Community Engagement and Civic Action Plan  
Bemidji State University, April, 2017  
Executive Summary

In 2016, Bemidji State University (BSU) signed a commitment to the Campus Compact* 30th Anniversary Action Statement of Presidents and Chancellors. This commitment calls for creating a civic action plan of community and campus engagement for institutional change and community impact.

At BSU, community and civic engagement currently takes place on campus in a variety of ways and locations (e.g., internships, practicums, individual faculty courses, student organizations, etc.). Yet no systematic organizational structure exists with regard to a unified infrastructure that centrally identifies, supports, coordinates, or collaborates such efforts. Thus, the goal of BSU’s action plan is to begin an initiative to identify the current practices, and create such an infrastructure to formalize community and civic engagement and support such opportunities and to ensure that they are sustainable.

In order to launch this initiative, a task force was created and the members developed a vision and mission statement for BSU as well as the overall elements of an action plan. While based in the four fundamental values of the institution, the primary focus of the plan is grounded in understandings of Community Engagement.

BSU Vision Statement – BSU will cultivate engaged leaders who facilitate transformative change in our communities.

BSU Mission Statement – BSU creates opportunities and capacities to be transformative citizens, volunteers, professionals, and co-creators of our communities.

The mission and vision set the framework and point to the goal of providing opportunities for students (and others) to be transformative citizens, volunteers, professionals, and co-creators of our communities.

This document outlines BSU’s current status and an action plan (via Campus Compact’s criteria) in three main phases. Phase I employs steps necessary for examining current resources and opportunities within BSU and among our community partners. During this phase, qualitative and quantitative data will be collected that will help us determine capacity for this work. It is important to understand what engagement currently takes place to build the infrastructure. Collecting and analyzing this data will allow us to effectively plan for a structure that will support the mission and vision.

Phase II involves the development of an infrastructure and implementation of mission and vision. This phase will include developmental and training opportunities for individuals (i.e., internal and external – students, faculty and community) to fully understand community and civic engagement. It will also involve the creation, or continuation of reciprocal partnerships for learning opportunities, as well as create mechanisms for tracking and reporting engagement opportunities.

Phase III reflects the commitment and sustainability of community engagement and civic action by BSU and surrounding community members through the development of a Center. This Center will utilize the existing expertise of faculty and staff invested in the academic, student and community partnerships.

In order to demonstrate this commitment and create sustainability, this Community Engagement and Civic Action Plan needs to be included in the BSU Strategic Plan for 2017-2020.

*Campus Compact is a national coalition the enables campuses to develop students’ citizenship skills and forge effective community partnerships. Campus Compact supports faculty and staff as they pursue service-learning and community-based teaching, and scholarship in the service of positive change.
Community Engagement and Civic Action Plan

Campus Compact

Bemidji State University
April, 2017

Below outlines Bemidji State University’s Community Engagement Civic Action Plan. Sections are identified via Campus Compact’s template.

**Vision and Mission**

Bemidji State University (BSU) is beginning an initiative to formalize community and civic engagement. Community and civic engagement currently takes place on campus in a variety of ways and locations (e.g., internships, practicums, individual faculty courses, student organizations, etc.). Yet no systematic organizational structure exists with regard to a unified office/area or infrastructure that centrally identifies, supports, coordinates, or collaborates such efforts. Thus, the goal of this action plan is to create a process by which we can identify what is taking place and establish a unified infrastructure for BSU (to include students, faculty, staff, and administration) and the greater community. At BSU structural change needs to take place prior to creating organized opportunities for cultural and policy change.

