. This result is related to the fact that these universities are research-intensive institutions, and thus they gave priority to their research work as a form of response to the pandemic.

Research obtained the largest number of dimensions and sub-dimensions, which is indicative of its complexity as a form of response. The dimensions identified referred to Research on: (1) Health impact, which included the sub-dimensions of a) development of new products, b) Mathematical modelling, c) New technologies, and d) Mental health; and (2) Socio-economic-environmental impact, which included the sub-dimensions of a) Contention of spread of virus and b) Economic, social and environmental impacts and recovery.

The next observable trend is that Outreach, as a form of engagement referring to the interactions of universities with society outside the campus, came up second in the list with almost 18.4% of initiatives as response. This result is indicative that these institutions gave priority to collaborations and partnerships to respond to the pandemic by engaging with local, regional, national and international communities and stakeholders, particularly with partners outside of academia.

Similar to Research, Outreach also had a large number of dimensions that suggest complex forms of interactions. The dimensions identified for this area refer to: (1) Institutional engagement and partnerships, which included the sub-dimensions of a) Production and distribution of medical goods, b) Strategic networking, and c) Dispatching health and other professionals; and (2) Tapping on alternative resources, which included the sub-dimensions of a) Promotion and organization of volunteer activities and b) Fundraising efforts.

Support came up third in the list of areas of engagement, with 13.8% of items describing initiatives that the universities mainly implemented through administrative procedures. Based on the beneficiaries, the following dimensions were identified as Support for: a) Students; b) Staff; and c) External communities.

Advisory role, as an area of engagement, accounted for 12.2% of the items identified. This area portrays initiatives in which universities fostered relations with society by offering technical advice and research output to their own communities and policy makers, such as governments, inter-governmental agencies and organizations or the public. Advisory role include three dimensions: a) Risk management in universities, b) Partnerships and c) Inclusion.

Information management received 10.8% of the items identified, and reflected the initiatives of universities to boost the production, gathering and dissemination of critical information related to the pandemic. This area is divided into two dimensions, namely, a) Internal information share and b) Communication outside campus.

Structural reforms accounted for 9.2% of the items identified and referred to how the universities adapted and updated their institutional organizations, internal governance methods and management styles to respond to the pandemic by promoting more efficient information share, decision making and implementation. As an area of engagement, Structural reforms was divided into four dimensions, including a) New bodies, b) Risk management, c) Support of other organizations as a channel, and d) Effective administration.

Education obtained only 6.9% of the items identified from the narratives describing the universities' responses to the pandemic in the Special Session. This result does not necessarily imply that universities did not make major contributions in this area; rather, efforts focused on ensuring continuity and quality in the delivery of education mainly through online learning, triggering a whole new area of support and innovation.

Education, being a core mission of every university, stands out as a clear domain to produce social impacts. The pandemic presented a major challenge to all educational institutions, yet universities were resilient and found new ways to grow, revise and to re-envision themselves. Education was divided in four dimensions that reflect the diversity of actions taken and described: a) Class formats, b) New contents, c) Training and skill development, and d) Technical aspects.

Lastly, Extended services obtained 4.5% of the items identified, and going beyond the more typical forms of engagement, these universities mentioned unusual yet very relevant, efforts to serve their communities and society through their services. Initiatives in this area were perhaps less visible, but very valuable. The dimensions included a) Library and other resources, b) Museums and cultural facilities, c) Research centres and related facilities, and d) Other facilities.

Overall, the narratives describing the responses to the pandemic by these universities represent a wide range of innovative solutions and approaches to the different problems and challenges these universities faced because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Notably, at this point, the information shared in the Special Session of the MOOC on USR only represents examples of proactive policies and good practices to promote the positive impacts of universities on society at large. By no means must the data in this study be considered as a comprehensive or exhaustive inventory or measures implemented by the universities examined in this study; instead, the experiences described in the MOOC can serve as a source of inspiration for all universities seeking to boost their own social roles and impacts.

## 5. Conclusion

Experiences shared by the universities in the USRN through the MOOC, and particularly in the Special Session on Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, offer ample space for reflection and learning, not only for the meaning of the USR concept but also in terms of its diverse understanding, depth of its implication and the need to further include the factors and elements beyond the academic contributions of universities in the analysis of USR policies.

General observations resulting from this study relate to the fact that USR permeates all aspects in the life of universities, and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic serve as clear evidence that socially engaged universities can make valuable social impacts on policies and projects aimed to reduce risk and manage crises. Universities can also be major drivers of change as they offer safe environments to their own communities, representing not only secure spaces in themselves but also promoting good practices that are replicable in settings beyond their campus.

Despite the severity of the calamities brought by the COVID-19 crisis, universities not only showed resilience in their drive to continue their work, but also became proactive parts of the solution to problems in a very wide range of ways. The responses of these universities to the pandemic demonstrate a shared sense of responsibility among members of the USRN, and corroborate that the USR concept and its implications are intimately related to each institution's mission and context.

Key findings from this study relate to the need to reconsider USR as a wider concept, a notion that is more open, inclusive and encompassing to the real diversity of options in terms of policy and measures that universities have at hand to serve their communities. This study reveals that in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, universities can diversify their own pool of engagements in at least eight academic and non-academic areas of engagement with dimensions that produce deep and wide social impacts.

Another key contribution of this study is the creation of a new framework of analysis that not only allows to identify areas of responses where universities engage in, but more importantly a means to help universities spot and determine USR priorities based on how they allocate their efforts and initiatives.

The study provides evidence of the influence and connection between academic and non-academic engagements in relation to applying USR to all aspects of the life of universities. While conventional perspectives primarily associate USR with education and research, this study—despite limitations—reveals that non-academic contributions significantly outweigh the academic ones. The combined percentage of Education- and Research-related initiatives accounted for only 31.1% of all the items identified, indicating that the majority of responses to the pandemic are non-academic projects or initiatives.

By examining the responses of universities to the pandemic and quantifying their institutional efforts, this study provides new insights into their decision making and the underlying priorities that shape their endeavours. While the application of these findings universally to the entire higher education sector may be challenging, this study presents a starting point to better comprehend the real impact of the USRN members on the disruptive event of the pandemic.

## 6. Future Research

This study may motivate and prompt new research in related areas that include but are not limited to the development of new frameworks that can help assess the measures implemented by universities to address the COVID-19 pandemic or other disruptions and disasters. Further research must be encouraged regarding innovative approaches that challenge traditional and limited understandings of USR and its implications, or in policy design and decision making on how USR can be incorporated in other areas of the life of universities.

## 7. Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the USRN Secretariat, and the members in the network that made the *Special Session on Universities Response to COVID-19* in the MOOC *Introduction to USR* possible.

## References

- Cai, X., Fry, C. V. & Wagner, C. S. (2021). International collaboration during the COVID-19 crisis: autumn 2020 developments. *Scientometrics*, 126(4), 3683–3692. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-021-03873-7>
- Sánchez, R. G., Bolívar, M. P. R. & López-Hernández, A. M. (2013). Online disclosure of university social responsibility: a comparative study of public and private US universities. *Environmental Education Research*, 19(6), 709–746. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2012.749976>
- Hale, T., Angrist N., Cameron-Blake, E., Hallas, L., Kira, B., Majumdar, S., Petherick, A., Phillips, T., Tatlow, H. & Webster, S. (2020). Variation in government responses to COVID-19. *Blavatnik School of Government working paper*, 31, No.11. <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/publications/variation-government-responses-covid-19>
- Ifijeh, G. & Yusuf, F. O. (2020). Covid-19 pandemic and the future of Nigeria's university system: The quest for libraries' relevance. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 46(6), 102226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102226>
- Jorge, M. L. & Peña, F. J. A. (2017). Analysing the literature on university social responsibility: A review of selected higher education journals. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 71(4), 302–319. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12122>
- Marinoni, G., Van't Land, H. & Jensen, T. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education Around the World. Global Survey Report. *International Association of Universities Global Report*, 23. [https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau\\_covid19\\_and\\_he\\_survey\\_report\\_final\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau_covid19_and_he_survey_report_final_may_2020.pdf)
- Palacio, F. & Sadehvandi, N. (2022). Creating an International Collaborative MOOC on University Social Responsibility. *Texas Education Review*, Vol 10, Issue 1. <http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/21507>
- Palacio, F. & Choy, M. (2019). Building a responsible brand in higher education underpinned by University Social Responsibility. *QS-APPLE 2019*. Proceedings of the Conference: Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Aging Societies. Japan.
- Rababah, A., Nikitina, N. I., Grebennikova, V. M., Gardanova, Z. R., Zekiy, A. O., Ponkratov, V. V., Bashkirova, N. N., Kuznetsov, N. V., Volkova, T. I., Vasiljeva, M. V., Ivleva, M. I. & Elyakova, I. D. (2021). University Social Responsibility during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Universities' Case in the BRICS Countries. *Sustainability*, 13(13), 7035. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13137035>
- Shek, D. T. L. & Hollister, R. M. (2017). *University social responsibility and quality of life: A Global Survey of Concepts and Experiences*. Springer.
- Tetřevová, L. & Sabolova, V. (2010). University stakeholder management and university social responsibility. *WSEAS transactions on advances in engineering education*, 7(7), 224–233. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228459318\\_University\\_Stakeholder\\_Management\\_and\\_University\\_Social\\_Responsibility](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228459318_University_Stakeholder_Management_and_University_Social_Responsibility)

- Yang, B. & Huang, C. (2021). Turn crisis into opportunity in response to COVID-19: experience from a Chinese University and future prospects. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(1), 121–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1859687>
- Yoshioka, T. & Maeda, Y. (2020). COVID-19 Stigma Induced by Local Government and Media Reporting in Japan: It's Time to Reconsider Risk Communication Lessons from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Disaster. *Journal of Epidemiology*, 30(8), 372–373. [https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/jea/30/8/30\\_JE20200247/\\_article](https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/jea/30/8/30_JE20200247/_article)

**PARALLEL SESSION II-B***Track 3: Driving Institutional Changes for USR***Collaborative Research in the 21st Century:  
Strengths and Challenges of Sub-Saharan African Universities****AUTHOR****Titilayo Olubunmi Olaposi**

Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria

Dr Titilayo Olubunmi Olaposi is a Principal Research Fellow at the African Institute for Science Policy and Innovation of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. She holds Ph.D in Technology Management. Her major research focus is the areas of Technological Entrepreneurship, Innovation Management and Research Management. She is a recipient of the African Dissertation Research Fellowship (ADDRF), ADDRf Postdoctoral Fellowship and IREX UASP Fellowship.

