

# **The Talloires Network: A Global Coalition of Engaged Universities**

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## Abstract

This article describes and analyzes the origins, work to date, and future of the Talloires Network, an international association of institutions committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education. Included are reflections on the network's strategies for advancing civic engagement in higher education globally, with particular attention to both the successes and the limitations of these strategies. The experience of the network to date may help to illuminate opportunities and challenges with respect to international dimensions of university civic engagement.

*The potential for social participation by students young and old, now and in the years to come, is massive. The extent to which this potential can be realized will depend on universities worldwide mobilizing students, faculty, staff and citizens in programs of mutual benefit.—Talloires Declaration 2005*

The Talloires Network was established by the Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education, ratified by a gathering of higher education leaders in Talloires, France, in September 2005. Since that time, the network has grown from 29 universities to over 230 universities in 62 countries. We seek to advance university-community engagement by increasing public awareness of—and support for—civic engagement, fostering the exchange of ideas and best practices, supporting other regional and global networks focused on this work, educating funders on the value of engagement, hosting conferences and events, and providing direct financial and capacity-building support to members.

We are entering an exciting new period in the network's development. In June 2011 the network's Global Leaders Conference in Madrid brought together over 200 university heads and other stakeholders to discuss the future of the global movement for engaged universities. This conference illustrated the energy and momentum of our network, which we hope to harness as we develop new programs to build the global field of higher education civic engagement.

At the closing session of the conference, Vuyisa Tanga, Vice-Chancellor of Cape Peninsula University of Technology, summarized:

In spite of our tremendous diversity we share the belief that we should change the academic paradigm from the notion of the ivory tower to an open space for learning and development. Policy alone is not enough to achieve this. We need decisive leadership, an alignment of all university processes and active student involvement to critically embed the culture of an engaged university. (Talloires Network, 2011a)

Participants in the Madrid conference resolved:

The world is a very different place than it was when the Talloires Declaration was signed. Across the globe, the societies in which our institutions are situated are facing increased economic, social, and civic challenges. At the same time, in universities on every continent, something extraordinary is underway. Mobilizing their human and intellectual resources, institutions of higher education are increasingly providing opportunity and directly tackling community problems—combating poverty, improving public health, promoting environmental sustainability, and enhancing the quality of life. Many universities across the globe are embedding civic engagement as a core mission along with teaching and research. Around the world, the engaged university is replacing the ivory tower. (Talloires Network, 2011b)

### **Origins of the Talloires Network**

*Some of our universities and colleges are older than the nations in which they are located; others are young and emerging; but all bear a special obligation to contribute to the public good, through educating students, expanding access to education, and the creation and timely application of new knowledge. Our institutions recognize that we do not exist in isolation from society, nor from the communities in which we are located. Instead, we carry a unique obligation to listen, understand and contribute to social transformation and development.—  
Talloires Declaration 2005*

In many parts of the world, particularly in the West, a traditional model of the university has been the ivory tower where academics pursue knowledge in relative isolation from the communities in which they are embedded. As the network's recent global conference affirmed, many institutions, both in the United States and around the world, are moving beyond this model. In some parts of the world, the university as ivory tower has never been the dominant model. Many universities have a long history of engagement with their communities. Indeed some, such as Universidad Señor de Sipán in Peru and the University for Development Studies in Ghana, were established with the primary mission of advancing social and economic development. Land-grant universities in the United States have the same founding motivation.

By the beginning of this millennium it was becoming clear that there was a global trend toward greater engagement of universities with their communities, characterized by systemic efforts to mobilize the expertise and person power of these institutions to address pressing societal needs. However, there was limited international coordination and exchange on these issues at the senior management level.

In 2005 Tufts University decided to contribute to remedying this gap by holding the first international conference of the heads of universities to explore the engagement and social responsibility roles of higher education institutions. Held at the Tufts European Center in the alpine village of Talloires, France, the conference brought together 29 university presidents, rectors, and vice chancellors from 23 countries around the world. This very diverse group came from institutions as diverse as An

Giang University in Vietnam and the University of Havana in Cuba, from the Catholic University of Temuco in Chile, Al-Quds University in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and the Aga Khan University in Pakistan, to Ahfad University for Women in Sudan. During 3 days of energetic dialogue, participants shared their experiences with community engagement and exchanged ideas for future work. Although the group represented starkly different contexts and types of universities, they found that they shared common purposes and strategic orientation. Discussions centered on ways to tap into the unrealized potential of universities and their students to tackle pressing challenges in their societies, and on forging a collective vision for advancing the field of community engagement in higher education worldwide.

