



A U C E A Inc.

COMBINED UNIVERSITY PARTNER SURVEY REPORT

Benchmarking Community Engagement: The AUCEA Pilot Project

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Executive Summary

Ninety-eight responses from partners identified by nine Australian Universities are analysed as part of the Australian University Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) Community Engagement Benchmarking Pilot.

Universities selected a small number of close partner organisations to assist with piloting the partner survey instrument. Most participating organisations were from the business, government, including local government and education sectors. The people who completed the surveys were mainly Chief Executive Officers and Senior Managers.

Most University partner representatives surveyed indicated that the organisation had a length of association of between 5-8 years and most, on average, categorise their interaction level with the University as “medium” on a five point scale from very low to very high. The main areas of contact with the University were: using University services including consultancy, University Services, expert services, technical assistance and staff development; relating to students through volunteerism co-operative education, internships, community service and service learning; participating on University committees; and using University facilities.

The effectiveness of University partnership arrangements from the perspective of responding partner organisations was assessed over four broad areas: 1) accessing the University; 2) working in partnership and providing assistance to the community/region; 3) student learning and research; and 4) benefits of regional partnerships with the University.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of a suite of items related to each area of analysis on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from ‘not important at all’ to ‘essential’. Respondents were also required to rate the current performance level or level of change brought about by their partnership with the University, for each item.

In each of the four areas, the mean importance score is contrasted with the mean performance scores in order to examine the University performance relative to partner organisation’s expectations. Mean performance scores are generally below mean importance scores although in some cases the difference is marginal. Whilst mean performance scores are above average to good the areas of largest disparity

between assessed importance and assessed University performance indicate areas that could be benchmarked for improvement.

Partners were also asked to indicate their level of overall satisfaction on a five point scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. Most surveyed partner organisations are satisfied or very satisfied with their relationship with the University. Given that participants were selected on the basis of their “good” relationship with the University, it is perhaps surprising that a small percentage is neutral or dissatisfied.

Responding organisations were asked to identify three impacts of the partnership with the University. Responses are classified in the following categories: student connections and employment; access to University resources and expertise; Knowledge, information and innovation; business development and improvement; regional development; research partnerships and research outcomes; positive capacity and approach to partnering; collaborative development of curriculum; establishing and maintaining networks; profile and promotion; and Independent advice and evaluation.

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to outline any other areas of concern to them not covered in the survey. Comments related to: University Teaching programs; communication issues; networking opportunities; funding issues; the positive contribution of the University; partnership issues (2); and the need for research.

Whilst the survey has yielded information on partner perception, the pilot has raised some methodological issues regarding the structure of the survey instrument, the terminology used and highlighted issues related to benchmarks that may be ultimately of use nationally.

Six benchmarks arising from the Partner Survey are proposed. Four benchmarks relate to partner perceptions (of accessing the University, regional community assistance; student learning and research; and regional community partnership benefits). A fifth benchmark is overall partner satisfaction and the sixth is the number of partner responses.

This report and the accompanying individual University report provide an opportunity for Universities to test outcomes and potential benchmarks established by the partner survey with their community partners.

Introduction

In 2005 the Australian University Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) identified a need to encourage the development of national and international benchmarks for engagement activity, the inclusion of engagement as a part of institutional profile assessments by government and as part of the AUQA assessment regime.

The benchmarking pilot had its origins at workshops conducted at the AUCEA conferences in 2005 and 2006 where 28 universities registered an interest in participation. The Benchmarking working group formed in 2006 and met twice before the next conference workshop in 2007. This process developed and tested a framework and indicators.

The framework has a dual purpose. It firstly aims to provide universities with a basic capacity to make ongoing comparisons with other universities throughout Australia and, through this, the adoption of 'good practice' where relevant to their circumstances, while at the same time retaining institutional confidentiality and individuality. Secondly, the framework aimed to provide the core elements for each University to tailor a more comprehensive local benchmarking process that will best fit their particular mission and community context. In both situations it is expected that the quantitative and qualitative assessments undertaken by the University will be by way of mutual partnership with their communities.

The benchmarking framework comprises goals, strategies and measures that are commonly associated with high quality and effective engagement. In this regard it is concerned with the quality of partnership relationships between University and community; the responsiveness of University governance management and administrative processes; questions of University accessibility; and the way that research, teaching and learning supports staff student and community involvement.

Documents supporting the benchmarking included:

- A definition of terms used in the Benchmarking Framework;
- An Institutional Questionnaire designed for the data collection;
- A Good Practice Proforma; and
- A Partner Survey

The Institutional Questionnaire and Partner Survey, designed to collect data related to the key measures identified in the Benchmarking Framework, were completed by seven participating universities. One University completed the Institutional questionnaire only (Charles Darwin University) and another completed the Partner survey only. The Partner survey was completed by a small sample of University identified partners in the period from December 2007 until April 2008.

Participating universities were asked to select a small sample of partners with whom they had a good relationship, asking them to assist in trialling the partner survey instrument. The survey was completed online (56) or on hard copy (41) with responses sent to the project leader who also analysed responses ensuring that all individual were de-identified to maintain confidentiality.

Universities who participated in the pilot partner survey were:

- Deakin University, Victoria (metropolitan/provincial/rural)
- James Cook University Queensland (metropolitan/provincial)
- Macquarie University, New South Wales (metropolitan)
- Murdoch University, Western Australia (metropolitan)
- Swinburne University of Technology, Victoria (metropolitan)
- University of South Australia, Centre for Regional Engagement, South Australia (metropolitan/provincial)
- University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland (provincial)
- University of Western Sydney, New South Wales (metropolitan)
- University of Wollongong, New South Wales (provincial)

A tenth University, Charles Sturt University, completed the partner survey independently. Charles Sturt responses are not included in the overall analysis although their results are compared at the end of the report.

Invitations to complete the survey were sent to between 15 and 25 partners for each University with the exception of one University who sent the survey to 125 partners. Not all respondents answered all survey questions. The average response rate was 47%.

Ethics approval 0708/122 was obtained from Swinburne University's Human Research Ethics Committee for the partner survey.

This report provides an analysis of the combined responses of 98 partner organisations whose representatives completed the partner survey. Individual reports have been produced for each of the nine participating Universities.

Limitations

Consideration should be given to the limitations of this research. The partner sample is not representative nor is it random so conclusions cannot be assumed for all University partners.

The online survey used software that did not allow for partially completed surveys to be saved and completed at a later date or to be saved after completion. Given the length of the survey, this may have been a deterrent to completing the survey for some partners.

There was a moderate level of non response to some areas of the survey questionnaire and thus interpretation should take account of the number($n=$) of responses which are indicated in all graphs and tables.

In Section 2, mean level of importance scores are contrasted with mean level of University performance scores. There has been no significance testing undertaken for the levels of disparity.

1. Profile of Responding Community Partners

1.1 Nature of Responding Partner Organisations

Respondents were asked to indicate the nature of their organisation by selecting categories on the questionnaire that best describe them. Respondents were able to select multiple categories in order to effectively describe their organisation. Figure 1.1 below summarises the characteristics of all responding organisations across the nine participating universities. Overall, business is the largest sector represented followed by government /local government and education. There were only four cultural organisations and one faith based organisation identified.

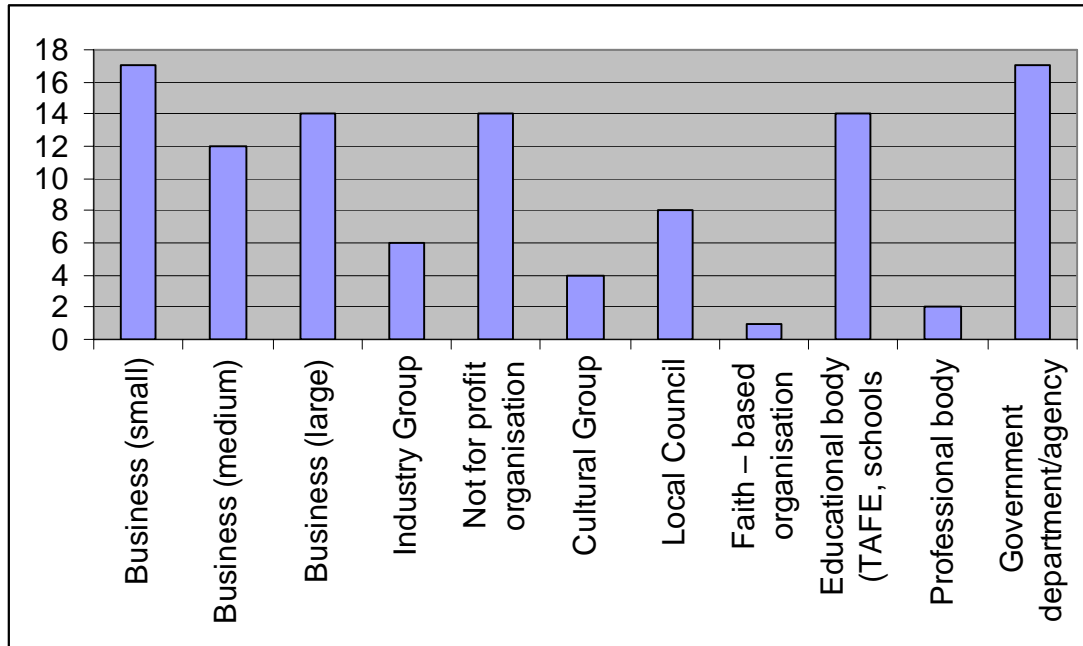


Figure 1.1: Characteristics of responding organisations (all participants).

1.2 Position of Responding Delegates

Table 1.1 summarises the positions of delegates from all partner organisations who completed the survey across the nine participating universities. Typically, delegates occupied managerial or senior managerial positions, with a representation of a range of specialist and administrative staff completing the questionnaire on behalf of their organisation.

