

Disrupting the Silo: Developing Partnerships with Internal and External Communities

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Key to remember disrupting silos starts with a conversation.

Land acknowledgements -

- What does it actually mean?
- How does it land for each person?
- Who are you?
- How do you identify?
- What is the meaning of your name (if you know it)?
- Where is your family from?
- Why did they come here?
- What is your relationship to the land? What has this land given you once you've been here?

Anchoring the Anchor Strategy - Towards 2030 goals, President's Three Priorities:

- Size, diversity and complexity
- How do we incorporate these ideas?
 - Disruption is a positive thing even if it feels uncomfortable.
 - Reimagining partnerships and community.
 - It is not a script, it's about who you are. About personal de-colonization. This is about unlearning and challenging and re-learning and practice.
 - Need to do the work on the individual level to engage internal and external communities. Important to have some level of social empathy.
 - How do we do this in an equitable manner?

Inclusive excellence through 4 imperatives of commitments that are central to UTSC:

1. Leadership (bold, empathetic, shared, transparent, inclusive)
2. Working and learning environment
3. Networks and partnerships (community)
4. Research/Scholarly prominence

Rethinking the ivory tower:

- Who's here? Who's not? Why? Whose experiences/values are not present?
- What are we going to do about it? What questions can you ask yourself?

- What are the effects of our decisions?
- Accountability: who's being held accountable?

Anchor Institution Strategies

- Community wealth building
- people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people
- Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) - community comes with particular capacities and assets – it is not about lacking things; it is not about looking at the community as a deficit
- Disrupting silos starts with having a conversations and understanding the context of larger ecosystem
- How do we support local community wealth building? By buying locally, supporting locally, hiring locally and connecting locally
- Also centres around accountability
 - Video: “How Wolves Change Rivers”

Video clip shown to start the group thinking about how we relate to each other and question balance.

Highlighted that it is important to ask ourselves what we are as an institution and as an individual, power of the decisions we make and to think about the intentionality of access programs. Emphasis on balance / and in practice.

- Who are we in this ecosystem?
- We are all connected and there is a response
- Need diversity of people, ideas etc. to make everything thrive
- Is this idealistic?
- If we bring the wolves back – how do we change the perspective of the deer who will lose power?
- Were these the desired outcomes?
- Were these outcomes intentional?
- Shows our interconnection – how our silos impact others
- How do we all relate to each other?
- Balance? Who needs to be where?
- Reciprocal Learning Partnerships - a way to bring about balance, address power dynamics and build opportunities for the community and university to contribute to a larger ecosystem

- to create and sustain equitable partnership work that goes beyond our silos i.e. individual departments and organizations

Scenario discussion:

A community agency approached the university to partner on an access program for grade 8 girls transitioning to high school. The program and grant was designed and written by community partner but being a new organization, they cannot apply for funding on their own and they've asked the university to serve as trustee. The program received grant funding and ran successfully for the year. The university did not include community agency's feedback in year-end report to funders nor tag them in a tweet on social media showcasing a photo-op at the university with a local government official with program participants.

When the University was approached by the community agency as to why they were not included in any of the year-end requirements, including the photo-op, it was explained to them that "everything was happening so quickly".

From the scenario, the group was asked to discuss what could be done differently and share feelings about the situation. Groups were asked to consider the scenario taking place between two community organizations. Would this shift your perspective?

Themes of power imbalance, accountability, relationship building and restorative practices came up in the group discussion.

- This discussion highlighted, the importance of sharing of knowledge and strategies that have worked i.e. could share story online through website?

Q. Could we have a repository of information to know what is going on at the University? i.e. shared database, not reinventing the wheel. **A.** A website is in the works to capture all the programs.

- Values-based, Reciprocal Learning Partnerships
 - Assets
 - Dialogue
 - Language
 - Relationship building
 - Culture
 - Co-learning
 - Social empathy
 - Joint problem posing/solving
 - Identify needs, issues, challenges
 - Self-assessment and reflection

Highlighted the importance of language and coming up with common language, and problem-solving. Along with including your own reflection.

Sustainability – how do we achieve it?

- Power dynamics
- Relationships
- Perceptions

Reflecting in terms of assets also allows for co-learning and an infrastructure.

- In relationship-building
- Managing expectations
- Capacity (funding)
- Language barriers
- Assessing impact
- Sustainability/continuity
- Benefits and limitations
- Fatigue
- Changing priorities
- Defining community/local
- Hope/optimism

Does the community feel empowered to question the University? To speak up despite the perceived power dynamic?

Relationship Building and partnership development: something to think about:

- Know the history: challenges include importance of knowing history of any past partnerships – the relationship doesn't start the moment we engage
- How can we support folks who have external facing portfolios?
- Circle of Care: Self-care and Community support
 - Acknowledge this work takes a lot as it's not embedded in the institution and it's important to take care of yourself and find your community of support.
 - Key to put a face to the work, and a face/name for the reason you are doing this work today.
- Continue to have these conversations in these spaces
- Encouraged to reach out to the Provostial Advisor, Access Programs – it is their role to help make connections and support. Also, Community Development & Engagement, UTSC, website has tips for how to navigate relationships.