This consensus is reflected in the 2005 Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education. The declaration committed signatories to a number of concrete actions at their own institutions and together, including to

- Expand civic engagement and social responsibility programs in an ethical manner, through teaching, research and public service
- Embed public responsibility through personal example and the policies and practices of our higher education institutions
- Create institutional frameworks for the encouragement, reward and recognition of good practice in social service by students, faculty, staff and their community partners
- Ensure that the standards of excellence, critical debate, scholarly research and peer judgment are applied as rigorously to community engagement as they are to other forms of university endeavor (Talloires Network, 2005)

The declaration also created the Talloires Network “for the exchange of ideas and understandings and for fostering collective action.” All participants in the 2005 Conference, as well as all institutions that have joined the Talloires Network since that time, have committed themselves to the principles of the Talloires Declaration.

### **Development of the Network**

The infrastructure of the Talloires Network was established in 2006 and since then has continued to grow and develop. The secretariat functions of the network are shared by Tufts University and Innovations in Civic Participation, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization. Guidance and oversight for the network are provided by a steering committee consisting of leaders in higher education from around the world. From 2005 to 2011, the steering committee was chaired by Larry Bacow, president of Tufts University. President Bacow provided dynamic leadership in expanding the network and building its programs.

In 2011, President Bacow stepped down as chair of the Talloires Network. Mark Gearan, president of Hobart and William Smith Colleges, has assumed the office of steering committee chair, and Janice Reid, vice-chancellor of the University of Western Sydney, has become vice chair. President Gearan and Vice-Chancellor Reid participated in the 2005 Talloires Conference, were original signatories to the Talloires Declaration, and have been influential leaders of the network since that time.

In its first 6 years the network operated with informal organizational policies. A self-appointed steering committee of higher education leaders from around the world provided strong guidance and oversight. In June 2011 Talloires Network members ratified an explicit governance policy that spells out the steering committee's responsibilities and calls for replacement of the founding body with a steering committee nominated and elected by the full membership. In August 2011, Talloires Network member presidents elected a new steering committee of members from universities in 10 countries around the world.

From its origins at the 2005 Conference, the Talloires Network has grown into the largest international network focused on higher education community engagement. Our membership of 230 higher education institutions in 62 countries has a combined enrollment of over 6 million students. As noted by Brenda Gourley, former vice-chancellor of the Open University (UK) and an original member of the Talloires Network Steering Committee: "Looking back at the history of Talloires since 2005, what began as a small meeting has become a movement." (Talloires Network, 2011 a)

*We believe that higher education institutions exist to serve and strengthen the society of which they are part. Through the learning, values and commitment of faculty, staff and students, our institutions create social capital, preparing students to contribute positively to local, national and global communities. Universities have the responsibility to foster in faculty, staff and students a sense of social responsibility and commitment to the social good, which, we believe, is central to the success of a democratic and just society.*  
*Talloires Declaration 2005*

Membership in the Talloires Network is based on an institutional commitment made by the chief executives, be they presidents, vice-chancellors, or rectors of the universities. University heads commit their institutions to the network for a variety of reasons. Some join to take advantage of the benefits offered by membership, such as eligibility for the annual MacJannet Prize, eligibility to take part in Talloires Network projects, and participation in network conferences. Some wish to make a public commitment as a signal to people outside the university as well as to their own faculty, staff, and students that community engagement is one of their core values. Some members may join for reasons only marginally related to community engagement: a desire to raise their institutional profile, to attract funding, or to cultivate relationships with other members of the network. Even in such cases it is our hope that their exposure to the work will help impel them and their institutions toward a greater awareness of the value of forging productive and mutually beneficial partnerships with their communities.