Table 1.1: Position of responding delegates (n=96)

Position	%
General Manager	6.25
Manager	32.3
CEO	12.5
Director	9.36
Executive Director	3.13
Managing Director	3.13
Scientist	2.08
Partner/Owner	4.17
HR Consultant	2.08
Principal	2.08
Team Leader	2.08
Other*	20.83

*Other includes; Developer, Project Leader, Cluster Facilitator, Brophy Family and Youth Services, Head of Department, Social and Community Planner, Chair of the Board, Technologist, Coordinator, Principal Consultant, Assistant Principal, Customer Relations Officer, Research Leader, Personal Assistant, Senior Practitioner, Document Control Coordinator, Principal Engineer, Outreach Librarian, Senior Human Factors Advisor, Senior Policy Advisor.

1.3 Position of Responding Delegates

Respondents were asked to identify how long they have been associated with the University participating in the survey. Figure 1.3 indicates the length of association for partners of each of the nine universities participating in this study. With the exception

of University 3, most University partner organisations surveyed had a length of association of between 5-8 years, seven universities had responding partner organisations with a length of association of between 2-5, years six universities had a smaller number of responding partner organisations with a length of association of 2 years or less.

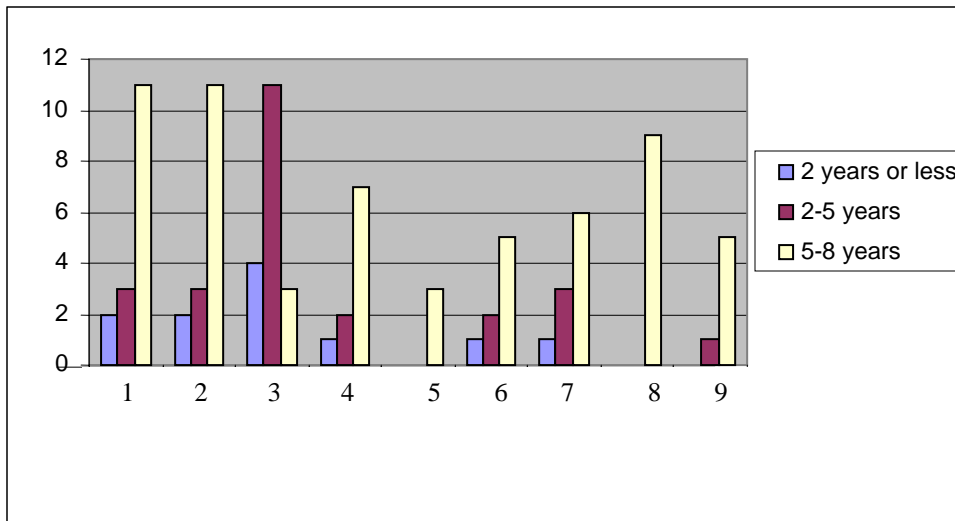


Figure 1.3 Length of Association with the University

1.4 Level of Interaction with Universities

Figure 1.4 below presents the distribution of interaction levels for partners of each of the nine universities participating in this study. Most partner organisations on average categorise their interaction level with the University as “medium”. Only University 3 has partners who categorise their interaction as “very low” although seven universities have responding partners who classify their interaction as “low”.

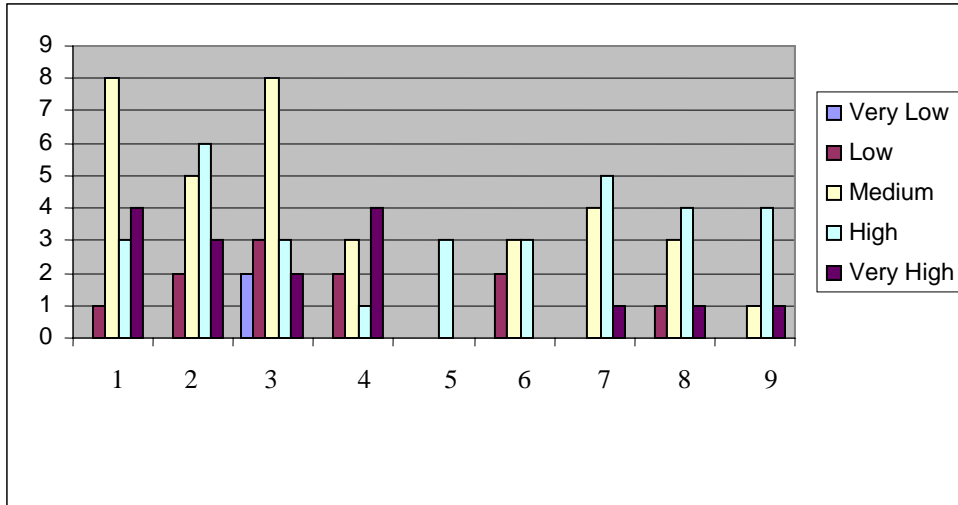


Figure 1.3: Level of interaction amongst responding organisations in the past two years (n=96)

1.5 Main Areas of Contact with Universities

Respondents were asked to nominate the area(s) in which their organisation has contact with their partner University. They had the option of selecting as many items as they wished from a suite of 20 options including an open ‘other’ category.

By combining the options referring to use of University services (consultancy, University Services, expert services, technical assistance and staff development *n=134*) this broad area can be seen to be the predominant point of contact on average across all nine Universities. By combining the options referring to students (volunteerism co-operative education, internships, community service and service learning *n=102*) this area can be seen to be the second most predominant point of contact on average across all nine Universities. Participating in research (*n=45*), participating in University Committees (*n=41*) and using University facilities including laboratories (*n=40*) are also frequent responses.

The full suite of options and the overall response for all nine universities are included in table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: Points of contact with all Universities amongst responding organisations

Point of Contact	%*
We participate in industry or community based research (n=45)	46
The University has provided consultancy to our organisation (n=27)	28
The University has provided ongoing support for the development of the sector in which we operate (n=24)	25
We employ graduates (n=8)	8
My organisation/clients/staff use University Services (n=34)	35
The University has provided expert services (n=29)	29
The University has provided technical assistance (n=20)	20
The University has provided staff development (n=24)	25
Students provide services to my organisation through volunteerism (n=4)	4
Our organisation has representatives on University/advisory committees (n=41)	42
The University has provided strategic alliance for commercial benefit (n=20)	20
My organisation/clients/staff use University Facilities (n=30)	31
Students provide services to my organisation through co-operative education (n=19)	19
Students provide services to my organisation through Internships (n=26)	26
We employ students for casual work (n=24)	24
The University has provided policy advice (n=13)	13
We provide guest practitioners as part of a University course (n=19)	19
Students provide services to my organisation through community service (n=6)	6
Other (n=19)#	19
My organisation/clients/staff use University Laboratories (n=10)	10
Students provide services to my organisation through field education (n=31)	32
Students provide services to my organisation through service-learning ¹ (n=16)	16
* Categories in this instance were not made mutually exclusive, thus column does not sum to 100%	

#Other includes employment of graduates (7), specific partnerships and alliances, professional development seminars and forums, sharing facilities, membership of University committees and industry boards, involvement in curriculum development.

¹ Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities (National Service Learning Clearinghouse)



2. Performance/Importance Analysis of University Community Engagement Activities

Section 2 focuses on assessing the effectiveness of University partnership arrangements from the perspective of responding partner organisations. This analysis is divided into four broad areas: 1) accessing the University; 2) working in partnership and providing assistance to the community/region; 3) student learning and research; and 4) benefits of regional partnerships with the University.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of a suite of items related to each area of analysis on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 'not important at all' to 'essential'. Respondents were also required to rate the current performance level or level of change brought about by their partnership with the University, for each item. For each area, the distribution of scores are represented in separate performance and importance/level of changes tables.

In each of the four areas, the mean importance score is contrasted with the mean performance scores in order to examine the University performance relative to partner organisation's expectations.

This enables University performance to be benchmarked against the level of importance the area is given by partner organisations.

2.1 Accessing the University

This area of analysis examines partner organisations' perceptions of the means through which University services, expertise and resources may be accessed. Table 2.1 presents the distribution of 'importance' scores attributed to the access items by responding organisations.

All eight items are important or very important to responding organisations with the most important items relating to responsiveness, communication and provision of a highly visible and easily accessed point of contact.

Table 2.1: All respondents (n=98)

	Not important at all %	Unimportant %	Moderately important %	Important %	Essential %
Provides a highly visible and easily accessed point of contact for organisations/groups/individual like yours (n=96)	3.13	5.21	14.58	37.5	39.58
Provides expert advice on key community issues important to your organisation/group (n=96)	10.42	10.42	22.92	42.71	13.54
Uses its economic and political significance to promote improvements in the region's facilities, infrastructure & institutions (n=97)	7.22	11.34	17.53	41.24	22.68
Uses University Advisory Panels and similar groups to share knowledge, resources and ideas (n=97)	9.28	6.19	22.68	36.08	25.77
Makes available its facilities to the surrounding communities (n=97)	8.25	5.15	25.77	39.18	21.65
Promotes cultural events that link its campuses and their local communities (n=97)	8.25	9.28	31.96	30.93	19.59
Is responsive to requests and queries (n=96)	3.13	3.13	9.38	31.25	53.13
Communicates regularly and well (n=96)	3.13	2.08	8.33	35.42	51.04

Table 2.2 presents the distribution of performance scores for all nine Universities across the eight access items tested. For the first six items the majority of respondents categorise performance as “medium” and for the last two, responsiveness and communication, the majority of respondents categorise performance as “high”.

