

# **Civic engagement in higher education: an overview of participating universities**

Summary analysis of background information provided by participants in the international conference on **The Civic Engagement Roles and Responsibilities of Higher Education**, hosted by Tufts University in Talloires, France, September 15-17, 2005

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## Contents

<b>Introduction and summary of findings</b>	<b>14</b>
1.1 Introduction	14
1.2 Summary of findings	15
<b>The meaning of ‘civic engagement’</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Defining civic engagement	21
2.2 How civic engagement is included in the university’s mission	23
2.3 Values underpinning civic engagement	24
<b>The programmatic form of civic engagement</b>	<b>26</b>
3.1 Forms of civic engagement	26
3.2 Relationship with teaching and research	27
3.3 Program content and organization	27
3.4 What shapes this programmatic mix?	30
3.5 Extent of civic engagement	32
3.6 Barriers to civic engagement	36
<b>How programs are funded</b>	<b>40</b>
4.1 Internal funding	40
4.2 Public funding	40
4.3 Partnerships	40
4.4 Donations	41
4.5 Loans	41
<b>The impact of civic engagement programs</b>	<b>42</b>
5.1 On students	42
5.2 On the community	43
5.3 On the institution	44
<b>Future plans</b>	<b>45</b>

<b>The role of networks</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>48</b>

# 1 Introduction and summary of findings

## 1.1 Introduction

In preparation for the conference on **The Civic Engagement Roles and Responsibilities of Higher Education** in Talloires, France, in September 2005, Tufts University conducted a survey of civic engagement among the universities participating in the conference. At the time of writing 25 universities had responded to the survey, and the data they submitted form the basis of this analysis.

The purpose of this effort was to develop a solid foundation for the Talloires Conference, to enhance and accelerate the process of exchange and consultation that will occur at this first gathering on this topic of the heads of universities from around the world. Therefore the survey gathered information about how higher education engagement with society finds expression in institutional policies, activities and programs that shape teaching, research and community outreach. It aimed to develop an understanding of the role of faculty<sup>2</sup> as well as the educational expectations of and for students.

The questionnaire sought three types of information from each institution: the university president's perspective on civic engagement; data about how civic engagement processes and programs function at the university; and an example of civic engagement at each institution.

This overview provides a brief analysis of the following issues that emerge from the survey:

- How civic engagement is defined by the respondents, its relationship with their institutional mission, the values underpinning civic engagement, and the key factors that would advance its development;
- The form and content of civic engagement and how programs are organized and resourced;
- The extent and impact of civic engagement in the responding universities;
- Challenges that these universities face in deepening their involvement in civic engagement; and
- Future plans and the role of networks in helping to strengthen this field.

Responses from the following institutions informed the analysis:

- Aga Khan University, Pakistan
- Ahfad University for Women, Sudan
- Al-Quds University, Palestine
- American University in Cairo, Egypt
- An Giang University, Vietnam
- Autonomous University of Baja California, Mexico
- Birzeit University, Palestine

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that the term 'faculty' applies to academic staff.

- Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
- Catholic University of Temuco, Chile
- Georgetown University, United States of America
- Jimma University, Ethiopia
- Kabul University, Afghanistan
- Makerere University, Uganda
- Methodist University of Piracicaba, Brazil
- Metropolitan University at Caracas, Venezuela
- Notre Dame of Marbel University, Philippines
- Saint-Joseph University, Lebanon
- Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Indonesia
- Tufts University, United States of America
- University for Development Studies, Ghana
- University of Ballarat, Australia
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- University of Havana, Cuba
- University of Texas at El Paso, United States of America
- University of Western Sydney, Australia

These 25 universities are located in 24 countries across five regions: Africa, Asia, Australia, North America and South America. Thirteen of the institutions are public institutions (state-owned) while the remaining 12 are private institutions, 3 being faith-based.

The experiences reflected in this analysis are diverse and rooted in wide-ranging socioeconomic and political circumstances. Consequently the civic engagement programs vary from involving universities in restoring war-torn areas to engaging with the needs of marginalized and poor communities, or strengthening democratic awareness and processes.

Despite each of the universities approaching civic engagement distinctively and facing a diverse set of challenges, the survey results suggest that there is a significant core around which most of the institutions find common ground. This conference presents a starting point for further exploration of the role that higher education institutions can play in contributing to human development through civic engagement.

## **1.2 Summary of findings**

### **The meaning of ‘civic engagement’**

The majority of respondents (21) define civic engagement as referring to a role played by the university in public matters or in social or community development. Descriptions include:

- ‘involvement in the public interest’;

- ‘building a progressive, healthy, educated and empowered community, focusing on community-based projects designed around an integrated framework which aims to alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life of the target beneficiaries’;
- ‘promoting equitable and sustainable socioeconomic transformation of communities’;
- ‘the promotion of democracy through development of citizenship participation and social capital construction’; and
- ‘a series of university-wide initiatives that combine the best policies and practices for students and faculty in an organized manner to collaborate with the community to assist society.’

In defining civic engagement, the responding universities also provide insight into how they see their role. Many see civic engagement as a means by which the university creates responsible citizens, and in the process is committed to fostering democracy and informing public policy. These universities refer to their role in training the leaders of the future and thus having an impact on their society. One university comments on how civic engagement is about researching the areas that are of vital importance to the country and informing government.

The more common definition of civic engagement is centered on the programs and activities that reach out from the universities, whether these are service-learning courses, projects with which the university is affiliated, or the voluntary work of students, faculty and staff. Twenty of the respondents define civic engagement in this way and often use words such as ‘outreach’, ‘community extension’, ‘social development’ and ‘community work’. These terms and definitions tend to describe the ways in which these universities respond to the social, economic, and cultural realities of their communities.

Some institutions define civic engagement as having a strong political purpose, e.g. deepening democracy, promoting human rights, or safeguarding the role of higher education institutions in the promotion of free thought.

The mission statements of the universities reflect their commitment to civic engagement mainly in two ways. Some (9) see civic engagement as a key cornerstone of the mission of the university, and it is explicitly included as one of its three functions — teaching, research, and service or engagement.

A number of universities (6) focus on the development or preparation of individuals in order to create a better community or society. Here the emphasis shifts from actual participation within the development of the community to the development of the individual students who will then be trained as effective and socially responsible leaders of the future.

More than half the respondents cite social or public service responsibility as the dominant value underpinning civic engagement. Other values mentioned include political commitment to freedom, democracy and the struggle against oppression; academic excellence; moral values such as ethics and accountability; equity of access to education and inclusiveness; adherence to religious ethics and teachings; a commitment to social

justice, empowerment and poverty alleviation; and a commitment to supporting socioeconomic development.

### **The programmatic form of civic engagement**

Civic engagement programs in the 25 universities take a range of forms. All the universities incorporate some of the following forms of civic engagement:

- Civic engagement activities feature as a compulsory requirement for degree purposes;
- Civic engagement is part of the curriculum;
- Extracurricular or part-time activities organized by or for students; and
- Engagement forms part of research.

Most of the respondents (21 out of 25) cite community development and poverty alleviation as the focus of their civic engagement activities. This broad field is followed by a focus on specific socioeconomic issues such as health (19), education and training (13), environment (11), entrepreneurship (7), political issues (7), and gender / women's studies (6). Culture, family and social issues, and legal issues are each mentioned by 3 institutions.

The programmatic issues manifest themselves in different ways according to the sociopolitical climate in the country.

Health is the second most important theme mentioned, and it covers both primary health care and environmental health. All universities include health in their programs. Educational programs in the universities based in North America and Australia are concerned mainly with targeting disadvantaged or marginalized communities (Latin American and Aboriginal communities respectively).

In the universities located in Central and South America the emphasis is on 'universalizing university education'. Environmental issues are covered in all regions with the exception of North America. The majority of universities in the Middle East include a focus on religious tolerance in their programs.

Capacity-building activities undertaken by universities for nonstudent constituencies feature strongly in the responses.

As for the location and organization of civic engagement in the responding institutions, 12 universities indicate that they have infrastructure in place to support the participation of faculty and students in civic education, often set up through a combination of internal and donor funding. Fifteen mention that they have set up university-wide centers with the sole purpose of driving civic engagement, and in 12 cases there are units in the different faculties that foster civic engagement (in those disciplines with a tradition of practical or clinical training such as teaching and medicine).

The participating universities are experiencing two types of pressures with regard to their involvement in civic engagement: pressures that encourage civic engagement (including



societal need for appropriate skills and values, internal pressure, government demand for responsiveness), and pressures that discourage the universities from getting involved (including financial constraints, faculty capacity and perception, and political factors).