### **Sources of support**

The Talloires Network has been fortunate to attract funding from a variety of supporters. The 2005 conference and the founding of the network were supported by the Omidyar Network, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Breidenthal-Snyder Foundation, Lowell-Blake and Associates, and the Charles F. Adams Trust. Since that time, we have received additional grants from the Carnegie

Corporation, the Walmart Foundation, the Pearson Foundation, the MacJannet Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. With generous support of the Walmart Foundation and the MasterCard Foundation, we are currently undertaking projects of direct support to our members, described in more detail below.

Since 2010, we have also received ongoing support from Santander Bank, which launched the Santander Universities program in 1996 to support the higher education sector in such areas as teaching and research, international cooperation, knowledge and technology transfer, entrepreneurial initiatives, student mobility, and innovation. Emilio Botín, chairman of Santander Bank, has declared that universities are “a driving force of social progress” (Santander Bank, 2010), and Santander has reinforced its commitment to this conviction through its relationship with the Talloires Network.

## **Strategies and Activities**

The Talloires Network has adopted a number of strategies for furthering its mission. These include

- supporting the leadership of the heads of institutions of higher education;
- striving for global participation and fostering authentic South-North dialogue and collaboration;
- increasing public awareness and support for civic engagement by publicizing outstanding programs;
- serving as a “network of networks”;
- cultivating and educating funders on the value of university civic engagement;
- encouraging and facilitating face-to-face interaction;
- providing direct financial and capacity-building assistance; and
- supporting faculty and managerial development.

## **Supporting Leadership**

Before we organized the founding conference of the network, there had been significant interaction internationally among faculty leaders in civic engagement, but much less among the heads of their institutions. We believed there was a timely opportunity to engage the attention—and to support the leadership—of the people with ultimate responsibility for the directions and priorities of universities. This strategic instinct became a defining principle: A distinctive strength of the Talloires Network is its focus on university presidents, rectors, and vice chancellors. Membership in the network is institutional, based on a commitment to the Talloires Declaration signed by the head of the university. Of course, most of the everyday work of engagement is done by university faculty, staff, and students, and we interact and undertake considerable work with these constituencies. However, buy-in from university leaders is critical in institutionalizing engagement. As noted by Margaret McKenna, president of the Walmart Foundation and former president of Lesley University, “University presidents should go out and model the behavior they want their students to show” (Talloires Network, 2010).

The day-to-day interactions of the network with its members take place largely through those staff appointed by their university presidents to drive their programs. These are generally faculty or other staff with responsibility for the university’s engagement work. However, we also keep member presidents engaged when we have

opportunities that would be of interest to them. The June 2011 conference at the Autonomous University of Madrid emphasized participation by the heads of institutional members, and this was a significant opportunity to reinforce the commitment of university leaders to civic engagement at their institutions. Sharifah Hapsah Shahabudin, vice-chancellor of the National University of Malaysia, said of our recent conference in Madrid: “This meeting has convinced me of the need to integrate industry and community engagement into research, education and services—not as an add-on or a third mission, but fully integrated. Universities of the future are engaged universities” (Talloires Network, 2011a).

## **Global Participation and South-North Dialogue**

Substantial geographic diversity has been a defining feature of the network since it began. Our current membership numbers 32 in Africa, 32 Asia-Pacific, 39 Europe and Central Asia, 37 Latin America and Caribbean, 14 Middle East and North Africa, 58 North America, and 19 South Asia. Although our membership is truly international, the uneven distribution of members reflects the varying levels of higher education community engagement in different regions. Countries or regions with the strongest representation in the network include the United States (52 members), South Africa (16), Australia (14), and the United Kingdom (13). These countries and regions have either strong traditions or more recent institutional interest in outreach and engagement. By contrast, our membership in India, China, continental Europe, and East Asia is comparatively small.

The network’s broad global representation has made South-North dialogue a major dimension of its activities. Our experience to date demonstrates that Northern institutions of higher education have a great deal to learn from the substantial civic engagement programs of sister institutions in the Global South.