BSU has four shared fundamental values for student learning that will guide this action plan:
- Civic engagement and leadership
- International and multicultural understanding
- Belief in the power of the liberal arts
- Environmental stewardship

In order to launch this initiative, a task force was created and the members developed a vision and mission statement for BSU as well as the overall elements of an action plan. While based in the fundamental values of the institution, the primary focus of the plan is grounded in understandings of Community Engagement. The community engagement interpretation that guided task force thinking comes from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2016). In this statement, the classification of community engagement is described as a

`collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good (p. 1).`

**BSU Vision Statement** – BSU will cultivate engaged leaders who facilitate transformative change in our communities.

**BSU Mission Statement** – BSU creates opportunities and capacities to be transformative citizens, volunteers, professionals, and co-creators of our communities.
Boyte (2010) and Schudson’s (2003) notion of citizenship as a full member of society provide additional constructs for our plan. These are:

1. Traditional civic engagement: The use of political institutions to foster change—e.g. casting votes, polling, enforcing workplace policies

2. Community-based service: The donation of time and resources to previously identified, or co-created needs of partnering institutions and organizations, usually altruistically, but also academically—e.g. food drives, charity events, service-learning opportunities

3. Public work: Community-driven participatory action to solve shared problems, usually developing new relationships and skills to do so—e.g. community gardens, action-based research projects

These additional constructs and opportunities may be fulfilled via academic and classroom opportunities, student services opportunities, and/or through community partnerships associated with BSU as a whole. The overarching outcome will be to cultivate engaged leaders, but the initial phases of the plan involve capturing information on what exists and identifying the current status of engagement in order to create and organize the optimal opportunities.

**Approach**

Our overarching framework is based off the signature model provided by Campus Compact. We want to develop opportunities for community and civic engagement that are varied, but are also structured to give students an engagement experience that enhances their capacity. In essence we are seeking ways for students to develop and employ critical thinking to become citizen professionals.

For BSU as a whole, we want to build on what already exists and find ways to create new skill sets and abilities for all who are involved (i.e., students, faculty, staff, administration, and community members) with an intention to create reciprocal meaningful relationships, and to solve problems together in our communities.

The primary and immediate goal for the Civic Action Plan (CAP) is to create a process that will identify the necessary steps to gather data and assess the current status of service learning and community engagement at BSU and in the Bemidji community. These initial steps will provide clarity regarding existing actions in order to begin the groundwork for a more unified structure that helps with relationship building among all partners involved (i.e., students, faculty, staff, administration, community members).

In order to accomplish this work, a fall start-up meeting was called and information on Campus Compact and Civic Action Planning was discussed by co-facilitators, Colleen Greer, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Mary Ward, Dean of Student Success (Interim), and Donna Pawlowski, Professor of Speech Communication. Subsequent to that meeting, a task force was formed composed of 14 individuals including faculty, staff, administration, undergraduate and graduate students, and a community member. Task Force members:

1. Molly Aitken-Julin, Program Director of Internships and Employer Relations
2. Erika Bailey-Johnson, Director of Sustainability
   a. Anna Carlson, Assistant Director of Sustainability (interim while Bailey-Johnson is on sabbatical)
3. Colleen Bakken, Community Member, General Manager of Harmony Natural Foods Coop, President of Bemidji Downtown Alliance
4. Brandy Lyn Brown, Assistant Professor of English, Director of Writing Center
5. Jessica Gehrke, Communications Specialist of 360 Manufacturing & Applied Engineering Center of Excellence
6. Colleen Greer, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Co-Facilitator of Task Force
7. Debbie Guelda, Professor of Biology, Director of Center for Professional Development
8. Nancy Haugen, Associate Director of Career Services
9. Rebecca Hoffman, Assistant Professor of Social Work, Director of Social Work Internships
10. Dennis Lunt, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Director of Leadership Studies
11. Renee Martin, Graduate Student in Business
12. Jay Passa, Health Education Coordinator
13. Donna Pawlowski, Professor of Speech Communication, Co-Facilitator of Task Force/Coordinator of Community Engagement Research
14. Representatives from Student Senate were identified. They included: Camilla Prosise, Peter Gable, Justine Scheller, Kelsey Cobenais. Unfortunately, their schedules have made it difficult for them to join the meetings so Dr. Pawlowski attended Student Senate to share information on task force planning.

Task force individuals have a vested interested in and commitment toward community and civic engagement and represent the various stakeholders both on and off campus, including academic, student affairs, business, nonprofit organizational, and community interests.