Table 2.2: Perceived performance levels amongst responding organisations for all University access considerations (n=98)

	Extremely low %	Low %	Medium %	High %	Extremely high %
Provides a highly visible and easily accessed point of contact for organisations/groups/individual like yours (n=95)	2.11	5.26	30.53	35.79	26.32
Provides expert advice on key community issues important to your organisation/group (n=87)	6.90	14.94	35.63	25.29	17.24
Uses its economic and political significance to promote improvements in the region’s facilities, infrastructure & institutions (n=81)	2.47	17.28	35.80	28.40	16.05
Uses University Advisory Panels and similar groups to share knowledge, resources and ideas (n=79)	1.27	17.72	34.18	35.44	11.39
Makes available its facilities to the surrounding communities (n=80)	3.75	8.75	37.50	32.50	17.50
Promotes cultural events that link its campuses and their local communities (n=76)	1.32	13.16	47.37	30.26	7.89
Is responsive to requests and queries (n=96)	2.08	3.13	25	42.71	27.08
Communicates regularly and well (n=95)	2.11	7.37	24.21	41.05	25.26

Table 2.3 contrasts the mean importance and performance scores in order to examine the University's performance relative to partner organisation's expectations in regard to access.

In all eight areas mean performance scores are below mean importance scores although in some cases the difference is marginal. The three areas ranked on average as most important to partner organisations also demonstrate the largest gap between mean importance and mean performance. Although the mean performance scores are good for providing a highly visible and easily accessed point, for being responsive to requests and queries and for communicating regularly and well, they do not match the high mean levels of importance which tends to suggest these are areas that could be benchmarked for improvement.

Table 2.3: Access performance/importance matrix for all University respondents

	Mean Importance Score	Mean Performance Score
All University Respondents:		
Provides a highly visible and easily accessed point of contact for organisations/groups/individual like yours	4.20	3.76
Provides expert advice on key community issues important to your organisation/group	3.36	3.25
Uses its economic and political significance to promote improvements in the region's facilities, infrastructure & institutions	3.57	3.28
Uses University Advisory Panels and similar groups to share knowledge, resources and ideas	3.66	3.37
Makes available its facilities to the surrounding communities	3.56	3.23
Promotes cultural events that link its campuses and their local communities	3.32	3.04
Is responsive to requests and queries	4.36	3.85
Communicates regularly and well	4.42	3.66

2.2 Working in Partnership & Providing Assistance to the Community/Region

This area examines the range of ways in which the University works in partnership with individuals, community/regional organisations and groups. Table 2.4 presents the distribution of importance scores for the five partnership and community/regional assistance items tested.

Results here indicate that all five items are mostly considered either ‘important’ or ‘essential’ amongst partner organisations. Very few scores for these items were observed in the ‘unimportant’ and ‘not important at all’ categories. On average, access to relevant and up to date knowledge and being responsive to the organisation’s knowledge needs are the most important items. It is interesting to note that active participation in community governance bodies, communities and groups is ranked by partners as, on average, the least important of the items tested.

Table 2.4: Importance attached by responding organisations to all respondents community/regional assistance

	Not important at all %	Unimportant %	Moderately important %	Important %	Essential %
In its community interactions, the University:					
Is responsive to your organisation’s/group’s/individuals knowledge needs (n=97)	2.06	0	16.49	38.14	43.30
Gives individuals/organisations/groups like you/yours access to knowledge which is relevant and up to date (n=97)	2.06	0	9.28	44.33	44.33
Successfully leads and coordinates regional partnerships & alliances (n=97)	6.19	4.12	21.65	35.05	32.99
Provides forums for discussions of community issues and concerns (n=97)	7.22	7.22	21.65	43.30	20.62
Actively participates in community governance bodies, communities and groups (n=97)	8.25	2.06	32.99	28.87	27.84

The distribution of performance scores for the University's community/regional assistance items are presented in Table 2.5. Scores here tend to concentrate mostly in the 'medium' and 'high' performance categories. On average, the highest performance rating is given to giving organisations access to up to date knowledge and the lowest performance rating is given to providing forums for discussions of community issues and concerns.

Table 2.5: Perceived performance levels amongst responding organisations for all respondents regional assistance

	Extremely low %	Low %	Medium %	High %	Extremely high %
In its community interactions, the University:					
Is responsive to your organisation's/group's/individuals knowledge needs (n=94)	1.06	6.38	29.79	39.36	23.40
Gives individuals/organisations/groups like you/yours access to knowledge which is relevant and up to date (n=94)	4.26	6.38	24.47	41.49	23.40
Successfully leads and coordinates regional partnerships & alliances (n=83)	4.82	13.25	38.55	27.71	15.66
Provides forums for discussions of community issues and concerns (n=78)	2.56	23.08	33.33	29.49	11.54
Actively participates in community governance bodies, communities and groups (n=78)	2.56	14.10	30.77	33.33	19.23

Table 2.6 contrasts the mean importance and performance scores in order to examine the University's performance relative to partner organisation's expectations in regard to regional/community assistance.

In all five areas mean performance scores are below mean importance scores. The greatest area of disparity between importance and performance relate to responsiveness to knowledge needs, providing up to date knowledge and providing forums for discussion of community issues and concerns.

Although the mean performance scores are good for responsiveness to knowledge needs and providing access to up to date knowledge and above average for providing forums, they do not match the high mean levels of importance which tends to suggest these are areas that could be benchmarked for improvement.

Table 2.6: Performance/importance matrix for all respondents regional assistance items

	Mean Importance Score	Mean Performance Score
In its community interactions, the University:		
Is responsive to your organisation's/group's/individuals knowledge needs	4.13	3.30
Gives individuals/organisations/groups like you/yours access to knowledge which is relevant and up to date	4.19	3.38
Successfully leads and coordinates regional partnerships & alliances	3.73	3.14
Provides forums for discussions of community issues and concerns	3.46	2.85
Actively participates in community governance bodies, communities and groups	3.66	3.10

2.3 Student Learning & Research

This area examines student learning and research impacts arising from the University's regional partnerships. Respondents were asked to indicate their views on the importance and current performance of seven items. Results shown in Table 2.7.below demonstrate that all seven items relating to student learning and research are considered important partner organisations. Most important on average are effectively using regional leaders and either developing or demonstrating research outcomes that benefit the organisation.

Table 2.7: Importance attached by responding organisations to student learning & research items

	Not important at all %	Unimportant %	Moderately important %	Important %	Essential %
The University:					
Effectively uses regional leaders and experts as advisers to the University (n=97)	8.25	1.03	19.59	40.21	30.93
Places students in your organisation to learn about real world practice (n=97)	6.19	3.09	12.37	32.99	45.36
Offers continuing education/professional development courses specific to your organisation's/group's needs (n=96)	6.25	5.21	16.67	36.46	35.42
Helps your organisation/group with specific research needs (n=96)	6.25	4.17	22.92	36.46	30.21
Develops research outcomes that benefit your organisation/group (n=97)	6.19	1.03	22.68	42.27	27.84
Has demonstrable research outcomes that benefit your organisation/group (n=97)	6.19	4.12	19.59	44.33	25.77
Provides opportunity for participation in research projects (n=97)	6.19	2.06	22.68	43.30	25.77

The distribution of performance scores for the University's student learning and research items are presented in Table 2.8 below. Scores here tend to concentrate mostly in the 'medium' and 'high' performance categories with the exception of the student placement item for which Universities on average are given a medium to very high rating. On average, the highest performance rating is given to student placement and helping organisations with specific research needs.

Table 2.8: Perceived performance levels amongst responding organisations for University student learning & research items

	Extremely low %	Low %	Medium %	High %	Extremely high %
The University:					
Effectively uses regional leaders and experts as advisers to the University (n=74)	4.05	16.22	21.62	36.49	21.62
Places students in your organisation to learn about real world practice (n=84)	5.95	9.52	23.81	23.81	36.90
Offers continuing education/professional development courses specific to your organisation's/group's needs (n=79)	10.13	15.19	35.44	24.05	15.19
Helps your organisation/group with specific research needs (n=79)	3.80	12.66	27.85	35.44	20.25
Develops research outcomes that benefit your organisation/group (n=80)	3.75	17.50	31.25	27.50	20
Has demonstrable research outcomes that benefit your organisation/group (n=79)	6.33	15.19	29.11	30.38	18.99
Provides opportunity for participation in research projects (n=80)	7.50	13.75	32.50	23.75	22.50

Table 2.9 below presents the importance/performance matrix for University Student learning and research items. In all seven areas mean performance scores are below mean importance scores. The greatest area of disparity between importance and performance relate to offering continuing education/professional development courses and placing students for real world experience.

Although the mean performance scores are above average for these items, they do not match the higher mean levels of importance which tends to suggest these are areas that could be benchmarked for improvement.

Table 2.9: Performance/importance matrix for all respondents student learning & research items

	Mean Importance Score	Mean Performance Score
The University:		
Effectively uses regional leaders and experts as advisers to the University	3.71	3.09
Places students in your organisation to learn about real world practice	3.73	2.98
Offers continuing education/professional development courses specific to your organisation's/group's needs	3.55	2.70
Helps your organisation/group with specific research needs	3.48	2.94
Develops research outcomes that benefit your organisation/group	3.47	2.99
Has demonstrable research outcomes that benefit your organisation/group	3.47	2.93
Provides opportunity for participation in research projects	3.44	2.81

2.4 Regional Partnership Benefits

This area examines the benefits of partnership with the University identified by partner organisations. Respondents were asked to indicate their views on the importance and perceived level of change in partner organisation resulting from the partnership with the University for ten nominated items. Results shown in Table 2.10 below demonstrate that all identified benefits are important to partner organisations. On average, the highest level of importance is given to influencing teaching and research directions.

