

Measured Progress, Meaningful Results

Developing Metrics for Town & Gown Relations



An ITGA capstone project by Shane D. Farver

Background

In October of 2013, Weber State University and the city of Ogden, Utah, took a historic step toward furthering town-and-gown relations with the signing of their College Town Charter, which outlined three joint committees (executive, steering and marketing) and developed a framework for collaboration between the two entities.

That charter also articulated a vision statement for a town-and-gown relationship:

Our community is known as a unique and vibrant place where Ogden City and Weber State University mutually pursue economic, educational, recreational, social and cultural initiatives.

After signing the charter, the city and university embarked upon various joint efforts such as a community-wide recognition of the university's 125th anniversary in January 2014, a student discount program aimed at area businesses, and the joint celebration of Weber State Downtown's grand opening. Weber State Downtown features a business incubator, a campus store and community classes.

With momentum building for greater town-and-gown involvement, Weber State President Charles A. Wight and others advised that a series of metrics be developed in order to measure the success of joint efforts between the city and university.

Linden, Michigan Mayor David E. Lossing, who also serves as director of government relations for the University of Michigan-Flint, listed "measurable outcomes" as one of five critical factors in community/university partnerships. By developing metrics, Ogden City and Weber State University can better articulate common goals and measure the progress toward those goals.

College Town committee members have identified three areas of the relationship between WSU and Ogden, which stem from the vision statement, which can be measured:

1. Educational
2. Recreational, Social, and Cultural
3. Economic

Project Description

This ITGA capstone project has started the process of developing a series of metrics dedicated to measuring growth and success in educational; recreational, social and cultural; and economic areas.

I have established baselines for some metrics. Other proposed metrics, however, do not have enough data to establish baselines. I have spoken with university administration, city government representatives and other stakeholders such as the WSU Center for Community Engaged Learning and WSU Performing Arts in order to establish meaningful metrics.

I plan to present draft metrics to Executive Committee members and eventually produce final metrics that will be used in measuring the success of myriad college-

town efforts. Following that Executive Committee meeting, the college town committee members will set reasonable, yet ambitious goals to work toward that pertain to each metric.

Area 1: Educational Metrics

The educational goals of Weber State University and Ogden City can be divided into two areas: college participation and community engaged learning. Suggested metrics have been developed for those areas. Metrics for another suggested area, internships, cannot currently be developed because the internship program for Weber State University is not yet centralized enough to gather meaningful, reliable data.

College Participation Metrics

In the area of college participation, metrics will measure how many Ogden-area high school graduates enroll in Weber State University the first year after high school, how many WSU students are from Ogden, and how many Ogden residents graduate from WSU.

Metric 1: Ogden-area high school graduates enrolled in WSU after the first year of graduating high school (five-year average)

Justification: Weber State serves Weber, Davis and Morgan counties primarily, with its largest campus located in Ogden. Two of WSU's three core themes, access and community, relate directly to adequately serving the immediate surrounding area. Determining how many Ogden-area high school graduates go on to Weber State University is a key metric in determining if WSU must expand outreach efforts to the Ogden community.

***Baseline:** According to a Weber State Market Share report on area high schools (Ogden High and Ben Lomond), a five-year average shows that 32.37% of Ogden District high school graduates enroll at WSU within one year of graduating high school.

*A recent change in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints minimum age for serving church missions could negatively affect this number.

Metric 2: Number of WSU students from Ogden

Justification: In a related but separate metric from Metric 1, Weber State serves Weber, Davis and Morgan counties primarily, with its largest campus located in Ogden. Two of WSU's three core themes, access and community, relate directly to adequately serving the immediate surrounding area. Determining how many Ogden-

area residents attend Weber State University is a key metric in determining if WSU must expand outreach efforts to the Ogden community.

Baseline: According to census data, as of fall 2013, 4,847 WSU students (19 percent of the total student population) came from Ogden.

Metric 3: Number of WSU graduates from Ogden:

Justification: The number of Weber State University graduates from Ogden measures not how many Ogden students enter college, but how many from the area finish college. This measurement is also tied to economic vitality of the region, since family orientation influences many Utahns to remain in their home state.

Baseline: Weber State data indicate that 4,435 of the 20,952 WSU graduates from 2009 to 2013 (21 percent of student population) were from Ogden.

Community-Engaged Learning Metrics

Through Weber State's Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL), students, faculty and staff continually reach out to improve the community. CCEL's active involvement in the community has resulted in Weber State receiving the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement. Metrics associated with community engagement will measure the health of Weber State's service efforts.

Metric 1: Percentage of WSU students engaged in service learning

Justification: The percentage of Weber State University students engaged in service learning details the level of outreach the surrounding community receives from the university. Many service projects, such as WSU Makes a Difference in Ogden Day, take place within Ogden's boundaries and benefit the city's residents.

Baseline: In the 2013-2014 academic year, 6,396 students, or 25.4 percent of the student population, engaged in community service.

