

Campus Engage: A Note On Developments*

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Context

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* endorsed the renewal of the civic mission of higher education and asserts that 'engaging with the wider society is one of the three interconnected core roles of higher education' (2011, p77). Campus Engage is a platform for the promotion of civic engagement activities in Irish higher education (<http://www.campusengage.ie>)

It is an initiative funded by the Irish government, through the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Campus Engage partners include all major Institutes of Higher Education in Ireland. The network aims to strengthen the relationship between higher education and the wider society, through promoting civic engagement activities in higher education in Ireland and facilitating the sharing of knowledge and resources between academic and civic communities. It will support the development of activities such as: service learning / community based learning, student volunteering, knowledge sharing and research, in order to increase the number of courses, activities and levels of participation in these areas across Irish higher education.

* URL: <http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/129>

In December 2012, Campus Engage was awarded further funding to support 'bottom up' engagement activities and the work piloted by the 2007 SIF 1 Proposal 'Civic Engagement, Student Volunteering and Active Citizenship' led by NUI Galway. This next phase of Campus Engage is being hosted by the Irish University Association (IUA) and the work is being led by a National Coordinator appointed in June 2013.

Project Overview

Campus Engage was conceived in 2007 following the award of €700,000 direct funding from the HEA SIF 1 and €700,000 indirect from NUI Galway (lead partner), DCU, UCD, UL and NUI Maynooth. The project set out to; "Widen the scope of such activity [civic engagement within higher education] to ensure that Ireland plays a leading role in the promotion of active citizenship in Europe through the development of social and civic "competencies" as a key element of the student experience." (See Appendix 2 for the original proposal entitled 'Civic Engagement, Student Volunteering and Active Citizenship').

The core objectives were to:

- Commission a comprehensive national review of volunteering, service learning and community research leading to recommendations for long term, sustainable development;
- Increase the scale of student participation and volunteering opportunities in all partner institutions through the development of appropriate models based on experience and evaluation;
- Establish a formal *National Network* to support such activities across the sector, providing training materials and organizing events (including a major conference on Civic Engagement & Active Citizenship).

Between 2007 and 2010 Campus Engage worked with 350 staff from 33 higher education institutions in Ireland and 30 community organisations; 40 best practice case studies were gathered and housed on the Campus Engage website; 12 higher education institutions hosted

Campus Engage seminars led by national and international experts; 16 civic engagement projects were seed funded and presented in a best practice guide available online; and over 60 academic staff were formally trained in civic engagement as part of a post graduate diploma module in learning and teaching for civic engagement.

Next steps

In 2012, steps were taken to broaden the institutional base of Campus Engage moving from an initial start-up institutional phase of five universities to a national project with representatives from across the higher education sector in Ireland and hosted by the Irish University Association (IUA). This new all-inclusive model was ratified at a national conference held at The Helix in December 2012 for the next phase of Campus Engage. This work is guided by a new Steering Committee with representation from 14 HEIs with an interest in developing a national hub to promote and embed civic engagement.

Working Groups

Following an intense process of review and consultation across the sector in 2012, it was agreed that Campus Engage would establish four Working Groups that will be jointly convened and championed by two higher education institutions. The Working Groups will address the areas of activity highlighted by HEA as fundamental to the second phase of civic engagement development such as the development of a national volunteer management system; a register of civic engagement activities; promotion of service learning, community based learning and volunteering, re-development of the Campus Engage website to service as a virtual repository of national resources for national and international audiences. The Special Interest Group convenors will sit on the Steering Committee thus ensuring that devolution of activities is matched by coordination of same.

The Working Groups comprise:

- Community Based Learning
- Community Based Research
- Volunteering
- Student Engagement

National Co-ordinator

In June 2013, Campus Engage appointed a National Coordinator to lead and support the development of civic and community engagement in Ireland. The Coordinator will be based in Dublin at the IUA office. It is anticipated that between 2013 and 2015 a body of seminars and activities will be undertaken to promote and grow community university engagement activities so as to buttress the National Review for Higher Education. All those interested in sharing work, learning more or becoming involved should get in touch with the National Coordinator.

For further information please contact:

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