Those universities citing levels of student participation above 50 percent are also institutions in which civic engagement is either mandatory or forms part of the curriculum.

Service-learning courses attract the highest level of student participation (15 mentions) possibly because here the civic service component is a mandatory and integral part of the course for degree purposes. This is followed by internships (13 mentions), student-organized civic engagement activities (13 mentions) and organized institutional support for civic engagement (12 mentions).

Among the constraints experienced in getting students involved in civic engagement, lack of funding is cited by 20 institutions as being the biggest constraint, mainly because many students have to work to support their studies, and this leaves little time for them to spend on community-related activities. This is especially true if the civic engagement activities are not part of coursework and depend on students having discretionary time.

The next challenge cited most frequently is the gap between community needs and student interest (6 respondents), while 2 institutions cite a lack of student interest as the key challenge.

Overall, the barriers to civic engagement that emerge from the responding universities can be summed up as follows:

- Throughout the sample of 25 universities, across all regions, the barriers are primarily financial.
- This is followed by the absence of supportive national policy for higher education institutions to engage in civic issues.
- The role of higher education institutions in civic engagement is not yet well established in all instances, and even in those universities where the leadership promotes social responsibility as a core value, some faculty are resistant to getting involved in community-related teaching and research. The lack of incentives for faculty to be involved in civic engagement perpetuates this situation.
- A number of universities mention that students face competing demands on their time, mainly because of the need to work to fund their studies, and this impacts negatively on their availability for civic engagement activities.
- The lack of a culture of civic engagement within the academic environment is mentioned as a barrier to civic engagement by just under one third of the respondents.

### **How programs are funded**

A lack of resources for civic engagement remains a challenge for most of the universities. The responses show, however, that the universities find funding for civic engagement projects from various sources (internal sources, public agencies, partnerships, donations

and loans), and this may be an area around which strategies could be further developed in future. In 15 cases the respondents mention that they have established centers to drive civic engagement, using soft funding.

### **The impact of civic engagement programs**

The blending of the universities' academic programs with civic engagement and practical community-based training has generally brought about understanding and reciprocity between universities and the communities in which they engage.

This interactive process has had far-reaching outcomes for the students (attitudinal impacts and opportunities for experiential learning), the institutions (forging long-term university-community partnerships; widening their sphere of research and learning; and facilitating employment, recognition, and funding opportunities for students and faculty) and their respective communities (improvement of social, economic and political conditions).

### **Future plans**

All the universities indicate that they intend continuing the work they are currently doing with regard to civic engagement, and are committed to improving their programs in a number of ways.

The majority of universities seek to expand their current work in this area. This concerns not only the actual programs that are being run, but also includes accessing stable funding for project sustainability, identifying pressing issues that need to be addressed within communities, and making every effort to involve all disciplines in civic engagement. Some universities intend to identify and test new models of civic engagement.

The participating institutions also aim to expand the understanding of civic engagement to include a commitment to enhancing democracy and civic action in the wider society.

A second area of interest mentioned by 10 of the universities is the need to create and maintain good partnerships. This includes expanding partnerships with communities and businesses, as well as with agencies committed to social development. Eight universities communicate the need to integrate civic engagement into the curriculum.

### **The role of networks**

Participating universities are involved in a variety of networks, and many point out the positive role that networks, especially formalized networks, can and do play in supporting civic engagement through various means.

Networks are often seen as a point of contact, enabling those involved in civic engagement to establish partnerships more effectively and encourage collaboration. They

also play a role in meeting interested contacts that may be useful in accessing funding. Very often, these networks are able to provide some funding directly.

Strengthened relationships among universities within geographic regions, and interaction between north and south can be enormously beneficial if they are appropriately structured.

## 2 The meaning of ‘civic engagement’

This section provides an overview of how civic engagement is defined by the respondents, its relationship with their institutional mission, the values underpinning civic engagement, and the key factors that would advance its development.

### 2.1 Defining civic engagement

The questionnaire used in the survey defined civic engagement as

‘a wide range of policies and practices that give expression to the notion of the public purposes of higher education. They include courses of study that involve community-based learning and service-learning, applied action research, engaged and public scholarship, promotion of student community service, and other outreach activities, to name but a few. “Civic engagement” concerns not only teaching and student learning, but also relates to reciprocal learning between the university and its wider community (however that might be defined), and the contribution this makes to scholarship and the development of knowledge.’

In general, the definitions provided by the respondents range from broad statements that encompass a culture of university involvement in the community or in the wider society, to more specific definitions focused on the actual projects in which the universities are involved. One respondent agreed with the definition provided in the survey questionnaire.

The majority (21) define civic engagement in very broad terms, referring to a role played by the university in public matters or in social or community development. Descriptions include:

- ‘involvement in the public interest’;
- ‘building a progressive, healthy, educated and empowered community, focusing on community-based projects designed around an integrated framework which aims to alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life of the target beneficiaries’;
- ‘promoting equitable and sustainable socioeconomic transformation of communities’;
- ‘the promotion of democracy through development of citizenship participation and social capital construction’; and
- ‘a series of university-wide initiatives that combine the best policies and practices for students and faculty in an organized manner to collaborate with the community to assist society.’

A more concrete definition of civic engagement is centered on the programs and activities that reach out from the universities, whether these are service-learning courses, projects with which the university is affiliated, or the voluntary work of students, faculty and staff. Twenty of the respondents defined civic engagement in this way and often use words such as ‘outreach’, ‘community extension’, ‘social development’ and ‘community work’. These terms and definitions tend to describe the ways in which these universities respond to the social, economic, and cultural realities of their communities.

The next most frequent mention (6) is of civic engagement as voluntary work among student clubs and societies, but in only two cases was this the sole form of civic engagement.

In other words, two types of definitions of civic engagement emerge, providing insight into how the responding universities see their role. In the first case the institutions see civic engagement as a means by which the university creates responsible citizens, and in the process is committed to fostering democracy and informing public policy. In this case the focus tends to be individual students at the university and these institutions refer to their role as training the leaders of the future who will then have an impact on their society.

In the second case, the institutions see civic engagement as taking form through programs and activities that engage communities in different ways, and this in turn intended to have impact on the students and faculty at the university. The most intensive manifestation of this type of engagement takes the form of reciprocity (see below), where both the institution and the communities benefit explicitly from the engagement.

It is important to note that the survey did not probe the institutions' definition of the term 'community'. The overall impression is that the universities tend to delineate the community by socioeconomic circumstances (e.g. poor communities) or in geographic terms (e.g. in specific regions of the country concerned), or both. There were no references to communities of interest, for example.

Some institutions define civic engagement as having a strong political purpose, e.g. deepening democracy, promoting human rights, or safeguarding the role of higher education institutions in the promotion of free thought, especially in occupied territories. Other institutions see civic engagement as being one means whereby the institution can support national development. For example, one university commented on how civic engagement is about researching the areas that are of vital importance to the country and informing government.

In a number of cases the term 'civic engagement' is used to describe the university's role in providing access to higher education, and to high-quality provision in particular. This definition includes various strategies for increasing access, such as establishing satellite campuses or providing short courses to members of a particular community (the range includes basic or continuing education; specific training such as in the provision of treatment, e.g. for tuberculosis; and capacity building for local government officials).

Finally, as mentioned above, a number of the definitions provided by the institutions suggest that civic engagement generates a symbiotic relationship between the university and its community. Many of the universities recognize that they were not just giving to the partners with whom they collaborate, but that they are gaining from the partnerships in a variety of ways, including gathering relevant data, being able to teach more effectively, and conducting more relevant research. Examples include:

- ‘building relationships and working partnerships with local communities aspiring to bring positive change to the life opportunities of its students, and a source of creativity and new knowledge that is relevant, robust and contributes to individual and community development’;
- ‘engagement refers to a range of activities that generate mutual benefits for and forge fruitful relationships between the university and its communities, based on recognition of the role that we can play in community development’;
- ‘universities are a resource for their communities, stakeholders have knowledge and skills that we draw upon in planning, teaching and research’; and
- ‘engagement is *in, of, and with* the community. By its very location it is *in the community* of W. Sydney, Australia; in seeking to understand the region, issues and problems, we undertake research *of the community*; addressing issues facing the region through teaching, research and advocacy is *with the community*.’

