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Understanding Perceptions of University of Delaware's Community Engagement: Feedback from Community Partners

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UNDERSTANDING PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to current efforts to measure and understand community engagement efforts, the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) at the University of Delaware (UD) developed open-source, community engagement survey tools to collect data regarding community engagement across three key stakeholder groups: (1) students, (2) faculty and staff, and (3) community partners. Development of the survey tools was driven by creation of a logic model, incorporation of other models and surveys, and consideration of overarching goals (e.g., creating mutually beneficial ties between institutions and communities). This report presents data from the community partner survey, which included both quantitative and qualitative questions.

The following are the major quantitative findings of the community partner survey:

- 71% stated that equity matters to UD when it comes to their community work.
- 70% reported that UD was a trustworthy partner in the community.
- 82% agreed or strongly agreed that UD supports community-based health in the state.
- 73% stated that UD supports arts and cultural activities in the state.
- 69% reported or strongly agreed that UD supports K-12 education in the state.
- 83% agreed or strongly agreed the community research UD does is beneficial.

The following are the major qualitative findings of the community partner survey:

- Community partners often reported on the strengths of UD's community engagement efforts, in general feeling that UD has made meaningful contributions to the states' Arts and Culture, improving the health of communities and addressing educational needs in the state.
- Community partners identified weaknesses of and barriers to community engagement at UD, such as financial barriers, lack of understanding community needs, and advertising community engagement opportunities.
- Community groups are concerned at times that UD's engagement is for the benefit of research and its faculty rather than outcomes and needs that matter most to residents and their day to day lives.
- Partners provided recommendations to improve community engagement at UD by expanding outreach to all regions in Delaware, as well as increasing awareness of current initiatives, expanding collaborations with funding, and supporting participation in community activities by engaging the entire campus, including efforts to address transportation barriers to and from sites.

Based on these findings, we provide recommendations and reflections to strengthen UD's community engagement efforts as part of UD's commitment to its Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching designation:

1. Clarify and expand awareness of what community engagement is, why it is valued, and how it can look across colleges and departments, as well as student groups.
2. Consider a regular community engagement feature on Delaware public radio and in The News Journal.
3. Identify one central web-based location where community engagement activities and opportunities across the University can be located.
4. Clarify how community partners can work in coordination with and gain support from established partnerships.
5. Expand outreach to all regions of Delaware and engage satellite campuses in community engagement efforts.
6. Evaluate new engagement projects in conjunction with community partners to focus efforts on addressing unmet community needs.
7. Transform community engagement to better align and prioritize community interests with university expertise and resources.

COMMUNITY PARTNER – COMMUNITY ENGAGMENT REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Measuring the breadth and depth of an institution's community engagement and the efficacy of its collaborative efforts is an essential task for the future of community engagement, also known as civic engagement. The Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) at the University of Delaware (UD) has developed a set of tools for measuring a University's institutional community engagement across three key stakeholder groups: (1) students, (2) faculty and staff, and (3) community partners. The toolkit is made up of a logic model and three distinct surveys, one for each identified stakeholder group. Survey questions are distinctly mapped from the logic model's short- and long-term objectives for improving institutional capacity for community engagement. Annual surveys are electronically distributed to each of the stakeholder groups to inform and improve the University's community engagement efforts. This toolkit is the first freely accessible ongoing tool to assess and improve institutional community engagement and aims to improve reciprocally beneficial relationships between institutions and the communities in which they are engaged.

BACKGROUND AND BRIEF HISTORY

Universities globally are embracing civic engagement as an important component of their work. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has designated 359 out of 5,000 higher education institutions in the U.S. as civically engaged organizations, a number which continues to increase (Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, 2020). UD was formally recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for outstanding community engagement in 2015, 1 of 67 public institutions nationally that hold this designation. UD's classification was garnered by the CEI, which seeks to expand the University's role in cultivating active citizens through partnerships that impact civic needs and fostering reciprocally beneficial relationships between the University and the communities where it is engaged.

Yet such efforts are not simple undertakings, and to do well, require more than a default documentation. A well-designed assessment approach must clarify purpose and aims, while advancing the quality of the effort along with supporting a common understanding of goals and objectives. An integrated approach to assessment is one mechanism to help establish a common definition of success, yet with such overarching substantial efforts being undertaken across stakeholder groups including students, faculty and staff, and community partners, via a similar breadth of interwoven activities which overlap across the areas of research, teaching, and service (including from a community member perspective) measuring such efforts can be daunting.

Further, data can be utilized to serve multiple purposes, informing not only the CEI's progress, but also supporting learning objectives, research needs and department or center-based evaluation needs.

UD's community engagement leaders identified one of the major challenges in transitioning from community involvement to sustained and visible community engagement to be the development of a strategic process for the regular, systematic and standardized collection of information on community engagement activities. Since then, the evaluation team has developed a toolkit aligning indicators and outcomes from a comprehensive logic model to formulate survey questions, identified key sources of data from which progress can be monitored and tracked, and collected survey data from three key stakeholder groups to inform and improve the University's community engagement using these systematic measurable tools.

Institutional civic engagement is important in establishing mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the community where it is located. Establishing mutually beneficial relationships requires not only continued engagement efforts but also community partners' trust that institutional partners have their best interests in mind. Higher education has long been involved in community engagement efforts yet there has largely been a lack of systematic, quantitative and qualitative analysis of the effectiveness, coordination, accessibility, and perception of these efforts. Evaluating institutional civic engagement efforts can improve UD's community engagement by providing the CEI and other civic engagement leaders with trends and analysis of stakeholders' perceptions on the effectiveness, accessibility, and scope of engagement efforts.

UD has a long tradition of commitment to community engaged scholarship through applying knowledge and creativity to challenges facing Delaware communities. In 2013, UD's Carnegie Foundation Task Force designed and fielded the first-ever UD Community Engagement Survey to all faculty and staff. These were the first results leveraged to improve the accessibility of community engagement opportunities for faculty and staff.