At the same time, the regional and national disparities in membership also are a continuing challenge. The Talloires Network has always had a strong U.S. base. Tufts University hosted the founding conference. Both our founding and our current steering committee chairs have been presidents of U.S. institutions. The secretariat functions of the network have been managed from the United States. A practical logic underlies this heavy American foundation: The United States has a well-developed higher education community engagement field in terms of policy, practice, and research, and many top funders are based in the United States.

However, this strong U.S. base also introduces the risk that we will be seen as an American network or an attempt by Americans to proselytize about higher education to other societies. In addition, it leads to a disproportionately strong attraction for universities in Anglophone countries, such as the United States, Australia, and South Africa. To overcome these challenges, we have worked hard to recruit members in every region of the world, to attract non-U.S. participants to our events, and to maintain global diversity on our steering committee. We are committed to maintaining and strengthening geographic diversity as a key operating principle.

In *The Engaged University: International Perspectives on Civic Engagement*, a book profiling engagement policies and practices of 20 Talloires Network member universities in 16 countries, co-authors David Watson, Robert Hollister, Susan Stroud, and Elizabeth Babcock (2011) remark on the clear differences between the North and

South in the motivations for, and methods of implementing, university civic engagement. Institutions in the Global South tend to address local development challenges, and in some locales, the role of universities in political transition and democratization. Therefore the relations between these universities and communities tend to be organized around those challenges and the transfer of information and applied knowledge. There is also more awareness in the South of the knowledge that community already possesses. Susan Stroud notes, “There is greater recognition that knowledge doesn’t just exist within universities so it is more of an equal exchange between the two” (Talloires Network, 2011a). Ahmed Bawa, vice-chancellor of Durban University of Technology in South Africa, states, “My university mainly services poor rural students who actually are the community, so the idea of engagement is not so much about exposing them to the poor as it is about empowering them” (Talloires Network, 2011a).

## **Public Awareness**

Across our membership, outstanding work is being undertaken by universities partnering with their communities in mutually beneficial ways. Although the scale and impacts of these activities are quite substantial, to date they have received comparatively modest public recognition. This means that decision makers, policy makers, and funding agencies operate with limited understanding of the extent and impacts of higher education civic engagement. Therefore, one of our key strategies has been to make more visible the substantial university civic engagement work happening around the world. We seek to highlight some of the most effective and innovative programs in order to encourage and reinforce the work of these programs, give other institutions the opportunity to learn from successful models, and raise the public profile and support for university civic engagement more broadly.

A major way that we recognize programs is through our annual MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship, which recognizes outstanding university civic engagement programs, awarded through a competitive application process. The MacJannet Prize has been one of our most successful programs because it gives prominence to the outstanding work of our members, often in parts of the world where civic engagement receives insufficient recognition. The winning programs receive a financial award to support their work, significant public attention through the network’s communications platforms (website, e-newsletter, and blog), and the opportunity to meet and learn from one another during an associated workshop and the award ceremony. Oscar García, vice-rector for outreach at the University of Buenos Aires, which received first MacJannet Prize in 2011, confirmed the value of the prize to its winners. Winning first prize is “a great motivator” according to García. “It is good to know we are not alone, as this kind of work is not easy” (Talloires Network, 2011a).

The MacJannet Prize winners from the past 3 years are outstanding examples of the tremendous impacts that innovative engagement programs can have on universities and communities. These programs provide innovative, effective, and inspirational models for university-community engagement. The 2009 first prize winner, the Urban Health Program at Aga Khan University (Pakistan), provides critical health and socioeconomic support to the squatter settlements of Karachi. The 2010 first prize winner, Puentes UC (Bridges UC) at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, links



university faculty and students with municipal authorities to build the capacity of local government to provide needed services. The 2011 first prize winner, Community Action Program in Vulnerable Neighborhoods at the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina), works with high-risk populations through extension centers that focus on non-formal education, community health, and community development.

In addition to the winning programs, we publicize the key programs and activities of our members through university profiles on our website and a featured “Program of the Month” in our monthly e-newsletters. These and the aforementioned volume, *The Engaged University: International Perspectives on Civic Engagement*, significantly raise the visibility of these universities and their community partnerships. *The Engaged University* was organized as a collective project in which the co-authors collaborated with 20 Talloires Network member institutions. Each participating member contributed substantial written information and interviews to help create case profiles of its community engagement work. In combination the profiles present a comprehensive picture of our global movement, illustrating major driving factors, common patterns, impacts, and implications for future policy and practice.

