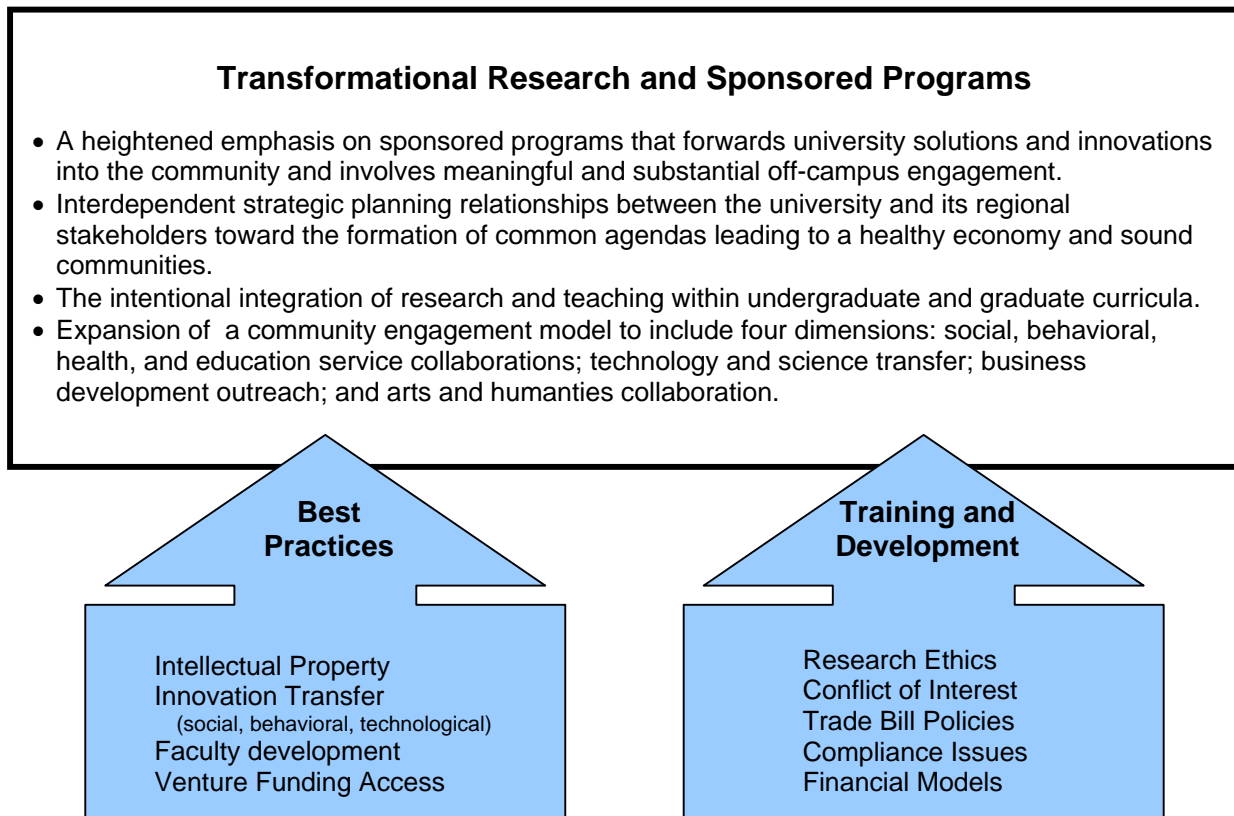


An Economic and Community Development Agenda

A Grants Resource Center (GRC) Community/Economic Development Taskforce will work to establish models of research and sponsored programs that promote institutional-community partnerships and innovation transfer leading to healthy communities and regional economic development.

As the U.S. economy recovers, two prevailing national attitudes exist: higher education's contribution of ideas and innovative market solutions are indispensable to economic health; and community-based solutions are more viable than national, one-size-fits-all answers. In order to fulfill the mounting expectations for higher education's engagement, the infrastructure needs to be strengthened and economic/community development best practices must be identified and promoted.

The Community/Economic Development Taskforce will guide the development of GRC services targeted at institutional engagement in these areas:



The formation of the taskforce responds to several needs and opportunities:

- Governors and state legislators have identified the higher education sector as a critical partner in producing a globally competitive workforce, rebuilding sustainable physical and social infrastructures, and stabilizing regional economies.
- The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act requires a sponsored programs approach centered on local initiatives and a research-based promotion of innovation to generate economic impacts. This has accelerated the call for more intense and proactive community engagement for all institutions.
- As a result of the survey of research issues among AASCU CEOs and CAOs, the provosts have asked that GRC consider the establishment of regional cooperative arrangements that could promote technology transfer, economic development projects, training of campus personnel, and cooperative management of administrative issues (patent policy, trade bill regulations, conflict of interest policies, and more).
- GRC has been approached by for-profit agencies that offer database services for either exploring local economic development assets or developing institutional capabilities in promising research areas.
- There is potential for a relationship with a proposal from APLU (formerly NASULGC) for a project that would set metrics for assessment of the campus innovation environment and establish criteria to measure the institutional engagement in the external economic environment. We (GRC) have been invited to participate and staff members have been attending meetings.

The GRC economic/community development agenda builds on the strengths of GRC/AASCU institutions:

- A historic commitment to engagement with community organizations and local business, and a record of educating the public administrators, local leaders, and teachers responsible for sustaining economic and community health.
- The existence of models of civic engagement that combine social, behavioral, technological, business, and science relationships with regions and local communities.
- Experience with the integration of teaching, learning, and research within both undergraduate and graduate curricula.
- A focus on applied and translational research and development.

It also addresses challenges facing GRC/AASCU institutions:

- Many lack personnel resources with adequate expertise in compliance, contract management, and intellectual property.
- Information on best practices involving community engagement activities is not shared among regional comprehensive universities.
- While community outreach activity has been comprehensive in approach, it has often lacked campus-wide coordination that would lend coherence to the outreach efforts.
- The politics of engagement can be volatile, with initiatives imposed on the institution rather than undertaken strategically, based on the mutual priorities of the institution and its community partners.
- Institutions tend to react to short-term benefits, at the expense of cultivating long-term, mutually-beneficial relationships.

GRC Community Economic Development Taskforce

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