Email: [olaposititi@gmail.com](mailto:olaposititi@gmail.com)

**PRESENTATION**

- ▶ [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- ▶ [Video playback](#)

## Collaborative Research in the 21st Century: Strengths and Challenges of Sub-Saharan African Universities

---

**Titilayo Olubunmi Olaposi**, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria

### Abstract

Research is the bedrock for innovation, and requires effective management to accelerate the latter's advancement. In many sub-Saharan African universities where resources are scarce, the ability to access international research funding is a key concern. The reality is that currently, world-class research is collaborative and international in nature. Project funding is highly competitive, and to ensure the readiness for success in collaborative research, institutions and their strengths and weaknesses need to be assessed and addressed. This study uses qualitative research methodology to investigate the main strengths and weaknesses of five (5) universities from five countries out of 10 members of the African Research Universities Alliance. From each institution, two researchers, specifically fellows of International Research and Exchange Board's IREX Universities Administration Support Program, are purposively selected for interview. Results show that the establishment of an office of sponsored research, provision of holistic research support services, existence of a Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, regular capacity building for researchers, clear university policy for sponsored research and university memorandum of understanding with foreign institutions are the key factors that facilitate collaborative research in the selected institutions. However, their main challenges include inadequate infrastructure to support internationally acceptable research, inadequate financial support for staff to attend international conferences, heavy researcher workload, lack of information on international best practices and funding opportunities, weak systematic learning and adaptation procedure and lack of incentives for researchers. This study concludes that the identified challenges for research in sub-Saharan African universities need to be addressed to accelerate innovation advancement.

Keywords: Africa, challenges, collaboration, research, strengths

### 1. Introduction

Research collaboration is highly essential especially amongst university researchers conducting multidisciplinary studies. Academics from all disciplines need to work with others because scientific investigations have advanced to a point where no single individual can claim to possess all the required skills, knowledge, technical know-how and resources to address current research problems. Collaborators must be carefully selected to gain what is required to achieve excellent research performance. In addition, breakthroughs in research are generally believed to be enhanced when researchers collaborate across disciplines. In such cases, innovations can be accelerated.

Research collaboration has become possible due to advances in technology that have facilitated easier communication and travel. Researchers now have access to technological devices that allow interaction from various geographical locations. In addition, researchers can attend conferences and interact with their peers in distant institutions either virtually or in-person. Virtual learning environments, a set of web applications, have enabled researchers to perform their required functions to take collaborations beyond geographical barriers (Singh, 2008). These research collaborations, such as co-authorship, can emerge from and manifest social and intellectual influences.



In many sub-Saharan African universities where resources are scarce, the ability to access international research funding is a key concern. The reality is that currently, world-class research is collaborative and international in nature. Project funding is increasingly becoming highly competitive, and to ensure their readiness for success in collaborative research, institutions and their strengths and weaknesses need to be assessed and addressed.

Literature is replete with issues relating to collaboration, however, the institution-based factors influencing its success remain unclear. The previous issues that have been addressed fall into a several categories such as the definition, measurement, sources, and factors driving the formation of research collaboration, as well as its effect on researchers' productivity and study impact.

Research collaboration has been defined in various ways. The essence is that two or more researchers come together to achieve one goal. This collaboration might involve sharing of ideas, knowledge, equipment, time, space, data, funds and other materials. At the end of such work, the outputs are to be shared by the collaborators. Issues such as findings management, conflicts of interest management, intellectual property rights and research output commercialisation require proper handling. Collaboration occurs in various forms, such as involvement in brainstorming sessions to identify or to develop a researchable concept, sharing experience to solve a research problem or active participation in carrying out experiments, data collection and/or report writing. Collaboration may occur amongst individual researchers in the same department, different departments within the same university, different universities within the same country or even amongst different countries.

Katz and Martin (1997, p.7) defined a research collaboration as 'the working together of researchers to achieve the common goal of producing new scientific knowledge.' According to Laudel (2002, p.5), research collaboration can be defined as 'a system of research activities by several actors related in a functional way and coordinated to attain a research goal corresponding with these actors' research goals or interests'.

To measure research collaboration, many scholars support the use of multiple authorship (or multiple address papers) as a measurement index (Smith, 1958). Scholars have observed an increasing trend in multiple authorship over the years and seem to reach a consensus that this scenario reflects an increase in research collaboration (Katz & Martin, 1997).

Factors driving research collaboration include funding sources and patterns (Heffner, 1981), desire for institutional and individual researcher visibility and recognition (Crane, 1972), increasing specialisation in science (Smith, 1958) and advancement of scientific disciplines (Goffman & Warren, 1980).

## 2. Funding Sources

Research collaboration is complex in nature. The reason is the involvement of complex human interactions amongst researchers (collaborators) for a period of time. Challenges of collaborative research have been established in extant literature, including difference in styles of investigators, differences in styles of research within and across disciplines, differences between academic and industrial research with respect to sharing of data and results or ethical considerations that may affect the research across institutions and nations.

Various studies have documented how teams of research professionals work together. To be considered high performing, a collaborative research team must consist of 'diverse members who are committed to common outcomes' (Cheruvilil et al., 2014).

Both researchers and their institutions have roles to play to achieve great success in collaborative research. Prior to establishing research collaboration, researchers need to declare any actual, apparent or perceived conflicts of interest as soon as possible. Researchers must also comply with multi-institutional agreements. On their part, institutions have to provide clear policies on issues relating to research collaboration, such as material sharing agreement, non-disclosure agreement and management of accountability, conflicts of interest and intellectual property issues. Management of collaborative research requires the provision of certain resources and infrastructure by institutions. Institutional involvement in collaborative research is quite germane because its management is vital to its success.

### 3. Research Methods

This study uses qualitative research methodology to investigate the main strengths and weaknesses of five (5) universities from five countries out of 10 members of the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA). Two researchers, specifically fellows of International Research and Exchange Board's Universities Administration Support Program (UASP), are purposefully selected for interview from each institution. UASP is a programme that assists mid- to senior-level leaders (managers, administrators and faculty) from across Africa to develop their capacity to manage research and knowledge transfer.

The fellows are considered qualified to provide correct information for this study because they hold leadership positions at universities in sub-Saharan Africa and thereby have first-hand information and experience on the issues under discussion. In addition, these fellows have undergone International Research and Exchange Board's UASP research management course. Therefore, they understand the language of research management and have also carried out assignments that make them familiar with the issues discussed.

The interviews are carried out virtually via Zoom. The researcher has prepared guiding questions for the discussion. Apart from the introduction that enable the collection of socio-demographic data, the respondents are asked seven main questions, as follows:

- How would you define research collaboration?
- Have you been involved in collaborative research? What is the nature of the collaboration?
- What benefits have you personally derived from collaborative research?
- In terms of percentage, how would you rate your university's performance on collaborative research? (Base this on governance framework components – clear objectives, standards, organisational structures, policies, procedures, enabling environment, monitoring, corrective action, learning and adaptation.)
- In your own opinion, what factors have enhanced your university's performance?
- What challenges have hampered your university's performance?
- How has collaborative research benefited your institution and its researchers?

### 4. Results

The results show the research collaboration occurs in sub-Saharan African universities in various forms and magnitude.

Several universities collaborate with the industry and other government institutions. The University of Rwanda was reported by one of the respondents to consistently and closely work with government institutions and civil society.

In addition, the results show that the establishment of an office of sponsored research, provision of holistic research support services, existence of a Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, regular capacity building for researchers, clear university policy for sponsored research and university memorandum of understanding with foreign institutions are key factors that facilitate collaborative research in the selected institutions. However, their key challenges include inadequate infrastructure to support internationally acceptable research, inadequate financial support for staff to attend international conferences, heavy researcher workload, lack of information on international best practices and funding opportunities, weak systematic learning and adaptation procedure and lack of incentives for researchers.

## 5. Lack of Effective Communication of Policies

‘... research has been given a new organisational platform under a new director and new set of policy framework. However, the problem is, the research vision and goals are not yet adequately communicated to the stakeholders and faculties.’

This contribution is supported by another participant by saying that:

‘I agree with you. Communication remains a major hinderance for research to flourish especially in African settings.’

The second respondent adds the factor of leadership and commitment, as follows:

‘... committed leadership is very much needed if this is to improve.’

Communication is highly essential for dissemination, implementation or enforcement of research policies, guidelines and standards. In several universities, visions, missions and goals are effectively communicated by having them clearly written in easy to access formats such as fliers and newsletters that are distributed to faculty, staff, visitors and other stakeholders. Communication in research may involve personal interactions. Other universities have a dedicated staff for this task. A participant is that:

‘The Research Management Officer in my institution embarks on sensitisation visits to the various faculties in the university with the opportunity of interacting with academics to promote ... research engagement and impact delivery.’

The strategy of sensitisation visits is supported by another participant and its effectiveness in raising awareness was highlighted. An addition to the strategy is to disseminate research-related information at departmental meetings. This task is done by the research administrators and not the department heads.

To facilitate improvement in research communication in African universities, the respondents identify the need to have a Research Communication Officer at each Faculty.

Efforts must be made to ensure that policies are extensively communicated, and thus universities need to work on creating effective communication mechanisms.

## 6. Research Compliance

In several universities where the vision, mission, goals and policies are documented and disseminated, the issue of compliance is identified.

## 7. University Website

Another medium used by universities for dissemination of research related information is the university website, which can vary in format. A few websites are highly user friendly whilst others are not; a few are built purposely to support research whilst some provide general information.

## 8. Benefits of Collaboration

- Collaboration between university and government institutions or civil society produces access to extra funding, research opportunities and other collaborations. For example, the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Rwanda works with Rwanda Biomedical Centre, Global Health, Human Resource for Health and National Science for Science and Technology amongst others to implement community projects (both intervention and research) of national significance. Every form of collaboration serve as a source of capacity building for staff, unlimited access to data and of support.
- International mentoring and support for new academic programmes are reported to have emanated from research collaboration. International institutions have assisted sub-Saharan African universities to set up post-graduate programmes and have mentored their staff.
- Research collaboration improves university visibility and the capacity to compete for funding opportunities.