## **A “Network of Networks”**

*Higher education must extend itself for the good of society to embrace communities near and far. In doing so, we will promote our core missions of teaching, research and service.—Talloires Declaration 2005*

As a global coalition, the Talloires Network has major strengths. We can bring together diverse perspectives on engagement from around the world. We can connect universities in every part of the globe to partner on joint projects. We can give support to the most promising programs not just in one country or region, but worldwide.

However, we also recognize the limitations that are built into our being a global alliance. Our secretariat and steering committee members cannot possibly have intimate knowledge of the conditions for engagement in different parts of the world. Both logistics and resources make it impractical to convene regular global conferences. At times, it can be more effective for universities with shared social, cultural, and economic contexts to work together before they partner with an institution on the other side of the world. Founding Network Steering Committee Chair Larry Bacow has argued, “It’s our responsibility to develop the conceptual framework for university civic engagement, gather and propagate best practices, consciously reflect on those at the regional level, and interpret it in the language, culture, and context of each region.”(Talloires Network, 2011a)

Therefore, the Talloires Steering Committee adopted a strategy several years ago of working in collaboration with regional university networks that focus on engagement. These networks have more detailed knowledge of the social and economic conditions, the policy frameworks, and the institutional cultures relevant to engagement in their own region. They have the capacity to convene regional gatherings and facilitate partnerships. By working together in a way that allows the strengths of our global network to complement the strengths of these regional networks, we can make our work more context-sensitive and effective. Therefore, we seek to strengthen the

work of existing higher education civic engagement networks and to catalyze the creation of such networks where they do not yet exist.

The early success of this approach is evident in the creation of two new regional networks committed to civic engagement: the Ma'an Arab University Alliance for Civic Engagement, and an Asian network of engaged universities (formal name is yet to be determined) Further, our partnerships with other networks have given us a wealth of knowledge, the ability to connect our partners with one another, and new opportunities to develop projects in various parts of the world.

We have concluded formal agreements with several other existing regional networks. Our partnership with the Latin American Center for Service-Learning (CLAYSS), based in Argentina, has focused on expanding our Latin American membership, providing a Spanish-language web platform for members, and convening Talloires Network members in the region. The Talloires Network has co-hosted a major conference in Cairo and supported a service-learning seminar for faculty in Beirut in partnership with the Ma'an Arab University Alliance for Civic Engagement. In partnership with the Russian Community Universities Network, a project of the New Eurasia Foundation and the Mott Foundation, the Talloires Network hosted a study tour for Russian university administrators to gather information on engagement practices in the United States. With a grant from the Walmart Foundation, the Network is supporting the South Africa Higher Education Community Engagement Forum to organize a series of capacity-building workshops. We are currently working with the Asian network mentioned above to organize a conference of Asian universities focused on civic engagement that will take place in 2012. We also have formal partnership agreements with the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA), Campus Compact in the United States, and Campus Engage in Ireland. We continue to explore opportunities for collaborating on concrete projects with these networks.

Leadership in building university civic engagement and social responsibility also is being exerted by other networks that focus on university roles in democracy, such as the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy, which seeks to advance the contributions of higher education to democracy on college and university campuses, in their local communities, and in the wider society. In addition, many global higher education networks, such as the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the International Association of Universities, have made civic engagement one of their areas of programmatic emphasis.

## **Engaging and Educating Funding Agencies**

Whenever we ask network members about the greatest challenges that they face in their community engagement work, funding is always near the top of the list. In our own experience operating the network secretariat, attracting the funding required to do our work is a constant concern. Therefore, one of our key strategies is cultivating and educating funders about the value of university civic engagement. A key collective challenge and opportunity is to expand dramatically the scale of financial investment in the movement.