The task force (i.e., planning team) created four initial sub-committees (Definitions, Inventory, Policies, and Logistics), which have investigated the following:

- What has been done on BSU’s campus (i.e., past surveys measuring engagement)
  - Civic Engagement Inventory completed in 2005 to BSU faculty; informal survey of departments regarding community engagement completed in 2015
- Fact finding about other university campus goals within the State system and comparable institutions
  - All other institutions in the system have a Center, Office, or designated faculty member who coordinates community engagement and service-learning activities
- Past or current policies (if any exist) regarding university initiatives toward community engagement
  - Currently no policies have been identified that guide best practices or identify goals or outcomes at the university level
- Identifying key constituents at BSU and within Bemidji community who can help to identify the current status of engagement; identifying those most core to BSU’s mission
  - A list of potential constituents for BSU and the greater community have been identified and will be contacted during data collection
- Generating working definitions
  - Definitions have been created and identified above

Moving forward, the task force will conduct the necessary steps to create assessment instruments and methodologies, collect data, and analyze data to provide an overall structured plan for systemic engagement and change.
While the mission and vision set the framework and point to the goal of providing opportunities for students (and others) to be transformative citizens, volunteers, professionals, and co-creators of our communities, it is important to create an infrastructure to support such opportunities and to ensure that they are sustainable. Thus, we have created a three-phase plan with specific outcomes to help us reach our broader goals. The three phases of the plan are outlined below, with specific outcomes identified for each phase.

Phase I employs steps necessary for examining current resources and opportunities within BSU and among our community partners. During this phase, qualitative and quantitative data will be collected that will help us determine capacity for this work. In addition to creating instruments for data gathering, we will be taking appropriate steps to obtain IRB approval, and we will be identifying a select team to engage in qualitative interviewing and data analysis. Collecting this data will allow us to effectively plan for a structure that will support the mission and vision.

Phase II involves the development of an infrastructure and implementation of mission and vision. This phase will include workshops for individuals (i.e., internal and external – students, faculty and community) to fully understand community and civic engagement. It will also involve the creation, or continuation of reciprocal partnerships for learning opportunities, and we will be putting in place mechanisms for tracking and reporting engagement opportunities.

Phase III reflects the commitment and sustainability of community engagement and civic action by BSU and surrounding community members through the development of a Center. This Center will utilize the existing expertise of faculty and staff invested in the academic, student and community partnerships.

Phase I - Identified action short-term outcomes to understand current practices: (short-term 1-2 years)

- Use internal working definitions of community and civic engagement (to include mission and vision) as a distinctive element of a learning culture at BSU
- Roll out initial ideas at Fall Start-Up to introduce BSU to community engagement and civic action plan
- Examine existing data from past surveys, and current University Listening Sessions to assess current status and dialogue around community engagement
- Obtain IRB approval in two stages
  - Stage one for baseline data and BSU collected data
  - Stage two for community data
- Seek out additional resources necessary for data collection and/or clearinghouse database
- Gather baseline data of the perceptions of the current level of BSU’s commitment, knowledge of, and opportunities for community engagement (via Furco Self-Assessment Rubric or some other instrument)
  - Administer rubric to selected administrators, faculty, staff, students, and community members
- Use baseline and existing data from past surveys to create methods of data collection (survey, focus group protocols, etc.) to identify the community/civic action being done at BSU (institutional level)
- Collect data via surveys, focus groups, or other methods to gather meaningful information that identifies the ways in which BSU lives out community and civic engagement
  - Host genuine conversations with faculty, administrators, staff, and students on sensitive topics (e.g., hate speech, civility, rape culture) with the goal of identifying current pressing issues in our communities
Engage interested students in data collection
- Begin to analyze BSU results quantitatively and qualitatively to identify current and potential relationships, and generate student opportunities for the future
- Use baseline and existing data from past surveys to create methods of data collection (survey, focus group protocols, etc.) to identify the current partnerships with and potential interest of external community partners (community level)
  - Identify broader list of community members who are key point individuals for helping with collaborative efforts
- Collect data via surveys, focus groups, or other methods to gather meaningful information from community partners
  - Host genuine conversations with community members on sensitive topics (e.g., hate speech, civility, rape culture) with the goal of identifying current pressing issues in our communities
  - Identify ways in which we can create opportunities to create meaningful reciprocal relationships with community members (e.g., children, elderly, at-risk youth, veterans)
  - Engage interested students in data collection
- Begin to analyze community results quantitatively and qualitatively to identify current and potential relationships, and generate student opportunities for the future
- Complete analysis of combined data to find themes, consistencies, and opportunities
- Enter data into database to build a more systematic institutional infrastructure for BSU, faculty, student affairs, and community organizations to identify projects and to create a more collaborative effort in relationship building
- Find ways to celebrate existing successful partnerships between BSU and the community

