



GOOD PRACTICES IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIETY

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

Students' Civic and Community Engagement

Fostering Student Engagement through AI-driven Qualitative Quality Assurance Practices
A Project Developed by:



UNIVERSITY
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MCAST



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Project: Fostering Student Engagement through AI-driven Qualitative Quality Assurance Practices

Consortium Partners

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Title: University College Cork: Civic and Community Engagement (CCE)

Organization: University College Cork

One liner – essence of the case study: UCC has developed a CCE plan to lead the university in societal engagement by capitalizing on its teaching and learning strengths and translating its dynamic academic and research leadership into far-reaching community engagement for the benefit of all.

Country: Ireland

Authors: University College Cork

Summary: The Civic and Community Engagement Plan outlines the goals of University College Cork to enact a strategic and coordinated approach, to raise the profile of civic and community engagement (CCE) activities, to ingrain a culture of engaged staff and students, and to deepen their presence in the community.

The vision of the Civic and Community Engagement Plan is to lead the university in civic engagement, by capitalizing on its teaching and learning strengths and translating its dynamic academic and research leadership into far-reaching community engagement for the benefit of all.

About the Qual-AI-ty case studies: This case study is part of a Compendium of Good Practices in student engagement with society. The cases provide an overview of inspiring initiatives, projects, and programmes that higher education institutions are undertaking in Europe and that offer opportunities for students to engage with their local context while addressing societal challenges. The aim of the compendium is to collect information about the current conditions of university student engagement with society through various voluntary and non-voluntary activities which are creating betterment of the societies in Europe.



OVERVIEW

1. Introduction

University College Cork (UCC) is a public university founded in 1845 as one of three Queen's Colleges located in Belfast, Cork, and Galway.

The university opened its doors to just 115 students in 1849 and for 2017 has a student population of over 21,000. 15,000 students in undergraduate programs and 4,400 in postgraduate and research programs, spread across four faculties: Medicine and Health; Business and Law; Science, Engineering and Food Science; and Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences.

It offers around 180 courses that attract 3,400 international students from more than 104 countries around the world, creating a uniquely cosmopolitan culture on campus.

2. Background Information

Civic and community engagement occurs within a national policy context that holds universities accountable for meeting key national policy benchmarks, including the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (2012), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) System Performance Framework (2013), and Section 5.5 of the Mission-Based Performance Agreement between the HEA and UCC (2014).

The Civic and Community plan is UCC's first plan to cohere and advance commitment to civic and community engagement, toward establishing the University as a community-engaged campus with best practices. This plan deepens regional engagement, prioritizing cultural ties, the Irish language, and a focus with intention on social challenges such as social justice, environmental sustainability, and public health and wellness.

UCC's 2017 strategic planning cycle provided an opportunity to intentionally focus on engagement, paying strategic attention to why and how UCC is connected to its broader communities.

A 2016 staff survey in UCC revealed that while there was significant staff activity in the area of community engagement, there was a clear sense that UCC needed to firmly establish civic engagement as a valued activity and integrate it into the institution's mission. The Staff underscored a perceived lack of recognition and

promotion of existing activities undertaken by staff. They highlighted the need for greater recognition of this area of their work by the University. Some other barriers to civic engagement identified by staff in the survey were:

- Time: 58% of staff noted lack of time as a barrier to CCE.
- Recognition: Lack of recognition of CCE was cited by 41% of staff, i.e., CCE is not valued as an activity for promotion and workload calculation. Recognition was identified as a key action.
- Communication: Staff highlighted the need for improved communication and information on CCE through central administrative support. Lack of knowledge was identified by 43% of temporary staff as a barrier to engagement with CCE. Lack of recognition of activities performed by staff was also seen as a problem.
- Culture: There is a clear sense that the UCC needs to firmly establish CCE as a valued activity and integrate it into the mission of the institution.
- Organizational structures: Staff suggested addressing the fragmented nature of CCE at the institutional level through central coordination and strategy. However, a percentage of staff also advocated for CCE to exist as a grassroots initiative outside the formal institutional structure of the University.
- Staff participation rates: 28% of academics stated that they had participated in Community Based Research. 68% of academics stated that they had not participated in community-based learning initiatives.

3. Aims and Motivations

UCC's vision is to be a leading civic engagement university, leveraging its strengths in teaching and learning, and translating academic and research leadership into far-reaching community engagement.