We always seek to include philanthropic leaders in Talloires Network conferences and events. In November 2009, we organized a luncheon of funders from

across the spectrum of corporate and private foundations as well as government agencies to discuss the current state of higher education civic engagement, the need for additional resources, and the interests and ideas of the funders about the types of programs that could attract their support. Carnegie Corporation President Vartan Gregorian, who hosted the gathering, observed, “This meeting was in effect a higher education-philanthropy ‘summit’ to envision the future of a movement with the potential to forge a new compact between higher education and society” (Tisch College, 2009). This roundtable discussion was attended by the heads of seven network member universities, and the presidents and other senior executives from several corporate and private foundations in addition to Carnegie: Santander, MasterCard, Walmart, Rockefeller, Pearson, KMG International, and IBM International. Judith Rodin, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, stated, “The fact that this diverse group of leaders came together on this important issue signals that the global movement of engaged universities is poised to enter a wholly new stage. The potential impact is enormous and the heightened momentum for mobilizing the expertise and power of higher education for social and economic innovation is a very positive development” (Tisch College, 2009).

Several philanthropic leaders also participated in a Talloires Network strategy meeting at the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center in March 2010 and in the network’s Global Leaders Conference in Madrid in June 2011. These have been fruitful opportunities for funders to meet members, learn more about the pivotal role universities can play in community development and social progress, and contribute their own ideas to the discussion. For example, during our 2011 conference in Madrid, Reeta Roy, president of the MasterCard Foundation, stressed how important project evaluation is to attracting funding. “We are looking for innovation, for projects which are bringing interesting partners together, but we are also looking for ones which can provide some hard evidence of what works and why,” said Roy. “We know there is tremendous work going on but much of this is not systematically documented” (Talloires Network, 2011a).

In addition, we strive to keep funders engaged in the process of developing ideas for projects. Many funders have significant experience and expertise that is valuable in project design, and through their contributions, they become invested in the projects. This approach of “co-inventing” with funders has led to grants from the Walmart Foundation and the MasterCard Foundation, as described below.

## **Interaction among Members and Stakeholders**

Of necessity much of our communication with and among members across the world is done by e-mail and phone. These communications are invaluable and allow people from all over the world to connect at little cost. However, there is simply no substitute for the trust and personal relationships built by face-to-face interactions.

Therefore, whenever possible, we have sought to arrange meetings of our members. The largest was our June 2011 conference in Madrid, which brought together over 200 university presidents, faculty, students, NGO heads, philanthropic leaders, government officials, and other stakeholders. Smaller meetings such as the previously mentioned meeting at the Bellagio Center in 2010 have helped ensure that a core group of Talloires Network Steering Committee and general members and stakeholders have

built strong and mutually supportive personal relationships. In addition, we have co-sponsored regional conferences—including gatherings in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Cairo—and encouraged Talloires members to take advantage of these opportunities. While not achieving the same impact as a global assembly, these regional meetings are less expensive, easier to organize, and allow in-depth discussions of issues relevant in the particular region.

## **Providing Financial and Capacity-Building Support**

Early in the development of the network, we focused on building the organization to be an effective enterprise. However, as we grew, it became clear that the best way to advance university civic engagement is by generating and disbursing resources to directly support members' activities. In addition, funders find such projects more attractive than providing "core support" to a network of universities.

The first large-scale program of funding directed to individual members is a program of competitive seed grants for universities in Chile, funded by the Walmart Foundation. These grants are supporting Chilean universities' development of programs targeted at improving economic opportunities for marginalized women and girls. We have partnered with a Chilean nonprofit, Participa, which has considerable experience in the field, to administer this initiative and to provide capacity-building support for participating universities.

Another ongoing project that will provide direct support to our members is a large multi-year global Youth Economic Participation Initiative of demonstration projects to be led by universities in developing countries. We are co-developing the initiative with the MasterCard Foundation, which is particularly interested in connecting students from disadvantaged backgrounds with employment opportunities and enhancing the ability of young people to create new economic enterprises.

## **Faculty and Managerial Development**

As practitioners and policy makers in the field well know, commitment and enthusiasm are necessary but not sufficient for successful university-community engagement. Developing institutional policies and management structures for engagement is challenging work, as is running effective service-learning courses and community-based research projects. Over the years a body of knowledge and best practice in these endeavors has developed that can be very helpful and instructive for management and faculty at institutions that are relatively new to the idea of engagement.