Phase II - Future strategies and long-term outcomes to sustain BSU-community relationships (post data collection): (3-4 years)
- Modify definitions (if needed) of community and civic engagement (to include mission and vision) to share with greater audiences as a uniform message to be used by all partners (internal/external) as a distinctive element of a learning culture at BSU
- Identify strategies for structural and systemic change and capacity building based on data results
- Create Community Partnership Advisory Board (faculty, staff, administration, community partners, students) to maintain organizational capacity and enhance greater connections to community
- Provide systematic and developmental training for faculty, students, (staff where appropriate) and community members to prepare for opportunities of community engagement and civic action
- Create opportunities for faculty development to include IFO contract criteria (i.e., teaching, scholarship and creative achievement, continuing preparation and study, student growth and development, service)
  - Identify ways to include community engagement in faculty development for intrinsic and extrinsic value (e.g., tenure and promotion, professional development plans and reports)
- Develop collaborative research opportunities among students and faculty
  - Communicate faculty and/or student research on community and civic engagement and its relevance to local needs and problems
- Work with academic and student affairs programs to build capacity and opportunities for students and faculty to engage in community engagement and civic action – meeting Mission and Vision outcomes
  - These outcomes will provide the necessary information to create community and civic engagement opportunities for students and faculty with the following values:
    - Bringing the intellectual disciplines into creative dialogue with contemporary social needs and problems

BSU Community Engagement and Civic Action Plan 2017 - 5
• Enhancing student learning of academic subject matter through direct contact with the everyday problems of real people as related to the discipline being studied (through traditional forms of learning)
• Fostering the habit of community building and responsible citizenship
• Developing skills of critical thinking and reflection about self, moral values, and social context that will remain with a student throughout his/her life
• Offering students organized and evaluated opportunities to encounter individuals and communities that might otherwise remain outside their personal experience, thus expanding their understanding of and commitment to diversity, social justice, and the common good

bullet points:

• Develop strategic engagement opportunities for students throughout their college career beginning with first-year experience
• Involve students to serve as ambassadors for community engagement and civic action in the classroom, on campus and in the community
• Create best practice for pursuing community engagement and civic action in order to ensure well-being of students and consistency
• Develop opportunities for students and colleges to have some designated recognition for service-learning/community engagement opportunities
• Strengthen community relations through continued collaborative dialogue and effective communication that allows more engagement of community members into BSU culture (i.e., community boards, committees, etc.)
• Collaborate with surrounding institutions (Leach Lake Tribal College, Oak Hills Christian College, etc.) for student engagement opportunities
• Identify ways to celebrate BSU-community partnerships through public recognition opportunities (incentives, rewards, public celebrations, invited luncheons, student-community presentations, etc.)
• Identify ways to recognize BSU faculty and staff who engage in community and civic action opportunities (recognition in tenure and promotion, awards, incentives, etc.).
• Identify additional resources for continued opportunities, faculty development, and community engagement
• Track and maintain what is being done via database to build and sustain capacity, and to find partnering opportunities
• Conduct annual Furco assessment to measure commitment of community engagement