## 9. Strengths

- *Existence of Postgraduate programmes.* The ability of several African universities to run master and doctoral programmes has served as a pathway to training researchers. This is the bedrock for collaborative research; without trained researchers, there can be no collaborators.
- *Availability of young and vibrant academic staff.* A young age is an opportunity that any organisation can harness for growth and development. Young scholars are usually very enthusiastic about research because they desire rapid and smooth career advancement. They also have considerable energy that they can expend on rigorous cutting-edge research. If young scholars were well guided and mentored, they would be highly productive and resourceful, especially in sponsored research.

The availability of young and vibrant academic staff is identified as a strength for universities in sub-Saharan Africa.

‘Our university’s employees are mostly under 45 years and early career researchers. This explains their hunger to prove themselves and their desire to put the university on a global map. They are therefore hardworking and eager to learn.’

Global funding agencies mainly focus their funding on early-career researchers and thereby promotes their research collaboration. According to a respondent, ‘Having more young academics ... portends longer serving years for the university ...’

However, the ratio of senior and early-career researchers must be carefully balanced. Senior researchers must be sufficient in number to provide leadership and mentorship to young researchers. A respondent provides such insight from the experience of their university, where senior staff are fewer compared with junior staff. Most of their academics are between Assistant lecturers and Lecturer I. This situation hinders the advancement and management of research, in general, if faculties have no sufficient number to draft policies/strategic plans, produce guidelines, implement policies or enforce standards and guidelines for research in the university. Mentorship of early-career researchers also becomes highly difficult.

- Collaboration with the industry and other government institutions. Several sub-Saharan African universities (e.g., University of Lagos, Nigeria and University of Rwanda, Rwanda) collaborate with academics from both local and international universities, industries and governmental and non-governmental organisations for research.
- Access to government support. This factor is exemplified in Nigeria. The Nigerian government provides funding for academics under the TETFUND Tertiary Education Trust Fund to be trained in universities in developed countries to gain PhDs or postdoctoral studies. Such exposure serves as a driver of collaboration. Academics that are trained abroad usually continue to do research with their supervisors and other scholars in their host universities.
- Staff development programmes. Several universities have staff development programmes (e.g. University of Ibadan) that enable early career staff travel abroad for training.
- Presence of Centres of Excellence. Centres of excellence are established to build capacity in the West and Central African Region.
- Research Office. Where this exists, research office coordinates research activities in a university. In some institutions it is designated Central Office of Research, while in others it is called Research Management Office. However, the functions are the same.
- Provision of Small Grants. A respondent reports that their university provides small research grants that has encouraged young researchers to join various types of research. Developing interest in research is the first step to its collaborative engagement.
- Networking with international institutions. Entering into alliance and signing memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with international organisations have helped sub-Saharan African universities to engage in collaborative research.

## 10. Weaknesses

The following issues are identified as the weaknesses of sub-Saharan African universities that may hamper the advancement of research collaboration.

- *Lack of proper research management.* All respondents report inadequate mentoring programmes in their universities. In most universities, early-career researchers are left on their own to navigate the research landscape. Hence, they learn through trial by error. According to a respondent:  
  
‘Having to be pathfinders in a resource-limited country and in a highly competitive world means that it takes significantly longer time for academic staff to establish research careers.’
- *Lack of adequate training for researchers and staff.* Most researchers are not properly trained and thus lack the necessary skills for successful research collaboration. Most research administrators are also not adequately trained. This scenario inhibits the advancement of research collaboration in the universities.
- *Lack of streamlined research activities.* Although several universities have clearly written research vision, mission and goals, research activities at the Faculty and Departmental levels are not streamlined. A respondent states that this scenario may be due to lack of integrated data management across faculties.

- *Aging academics.* Unlike in the University of Rwanda where most of the academics are early careers, in some universities, most of the academics are aging. The academics are reaching the apex of their career but new and younger faculties are not employed. This is the case in government-owned universities where an embargo on employment has been implemented. This aging scenario has gross adverse effects on research collaboration. Late-career researchers tend to lose interest in rigorous study because they no longer need career advancement that in turn highly motivates young academics to work diligently.
- *Lack of enabling environment for research.* Many universities in sub-Saharan Africa do not adequately support research. Respondents report little or no incentivisation. Researchers hardly gain funding to attend international conferences and often lack visibility that can facilitate collaboration with international colleagues. Researchers often lack access to information on calls for grant applications, and even with such access, lack the credentials for qualifications, such as connections with a researcher from advanced countries.
- *Lack of clear policies and strategic plans for research.*

Having clear research goals is key to advancing research collaboration in a university.

‘... the university has articulated a clear and alluring vision for research in the coming 10 years ... with specific research goals to be met in an elaborate 10-year-strategic plan.’

Setting research goals is the first step to motivating researchers to do the needed actions such as identifying appropriate research problems and building research teams for achieving their objectives.

Several universities do not have clearly written research objectives, vision, mission and goals for researchers and staff. In other universities, these items are clearly written in research policy handbooks or strategic plan brochures.

A respondent to this study reports:

‘... in our university, we do not have research mission, vision and goals ....’

A possibility is that the university does have such goals but the respondent may not be aware of its existence if it is not clearly written or if the information is not easily accessible or well disseminated.

‘... we have cases where policies were put in place but implementation later became a big problem.’

An example is cited wherein a university formulated a policy to give incentives for published works but which failed in the implementation. If implemented, the policy has potential to enhance research collaboration, which in turn can improve the productivity of researchers.

- *High Staff Turnover.*

The effectiveness and efficiency of research management are at times affected by high staff turnover. This is a weakness in a university and has negative effects on research management and collaboration. The brain drain occurring in several sub-Saharan African universities tend to disturb the stability of inter-university collaborations. Similarly, within a university, lack of administrative specialisation and the tradition of transferring administrators within a short time period does not favour research collaboration. Administrators that work in research offices and have been trained to handle collaboration may suddenly transferred to another department where they cannot utilise the research management knowledge they have acquired. Hence, the skills, capabilities and experiences garnered over the years go down the drain. A new administrator transferred to the research office becomes a novice in matters relating to research collaboration and slows down the processes. According to a respondent:

‘High turnover of research management staff spells doom for the operations of Research Management Office. It is a serious issue which needs an urgent attention.’

A good example is the University of Ibadan where most of the research administrators deployed to the Research Management Office are executive cadre (now known as Research Administrators) and are not transferred to another department. The University of Lagos, Nigeria also has approved the Research Administrator cadre who cannot be transferred. At the University of Ibadan, whilst the Director is always a professor, an ongoing move is to create the post of Deputy Director which only Research Administrators on Level 14 (and who will retire on that level) are qualified to occupy. Similarly, the position of a Deputy Director for each Unit of the Research Management Office (finance, ethics and integrity, legal, research development and policy and research linkages) is in line. This arrangement, if well implemented, can boost research collaboration in any university. Thus, the creation of the position of Research Administrator is recommendable to all research-based universities.

## 11. Conclusion

This study shows the strengths and weaknesses of sub-Saharan African universities in relation to research collaboration to foster breakthrough research. Establishment of an office of sponsored research, provision of holistic research support services, existence of a Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, regular capacity building for researchers, clear university policy for sponsored research and university memorandum of understanding with foreign institutions were the key factors facilitating collaborative research in the selected institutions, while inadequate infrastructure to support internationally acceptable research, inadequate financial support for staff to attend international conferences, heavy researcher workload, lack of information on international best practices and funding opportunities, weak systematic learning and adaptation procedure and lack of incentives for researchers were major challenges. This paper concludes that sub-Saharan African universities need to address the identified challenges to accelerate their research innovation.

## 12. Acknowledgements

This study was enabled by the University Administration Support Program Fellowship awarded to me in 2022, administered by the International Research and Exchange Board, Washington, DC, USA and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, USA.

## References

- Cheruvilil, K. S., Soranno, P. A., Weathers, K. C., Hanson, P. C., Goring, S., Filstrup, C. T. & Read, E. K. (2014). Creating and maintaining high performing collaborative research teams: the importance of diversity and interpersonal skills. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 12(1), 31–38. <https://doi.org/10.1890/130001>
- Crane, D. (1972). *Invisible Colleges*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Down, K. (2008). UK JISC VRE Programme.
- Goffman, W. & Warren, K. S. (1980). *Scientific information systems and the principle of selectivity*. Praeger Publishers. New York, p.127.
- Heffner, A. G. (1981). Funded research, multiple authorship, and subauthorship collaboration in four disciplines. *Scientometrics*, 3(1), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02021860>
- Katz, J. S. & Martin, B. R. (1997). What is research collaboration? *Research Policy*, 26(1), 1–18. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0048-7333\(96\)00917-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0048-7333(96)00917-1)

- Laudel, G. (2002). What do we measure by co-authorships? *Research Evaluation*, 11(1), 3–15. <https://doi.org/10.3152/147154402781776961>
- Lawani, S. M. (1986). Some bibliometric correlates of quality in scientific research. *Scientometrics*, 9(1–2), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02016604>
- Singh, K. B. (2008). Building virtual research communities using web technology. *Sourcebook of Models for Biomedical Research* 2:5. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-59745-285-4\\_78](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-59745-285-4_78)
- Smith, M. (1958). The trend toward multiple authorship in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 13(10), 596–599. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040487>



## PARALLEL SESSION V-A

*Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility*

### Strengthening Faculty Engagement and Partnerships through a Community of Practice

#### AUTHORS

#### Audrey Falk

Merrimack College, USA

Professor Audrey Falk is a Country Director, USA, Northeast Region for the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association. She is a professor at Merrimack College in Massachusetts in the Winston School of Education and Social Policy. Professor Falk is the Director of the Master's Program in Community Engagement and Chair of the Department of Applied Human Development and Community Studies. She received the Chair Academy's International Exemplary Leadership Award in 2021. She completed her Master's degree at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education with a focus on Risk and Prevention and her doctorate at Boston University with a specialization in Community Agency Educational Administration.

Email: [falka@merrimack.edu](mailto:falka@merrimack.edu)

#### Barrett Brenton

Binghamton University, USA

Prof Brenton Brenton is primarily responsible for professional development initiatives to further faculty and student participation in a variety of community-based teaching, learning and scholarship activities at Binghamton University. He is an active practitioner of applied community-engaged learning and research, with a broad record of national and global scholarship that developed with his position as a professor of anthropology and faculty coordinator for academic service-learning and community-based research at St. John's University in NYC. He received a BA in anthropology from the University of Nebraska Lincoln and a MA/PhD in biocultural anthropology from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Contact Brenton for aid in conceptualizing and facilitating engagement ideas, course design and designation.

