

## **Analyzing Institutional Commitment to Service: A Model of Key Organizational Factors**

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*Although some work has begun to explore issues related to expanding, sustaining, and institutionalizing service-learning, there is little understanding of the dynamic relationship between organizational factors related to service-learning and actual levels of institutional commitment. Each institution must develop its own understanding of its academic priorities, including the role of service as an aspect of mission, and set clear goals for a level of commitment that matches those priorities. A matrix that links organizational factors to levels of commitment to service is proposed as one possible approach to setting institutional goals, realistically assessing current conditions, and monitoring progress toward the desired level of implementation of service-learning.*

### **Introduction**

The "Engaged' Campus" (Edgerton, 1994) has been widely used as a generic label for the many diverse expressions of institutional commitment linking the academy to community priorities and needs. Now, more than two years after the American Association of Higher Education gave visibility and importance to the professional service and service-learning movement by dedicating its 1995 annual conference to the "Engaged Campus," many institutions speak of themselves as campuses that are engaged in service to their communities through the activities of faculty and students. National conferences, affiliation groups, and grant programs have grown rapidly to give visibility and recognition to service and service-learning programs.

Even though the rhetoric of service is similar at many institutions, a cursory glance at campus literature, professional publications, and conference presentations makes it obvious that engagement in service-related activities is playing out differently across institutions, and the level of involvement in and commitment to service takes many different forms. Whether a campus engages in service on a small or large scale, commitment to any level of service requires institutions to make choices; choices that can be made deliberately or accidentally. For the service movement to be sustained and institutionalized, each institution must develop its own understanding of the degree to which service is an integral component of the academic mission.

This view is evident in the work of several scholars who have emphasized the necessity of broadening scholarly roles and increasing the diversity of institutional types based on more deliberate selection of academic priorities. Boyer, for example, proposes that faculty priorities can be uniquely tailored to reflect particular institutional missions, a strategy he believes could produce greater institutional variety and improved responsiveness to societal needs (1990).

In 1992, the Pew Higher Education Roundtable created forums of institutions that were engaged in substantial examinations of curricula, faculty roles, and administrative structures. An early observation of the Roundtable was that institutions must be more selective in their range of academic activities.

Every institution needs to establish a clear and definitive statement of mission that reflects its own goals. Even more important is the need for strong leadership to ensure that the energy and ambition of faculty and staff are engaged in the fulfillment of that mission. An institution must resist the efforts of particular factions to distort its mission into shapes unsuited to its actual strengths and capabilities. (1992, p. 5a)

Even earlier, Lynton and Elman called for greater institutional distinctiveness because they found "almost no connection between the internal views and the external expectations as to the role and functions of our universities. The existing, narrowly defined mold into which almost all universities have tried to cast themselves is not adequate to the expanding needs of our contemporary, knowledge-based society" (1987, p. 12).

A central theme in these discussions is that the challenge to diversify organizational forms and strategies in higher education is made more complex by the lack of national experience with alternative interpretations of faculty roles and responsibilities. The scholarly elements of service and their legitimate relationship to an integrated view of teaching and research have received little attention either in the academic environment or in the research literature on scholarship, but are seen as key to the creation of more distinctive and responsive institutions (Lynton & Elman, 1987).

What is known about the variety of institutional responses to the potential relevance of service and service-learning to their mission? To date, the vast majority of service-learning research has explored aspects of student and faculty involvement in service and service-learning. Now, we can see that involvement in service and service-learning has real, but poorly understood impacts on institutional structures, policies, resources and decisions. More recently, some research has focused on important questions regarding efforts to sustain, expand, and/or institutionalize service-learning. A sample of relevant studies is offered below as examples of research that has begun to explore key factors related to organizational impacts.,

For example, there is a growing understanding of the importance of institutional mission and infrastructure to the success and sustainability of community service and service-learning. In her case studies of five Montana institutions with diverse missions, Ward identified three factors related to institutionalization: faculty participation, funding, and leadership for service-learning (1996).

In its recent report on "Lessons Learned from the 1991-1996 Institutes on Integrating Service with Academic Study", (1996), Campus Compact reports evidence of broad adoption of service-learning across many different kinds of institutions. The report states, "as service learning becomes increasingly institutionalized on campus, 'second generation' issues surface. These require a larger vision of the purposes and goals of service-learning, especially if

service-learning is to develop a broader following among faculty" (1996, p. 2). Congruence of service-learning with institutional mission is listed as the first factor associated with success in institutionalization.

