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Pushing Engagement Further: UTK Workers Respond to the Challenge

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About this Research

This research was conducted at the request of the Division of Diversity and Engagement, specifically Vice Chancellor Tyvi Small and Assistant Vice Chancellor and Director of Community Engagement and Outreach Dr. Javiette Samuel. This report summarizes the findings of a survey fielded in Spring Semester, 2021, and targeting faculty (and less-so staff) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This report, joined with a previous report funded by the UTK Office of Research and Engagement, and shared with DDE in November of 2020, are meant to provide extensive data and analysis to DDE about the interests of the Knoxville community in collaborating with UTK, and the capacity, skills, and interest of UTK faculty to collaborate with the Knoxville community.

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Survey Results

THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

Demographic information and qualifiers on survey data

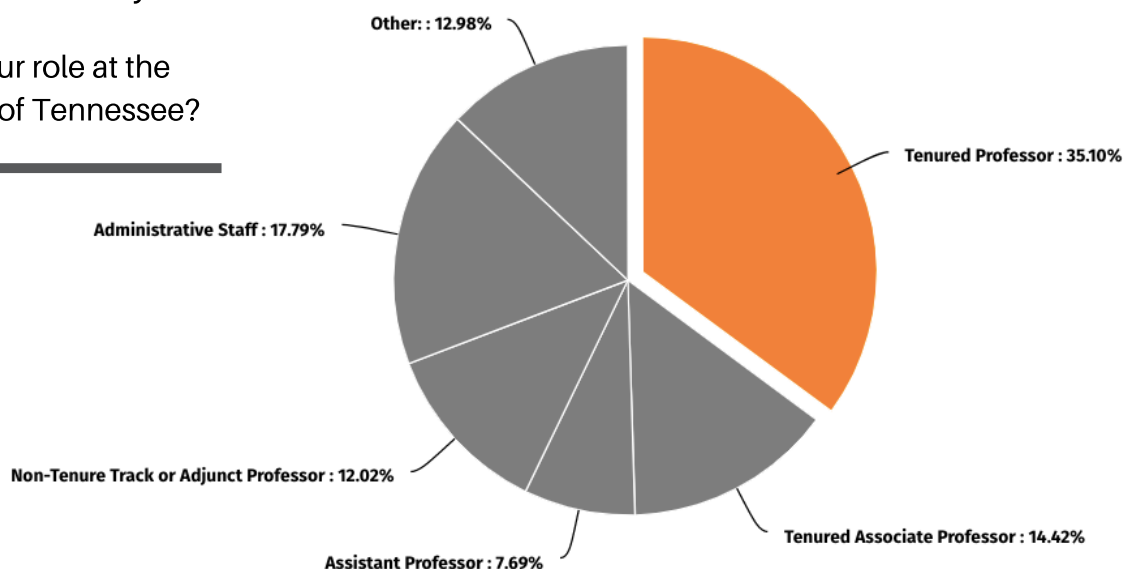*Sample Size, Participation Rate, and Predominant Identities*

The survey had a 33% completion rate; 523 UTK faculty and staff members began the survey, and 173 finished it. The survey was viewed by 1,136 individuals. Of the 519 people who began to survey, 446 responded to at least the first field which was their consent to participate in the study; however, the rate of response for questions afterwards decreased significantly. This was after multiple reminders by the Engagement Office, Deans of several Colleges, and Dr. Shefner sending reminders across campus. Thus, this report contains important insights, but it cannot be seen as a definitive portrait of engagement interest and activity across campus at this time. Approximately 76% of respondents were White, and 59% identified as women.

Professional and Personal Identities of Respondents

Professors were the majority of survey respondents who identified their role with UT (69%, 118 people). Nearly half of all respondents (49%, 102 people) were either tenured professors or assistant professors. Administrative Staff were 18% of the surveyed population, and 13% had another role. At least half (50%, 103 faculty and staff) have worked at UT for a decade, and 40% (82 faculty and staff) have been employed 14 or more years with UT. Survey participation among faculty and staff was similar for staff in their first decade at UT with 18% participation from those employed 0-3 years (36 individuals), 15% (30 individuals) for 4-6 years, and 17% (37) for 7-10 years.