Email: [bbrenton@binghamton.edu](mailto:bbrenton@binghamton.edu)

#### Martina Jordaan

University of Pretoria, South Africa

Martina Jordaan is Head: Community Engagement Research and Postgraduate Studies at the Mamelodi campus, University of Pretoria. She was previously responsible for a compulsory undergraduate module, Community-Based Project, of the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology. Annually more than 1600 students enroll for the module and they are involved in more than 570 projects in various communities. Martina has a doctorate in History and a Master's in Development studies. She was also head of the Education Museum in Pretoria and thereafter responsible for the development of pre-schools in the informal settlements next to Pretoria as well as skills development of staff of various schools in Pretoria.

Email: [martina.jordaan@up.ac.za](mailto:martina.jordaan@up.ac.za)

#### PRESENTATION

- [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- [Video playback](#)

## Strengthening Faculty Engagement and Partnerships through a Community of Practice

---

**Audrey Falk**, Merrimack College, USA

**Barrett Brenton**, Binghamton University, USA

**Martina Jordaan**, University of Pretoria, South Africa

### Abstract

The COVID-19 disrupted teaching and learning practices in higher education institutions across the world, it also had a particularly complex impact on community engagement. Community-engaged faculty and staff were tasked with identifying alternatives for students to support communities and make meaning of those experiences, sometimes without actually entering these communities. A virtual community of practice (CoP) supported seven faculty and staff members of diverse higher education institutions in planning for, implementing and processing the transformation of community-engaged teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the proper representation of diverse institutions, the group benefited from learning about various practices and strategies to support students and faculty members in community engagement during the pandemic.

The CoP was organised through Campus Compact and involved faculty and staff members from six institutions based in the US and one in South Africa. The focus of this group was on supporting faculty members in their community engagement work. These scholars came together for six 90-minute Zoom sessions from February to April 2021 for roughly one year into the ongoing pandemic. This learning community provided a space to reflect on the impacts of the coronavirus on the community engagement work taking place on our campuses and in our communities. This paper examines the process by which communities of practice were utilised to strengthen community engagement work and points to new directions for the field based on lessons learned from the pandemic. Furthermore, this study demonstrates how this CoP has resulted in new partnerships and initiatives that provide enhanced opportunities for students as well as an expanded vision for the practice of higher education community engagement.

Keywords: Community of practice, Campus Compact, COVID-19, community engagement, virtual

### 1. Introduction

This paper reflects on a learning community organised through Campus Compact (<https://compact.org/>), which focused on strengthening faculty participation in community-engaged research, teaching and service. The focus is on the planning and implementation of this community of practice (CoP), as well as major themes that emerged across the represented institutions. The shared information may be helpful for institutions seeking to bolster faculty understanding of community engagement and staff members' capacity to get involved and provide support for community-engaged faculty members.

The CoP was organised by Campus Compact and a US-based non-profit organisation. Campus Compact focused on civic and community engagement implemented by higher education institutions (HEIs). In particular, Campus Compact helps member institutions build knowledge, skills and capacities in civic and community engagement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Campus Compact organised virtual CoPs, which were advertised and opened for non-Campus Compact members.

One of the CoPs advertised was developed around topics linked to supporting faculty members in their community engagement work. This specific CoP consisted of six HEIs across the USA and one from South Africa. These institutions represented large public comprehensive research and media institutions, as well as small private and public colleges and universities.

CoPs are learning communities comprising professionals seeking to gain knowledge and resources to be more effective in their work. The idea of CoPs emerged from the literature on organisational change and organisational development. The idea is that, for organisations to be more efficient and effective, the human beings who make up such organisations must maintain a growth mindset and seek opportunities to utilise information to create change within the organisations.

The goal of the CoP was to assist in identifying strategies to engage faculties, to consider ways to share resources and approaches with faculty members and to explore various approaches for faculties to partner with communities. The CoP assists in how faculty members can be supported to develop community engagement learning outcomes for students and how faculties are supported to disseminate their community engagement practices.

## **2. Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning**

Community engagement includes community-engaged research, course-based community engagement, academic service-learning and extracurricular community engagement activities. In many ways, university community engagement changed fundamentally during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cristofolletti & Pinheiro, 2022). For one, the pandemic cancelled and delayed certain types of community engagement. However, during the pandemic, dialogues about the role of HEIs in communities was deepened. For example, Ohmer et al. (2022) reflected that community engagement requires flexibility and adaptability to address the needs of communities and societies. As such, online service-learning became a meaningful alternative and a more assessable choice, even after COVID-19 (Veyvoda & Van Cleave, 2020). However, during the pandemic, certain challenges for community engagement emerged, including the suspension of partnerships. In particular, students who opted for an online option faced the problem of community partners not having the capacity to supervise and monitor those who wanted to continue with their projects online (Couillou et al., 2022). However, online community projects were an option for many universities to continue with their respective community projects (Ngai et al., 2023; Jordaan & Mennega, 2022).

## **3. Communities of Practice**

The literature indicates that community engagement in HEIs has become more complex, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is important that lessons learned during the pandemic should continue after the COVID-19 era. The literature also addressed the value of CoPs, especially remote CoPs, which are more accessible and flexible for members. This format, however, may have a few challenges, including a lack of commitment and engagement and a low sense of community.

Lave and Wenger (1991) were the first to introduce the concept of a CoP. A CoP comprises people who share their expertise and individual experiences for a common enterprise (Brown & Duguid, 1991; 1998). Within a CoP, new knowledge is created, problems are solved and experiences are shared (Corcoran & Duane, 2019). A CoP can also play an important role in the development of higher education faculties while enabling professional learning to take place (Stark & Smith, 2016).

Even though online CoPs have been previously discussed by researchers, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the idea required revisions (Ardichvili et al., 2003). Online CoPs have different values, including being able to connect geographically (Li et al., 2009) and reaching more members. They are also more convenient (Delgado et al., 2021) and facilitate easier participation (Bolisani et al., 2020). Zhang and Watts (2008) reported that recordings of online CoPs have

various values, including the opportunity to listen to past sessions. Online CoPs also foster interdisciplinary dialogues and give participants a safe office or home space from which they can still be part of CoPs (Yang et al., 2020). Yet, even though it is easy to develop an online CoP, developing a community within an online platform can be quite challenging. Various problems include technological challenges (Zhang & Watts, 2008), such as device and Internet connection issues. Online CoPs may also prevent members from being engaged or engaging (Ardichvili et al., 2003). They may also be unwilling to share their experiences for fear of judgement (Delgado et al., 2021).

#### 4. The CoP Structure

The discussed CoP created an opportunity to explore how faculty members could be supported in their community engagement work. The facilitators who volunteered and were connected to Campus Compact developed a schedule that included a group meeting every alternative week and facilitators' meetings every other week. The sessions were purposefully organised to include discussions and the collection and sharing of resources. During the first session, group norms were established. The sessions comprised six bi-weekly Zoom sessions of 90 minutes each. The sessions ran from February to April 2021. An agenda was forwarded to the participants in advance, and any resources were shared on a Google drive. Before the first session, all the participants completed a Google form that was aligned with Campus Compact's competencies to support engaged faculty development.

Generally, Campus Compact allows facilitators to decide how to facilitate the sessions. Thus, the CoP members were interested in how to apply shared knowledge to their work environments and home institutions. A survey forwarded to the attendees served as a guide in shaping how the sessions were organised. The topics discussed during the sessions included the following: understanding the context of faculty work, designing and facilitating professional development and sustaining and encouraging institutional transformation. The CoP also provided a safe environment in which participants can reflect on and share how the pandemic impacted community engagement.

Various cross-institutional themes were identified during the sessions. It was important for each campus to have community engagement champions. However, it was also challenging to engage additional faculty members on community engagement projects. Balancing online resources and networking opportunities with in-person engagement and training was important in casting the widest net, so to speak, to engage faculty members. The size of the institution, the type of institution and its location all affect how students, faculty members and administrators perceive community engagement. Thus, the opportunity to connect across institutions was embraced as most of the institutions have a few community engagement staff members.

#### 5. Reflections of Participants

After completing the sessions, the participants and facilitators created an opportunity to reflect on the process through a Google form. The facilitators reflected on the CoP as follows.

Audrey Falk from Merrimack College, USA: 'I enjoyed collaborating with Barrett and all of our participants in creating a shared learning space, particularly in the context of COVID-19, where all of our institutions were grappling with common and timely challenges. We were all seeking to re-envision community engagement and faculty engagement in the context of the pandemic.'

Barrett Brenton from Binghamton University, USA: 'As a co-facilitator with Audrey, our primary role was to embrace an equity-based framework through which all the participants could bring and embody their diversity of identities, experiences and ways of knowing. It was so rewarding for me to listen, learn, share and be inspired for my own work by the various individual and institutional strategies being used to support a community-engaged faculty.'

Martina Jordaan, a participant: ‘The Campus Compact CoP allowed me to share my experiences and national community engagement practices with fellow global practitioners. I value personal development opportunities [and] the frequent engagement allowed me to gain valuable insights from colleagues from the USA. In addition, the networking opportunities allowed me to implement new ideas and concepts into my work environment.’

Kara Bruce Love from Miami University, USA: ‘Participating in this CoP gave me a chance to immerse myself in best practices, learning from the experience of my peers and through the literature we discussed. Having a small group pushed me to contribute and allowed me to find my own voice when discussing community-engaged learning.’

Nickki Pearce Dawes from Lasell University Newton, USA: ‘My participation in this CoP was a great way to learn from my peers who were also focused on supporting the faculty in their community-engaged work. The CoP was a space where we could both receive and give feedback.’

Sarah Brackham from Southwestern University, USA: ‘I sought out Campus Compact’s CoP because I was looking for ways to re-engage with community-engaged learning literature and connect with peers outside my university. Through bi-weekly discussions, I learned from other participants and from the resources that were shared. I have already utilised some of these resources to implement an inaugural community-engaged department institute.’

Maria Trogolo from the University of South Florida, USA: ‘Learning from colleagues at different kinds of institutions was thought-provoking. I was inspired by my colleagues’ dedication and focus on impact for positive social change.’

Various other projects and initiatives were launched from the CoP, including a visit by Professor Audrey Falk to South Africa and a visit to the USA by Dr Martina Jordaan. Two conference presentations and a book chapter were also produced from the CoP. Furthermore, Dr Jordaan nominated Professor Falk to be a Country Director for the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association (HETL). From this association, Professor Falk and Dr Jordaan collaborated in an e-engagement initiative involving the country directors from Iraq, India and Morocco. This partnership delivered a conference presentation, a webinar and a book chapter (Falk et al., 2023).