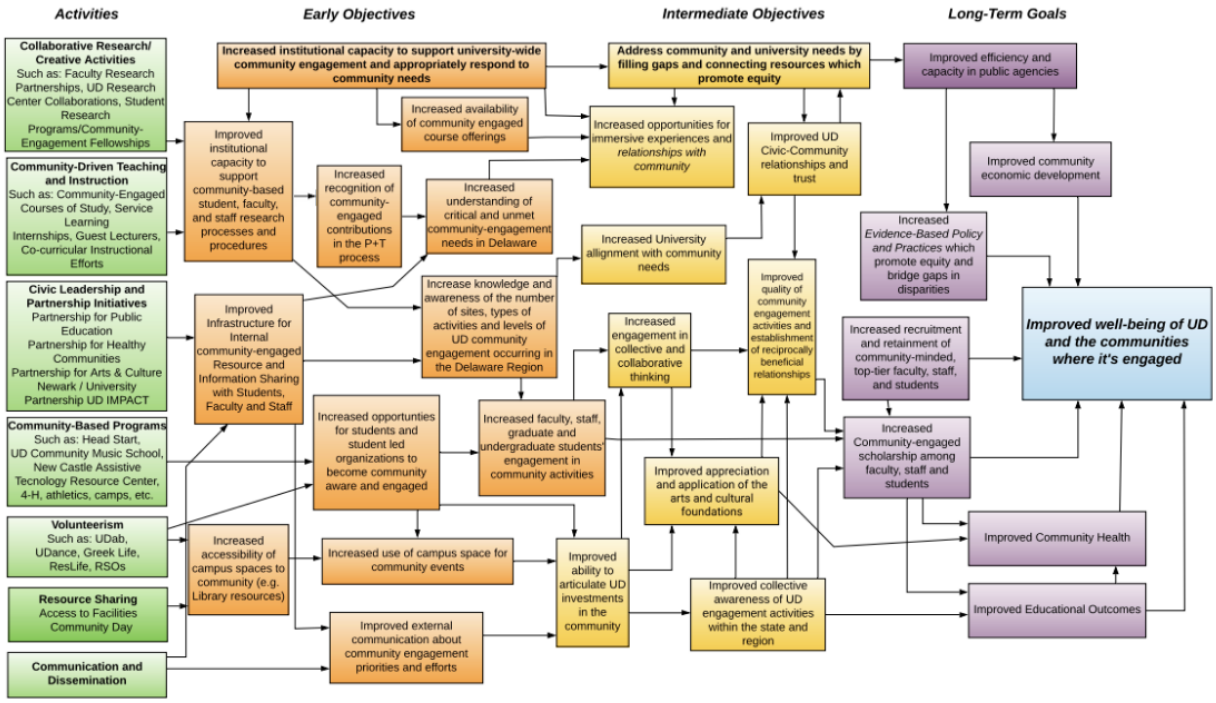
In 2015, the Carnegie Foundation honored UD for its institutional commitment to community engagement. Within the context of the Carnegie Foundation designation, community engaged research has widely defined the purpose of community engagement as "the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of 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 societal issues; and contribute to the public good" (Civic Engagement Benchmarking Task Force, 2005, p. 2).

The following year, UD's CEI formed to strengthen civic engagement across the institution and its partners. The initiative was formed to strengthen collaboration between UD and its larger community and in doing so recognize and impact civic needs. In 2017, CEI held quarterly evaluation

meetings to define community needs and identify corresponding data sources. The University's Civic Action Plan, published in 2017, developed UD's three key partnership groups, the Partnership for Healthy Communities, the Partnership for Arts and Culture, and the Partnership for Public Education.

In response to a call for ongoing measurement of institutional engagement, the process of developing an evaluation tool began in 2018. The tool development consisted of a seven-step process, further detailed in the Methods section, resulting in a comprehensive logic model, aligning outcomes and indicators of community engagement, see Figure 1, as well as surveys for the three identified stakeholder groups. Survey data collected from UD students, faculty and staff, and community partners was utilized to directly measure the objectives identified in the logic model; though additional data was also collected from other existing sources (i.e., research and administrative sources).

Figure 1. Community Engagement Logic Model



The authors of this report intend for this data to be used within the context of the logic model, to inform and improve the community engagement work to meet UD's goals for its CEI. Further, these tools were developed to support mutually beneficial community engagement among similar institutions.

METHOD

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

Survey development consisted of a seven-step process to ensure that survey questions were comprehensive, aligned with former tools, all while remaining succinct to increase participants' response rates. The first step began in 2018 by reviewing all available materials and documents which described the purpose and intent of the civic engagement work at UD. These tools included UD's 2017 Civic Action Plan as well as the mission statements and ongoing engagement efforts of partnership groups. In order to begin gathering data that would assess engagement efforts, an inventory of community engagement efforts by faculty, staff, students, and community partners was simultaneously established using academic colleges as key information providers.

As the second step in survey development, the research team conducted a literature review on strategies for evaluating institutional community engagement and by reviewing the work of other community-engaged institutions. While a limited number of tools were identified, those resources identified were not equipped to assess community partner perception of institutional engagement.

The third step involved using prior tools and partnership feedback as guides to develop short- and long-term objectives of community engagement. The process included a committee of individuals, with input from partnership groups of the CEI, resulting in clearly articulated objectives for the effort so that the appropriate data could be identified and trends could be tracked. Objectives were largely defined by a myriad of data sources and partner evaluations of community needs. Short- and long-term objectives were identified that would increase the capacity for members of the UD community members to participate in community engagement within and beyond UD's campus. These objectives were then mapped to long-term goals that focus on the continual development and measurement of: (1) high-quality community engagement activities; (2) community-engaged scholarship among faculty, staff, students, community partners; and (3) improved well-being of UD and the communities where it is engaged. These objectives and goals were utilized to create a logic model, a visual guide to the outline and timeline of the objectives and goals for community engagement.

Objectives were mapped to indicators for each survey group, comprising the fourth step in the survey development process. Working evaluation meetings occurred regularly with each of the three CEI partnership groups (Education, Arts and Culture, and Community Health), to clarify objectives and work toward measurable, standardized indicators. Data collection mechanisms were identified to assess these indicators, with the goal of capturing existing data as well as understanding the best mechanisms for accessing existing data on campus and in the community. Survey questions were developed in the fifth step of survey development through both reviewing

existing tools and developing unique questions tailored to UD and surrounding communities. The sixth step involved survey question review by leadership at UD across all partnership teams, and the final step consisted of question piloting with a subset of students, faculty, staff and community partners. Confusing or potentially redundant questions were eliminated or refined, and the second round of piloting took place.

The community partner survey is 32 questions and three pages long and contains both qualitative open-ended questions and quantitative questions (see Appendix for entire survey). The community partner survey has three primary objectives: (1) understand perception of community engagement activities broadly and specific to their experience, (2) assess community perceptions of UD's community awareness and effectiveness, and (3) understand range and types of activities undertaken with students and faculty and staff.

Survey data collected from UD community partners will be utilized to directly measure the objectives identified in the logic model; though additional data is also collected from other existing sources (i.e., research and administrative sources). Within the context of the logic model, this data informs and improves the work to meet UD's goals for its CEI. Further, we have developed the tools with the intention of dissemination, supporting mutually beneficial community engagement.