What is your role at the
University of Tennessee?

Figure 1

Other: : 12.98%

Tenured Professor : 35.10%

Administrative Staff : 17.79%

Non-Tenure Track or Adjunct Professor : 12.02%

Assistant Professor : 7.69%

Tenured Associate Professor : 14.42%

Professional and Personal Identities of Respondents (con't)

The majority of faculty and staff who responded were White (76%, 165 individuals). The second most common racial or ethnic category selection was "I would prefer not to specify" at nearly 10% of respondents (21 individuals). Approximately 6% of those who took the survey (13 individuals) were Black and/or African American and 4% (8) were Asian. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders, Native American or Alaska Native, and people who are Arab or Middle Eastern each made up roughly 1% of the population with 3, 2, and 2 faculty or staff members respectively. 10% (22 faculty or staff members) identified themselves as having Latinx, Spanish, or Hispanic origins. Only 13 of them chose to specify a specific group. 4 of them (31%) chose Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, 1 chose Puerto Rican, 1 Cuban, 1 elected to self-describe, and 6 (46%) chose the category for another Latinx, Spanish, or Hispanic origin.

What is your race and/or ethnicity? (select all that apply)

Figure 2
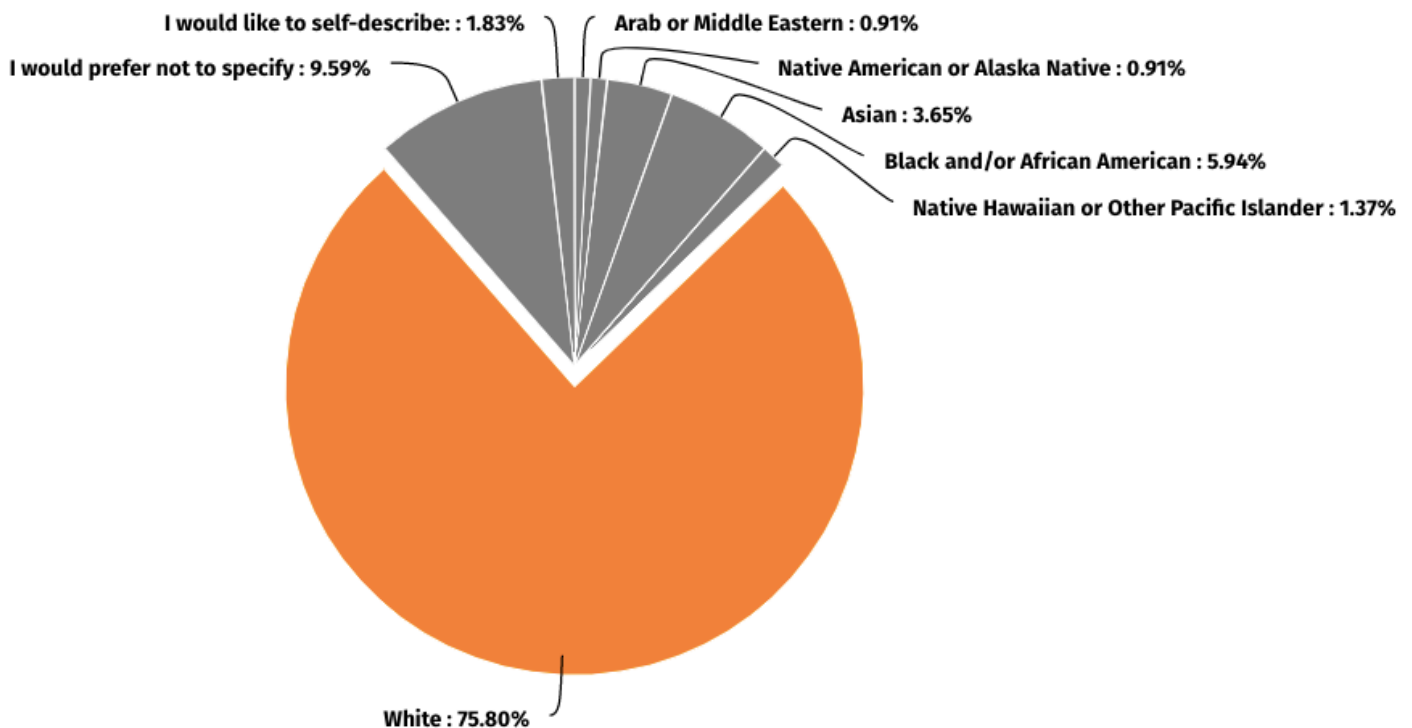
Professional and Personal Identities of Respondents (con't)