Through the follow-up CoPs, Dr Jordaan managed to connect with other community engagement faculty members and staff. In particular, she was able to host four online webinars with CoP facilitators and participants for staff of the University of Pretoria, such as Professor Timothy Stanton, *Emeritus Professor* at Stanford University, USA.

## 6. Recommendations for Starting a Community of Practice

The small number of participants in the CoP ensured active participation by all. The size of a CoP is important in ensuring quality engagement by all and in motivating participants to find their own voice in the discussion groups. It is important to embrace an equity-based framework where all participants can share their diverse identities, experiences and ways of knowing. A strong structure was also necessary, such as meeting at the same time and on the same day of the week. The assigned six sessions were manageable for both the participants and the facilitators. Providing the participants with a reading for each session helped establish the foundation of the discussions, although it has been proposed that there should be less participants to ensure greater accountability. As the participants may be living in different time zones, it is important to be sensitive to such differences. The success of the CoP can also be ascribed to the short-term nature of the project. In fact, the six sessions were sufficient without burdening the facilitators or attendees too much.

## 7. Limitations of the Study

The CoP group only represented one group of CoPs organised by Campus Compact. This was also a very small CoP with two facilitators and five participants. Thus, the study does not reflect all the outcomes of all CoPs organised by Campus Compact, nor does it reflect the outcomes of a large CoP. The CoP also took place at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic—a time when all the participants were still under lockdown.

## 8. Conclusion

Community engagement is one of the pillars of higher education. Such an activity impacts student learning, professional development and career development. In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the conduct of community engagement outreach within HEIs. In response, online CoP was introduced to allow faculty members to connect globally and solve problems across geographical divides. These global CoP connections can be motivational and inspirational for faculty members and staff.

Indeed, community engagement is an essential component of higher education. It prepares students for the world of work and prepares them to become engaged citizens. Through community engagement, HEIs can make a real impact on the broader society. The CoP has been shown to have many benefits for professional development and for community engagement. For one, it provides an opportunity for all the participants to feel more connected and less isolated. It also enables the participants to define a CoP, the group's purpose and the structure that supports this purpose. Furthermore, a formal CoP allows attendees and facilitators to continue with the relationship that has been built. Finally, various other projects and partnerships were developed as a result of this CoP.

## References

- Ardichvili, A., Page, V. J. & Wentling, T. L. (2003). Motivation and barriers to participation in virtual knowledge sharing communities of practice. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 7(1), 64–77. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13673270310463626>
- Armer, T., McCoy, K., Verrett, B., Williams, A., Menson, K. & Lima, M. (2020). Telling our stories together: How universities and community partners co-create engaged scholarship. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 13(1), 50–60. <https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/jces/vol13/iss1/6/>
- Bolisani, E., Fedeli, M., Bierema, L. L. & De Marchi, V. (2020). United we adapt: communities of practice to face the CoronaVirus crisis in higher education. *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 19(4), 454–458. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14778238.2020.1851615>
- Brown, J. S. & Duguid, P. (1991). Organizational Learning and Communities-of-Practice: Toward a unified view of working, learning, and innovation. *Organization Science*, 2(1), 40–57. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2.1.40>
- Brown, J. S. & Duguid, P. (1998). Organizing knowledge. *California Management Review*, 40(3), 90–111. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41165945>
- Corcoran, N. M. & Duane, A. (2019). Using social networks and communities of practice to promote staff collaboration in higher education. In *Knowledge management and organizational learning* (pp. 157–174). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29872-2\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29872-2_9)
- Couillou, R. J., McGee, B. L., Carr, A. S. & Lamberth, T. (2022). Pandemic partnerships: Community/university experiences with community-based learning in the COVID-19 era. *Journal of Experiential Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10538259221145935>
- Cristofolletti, E. C. & Pinheiro, R. (2022). Taking stock: The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on University–Community engagement. *Industry and Higher Education*, 37(2), 251–264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09504222221119927>
- Delgado, J., Siow, S., De Groot, J., McLane, B. & Hedlin, M. (2021). Towards collective moral resilience: The potential of communities of practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 47(6), 374–382. <https://doi.org/10.1136/medethics-2020-106764>
- Falk, A. F., Jordaan, M., Saeed, S. T., Chaoui, N. E. H. & Rao, M. B. (2023). Exploring the literature and rationale for global e-cultural learning. *Handbook of Research on Fostering Social Justice Through Intercultural and Multilingual Communication*, 218–244, IGI Global.

- Jordaan, M. & Mennega, N. (2022). The changing face of community engagement in a time of crisis-insights into an undergraduate service-learning course. *International Case Studies in Service Learning*, vol. 47, 85–97, Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2055-364120220000047006>
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge University Press.
- Li, L. C., Grimshaw, J. M., Nielsen, C., Judd, M., Coyte, P. C. & Graham, I. D. (2009). Evolution of Wenger's concept of community of practice. *Implementation Science*, 4(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-4-11>
- Ngai, G., Lau, K. H. & Kwan, K. P. (2023). A large-scale study of students' e-service-learning experiences and outcomes during the pandemic. *Journal of Experiential Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10538259231171852>
- Ohmer, M., Finkelstein, C., Dostilio, L., Durham, A. & Melnick, A. (2022) University-community engagement during a pandemic: Moving beyond 'helping' to public problem solving. *Metropolitan Universities*, 33(1), 81–91. <https://doi.org/10.18060/25329>
- Pyrko, I., Dörfler, V. & Eden, C. (2017). Thinking together: What makes communities of practice work? *Human Relations*, 70(4), 389–409. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726716661040>
- Stark, A. M. & Smith, G. A. (2016). Communities of practice as agents of future faculty development. *The Journal of Faculty Development*, 30(2), 59–67.
- Veyvoda, M. A. & Van Cleave, T. J. (2020). Re-imagining community-engaged learning: Service-learning in communication sciences and disorders courses during and after COVID-19. *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups*, 5(6), 1542–1551. [https://doi.org/10.1044/2020\\_PERSP-20-00146](https://doi.org/10.1044/2020_PERSP-20-00146)
- Welch, M. & Plaxton-Moore, S. (2017). Faculty development for advancing community engagement in higher education: Current trends and future directions. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 21(2), 131–165. <https://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/jheoe/article/view/1333/1330>
- Yang, L., O'Reilly, K. & Houghton, J. (2020). Silver-lining of COVID-19: A virtual community of practice for faculty development. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 12(3), 1–9.
- Zhang, W. & Watts, S. (2008). Online communities as communities of practice: a case study. *Journal of Knowledge Management*.

**PARALLEL SESSION V-B***Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility***Responding to the Signs of the Times: Opportunities for Civic Engagement with the Health Sciences Program During the COVID-19 Pandemic****AUTHORS****Ma. Criselda Dana Buñag****Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines**

Ms Ma. Criselda Dana P. Buñag is a Student Affairs Professional from the Office for Social Concern and Involvement (OSCI). She is currently part of the National Service Training Program 12-Bigkis Program and serves as the program's learning design coordinator. Together with the other learning design coordinators, she ensures that the objectives and activities of the OSCI-facilitated formation programs are aligned. She graduated from the Ateneo de Manila with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences and a Minor in Economics and Specialization in Cultural Heritage. She also has a Master of Arts in History. She has been with the OSCI for 13 years and is also a lecturer at the Department of History of the Ateneo de Maa University.

Email: [mbunag@ateneo.edu](mailto:mbunag@ateneo.edu)**Erika Keith Mendoza****Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines**

Ms Erika Keith C. Mendoza graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Manila. She is currently finishing her Master of Arts Degree in Political Science in the De La Salle University. She served as an instructor at the Cavite State University and taught major and general education subjects. She is currently a Student Affairs Professional from the Office for Concern and Involvement (OSCI) and part of the National Service Training Program (NSTP) 12-BigkisProgram.

Email: [ekmendoza@ateneo.edu](mailto:ekmendoza@ateneo.edu)**Syra Marie Norin Petalio****Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines**

Ms Syra Marie Norin A. Petalio graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Sciences and a Minor in Literature (English) from the Ateneo de Manila University. She is also currently a Student Affairs Professional from the Office for Social Concern and Involvement (OSCI) with the National Service Training Program (NSTP) 12-Bigkis Program and is also a part-time lecturer in the Health Sciences Program of the same university teaching an introductory course to community health as well as one on science, technology, and society.

Email: [spetalio@ateneo.edu](mailto:spetalio@ateneo.edu)**PRESENTATION**

- ▶ [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- ▶ [Video playback](#)



## Responding to the Signs of the Times: Opportunities for Civic Engagement with the Health Sciences Program During the COVID-19 Pandemic

---

**Ma. Criselda Dana Buñag**, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines

**Erika Keith Mendoza**, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines

**Syra Marie Norin Petalio**, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines

### Abstract

The National Service Training Program (NSTP)-Bigkis is one of the formation programs under the Integrated Ateneo Formation. This program seeks to promote civic engagement through service learning with partner communities and institutions. It is tied with the course SocSc13 (The Economy, Society and Sustainable Development), which focuses on theories and frameworks that help students understand the social issues and realities in the Philippines. The implementation of the program started during the COVID-19 pandemic and has since adapted to the challenges that emerged.

This paper discusses how the program is implemented for one of the undergraduate degree offerings of the Ateneo de Manila University, namely, the Health Sciences Program, which is geared towards understanding public health and health systems. It describes how students engage with communities and institutions through a series of conversations, enabling them to understand the realities experienced by the partners. As part of the initiative to respond to the needs of the times, students created information and education campaign materials that address the various health concerns identified by partner communities and institutions during the engagements.

This paper also discusses the different models and strategies applied to the program design to enrich the experiences and understandings of students. This was done in response to different factors, including exploring partnerships with another course, adapting to the changes in the academic calendar and transitioning to changing modes of delivery. At present, this program continues to evolve and adapt to the current context as the university and the country transition towards the ‘new normal’.

Keywords: Service Learning, Civic Engagement, Health Sciences, Formation, COVID-19

### 1. Introduction

The Philippine government implements the Republic Act 9163, also known as the ‘National Service Training Program (NSTP) Act of 2001’ as part of the curriculum for baccalaureate degrees and technical–vocational degrees as part of the students’ requirements for graduation. It aims to ‘promote civic consciousness among the youth’ and ‘develop their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and social well-being’, aiming to ‘inculcate in the youth patriotism, nationalism, and advance their involvement in public and civic affairs’ (Republic Act No. 9163, 2002).