Others have suggested that the institutionalization of service-learning must focus on aspects of institutional policies and resources so that the role of service is adopted at the core of faculty work and the student experience, and is not marginalized by being treated as an extra or add-on assignment or duty (Lynton, 1995).

Zlotkowski asserts that institutionalization of service-learning requires institutions to go far beyond implementation issues and will ultimately depend on the complete "transformation of a set of elitist, self-referential academic assumptions" (1995, p. 130). He believes that institutional service-learning strategies must be distinctive and appropriate to the individual institution and its contexts if the commitment is to be realized and sustained.

Lynton (1995) also argues that institutional responses to the service-learning movement must be institutionally distinctive. He says that every institution and every unit within an institution can and should decide in a deliberate way the degree to which service is integral and appropriate to the mission. If service is to be performed with quality and be sustained, he believes we must all come to accept that the form and degree of institutional expression of commitment to service will be highly variable across and within institutions.

Clearly, there is growing evidence that there are significant differences in institutional responses to the implementation of service-learning, and to the demands service makes on a campus organization. By what strategy can we begin to understand, interpret, and evaluate the elements of those different responses in ways that will guide institutional efforts and choices? If we are to truly achieve Senge's organizational environment of "creative tension," where vision and reality work together to guide institutional actions, then we must develop systematic approaches for setting goals and monitoring our progress (Zlotkowski, 1995).

This article will use data from 23 case studies conducted between 1994 and 1997 to propose a matrix of levels of commitment to service. Four levels of commitment are identified, each characterized by campus responses to seven key organizational factors that impact the implementation and support of service-related activities. The proposed matrix represents one possible approach to creating a conceptual framework to guide institutional decisions and goals, assess the relationship of goals to campus conditions regarding service, and monitor progress toward institutionalization.

### **Research Methods and Analysis**

The data behind the proposed matrix came from two different, but related studies. Both studies explored the degree to which service and service learning were accepted as an academic priority, and looked for explanatory factors related to the potential for sustained or expanded efforts.

The review of previous research and literature on institutional commitment to service raises many questions, indicates a need to explore interactions among ambiguous variables, and gives

reason to suspect that the context contains . unexplored domains. The researchers sought to understand the framework that shapes the thoughts, feelings and actions of the, subjects - faculty, students, institution, and community. Therefore, the methodology chosen for these research projects was qualitative studies of an exploratory nature (Marshall & Rossman, 1989); when the goal of research is to explain processes and describe and interpret the contexts of complex actions, case study methods are most effective (Merriam, 1988).

Both studies employed site visits for interviews and document analysis to develop deep and rich case studies of institutions professing some degree of commitment to service. In-depth interviewing is commonly used in case study research because it respects how the respondents frame information and thereby' contributes to the collection of valid and reliable information (Yin, 1984).

The data from both studies were subjected to analyst-designed typologies where the researchers identified distinct variables and indicators based on literature and previous research, and applied the typology to naturally-occurring variations in data. This process involves uncovering patterns, themes, and categories (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Patterns and themes' were derived from the interview data and documents, and these were used to measure the presence of the indicators defined for each predicted variable.

The first study involved four in-depth case studies of institutions that had self-identified as adopting a distinctive mission which had community-based scholarship as the defining characteristic. The study was designed to assess the match between stated academic priorities and the actual working priorities of the faculty, and to explore factors that helped to explain the presence or absence of a strong match between the two.

The research protocol was designed to capture data on each institution in areas related to the following organizational factors: organizational goals, structure and flexibility; faculty composition and rewards; research and service orientation; and education approach (including service-learning). The study assessed the "rhetoric vs. the reality" of the institutional claim of a distinctive mission characterized by an academic environment that fosters and supports service and service- learning as important elements of scholarship (Holland, 1995).

One researcher conducted interviews with 35-40 faculty, administrators (presidents, provosts, deans, chairs, community relations staff), and students during 3-4 day visits to each campus. Multiple campus documents (catalogs, recruitment materials, faculty policy guidelines, strategic plans, publicity pieces, campus newspapers, etc.) were also examined. Part of the site visit included observations of faculty, staff and students on and off campus. The outcomes of this research included the development of a viable strategy for assessing the characteristics of any institutional mission, and a conceptual framework illustrating the defining features of one particular type of distinctive academic mission. In addition, the matrix described in this article was first proposed as an outcome of this study.

The matrix arose as a way to categorize the different organizational forms of interpreting the role of service and the relationship to the organizational factors that were found to be most significant in explaining the presence or absence of a commitment to service as an academic

activity. Recently, a second study presented an opportunity to refine the matrix by studying the experiences of a much larger group of institutions.