Which of the following Latinx, Spanish, or Hispanic group(s) do you belong to? (Select all that apply)

Figure 3
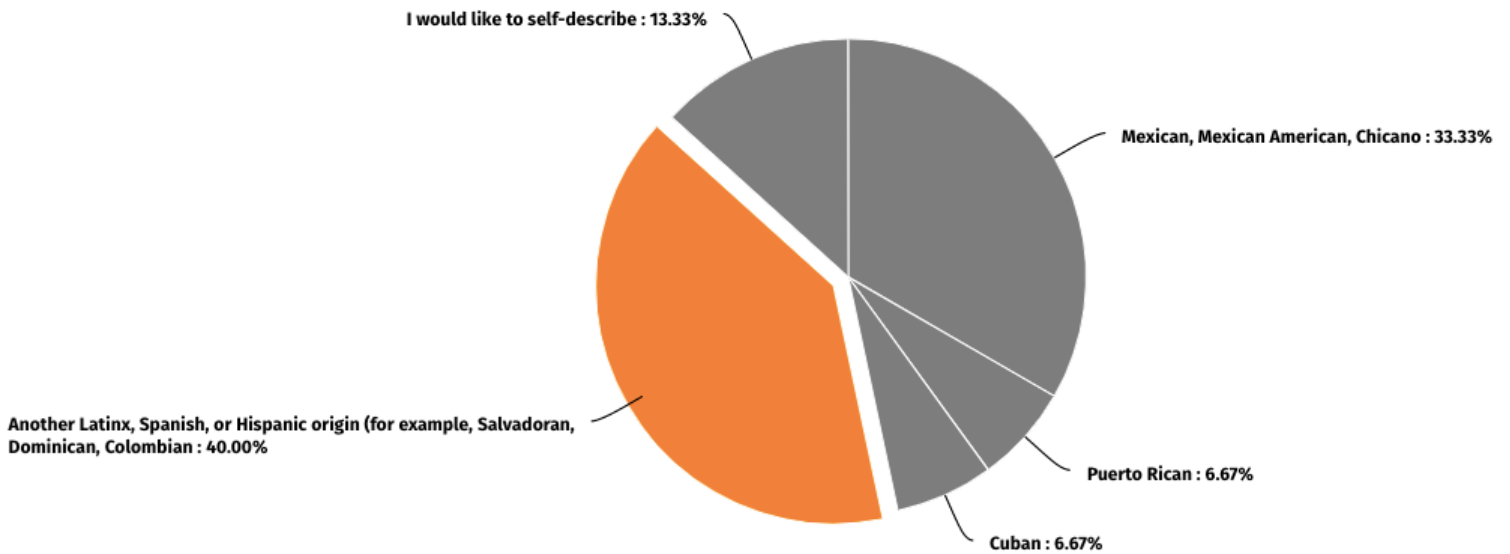
The majority of respondents were women (123 individuals making up 59% of respondents). 66 (33% of respondents) were men, 14 (7%) chose not to specific their gender, 1 person (0.48%) chose to self-describe, and 1 person (0.48%) identified as non-binary.

What is your gender identity?