At the Ateneo de Manila University (AdMU), this is implemented over a series of programs facilitated by the Office for Social Concern and Involvement through the different year levels, during which students go through years of formation programs with their own foci. Delving deeper into the specifics of this necessitates drawing specific examples from experiences of actually conducting the program. Therefore, this paper examines students’ experiences of conducting part of this NSTP implementation, also called ‘NSTP12-Bigkis’, together with the Health Sciences Program, one of the courses offered by AdMU.

## 2. The NSTP 12-Bigkis Program

The Integrated Ateneo Formation (InAF) of AdMU is a systematic and deliberate approach towards student formation, which aims to achieve the formation of persons-for-and-with-others who will contribute meaningfully to the transformation of Philippine society as servant-leaders engaged in various fields of endeavour. One of the programs under InAF is the NSTP. As mentioned previously, the NSTP is based on R.A. 9163, which seeks to ‘promote civic consciousness among the youth’ and develop ‘their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and social well-being’. Through the NSTP, the government hopes to inculcate in the youth the values of patriotism and nationalism, as well as encourage them towards active involvement in public and civic affairs. The NSTP at AdMU is implemented in two semesters: NSTP 11 taken by students in their sophomore year and NSTP 12 taken by students in their junior year. This paper focuses on NSTP 12, which is also called the NSTP 12-Bigkis Program.

The NSTP 12-Bigkis Program is relatively new. It was only offered during the AY 2020–2021, in time for the complete rollout of the university’s new curriculum. This program is designed for juniors taking the course Economy, Society and Sustainable Development (SocSc 13). It provides opportunities for students to immerse and interact with partner communities and institutions, as well as respond to the needs of these marginalised communities or organisations through discipline-based (DB) or service learning research or projects. The program is named ‘Bigkis’, which is a Filipino term that means ‘weaved together’. It aims to weave together and synthesise students’ learnings from their different formation programs and the various courses they have taken as they complete their majors.

When AdMU began classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, the university adopted the online mode of teaching. This changed over time as restrictions and parameters were adjusted vis-à-vis existing protocols in the country. The modalities that the university adopted were also the ones used to deliver the NSTP 12-Bigkis Program.

The program is divided into six modules with three different phases: the Pre-Engagement Phase, which includes all preparatory activities; the Engagement Phase, which includes engagements or interactions with partner communities and institutions; and the Post-Engagement Phase, which includes the processing and synthesis. All these phases consisted of synchronous and asynchronous activities delivered through Canvas, the official learning management system of the university, and Zoom for the synchronous material. Hybrid sessions were latter held upon the resumption of face-to-face classes.

The heart of the program happens during the Engagement phase, in which students and partner communities or institutions interact with each other. The partner communities and institutions with expressed needs or services that students can accommodate were scouted and then partnered with the courses that would best fit their aforementioned needs. These partners, however, should have the capacity to interact with students online because the synchronous sessions with partners during the engagements were only held via Zoom, Google Meet and Messenger Rooms.

## 3. The NSTP 12-Bigkis Program and the Health Sciences Program

The Health Sciences Program is one of AdMU’s course offerings under the School of Science and Engineering. This program trains future professionals to engage in health in various ways and capacities through multidisciplinary and systemic approaches to healthcare management, health and environmental policy, health products and services development, health informatics, health education, health promotion and communication and other challenges in public health care.

3.1 Implementation of the Partnership Over the Years

AdMU implemented a quarterly set-up when it began online classes in the AY 2020–2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The required subjects taken in a semester were divided to fit the quarterly setup that lasted around 6–8 weeks. This set-up was quite challenging because the schedule can only accommodate two online engagements or meetings with partner communities and institutions. Thus, there were concerns whether students will be able to build rapport with the community with those two engagements. The feasibility of the outputs to be created was also taken into consideration as students were challenged to produce them in a short period of time.

Keeping these constraints in mind, the NSTP 12-Bigkis and the Health Sciences Program started with DB approach. Aside from the students’ SocSci3 subject, there was no other major subject tie-up or collaboration. Instead, together with the Health Sciences Program, engagements and feasible outputs that can utilise students’ knowledge as Health Sciences majors were carefully designed.

During this period, due to the ongoing pandemic, health became a major concern for the partner communities, and many of the partners lacked reliable information sources about COVID-19. Other health matters were also locked in a standstill, as the majority of their focus at the time was on the pandemic. Thus, the Health Sciences students created health campaign materials on various topics depending on the health issue or concern that emerged or were identified in the course of their online engagements with the partner communities. A collaboration with Fine Arts majors was also attempted. Some Fine Arts majors were distributed in a few groups of Health Science students during their NSTP 12-Bigkis engagements and together, they created the aforementioned health campaign materials for and with the partners.

Below are examples of the health campaign materials created by the Health Sciences students during the first run of NSTP 12-Bigkis.

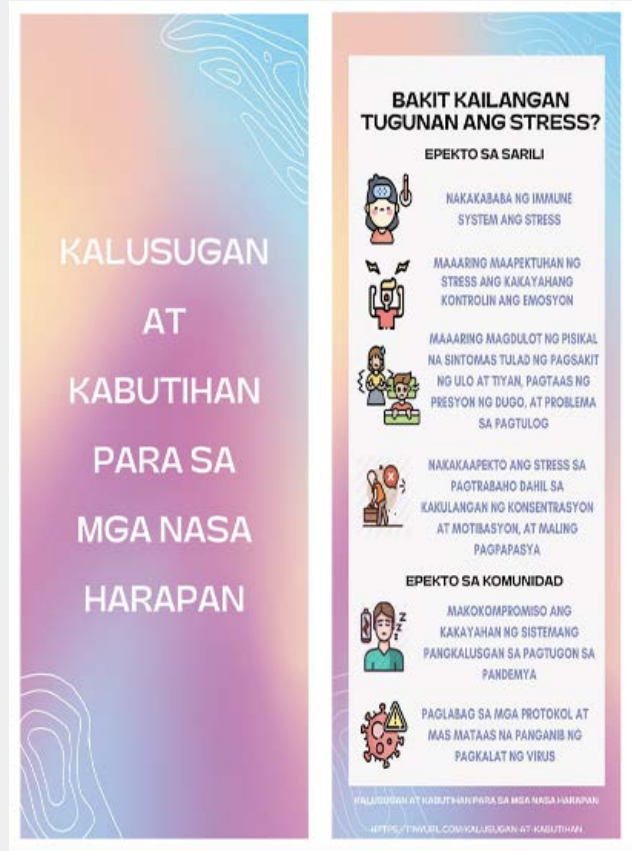


Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 1 is an infographic focused on how frontliners can take care of themselves, while Figure 2 shows part of a comic book made in collaboration with some Fine Arts students. The Health Sciences students also created a module regarding the first 100 days of a newborn child’s life, which became the basis of the comics made by the Fine Arts students.

During the second year of the NSTP 12-Bigkis Program, AdMU returned to the semestral set-up, which provided a longer school calendar to implement the NSTP 12-Bigkis activities. As the number of online engagements increased to 3–4 sessions, the students had more opportunities to communicate and build rapport with the partners and more time to create and improve their outputs.

In terms of the partnership with the Health Sciences Program, a collaboration with one of the major subjects taken as part of the Health Sciences curriculum was explored. The Anthropology of Health (ANTH 168) course is focused on the relationship and interplay of bio-ecological conditions as well as their sociocultural and power relations with health and wellness. The partnership with ANTH 168 not only complemented the SocSci 13 subject well but also provided another lens through which students could process the concepts they learned and make sense of their experiences. This subject also provided the students with an avenue to intentionally integrate the theories they have been learning in their classes and juxtapose them with real-life experiences. Figures 3 and 4 are examples of the outputs created by the students.



Figure 3



Figure 4

Academic Year 2022–2023 marked the third year of implementation of the NSTP 12-Bigkis Program. Much of what was done for the past two years are still continuously being implemented, as the students continue to engage with partner communities and institutions with expressed needs to address health issues and concerns by creating health campaign materials.

One of the major changes implemented in the current school year is the return to face-to-face activities, such as classes in the university. Trying a flex and hybrid mode, some of the preparatory sessions were conducted online and others onsite. This movement signalled the beginning of the NSTP 12-Bigkis program piloting a few groups that would conduct off-campus engagements.

The Health Sciences Program was one of those who expressed their interest in fielding their students for off-campus engagements. Exploring the list of partners the program had, coordination meetings with the City Government of Marikina were held to check if they have any needs that the students can be of help or provide service to, and if they can already accommodate students for face-to-face activities. Fortunately, the City Government of Marikina found certain needs that aligned with the program and allowed the students to assist in their mega vaccination centre and to observe and analyse the current vaccination system being implemented in the city. This heightened the students’ awareness of real-life situations during a face-to-face set up, in which they applied the lenses and theories from their ANTH168, SoSc13 and NSTP 12-Bigkis engagements.

The off-campus engagements were purely voluntary and were open to a few groups of students only. These engagements were designed and created according to the health and engagement protocols released by the university and the national government, which were strictly followed and observed during the implementation of these engagements. Figures 5 and 6 are pictures of students during the area engagements at the Marikina Mega Vaccination Centre.



Figure 5



Figure 6

## 2.2 Opportunities and Challenges

The Health Sciences program has been one of the most supportive departments in implementing service learning and DB initiatives. They have taken an extremely hands-on and collaborative approach in designing and contextualising the activities and outputs created by their students together with the communities. Such collaborations enable us to better imbibe one of the values promoted by the NSTP 12-Bigkis Program for the students: being professionals for and with others.

The pandemic challenged the program to find creative ways to continue with the activities and move forward despite the difficult situation. Prior to the pandemic, the InAF programs catered to communities and institutions that were in close proximity to the university. Shifting to online engagements enabled the program to reach far-flung communities across the entire archipelago. The online mode of interaction was the best possible way to meet institutions and continue to respond to the signs of the times. This mode of interaction also allowed students and partners to share their stories and experiences with one another despite the constraints of the aforementioned setup. In a way, the pandemic also brought more opportunities to learn from each other, build rapport and expand viewpoints and perspectives given those learnings.

Furthermore, the students were given the opportunity to exhibit their creativity through the outputs they produced for and with the partner communities. Despite the various limitations they encountered, such as time constraints and the online set-up, the students were still able to produce quality outputs that responded to the expressed needs of the partners. The Health Sciences students, in particular, created a variety of health campaign materials that can be used not only in the partner communities they were assigned to but also in other areas with the same health concerns identified. These materials were shared as soft copy files to the partners so that they can print and distribute them to their respective communities.