Table 2.10: Importance attached by responding organisations to benefits of regional/community partnership

	Not important at all %	Unimportant %	Moderately important %	Important %	Essential %
From my/our interaction with the University,					
I /my community/community organisation/business/group have/has (n=97):					
Influenced University teaching and research directions	13.40	2.06	22.68	39.18	22.68
Put research findings into action	15.46	3.09	17.53	38.14	25.77
Enhanced our ability to plan effectively	14.43	7.22	25.77	35.05	17.53
Enhanced staff capacity to serve clients	15.46	4.12	20.62	41.24	18.56
Given us new ideas about our work	16.49	5.15	16.49	38.14	23.71
Created opportunities to leverage new resources	13.40	1.03	22.68	40.21	22.68
Enhanced staff development	16.49	4.12	20.62	38.14	20.62
Help build new community networks	14.43	7.22	22.68	35.05	20.62
Have a greater sense of agency effectiveness	17.53	7.22	26.80	32.99	15.46
Increased our profile in community as an effective agent of change	11.34	7.22	21.65	41.24	18.56

Table 2.11 presents the distribution of perceived level of change scores as rated by responding partner organisations for the ten benefit items. Scores here tend to concentrate mostly in the ‘minor positive’ change and ‘no change’ categories.

Table 2.11: Perceived levels of change amongst responding organisations arising from all University partnerships

	Worse %	Minor negative change %	No change %	Minor positive change %	Better %
From my/our interaction with the University,					
I /my community/community organisation/business/group have/has:					
Influenced University teaching and research directions (n=69)	4.35	2.90	33.33	39.13	20.29
Put research findings into action (n=67)	2.99	4.48	37.31	35.82	19.40
Enhanced our ability to plan effectively (n=73)	2.74	5.48	39.73	36.99	15.07
Enhanced staff capacity to serve clients (n=70)	2.86	4.29	38.57	41.43	12.86
Given us new ideas about our work (n=83)	1.20	6.02	27.71	46.99	18.07
Created opportunities to leverage new resources (n=79)	1.27	5.06	35.44	40.51	17.72
Enhanced staff development (n=75)	1.33	8	34.67	44	12
Help build new community networks (n=74)	1.35	6.76	32.43	44.59	14.86
Have a greater sense of agency effectiveness (n=70)	1.43	11.43	40	35.71	11.43
Increased our profile in community as an effective agent of change (n=76)	2.63	3.95	34.21	42.11	17.11

Table 2.12 below contrasts the mean importance scores with the mean level of change scores in relation to the ten identified area of benefit of the partnership. In four areas the mean level of improvement in University performance is marginally higher than the mean importance to the partner organisation. However the greatest level of disparity is demonstrated for the item with the highest mean level of importance (Increased profile in community) although this item still demonstrates partner assessment of positive level of University improvement. This area requires further level of investigation in order to clarify the appropriate partner expectation benchmarks.

Table 2.12: Performance/important matrix for regional partnership benefits items (all respondents)

	Mean Importance Score	Mean Level of Change Score
From my/our interaction with the University,		
I /my community/community organisation/business/group have/has:		
Influenced University teaching and research directions	3.14	3.08
Put research findings into action	3.12	3.11
Enhanced our ability to plan effectively	2.93	2.98
Enhanced staff capacity to serve clients	3.02	3.23
Given us new ideas about our work	3.10	3.19
Created opportunities to leverage new resources	3.38	3.19
Enhanced staff development	3.08	3.01
Help build new community networks	3.19	3.09
Have a greater sense of agency effectiveness	2.91	2.92
Increased our profile in community as an effective agent of change	3.97	3.08

2.5 Overall Partner Satisfaction Levels

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their relationship with the University on a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘very dissatisfied’ to ‘very satisfied’.

Figure 2.1 below summarises the distribution of responses divided into ordinal categories. The graph shows that most surveyed partner organisations are satisfied or very satisfied with their relationship with the University. Given that participants were selected on the basis of their “good” relationship with the University, it is perhaps surprising that a small percentage is neutral or dissatisfied.

2.1 Overall Partner Satisfaction Levels

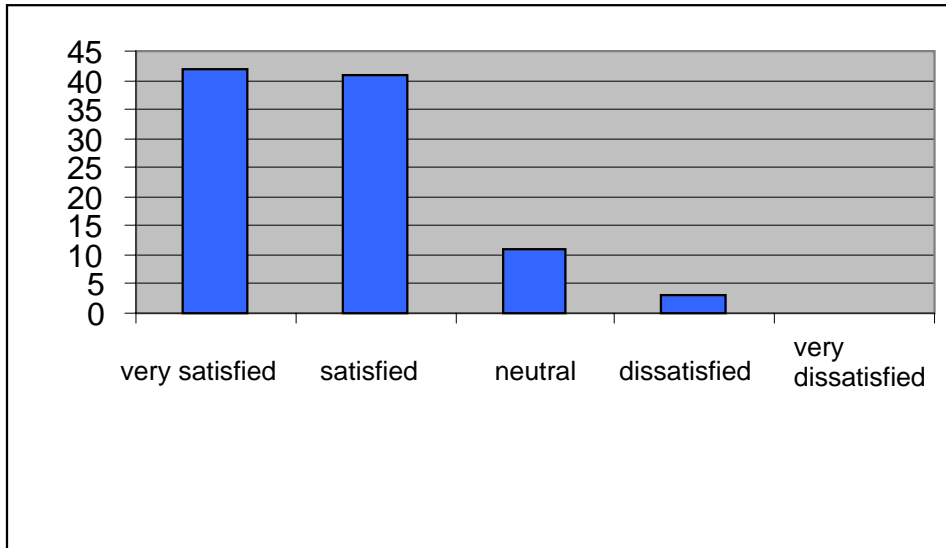


Figure 2.1: Distribution of all University regional partner satisfaction scores (n=97)

3. Specific Impacts of University Partnerships on Partner Organisations

Survey respondents were asked to state in their own words up to three impacts that have benefited their organisation resulting from their association with the University. Most respondents answered this question. Responses to this question for all nine University partner responses have been broadly categorised into eleven themes, which create a picture of the broad impact of the University on the wider community.

- **Student connections and employment (53)**

Many impacts identified in this theme relate to student and graduate outcomes, student placements and the mutual benefits provided by co-operative programs, learner pathways and graduate employment.

- **Access to University resources and expertise (52)**

The impacts in this theme involve access to and relationships with University staff; access to University expertise, specific advice and different ways of thinking; access to University resources, facilities (including resource sharing) and funding; University contribution to boards and committees. Impacts categorised here relate strongly to those impacts categorised under the following knowledge information innovation, business development, networking, independent advice and regional development headings.

- **Knowledge information and innovation (36)**

Many respondents identified new knowledge, ideas, problem solving, access to research and technological improvement as impacts of their relationship with the University.

- **Business development and improvement (35)**

Impacts identified by some respondents relate directly to their business or organisation. Benefits identified included: professional development; industry awareness; global and industry specific knowledge; improved processes and

technology; strategic development and access to good graduates. Many also reported raised profiles for their organisations resulting from the partnership with the University.

▪ **Regional development (26)**

Particularly for respondents in rural and regional areas, impacts identified relate to benefits for the region including increasing student numbers, future employment and identifying regional priorities. The University's capacity to facilitate networks is also identified as an impact.

▪ **Research partnerships and outcomes (23)**

Collaborative research, commercialisation, improved research processes and the translation of research into practice are identified in this theme. Impacts identified in this category often strongly relate to new ideas and innovation.

▪ **Positive capacity and approach to partnering (23)**

A number of comments relating to partnering indicated appreciation of the working relationships with and approach of the University.

▪ **Collaborative development of curriculum (13)**

New and/or improved learning and teaching programs and the opportunity for community members to contribute to the development of these models have been identified as impacts.

▪ **Establishing and maintaining networks (11)**

The capacity of the University to facilitate networks, cross fertilisation and community and professional links is generally identified as an impact in the comments categorised under this theme.

▪ **Profile and promotion(10)**

Promotion of organisations, sectors and regions is noted as an impact under this theme

▪ **Independent advice and evaluation (4)**

Although closely linked to the previously identified theme of knowledge information and innovation, the value of University independence is highlighted in the comments categorised under this theme.

The verbatim comments are listed in the categorised themes below (-r denotes a repeated comment).

All respondents (n=96):

Student connections and employment -53

Broader connection with students	Student involvement in economic development activities
Articulation for our students	Student placements
Realistic & accessible articulation pathways	Providing information to graduates for employment
Learner pathways	Encourages student involvement in economic development activities
Support for Higher Education Quality	Provides us with talented interns and graduates
Collaborative projects which benefit students	Effective in our grad recruitment campaign
Access to good students	Good source of well trained and skilled staff
Graduate employment	Graduates
Employment links	Student benefits
Quality graduates	Opportunity to recruit highly qualified graduates
Internships & practicisms	IBL's help us keep up w/ emerging webdesign trends -r
Visibility of new graduates	Well trained Graduates fitting into our culture
Access to vacation students	Field education - students on placement
Student Placement	Highlighted needs of training in graduates
Recruitment	Ongoing student placements
Graduates being employed in our organisation	Student clinics in GP/Health Care Clinics
Employment of graduates	Graduate employment opportunities
Ongoing support for graduates	



Consultancy assignments	Intern input
access to students and new staff (graduates)	Access to high quality graduates
Provided good student for summer vacation projects	Students becoming casual staff
Mutual needs met - co-operative program	Service learning for economic development
Increased awareness of graduates	Student co-operative learning
Future opportunities for our new tertiary students	Provision of graduate engineers
International student education	Students leave with positive image of Council
Conversion of interns to permanent employees	Employees gain by coaching students
	Graduates
	Work Skills Scholarships: Staff Appointments