Phase III – Creating a Center for Community and Civic Engagement: (4+ years)

• Identify funding to create a Center for Community and Civic Engagement to include elements of leadership, service-learning, civic action, student affairs, etc. to be accessible for internal and external partners. Positions within the center will be primarily staffed primarily by current faculty positions; other liaison positions may include student affairs and other staff members.
  o While a Center for Community Partnerships already exists, it is primarily for business opportunities regarding economic and workforce development, is housed off-campus, and does not have an overarching framework to involve the whole campus.
  o Potential collaboration with this existing off-campus entity will provide an additional meeting site for gathering and working with community members
• Employ a Director of Community and Civic Engagement, who also acts as Faculty Development Coordinator (likely from Academic Affairs as part of a current faculty position)
• Employ a Director of Community Engagement Community Partnerships (likely from Academic Affairs as part of a current faculty position)
• Employ student liaison interested in community and civic engagement (perhaps via internship or paid student employment)
- Employ staff member for administrative support
- Coordinate academic and student affair efforts to sustain overall commitment to community engagement and civic action

#### Implementation

The implementation plan is outlined in the following table. While the above information identifies all outcomes (Phase I, II, III), the specific plans are only laid out for Phase I. Please note that budget is not identified in this plan; some additional resources may be needed in Phase I for faculty release time, purchasing of database program, or general office supplies of copying, mailing, etc.

Long-term outcomes for Phase II and III will be mapped out prior to the end of Phase I.

Implementation of Phase I is ambitious; the timeline will be adjusted if unforeseen circumstances preclude completing timely deadlines.

In order to demonstrate commitment and sustainability, this Community Engagement and Civic Action Plan needs to be included in the BSU Strategic Plan for 2017-2020.
### Goal 1: Conduct an assessment of community and civic engagement currently at BSU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Strategies/Tasks</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Members Involved</th>
<th>Reporting/Outcomes/Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Use internal working definitions of community engagement and civic action (to include mission and vision) as a distinctive element of a learning culture at BSU</td>
<td>• Use definitions as uniform and standard in written and oral communication</td>
<td>Used throughout process</td>
<td>Task Force University members as a whole</td>
<td>• Identified distinction and consistency</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| B. Roll out initial ideas at Fall Start-Up to introduce BSU to community engagement and civic action plan | • Introduce ideas to faculty  
• Celebrate or highlight any current projects as demonstrated examples of partnerships | Fall 2017  | Task Force and Center for Professional Development (CPD) | • Use Fall Start-Up to generate interest and demonstrate transparency of ideas          |
| C. Examine further existing data from past surveys and current University Listening Sessions to assess current status and dialogue around community engagement | • Review data from 2005 and 2015 engagement survey  
• Review data from 2017 presidential listening sessions  
• Review best practices and sample survey from external sources | Fall 2017  | Task Force                                           | • Synthesis of data helps to provide information to date in determining constructs for creation of exhaustive survey |
| D. Obtain IRB approval prior to data collection for baseline perceptions | • Complete IRB paperwork  
  o Will likely include initial collection of baseline instruments (Furco) and overall plan | Fall 2017  | Task Force                                           | • Obtain IRB approval so results can be shared with and reported to the greater scholarly community |
| E. Seek out ideas for potential resources needed for data collection and/or clearinghouse database (Phase I) | • Identify if additional funds will be necessary for data collection  
• Determine whether database creation will need funding | Fall 2017  | Task Force Administration                             | • Resources may be necessary for copying, mailing, purchasing of database program       |
### F. Gather baseline data of the perceptions of the current level of BSU’s commitment, knowledge of, and opportunities for community engagement (via Furco Self-Assessment Rubric or some other instrument)
- Used to create a baseline; but not yet full data collection of engagement assessment
- Furco (or similar instrument)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Appropriate members from faculty, staff, administration, students, and community members complete Furco (or similar) engagement instrument</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>May include respective reporting departments</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- President</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Dean’s</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- VPs/Provost</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Sample of faculty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Sample of students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Student Senate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Student Affairs admin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Sample of Community Members</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- AIRC</td>
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- Fall 2017
- Task Force