Metric 2: Percentage of WSU engaged students who say they'll continue to be involved in community service

Justification: While undeniably self-reported data that does not measure actual continual involvement, the percentage of WSU students who report that they will remain involved in service once their official university service ends does measure attitude and possible intent.

Baseline: Seventy-six percent of community-engaged students report that, because of their WSU engagement, they will continue to be involved.

Metric 3: Number of WSU professors who teach courses with a community engaged learning component

Justification: The number of WSU professors who teach courses with a recognized community engaged learning component indirectly measures student participation and directly measures faculty's desire to instill community engagement as a component of education.

Baseline: In the 2013-2014 academic year, 71 professors taught 83 community engaged learning courses.

Area 2: Recreational, Social and Cultural Metrics

Weber State University is a major provider of social and recreational opportunities for the Ogden area. Whether it's through sporting events or the performing arts, WSU offers a variety of activities for the community to participate in. What's more, WSU plays and activities are sometimes held off campus, another example of the university reaching out beyond its borders and into the community at large. Performing Arts brings faculty-led and student-run performances to the campus and community. The Office of Cultural Affairs brings in outside acts to campus and to venues in downtown Ogden.

Further, Weber State University's Browning Center serves as the largest venue north of Salt Lake City for musical and theatrical performances.

The university also plays a part in fostering cultural connections and preserving culture for the Ogden area. Metrics in this category will focus upon measuring how well Weber State provides social and cultural opportunities to Ogden, as well as determining how WSU fosters cultural connections.

Event Participation Metrics

While its primary interaction with the community at large is academic in nature, Weber State University also serves as a cultural and entertainment hub for the region, showcasing student and faculty performers as well as bringing in national acts. The extent to which community members interact with Weber State University during entertainment or cultural events is indicative of the strength of the college town relationship.

Metric 1: Community attendance at WSU sporting events

Justification: Sports teams often draw emotional connections between the university and city, with fans and alumni having deep affiliations with the university through attendance of WSU basketball, football and other games. Robust attendance at sporting events is indirectly affiliated to strong ties with the university overall.

Baseline: I have yet to determine a baseline for this metric.

Metric 2: Community attendance at annual National Undergraduate Literature Conference

Justification: The National Undergraduate Literature Conference (NULC), which will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2015, is among the most impactful events that Weber State hosts. Local and national storytellers converge upon Weber State University and the community at large for several days, and an estimated 200 undergraduate writers and poets come to campus to share stories and learn. This is not only a great opportunity for community members, it increases the visibility of Weber State and Ogden.

Baseline: Due to a lack of previous records, a baseline cannot yet be established for attendance at NULC. However, attendance, along with reported zip codes of attendees, will soon be kept and will make a baseline possible.

Metric 3: Community Attendance at Weber State Performing Arts Events

Justification: In order to effectively gauge public interest in Weber State-hosted events and whether those events are meeting the needs of the public at large, attendance at Weber State-hosted events should be measured. Because the missions of Cultural Affairs and WSU Performing Arts differ, measurement of events should be split between Cultural Affairs- and Performing Arts-hosted events.

Baseline: Again, because previous attendance records have not been kept, a baseline cannot be established at this time, but it will be in the future. Recording the city that attendees come from will also be possible.

Metric 4: Total Community Attendance at major Weber State Art Exhibits

Justification: In addition to musical and theatrical events, Weber State brings in nationally recognized artists. Attendance at artistic exhibitions captures another segment of the art appreciation community within Ogden and the surrounding area.

Baseline: Attendance at the 2014 Motoi Yamamoto exhibit "Floating Garden" included 15,000 visits, according to a gallery door counter.

Metric 5: Attendance at Arts in the Park and Science in the Park Programs

Justification: Weber State University is more than just a provider of cultural and artistic events. It also seeks to instill a love of the arts in children. WSU's Arts in the Park program exposes Ogden children to storytelling, music and dance, theatre and visual arts during events throughout the week. Likewise, Science in the Park exposes children to the sciences. Measuring attendance at these events, while not speaking to actual development of interest in the arts and sciences, does measure Weber State's success in attempting to foster that.

Baseline: In 2012, the total number of participants for Arts in the Park was 6,372. The total number of participants for Science in the Park was 6,953. It should be noted that children in the program might visit multiple times each week. Thus, the total attendance for the program should not be counted as total children, but total visits.

Metric 6: Number of Weber State arts events that occur off campus

Justification: The amount of arts-associated events that Weber State hosts off campus and in the community is indicative of the university's overall efforts to be a part of the community in which it resides. Measuring the amount of off-campus cultural and arts events hosted by the university signifies the level of interaction with the community at large.

Baseline: A baseline is not currently established. However, a review of the yearly events calendar could provide the necessary information for establishing a baseline.

Area 3: Economic Metrics

Weber State prides itself as an economic driver for its students and its community. As one of the primary economic forces in the region, the university has the duty to provide economic opportunities for graduates and community members alike. The areas in which WSU serves as an economic partner for Ogden city revolve around four areas: earning potential, community partnerships, student discounts and scholarships.