We have already sought to provide training and development opportunities to our members through our regional partners. Our partners in the Middle East and Latin America, the Ma'an Arab University Alliance for Civic Engagement and the Latin American Center for Service Learning, have held workshops on service-learning for interested faculty in their respective regions.

In the past we have been able to provide modest financial support for these endeavors. We are currently, with support from the Pearson Foundation, developing a larger scale management training and development program that will provide in-person training through our regional partners, perhaps in parallel with existing higher education

conferences. We also hope to utilize “webinars” and other online tools to expand the reach of this initiative.

## **Lessons Learned**

In addition to the previous strategies, all of which have had varying degrees of success and are ongoing, several strategies that we have adopted in the past have not been entirely successful. These strategies have all either been abandoned or are in the process of being rethought. We discuss these experiences below in the spirit of trying to learn from mis-steps as well as from successes.

### **A Common Global Project**

At our founding conference, participants were enthusiastic about collaborating on a common global project, to unite the membership by working together on a concrete initiative that would be a defining cause for the Talloires Network. In part due to the focus of the Millennium Development Goals and UNESCO’s Education for All campaign, in 2006 our steering committee chose to adopt a global project on literacy. Literacy was defined broadly to include reading, numeracy, digital literacy, and financial literacy. Members were strongly encouraged to adopt projects focused on these areas. We disseminated resources on literacy throughout the membership and created an extensive handbook on literacy projects.

Ultimately, the project failed to gain purchase with our members. Many already had literacy programs, but these were not necessarily a focal point of their engagement work. For others, literacy was not a priority. The project seemed to discourage some universities from joining the Talloires Network, as they thought literacy was our primary focus. Furthermore, we were unable to attract funding for literacy programs and therefore could not devote enough resources to this proposal. Therefore, the project was quietly dropped in 2009, with a recognition that effective university civic engagement must be driven by local priorities and programs.

### **Self-assessment**

Another strategy that met with little success was encouraging our members to undertake thorough self-assessment of their civic engagement policies and practices. All agree that evaluation is essential in order for universities to identify both strengths and weaknesses and to make changes to priorities and work plans. We originally required universities to complete a self-assessment tool in order to be eligible for membership. This mandatory assessment was based on a tool prepared by David Watson for the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Watson’s assessment tool is comprehensive and valuable for evaluating a wide range of a university’s engagement work, but it is also challenging to complete. We dropped the requirement after we realized that it was a major barrier to universities’ joining the network. Despite our continued urging members to complete the assessment, only a handful of universities have done so.

Members did not complete the assessment for a variety of reasons. Many had already completed their own assessments, in forms that took cognizance of their own needs and constraints. Others were discouraged by the length and comprehensiveness of the tool that we recommended. Still others may have not seen sufficient value in the

exercise. We have considered revisiting the self-assessment requirement by selecting or developing a shorter tool, but would need to consult widely about its benefit before trying again.

## **The Leadership of Students**

To date the strategic vision of the Talloires Network has emphasized supporting the top leadership of universities around the world, and this orientation continues to be a distinguishing strength. Although we have engaged university students in several ways, our overwhelming focus has been on involving and reinforcing the efforts of university presidents, rectors, and vice chancellors. Our efforts to support student leadership have been productive, but we have not built a sustainable community of Talloires Network students.

Most of our efforts have begun with in-person gatherings of students, followed by efforts to maintain the relationships built during these gatherings through online platforms. For example, in 2008 we brought 24 students from around the world to the Clinton Global Initiative University conference in New Orleans. In addition, we initiated an online peer community. Through a competitive applications process, we selected a group of 20 student peer advisors from several countries and then hosted monthly discussions on an online forum for these mentors to share their experiences and ideas with other students. The first few discussions attracted substantial interest, but then participation dropped sharply, and the forum and the Student Peer Advisor program were ultimately abandoned. In retrospect, several elements would have helped to sustain this effort: allocation of more staff time to organizing and brokering discussions, giving the dialogues greater consequences (on allocation of network resources, for example), and providing opportunities for in-person as well as virtual communication.