Figure 4

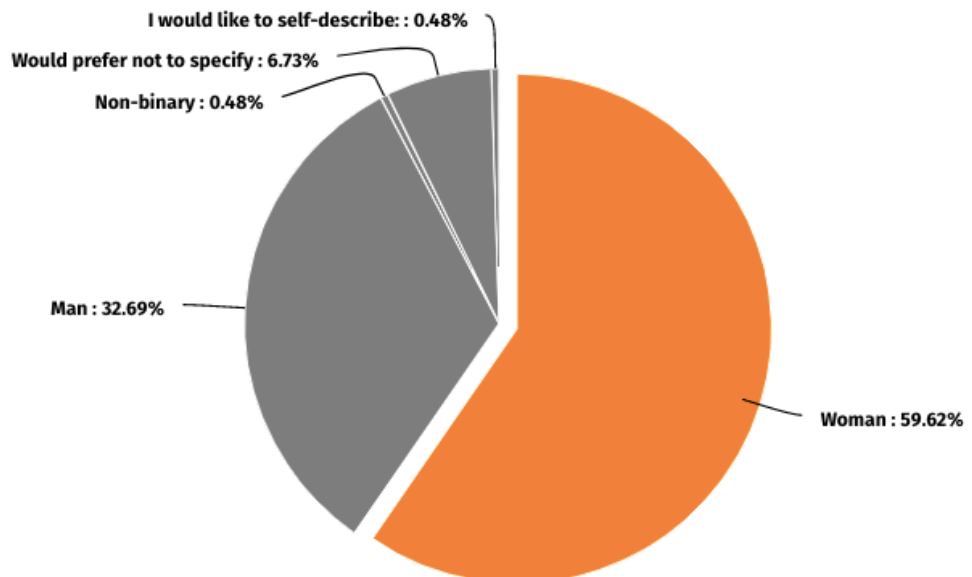# Past behavior and current attitudes towards community engagement

Most who responded regarding their current engagement did work with organizations in Knoxville during the past 5 years (300 people, 72%). The majority of those engaged, roughly 60% (106), did so in 1-4 projects. However, almost 40% of respondents (69) participated in 5 or more projects, and 18% of them (32) were involved in 9 or more projects over the past 5 years.

Have you participated in community engagement work in the past 5 years?

Figure 5
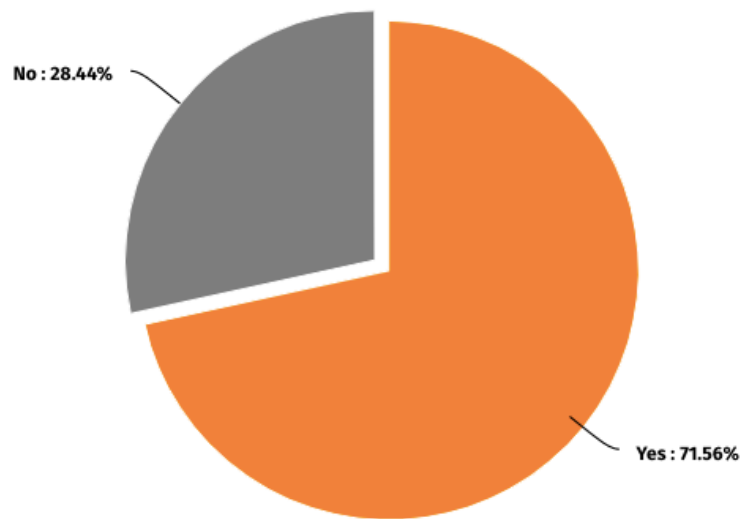
How many community engagement projects have you worked on in the past 5 years?

Figure 6
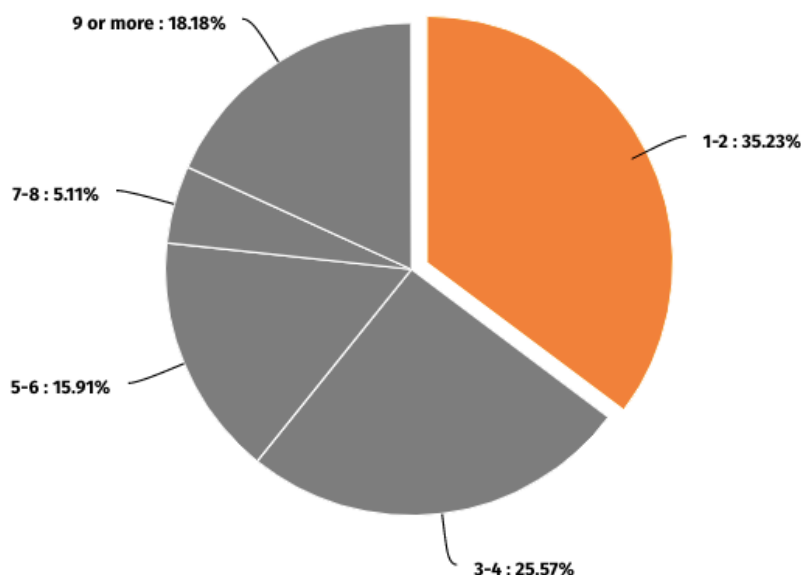
Whether or not respondents had participated before, **the majority reported they were interested in participating now or in the future. 93% (162 respondents) who had done community engagement work in the past 5 years were interested in continued participation, and 72% (81 respondents) who did not participate in the work over the past 5 years were interested in doing so.**