### G. Use baseline and existing data from past surveys to create methods of data collection (survey, focus group protocols, etc.) to identify the community/civic action being done at BSU (institutional level)
- Analyze baseline data
- Develop constructs for learning about engagement on campus
- Create survey/data collection methods
- Use existing or sample surveys in creating instrument for BSU
- Tap into existing resources and add what is distinctive for BSU
- Create qualitative and quantitative measures for data collection

- Spring 2018
- Task Force

### H. Obtain IRB approval prior to data collection
- Complete IRB paperwork for BSU protocols

- Spring 2018
- Task Force

### I. Enter baseline data
- Begin creating clearinghouse database

- Spring 2018
- Task Force

- Students interested in community engagement (via internship or potentially class projects)

- Methods will be used to collect data about current engagement opportunities

- Obtain IRB approval so results can be shared with and reported to the greater scholarly community
| J. Collect data via surveys, focus groups, or other methods to gather meaningful information that identifies the ways in which BSU lives out community and civic engagement |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Obtain data from respective academic units on campus engaged in activities in their respective colleges.  
  o Academic departments  
  o Internship office  
  o Academic affairs  
  o Cultural diversity office  
  o Center for Professional Development  
  o AIRC  
  • Obtain data from respective student affairs units on campus engagement in activities  
  o Career Services  
  o Summer Sessions  
  o Student Senate  
  o Sustainability office  
  o Office of Student Development and Enrollment  
  • Utilize qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data  
  • Provide opportunity for individuals to tell their stories  
  • Host genuine conversations on sensitive topics |
| Spring 2018 | Task Force |
| • Identify current status, nature of, and potential opportunities for engagement  
  • Garner perceptions of current partnerships and ways to improve external relations  
  • Data will be analyzed and recorded into database for BSU and community members |

| K. Begin to analyze BSU results quantitatively and qualitatively to identify current, and future potential student opportunities for the future |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Begin analysis of data  
  • Begin entering data in clearinghouse program |
| Spring 2018 Fall 2018 | Task Force Students |
| • Identify trends and themes among data  
  • Provides a mechanism for identifying and tracking information |

<p>| L. Celebrate campus and community successes and partnerships |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Provide opportunities to invite community members to campus for highlighting stories and sharing partnerships |
| Spring 2018 | Task Force/CPD BSU Community Bemidji Community |
| • Create meaningful relationships with Bemidji community |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 2: Conduct an assessment of community members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>M. Identify community members who are key point individuals for helping with collaborative efforts</td>
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<tr>
<td>N. Use baseline and existing data from past surveys to create methods of data collection (survey, focus group protocols, etc.) to identify the current partnerships with and potential interest of external community partners (community level)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O. Obtain IRB approval prior to data collection</td>
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<td>P. Collect data via surveys, focus groups, or other methods to gather meaningful information from community partners</td>
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<td>Q. Begin to analyze community results quantitatively and qualitatively to identify current and potential relationships, and</td>
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<td>Task</td>
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<td>generate student opportunities for the future</td>
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<td>R. Celebrate campus and community successes and partnerships</td>
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<td>S. Conduct annual Furco assessment to measure commitment of community engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 3: Analyze data to create clearinghouse database for generating community partnerships to determine student opportunities for engagement</td>
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<td>T. Complete analysis of results quantitatively and qualitatively from resource assessments to identify current and potential relationships, and generate student opportunities for the future</td>
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<tr>
<td>U. Enter data into database to build a more systematic institutional infrastructure for BSU, faculty, student affairs, and community organizations to identify projects and to create a more collaborative effort in relationship building</td>
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Communication

Much of Phase I will be internal communication quarterly with BSU President, academic deans, VP/Provost, BSUFA Senate and other bargaining units as appropriate (i.e., MSUAASF), Student Affairs, and Student Senate.

Phase II/III to be communicated with the above, as well as community members, and Communications/PR office for external posting.

References

