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Embracing “Other” Forms of Sponsored Activity: Leadership Perspectives on Building Research Capacity at WMU

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The Project: Leadership Conversations on Research

Rationale: This Academic Leadership Academy Project had the following goals:

- To explore leadership perspectives on “research”
- To help raise awareness of Carnegie Classification metrics regarding “research activity”
- To identify key investments academic leadership deemed essential to advance WMU’s standing as a research institution.
- To raise awareness of regulatory definitions of sponsored activity
- To explore initiatives that deans, directors and chairs would be willing to lead, on behalf of their units, in order to advance WMU’s standing as a research institution.

Method: 10 face-to-face conversations of about 60-90 minutes in duration.

Participants: All 10 participants were current or former deans, directors or department chairs.

The discussion questions

A. Exploring Views on Research

- What does the term “Research” mean to you?
- What does the term “Research University” mean to you?
- Based on the Carnegie criteria to determine an institution’s level of research activity and your views on research, what investments do you feel are critical to advance WMU’s standing as a research university?

B. Exploring Opportunities “Other” Sponsored Activity

Affords to Build Institutional Research Capacity

- As a dean/director/chair, if you were asked today to lead one sponsored project initiative on behalf of your unit to enhance WMU’s standing as a research institution, what would that initiative be?
- What would be your primary concern(s) about serving in this role on behalf of your unit?

Carnegie Classifications on “Research Activity”

The Carnegie classification criteria for research institutions has a methodology which examines the following items to determine the “level of research activity” which occurs at an institution:

- Research & development expenditures in science and engineering
- Research & development expenditures in non-Science and Engineering fields
- Science & Engineering research staff (postdoctoral appointees and other non-faculty research staff with doctorates)
- Doctoral conferrals in humanities fields, social science, STEM and other fields

URL: http://carnegieclassifications.ui.edu/

Federal regulations on institutional functions and sponsored activities

**Majors Functions of an Academic Institution**

Instruction means the teaching and training activities of an institution.

- Sponsored instructional and training activities which are established by grant, contract, or cooperative agreement

Departmental research means research, development and scholarly activities that are not sponsored research and, consequently, are not separately budgeted and accounted for. Departmental research, for purposes of this document, is not considered a major function, but as a part of the instruction function of the institution.

Organized research means all research and development activities of an institution that are separately budgeted and accounted for. It includes:

1. Sponsored research means all research and development activities that are sponsored by Federal and non-Federal agencies and organizations. The term includes activities involving the training of individuals in research techniques commonly called research training where such activities allow the same facilities as other research and development activities and where such activities are not included in the instruction function.

2. University-wide research means all research and development activities that are separate budget and accounted for by the institution under an internal application of institutional funds. University research, for purposes of this document, must be combined with sponsored research under the function of organized research.

Other sponsored activities means projects financed by Federal or non-Federal agencies and organizations which involve the performance of work other than instruction and organized research. Examples of such programs and projects are health service projects and community service programs.

*The Carnegie classification and related methodology are described in the “Majors Function of an Academic Institution” of the Carnegie classification of institutions and is a part of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Classification System. The methodology is applied to each institution’s activities and is based on the type of activity rather than the level of activity.

Common university interpretations – Other Sponsored activity

*“Other Sponsored Activity” may include:*

- Travel grants
- Support for conferences or seminars
- Support for University public events
- Support for students, staff, or teachers in elementary or secondary schools, or the general public, through outreach-oriented activities
- Projects that involve faculty, staff, or students in community service activities (where the students are not receiving academic credit for their involvement)
- Support for projects pertaining to library collections and archives and acquisitons
- Programs to enhance institutional resources, including data center expansion, computer enhancements... and many more...


What would you lead on behalf of your peers, our community?

Proposed initiatives to build our research culture and capacity & concerns

- Secure funding to expand the capacity of the department to engage nonprofits and the regional public sector through joint development of databases to facilitate evaluation, system analyses, as well as trainings and other networking events to facilitate joint program development and grantwriting.
- A comprehensive “University Audit” of its structure to assess its capacity to support civic engagement, leverage public private partnerships and expand investments in graduate education.
- Training grants to invest in students for professional development, network, and skill building beyond the curriculum.
- Collaboration with the City of Kalamazoo on a “Smart Cities” initiative.
- Collaboration to unite “splintered collections” where WMU has a component.
- Sponsorship of a college-wide conference showcasing WMU strengths in automotive research and technical services.
- A partnership summit to invite 4-5 high school students from every county in Michigan to come to campus to learn about health professions, explore programs at WMU and encourage participating students to learn about health equity issues in collaboration with faculty, staff and ROSs.
- Support for advanced fellowships in the Humanities (“Society of fellows”)
- Support to link K-12 professionals, Geography, Political Science and History faculty and students to examine best practices in civic instruction

Next steps & acknowledgments

Next steps: All 10 participants identified actionable initiatives in the form of either possible grant or contract proposals, or partnerships that could be leveraged to develop their sponsored sponsor programs. OVPF is currently researching and developing a plan and list of potential sponsors for the proposed activities.

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Interested in developing an initiative? Feedback?

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