The second study involved evaluation of 19 institutions funded by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Corporation for National Service. The grants were intended to support the adoption and institutionalization of service-learning. The evaluation plan was based on a comprehensive case study approach designed at Portland State University to assess the distinctive impacts of service-learning on students, faculty, institution, and community (Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996). Variables and indicators that operationalized overall grant program goals were developed for each constituent group, and reflected the organizational factors shown in the matrix as well.

The 19 subject institutions in this evaluation project were a highly diverse blend of size, mission, geographic region, local context, and history, and as such provided an opportunity to test the proposed matrix in a wide variety of settings- Two researchers shared responsibility for conducting one-day site visits to each campus. Interviews and focus groups were held with academic administrators, faculty, students, community partners and staff engaged in supporting service-learning to probe for data regarding the impact variables. Campus documents were also reviewed, and each site grant director prepared a written report responding to key factors.

Much of the existing research on institutional engagement in service-learning is limited because it is based on the experience of one or a few institutions. This matrix is derived from research that involved an unusual opportunity to explore the experiences of a large group of institutions. Analysis of interviews and documents from the first research project resulted in the identification of four potential levels of commitment and seven organizational factors that characterize institutional choices and behaviors regarding service. These constitute the proposed matrix that was then refined through application to the multiple subjects of the second research project.

These case studies were, among other things, a test of popularly-held but poorly-researched belief structures regarding the scholarship of service as a component of institutional missions and academic priorities. The matrix is meant to be a useful diagnostic tool to describe and interpret the dimensions, approaches, and levels of institutional commitment to community service and service-learning and, therefore, to facilitate institutional planning, decision-making and evaluation. As framed by the discussion of the literature in the introduction above, if we are to achieve a creative tension between vision and reality regarding the implementation of each institution's vision of the role of service, then there is a need for a method to guide and monitor institutional efforts and choices so as to foster institutionalization.

### **A Proposed Matrix of Institutional Commitment to Service**

From case studies and the literature, especially Crosson (1983), the proposed matrix was developed to explain the interrelationship of levels of commitment to service with key organizational factors that illustrate and characterize each level. The matrix is shown in Figure 1.

The four levels of institutional commitment to service represent different institutional expressions of seven organizational factors most often cited as definitive components that frame an institution's service-related activities. The organizational factors represent important aspects of organizational infrastructure, policy, communication, and participation that are typically affected by efforts to define and implement service as a reflection of campus mission. At any level of commitment to service, any institution should be able to match its organizational choices with these factors to test the linkage between goals and performance. The continuum of levels of commitment and the factors that define those levels arose naturally from data analysis that revealed the variety and nature of institutional choices and behaviors regarding involvement in and commitment to service and service-learning.

**Figure 1:**  
*Levels of Commitment to Service, Characterized by Key Organizational Factors Evidencing Relevance to Institutional Mission*

	<b>Level One Low Relevance</b>	<b>Level Two Medium Relevance</b>	<b>Level Three High Relevance</b>	<b>Level Four Full Integration</b>
<b>Mission</b>	No mention or undefined rhetorical reference	Service is part of what we do as citizens	Service is an element of our academic agenda.	Service is a central and defining characteristic
<b>Promotion, Tenure, Hiring</b>	Service to campus committees or to discipline	Community service mentioned; may count in certain cases	Formal guidelines for documenting and rewarding community service/service-learning	Community based research and teaching are key criteria for hiring and rewards
<b>Organization Structure</b>	None that are focused on service or volunteerism	Units may exist to foster volunteerism	Centers and institutes are organized to provide service	Flexible unit(s) support; widespread faculty and student participation
<b>Student Involvement</b>	Part of extracurricular student activities	Organized support for volunteer work	Opportunity for extra credit, internships, practicum experiences	Service-learning courses integrated in curriculum; student involvement in community based research
<b>Faculty Involvement</b>	Campus duties; committees;	Pro bono consulting;	Tenured/senior faculty pursue	Community research and service-learning

	disciplinary focus	community volunteerism	community-based research; some teach service-learning courses	a high priority; interdisciplinary and collaborative work
<b>Community Involvement</b>	Random or limited individual or group involvement	Community representation on advisory boards for departments or schools	Community influences campus through active partnership or part-time teaching	Community involved in designing, conducting and evaluating research and service-learning
<b>Campus Publications</b>	Not an emphasis	Stories of student volunteerism or alumni as good citizens	Emphasis on economic impact, links between community and campus centers/institutes	Community connection as central element; fundraising has community service as a focus

There is no intention in the matrix to judge "correctness" or "goodness" regarding an institution's choice of level of commitment. Rather, the intent is solely to provide a framework that may be useful to an institution in comparing where it ideally seeks to be positioned on the matrix and its assessment of its current location, all in the service of coherent institutional planning and decision-making.