Considering this vision, UCC has identified that the goals of the plan are to be more connected, visible, and engaged with and for the community:

- *Connected* (Promote a strategic and coordinated approach): UCC will develop a physical and governance infrastructure of civic and community engagement governance infrastructure, with specific support functions.
- *Visible* (Raise the profile of our current and future civic and community engagement activity): Engagement activity will be captured, disseminated, and communicated at a high level and to a wide audience.



- *Engaged* (Implement a culture of staff and student civic engagement): proactively engage in community-based research, learning, and volunteering to achieve relevant social, cultural, and political impact.

4. Stakeholders

In order for UCC to be successful in its objectives and mission, an organizational framework, including different stakeholders are identified as being included in the development of activities:

- University Civic and Community Engagement Committee (UCCEC) comprises of CCE Champions from each of the 4 Colleges, Research Institutes and Administrative units. It is chaired by the Vice President for External Relations, and has responsibility to drive, convene university-wide efforts.
- Faculty/ College Committees support and drive activities at a more local level.
- Student Leadership (Students Union, Societies, Clubs) is integral to the success of the plan.
- A University wide CCE Team has been established under the leadership of a Head of Civic and Community Engagement.
- In addition, it is planned to create a Community Advisory structure composed of citizens, alumni, government entities, civil society organizations, regional development and other community members.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Inputs

To achieve its mission, the UCC CCE plan calls for new commitments in terms of physical and organizational infrastructure, teaching and research. The entire implementation process has been divided into 3 phases:

Phase 1 (2017/2018):

- By Fall 2017 - UCC began implementing a university-wide civic engagement plan, underpinned by a clear conceptual framework and common language across campus.
- By the end of 2017 - a visibility initiative was begun to raise the profile of existing and future civic activity, thereby broadening its reach and impact.

Phase 2 (2018-2020):

- By 2018 - UCC created a best practice engagement infrastructure and capacity-building program focused on expanding and institutionalizing engagement, community-based research, learning, volunteering and external partnerships.

Phase 3 (2020-2022):

- By 2020 - all staff can access professional development support for the integration of community engagement, in all their activities.
- By 2022 - all UCC students (undergraduate and postgraduate students) will have the opportunity to participate in a community engagement experience during their time at UCC.

2. Strategies and Activities

Action plans and activities to implement the contributions made by UCC were through the following:

- Establish a Civic Engagement Committee in each college and appoint a college Champion(s) with responsibility for driving and supporting each college's activities on an ongoing basis.
- Build awareness of our exemplary engaged research and other activities through communications, branding and an integrated marketing campaign, inclusive of a social media presence.

- Mainstream Community Based Research and Community Based Learning, establish mentoring for staff throughout the academic year to embed CBR and CBL, and promote supports the theory and methodology of community engaged scholarship to support staff to engage with community.
- Develop student's civic attributes through transdisciplinary University wide modules that promote civic competencies, and extend community engagement with the Students Union, UCC Societies, UCC Clubs and Student Hub, establishing structured service placements with community organizations.
- Set up Community Advisory structures, and extend our community education and regional engagement partnerships, deepening relationships with key agencies, civil society organizations, local development companies, arts, Irish Language and cultural organizations, and bring the University to the community through a liaison role and reciprocal knowledge exchange events.
- Advocate for and implement innovative access solutions and progression pathways for Travellers, asylum seekers and migrant communities, becoming a Sanctuary University.
- Establish a UCC Community Week, an annual invitation to the public to come to UCC for a week of festivities, music, food, the arts, learning that pushes out the boundaries of thought, partnership opportunities and a general showcasing of what we do inside the gates of UCC.

3. Deliverable Outputs

The creation of civic initiatives with social impact, together with community groups, charities, schools and many other organizations collaborating with the university that support lifelong learning, community development, neighborhood regeneration, arts, culture, environment, health and wellness.

1. UCC's main initiatives involve *Engaged Research*: a distinct focus on addressing societal challenges and advancing social and scientific research with society.
 - In response to the COVID-19 crisis UCC has progressed a wide range of public engagement activities www.ucc.ie/en/civic/covid19/ among other things setting up an interdisciplinary Covid-19 research team of 100 researchers, and providing responsive and trusted scientific information in the region, nationally and internationally.
 - UCC's Institute for Social Science in the 21st Century (ISS21) brings together interdisciplinary teams to address key issues arising from COVID-19, providing