The NSTP 12-Bigkis Program also opened opportunities for students to continue their engagements with their assigned partner communities even beyond the given timeline of the program. In fact, some groups of Health Sciences students requested to do their theses or capstone projects in relation to or together with their assigned partner communities or sectors under the NSTP 12-Bigkis Program. This shows that the engagement gave them more opportunities to extend help and implement projects that would cater to the needs of the partner communities.

However, despite the many upsides that the past years have brought, the NSTP 12-Bigkis Program also encountered constant adjustments over the past two years. Given the geographical situation of the Philippines, one of the major constraints often faced was the frequent cancellation of classes due to typhoons, which then led to cancellations or movements in the online engagement schedules with the partners and students. This was a more pronounced concern, especially during the quarterly setup, which had a relatively shorter academic calendar. Thus, all the stakeholders involved had to constantly be prepared to respond and recalibrate based on the given conditions of those specific times. Often, however, the effects lingered especially throughout the reflections shared by the students.

Internet connectivity also continued to be a concern. There were moments when the partners and even students encountered difficulties joining or staying in the meeting rooms during the online engagements because of connectivity issues brought about by poor Internet connection. The respective stakeholders had to resort to creating or designing creative ways to keep people connected and engaged, such as doing a phone patch during the online engagements or creating group chats and other forms of group correspondence to shift the conversation to more asynchronous means if the time fell short for the synchronous sessions. Adjustments in terms of the mode, set-ups and calendar were constantly made to accommodate the needs of the partner areas.

This situation was further challenged upon the return to onsite classes, and adjustments continued across many fronts. Modules were re-evaluated and revamped to respond to the new observations and the changing needs both of the partners and students. More importantly, careful planning in implementing the off-campus engagements was conducted. With the return to off-campus engagements, another set of issues emerged in terms of logistical arrangements and paperwork, transportation and time constraints. During this stretch, two to three off-campus engagements were still considered too short and yet, to comply with all the necessary protocols and procedures, a great deal of work also had to be done. There were also certain growing pains on all fronts, and additional work had to be done to augment the deficiencies and other areas of improvement.

However, despite all the challenges, it is also important to acknowledge the gains achieved by the students and partner communities during online engagements. For one, these online engagements enabled us to cater to and provide service to far-flung communities and build relationships with them, further bringing stories and experiences from locations not necessarily front and centre into the conversation. The question now is how can these gains be maintained? What can we do to continue to build on the relationships that exist?

Even with all the changes, there remains hope in the practice of service learning and DB research and projects that the students have accomplished. It has opened up a world of possibility in terms of seeing how else their degrees or majors can be used to respond to the needs of the society that they also inhabit. The program has also provided the opportunity for students to gain a better grasp of the stories behind the figures that they deal with and study on a regular basis. These numbers are alive, represented by actual people who are experiencing lives that may be different from theirs but are also worth celebrating and upholding dignity all the same.

In the face of all the constant changes and the many signs of the times felt by society, the hope is that more students will eventually join the off-campus engagements in the coming semesters and that more communities will be provided with the right type of quality services that can respond to their needs and plans more deliberately. It is a long road towards this actualisation but the efforts have come a long way.

Ultimately, the implementation of this program and the various changes in the iterations of that experiences can still be improved in the future. There are upsides here that can only be strengthened over time. With more concerted efforts towards better integration, students' understanding of the perspectives they carry, and the lenses through which they examine the everyday occurrence of society, can continue to improve.

The NSTP 12-Bigkis Program is a relatively new program; thus, it has much room for adjustments and improvements. However, what also encapsulates this endeavour is the heart for proper service initiatives and opportunities that can foster environments for self-improvement by bolstering students' confidence and strengthening their resolve to take part in meaningful action. In this way, they can respond to the signs of the times with intention and purpose, rooted in an understanding of who they are, what they are capable of and what they are being called to do.

## References

- Bingle, R. & Hatcher, J. (1996). Implementing service learning in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 67(2). Retrieved July 14, 2014, from <http://www.compact.org/advancedtoolkit/pdf/bingle-all.pdf>
- National Service Training Program (NSTP) Act (2001)* R.A. 9163.





# PRESENTATIONS

---

**PARALLEL SESSION I-B***Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility***Promoting Food Justice through Religious Education:  
Towards Faithful Imagination of Regenerative Food Systems****PRESENTER****Justin Joseph Badion****Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines**

Justin Joseph G. Badion, Ph.D., is an instructor of the Ateneo de Manila University, where he teaches in the undergraduate level and in the Theology Department's graduate program, the Formation Institute for Religion Educators. He obtained his degree Doctor of Philosophy in Theology, with specialization in Religious Education, from the Loyola School of Theology. He is also a member of a joint working group on SDG#2: Zero Hunger composed of members from the Ateneo de Manila University, Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan, Ateneo de Davao University, and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Philippines, which promotes dialogue on regenerative food systems in the Philippines. His research interests are alimentary theology, religious education, practical theology, food systems, food justice, and intersectional theology.

Email: [jbadion@ateneo.edu](mailto:jbadion@ateneo.edu)

**PRESENTATION ABSTRACT**

The world is undergoing a global food crisis. Although the global food system produces more than enough food to feed the world, many people remain hungry. Many countries in the Global South, like the Philippines, remain ill-prepared for supply chain vulnerabilities in their local food systems, worsened by issues relating to production disruptions, the instability of the global market, and environmental degradation. In recent years, a call for just food policies and initiatives has begun to emerge under the banner of the food justice movement, emphasizing the need for sustainable and regenerative food systems on both the global and local levels. Gathered around the common table of the cosmos, the call for food justice is consistent with the global Church's task of transcendental nourishing—a holistic feeding of the world in body, mind, and spirit. Religious educators can partake in this mission by not only integrating food justice within their teaching but also by crafting critical pedagogy that is informed by a way of doing theology that is attentive to food and food issues, known as alimentary theology. Alimentary theology is not simply a theology of food, but in itself sees theology as food—a theology that can help in empowering people toward sustainability and capacity-building. As a way of exemplifying this promotion of food justice through religious education, this paper will also showcase the design of an interdisciplinary theology elective on food justice that has been taught at the undergraduate level in the Ateneo de Manila University since 2020.

**PRESENTATION**

- [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- [Video playback](#)

## PARALLEL SESSION II-A

Track 2: Collaborative Research to Address Global Challenges

### Aurora SDG Research Dashboard: Gaining Insights in Co-author Collaboration of SDG Related Papers

#### PRESENTER

#### Maurice Vanderfeesten

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Maurice Vanderfeesten currently works as Innovation Manager Research Services at the University Library of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He believes in a multi-disciplinary approach and is responsible for co-creating library services for Open Science, Scholarly Communication Workflows and Research Intelligence. Maurice studied Information Sciences at Utrecht University, worked at SURF, a cooperation of Dutch universities for IT-innovation, on scholarly information infrastructures, Open Access repositories and enhanced publications, worked in EU projects like DRIVER (now OpenAIRE), and worked at TU Delft on research data management. He is chair of the Research Impact Coordination group for the Dutch Royal and University Libraries (UKB). He consulted the Dutch Universities Association (UNL) on the concept for a National Open Knowledge Base and guiding principles to regain academic sovereignty of research information.

Email: [maurice.vanderfeesten@vu.nl](mailto:maurice.vanderfeesten@vu.nl)

#### PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

Aurora was formed in 2016 as a consortium of research-intensive universities deeply committed to the societal impact of their activities, and with a history of engagement with their communities (<https://aurora-universities.eu/about/>). To showcase their impact, they build a dashboard that is able to answer several questions: “What research have we produced that is related to societal challenges, like the SDG’s?”, “Is that research freely accessible to the public?”, “Is that research being used by policy makers? And used in public debate?”. From the publication metadata, we can also see co-author relations where international collaboration has taken place. We then can produce a worldwide heatmap, showing hotspots of that collaboration. We also can filter to co-author collaboration with the Least Developed Countries (LDC), Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and the Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDC), and show to what SDGs there co-authored publications relate to. Similarly we can show the Policy Impact of our publications in those countries. Here we show which governments, ngo’s, development banks and think tanks, etc. have used our SDG related publications in the reference of their policy documents. Together this can demonstrate on what SDG’s we collaborate with co-authors in different parts of the world, but also on what SDG’s we have some influence in shaping regulations and policy in the different parts of the world.

#### PRESENTATION

- ▶ [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- ▶ [Video playback](#)

## PARALLEL SESSION II-B

Track 3: Driving Institutional Changes for USR

### Reflections on Transformative Change towards Sustainability in Universities

#### PRESENTER

**Ivar Maas**

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Ivar Maas is the lead Sustainability of VU Amsterdam and is responsible for the implementation of the Sustainability strategy of the university. He leads a team that works on a portfolio with a wide range of projects that all aim to integrate sustainability at the VU in Education, Research, Knowledge Transfer, Operations and the Community. Ivar is also a PhD Candidate at the Institute for Environmental Studies at VU. His research centres around transforming universities for sustainability. And he aims to identify transformative pathways towards sustainability as an integral part of the university.

Email: [ivar.maas@vu.nl](mailto:ivar.maas@vu.nl)

#### PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

Mitigating the climate crisis requires immediate and resolute action from governments, organizations, and civilians. Recognizing their responsibility in society, progressively more universities claim to address sustainability issues. Universities can address this (broadly speaking) by integrating sustainability into the institution's administration, research, knowledge transfer, and education. In doing so, they can become an important change agent of the (regional) sustainability transition. However, the organizational change for a university to be sustainable is deep and requires a fundamental shift. The shift goes further than superficial measures and also needs a change in (including but not limited to) the organizational culture, the values and beliefs of its employees and the wider social context in which the university is nested. This makes it a complex and multi-level system change, which can also be seen as a transformative change. But what is transformative change towards Sustainability? What makes a sustainable university sustainable? And how does a university transform into a sustainable one? In this presentation, I will reflect on these questions. First, a broad theoretical framework for sustainability in Universities will be provided. Secondly, the questions mentioned above will be addressed. Note that literature on transformative change in universities is upcoming. Lastly, in an open discussion, we will reflect on the findings of current literature and our experiences as members of these academic communities.