Access to University expertise and resources - 52

Connection to University personnel	Governance
Access to other expertise from the Uni.	Support and Supervision
Closer ties with University staff	Consulting firms run by University personnel
Knowledge and expertise through Board membership	Provided effective staff resources
Input into Board through membership by JCU staff	Harness expertise within uni to enrich community program
Shared facilities	Advised of corporate governance developments
Have provided great expert support	Regular strategic planning from uni
Provides some funding	Regular strategic planning/landuse input from Uni
Funding the org allowing us to continue our festival	Resources
Fully supported and resourced better	Staff
Advice on specific issues in the industry	Access to advanced tools
Access to nationwide audiovisual/IT resources	Access to intellectual capital
Sharing of equipment	Resource sharing
Governance participation	Establishing a campus in Mt Gambier
Committee participation	Len Phillip's role/Director of Regional Engagement



Use of function centre at reasonable rates	Staff development - learning about graphics skills -r
Access to additional resources, funds, staff	Provision of expert advice
Access to students and new staff (graduates) - r	Provision of consultancy services
Very good relationship with Peter Brooks	Links with academics
Availability of research labs	Uni in the Brewery
New ideas to solving problems	Innovation Campus project
Enhanced resources for projects	Use of pilot plant facility
Has helped develop new schemes	Info on men's health
Helped overloaded staff with data inputs	Involvement of UNAD
Has provided continued stall work	Better understanding of University
assisted in business survey -r	Have provided leveraged funding opportunities

Knowledge, information and innovation - 35

Cross disciplinary e.g. business engagement	Increased our knowledge base
Better understanding of University issues	Provided global knowledge
Better collaboration	Improvement of veterinary skills & knowledge
Sharing of student data for planning purposes	Greater understanding of edu concepts & training
Linkages to APEC economies	Better understanding of wetland ecology
Increased knowledge about setting up new community service	Knowledge of threats facing bushland
Improved alignment of technology with need	New thinking into organisation
New ideas	Keep abreast of current trends
Introduced new ideas	Better understanding of University -r
Extend community programs to broader audience	IBL's help us keep up with emerging web design trends
I can keep up to date with new research	Awareness of the overall industry situation
I am able to develop better land management plans	Cherry crop load research, improved decisions
Tackling major environmental issues	Software development
	Information exchange



Blue Sky lecture series	New research idea -r
Community lecture series	Bringing innovation into Baxter -r
Awareness of programs	Lead the way in technology improvement project
We have created a learning hub on our site	Expert consultancy
Provide useful information to inform community	Innovation Campus project -r

Business Development and Improvement - 35

Professional development	Increased our knowledge base -r
Professional Development for Staff	Provided global knowledge -r
Staff development	Better client service using referral options
Staff development	links to programs
Personal [and] professional development	New thinking into organisation
Staff development opportunities	Keep abreast of current trends -r
Engagement in professional development activities	Strengthened Councils planning functions
Study options for further education	Meeting the needs of my organisation
Study opportunities for staff	Awareness of the overall industry situation - r
Training of staff	Cherry crop load research improved decisions—r
Added flexibility in staff resources	Consultancy assignments -r
Staff development - learning about graphics skills	Assisted in business survey
Teacher and school leadership PD	Improvement in team building co-operation
Increased our service capacity	Work Skills Scholarships: Staff Appointments -r
Broadened our skill set	Provides us with talented interns and graduates-r
Innovative use of technology to improve service	Effective in our grad recruitment campaign -r
Linked with strategic direction of organisation	Good source of well trained and skilled staff -r
Help build a client base	Working strategically as a supplier/partner -r

Regional Development - 26

More informed decisions relating to regional econ dev	Blue Sky lecture series -r
Support of BioGeelong initiative	Community lecture series -r
I am able to develop better land management plans -r	Community engagement opportunities e.g. Art exhibit
Tackling major environmental issues-r	Assist to identify community priorities
Increased growth in student body	Increased awareness of opportunities for work in Illawarra
Extend community programs to broader audience-r	Future opportunities for our new tertiary students -r
Strengthened Councils planning functions -r	International student education -r
Establishing a campus in Mt Gambier -r	Provide useful information to inform community-r
Len Phillip's role/Director of Regional Engagement -r	Uni has attracted future employees to region
[Campus] Location (2)	Bringing innovation into Baxter
Uni's good name in community -r	Service learning for economic development
Lifelong learning strategy for region	Increased community capacity for service evaluation
Stimulated education/training discussion in region	

Research partnerships and outcomes - 23

Provision of knowledgeable student for research	Access to valuable research outcomes
Discussed possible commercial applications of research	Research done in partnership with us
Improved research planning	Process & Formative Evaluation - Action Research
Development of cross-disciplinary research	Joint research - numeracy; use of ICT's in schools
Greater nursing research capacity	Recognised co-author research
Clinical research	Joint research projects
Generated IP that we have commercialised	Cooperative Research
Translation of research into practice on site	



Research studies - local skills shortages	Partnership in Post Grad study grant
Research studies - changing labour markets	New research idea
Research studies - future employment challenges	Research collaboration: process effectiveness -r
Partnership in R&D	Research partnerships

Positive capacity and approach to partnering- 14

Partnering beyond traditional vender/customer relationships	Enabled tight timeframes for projects to be met.
Willingness to enter into strategic partnerships	Eager business partner
Working co-operatively on projects	High level of motivation & great attitude
High level of communication	Ability to run projects that were negotiated
High level of approachability of staff	Achieved project goals
Fantastic projects have grown from our partnership	Research collaboration: process effectiveness
Develop working partnerships	Working strategically as a supplier/partner interaction

Collaborative development of curriculum -13

Developed a new Ph. D. programme	Re-introduction of Engineering Degree
New clinical model	Involvement in development of the course
Greater diversity of undergraduate programs	Curriculum more congruent with our industry needs
Musical director input into music teaching project	Industry placements more aligned with our needs
Ability to influence thesis subjects	Mutual needs met - co-operative program -r
Introduction of chemical engineering at JCU	Uni in the Brewery
Graduate teacher - preparation courses/induction	

Establishing and maintaining networks- 11

Development of professional networks	Facilitated links between local organisations
Increased artistic cross fertilisation	Increased positive networking
Driving force behind Industry Network	Increased positive networking to "new" areas



Fosters links with Alumni Association
Development of professional networks
Enhanced cross local government partnerships

Networking opportunities linking mentors
& students
Staff collaboration with UOW Groups

Profile and Promotion -10

Greater profile of professional nursing issues
Raised the profile of our institution in the community
Media and PR opportunities
Promotes our programs
High profile as benefactor of Cyclone Testing Station

Name recognition
Uni's good name in community
More effective promotion to CALD community
Profile for our organisation through association
Our profile and reputation in region

Independent advice and evaluation

Evaluation of organisational programs
Independent testing facilities
Provided independent feedback
Provided informed critique of strategic docs.

4 Other Areas of Concern to Partner Organisations

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to outline any other areas of concern to them not covered in the questionnaire. Most respondents opted not to add any further comments; however, thirty-two comments overall were recorded. These comments relate to:

- University teaching programs either identifying new collaborative opportunities, reinforcing the importance of a particular course or raising issues of quality (12);
- Communication issues including timing and regularity of communication, knowing the right person to contact and the importance of not over-communicating (5);
- Networking opportunities (5)
- Funding issues (4);
- The positive contribution of the University (4);
- Partnership issues (2); and
- The need for research.

The verbatim comments are categorised below:

All comments (n=28)

University Teaching Programs

We should jointly develop better teaching programmes for Ph. D. students.

[Absence of academic snobbery] & relevance of courses to industry and work.

Most of the not for profits would like to see the Social Work Degree being delivered out of Warrnambool. The organisations would clearly be interested in providing ongoing field placements to those students.

High quality graduates with some skill & knowledge development appropriate to our industry. Courses too generic and basic development and professional skills could be better.

Teaching and learning facilities need to be maintained as per the reputation so organisations continue to receive graduates of high quality.

Develop training packages for companies and community groups.

None - the Centre for Regional Engagement through the social work program interacts with the non-profit sector very well.

The provision of ongoing and sustainable education of specialist electricity powers system engineers is very important.

Staff learning opportunities which offer alternate thinking that may be found in the workplace.

I've found the MBA program to be wholly underwhelming and C grade. Considering the cost isn't that different from top tier business schools such as AGSM, the Uni's general approach to the Graduate School of Business is pretty embarrassing to the organisation.

Outreach programs would be helpful in identifying future opportunities for collaboration.

The UWS co-operative program is a great initiative and I'm surprised other Universities don't do it similarly.

Communication Issues

It is difficult often to contact the right person with an enquiry - not knowing which key person in which faculty - otherwise you hit a brick wall and get nowhere. We have emailed various staff members and never received a reply. (e.g. to our request for Education students to volunteer as tutors and supervisors in a buddy reading and homework program).

While I think it's important to enhance communication between University and our business, at times the amount of communication can be too much. When we have students working with us, it's important to us to have necessary and sufficient communication without there being too much communication - which becomes very time consuming and can be repetitive. There's a particular art here, and when the balance is there it's very much appreciated.

Accuracy and timing of communications.

is an organization that is not very responsive, is slow to adopt and implement change. The University is extremely frustrating to deal with.

Regular communication on the Uni's events.

Funding Issues

how can we gain access to funds to pay industry for involvement with University activities. eg value industry leader time by also paying for it.

The Uni help found & subsidized heavily the AFCM 17 years ago. Funding has decreased since then significantly. Support for us has now focussed on intellectual input while still receiving \$10,000 per year for \$1m festival.

Sponsorship - collaborative opportunities with council and local businesses.

Sponsorship- collaborative opportunities with community & local business community.

Greater networking opportunities with staff

Networking Opportunities

More innovative business interaction between council and business community especially large corporates.

Greater networking opportunities with staff & student bodies.

More innovative business interaction between Civil Council & business community, especially large corporates

Like to improve the networks with research institutions that we can service.

Greater networking opportunities with staff.

Partnership Issues

Rebuilding a more productive partnership with the University to support the education of Main Roads staff & research & development work to support Main Roads.