- a focal point for impactful social science research that benefits people, communities and organizations.
- All of UCC's Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) funded Centres are developing engaged research programmes with society to respond to critical challenges and to provide vital policy and practice focussed research.
 - UCC is a leading member of the European Living Knowledge Network, alongside some of the highest ranked Universities in Europe and worldwide. We are a site for one of two 'Science Shops' on the Island of Ireland - small entities that unite researchers, citizens and civil society organisations, to address societal challenges across a wide range of disciplines – free of charge.
2. UCC's Academic Strategy: Connected Curriculum integrates community engagement across all of its academic programmes and courses.
- UCC prepares post-graduate students for academic based community engagement as part of the Horizon 2020 funded EnRRICH project.
 - A series of bespoke community based 'service learning' courses are integrated across the undergraduate curriculum, with support from the European Union through the EU UNICORN Erasmus+ programme.
 - UCC's Bystander Intervention Module is available to all 22,000 students on campus. It is a targeted response to the issue of sexual respect and broader consent awareness.
3. UCC is a leader in a movement to increase openness and public participation in scientific research:
- UCC researchers actively contribute to RTE Brainstorm and The Conversation, providing the public with independent research informed analysis on key societal challenges, thus contributing to an active civil society discourse - a precondition for a strong democracy.
 - UCC's European Research Night, 'Cork Discovers', funded by the European Commission, involves 40 events in 10 venues across the City, with over two thousand visitors attending.
 - A further 12,000 people participate in the Cork Science Festival which is organised by Corks Lifetime Lab and UCC [Tyndall, IPIC, CONNECT, APC Microbiome Ireland, MaREI and INFANT].

- Each year it hosts a dedicated 'Community Week', a moment in the year where it intently pauses to connect and create dialogue and meaningful action with people, communities and organisations through 50 different individual local, regional and global events.
 - It hosts an annual public talk's series entitled 'Relevance to You' that makes its research accessible to a lay audience.
 - Its Centre for Local and Regional Governance brings the University directly into City Hall to deliver policy relevant impact; providing a platform for constructive dialogue and research with citizens, politicians, practitioners, business leaders and academics on issues of critical importance to the city and region.
 - UCC supports citizenship and civic discourse through six active learning neighbourhoods, where people come together in their local area to develop learning experiences that benefit their neighbours. Its Free University Series promotes learning as a public good, advancing participation and inclusivity in learning for all of Cork's citizens.
 - UCC's Equality and Refugee Weeks provide a regional focal point for dialogue and action on issues of social justice, democracy and inequality; and driving positive social change with citizens for a more inclusive and egalitarian society.
4. UCC has initiated partnerships that contribute to building fair and just, cohesive and democratic societies
- As part of a European University (UNIC), and in partnership with Cork City Council, UCC has signed an MOU to engage with its city through teaching, research and community engagement to address societal challenges.
 - UCC was instrumental in Cork becoming part of UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities in 2015, one of only 119 in the world, recognising Cork's continuing excellence and commitment to social inclusion and lifelong learning.
 - Through its Centre for Global Development, UCC supports international development and global sustainability issues. It is an active member of the Development Studies Association of Ireland, and has hosted an international conference on Global Hunger and facilitated the Irish launch of the groundbreaking EAT-Lancet Report on Food, Planet, Health.
 - UCC has established an Equality Diversity and Inclusion Unit. It is a Sanctuary University, and has established Scholarships for asylum seekers and refugee

students to study a range of undergraduate degrees. Significant university-wide events include an annual Equality Week and a Refugee Week.

- UCC's is a key contributor to multi-organisational civic partnerships in the region, which improve social justice, inclusion, health, environmental and learning outcomes. These multilateral partnerships include Cork Healthy Cities, Cork Food Policy Council, Cork Environmental Forum, Cork City of Sanctuary and Cork Age Friendly City and County, UNESCO Learning City.
- It is building community capacity through in depth-partnerships with local communities and Gaeltacht regions. The EU funded Grassroots Wavelength Project has established Community Radio Stations on the West Cork Islands. UCC supports Islands action planning and has created an academic partnership.
- It is engaging with marginalised populations and geographic areas through Adult and Continuing Education partnerships with the Education Unit in Cork Prison, and outreach in Cahersiveen (Skellig CRI).
- UCC's Access & Participation Office has established a regional 'whole-of-education' approach to widening access and participation through the SOAR initiative. Specific Traveller engagement initiatives and a New Avenues to Teaching initiative aim to increase the participation of marginalised students in Teacher Education Degrees. The UCC PLUS+ Homework club provides academic support to students in economically challenged areas in Cork city, with over one hundred UCC students participating in the initiative annually delivering over 3,000 hours of volunteering.
- UCC is heavily invested in supporting society to move to a low-carbon future. UCC's ERI is supporting policy makers to 'Green the Recovery' and it is actively supporting the delivery of the Irish Governments Green New Deal. UCC's ground-breaking Dingle 2030 partnership with ESB Networks, led by its Marei Centre, is developing new ways to build capacity and empower communities around climate action. Marei are leading a national initiative that support Irish Public Bodies and State Agencies involved in climate related infrastructure projects to engage effectively with communities.
- UCC's Centre for Cooperative Studies actively supports a wide range of national organisations and communities. It is developing the effectiveness and capacity of the micro-finance sector nationally, particularly Credit Unions, and has organised the Credit Union Summer School.