PARTICIPANTS

Respondents for the community partner survey were identified through a series of meetings with UD professors and researchers who provided contact information for UD's past and current community partners reaching across fourteen for profit and non-profit sectors including but not limited to: education, health services, government, banking, agriculture, entertainment, food service, arts, transportation, criminal justice, environmental affairs, religious institutions, and social services. The community survey was sent to 2,136 community partners who work directly with UD. Seventeen percent (n = 353) of community partners responded to the survey, though 208 submitted complete responses.

Data collection for each of the three stakeholder surveys consisted of email contact and reminders from Dr. Lynette Overby, UD's Acting Director of the Community Engagement Initiative. Following the email communication from Dr. Overby, the community partner survey remained open for approximately two months. Surveys were created and administered through Qualtrics and remained open from November until mid-January. Dr. Overby initially contacted community partners via email to complete the survey in November. She followed up with reminders to community partners to complete the survey before the Qualtrics form closed in mid-January.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

While survey participants remained anonymous, community partners responded to a series of demographic characteristic questions, such as primary business/organizational zip code, business/organizational sector and main area of interest, and number of years the respondent worked on projects or in partnership with UD. These questions were unique to the community partner survey. Responses give insight into the duration of community partners' collaboration with UD, the sector or general scope of their relationship, as well as their perceptions of community engagement.

OVERALL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORK

Across all three surveys, respondents were asked to give a rating on a 10-point Likert scale from 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent) of UD's community engagement work, and were asked to assess their attitude towards UD's work in the community, whether it has improved, declined, or stayed the same.

THINKING ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES

Community partners were also asked to rate the extent to which they would agree with 20 statements regarding the effectiveness, scope, and communication of community engagement efforts on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). These questions gage community partners' perception of the University's civic engagement work. For example, "I know how to get in touch with a University employee capable of helping with my community needs" and "It is easy to host a community meeting or event at a UD-owned facility". Many of these questions are common across all three surveys, allowing for comparison between groups. For example, "Equity matters to UD when it comes to its community work" and "UD does not understand the critical or unmet needs of communities in Delaware".

EXTENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Respondents were asked four questions about the extent of community partners' engagement with UD over the past year, requiring respondents to describe the nature of their collaboration (e.g.,, "In the past 12 months, about how many projects, grants or programs supported by the University of Delaware were you engaged in?") and quantify the number of UD associated persons involved with the project (e.g., "In the past year, about how many different UD faculty, staff or students have you met or worked with?"). In addition, respondents were asked to indicate the number of UD-hosted meets or events they have attended, as well as the financial benefit that has resulted from the participants' engagement with UD.

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v26. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data, and provide summaries of the range of variables examined. Qualitative data were coded using Dedoose™ qualitative analysis software. Initial codes were developed by reading a subsample of responses and using line-by-line coding, and codes continued to be developed and refined throughout the coding process. In order to improve inter-rater reliability and ensure coding accuracy among all three coders, codes were given an explicit definition. All coding discrepancies were discussed among all three coders and were resolved by reaching a consensus. Salient themes are provided in the Findings section.

FINDINGS

QUANTITATIVE

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. The sample of University community partners primarily consisted of individuals in four sectors. A total of 54% of participants were from the non-profit sector, 23% of partners were involved in government, 8% were in the corporate sector, and 8% were in PreK-12 education. A smaller number of survey respondents, about 5%, indicated their affiliation in the volunteer sector, and 2% reported their involvement in higher education.

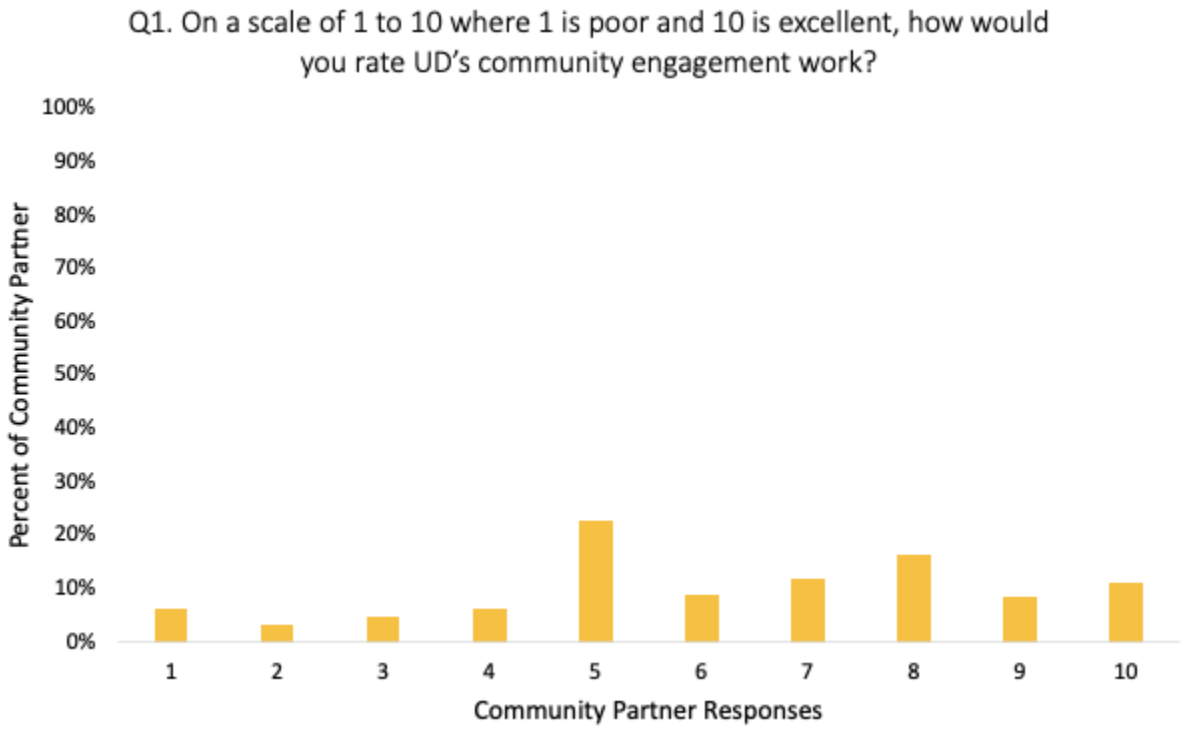
Community partners reported a wide range of business/organizational zip codes from across the state of Delaware. The highest quantity of participants' organizational zip codes, 23%, was 19801, an area code in New Castle County. The second highest reported area code was 19901, an area code in Kent County which represented 13% of participants. Another area code in New Castle County, 19711, represented another 13% of survey participants. Thirty-four unique area codes were reported in total. Furthermore, approximately half of respondents (48%) indicated their business/organization was located in Wilmington.