*Level One: Low Relevance.* "We would provide service to the community, if we had additional time and resources, but it is not specifically encouraged or rewarded". Service is not integral to institutions at this level; they most often place higher priority on specific and unique instructional environments or on research. Service for faculty and administration involves participation on campus committees or in disciplinary societies. Students experience service through self-selected extracurricular club-based activities not linked to other university goals.

*Level Two: Medium Relevant.* "We encourage faculty, students, and staff to be volunteer's in their local communities because to do so is good for society at large and is 'consistent with the actions of an educated person." This philosophy is common among institutions who view community service as evidence of good institutional citizenship and an ingredient in good community and public relations. Such institutions may have organized units that promote and organize extracurricular community service activities for students, and sometimes for faculty and staff as well. Faculty pro bono work with community organizations may be acknowledged when there is a benefit to the institution, but most faculty service is campus or discipline-based. The campus invites community participation on advisory groups. Service-learning may occur in scattered courses based on the self-motivation of faculty.

*Level Three: High Relevance.* "Our mission sees the community as a laboratory for research and teaching purposes. We have expertise that can help solve community issues, and we can help

study community problems. Our students spend time in community-based learning experiences and, in some cases, required service projects." This approach might be called an outreach, one-way, or expert model of community-university interactions and service activities. This level features the support of service and service-learning through highly traditional and familiar scholarly roles that are compatible with traditional evaluation mechanisms. Service activities are often organized in separate centers or institutes focused on public issues and advised by community partners and community leaders. Student involvement is typically extra- or co-curricular, and often is career-oriented (internships and practica). Service-learning is generally offered as a distinct and separate course or requirement segregated from the rest of the academic experience. Service experiences for students and faculty do not often overlap.

*Level Four: Full Integration.* "We ask the community to be our partner in setting and conducting our scholarly service agenda. We invest in service-learning within the curricular experience of students, and have support and reward structures for faculty and students who engage in community-university partnerships.", This level represents institutions that take an interactive and interdependent relationship with the community as a defining characteristic of the overall academic mission. Community service and service-learning are deliberately supported and promoted as relevant to some aspect of virtually every person's academic experience. In most cases, service is integrated with many teaching and research activities for faculty and students. There is a specific strategy for recognizing and rewarding service-based scholarship of faculty and students, and a deliberate strategy for supporting service-learning as an integral component of the curriculum for most or all students. This level is especially distinguished by the influential role given to the community in guiding and evaluating community-university interactions that are meant to be mutually beneficial - a clear move away from the 'expert' model of outreach

### **Organizational Factors Across the Levels**

Seven factors evolved from the case study research as keys to interpretation of institutional actions across the levels of commitment. Any effort to implement or evaluate service-related activities was shown to have impacts on these factors. The matrix may be useful at an institutional, unit, or individual level for setting goals, monitoring progress and matching actions to vision of commitment. Each of the seven factors is discussed briefly in order to describe the factor and identify examples or characteristics that differentiate the factor at each level of commitment.

#### *Mission*

Missions generally consist of some combination of the same three elements that describe the work of faculty or the practice of scholarship: teaching, research and service (Lee, 1968). There is general agreement on the pattern of evolution that has created the common and general mission types of higher education institutions that are often used to broadly categorize institutions, primarily by their attention to teaching and/or research (land grant, small liberal arts, regional comprehensive, etc.). These generic types of mission statements often are linked to an institution's Carnegie Classification. Increasingly, as was discussed in the introduction, institutions are being encouraged to articulate more specific missions that provide detailed



portrayals of each campus' interpretation of and vision for its scholarly priorities, including for the role of service.

Service has traditionally been mentioned in almost every institution's mission statement, but rarely is it defined or explained to internal or external audiences. It is only recently that the role of service as a potentially distinguishing characteristic has taken on greater national visibility, inspiring some institutions to try, to define service more specifically. The, national conversation on the nature of faculty scholarship, as framed by Boyer's work (1990), has compelled many institutions to be more specific about the role of service.

Cases in this study that demonstrated broad acceptance and understanding of a particular interpretation of service were uniformly characterized by a general campus agreement on the relationship of service to the institutional mission. Many of the problematic issues experienced at institutions striving to implement and sustain service-learning were linked to real or perceived mis-alignment of the campus mission and institutional actions regarding service. Such mis-alignments, were shown to result in institutional confusion and anxiety regarding the role of service, and to inhibit campus development of service-learning courses and activities. The most common cause of mis-alignment was the absence of any discussion, much less agreement, on the meaning of service as a component of the overall mission. Faculty, students, or administrators who were trying to implement service-learning without the supportive context of a clear mission reported this as a major obstacle. In the absence of agreement on mission, these cases showed wide variations across levels of commitment on all factors in the matrix, and interviewees reported frustration with inconsistent institutional actions and policies.