Are you interested in participating in community engagement now or in the future? (Respondents who have participated in community engagement work before)

Figure 7
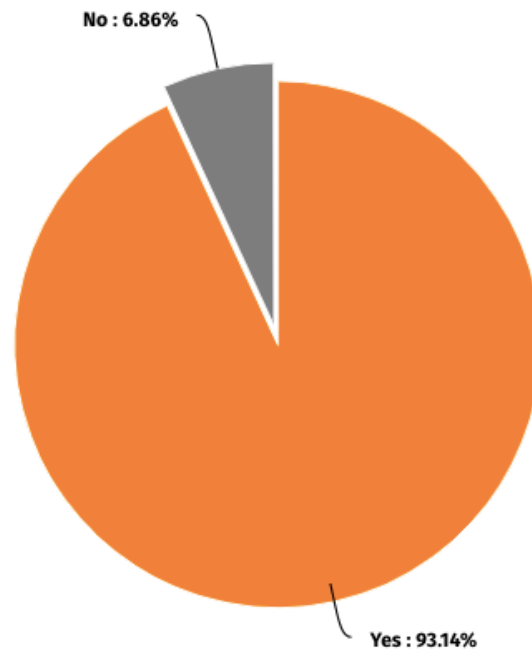
Are you interested in participating in community engagement now or in the future? (Respondents who have not participated in community engagement work before)

Figure 8
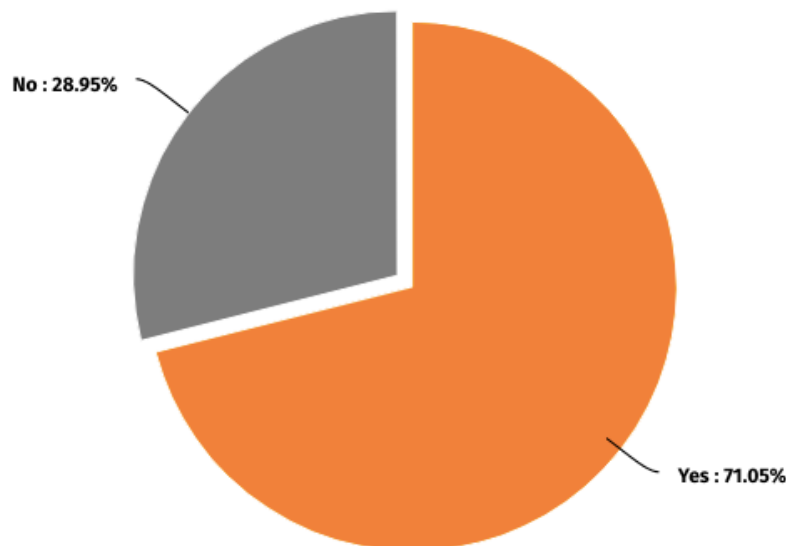
Evaluating interest and needs for future participation in community engagement work

Faculty and staff overwhelmingly plan to seek a role in community engagement projects in the coming academic year (2021-2022). 71% (137 individuals) indicated they were either likely or very likely to do so. Still, 20% (38 individuals) are unsure if they are likely to seek to participate this coming academic year, so understanding the causes for their uncertainty could help UT develop strategies to remove barriers to their participation. The data supports the notion that participation in community engagement work could be increased since more than half of respondents (52%) think that UT could foster or deepen the interest and willingness faculty and staff to participate in community engagement work.