About 24% of community partners identified health as the primary area of interest for their business or organization. About 17% identified PreK-12 Education/Youth Programming as their organizations primary interest while another nearly 8% identified community organizing as their group's primary interest. About 29% of community partners listed 'Other' as their organization's primary area of interest.

OVERALL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORK

Community partners rated the University's community engagement on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being poor community engagement and 10 being excellent. Overall, the mean was 6.23 (Mode = 5; SD = 2.500), see Table 2 and Figure 2.

Figure 2. Community Partner Community Engagement Rating



In addition, community partners reflected upon their attitude towards the University's work in the community within the previous year, and whether it improved, declined, or stayed the same. Thirty five percent of community partners felt the University's work improved, while 14% said it declined, see Table 3.

EXPERIENCES WITH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

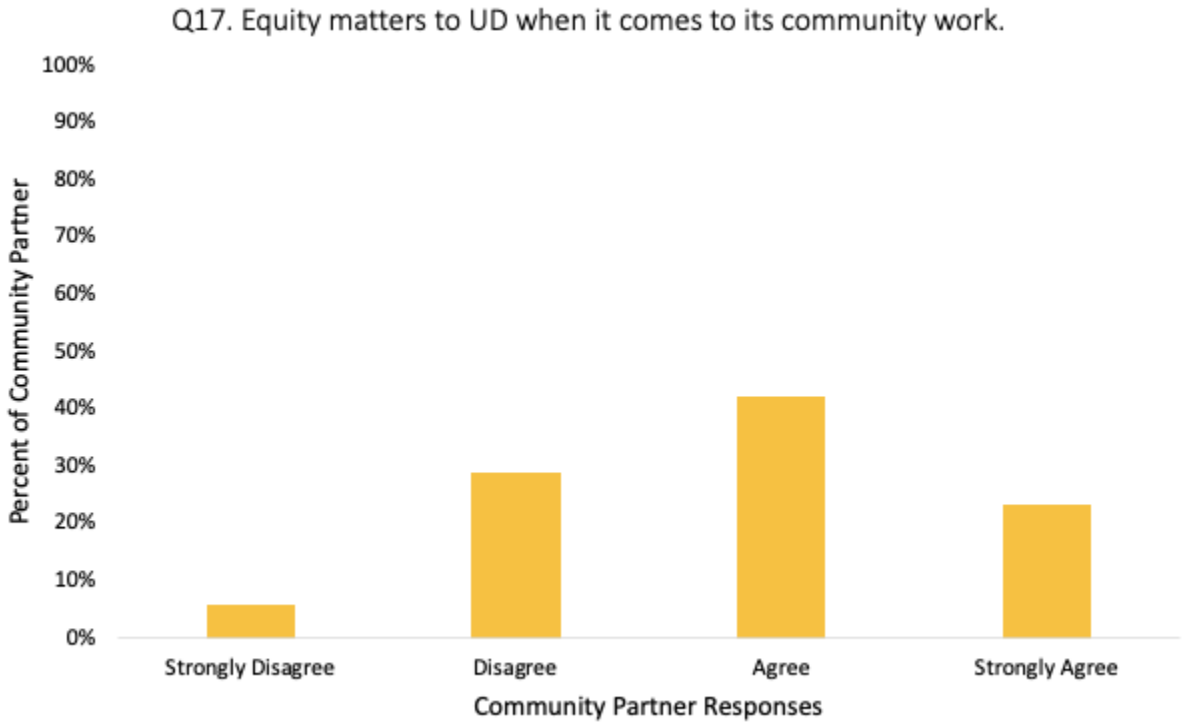
Community partners are generally positive about their experiences in working with UD (most have engaged with at least 17 faculty or staff in the past year, on 1-2 projects); however, sentiments are not always consistent and some express frustration. The community would like more information about the ways UD is engaged, the impacts of that engagement, better access to UD facilities and resources and to see longer-term commitments to serving the community's needs, not just those of the University.

Community partners were asked to reflect on the past 12 months when responding to a series of statements about their experiences with community engagement, see Table 4. They then were asked to indicate whether or not they agreed with the statements by choosing numbers on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

About 65% of community partners agreed or strongly agreed that equity matters to UD when it comes to their community work, see Figure 3, and 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that UD was a trustworthy partner in the community. The majority of partners, about 63%,

agreed or strongly agreed that professors at UD are community minded. However, 68% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that UD employees are not aware of the work their own University is doing in the community.

Figure 3. Community Partner Responses Regarding Equity



Community partner results also showed a highly positive reaction to community engaged research at UD. About 83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the community research UD does is beneficial. About 81% of community partners agreed or strongly agreed that UD provides scientific evidence for policy in Delaware. Furthermore, 63% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed they have a strong partnership with UD, and about 68% of community partners agreed or strongly agreed that their relationship with UD is reciprocal, such that there is mutual benefit. Yet, about 43% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that UD does not understand the critical and unmet needs of the community.

Community partners' awareness of UD's three partnership groups for community engagement differed by group, showing some to be more widely known than others. About 73% of community partners were aware of the Partnership for Healthy Communities at UD. Slightly less respondents, about 46%, were aware of the Partnership for Public Education at UD, and only 34% of community partners were aware of the Partnership for Arts and Culture at UD.

In addition to knowledge about the partnership groups, community partners also widely said that UD was supportive of arts and culture, public health, and K-12 education in Delaware. About 82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that UD supports community-based health in the state. Similarly, about 73% of community partners agreed or strongly agreed that UD supports arts and cultural activities in the state. Finally, about 69% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that UD supports K-12 education in the state.

Obstacles in community partners' experiences with UD included difficulties utilizing university resources and hosting community meetings at UD-owned facilities. Specifically, about 56% of community partners disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that it was easy to host community meetings at UD-owned facilities.

Respondents simultaneously were less able to identify specific community engagement work UD is doing and some were unaware of how to contact university employees to help with community needs. Only 52% of community partners agreed or strongly agreed that they have a good sense of the work UD is doing in the community. Similarly, just 53% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they know how to get in touch with a University employee capable of helping with their community needs.

EXTENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Community partners were asked to report the number of UD-hosted meetings or events they attended in the past 12 months, see Table 5. In the past year, respondents reported attending more than four UD-hosted meetings or events, M = 4.82, SD = 15.414, Mode = 0, Min/Max= 0/221. In addition, community partners generally reported engaging in more than one project, grant, or program supported by UD in the past 12 months, M = 1.87, SD = 2.666, Mode = 0, Min/Max= 0/25. Respondents were also asked to indicate the total number of UD faculty, staff, or students they worked with on any community engagement activities in the past twelve months. On average, participants worked with more roughly 17 university faculty, staff, or students, M = 17.26, SD = 45.651, Mode = 4, Min/Max= 0/400. Community partners estimated their average financial benefit from engagement with UD was just over $190,000, although there were large distributions of responses on this question. The mode, for example, is $0, M = $195,952.29, SD = $2,616,319.69, Mode = $0, Min/Max= $0/$38,000,000.

OPEN-ENDED FEEDBACK

Community partners were asked to provide additional thoughts, advice, or feedback about UD's community engagement. These narrative responses were carefully reviewed using Dedoose™, resulting in seventeen themes which were further grouped into five categories (i.e., Strengths, Weaknesses, Barriers, Recommendations, Survey Tool, see Table 6).

STRENGTHS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT UD

UD ACTIVELY ENGAGES WITH THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY

Community partners often reported on the strengths of UD's community engagement efforts, such as community engagement happening throughout the state:

> "As a resident of Dover and a volunteer with Restoring Central Dover, the community engagement efforts of the U of D Associate of Arts program here -- students and faculty -- has been excellent!"

> "The U of D's commitment to improving community engagement in helping communities to solve its own problems has been outstanding; also encouraging students to be involved in real life community needs and problem solving will turn out graduates who are sensitive to the needs of the [underserved] and economically disadvantaged communities and will create a better world for all."

> "Community engagement varies with each department or school. Overall my experience has been terrific. Most would be at a 10."

In addition, respondents provided examples of successful community engagement initiatives:

> "I work with CEEE [Center for Economic Education and Entrepreneurship] in their oversight of the Bank at School program and more recently in their efforts to implement the K-12 financial literacy standards in Delaware Schools. I find them engaged, active, and dedicated to this pursuit. I also work with UD's Director of Community Revitalization in their partnership with the FHL [Federal Home Loan] Bank [in] Pittsburgh and the Washington Heights community in Wilmington. They have been an excellent community partner, providing funding, leadership, and resources to our initiatives."

> "[Certain Faculty in Energy] are doing a good job. [Other faculty are] doing the job [that] was asked to perform by [the] County Government (Survey to relocate our entire community). One of the largest cleanup of pollution was engaged in by our Civic Association for which I am its President. For those who refused to cooperate we entered into a class action lawsuit with 32 defendant companies that we won."

COMMUNITY PARTNERS WANT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Respondents were enthusiastic and stated they wanted to become involved with current and future initiatives:

> "I would value the opportunity to work with the University and be kept informed of community engagement."

> "I wish I knew how to get involved…"

> "I would like to support UD more."

WEAKNESSES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT UD

UD NEEDS TO COMMIT TO LONG-TERM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, ESPECIALLY WITH MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE OF THE UD CAMPUS

Community partners proclaimed that the University needs to increase engagement with the surrounding cities:

> "My perspective is that UD is not very engaged in the City of Wilmington, our State's primary city. In particular I do not believe UD makes much -if any- effort to train teachers to work in Wilmington low income communities, where they are sadly needed. UD is one of the State's most powerful and capable institutions and I wish it would employ more of that capability and power in Wilmington, particularly in the public education arena."

> "I feel that UD needs to engage with the Community at a much higher level, as a long-time employee of UD I have witnessed a drop in the engagement with the city of Newark and feel that we as a University should partner more with the community."

Furthermore, one respondent noted a lack of engagement with marginalized communities:

> "There should be more direct and strategic community engagement with vulnerable and marginalized communities and areas outside of UD."

COMMUNITY PARTNERS ARE UNAWARE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORK UD IS DOING AND ITS IMPACT

Several respondents had absolutely no awareness of how UD is engaged with the community, citing, "I am not aware of many community events going on in the community [supported or attended by UD]." "Is there community engagement by UD?"

In addition, Community partners wrote about UD's values related to community engagement and its effects on the community, and there is a common belief that there is a disconnect between the two. For example, several respondents believe the disconnect stems from the value placed on academic publications and research:

"Community engagement is not and should not be focused on academic publishing."

"I would like to see them provide more tangible benefits to the citizens of the Wilmington community, besides exploiting the community for research."

Conversely, others indicated this disconnect is driven by the university's focus on financial gains:

"Community engagement appears important when it provides a revenue stream for UD."

"It appears that UD is starting to move in the right direction but UD is still in the space of transactional engagement with community partners. Meaning, if you have money to give to UD, they can work with you, but if you don't have funding to give, they aren't very willingly bringing their rich resources to bear to support the community for the sake of being part of the community. UD still has a long way to go to not be as transactional with their level of community engagement."

"University of Delaware often works to receive dollars for grants and work in the community with key partners where few resources are shared with those partners. In several cases I can [cite] where a promising practice is often taken over or built upon by UD and written into a grant where the launching or seed organization is completely left out of the picture or process. Intellectual property, community trust and then long-term partnership are often neglected."

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

Community partners expressed a concern that UD does not have a clear understanding of the community's needs:

"UD focuses services only on students and does not take into consideration community needs. There could be improved collaboration with the City of Newark and external partners to develop programs that would benefit student education as well as strengthen the community."

"Only reason results aren't better is that you often suffer from poor peripheral vision, meaning your frame of reference tends to be internally focused and overly academic (which I assume is difficult to overcome)."

"There are some instances where the program is not well thought out, or perhaps not well matched to the audience."

Furthermore, respondents questioned if the university respects it's neighboring town:
"U of D needs to invest in the community, engage with the actual community and be an invested partner."

"I strongly feel UD is not a good neighbor/ partner with respect to what direction our town grows."

"Not sure it's consistent over time, and UD's primary goal of keeping UD students can get in the way of genuine community work. Lots of resources, but not sure the incentives for the university to be community involved are adequate to overcome the much stronger pull for research/teaching/the UD system to overcome that."

ADVERTISEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

A few community partners stated that there is a lack of advertising for community engagement:

"UD could do a better job of explaining and promoting the things they provide to the community that many people take for granted."

"Is there community engagement by UD? If there is, there needs to be a better marketing effort to promote their efforts."

LACK OF INITIATIVES RELATED TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Community partners expressed a concern for a lack of diversity and inclusion reflected on the campus and in current initiatives:

"The impression the community has about UD will still always be influenced by its student body, which is overwhelmingly white and not entirely welcoming to students of color. More work needs to be done in terms of recruiting students of color."