A formal partnership would improve ties & benefits. A formalised student practical experience program is essential.

Positive Contribution of the University

UniSA is developing a presence in the community gradually and I look forward to the future and an increased focus on community engagement

As uni has grown in stature it has been very positive towards the reputation of our city - University of Wollongong.

None - the Centre for Regional Engagement through the social work program interacts with the non-profit sector very well (repeated)

The UWS co-operative program is a great initiative and I'm surprised other Universities don't do it similarly (repeated)

Could not understand questions 13 and 14?

5. Comparison to the partner survey conducted independently

The partner survey conducted in January 2008 by Southern Cross University had a slightly larger survey sample and similar (41.7%) response rate. The process of selecting partners to be surveyed tended to be similarly skewed towards good partners, thus influencing the results as with the AUCEA pilot.

The report which, prepared for the Office of Regional Engagement at Southern Cross University by the Australian Regional Tourism Research Centre, found that, in common with the findings from the AUCEA partner survey, there was a high level of overall partner satisfaction (82.5%). Similarly, mean performance scores were below mean importance scores in the areas of accessing the University's resources, expertise, and services; regional/community assistance; and student learning and research with the greatest levels of disparity perhaps providing targets for improvement (in particular items related to access and service delivery areas which are also highlighted in the combined report).

Survey respondents responded positively to the University's regional role and engagement. They were most likely to judge the University's level of change/improvement for the regional engagement items either matching their level of expectation or, in the case of one item (influencing University teaching and research directions) exceeding the level of expectation.

These findings are consistent with the combined University findings presented in this report.

Methodological issues highlighted by the piloting of the survey at Southern Cross University related to sampling, the structuring of questions, terminology used and survey administration issues (hard copy versus online) . For the Office of Regional Engagement, the survey results did not provide a detailed understanding of the scope of partnership activity across the university or further insight into the nature of the partnerships and thus was of limited use.

Discussion

The AUCEA Benchmarking Pilot intended to test whether the initial partner and institutional surveys could establish benchmarks for community engagement against which universities could measure their progress. This report and the accompanying individual University report provide an opportunity for individual Universities to test outcomes and potential benchmarks established by partner perception.

In addition to providing benchmarks that could be used by Universities to test their engagement activities and outcomes against those of other Universities, the survey also added the dimension of benchmarking individual university performance against partner expectation for a range of items in four areas 1) accessing the University; 2) working in partnership and providing assistance to the community/region; 3) student learning and research; and 4) benefits of regional partnerships with the University.

Whilst mean performance scores are above average to good, they are generally below mean expectation with the exception of the final category 'benefits of regional partnerships with the University'. In this question the performance items were tested as level of change/improvement. Thus we are left with a question when mean performance outweighs mean importance in this area. Are Universities demonstrating the most improvement (better performance) in the areas that are of lesser importance to the Community?

Although no significance testing has been undertaken, the areas of largest disparity in the other three sections between assessed importance and assessed University performance could indicate areas to be benchmarked for improvement. Not unexpectedly, the areas of greatest disparity vary between Universities. However, the overall picture presented by the combined responses highlights areas of greatest difference between partner expectation/importance and University performance as: accessing to up-to-date and relevant knowledge; responsiveness to requests and knowledge needs; regular communication; easily accessed point of contact; and providing a forum for discussion of important issues. It is worth noting that, overall, the area of regional partnerships and alliances demonstrates a level of disparity but this is not reflected in the individual reports for regional Universities which are more likely to receive high to very high levels of approval from partners. The survey did attract some negative comments from partners but these comments were more likely to come from partners identified by metropolitan Universities.

Any conclusions drawn from this analysis must be treated with caution because of methodological issues identified.

The size and complexity of the survey instrument are problematic. Attention needs to be paid to both the phrasing and number of the statements to which partners are asked to assign a level of importance and rate University performance. There are a large number of items presented for partner assessment so survey fatigue is a real risk which could be addressed by simplifying the instrument. When partners are asked to nominate their main points of contact with the University (see Table 1.2), they are given a list of 22 items including "other", for example. Analysis of the responses demonstrate that this list could be reduced to five broad categories by combining the options referring to use of University services (consultancy, University Services, expert services, technical assistance and staff development); relating to students (volunteerism co-operative education, internships, community service and service learning, employing graduates); participating in research participating in University Committees ($n=41$) and using University facilities.

In attempting to capture a comprehensive picture of the partnership, the level of detail used may in fact have been counter productive. The large amount of data generated perhaps confuses rather than clarifies specific targets for improvement.

In addition, the method of sampling, although useful in recruiting good partners to assist in refining the process, does not provide us with a representative sample and thus conclusions cannot be drawn for partners in general. However, targeting the sample does provide a benefit, in that areas highlighted by the responses of their good partners for particular universities are likely to warrant further consideration.

The high level of importance given by partners to most items tends to suggest that the survey has identified important aspects of the partnership. This perception is reinforced by the analysis of impacts identified. However, not all partners answered all questions and response rates for the survey were not high given the sample selection criteria which could tend to suggest that the survey was too long and arduous for partners to complete.

Given these limitations, the value of further interrogation of the data may not be particularly useful although the opportunity to analyse responses by partner category and to examine patterns in the three impacts identified may add insight to future discussion, for example.

Other methodological issues highlighted by the piloting of the survey also relate to, the terminology used and survey administration issues. Administration of the survey had the advantage of being conducted independently of individual Universities by AUCEA. The pilot process relied on the goodwill of the committed participants but the process would need to be institutionalised in order to provide regular and timely analysis and reporting.

The option of completing the survey on paper or online added complexity to the process and analysis given that the survey had the importance and performance sections separated on the online version. The software used for the survey did not allow respondents to retain a copy of their completed survey nor to save the survey for completion at a later time which again could have contributed to the lower than expected response rate.

Potential Benchmarks

The AUCEA Benchmarking Pilot Project aimed to establish benchmarks of university community engagement. For the purposes of this exercise, the benchmark is baseline data against which individual universities can compare their results against other participating universities and against which they can benchmark future performance. The partner survey was designed to capture data to populate measures identified in the Benchmarking Framework (see Appendix A).

Essentially these measures relate to:

Strategy 1.3: The University supports capacity building for engagement by its staff students and community members;

Strategy 2.1: Demonstrated community connection to the University Governance;

Strategy 3.1: Community access to the University resources;

Strategy 3.2: Effective communication of engagement opportunities and activities;

Strategy 3.3: Community contact and relationship management;

Strategy 4.1: Partner perception of the value of research;

Strategy 4.2 Partner perception of the relevance and impact of research; and

Strategy 5.2: Partner assessment of the capacity of University graduate to contribute as ethical engaged citizens

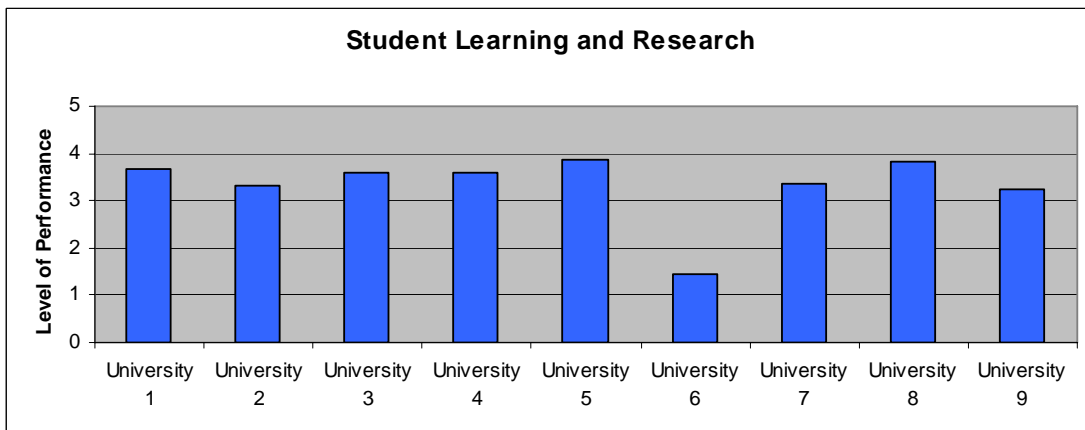
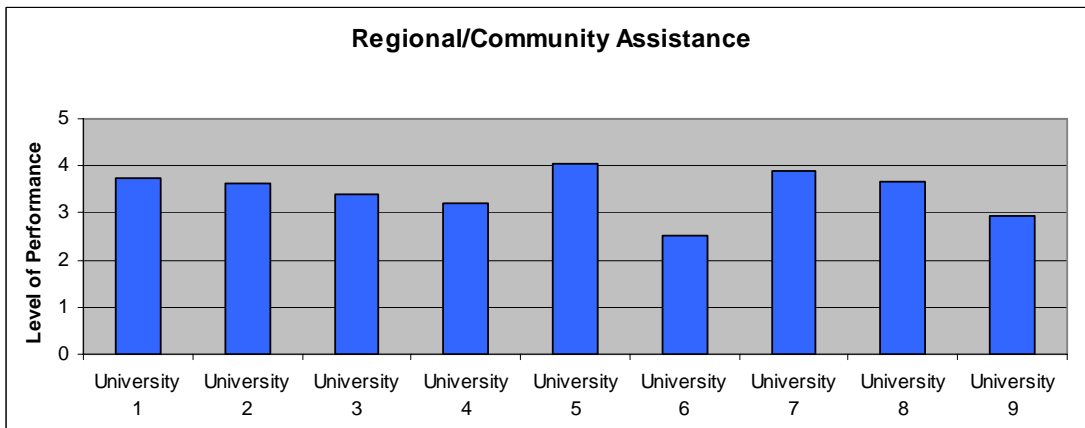
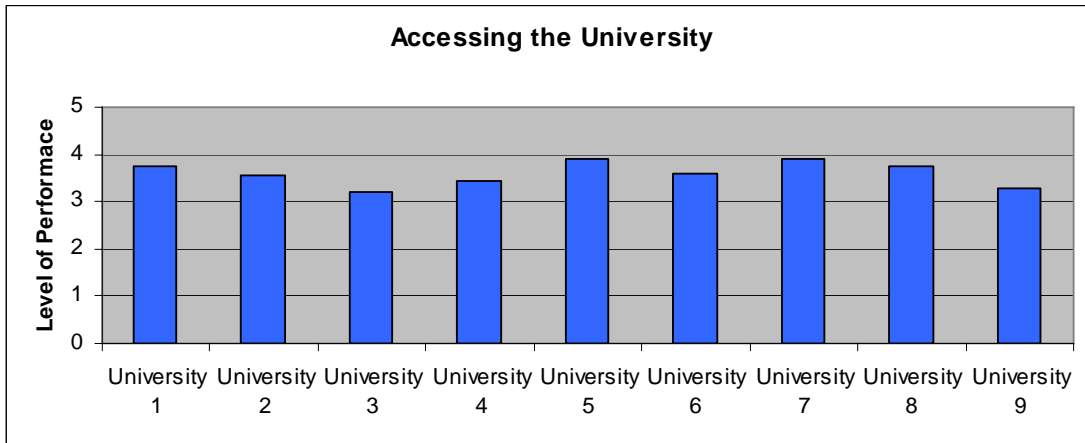
Elements of the survey focused further on students and relate to Strategy 5.2 courses providing experiential learning in the community, although it is noted that questions in the survey relating to students and comments from respondents had a wider focus than experiential learning alone. Interestingly, the issue of graduate quality and capacity to ethically contribute to the community is not asked in the survey nor is it raised as an additional comment by respondents.