"Campuses with the most success in achieving their plans are those in which the plan is congruent with a broadly understood and accepted mission, and is articulated in the language of the campus" (Campus Compact, 1996, p. 6). "Demonstrating the link between service-learning and an institution's definition of its mission may be the most critical variable for institutionalizing service-learning" (Hudson & Trudeau, 1995). These statements would be true no matter what level of commitment to service was seen as compatible with and appropriate to a particular institutional mission. Whether the commitment within the mission is at Level One or Level Four or some combination, sustained effort and institutionalization was found to be dependent on a clear and broad agreement of the role of service as a component of that mission.

For the factor of institutional mission, the four levels of commitment reflect four different views of the role of service as increasingly relevant and central to the institution's view of its academic mission and responsibility. Each level is legitimate and appropriate when placed in the context of compatible institutional objectives and, there are many institutional examples of each level. Much of the rest of the matrix is, to a great degree, a measure of an institution's realization of the level of. commitment to service as defined in their mission.

### *Promotion, Tenure and Hiring*

The interpretation of faculty scholarship defines the fundamental character of higher education institutions and the choices each makes regarding teaching, research and service (Holland, 1995). The most common factor cited by the case study institutions as critical to expansion of

service-learning was a faculty reward system seen by faculty as compatible and consistent with the institutional expectation for involvement in service. In the matrix, Levels One and Two represented fairly traditional views of service as primarily matters of campus and disciplinary committees with some credit given at Level Two for volunteerism, especially if beneficial to the discipline or the institution in terms of visibility and recognition (such as doing an economic impact analysis for a new community airport that would also serve the university's own developmental interests). Institutions seeking to operate consistently across all factors at a Level One or Two were generally satisfied with existing reward systems.

At Levels Three and Four some cases illustrated the possibility of contradictions between the presence of a formal policy supporting the defined role of service and the actual level of implementation. In other words, institutional policies meant to support service were not necessarily operationalized. The matrix was developed to gather information that would highlight discrepancies between policy and practice. In evaluating this factor, a campus using this matrix should consider specific evidence that reward policies that support service are fully implemented. In the case studies for this research, only a few institutions had attained Level Three, but many expressed the goal of implementing reward policies for service that would reflect a Level Three or Four commitment. Faculty and administrators at these institutions expressed interest in models of successful reform of faculty reward systems.

Across all levels, community members tend to place importance on the promotion, tenure, and merit pay of their faculty partners as a reflection of the institutions' overall commitment to service. Community partners demonstrated *high* attentiveness to the institutional support and recognition given to faculty.

### *Organization Structure*

Campus responses to the logistical and policy demands of service and service-learning reflect a great deal about level of commitment and capacity to sustain that commitment. Clearly, the case studies revealed that creation of a campus unit, such as a service-learning center, to provide leadership and assistance was seen as a powerful force necessary to a sustained or expanded effort. However, the scope of duties in such an operation was a critical and delicate balance between support and control. A center that provides logistical support (training, transportation, recruitment, scheduling, evaluation) was seen as a facilitating factor in institutionalizing service-learning. Centers that were viewed as involved in the actual creation and management of community-university partnership activities and projects were often seen as fully responsible for sustaining institutional service efforts and, in some cases, were judged to inhibit the interest of others on campus ("they do service in that center, so I don't have to think about service in my work.").

Because the creation of a support unit involves the dedication of real resources toward the support of service-learning, the scope and scale of these units were often a reflection of campus intentions for levels of faculty, student and community participation. Among the case study institutions, the presence of a campus-wide unit supporting service-learning was cited as a facilitating factor in that it not only provided practical assistance, but also raised visibility, offered the legitimacy conferred by a formal unit, and offered a venue for building

interdisciplinary Partnerships across departments. These units were often the vehicle for maintaining the, interpretation of the mission and extending support to faculty, including programs of faculty development and recognition.

