School of Medicine Strategic Planning Committee on Community Engagement

Observations and Recommendations

Community Definition

We define our community as the city of Charlottesville, the surrounding region, and the Commonwealth of Virginia. In some cases, University of Virginia (UVa) School of Medicine (SOM) departments, faculty members, and staff maintain engagements in other parts of the world, often in the context of their work and relationship to the UVa SOM. These may also be considered part of our community if the activities are aligned with the School’s missions.

Key Observations

1. Community engagement is a core value of our organization and occurs at many scales.
2. The leadership of the UVa SOM needs to make a visible commitment to community engagement.
3. The types and extent of community engagement at the UVa SOM are not effectively catalogued.
4. Community engagement sponsored through the UVa SOM should link to our three missions of clinical care, research/innovation, and education.
5. Departments and other units should build community engagement based on their unique strengths and in close coordination and collaboration with community members.
6. Community engagement activities should address identified health challenges in the community, should consider the social determinants that lead to these challenges, and should be associated with evaluation to assess impact.
7. Community engagement is an unfunded mandate in most cases.
8. We must recognize and account for the historical relationship of the UVa SOM to the community when we develop new community engagement activities.
9. The UVa Health System and the UVa School of Medicine both value community engagement but have different processes and priorities related to community engagement.

Key Recommendations

1. The Dean of the SOM should make the commitment to community engagement visible and explicit.
   a. The presence of school leadership at community events should be prioritized.
   b. New faculty should be provided with a meaningful statement of the SOM’s commitment to community engagement as well as exposure to possible activities and the potential for recognition for community engagement.
   c. Better strategies for recognition of community engagement are needed at several levels.
      i. All faculty evaluations should include an opportunity to describe and to be recognized for community engagement activities during annual reviews and in the promotion and tenure process.
ii. Staff evaluations already include assessment of community service. This should be continued and enhanced.

iii. A school award should be developed to identify the department with the most outstanding community engagement activity for the year. This activity should embody the qualities described above including: linkage to school mission(s); relevance of the project to an identified community health issue; effective collaboration with a community partner(s); and evaluation of impact(s).

2. A survey of community activities by individuals, clinical and basic science departments, and other units at the SOM is needed.
   a. This survey should collect information through email and through an option on the website which allows for real-time reporting. This information should be organized and searchable on the SOM webpage.
   b. Ideally, the catalog will help others within the SOM and in the community to identify successful projects with which to collaborate or expand. Survey respondents could indicate whether they are interested in recruiting other volunteers.
   c. The survey is not compulsory and recognizes that many individuals at the SOM contribute to the community outside of their roles at the SOM.
   d. This survey should be used by communications to highlight the activities of the SOM.