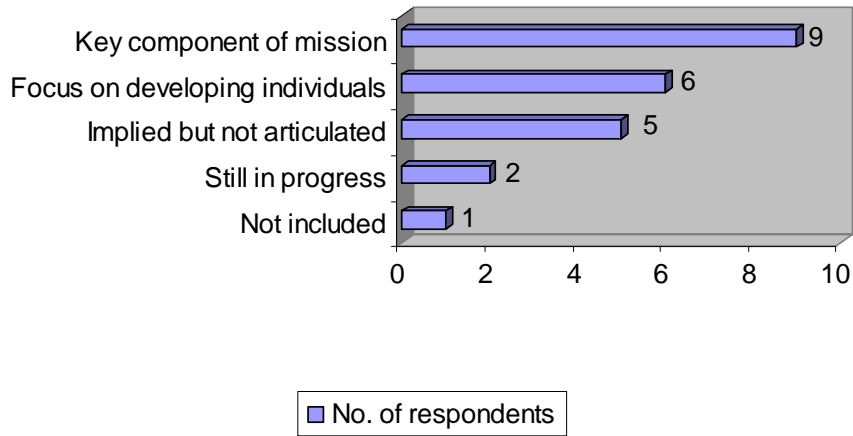
## 2.2 How civic engagement is included in the university’s mission

The mission statements of the universities reflect their commitment to civic engagement mainly in two ways. Some (9) see civic engagement as a key cornerstone of the mission of the university, and it is explicitly included as one of its three functions — teaching, research, and service or engagement. Examples here include:

- ‘participate in public service through higher education’;
- ‘community programs within the context of sustainable development emphasizing social conscience and democratic values’;
- ‘fostering’ students’ appreciation of their own culture and heritage, and of their responsibility to society’; and
- ‘we want to foster an attitude of “giving back”, an understanding that active citizen participation is essential to freedom and democracy, and a desire to make the world a better place’.

A number of universities (6) focus on the development or preparation of individuals in order to create a better community or society. Here the emphasis shifts from actual participation within the development of the community to the development of the individual students who will then be trained as effective and socially responsible leaders of the future. In five cases civic engagement is not mentioned explicitly in their mission statement, but is implied. The rest of the respondents are either in the process of redefining their mission, or have not included civic engagement in their statement.

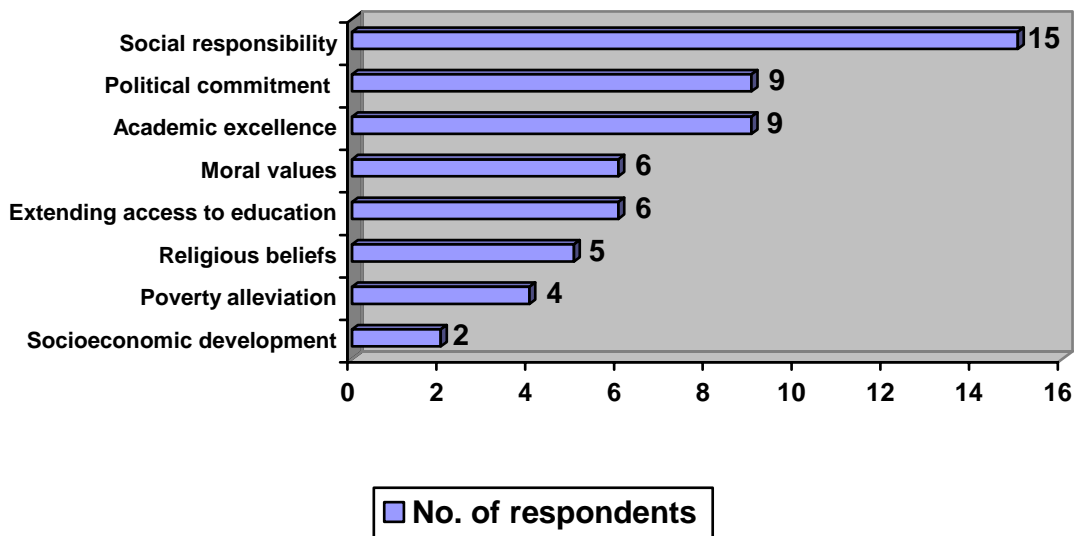
**Figure 1: How is civic engagement included in the university's mission?**



### 2.3 Values underpinning civic engagement

More than half the respondents cite social or public service responsibility as the dominant value underpinning civic engagement. Other values mentioned include political commitment to freedom, democracy and the struggle against oppression; academic excellence; moral values such as ethics and accountability; equity of access to education and inclusiveness; adherence to religious ethics and teachings; a commitment to social justice, empowerment and poverty alleviation; and a commitment to supporting socioeconomic development. The frequency of mention in each category is captured in Figure 2 (in most cases institutions mentioned more than one value).

**Figure 2: Values underpinning civic engagement**



While social responsibility is the dominant value, many of the respondents are also stimulated by the realities of the communities they serve – a perspective summed up by one university as follows: ‘the university is not an ivory tower, but must be integrally involved in the community it serves.’ In other words, specific conditions – such as poverty or political struggle – provide opportunities for a university to become involved in civic engagement through teaching, research, and other activities. In the case of faith-based institutions, civic engagement is a central concern, tightly bound to notions of social justice.

It is noteworthy that in approximately one-third of the responses, civic engagement is seen as an integral part of academic excellence. Here, civic engagement is linked closely to effective teaching and good research. In this understanding the three components of the academic project (teaching, research and service) are linked, with each impacting positively on the other to give students a better education and to strive for greater responsiveness.



### 3 The programmatic form of civic engagement

#### 3.1 Forms of civic engagement

Civic engagement programs in the 25 universities take a range of forms. All the universities incorporate some of the following forms of civic engagement:

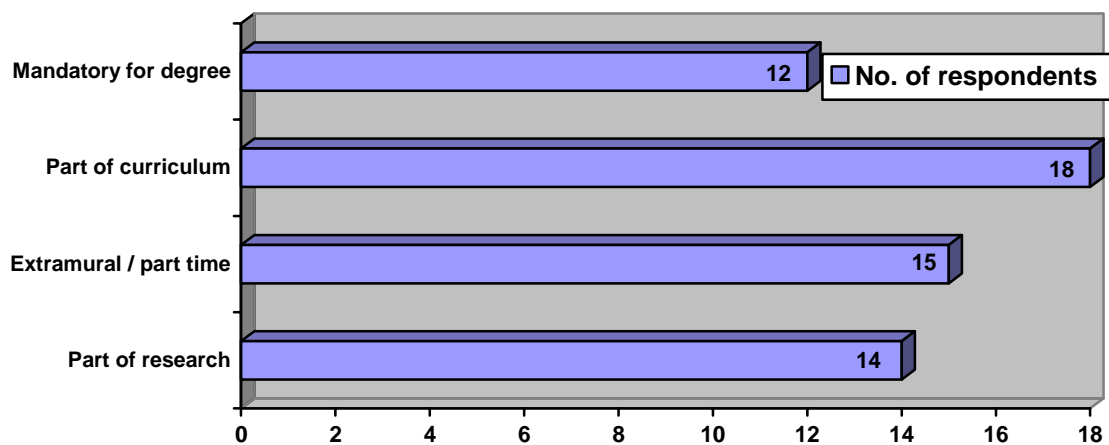
- Civic engagement activities are a compulsory requirement for degree purposes;
- Civic engagement is part of the curriculum;
- Extracurricular or part-time activities are organized by or for students to provide them with opportunities to engage with communities; and
- Engagement forms part of research.

In 18 institutions civic engagement activities form part of the curriculum, and 12 universities said that civic engagement is mandatory for degree purposes. The next most prevalent form of civic engagement is extracurricular activity organized by and for students (15 universities), while in 14 universities research is an important form of civic engagement.

Activities range from academic service-learning courses to programs for providing access to opportunities for high-achieving students, outreach to schools, and the development of local networks in specific subject areas. The survey responses also mention cases of research partnerships between universities and local organizations that have a strong community focus.

Figure 3 illustrates the types of civic engagement activities undertaken in the sample of universities.