5. UCC is a leading site for Cultural Engagement in its region

- UCC's Glucksman Gallery is leading the international field of arts engaged practice and is a cornerstone of community engagement in the region. It prioritises public engagement across three themes: Health and Wellbeing; Equality and Diversity; and Climate Action and Sustainability. In one example, its Creative Agency project enables young asylum seekers to work with artists and curators over an extended series of workshops, empowering them to participate in imaginative projects that present their voices and views in the public realm.
- UCC is the leading regional contributor to Corks Culture Night, an annual all-island public event that celebrates culture, creativity and the arts. The university organises special and unique events and workshops made available free of charge. The initiative has significantly raised the profile of the arts and culture, as well as creating a common sense of community and belonging across Corks diverse populations, building regional cohesiveness and inclusion.
- The Cork Folklore Project (CFP) is a UCC supported non-profit community-based organisation that digitally records stories and memories from the people of Cork, most recently capturing peoples oral accounts of COVID-19. It has reached over 900 hours of recordings on everyday life in the past and present. Recognised nationally and internationally for its high standard of folklore collection and dissemination, it has received visits from the Smithsonian and many other leading repositories internationally.
- In a first for Ireland, UCC has entered a multi-year partnership with Cork Opera House to establish it as a Regional Learning Theatre that will enrich the student experience in UCC through internships and the development of an MA in Arts and Cultural Management, which will contribute to further developing a skilled creative industries workforce in the region and beyond.

4. Intangible Outputs

Students will be able to develop a strong institutional identity and culture of CCE. The university will have a strategic and coordinated approach to civic education. Raising the profile of civic education activity and broadening its reach and impact and increasing capacity to implement CBR and CBL. Increased student and staff engagement in civic education and establishment of new and innovative community



partnerships, accompanied by more inclusive local, regional and global engagement, as an intangible outcome.

EVALUATION AND IMPACT

1. Strategical Initiatives for Evaluation & Monitoring

UCC developed and implemented a framework to monitor and evaluate the nature, extent, and value of engagement to the institution and the community. This includes 1) developing intelligent metrics 2) a baseline for measuring progress and 3) integrating these with our established systems for performance review, reporting, and planning.

Likewise, to measure and ensure impact and strategic use of the investment, an international advisory group was established, and an external evaluator was appointed to support formative and summative evaluation, including an interim and final report.

Case studies and other qualitative research methodologies were used to determine the tangible community and regional benefits of the work. The UCC Civic and Community Engagement Committee, under the direction of the Vice President for External Relations, prepared an assessment framework closely informed by the Campus Engage self-assessment tool and the Carnegie self-assessment framework.

2. Analysing the Impacts of the Outputs

In terms of external stakeholders, there is a very clear sense that UCC has a very well-organized approach. UCC staff in particular areas like engaged learning, engaged research, volunteering, are working well together to a very strong mission and communication. Impact includes for example, University College Cork was the 1st Place Winner of the international MacJannet Prize for Community Engagement, from the Talloires Network in 2019. UCC was ranked 8th in the world in 2021 Times Higher Education (THE) University Impact Rankings. Civic and community engagement at UCC was successfully reviewed and quality assured by the US Carnegie Foundation Ireland Project.

3. Defining major success factors

One of the major strengths that have contributed greatly to positive change in the case study areas is the support from the administration in general, from the President, Vice Presidents, and Leadership throughout the university. There is a strong recognition, supportive culture, and willingness to support communication.

There is a university-wide approach, with a central office, alongside several different locations across the university, and ongoing communication is everyone's responsibility. UCC has excellent community partners: The County of Cork and City of Cork is a very strong community partner and from the highest leadership, from the city CEO to the Director of Economic and the Community Directorate. There is also a strong community and a voluntary sector in Ireland. There are many civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations, and they are all very willing to collaborate with the university, with its staff, and with its students. Another key force at the national level is the IUA Campus Engage, a collective of universities that common plan and influence research funding. The Irish Research funding bodies provide funding for civically engaged research, and UCC partners with NGO's and CSO's to apply for research grants, and co-produce research with societal partners.