"Many of the programs that the university provide, or support do not reach underserved communities without an intermediary provider of information"

"I think efforts to be more inclusive (to engage participants beyond those who are normally called upon) can be improved."

LACK OF ENGAGEMENT IN THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

Community partners expressed a concern for the lack of outreach in the cities surrounding the university:

"UD takes no interest in engaging with Newark residents or City officials for the betterment of the community."

"My perspective is that UD is not very engaged in the City of Wilmington, our State's primary city. In particular I do not believe UD makes much -if any- effort to train teachers to work in Wilmington low income communities, where they are sadly needed. UD is one of the State's most powerful and capable institutions and I wish it would employ more of that capability and power in Wilmington, particularly in the public education arena."

"The community engagement seems selective to the same audience- as a small state people keep asking the same group(s) to participate or their personal contacts."

"In our experience (as director of a nonprofit) we have no contact with UD. We have never found anyone interested or engaged in community concerns in southern Delaware."

BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT UD

ECONOMICS OF BECOMING INVOLVED AND BUILDING USE

Community partners revealed critical obstacles preventing participation in community engagement. For example, many respondents identified financial barriers:

"I have to pay for UD involvement."

"I've also had times when I've rented space for events at U.D. and the costs have been prohibitive, making it difficult to net any profit from those events."

LIMITS ON STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Others acknowledged barriers limiting student participation, for example, one respondent said:

> "Reaching U.D. students also [presents] challenges, but I'm hopeful that will change. I've had experiences in the past with U.D. students using local arts groups to conduct class projects and the students have been unprepared when coming to meetings and have shared results that were of little use to the community group. Again, I hope to help change this by vetting collaborations more carefully in the future, so that the collaboration is mutually beneficial."

INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Finally, a few community partners noted barriers placed by leadership:

> "Regrettably, senior leadership does not seem to embrace this commitment by holding every project to a strict financial sustainable benchmark."

> "...Under prior Presidents the impact on the Community was more important."

> "I don't think UD leadership participates in the community at all."

RECOMMENDATIONS TO OVERCOME BARRIERS AND IMPROVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT UD

INCREASE PARTICIPATING BY ENGAGING WITH ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Numerous community partners recommended joining forces with minority organizations to improve community relations:

> "Partner with black organizations."

> "If UD would like to partner with communities (particularly non-white communities), then I highly suggest that UD cultivates mutual relationships with community organizations to fund and design programs…"

> "I'd like to see UD offer more support to community agencies and community led groups that focus on disenfranchised communities. I've listed some ideas below:
>
> ...Program partnerships with community led- advocacy groups:
>
> A List of Community Agencies/Community Led Groups: Network Delaware, Women In Power: Black Maternal Health Advocacy Group, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, 302 Gunz Down, Delaware Center for Justice, CCAC's PACE (Advocacy Council for

Education), Walnut Street YMCA, ACLU De, Wilmington Public Library/NCC [New Castle Counties] Libraries, Black Achievers Program."

EXPAND COMMUNITY OUTREACH TO ALL REGIONS, AND IN SUPPORT OF UNDER-RESOURCED COMMUNITIES IN DELAWARE

Community partners proposed expanding community outreach to encompass all parts of Delaware:

"...I believe UD can do more outreach, tutoring and to assist other students struggling to succeed academically. The Latino population has one of the highest High School drop out rate nationwide. and I do not see any incentives targeting this major crisis."

"[A]s someone who lives in Kent county, there appears to be limited programming of activities in my area. I would love to see more community-oriented programs for children in Kent County. Thank you!"

"UD would enhance community engagement by extending themselves to the Sussex County Hispanic Community which is growing. Extending services and receiving feedback from this population on their unmet needs across the lifespan and across the social service spectrum would be beneficial for this community."

IMPROVE ADVERTISING OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community members recommended enhancing advertising to increase participation and awareness of community engagement opportunities:

"Nearly all of [the] programs/ events/ forums/ classes/ research/ films etc that I have experienced over the years via UD have been awesome, but I have stumbled upon most of them. I can think of several things that I learned about too late & kick myself, wishing I had found the stuff earlier (math program for elementary kids, environmental film series, Coast Day in Lewes...There must be a better way to inform the community of not necessarily the programs themselves (because there are so many), but at least of where to go to find the info. I'm pretty resourceful & I have to really dig to get the info I do get."

"Is there community engagement by UD? If there is, there needs to be a better marketing effort to promote their efforts."

"I think it needs to be more explicit, because I'm sure there are things going on that I'm just not aware of."

INCREASE FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Some community partners mentioned current initiatives that could use additional support:

"You need a staff that is actively engaged with the community. XXX [name withheld], for example, who attends the City of Newark Council meeting is someone who you want in your organization."

"... think the CEI is out of touch with the committee. They need an employee that can be engaged in civic duties, rather than running them."

"I would love to see fine arts faculty supporting students attending, observing or participating in fine arts activities in New Castle County."

SURVEY TOOL SUGGESTIONS

INCLUDE A NEUTRAL OPTION FOR SURVEY QUESTIONS

Several community partners mentioned wanting to have a "neutral" option, such as an "not applicable":

"This survey lacks a critical element ... 'neither agree nor disagree' as such I will be skeptical of the usefulness of published results. N/A is not an effect proxy for that value, and forces a survey participant to bias their responses toward 'agree.'"

"Some of the responses were really between Agree and Strongly Disagree so I selected Agree. Also, I had to use 'agree' when there might not have been a better response than N/A."

"Many areas [of the survey] did not apply due to my role with UD, but no opt out answer."

CONCLUSIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Data collected from community partners provides valuable insight as the University moves forward with continued community engagement efforts and looks to build upon the relationships these efforts create. This measurement of UD's community engaged work by stakeholder

perceptions has proved to be a unique and novel undertaking in community engaged scholarship across the country. The process has brought about valuable conversations about the ongoing strategic approaches that the University is taking to expand and emphasize community engagement. Results have demonstrated the importance of elevating partnership work as a critical outreach entity in each of these areas. In response to survey feedback, seven major recommendations have been identified:

1. **Clarify and expand awareness of what community engagement is, why it is valued, and how it can look across colleges and departments, as well as student groups.** Leveraging the expertise of leaders at UD's CEI through an expansion of their efforts may help to expand institutional awareness and broader valuing of community engagement as an integral piece of the University's role in the wider Delaware community.
2. **Consider a regular community engagement feature on Delaware public radio and in The News Journal.** One of the primary challenges community partners identified to community engagement efforts revolved around the communication and dissemination of engagement efforts. UDaily's broad-reaching coverage of these efforts can translate community engagement achievement for a wide-range of readers, including community groups to increase awareness and connect resources. As a key part of Delaware communications, public radio and The News Journal should consider a regular feature on the University's community engagement.
3. **Identify one central web-based location where community engagement activities and opportunities across the University can be located.** Information should be easily accessible to community partners in a single location online, including information on how to become engaged in community engagement opportunities. Respondents recognized a need for community engagement information to be easily accessible in a single location. Most often, partners were looking specifically for information on how to become engaged in existing efforts with clarification on how partners can gain the support of the University' established partnership groups. Some of this information, including upcoming events, partnership activities, and areas of involvement has been available on UD's CEI website (https://www.cei.udel.edu/). These resources specifically designate information for community partners to assist in the successful implementation of and accessibility to community engaged projects. Currently, community partners' awareness of these resources remains low. Leveraging the expertise of leaders at UD's CEI through an expansion of their efforts may help in reaching these groups with CE resources and information.
4. **Clarify how community partners can work in coordination with and gain support from established partnerships.** In addition to the need for a central hub for community

engagement, these results demonstrate a need to improve advertisements of current and future initiatives to reach new partner groups. Accelerating and expanding CEI partnerships and scope would connect community partners to existing and future opportunities.

5. **Expand outreach to all regions of Delaware and engage satellite campuses in community engagement efforts.** Community engagement must be available, accessible, and promoted in all regions of Delaware. Partners noted a concentration of engagement efforts in New Castle county and expressed hopes for future collaboration in Southern Delaware. Expanding the University's community engagement as a core aspect of its mission necessitates further involving satellite campuses in community engagement efforts. This could entail the creation of a fourth partnership, a partnership for community engagement in Kent and Sussex counties.
6. **Evaluate new engagement projects in conjunction with community partners to focus efforts on addressing unmet community needs.** Community partner responses highlight the need for an increased focus in community engaged projects to manage their scope and aim to better meet community partner needs. Data identified a lack of engagement efforts in community areas and sectors of highest need. Future engagement efforts must strive to include community partners in early stages of engagement efforts, in order to more accurately identify and address the critical and unmet needs of communities. Furthermore, University members should circle back to the community to inform them of how their participation in community engaged scholarship was utilized by the institution, thereby closing the feedback loop.
7. **Transform community engagement to better align and prioritize community interests with university expertise and resources.** Survey data showed that community partners identified a disconnect between University engagement and community needs and ongoing efforts. University engagement must shift to work alongside community partners and leaders and align with ongoing efforts instead of creating new efforts unaligned with current work. A listen and response framework for engagement is vital to effective engagement efforts to work together with communities rather than on them. This requires listening to community partners and engaging communities in ways that are mutually beneficial.

This data has yielded new and valuable information for new community engagement work at UD and as the university continues to expand community engagement work, this annual survey will monitor changing stakeholder perceptions of that work. In the future, this research could be expanded to individual and respective involvement in specific activities and events in order to

further enhance our understanding beyond a more broad-based picture of community engagement. The challenges and successes identified within this and other stakeholder reports recognize the important role of this data collection as a commitment to the increased scope of community engaged work at UD, in starting more conversations around community engagement and using data analysis in broader ways.

REFERENCES

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. (2020, February 4). 2020 Carnegie community engagement classification recipients announced. https://www.aplu.org/news-and-media/blog/2020-carnegie-community-engagement-classification-recipients-announced

Civic Engagement Benchmarking Task Force. (2005). Resource guide and recommendations for defining and benchmarking engagement. CIC Committee on Engagement in collaboration with National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges: Council on Extension, Continuing Education, and Public Service Benchmarking Task Force. Pp. 2. http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/groups/CommitteeOnEngagement/index.shtml

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Survey Questions	Response Options	Percent
Q30. What sector does your primary business/organization fall into? (n = 208)		
	Corporate	8.6%
	Government	22.6%
	Higher Education	2.4%
	Non-Profit	53.4%
	PreK - 12 Education	8.2%
	Volunteer	4.8%
Q31. What is the main area of interest for your primary business/organization? (n = 208)		
	Agriculture	1.0%
	Arts	4.8%
	Community Organizing	8.2%
	Criminal Justice	1.9%
	Economic Development	5.8%
	Environment	2.9%
	Health	23.5%
	Higher Education	1.4%
	Job Training	1.0%
	Other	28.4%
	Policy	3.8%
	PreK - 12 Education/Youth Programming	17.3%

Table 2

Rating of UD's Community Engagement Work

Q1. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, how would you rate UD's community engagement work? (n = 225)	
Response Options	Percent
1	6.2%
2	3.1%
3	4.9%
4	6.2%
5	22.7%
6	8.9%
7	12.0%
8	16.4%
9	8.4%
10	11.1%

Table 3

Attitude Toward UD's Work in the Community in the Past Year

Q2. In the past year, has your attitude toward UD's work in the community improved, declined, or stayed the same (n = 225)	
Response Options	Percent
Improved	34.7%
Stayed the Same	51.1%
Declined	14.2%

Table 4

Extent to Which Community Partners Agree or Disagree with Statements about Community Engagement

Thinking about your experience over the past 12 months, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements on a 1-4 scale with 1 being "Strongly disagree", 2 "Disagree", 3 "Agree", 4 "Strongly agree".

Survey Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	*n*
Q3. I have a strong partnership with UD.	9.7%	27.9%	39.4%	23.1%	208
Q4. My relationship with UD in the community is reciprocal; there is a mutual benefit.	9.3%	22.7%	45.3%	22.7%	203
Q5. The community-based research UD does is beneficial.	3.0%	14.5%	51.8%	30.7%	199
Q6. I have a good sense of the work UD is doing in the community.	6.5%	41.9%	39.6%	12.0%	217
Q7. I am aware of the Partnership for Public Education at UD.	10.7%	43.3%	30.7%	15.3%	215
Q8. I am aware of the Partnership for Healthy Communities at UD.	6.9%	20.5%	41.1%	31.5%	219
Q9. I am aware of the Partnership for Arts and Culture at UD.	11.9%	54.5%	25.1%	8.5%	211
Q10. I know how to get in touch with a University employee capable of helping with my community needs.	10.7%	36.3%	30.7%	22.3%	215
Q11. It is easy to host a community meeting or event at a UD-owned facility.	20.1%	41.8%	23.9%	14.2%	134
Q12. Professors at UD community-minded.	6.8%	29.4%	47.4%	16.4%	177
Q13. UD supports arts and cultural activities in the state.	2.3%	15.6%	67.1%	15.0%	167
Q14. UD supports K-12 education in the state.	7.0%	14.6%	57.3%	21.1%	171
Q15. UD supports community-based public health in the state.	4.1%	13.7%	53.2%	28.9%	197