**Figure 3: Forms of civic engagement activities in the participating universities**



### **3.2 Relationship with teaching and research**

Civic engagement activities are integrated into the core business of the universities (teaching and research / scholarship) in seven different ways, and this provides some indication of the extent to which they may start contributing to the development of new knowledge:

- a. Civic engagement as a core function of the university, prioritized at the same level as teaching and research.
- b. Civic engagement that informs the research carried out by faculty and students, including:
  - Research carried out in specific fields, e.g. gender, human rights, democracy, etc;
  - Community-based research, selection of a community problem for research, thesis research; and
  - Research on civic issues is part of the graduation requirements.Almost all mention this form of engagement.
- c. Community-based learning for students through social service activities, outreach / extension programs involving both the ‘fixing of problems’ and the sharing of knowledge:
  - Curriculum-based community service or civic engagement programs; and
  - Extracurricular activities organized by the university or by the students.
- d. Education or training programs aimed at other groups in society:
  - Increasing access to education for less fortunate or other needy groups;
  - Workshops and seminars for communities;
  - Training for officials from regional and local governments, as well as members of nongovernmental organizations on project design and management; and
  - Leadership training and development.
- e. Funding or scholarships made available by the university for work or research done in the field of civic issues. For example, scholarship grants related to community development activities, or funding provided to political science students who conduct democracy and civic education and disseminate civic educational materials.
- f. Departments, units or centers being established within the university, dedicated to study of societal problems.
- g. Advocacy and awareness of issues taken up through conferences, policy dialogues on education with government, or international day celebrations.

### **3.3 Program content and organization**

Most of the universities (21 out of 25) cite community development and poverty alleviation as the focus of their civic engagement activities. This broad field is followed

by a focus on specific socioeconomic issues such as health (19), education and training (13), environment (11), entrepreneurship (7), political issues (7), and gender / women’s studies (6). Culture, family and social issues, and legal issues are each mentioned by 3 institutions.

**Figure 4: The focus of civic engagement programs**

Issue	Total	Asia	Africa	Middle East	North America	Central and South America	Australia
Total no. of respondents	25	5	6	4	3	5	2
Community development / poverty alleviation	21	5	4	4	1	5	2
Health	19	2	6	4	2	3	2
Education and training	13	5		3	1	3	1
Environment	11	2	2	1	1	3	2
Entrepreneurship	7	1	2	1		2	1
Political	7	2	1	2	1	1	
Gender / women’s studies	6		2	2		1	1
Culture	5			3		1	1
Family social issues	4	1	1	2			
Legal issues	3			1	1	1	

The survey responses suggest that the gap between rich and poor provides a key focus for most of the respondents: 21 out of 25 respondents indicate that their civic engagement programs focus on various aspects of community development or poverty alleviation.

Health is the second most important theme, and it covers both primary health care and environmental health. Health forms the key focus for the university respondents in Africa, followed by community development and agriculture. Educational programs in the universities based in North America and Australia are concerned mainly with targeting disadvantaged or marginalized communities (Latin American and Aboriginal communities respectively).

In the universities located in Central and South America the emphasis is on ‘universalizing university education.’ Environmental issues are covered in all regions while the majority of universities in the Middle East include a focus on religious tolerance in their programs.

The survey responses provide an interesting indication of how the programmatic form of civic engagement varies according to the sociopolitical climate in the different countries. For example, the responses of institutions to democracy education can be quite different, depending on the environment: According to the University of Dar es Salaam, the

development of democracy in Tanzania entails educating citizens so as to strengthen their understanding and participation in a multiparty democracy, whereas in the United States of America the emphasis is on voter registration.

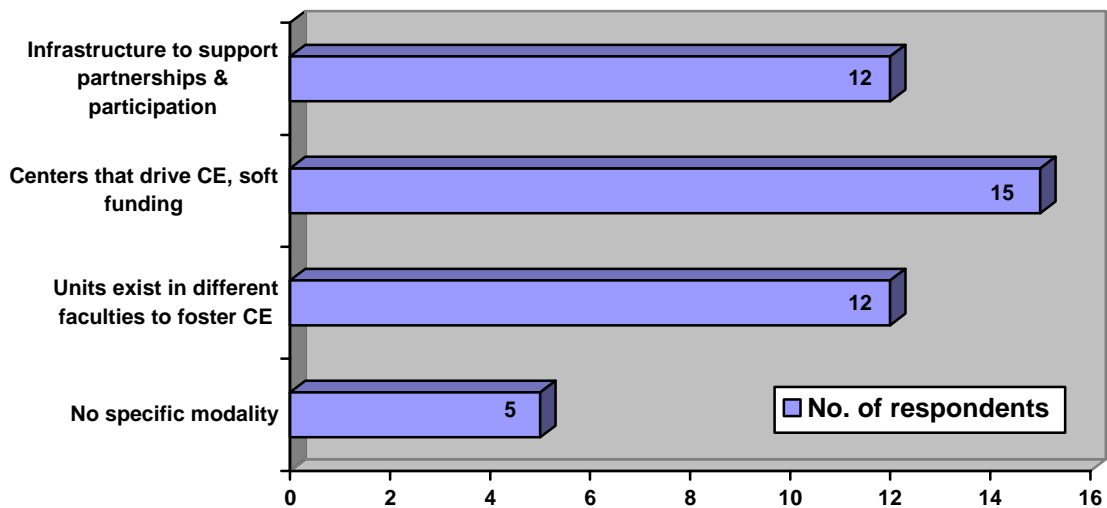
Another striking finding is the extent to which capacity-building activities are undertaken by universities for nonstudent constituencies. Examples of capacity-building initiatives at the responding universities include:

- Programs that support processes of decentralization in the country and build capacity at the local government level to improve service delivery. (Makerere University, Uganda and University for Development Studies, Ghana)
- Training micro entrepreneurs in the development of business plans and obtaining funds from financial entities. (Metropolitan University at Caracas, Venezuela)
- Technical assistance in accounting and information technology (IT) for nonprofit organizations. (University of Texas at El Paso, United States of America)
- Programs for adults who lack qualifications and civil service employees; examples here include the teaching of computer skills. (Al-Quds University, Palestine)
- Training teachers, religious leaders, youth leaders, and leaders of women's organizations both at local and national levels in issues such as civic education, democracy, gender equity, human rights, and other related issues. (Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Indonesia)
- Training of youth and community leaders, as well as programs structured for civil servants. (Ahfad University for Women, Sudan)
- Training in leadership development for various target groups such as leaders of political parties and democracy advocacy groups. (University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania)
- Building the capacity of lower income populations to empower women and ethnic minorities. (Methodist University of Piracicaba, Brazil)
- Training selected community members as trainers in TB and HIV and AIDS prevention to work with the rest of the community. (Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa)
- Formation and training of community-based organizations such as agricultural cooperatives. (An Giang University, Vietnam)

As for the location and organization of civic engagement in the responding institutions, approximately half the universities have infrastructure in place to support the participation of faculty and students in civic education, often set up through a combination of internal and donor funding. Although the data do not indicate what form this infrastructure takes, 15 universities have set up university-wide centers with the sole purpose of driving civic engagement, and in 12 cases there are units in the different faculties that foster civic engagement (in those disciplines with a tradition of practical or clinical training such as teaching and medicine). A number of institutions have in place arrangements (such as consultative committees) that foster partnerships (e.g. one university mentions a regional council consisting of prominent members of the community from business, government, nonprofit organizations and local alumni that was set up to guide its operation in the region), and 5 universities have no specific arrangements for civic engagement.

Figure 5 illustrates the different ways in which the respondents organize civic engagement at their universities. It shows that in most cases specific operational arrangements have been made to manage civic engagement at the institution.

**Figure 5: How programs are organized**

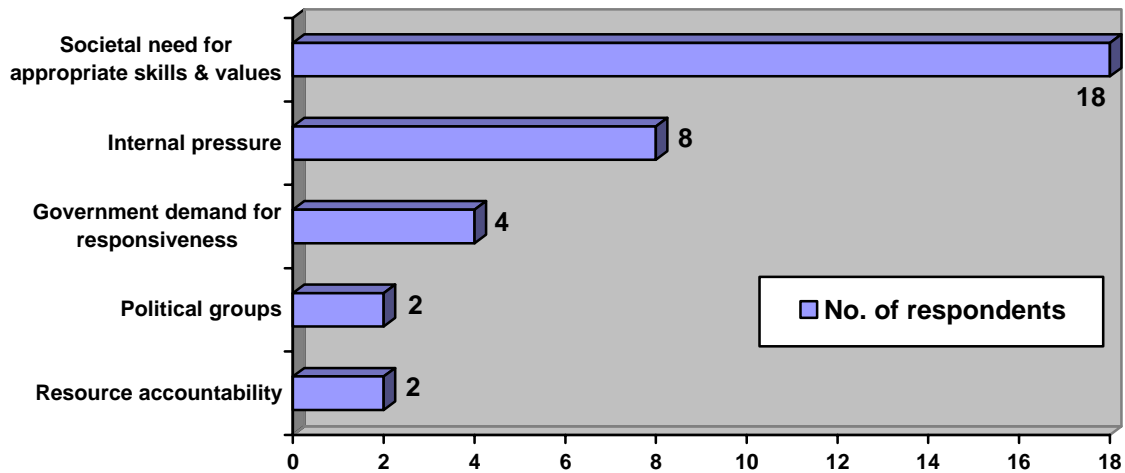


### 3.4 What shapes this programmatic mix?

Participating universities are experiencing two types of pressures with regard to their involvement in civic engagement: pressures that encourage civic engagement, and pressures that discourage the universities from getting involved.