#### PRESENTATION

- [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- [Video playback](#)

## PARALLEL SESSION III-A

*Track 5: Elevating Sustainable Development through Regional and Global Collaboration*

### Advancing Sustainable Development through Partnerships: Challenges and Opportunities in Collaboration

#### PRESENTERS

##### Joanne Curry

Simon Fraser University, Canada

Dr Joanne Curry is Vice-President for External Relations and a member of Simon Fraser University's Executive team. The institutional lead for community engagement, she has worked in community-university engagement for over two decades. Joanne's achievements include supporting the development of the university's vision as Canada's leading community-engaged university and building the university's third urban campus in Surrey. Joanne is part of the University Social Responsibility Network's executive committee and is a Director of a number of boards of trade and economic development organizations. She holds a Doctorate of Business, Bath University, UK; a Masters of Business Administration from SFU; a Bachelor of Commerce with Distinction from the University of Manitoba, and an honorary degree from Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Her doctoral thesis, area of practice, and passion is in building successful university-city government relationships.

Email: [joannec@sfu.ca](mailto:joannec@sfu.ca)

##### Julian Skyrme

The University of Manchester, UK

Dr Julian Skyrme is the founding Director of Social Responsibility at The University of Manchester. Social responsibility is one of the University's three core goals and ensures that Manchester's learning, research, engagement and operational activities make a positive difference to society. He has first-class honours, master's and doctoral degrees in political philosophy and social sciences from The University of Manchester and spent his early career as a teacher and Assistant Vice-Principal in a large urban sixth form college. Julian contributes to local, national and international policies, initiatives and networks to enhance the social engagement of higher education. He is a member of: Manchester City Council's Strategic Education Partnership Board and Homelessness Partnership Board; the Board of Manchester's Loreto Sixth Form College; the Board of Trustees at MACC – Manchester's voluntary, community and social enterprise support organisation; Business in the Community's (BITC) North-West Leadership Board; and the global University Social Responsibility network. He's also a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, guitarist, everyday cyclist, Manchester United and Wales fan, and father to two children.

Email: [julian.skyrme@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:julian.skyrme@manchester.ac.uk)

**PARALLEL SESSION III-A***Track 5: Elevating Sustainable Development through Regional and Global Collaboration***Advancing Sustainable Development through Partnerships:  
Challenges and Opportunities in Collaboration****PRESENTATION ABSTRACT**

There is growing realization on the importance and necessity for universities to collaborate, locally, regionally and globally, to advance sustainable development. The types of partners have become even more diverse from all levels of governments, industry, and community organizations and the mechanism and structures to support these partnerships are also evolving. Equity, diversity and inclusion design in the collaboration is also a priority. We all agree that partnership and collaboration is required but most of us can identify partnerships that have worked to achieve established goals but an even greater number that have not been successful. After a launch or news release, the expectations early in the partnership are not realized. How can better understand the selection of partnerships and areas for sustained collaboration and the factors that lead to success in working together to advance sustainable development? I will incorporate video clips of comments from a university, a local government, and an indigenous community to share a frank assessment of the state of collaboration and how university-community partnerships for sustainable development can be more strategic and shaped for success. I am open to joining as a panelist of another USRN member if a similar topic is proposed.

**PRESENTATION**

- [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- [Video playback](#)

**PARALLEL SESSION III-B***Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility***Promoting Social Responsibility through Service-Learning in Higher Education****PRESENTERS****Nina Rösler**

University of Tübingen, Germany

Staff member of the Service-Learning and Civic Engagement sub-section focused on local Service-Learning networks, courses and other formats. Master of Arts in Peace Research and International Politics at the University of Tübingen. Since 2019, conceptualisation, coordination and implementation of Service-Learning courses, trainings, consultation, quality assurance and public relations.

Email: [nina.roesler@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:nina.roesler@uni-tuebingen.de)**Charoula-Maria Fotiadou**

University of Tübingen, Germany

Staff member of the Service-Learning and Civic Engagement sub-section focused on International Service-Learning. Master of Sciences in Archaeological Sciences - Paleogenetics at the University of Tübingen. Since 2022, conceptualisation, organisation and implementation of project seminars in which academic teaching is linked with civic engagement within the framework of the DAAD-funded accompanying programme to CIVIS.

Email: [charoula.fotiadou@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:charoula.fotiadou@uni-tuebingen.de)**Iris-Niki Nikolopoulos**

University of Tübingen, Germany

Head of the Transdisciplinary Course Program and the Service-Learning and Civic Engagement sub-section. Doctorate in political theory at the Otto-Friedrich-University of Bamberg. Since 2013, focus on interdisciplinary teaching and the development of research-based teaching and learning in the introductory and final phase of studies. Since 2020, establishment of international teaching-learning formats in the European university network CIVIS.

Email: [iris.nikolopoulos@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:iris.nikolopoulos@uni-tuebingen.de)

**PARALLEL SESSION III-B***Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility***Promoting Social Responsibility through Service-Learning in Higher Education****PRESENTATION ABSTRACT**

The University of Tübingen recognizes and is committed to its special societal responsibility as part of the scientific community and therefore educates highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens. By doing so, they undertake active participation in the society and provide a service to community while they advance, create and disseminate knowledge through research. In this context, the Service-Learning and Civic Engagement sub-section was founded in 2011 as part of the Transdisciplinary Course Program. In the latter, Bachelor students can earn 21 Credit Points for the mandatory key qualifications module. Service-Learning along with the concept of Civic Engagement are oriented towards the common good and provide exemplary opportunities to involve civil society, students and lecturers in an exceptional way, by applying academic knowledge on real social needs in a community context. In addition to describing the theoretical underpinnings of Service-Learning, the presentation will focus on the various implemented formats at the University of Tübingen, i.e., courses, mentoring programs, student initiatives and internships. These formats serve as an opportunity for students to officially recognize their short- and long-term civic engagement as part of their studies. Furthermore, the presentation will provide insights into faced challenges, informed strategic decisions and consequent developments. The presentation will conclude with lessons learned over the course of the past decade. To conclude, by successfully incorporating the different Service-Learning formats in the curriculum, we ensure their institutional sustainability and promote the assumption and recognition of social responsibility in Higher Education.

**PRESENTATION**

- [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- [Video playback](#)



## PARALLEL SESSION IV-B

*Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility*

### Embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals into Postgraduate Level Business Programmes – A Case Study

#### PRESENTER

**Joe Houghton**

University College Dublin Smurfit Graduate School of Business, Ireland

After a career running global projects for multinationals, Joe switched into a portfolio career of university teaching, consultancy and non-profit work in the early 2000's. Co-creator & Director of the UCD Smurfit MSc in Project Management at one of the world's top 100 business schools, Joe has an international Executive MBA and various post-graduate awards in teaching & learning. His research interests include online learning, experiential learning, universal design for learning, communities of practice & innovation in teaching. He hosts the Plus One Podcast where he interviews innovative educators from around the world – see [www.plusoneteaching.com](http://www.plusoneteaching.com). Joe is also a semi-pro photographer and delivers talks & workshops to clubs all over the world. He has authored 2 books on photography.

Email: [joe.houghton@ucd.ie](mailto:joe.houghton@ucd.ie)

#### PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

Given the challenges they represent, inclusion and awareness of the 17 UN Sustainability Goals should be a key aspect of studies at all levels of education globally. This case from a Master's level business programme in Ireland examines how student led learning and co-creation were implemented in a new Master's level module as part of a Business Master's programme in a leading Irish University. Formative and summative assessment, experiential learning, problem-based learning & community engaged learning were all used to engage, focus and direct student awareness, activity and outputs to enable deep engagement with sustainability themes in a programme where such aspects had previously not been highlighted. The presentation provides a template and easy to implement methodology that other educators are encouraged to use & adapt to facilitate similar engagements with their own students, using free online resources to facilitate collaborative enquiry and development of tangible artefacts demonstrating research and learning. Such engagements could be applied to students at many levels of education, not just post-graduate.

#### PRESENTATION

- [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- [Video playback](#)

**PARALLEL SESSION VII-B***Track 4: Education to Cultivate Social Responsibility***Fostering Students' Empowerment to Address Global Challenges****PRESENTER****Elisabetta Magnani****Macquarie University, Australia**

Elisabetta (Lisa) is Professor of Economics and Political Economy at Macquarie University in Sydney. Her education includes a Doctorate in Political Economy from the University of Bologna (1993) and a PhD in Economics from Yale University (1996). Her work has focused on understanding how capitalist economies create and retain jobs, support wages, promote good working conditions and pursue technological innovation in globalised settings. Over the years, she has developed an interdisciplinary research agenda centred on the exploration of the ways work conditions and labour market institutions impact societal resilience and cohesion, and ecological sustainability.

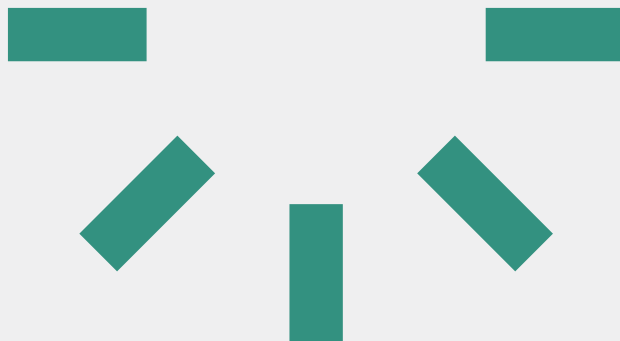
Email: [lisa.magnani@mq.edu.au](mailto:lisa.magnani@mq.edu.au)

**PRESENTATION ABSTRACT**

This article discusses the use of global challenges in a 3rd year unit, created by the Author, in a large Australian Business school. It offers clear demonstrations of how it seeks to enhance business students' engagement and nourish a sense of empowerment in addressing the chosen global challenges. Engagement with global challenges allows students to question the notion of 'global' by addressing issues related to the multifaced notions of labour, capital, class, markets, and power, aspects that are usually neglected in principle of economics units. It also offers students opportunities to understand how local/national/regional realities shape the perceptions and span of action governments and communities have in terms of policy interventions. By incorporating global challenges in economics units, I expose the limits of economics and business teaching, ill-equipped to critically address the biases of its own tools, languages, and metaphors. Global challenges offer ways to break interdisciplinary boundaries to empower students to be actors of change in the 21st century. Ultimately, dealing with global challenges in undergraduate teaching is a way to return universities to their mandate of changing the world rather than simply discussing it.

**PRESENTATION**

- [PowerPoint presentation slides](#)
- [Video playback](#)



**Proceedings**  
of the International USR Summit 2022