Level One was universally relevant to all institutions in the study. Levels Two to Four were found to be cumulative at some institutions. In other words, many cases had centers for student volunteerism, special service centers or public institutes, and other supportive infrastructure. At most institutions, the distinction between Level Three and Four would be seen as a difference between discipline or subject-based service centers controlled by a dean or department, and institution-wide comprehensive support centers that were meant to foster collaborative activity and serve all faculty and students. Operating in a decentralized or centralized mode was not a defining characteristic when evaluating institutional commitment to service-learning; it was a reflection of organizational culture and approach. Much more important was the scope of responsibilities of an infrastructure unit meant - to promote and -sustain commitment to service, and the perception of its accessibility and flexibility for faculty and students engaging in service-related activities.

### *Student Involvement*

Perhaps the greatest variation among forms of institutional commitment to service was the degree to which service as a component of institutional mission was understood to be specifically connected to aspects of the student experience in or out of the classroom. The case studies included institutions that were operating deliberately, successfully, and with sustained commitment at each level of student involvement. Other cases were less focused or consistent because they had not truly defined the role of service in student life as a specific reflection of their mission; this seemed to contribute to tentativeness and confusion among faculty and students. Most troubling were institutions that were claiming to operate at a level that, upon further examination, was not to be seen in practice. This often appeared to be the result of a lack of experience with service-learning and a misunderstanding of service-learning practice, while others seemed to be more of a public relations effort to promote the appearance of a 'service--minded' institution without actually adopting the practices of service-learning as a valued component of the student academic program'

Among the case studies, the degree of student involvement in service-learning was easily characterized across the levels of commitment as the -focus moves from club-based service projects through other extra- and co-curricular activities, eventually evolving into course-based service-learning. The four levels may be found separately or cumulatively. For example, an institution operating at Level Four was very likely to have substantial activities that represent Levels One to Three as well. The majority of cases operated between Level Three and Four, depending on the degree of integration into the curriculum. Most institutions at Level Two quickly moved to Level Three or Four because of student response to the valued outcomes of community service and the pressure for more service-learning experiences.

### *Faculty Involvement*

This factor offers a more individualized interpretation of faculty work than the broad view of the factor on promotion, tenure and hiring. The factor on rewards focused on a faculty-wide view of how service is defined, promoted, evaluated and rewarded within the official recognition system. This factor on faculty involvement is focused on the individual behaviors and time choices made by faculty as a reflection of their personal adoption of service as a component of their professional work. To what extent do individual faculty engage in certain types of service-related activities and how do they explain their choices and priorities?

The scale of commitment across the four levels reflects a pattern of movement from traditional forms of individual scholarly agendas toward more interdisciplinary and collaborative work with other faculty, students and/or community partners, etc. Each level represents a growing link of the faculty member's professional work to community issues and to others who have similar interests and concerns. The adoption of a Level Four commitment to collaboration on a scholarly agenda was found to be characteristic of many, but not all, faculty at institutions with a strong Level Four mission-based commitment to service and service-learning. In fact, the interplay of the factors on mission, rewards, and faculty involvement revealed that no institution, regardless of level of commitment to service, expected all faculty members to reflect the institution's service mission. Rather, each institution's academic aim was to identify the role of service in the mission and then build the organizational context to support the participation of a critical mass of faculty to fulfill that role for the institution. Service was viewed as a component of a larger or expanded view of the campus mission that must be met along with other scholarly roles. This seemed to represent a broader view of scholarship rather than a displacement of one scholarly priority for another (Boyer, 1990).

Another way of looking at faculty involvement is to assess the degree to which scholarly roles of teaching, research and service remain distinct or are blended and integrated. Lynton effectively explores the ways in which involvement in service as a scholarly activity can be planned, supported and evaluated (1995). Attainment of Level Four in service-learning requires faculty to understand the relationship of the scholarship of service-learning to the rest of their teaching and research agenda. The relationship between the factors on student and faculty involvement is a key indicator of the depth of institutional commitment to service. While pockets of service-learning occur at almost all institutions in fields where service-learning activity is logical or essential to the subject area (social work, for example), the extension of service-learning into a broad array of courses and majors signals a deeper and wider engagement of the institution's faculty and students in service as appropriate and important academic work for that mission.

### *Community Involvement*

Just as most models for assessing service-learning rarely attend to impacts on community-partners and participants, the level of deliberate thought given to the role of community in service-related activities was a telling factor in identifying the level of institutional commitment to service. The levels on the matrix are distinguished by the level of influence the community has on the behavior of the institution and the level of access the community has to the intellectual resources of the institution. For example, many institutions had community members serve on advisory boards, but there was wide variance in the role and the attention given to such

boards. At Level One, the community's role on a board was mostly symbolic or social. As the level of commitment to the role of service became more central to the mission, the community participation in the campus became more complex and more of a shared activity between the college and the community.