With the exception of two universities, all the universities seem to have experienced some kind of pressure to become more involved in civic engagement activities. As shown in the graph below, the most significant pressure (mentioned by 18 institutions) comes from various levels of government (central, provincial / regional, and local), the mass media, as well as specific communities (local communities or communities of interest, e.g. farmers) that expect the universities to respond to the overall need for skilled, informed, professional, and marketable graduates who can help build the country. Other pressures are those experienced internally – from students and faculty members for the university to engage with wider issues – as well as pressure from government for universities to be more responsive to the external environment, particularly in contexts of transformation or major change. In some cases pressures come from the need to be accountable to donors supporting civic engagement activities. Figure 6 illustrates the number of mentions of different pressures from the universities.

**Figure 6: Types of pressures on participating universities to become involved in civic engagement activities**



Most of the universities feel that there are no external pressures on them *not* to become involved in civic engagement programs. The main limiting factor for their involvement seems to be related to the lack of resources, viz. financial resources and time pressures on faculty and students. Universities from the Middle East, however, highlight political pressures on them *not* to become involved in civic engagement programs. For example:

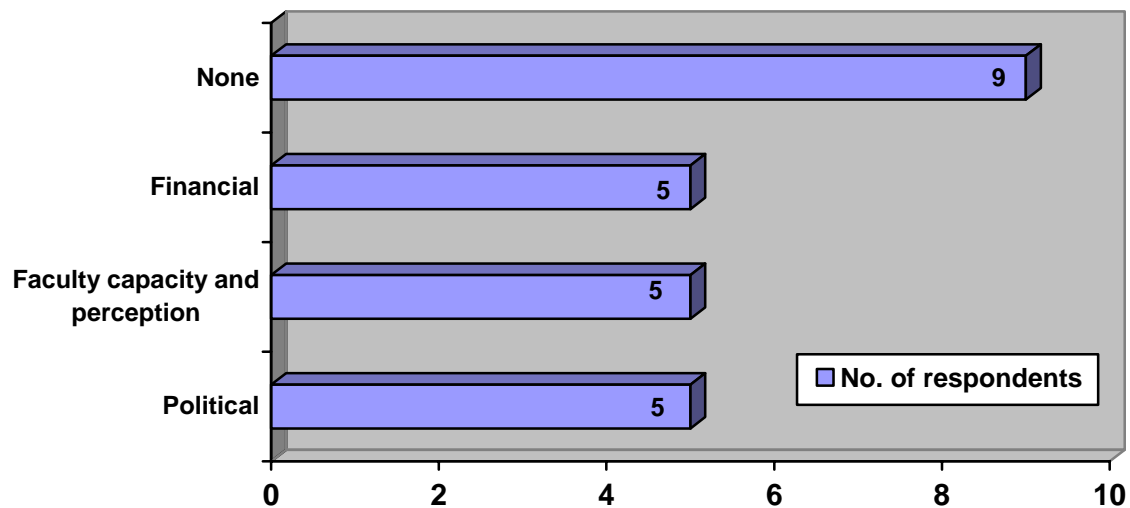
‘Since the university’s protocol with the Government [of Egypt] specially prohibits political and religious activity on campus, this is an area of great sensitivity. Occasionally, the US embassy also registers concerns when student protests erupt over issues of US foreign policy and intervention in this region.’  
(American University in Cairo, Egypt)

It is important to clarify that the political pressures (as reflected in Figure 7 below) comprise pressures from various role players, including student groups, for universities to become more actively involved in political struggles for freedom and independence. It also refers to threats the university leadership may experience from authorities or other forces in the context of political struggle.

Other limiting factors include the pressure for institutions to focus on teaching in the face of continuously increasing student enrollment. The pressure of conventional teaching and research commitments can make it difficult even for the most interested staff to focus on community engagement, something that is aggravated by the current lack of well-developed formal recognition and reward mechanisms, reported by most of the universities. While some opportunities are available for faculty to access small research grants, awards, and special funds for civic engagement, much of their involvement seems to depend on individual motivation and commitment.

There are also pressures that stem from the perceptions of faculty about whether universities should be involved in civic engagement at all. In some instances, despite an institution’s promotion of civic engagement, there are faculty who continue to view engagement as a philanthropic or ‘add-on’ activity. Many of these faculty are resistant to seeing a new role for universities in responding to issues of poverty, violence, the aftermath of conflict, weakened democratic institutions, and the realities of society at large. The following graph shows the different types of pressures and constraints reported by respondents in the different regions.

**Figure 7: Types of pressures and constraints on universities**



### 3.5 Extent of civic engagement

The survey asked respondents for information about the extent of student and faculty participation in civic engagement, and the responses demonstrate the following range of student involvement:

Extent of student participation	University <sup>3</sup>
0-10%	Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa Metropolitan University at Caracas, Venezuela University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
10-25%	American University in Cairo, Egypt Catholic University of Temuco, Chile Makerere University, Uganda Saint-Joseph University, Lebanon

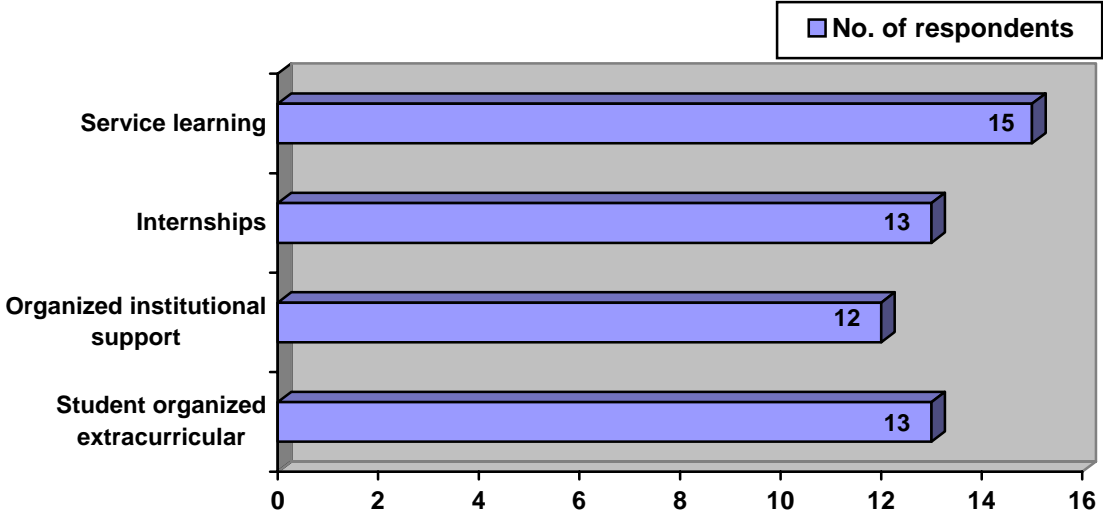
<sup>3</sup> In two cases this information was not available.

Extent of student participation	University <sup>3</sup>
25-50%	Methodist University of Piracicaba, Brazil University of Ballarat, Australia
50-75%	Aga Khan University, Pakistan Al-Quds University, Palestine An Giang University, Vietnam Notre Dame of Marbel University, Philippines Tufts University, United States of America University of Texas at El Paso, United States of America
75-100%	Ahfad University for Women, Sudan Autonomous University of Baja California, Mexico Birzeit University, Palestine Jimma University, Ethiopia Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Indonesia University for Development Studies, Ghana University of Havana, Cuba University of Western Sydney, Australia

Those universities citing levels of student participation above 50 percent are also institutions in which civic engagement is either mandatory or forms part of the curriculum. However, more research is required to establish more precisely the factors that are driving the varied levels of student participation at these institutions.