4. Lessons Learned

One of the best lessons learned in this case is the bottom-up grassroots approach to organizational leadership distributed across the university. Much activity is community informed and led. Academics, researchers, and students of UCC, are the ones who lead, with top down support. The approach that UCC has taken is very strategic, making CCE part of the whole system of resources, learning, and curriculum. Often communities struggle to partner with HEI's, but UCC has streamlined this with supportive structures, making sure that the university responds to community partners in a timely and effective manner.

5. Identifying the major Strengths and Weaknesses

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong national to local strategic planning in the Irish system. - Multiple strategic projects have been executed across key nationally agreed areas of engaged research, engaged learning, volunteering and partnerships. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public understanding of the University's societal engagement mission is low compared to other factors, underscoring the importance of demonstrating and communicating more strongly the value of the engagement work to the public. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broadening participation, bringing the University closer to the community, with an emphasis on access and community education. - Establishment of strong links with civil society and marginalized urban and rural communities. - Integration of community-based learning and research throughout the University and expanded opportunities for civic leadership volunteerism and community service. - Facilitation of spaces for people to come together in partnerships and collaborations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Ireland, research funding, teaching and learning are relatively well funded, but civic and community engagement is much less well funded, and is a major weakness nationally. |
|--|--|

7. Further Challenges

One of the biggest challenges is to maintain the success of the plan, for which an average investment of more than 250,000 euros per year is required for central leadership support to CCE to be achieved by 2022. This includes a combination of central and external support. In addition, an indicative target of external research funding above €750,000 per year by 2022 for engaged research is needed to develop UCC's capacity and position UCC internationally.



FURTHER INFORMATION

1. Sustainability Factors

The main sustainability factors that have made the case more enduring, effective, efficient and covering broad societal perspectives, include leveraging transdisciplinary knowledge and practice to address priorities that reflect the UN Sustainable Development Goals through the key global imperatives of equality and social justice, public health and well-being, and environmental sustainability.

Also establishing UCC as an internationally recognized site of excellence for civic and community engagement as a central aspect of teaching, research, and internationalization. Also, the preparation of UCC students to contribute fully to society as thoughtful civically engaged leaders through community-engaged research and impact.

Also, UCC's focus on key measure that demonstrate the societal impact of research, learning, volunteering and other practice, towards improving outcomes for citizens, addressing health and well-being, environmental and environmental sustainability, equity and social justice (increasing economic security, capabilities and social capital), and strengthening democracy.

2. Transferability

The commitment of universities to the community is very present in the political landscape of Ireland. Therefore, UCC has implemented various initiatives and responsibilities in the area of transfer to establish itself as a best practice example of student and staff engagement with society, starting in the area of lifelong learning, structuring and supporting university-wide partnerships with the community, research, and volunteering.

UCC has an array of staff training opportunities. Community Academic Research Links (CARL) promotes research that is co-developed and written with community members, in which a large number of students are involved. Every year UCC organizes a volunteer fair where organizations are invited in September, they set up booths, where students can go and meet the organizations and sign up for volunteering opportunities. These have recruiters and a very structured program.

UCC has an initiative called 'Connected Curriculum', which aims to integrate civic and community engagement, and other factors, across its Academic Strategy. It also



provides training to doctoral students who participate in community-based research. Students work with community partners to help solve a community problem. As part of the process, they work in teams and develop a research paper collaboratively with the community partner largely in a community immersion manner. This allows the Civic and Community Engagement program to have broad transferability possibilities.

3. Awards and Recognition

University College Cork was the 1st Place Winner of the international MacJannet Prize for Community Engagement, from the Talloires Network in 2019. University College Cork was ranked 8th in the world in 2021 in the Times Higher Education (THE) University Impact Rankings. In 2019, it ranked Number 1 in Ireland for working towards the UN goal of 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions' (12th globally). Civic and community engagement at University College Cork was successfully reviewed and quality assured by the US Carnegie Foundation Ireland Project. In 2018, UCC became the first university in Europe to be awarded a Gold Star from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, thanks to the project UCC Green Campus.

4. Relevant Links

https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/centralmedia/UCC_Civic_Engage_2017a.pdf

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/civic/>

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/civic/governance/overviewandpolicycontext/>

5. Contact Persons

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