How likely are you to seek participation in a community engagement project in the 2021-2022 academic year?

Figure 9
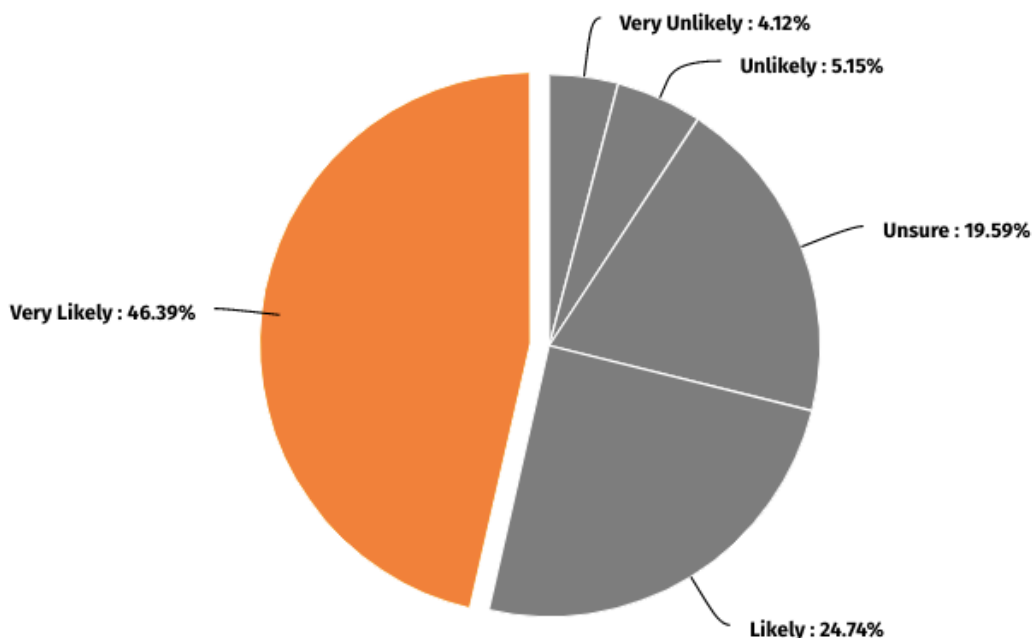
As approximately 52% of respondents answered that UTK could increase the likelihood of their becoming engaged in the community, it is worth thinking about what kinds of policy changes might be made, and incentives made available, for this increased engagement to occur. We address this more in the following sections and concluding remarks of this report.

Is there anything UTK could do that would foster or deepen your interest and willingness to participate in community engagement activities?

Figure 10

- I don't know : 31.08%
- Yes : 51.35%
- No : 17.57%
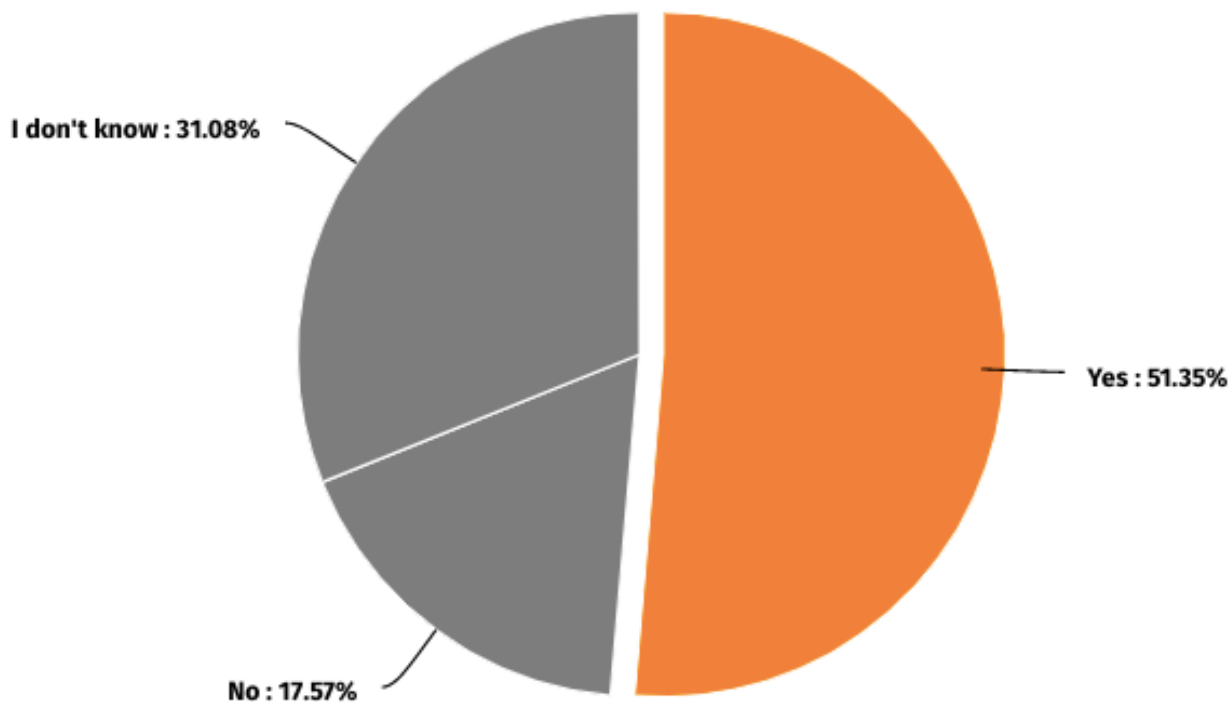
Evaluating non-participation in community engagement