Service-learning courses attract the highest level of student participation (15 mentions) possibly because here the civic service component is a mandatory and integral part of the course for degree purposes. This is followed by internships (13 mentions), student-organized civic engagement activities (13 mentions) and organized institutional support for civic engagement (12 mentions). These are shown in Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8: What forms of civic engagement attract the most students?**





Among the constraints experienced in getting students involved in civic engagement, lack of funding is cited by 19 institutions as being the biggest constraint, mainly because many students have to work to support their studies, and this leaves little time for them to spend on community-related activities. This is especially true if the civic engagement activities are not part of coursework and depend on students having discretionary time. The next most frequent is the gap between community needs and student interest (6 respondents), while 2 institutions cite a lack of student interest as the key challenge. Other constraints are:

- Disruption of plans and daily life due to military occupation;
- Lack of a culture of social participation and civic engagement in the country, or lack of a strong civil society;
- Time constraints;
- Dented enthusiasm due to the demands of engaging with communities under harsh conditions of poverty and underdevelopment;
- Limited incentives and recognition; and
- Community fatigue.

<b>Extent of faculty participation</b>	<b>University<sup>4</sup></b>
0-10%	Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa Metropolitan University at Caracas, Venezuela University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
10-25%	American University in Cairo, Egypt Autonomous University of Baja California, Mexico Catholic University of Temuco, Chile Georgetown University, United States of America Saint-Joseph University, Lebanon University of Texas at El Paso, United States of America
25-50%	Birzeit University, Palestine Kabul University, Afghanistan Makerere University, Uganda Methodist University of Piracicaba, Brazil Tufts University, United States of America University for Development Studies, Ghana University of Ballarat, Australia
50-75%	Aga Khan University, Pakistan Al-Quds University, Palestine An Giang University, Vietnam Notre Dame of Marbel University, Philippines Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Indonesia University of Havana, Cuba
75-100%	Ahfad University for Women, Sudan Jimma University, Ethiopia

<sup>4</sup> In one case this information was not available.

Challenges faced by these universities in increasing faculty participation are shown in Figure 9 below. In virtually all the universities, funding is clearly the key challenge once again, but the very limited academic reward accorded to civic engagement is mentioned as a serious constraint by 10 institutions.

Once again the culture of the institution seems to be a factor, in that three institutions mention that their faculty tend to regard civic engagement as campus committee duty rather than dynamic engagement with external issues and communities. Very often, academics are resistant to the idea of applied or collaborative research that has a civic engagement component, and involvement in civic engagement projects or research may be very time consuming, inhibiting the academics' ability to publish work quickly and thus achieve recognition. This reluctance is often reinforced by the system of promotion or rewards where research is rewarded, while civic engagement involvement is given less credit, and its time consuming nature is not recognized. Thus, in many instances, involvement in civic engagement is not conducive to a successful career path.

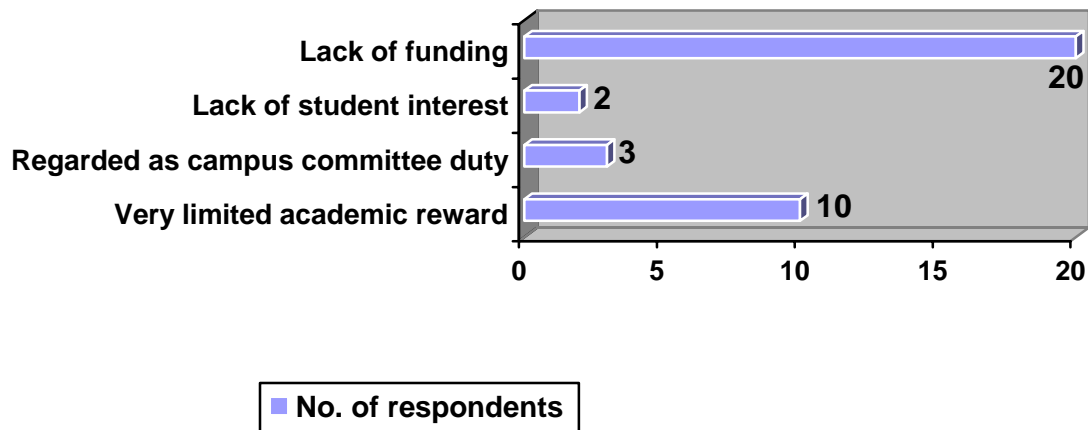
At two universities lack of student interest in civic engagement is a constraint to faculty participation. Other issues are the distance to the project sites and their location, time constraints due to workload pressures combined with family pressures, lack of a strong civil society, and political disruptions.

Two other constraints to student and faculty involvement are the following:

In some cases faculty and students involved in civic engagement lack the infrastructural support needed to foster their full participation. Most universities represented do not have a unit dedicated to aiding in civic engagement programs. Thus, much of the work involved in creating partnerships, accessing funding, and maintaining projects is left to the faculty and students.

There may be a general lack of commitment to social participation, especially in countries in which civil society is weak. This makes it difficult to create an atmosphere within the university that encourages civic engagement, and makes it difficult to create an awareness of the role that the university can play in social development projects. This in turn inhibits the establishment of partnerships and access to funding, especially from government. Some of the universities mention the positive role that partnerships with the media and other higher education institutions could play in addressing this problem.

**Figure 9: Challenges faced by the universities in fostering faculty participation in civic engagement**

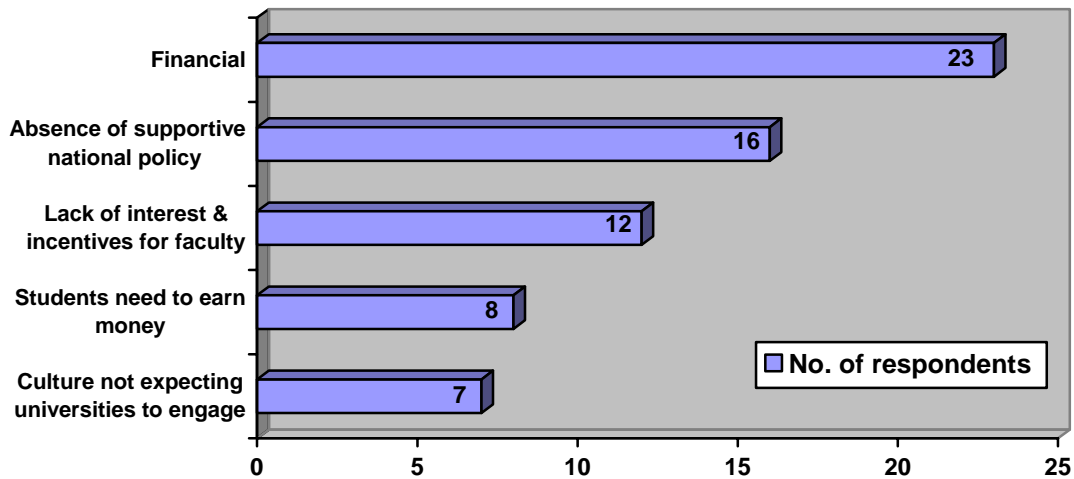


### 3.6 Barriers to civic engagement

Overall, the barriers to civic engagement can be summed up as follows (shown in Figure 10):

- Throughout the sample of 25 universities, across all regions, the barriers are primarily financial.
- This is followed by the absence of supportive national policy for higher education institutions to engage in civic issues.
- The role of higher education institutions in civic engagement is not yet well established in all instances, and even in those universities where the leadership promotes social responsibility as a core value, some faculty members are resistant to getting involved in community-related teaching and research. The lack of incentives for faculty to be involved in civic engagement perpetuates this situation.
- A number of universities mentioned that students face competing demands on their time, mainly because of the need to work to fund their studies, and this impacts negatively on their availability for civic engagement activities.
- The lack of a culture of civic engagement within the academic environment is a barrier to civic engagement in under one-third of the respondents.

**Figure 10: Barriers to civic engagement**



### Financial resources

The lack of funds for civic engagement is mentioned by 23 institutions as being a barrier to the development of civic engagement. Once again this view was spread across all regions.

The major sources of funding are the universities' own budgets (17), and access to funds from international agencies (9) and philanthropic organizations (2). Nine institutions indicate that they have accessed public funding for civic engagement activities. In all cases it is clear that institutions depend on a multiplicity of sources for funding civic engagement, and that one single source is unlikely to sustain such involvement.

On the basis of the data collected in this survey, it is not possible to say whether there is any relationship between the existence of national policy on civic engagement and the availability of funds for civic engagement activities. It would seem, however, that incentives for civic engagement do depend on an enabling policy environment in which various role players (such as government departments or private sector organizations) can partner with universities around civic engagement projects for wider benefit.