During each of the past 3 years, we have also brought student representatives of the MacJannet Prize–winning programs to several days of workshops and an award ceremony, and the strength of student leadership has been a major criterion in selecting winners. Finally, we brought a group of students to our recent conference in Madrid to act as a communications team, conducting interviews, reporting on conference discussions, and blogging. In each case, the students provided invaluable insights to these gatherings and reported that the lessons they learned would be useful on their return to their respective institutions.

Each of our efforts to support the leadership of students at Talloires Network institutions has had positive impacts. However, these efforts have not added up to a sustained student strategy or to maintaining a community of students after the fact, despite use of Facebook, online forums, and other social networking tools. As students return to their institutions, they tend to get busy and lose interest in remaining engaged with us and with each other, and of course, they ultimately graduate and move on.

At present, youth participation is a significant dimension of the global Youth Economic Participation Initiative that the Talloires Network is developing in partnership with the MasterCard Foundation. Three of the 12 members of the initiative's advisory committee are university students. We are incorporating students' recommendations in shaping this program through peer-to-peer interviews with 100 students in 10 countries and through two online dialogues.

We now are endeavoring to pay increasing attention to student leadership. Through strategic planning discussions over the past year, network leaders have embraced student leadership as a higher priority. We believe that building the capabilities of student leaders in selected Talloires Network institutions will strengthen a mutually reinforcing bottom-up and top-down leadership dynamic.

## Reflections

The Talloires Network has made a strong contribution to the global movement for engaged universities. With over 230 members, the network is among the largest international organizations committed to this effort. We have raised the profile of university civic engagement, increased the interest of several key funders in this work, and encouraged new universities to adopt engaged policies and practices. We have disseminated resources directly to members and supported them in expanding their own work. Through conferences and online communications platforms, we have helped our members around the world share best practices and innovative models for engagement.

However, we also recognize that we are just one organization out of many in this field. Several regional and global initiatives are collectively driving the movement forward. The Talloires Network has formal or informal relationships with many of these other networks, and new organizations and initiatives continually come to our attention.

We are also aware of the difficulty of measuring impacts and determining how big a role our actions have played in advancing in this field. Much like our individual members, the Talloires Network always struggles with measuring impact and evaluating success. In this effort, it is tempting to emphasize indicators that are easy to quantify, but do not tell the full story. For example, keeping track of the number of new members we attract is certainly useful, but it does not tell us how committed these members are, what benefits they actually derive from membership, and so forth. Similarly, it is easy to document how many events we hold and the number participants, but the real impact of these conferences and the benefits gained by the participants are much harder to quantify.

## Future Directions

*The university should use the processes of education and research to respond to, serve and strengthen its communities for local and global citizenship. The university has a responsibility to participate actively in the democratic process and to empower those who are less privileged. Our institutions must strive to build a culture of reflection and action by faculty, staff and students that infuses all learning and inquiry.—Talloires Declaration 2005*

Participants in the Network's 2011 Madrid Conference committed themselves to several action steps that echoed and also expanded on those articulated in the 2005 Talloires Declaration:

- Advance civic engagement globally through the dissemination of best practices, encouragement of innovation, development of communities of practice, policy advocacy, and promotion of the field of philanthropic organizations

- Elevate public awareness of the value of university-community engagement
- Promote the work of, and collaborate with, regional networks
- Expand student programs, student participation in international conferences, and exchange opportunities
- Assist in the creation of tools for evaluating impact and the collection of data on university-community engagement, as well as the assessment of student civic engagement and social responsibility competencies
- Explore and develop strategies for universities to increase economic opportunity for disadvantaged youth
- Promote access and retention programs in higher education for academically talented youth from low-income sectors (Talloires Network, 2011b)

Every movement starts as a seed that germinates and grows. The initiatives and innovations of those universities for which engagement with their communities is part of their mandate, are as diverse and distributed as the institutions themselves. Some will come to public notice. Others will be unsung endeavors driven by a quiet commitment to social justice and transformation. Either way, the Talloires Network will continue to connect and support those with the desire to make a difference in their local, national and global communities..

We would welcome collaboration, and encourage questions and critical comment from colleagues in all parts of the world.

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