If you are interested in participating in community engagement, but have not done so, can you explain why you have not participated?

Respondent's answers to questions about their non-participation were many and varied. Some mentioned lack of knowledge about what community engagement means (despite it being defined at the beginning of the survey). Others did not know about the Knoxville community's needs, or how to find out about them. Others answered that family obligations kept them from this work. Many respondents mentioned a lack of opportunities. The reasons attributed to the institution include lack of support, other priorities, international focus of their research, the structure of their teaching, lack of invitations to do the work. Certain faculty note that they are not clear about what opportunities are available especially for their disciplinary expertise, notably in the STEM fields. Still others, thinking about the then-current moment, cited COVID as a reason not to do engaged work. Finally, despite the definition supplied in the survey introduction, many answered as if they did not understand the difference between service and engagement work.

Staff members often commented that their positions did not provide the possibility of engagement, and even that they were penalized for doing so. Many faculty responded they perceived a lack of support or communication from department leadership about department values of service, or opportunity to do so. Of those faculty who answered this question with teaching in mind, one provocative answer was that teaching classes with rigid curricula, such as mass introductory classes, makes it difficult to incorporate engagement into classes. Many self-identified instructors note that they are paid only to teach. Among all respondents, the most prevalent answer for why they did not participate in engagement was lack of time due to other UTK professional obligations.

Connecting community engagement to the purpose of the university

> 66
>
> *I think the mission of a university is to benefit the broader community and use its skills and resources to that aim.* 99

Why are you interested in community engagement?

Again, answers are wide and varied. Many respondents define the role of the university as promoting education and critical thinking in the local community and crucial to a strong and democratic community and society, as the quote above suggests. Others cite the importance of advancing social justice to their roles within UTK. Many others articulate a more general desire to 'give back' to the community. Several in a range of disciplines note that their people-oriented research demands that such engagement follow their data-generated knowledge. Others feel that "anything we study should be of value and useful to the community", and that such work with the public is rewarding.

Some respondents comment their disciplinary work studying inequality makes engagement a logical next step. Those who study marginalized populations note that engagement is "the appropriate and ethical thing to do". Certain respondents highlighted their commitment to their discipline as a reason to educate and engage with communities, noting the importance of their disciplinary expertise and how it is based on directly contributing to disadvantaged communities (eg. education, food security, and public health faculty). For such respondents, engagement is not separate from their career-oriented work, but central to it. Such sentiments are not limited to those disciplines addressing direct human needs, however, as this comment makes clear: "I also think the only way we are going to have an engaged public that cares about nature is by giving them hands-on experiences with it and helping them to have positive memories and times in nature."