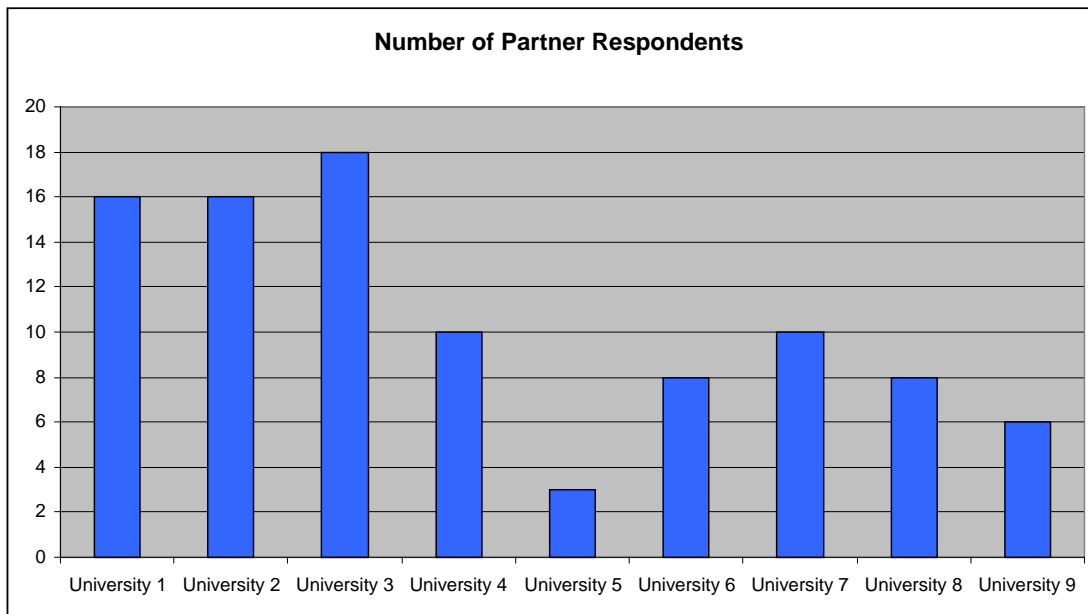
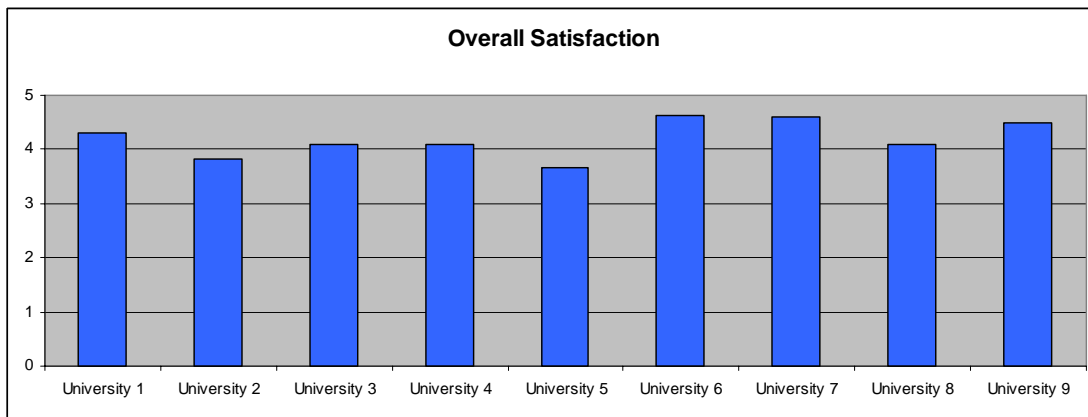
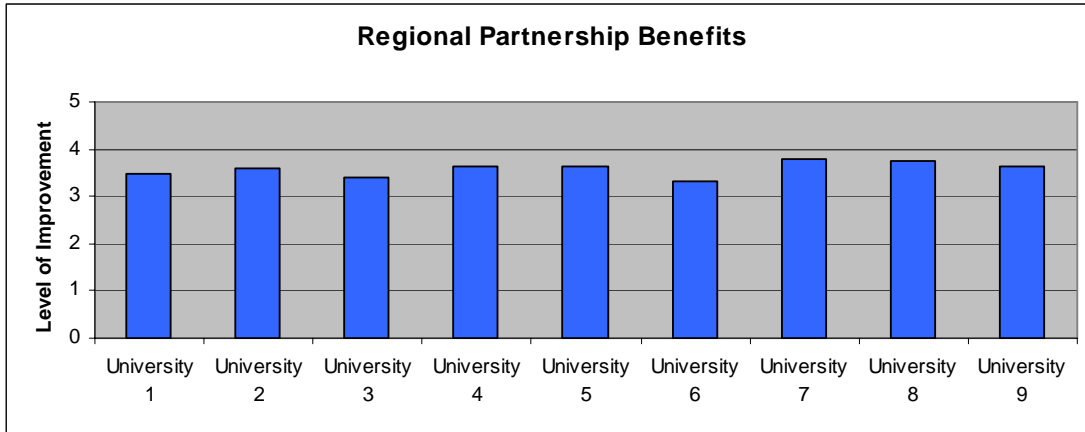
As noted in the earlier discussion, the full survey in an attempt to capture a detailed picture, did not restrict questions to the framework measures or contain questions designed to simply address those measures.

The survey also added the dimension of benchmarking university performance against partner expectation for a range of items in four areas 1) accessing the University; 2) working in partnership and providing assistance to the community/region; 3) student learning and research; and 4) benefits of regional partnerships with the University. The Benchmarks in this regard relate to individual Universities and their own improvement strategies.

The attempt to comprehensively identify elements of university community partnership has resulted in a huge amount of data from which an attempt to extract benchmarks has been made.

The following benchmarks retain the four headings from the survey instrument, as listed above, with scores derived from averaging the results for individual items in the category. The overall satisfaction and number of respondents are included as additional potential benchmarks.





The Next Stage in the Pilot Process

The experience of administering and analysing the partner survey has demonstrated that, despite the best intentions, the survey is university-centric, as demonstrated by the language used and the limited opportunity for partners to identify areas important to them, and overly complex.

The next stage of the process can provide a basis for an additional qualitative dimension which can be facilitated by sharing the outcomes of the survey. Assumptions and conclusions do need to be tested both with partners and within the wider University community itself.

It is recommended that the next stage of the Benchmarking Pilot Project should be for individual Universities and their communities to test:

- The usefulness of the data;
- The benchmarks derived from partner perception as reported;
- Missing indicators/benchmarks;
- The items reported against the items listed as most important by partners;
- The items reported against the impacts of University community engagement as identified by partners; and
- The validity of the benchmarks as indicators of University Community Engagement performance.

Although the pilot process so far has indicated that a simpler and more direct instrument is required, the structure of the survey and refinement of key indicators relating to partner perceptions will be informed by these discussions.

APPENDICES

A: Benchmarking Framework

B: Letter to Participants

C: Data Collection Instrument

AUCEA PILOT PROJECT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK



Introduction

AUCEA has developed this national benchmarking framework to assist universities improve engagement with their communities.

In this regard the framework has a dual purpose. It firstly aims to provide universities with a basic capacity to make ongoing comparisons with other universities throughout Australia and, through this, the adoption of 'good practice' where relevant to their circumstances, while at the same time retaining institutional confidentiality and individuality. The benchmarking outcome for any individual university will only be made available to that university. The aggregate assessment across all universities will be made available to all participating universities.

Secondly, the framework aims to provide the core elements for each university to tailor a more comprehensive local benchmarking process that will best fit their particular mission and community context. In both situations it is expected that the quantitative and qualitative assessments undertaken by the university will be by way of mutual partnership with their communities.

The benchmarking framework comprises goals, strategies and measures that are commonly associated with high quality and effective engagement. In this regard it is concerned with the quality of partnership relationships between university and community; the responsiveness of university governance management and administrative processes; questions of university accessibility; and the way that research, teaching and learning supports staff student and community involvement.

As an association of community engaged universities, AUCEA will manage the implementation of the benchmarking framework.