### National policy

The absence of civic engagement as an explicit component of national higher education policy is seen as a barrier by 17 of the responding universities. National policy helps shape the environment in which civic engagement practices can flourish, and guides universities in becoming a force for the public good and contributing meaningfully to social development. This is particularly important in a context in which a number of pressures act on universities not to engage with public issues, e.g. the absence of a strong civil society, the adherence to traditional approaches in higher education that see teaching and research as isolated academic processes (the 'ivory tower' approach), and the

reduction of public support for higher education that drives many universities to adopt a more market-led orientation to the academic enterprise. National policy frameworks can influence the extent and context of civic engagement in higher education, and foster institutional policies that shape the resource base for civic engagement and determine the form of programs and activities.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether civic engagement forms part of national policy governing higher education in the country. Fourteen of the respondents indicate that this is the case in 9 countries: Afghanistan, Brazil, Cuba, Indonesia, Mexico, Philippines, South Africa, Tanzania, United States of America, and Vietnam. According to the survey responses, the following countries do not have civic engagement cited in the national policy frameworks for higher education: Australia, Chile, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lebanon, Pakistan, Palestine, Sudan, Uganda, and Venezuela.

Those instances in which no national policy for civic engagement is in place, appear to reflect two kinds of situations: those countries in which civic engagement programs in universities are not favored by government, and those in which the role of higher education institutions in civic engagement is acknowledged, despite the absence of such national policy, as the following examples show:

- **Requests for assistance** with service delivery projects, research initiatives, etc. (Aga Khan University, Pakistan)
- Institutions called upon to become **more relevant to the needs of society** by producing well-trained, skilled, and marketable human resources for sustainable development. (Makerere University, Uganda)
- No clear statement, but the Ministry of Higher Education in certain aspects requires that universities **include the teaching of certain subjects** that have a civic engagement component, for example topics such as HIV and AIDS and community development. (Ahfad University for Women, Sudan)
- Some **limited government grants** are available for projects with a community / regional focus and for innovation projects.

It is worth noting that despite the fact that only half of the countries represented have national policy frameworks shaping civic engagement in higher education, all the universities indicate that they have some form of institutional policy framework that guides their civic engagement activities. Eight indicate that civic engagement is a fundamental cornerstone of the way they manage their institutions and do not really specify separate descriptions of these policies. Examples include:

- ‘Aga Khan University’s policy on civic engagement is represented as part of its mission statement and is reflected in all its educational programs and activities.’ (Aga Khan University, Pakistan)
- ‘In the general sense described above, our institution’s entire operations are guided by the principle of civic engagement.’ (Al-Quds University, Palestine)
- ‘Our Academic Policy and Policy for Extension determine that all teaching and research must have a positive impact on the communities in which we are involved.’ (Methodist University of Piracicaba, Brazil)

- ‘Our institution recently included civic engagement through the social capital initiative approach as a main strategic component of its long-term plan.’ (Metropolitan University at Caracas, Venezuela)
- ‘As expressed in our Strategic Plan and its underpinning plans, but it has not been the subject of specific functional policies.’ (University of Western Sydney, Australia)

In their responses to the question of what would facilitate the growth of civic engagement, most of the respondents cite national policy on higher education as a critical factor. Comments on the importance of national policy for civic engagement include the following:

- ‘A more forceful drive by national educational leadership to incorporate civic engagement as an integral and effective part of their mission’;
- ‘Convince the minister of education to develop this approach as public policy’;
- ‘Government policy must allow it to flourish, and foster a culture of allowing political awareness and political debate’; and
- ‘Government must recognize universities as a force for social change.’

However, none of the respondents indicated whether and how they might advocate for the inclusion of civic engagement in national policy.

## **4 How programs are funded**

As the analysis above indicates, a lack of resources for civic engagement remains a challenge for most of the universities. The universities find funding for civic engagement projects from various sources, and this may be an area around which strategies could be further developed in future. Fifteen institutions have established centers to drive civic engagement, using soft funding.

### **4.1 Internal funding**

Where civic engagement is integrated into the curriculum, or takes the form of extracurricular activities, funding for projects is allocated mostly from the internal budget. In some cases, the cost of the project is included in the cost of the course or module, and is thus carried by student fees. In other cases funding is used from research budgets or through course releases. Many universities have a budget specifically for civic engagement. Another source is fundraising activities organized by students through clubs and organizations to support their civic engagement commitments.

### **4.2 Public funding**

In countries where national policy encourages civic engagement, government funding may be available for specific programs or activities. However, funding may be awarded on a very competitive basis or is only available for projects that the government deems necessary. In some instances government-appointed bodies that oversee higher education may have some funding available for civic engagement. However, these resources tend to be limited. Some governments offer tax exemptions for universities involved in civic engagement, or are committed to paying the travel costs involved in civic engagement programs. It seems the most effective way of gaining funding from government is through partnerships at the local or national level, where the government is actively involved in a project and thus provides funding.

### **4.3 Partnerships**

Often, funding is gained through partnerships. These may exist with industry, nongovernmental organizations, philanthropic organizations, or local communities. The partnerships generate funds through specific agreements or donations from one or more of the partners. Very often this funding takes the form of grants and various organizations are committed to funding civic engagement programs. However, these organizations are often involved in specific areas of interest. For instance, a fair amount of funding is available for housing, gender issues, and educational projects through such agencies as Habitat for Humanity, Ford Foundation, and the General Board of Global Ministries. Other organizations that are involved in giving grants include USAID, Pathfinder International, Red Cross, and the Inter-American Development Bank. Awarding of grants is done on a very competitive basis, and although it represents a large proportion of funding, dependence on this funding can lead to a lack of sustainability.

#### **4.4 Donations**

Some universities have garnered donations from individuals and organizations for specific civic engagement projects.

#### **4.5 Loans**

In a few cases universities have applied for loans to maintain civic engagement projects. However, these loans have been awarded with special rates.



## 5 The impact of civic engagement programs

The blending of the universities' academic programs with civic engagement and practical community-based training has generally brought about understanding and reciprocity between universities and the communities in which they engage. This interactive process has had far-reaching outcomes for the students, the institutions and their respective communities.

### 5.1 On students

Broadly, the impact on the students is twofold:

- There is an **attitudinal impact** in that participation in civic engagement activities results in more favorable attitudes towards working in deprived communities. Students have a better appreciation of community problems and needs, which is expressed by the American University in Cairo as follows: 'Students develop better attitudes towards being responsible citizens that appreciate their cultural heritage.'
- The other significant impact is the opportunity for **experiential learning** and the ability to have a real-life application of the concepts that had been taught, thus making the theory more meaningful and resulting in a more effective real world preparation. 'They are given the opportunity to feel how capital risking is like, and to apply many concepts from the theory of the firm and quantitative techniques to estimate functions and optimums. In general students in PRATS find real application of many of the concepts and instruments they review in classroom turning meaningful what they have learned.' (Autonomous University of Baja California, Mexico)

These key impacts result in the following benefits to students:

- Participants acquire leadership and communication skills;
- Students are better prepared for post higher education;
- Students are more professional in their approach;
- Students become more employable and are more competitive in the job market;
- Students have the opportunity for sociocultural learning;
- Networking opportunities lead to longer-term employment (over 60 percent of students in Australia); and
- Civic engagement has an impact on setting new career directions – some students changed their career prospects after their community-based experiences.

Participating universities see the reciprocity or mutuality of beneficitation between students and the university on the one hand, and the community on the other. This is clearest in the following responses:

'Consulting of senior students provides transmission of knowledge and techniques to entrepreneurs ... but this knowledge and experiences transfer goes also the opposite way from entrepreneurs to students.' (Autonomous University of Baja California, Mexico)

‘It has been a mutual learning process, the community profiting from the training and the university learning from the community.’ (Metropolitan University at Caracas, Venezuela)

‘While universities are a resource for their communities, local communities and stakeholders have knowledge and skills that we draw upon in planning, teaching, and research.’ (University of Western Sydney, Australia)

## 5.2 On the community

At a general level, university civic engagement significantly improves the social, economic, and political condition of beneficiary communities. Apart from being empowered through various programs, including greater access to education, cultural development, micro entrepreneurship, health, and literacy, communities also benefit from tangible infrastructural projects realized through the partnership between the university and local government structures.

Civic engagement programs furthermore provide training and support to nongovernmental and community-based organizations, and important gains have been made in building the capacity of local government officials for improved service delivery.

Beneficiaries are variously described as citizens of the community, voluntary organizations or community-based organizations, and micro entrepreneurs. The most significant impact is the **direct impact** on the lives of the beneficiaries in terms of awareness and better knowledge, better techniques and better opportunities or living conditions. In other words the beneficiaries are empowered.