The cases where institutionalization of service-learning was problematic often had narrow or limited relationships with community partners relative to the apparent level of institutional interest in service involvement. For example, some cases revealed that good intentions to implement service-learning were inhibited because faculty tended to rely on the one-way or expert model for managing community interactions, thus limiting the input of community partners. A disconnect between the desired level of commitment to service and the particular level of community involvement poses a serious threat to a sustained institutional effort because community partners are constantly alert to the fit between institutional rhetoric and actual performance. Institutions operating or hoping to operate at Level Four expressed the view that partnerships must truly be of demonstrable mutual benefit, and that partnerships must give the community shared responsibility.

Again, there is no judgment of good or bad across these levels; however, it is important to the institutionalization process that the level of community involvement be as purposefully considered, selected and nurtured as is done for faculty and student involvement.

### *Campus Publications*

For each of the 23 case studies, official campus materials were examined as possible measures of level of institutional commitment. The presence or absence of the topic of service and service-learning were often a revealing component of catalogs, strategic plans, recruitment materials, annual reports, alumni publications, newsletters, and even budgets. Institutions that developed a match between commitment to service and the operationalization of service sometimes realized benefits of improved community relations, public relations, and external support. These benefits were often unexpected and are reflected with enthusiasm in campus publications. Institutions operating with authentic success at Levels Three and Four usually were distinguished from institutions that were only claiming to have a high level of commitment to service by the specificity and the breadth of service-learning examples offered in published materials. This is not a completely reliable factor in that not all institutions tell their service stories effectively, but it can be used as a check for consistency and evidence in many cases.

### **Discussion**

The case studies conducted for this research demonstrate that to some extent all institutions exhibit traits of all these levels because of differences among individual and departmental goals, attitudes, and practices. However, the matrix was found to be useful in characterizing the overall commitment to service in each case study, and to identifying potential facilitators and obstacles to sustained or expanded engagement in service and service-learning.

The matrix also was helpful in interpreting the meaning of data in that it tended to highlight disconnects between expressed goals and actual institutional performance. Some cases revealed

institutional inconsistency, in which service was claimed to be valued in the rhetoric of the mission and publications, but an examination of the rewards, organization structure, and faculty, student and community involvement showed uneven commitment, support or participation. Where these disconnects occurred, high variability across the matrix levels illustrated internal confusion over the role and importance of service-learning. In most cases where the institution was operating at Level One or Two, the contradiction between intentions and accomplishments could be attributed to competing views of the institutional mission. These factors were frequently cited by campus subjects as major obstacles to institutionalization because in the absence of a widely-held view of service in the mission, it was difficult to make organizational choices about the factors shown in the matrix. Institutions seen as operating at Levels Three or Four seemed to have attained consensus on the role of service in the mission, and tended to attribute gaps between organizational goals and conditions to factors of promotion, tenure and hiring, or of organizational structure. These findings suggest ways the matrix, may help institutions identify areas where further work is needed in order to realize and sustain their vision for service.

The matrix also helped distinguish cases of organizational incongruity from cases where institutions, were still in. developmental phases. In other words, where there was a difference between stated institutional goals and actual institutional behavior as shown on the matrix levels, it was possible to distinguish between cases where the difference was an incongruity based on false claims, disagreement, or inaccurate self- assessment, and cases where the difference reflected developmental stages of a work-in-progress. Without exception, institutions that showed the greatest progress toward institutionalization (at whatever level selected) could demonstrate a coherent and shared understanding of the role of service in the institutional mission and could articulate the impact of the mission on the other factors shown in the matrix. In addition, these institutions usually exhibited an internally consistent view of their current level of performance and the strategies needed to fulfill their goals.

Institutions struggling with implementation and institutionalization often felt they had reached a plateau and could not move beyond it. Service-learning was believed to exist and/or persist at most of these institutions because of the strong advocacy of one or more faculty. "Jane inspired the three of us to do service-learning, but it won't be adopted by others unless something changes" (the something is variably described as an issue of rewards, organizational support, or curricular issues). Whether or not service-learning expands or is sustained beyond the work of those individual advocates can be predicted to some degree by assessment of other factors in the matrix, such as the creation of reward strategies, the presence of institutional support units for service-learning, or formal integration of service-learning into required courses.

