Outreach and Engagement

BACKGROUND

Oregon State University's outreach and engagement mission extends across all academic colleges and other relevant units of the university. With funding from federal, state, and local governments, the OSU Extension Service has been, for 106 years, a catalyst for change to strengthen communities and economies, sustain natural resources, and promote healthy families and individuals. An Outreach and Engagement Council—made up of college outreach leaders, the Library, University Relations and Marketing, and others across the campus—provides policy leadership and advice about priorities.

As one of three core pillars of OSU's accreditation process, outreach and engagement is defined as a process that involves discovery, validation, and communication among learners not residing on the main campus. Associated performance metrics include the number of learners reached and respective credentials gained, the amount of external funding secured for this work, and the number of volunteers trained, among other measures.

As with many universities, we have raised the profile of community-engaged scholarship, emphasizing the value of reciprocal benefits and creation of shared solutions to multi-dimensional issues such as food insecurity, rural-urban interdependence, and tomorrow's workforce. As Oregon's population becomes more diverse in background and learning styles, OSU must adapt strategies and tools to effectively connect and engage across the state.

Current Areas of Focus
- Continued buildout of Open Campus and the associated Juntos program
- Implementation and accountability for Outdoor School (2016 Ballot Measure 99)
- Preparation for renewal of Carnegie Foundation elective credential for community engagement
- Promotion of an innovation culture

Key Questions
- Are there ways to use our statewide presence across all university missions? For example, engaging matriculated students in outreach and engagement work through experiential learning?
- Through a new "Latinx Initiative," how do we best align this work with the university's priority for diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- How should we effectively connect with Oregon's urban population and the new Portland Initiative while maintaining existing rural outreach programs?
- How can we balance innovation and response to emerging issues with serving traditional learners?