Other aspects of the impact felt at community level are:

- A ‘domino’ effect – themes of projects are diffused to other locations, and the initiatives can be catalysts for social change or similar projects in other locations;
- Results in involvement from local and provincial government in providing infrastructure;
- Accurate information is provided to the media to inform stakeholders in the projects concerned (e.g. in Vietnam);
- Access to education for disadvantaged communities;
- Improved standards of education, allowing students to compete equally on an international level for access to universities worldwide;
- General development of a civic culture and skills for participation in a multiparty democracy;
- A social network of support, and the provision of a gateway for community / voluntary sectors into the university; and
- Organizations are assisted to complete projects that would otherwise have been put onto the back burner.

### 5.3 On the institution

Civic engagement has facilitated the forging of sustainable, interactive links between these universities and their communities. It has given the institutions an opportunity to provide services and widen their sphere of research and learning, by extending their activities into new fields. Through different programs the universities have managed to build relationships of trust and have improved their public image among local communities. This has been the case particularly where there is a strong sense of reciprocity.

Community-based interaction has also provided the universities with opportunities to collaborate with other players in the development arena such as private sector companies and government agencies. These networks have facilitated employment, recognition, and funding opportunities for students and faculty.

Impact at the faculty or institutional level is as follows:

- Enhanced public / community image of the university;
- Enhanced awareness of social needs and problems leading to:
  - Valuable research results that could, *inter alia*, influence public policy. Although there was no mention of changes to research processes or the focus of research, it is clear that in those institutions in which civic engagement is strongly promoted, the research agenda itself is shaped by this orientation.
  - Improved capacity to provide useful services to address the needs of communities.
- Receipt of national awards for successful social service programs;
- Networking with industry, putting theory into practice;
- Opportunities for collaboration, e.g. publishing papers jointly, participating in seminars, and engaging in joint ventures with communities;
- Learning how to conduct productive negotiations through dialogue; and
- Being able to make important contributions to new knowledge in the world.

None of the respondents explicitly mention any impact on teaching.

## 6 Future plans

All the universities indicate that they intend continuing the work they are currently doing with regard to civic engagement, and are committed to improving their programs in a number of ways.

The majority of universities see a need to expand their current work in this area. This concerns not only the actual programs that are being run, but also includes accessing stable funding for project sustainability, identifying pressing issues that need to be addressed within communities, and making every effort to involve all disciplines in civic engagement. Some universities intend to identify and test new models of civic engagement.

The responses also mention expanding the understanding of civic engagement to include a commitment to enhancing democracy and civic action in the wider society. While no information is available about how this might be achieved, some of the universities indicate that it is important to create awareness around the responsive role that higher education can and should play.

A second area of interest at 10 of the universities is the need to create and maintain good partnerships. This includes expanding partnerships with communities and businesses, as well as with agencies committed to social development. Mention is made of the need to partner more closely with government in order to identify key issues and access funding, and to partner with the media to create an awareness of higher education's role in civic engagement. Universities also call for greater collaboration and networking between higher education institutions to support the work they are all doing in this field.

Eight universities see a need to integrate civic engagement into the curriculum. This would require forging closer links between teaching, research, and civic engagement. Some universities mention specific ways of doing this, such as requiring a certain number of hours of civic engagement for graduation purposes. This step would also reward students for the time and effort they put into service, often on a voluntary basis.

A further intention on the part of a number of institutions is to establish a center to manage civic engagement. For many institutions this would be an important step to take in managing partnerships more effectively and having a central office responsible for accessing funding and supporting faculty and students involved in civic engagement.

Other plans include a greater commitment to integrating research and civic engagement to ensure that civic engagement is seen as an academic endeavor, running workshops and seminars for people engaged in philanthropy, and conducting a review of current civic engagement activities at the university.

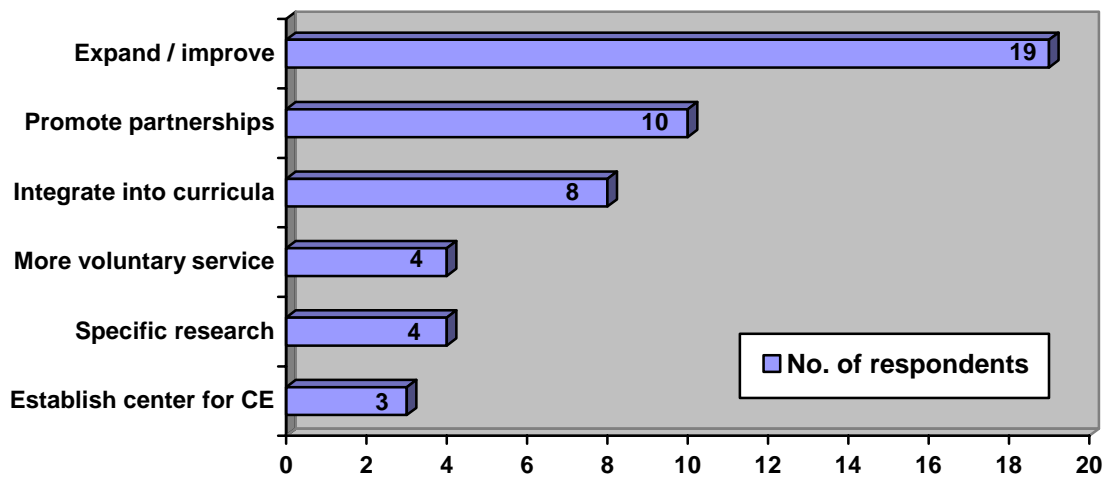
Figure 11 summarizes the future plans mentioned most frequently, as follows:

- Expand / improve / enhance the work that is currently being done;

- Promote appropriate partnerships between government, other universities, and agencies involved in social development;
- Include / integrate civic engagement in the curriculum as a requirement for graduation;
- Initiate more voluntary service;
- Conduct research into specific problems; and
- Establish a unit / center to drive civic engagement.

Despite so many institutions mentioning the importance of national policy for the promotion of civic engagement, none provide any indication of the role it could play in advocating for such policy development and implementation.

**Figure 11: Future plans with civic engagement**



## **7 The role of networks**

The survey responses show that a variety of networks exist, and many universities point out the positive role that networks, especially formalized networks, can and do play in supporting civic engagement through various means.

Networks are often seen as a point of contact, enabling those involved in civic engagement to establish partnerships more effectively and encourage collaboration. They also play a role in establishing interested contacts that may be useful in accessing funding. Very often, these networks are able to provide some funding directly.

More importantly however, these networks act as a forum for discussion, and as a place in which research papers linked with civic engagement can be presented. This reinforces the academic nature of civic engagement that is so important in light of the challenge that many academics face of civic engagement not being recognized as an academic endeavor. Networks also play a role in creating awareness among higher education institutions as well as government, media, and funders, of the role that higher education can and should be playing in social development.

Good networks can also introduce institutions to a range of new practices and ideas. Some universities point out that networks could provide workshops and active training for faculty and staff on the practice of civic engagement. There is also the potential for universities to support each other through networks, by playing a more direct role in coordinating partnerships and sharing resources such as training, manuals, infrastructure, and expertise. Finally, some universities point to the potential of establishing student networks of civic engagement.

However, networks are not always seen in a positive light. Some universities point out that networks create competition among universities for funding and good civic engagement opportunities. Another negative factor is the fact that some networks do not have concrete programs that facilitate support and are therefore limited in their ability to back civic engagement. There is also the need to be sensitive to the notion of reciprocal learning, as indicated in the relationships between the universities and their own communities. In the case of networks, relationships between universities within geographic regions, and interaction between north and south can be enormously beneficial if they are appropriately structured.

## **8 Conclusion**

This analysis is based on a small sample of 25 universities that have demonstrated their interest and involvement in civic engagement. While their experiences cannot be taken to be representative, they do provide important indications of the extent and character of civic engagement in different parts of the world, operating in very different contexts and conditions.

What the survey shows is that there are specific factors that facilitate civic engagement in higher education – leadership, government policy, level of interest among students, faculty commitment, demands from community groups, and faith traditions, to name but a few. The survey also provides an indication of some of the barriers to civic engagement, such as lack of resources, skepticism from faculty, lack of incentives or reward systems to support interested faculty, as well as political pressure. The conference organized by Tufts University will provide an opportunity for university leaders to discuss what can be done to improve the situation – in terms of their own campuses, within their existing networks, and collectively as an international network of interested and committed university leaders.