Documents supporting the benchmarking include:

- A definition of terms used in the benchmarking framework;
- An institutional questionnaire designed for the data collection;
- A good practice proforma; and
- A partner survey that will provide data for the benchmarking indicators.

AUCEA acknowledges the contribution of the Holland matrix, the Gelmon Assessment model and Judith Ramaley's engagement criteria as noted in the Galick and Langworthy paper used as a basis of the Benchmarking Pilot; the contribution of all benchmarking workshop participants who have collaborated in the development of the model; the hosting of the pilot project at Swinburne University and the project management of Anne Langworthy.

The framework

The draft framework has been designed around five university community engagement goals deemed to be common to all universities committed to community engagement. It is noted that in each university additional goals, strategies and measures will be developed as appropriate to the local environment.

Overarching goals

1. To facilitate and encourage informed dialogue and partnership activities between the university and its community on issues of local and global importance.
2. To ensure university governance, management and administration processes support effective community engagement.
3. To ensure the university is accessible, outward reaching and responsive to its communities.
4. To increase the social, environmental and economic value of research to the university's community partners.
5. To design and deliver high quality learning and teaching that responds to community needs and fulfils the university's stated graduate attributes.

Goals	Strategies	Measures
Goal 1 To facilitate and encourage informed dialogue and partnership activities between the university and its community on issues of local and global importance.	1.1 The university executive, staff and students are strongly linked to and engaged in regular and mutual dialogue with the community and community leaders on agreed priority issues.	1.1 Measures to be Determined.
	1.2 University planning documents articulate the university's commitment to community engagement.	1.2 Engagement included in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vision ▪ Mission ▪ Institutional strategic plans and their derivative plans including implementation and functional plans and reporting progress against all goals and strategies ▪ University engagement strategies evaluated as effective by community partners ▪ Graduate attributes
	1.3 The university supports capacity building for engagement by its staff, students and community members.	1.3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dedicated staff development - regular program ▪ Attendance by university executive members academic staff and general staff (percentage/number) at Forums relevant to their discipline or area of expertise ▪ Career progression, number of promotions based on community engagement achievements ▪ Number Faculty/Division led engagement forums ▪ Opportunities provided on campus (or even off-campus) for students to participate in skill development for community participation and leadership

Goal 2	To ensure university governance, management and administration processes support effective community engagement.	2.1 Demonstrated community connection to the University's governance.	2.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ System structures to invite community voices into university governance ▪ or University standing committee advisory group or engagement.
		2.2 The university policy and processes support effective community engagement and institutional capacity to work with diverse communities	2.2 University community engagement is a criterion in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Performance • Staff development • Promotion • Course accreditation and review • Student reward and recognition • Staff reward and recognition
		2.3 The university effectively resources an identified engagement strategy that resources and supports all faculty, staff, students and wider community, and documents progress/outcomes.	2.3 \$ budget allocated to engagement (dedicated positions and operating expenses) as a proportion of total university operating budget
		2.4 Effective mechanisms to capture and record engagement activities.	2.4 Systems in place to capture and record engagement activities.
		2.5 The institution has executive leadership and co-ordinating infrastructure or dedicated community engagement team established within the university.	2.5 Existence of a dedicated strategic manager and integrated community relationship management (community building/engagement) system.

Goal 3:	To ensure the university is accessible, outward reaching and responsive to its communities.	3.1 Community access to university resources i.e. facilities, grounds, services, education and training facilities and provision of community education	3.1 Key community activities initiated by the university as an engagement opportunity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of facilities • Development of specialised/shared infrastructure • Ease of access to university staff and facilities as rated by community partners • Specialised services to meet civic and related objectives
		3.2 Engagement opportunities and activities are effectively communicated	3.2 Existence of engagement in communication strategy plan; and evidence of implementation in university publications, web sites and other public material
		3.3 Community contact and relationship management	3.3 Partner perceptions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ease of contacting the university ▪ communication ▪ responsiveness ▪ relationships management
Goal 4:	To increase the social, environmental and economic value of research and innovation for the university's community partners	4.1 Ensure communities are engaged as part of national and international research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ drawing on community expertise and knowledge ▪ developing formal partnerships ▪ sharing information ▪ encouraging active participation of community members ▪ acknowledging community contribution 	4.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Numbers of externally funded collaborative grants as a proportion of all research grants ▪ Numbers of internally funded collaborative grants as a proportion of all internally funded grants... ▪ Partner perception of the value of research ▪ Publication of research outcomes on website, newsletters and media

		4.2 Ensure that innovation, research and consultancy has relevance to and impact upon the community	4.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of grants and consultancy funds received for projects undertaken in collaboration with industry and community partners as a percentage of all funded projects ▪ Partner perception of relevance and impact of research including research outcomes implemented.
Goal 5:	To design and deliver high quality learning and teaching that responds to community needs and fulfils the university's stated graduate attributes.	5.1 Ensuring that skills for active citizenship are integral to high quality teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community engagement is explicit in the graduate attributes
		5.2 Building in course elements to all programs that enhance student skills in achieving beneficial outcomes for students in the community	5.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and type of courses providing experiential learning in the community e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – practical placements – work related projects – community problem solving – service learning – field trips – international projects – opportunities for student volunteering – student leadership ▪ Number of students who participate in experiential learning as a percentage of all students ▪ Partner assessment of the capacity of university graduates to contribute as ethical engaged citizens
		5.3 Pursue learning pathways with other educational providers to ensure the best community outcomes	5.3 Measures to be Determined.

Appendix B: Partner Letter



A U C E A Inc.

University Logo/
Letterhead

Dear (University Partner),

We are writing to you as a key university partner to invite you assist us in gaining information about the connection between your organisation and the university. We are seeking your ideas about the ways in which the university may or may not contribute to the region and /or community , the importance of elements of the partnership to you and ways in which this could improve.

As a university committed to university community engagement, we are keen to monitor and evaluate our performance. The University is a member of the Australian University Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) and is participating with 13 other committed Australian universities in a Community Engagement Benchmarking Pilot Project.

The Partner Feedback Survey is an important part of this process.

Your assistance with this project will involve responding to a University Partner Feedback Survey either on line at <http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zqi?p=WEB2279LOM35QW> or by returning the enclosed survey form in the replied paid envelope. The analysis of the results of the survey is being conducted independently on behalf of AUCEA and your response will remain anonymous. If you would like a summary of results please contact Anne Langworthy at alangworthy@swin.edu.au. (or university contact)

Your participation in the project is entirely voluntary. If you wish to withdraw from the survey at any point you are free to do so. If you wish to withdraw any of the information you have supplied for the project you are able to do so.

If you have any questions or comments please contact

Individual University contact person
Address
Phone
email

Thanks in advance for taking the time to complete the Feedback Survey; your contribution to the pilot project is greatly valued.

Yours sincerely



Individual University signature

Benchmarking project facilitator
AUCEA

This project has been approved by or on behalf of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) in line with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this project, you can contact: Research Ethics Officer, Swinburne Research (H68), Swinburne University of Technology, P O Box 218, HAWTHORN VIC 3122. Tel (03) 9214 5218 or resethics@swin.edu.au

AUCEA Benchmarking Pilot Project University Partner Feedback



Name of University:

Introduction

Engaged universities have a commitment to working in partnership with their communities. The university is keen to get feedback from key community partners on the university engagement with its partners, the importance of key strategies and their rating of current university performance.

For each item, please fill in the box that best describes your rating of its importance and current performance. If you are unable to comment on a particular area please fill in the not applicable (N/A) box.

At the end of the survey there is an opportunity to provide comments on the value of the relationship with and any other points you wish to raise.

Section A – ABOUT YOU OR YOUR ORGANISATION

1. Which of the following best describes you or your organisation/group? – Tick all that apply

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Business | <input type="radio"/> small | <input type="radio"/> Industry Group |
| | <input type="radio"/> medium | |
| | <input type="radio"/> large | |
| <input type="radio"/> Informal Community Organisation | <input type="radio"/> Not for profit organisation | |
| <input type="radio"/> Cultural Group | <input type="radio"/> Local Council | |
| <input type="radio"/> Faith – based organisation | <input type="radio"/> Social club | |
| <input type="radio"/> Educational body (TAFE, schools etc.) | <input type="radio"/> Professional body | |
| <input type="radio"/> Government department/agency | <input type="radio"/> Individual community member | |

If other, please specify:

2. Your position in the organisation

3. How long has your organisation or have you been associated with the university?

2 years or less

2 - 5 years

5 – 8 years

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Your level of interaction with the University over the past two years

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Very Low | <input type="radio"/> High |
| <input type="radio"/> Low | <input type="radio"/> Very High |
| <input type="radio"/> Medium | |

5. Please select your main areas of contact with the university – Tick all that apply

- We provide Guest practitioners as part of a University course
- We participate in industry or community based research
- Students provide services to my organisation through:

Section C – BENEFITS

The following items seek your views on the importance and current performance of the University in maintaining and developing your partnership. If you are unable to comment on the performance of a particular item please mark not application N/A.

IMPORTANCE					ITEMS	LEVEL OF CHANGE				N/A
Not important	Moderately Important		Essential			Worse	No Change		Better	N/A
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	8. From my/our interaction with the university I /my community/community organisation/business/group have/has:					
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Influenced university teaching and research directions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Put research findings into action	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Enhanced our ability to plan effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Enhanced staff capacity to serve clients	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Given us new ideas about our work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Created opportunities to leverage new resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Enhanced staff development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Help build new community networks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Have a greater sense of agency effectiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Increased our profile in community as an effective agent of change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Overall – How satisfied are you with your relationship with the university?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

Please state up to 3 specific impacts that have benefited your organisation based on partnerships with the university

Please outline any issues not already covered which are important to you or your organisation?

If you want to receive feedback on the results of the survey; please email (researcher email provided).