Frequently this research study helped campus participants see their organizational disconnects more clearly than before, and to imagine possible strategies for change. The matrix, as the framework for case studies, is an effective strategy for gathering data that can assist both the researcher and the institution develop more specific descriptions and interpretations of the appropriate level of service activity for the respective mission, and the strategic points where action is required to achieve success in implementation

The case studies revealed that commitments to service-learning at Levels Three and Four were most likely to occur most quickly among institutions with a religious affiliation. In those settings, administrators, faculty and students commonly said that they had self-selected to be at an institution 'Where it was understood', that service is a valued academic role. In addition, many of these institutions had natural and extensive relationships with other religious-based community organizations as service partners (retirement homes, homeless shelters, youth programs etc.). However, these faculty often expected more logistical support for service-learning from their institutions, than did faculty at secular institutions and looked for the institution to operate at a high level on the factor of organizational structures. This phenomenon was attributed to the faculty perspective that their role was to create and sustain the learning elements of the service-learning experience and that others should be responsible for issues of logistics, orientation, and evaluation.

Secular institutions that demonstrated commitment at Levels Three and Four did so most often on the basis of unique relationships with a community or region where the university-community interdependency was strong and obvious ("we need each other to succeed"), on the design of a unique academic environment and student experience that was seen as offering competitive advantage in recruiting or fund raising, or as a strategy essential to meeting the needs of a unique student population.

Most secular institutions in the case studies were at level two or three based on the personal values and beliefs of a subset of faculty and their students. These subgroups of faculty sometimes organize into formal or informal units, recently identified as "service enclaves" in a study of seven institutions conducted by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE, 1997). These enclaves were seen as having two potential outcomes: become isolated and marginalized, or become a vehicle for disseminating commitment to service across the institution. The probability of realizing either outcome was found to be most strongly connected to the institutional mission and institutional support. This is consistent with the matrix proposed in this article, which may provide a method for assessing the appropriateness of an enclave strategy and the likelihood of its success in meeting institutional goals for service.

Almost all the case study institutions felt they were not yet operating at their desired level, especially with regard to the level of faculty and student involvement. While the cases suggest that institutionalization of the role of service is greatest when an institution operates uniformly on one level, there are exceptions. For example, several cases were found to have the aim of operating at the third or fourth level on, all factors except student involvement because their campus culture did not support, full integration of service-learning into required courses. In addition, there was great variability across the cases in the selection of organizational strategies for changing or moving across the levels of performance as needed to fully realize their goals. More research is needed to explicate the relationship between organizational change strategies and levels of commitment.

### **Summary**

The introduction to this article offered a brief review of research and literature to demonstrate the importance of institutionally distinctive responses to the role of service as a variable priority

of higher education institutions, and the need for a method to assist institutions and others in interpreting and characterizing those responses. The data from 23 institutional case studies were used to propose a matrix that may be useful for faculty and administrators interested in exploring and clarifying the specific dimensions and levels of service, and to capture the patterns of institutional effort in ways that can assist in planning, evaluation, dissemination, and institutionalization. As an illustration of the relationship between key organizational factors and institutional actions regarding the role of service, the matrix is a diagnostic tool for identifying levels of institutional commitment and evaluating the effects of different approaches to organizing and supporting service and service-learning within the framework of a specific campus mission.

Campus teams engaged in strategic planning or mission review may find the matrix a useful framework for staff and student inclinations toward service. For institutions with more experience with a specific vision for the role of service, the matrix can serve as an ongoing check of progress made toward the vision and can assist in helping illustrate to the campus and community the interrelationships among key organizational factors influencing individual and collective commitment to service and service-learning. At a minimum, the matrix is a reminder of the organizational elements that must be purposefully addressed, regardless of the desired level of commitment articulated by the campus mission.

The matrix is not prescriptive; rather it portrays the pattern of current trends of organizational choices made across a wide and diverse array of universities and colleges. In conducting the case studies, an important lesson was that the relationship of, each institution to its community (however it chooses to define community) will have unique elements that reflect the expectations, limitations and opportunities presented by history, economy, culture, geography, and even the weather!

Without further research, the relationship, if any, among the levels of commitment to service is not clear, especially when one considers that movement could be in any direction on the matrix. These levels may be necessary stages through which developing institutions must or tend to pass as they develop greater experience with service, independent levels that are intentionally or accidentally chosen by institutions, or some combination of both. Based on the case studies behind the matrix, the factors that seem most likely to be associated with movement across levels include unit and campus leadership; financial resources including internal allocations, external funding, and incentives; internal and external expectations and demands (governing bodies, legislatures, community interest groups, local crises); community history and goals; and institutional motivations (service-learning as social learning, as a tool for community relations, and/or as student career development and exploration, for example).

The next phase of research and analysis of this model will include exploration of possible explanatory factors related to movement across the continuum, and linkages between organizational change strategies and movement across levels, in addition to further work on features of distinctive institutional missions and their impacts on service learning commitments.

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