Earning Potential Metrics

The ability to lift graduates out of their current economic class is one of Weber State University's chief objectives. With 19 percent of Weber State University students coming from within Ogden city limits, the ability of Weber State to measure the economic uplift that occurs because of obtaining a WSU degree will also inform the ability for Ogden citizens to rise above their current economic station.

Metric 1: WSU Return on Investment

Justification: Return on Investment — the average extra amount Weber State University graduates make over their lifetime because they obtain a degree minus the cost of a WSU education — shows a direct, tangible economic benefit to obtaining a degree.

Baseline: According to PayScale, a salary data collection and comparison website, WSU was the No. 1 public university in Utah for ROI, a 20-year net ROI of \$381,300, in 2014. The annual report's methodology can be found here:
<http://www.payscale.com/college-roi/c/methodology>

Metric 2: Average Starting Salary for a WSU Graduate

Justification: While ROI measures the long-term economic benefit of obtaining a Weber State University degree, average starting salary measures the immediate benefit to a WSU graduate who enters the workforce.

Baseline: According to Affordable Colleges Online (ACO), WSU has an average starting salary of above \$40,000. WSU was ranked 17th in the nation for low cost and high starting salary, ACO's 2013 analysis stated.

Partnership Metrics

Weber State University and businesses and nonprofits within the community share a rich history of partnerships, some of which have spanned decades. Metrics that measure those partnerships will determine the amount Ogden partnerships overall, the number of long-term partnerships that Weber State University has with Ogden entities and also produce some qualitative data that indicate the efficacy of those partnerships.

Metric 1: Amount of Overall Partnerships

Justification: The number of overall partnerships offers yet another measure of the community connectedness of the university that goes beyond the level of interactions with government entities. In addition, it shows a direct connection between the economic and other goals of community partners.

Baseline: According to the Center for Community Engaged Learning, Weber State University has 132 identified community partners. It is not known at this time how many of those partnerships are from Ogden.

Metric 2: Amount of Long-Term Partnerships

Justification: While overall partnerships indicate the connections to multiple community entities, the amount of long-term partnerships (a decade or more), speaks to the longevity of those connections.

Baseline: Due to data still being sorted, a baseline for this metric cannot be established.

Metric 3: Partner Feedback

Justification: The number of partnerships only tells a small portion of the story surrounding the value of those partnerships. Every year, the Center for Community Engaged Learning sends a survey to WSU's community partners. While qualitative in nature, and thus more difficult to measure, the feedback does add nuance by adding the perspective of community partners themselves.

Baseline: Given the qualitative nature of the data, coding responses as positive or negative could be an appropriate way to count responses. A baseline cannot be established currently, however.

Scholarships

Access, along with learning and community, is one of Weber State University's three core themes. In order to provide proper access to prospective students in the Ogden area and beyond, Weber State must offer need-based and academic scholarships and facilitate financial aid. WSU's ability to offer such scholarships is also dependent upon the generosity of donors.

Metric 1: Amount of scholarship and financial aid dollars distributed by Weber State University

Justification: The scholarships and financial aid awarded by Weber State University have a direct relationship to the institution's ability to meet the educational needs of the region. Many Ogden-area residents are in need of assistance in order to attend college.

Baseline: WSU provided more than \$95.5 million in scholarships and financial aid to more than 13,700 students as of July 1, 2014

Metric 2: Number of Ogden-area residents who provide scholarship funds to Weber State University

Justification: The number of Ogden-area residents who contribute scholarships to the university provides a sense of the level of support the residents not only give to the university, but to other Ogdenites who are furthering their education.

Baseline: Determining the number of donors will first require attaining all Ogden-area Zip Codes and then searching donor records with that information. The necessary information has yet to be collected.

Next Steps

Having established several potential metrics for the college town relationship, I will next bring these options before the College Town Executive Committee for presentation and further review. After feedback from steering committee and executive committee members, metrics will be adjusted accordingly. In addition, key stakeholders will be approached again to determine baselines that were previously unavailable.

The primary goal is to establish these metrics before the end of the 2014-2015 academic year, thus enabling the College Town Committee to have baselines

available in order to measure them against progress in each of the defined areas as new data become available.

Once all baselines have been established and discussed, stakeholders associated with each group of metrics can then develop goals for one year, five years and 10 years. Each goal should be ambitious enough to not be easily realized, but realistic enough to encourage working toward the goal.

Metrics should be revisited every five years to determine if they are still relevant, or if new metrics are needed.

Conclusion

As this preliminary project indicates, ample data are available for the development of metrics for Weber State University's college-town relationship with Ogden, and many baseline measurements are already available. With additional input from College Town Committee members, these rough metrics can be further refined and be ready for use. The development of metrics are intended to move the relationship away from the dangers of complacency and toward a constant drive forward to goals.