Q16. UD is a trustworthy partner in the community.	8.0%	22.2%	44.8%	25.0%	212
Q17. Equity matters to UD when it comes to its community work.	5.8%	28.9%	42.1%	23.2%	190
Q18. UD is collaborative in its approach to working with the community.	9.7%	27.5%	44.4%	18.4%	207
Q19. UD employees are not aware of the work that its own University is doing in the community.	4.1%	27.8%	55.8%	12.4%	145
Q20. UD does not understand the critical or unmet needs of communities in Delaware.	5.6%	41.1%	33.0%	20.3%	197
Q21. UD takes advantage of the community.	11.3%	46.2%	27.2%	15.4%	195
Q22. UD often provides scientific evidence for policy in Delaware.	3.3%	15.7%	60.1%	20.9%	178
Q23. UD has helped to improve community economic development in the state of Delaware.	7.6%	22.9%	50.6%	18.8%	170

Table 5

Extent of Engagement with UD in the Past Year

Please answer the following questions about the extent of your engagement with UD in the past year.

Survey Questions	Mean	Mode	Standard Deviation	Min/Max	*n*
Q24. In the past 12 months, how many UD-hosted meetings or events have you attended?	4.82	0	15.414	0/221	214
Q25. In the past 12 months, about how many projects, grants or programs supported by the University of Delaware were you engaged in?	1.87	0	2.666	0/25	214
Q26. In the past year, about how many different UD faculty, staff or students have you met or worked with?	17.26	4	45.651	0/400	214
Q27. Estimating in dollars, what financial benefit has your engagement with UD resulted in?	$195,952.29	$0	$2,616,319.69	$0/$38,000,000	214

Table 6

Open-Ended Feedback Categories and Themes

Category	Theme
Strengths of Community Engagement at UD	
	UD Actively Engages with the Surrounding Community
	Community Partners Want to Become Involved in Community Engagement Opportunities
Weaknesses of Community Engagement at UD	
	UD Needs to Commit to Long-term Community Engagement, Especially with Marginalized Communities Outside of the UD Campus
	Community Partners are Unaware of Community Engagement Activities and Would Like More Information about the Work UD is Doing and its Impact
	Lack of Understanding of Community's Needs
	Advertisement of Community Engagement Needs Improvement
	Lack of Initiatives Related to Diversity and Inclusion
	Lack of Engagement in the Surrounding Communities
Barriers to Community Engagement at UD	
	Economics of Becoming Involved and Building Use
	Limits on Student Participation
	Institutional Barriers for Community Engagement
Recommendations to Overcome Barriers and Improve Community Engagement at UD	
	Increase Participation by Engaging with Additional Organizations
	Expand Community Outreach to All Regions and in Support of Under-Resourced Communities in Delaware
	Improve Advertising of Community Engagement

	Increase Funding for Community Engagement
Survey Tool Suggestions	
	Include a Neutral Option for Survey Questions

APPENDIX

Community Partner Survey

As part of its commitment to civic engagement, the University of Delaware (UD) would like your feedback about its community work. Results will be incorporated into future progress reports about UD civic and community engagement and used to guide planning efforts. The survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete and has just 3 easy-click through pages. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and perspectives with us.

Q1. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, how would you rate UD's community engagement work?

Q2. In the past year, has your attitude toward UD's work in the community improved, declined or stayed the same?

- ❑ Declined
- ❑ Stayed the same
- ❑ Improved

Thinking about your experience over the past 12 months, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: *Indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements on a 1-4 scale with 1 being "Strongly disagree", 2 "disagree", 3 "agree", 4 "Strongly agree".*

Q3. I have a strong partnership with UD.
Q4. My relationship with UD in the community is reciprocal; there is a mutual benefit.
Q5. The community-based research UD does is beneficial.
Q6. I have a good sense of the work UD is doing in the community.
Q7. I am aware of the Partnership for Public Education at UD.
Q8. I am aware of the Partnership for Healthy Communities at UD.
Q9. I am aware of the Partnership for Arts and Culture at UD.
Q10. I know how to get in touch with a University employee capable of helping with my community needs.
Q11. It is easy to host a community meeting or event at a UD-owned facility.

Thinking about your experience over the past 12 months, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding general community engagement and perceptions? *Indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements on a 1-4 scale with 1 being "Strongly disagree", 2 "disagree", 3 "agree", 4 "Strongly agree".*

Q12. Professors at UD community-minded
Q13. UD supports arts and cultural activities in the state.
Q14. UD supports K-12 education in the state.
Q15. UD supports community-based public health in the state.
Q16. UD is a trustworthy partner in the community.
Q17. Equity matters to UD when it comes to its community work.
Q18. UD is collaborative in its approach to working with the community.
Q19. UD employees are not aware of the work that its own University is doing in the community.
Q20. UD does <u>not</u> understand the critical or unmet needs of <u>communities in Delaware.</u>
Q21. UD takes advantage of the community.
Q22. UD often provides scientific evidence for policy in Delaware.
Q23. UD has helped to improve community economic development in the state of Delaware.

Please answer the following questions about the extent of your engagement with UD in the past year.

Q24. In the past 12 months, how many UD-hosted meetings or events have you attended?

Q25. In the past 12 months, about how many projects, grants or programs supported by the University of Delaware were you engaged in?

Q26. In the past year, about how many different UD faculty, staff or students have you met or worked with?

Q27. Estimating in dollars, what financial benefit has your engagement with UD resulted in?

Q28. Please provide any additional thoughts, advice or feedback you have about UDs community engagement here.

Please answer the following questions about yourself. These questions will conclude the survey.

Q29. What is your primary business/organizational zip code?

Q30. What sector does your primary business/organization fall into?

- ❑ Non-Profit
- ❑ PreK – 12 Education
- ❑ Higher Education
- ❑ Corporate
- ❑ Volunteer
- ❑ Government

Q31. What is the main area of interest for your primary business/organization?

- ❑ Arts
- ❑ PreK – 12 Education/Youth Programming
- ❑ Higher Education
- ❑ Health
- ❑ Environment
- ❑ Agriculture
- ❑ Policy
- ❑ Economic Development
- ❑ Criminal Justice
- ❑ Job Training
- ❑ Community Organizing
- ❑ Other

Q32. How many years have you worked on projects or in partnership with UD?