



Aligned Scholarship and Engagement Steve D. Hanson

Issue: The share of state budgets devoted to higher education has steadily declined over the last several decades. This proportional reduction in support, combined with the recent steep declines in many state economies, has placed higher education in a difficult financial position. The response over time has been to seek out external sources of funding (e.g., grants and contracts) which has gradually caused higher education institutions to shift from supply-driven to demand-driven organizations. The traditional disciplinary organizational structure has not been well suited to serving more demand-driven stakeholders and, in most institutions, layers of boundary/enabling organizations (e.g., centers and institutes) have been established to help meet the needs of these stakeholders. In many instances the strategic intent, expectations, and incentives are not well aligned across the academic units and the boundary organizations. Recently, emerging donor/private sector partnerships, aimed at addressing “wicked problems,” have created new and exciting funding opportunities but have also highlighted the weaknesses of the traditional higher education model.

What has been done? This project has involved the development of a higher education model that illustrates the breakdown in the current model and explores what the characteristics of a solution look like. The proposed solution centers on the development of shared strategic institutional intent and aligned expectations and incentives. The model creates cultural change using a simple and transparent set of principles and behaviors that, if adopted across the institution, create synergistically aligned scholarship and engagement that is responsive to stakeholder demand. The model is scalable in the sense that it can be adopted at different administrative levels in an institution. The approach has been implemented with success in one academic unit and is currently being evaluated for pilot adoption in one college and one major university-wide program.

Impacts: Creating a shared strategic intent by embracing a simple and transparent set of strategic principles and then aligning expectations and incentives allows an institution to rapidly move toward an innovative demand-responsive model that maintains a core foundation of disciplinary strengths.

Funding Sources, Cooperators, Partners, Mentors, etc.: This project has been internally funded through the Michigan State University General Fund, Experiment Station, Extension, and International Studies and Programs. Dr. Kim Wilcox, Provost, Michigan State University; Dr. Jeff Armstrong, Dean, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources; Dr. Jeff Riedinger, Dean, International Studies and Programs; and Dr. Chris Brown, Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine, have been important supporters. Dr. Steve Pueppke, Director, Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, has served an important mentoring role.

Contact Information: Steven D. Hanson, Chair, Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, 202 Agriculture Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1039; phone: 517-355-4567; e-mail: hanson@msu.edu.