> 66
> *The University, as a powerful institution in any community, has resources and knowledge that can positively impact the many communities in which it is located.*
> 99

Some respondents noted their commitment directly to communities, often because of their own personal histories. Others note their interest in building the larger community and contributing their skills to that end. A common sentiment was that it is "important to keep connected and informed by the communities we serve". Teaching students the value of community work was another reason for engagement, especially as it pushes students to learn about others. Some noted that engagement makes possible democratizing or making public the tools and possibilities of the university. In addition to giving back, other respondents noted the importance of recognizing the expertise inherent in communities themselves, and how it was necessary to make sure our work recognizes and contributes to that expertise. Others focused on the best practices that may be learned from, then disseminated to, the community. Finally, other respondents note that, for resource-strapped organizations, the contribution of university workers can be very beneficial.

Still others noted that the University also benefits from such work. The benefits we accrue, in this perspective, includes not being an island. Through this work, the University can build connections, partnerships and support, while tackling real world problems. Such work also helps the University maintain credibility and relevance, and is central to the land grant mission. Others commented on the value of engagement to students, including graduate students who may not end up employed in academia.

Still others, in addition to recognizing the University's responsibility to address concrete social problems, also found it is good public relations: "I also believe that engaging with communities across the state will expose people who are otherwise disposed to think poorly of higher education to the benefits that the University and other institutions can bring their communities." For many, engagement is simply a fundamental part of our university mission.

Perception of institutional commitment and support for community engagement

In response to whether University of Tennessee engages with the Knoxville community as much as it could, faculty and staff were split with the largest share suggesting UTK could participate in the community more than it does. 50% (99 individuals) believed no, and 39% (78) indicated they did not know. The other 11% (21) believed UT engages as much as it can. The fact that 78 people were unsure indicates limited understanding of UT's community engagement activities and the support available for many of its faculty and staff to do this work. However, this result suggests that half of the faculty and staff who responded may have feedback for how UT could further engage with the community.

Do you think UT engages with the community as much as it could?

Figure 11

Yes : 10.55%
I don't know : 39.70%
No : 49.75%
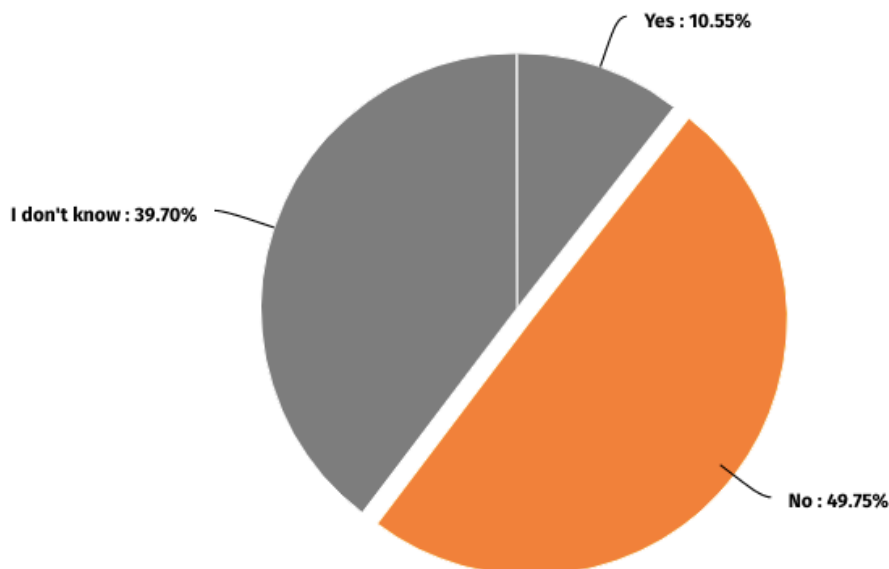
In explaining their answers to their perception of UTK's engagement, the most common response is that respondents have no idea what or how much the University does in the engagement world.

> *I think having a centralized place where faculty and staff can find out about engagement opportunities would be great. Maybe something like this exists and I'm just not aware of it in which case more awareness of what is out there would be beneficial.*

> *I didn't even know there was an office of community engagement and outreach.*

The second most common response was that more could be done.

> *I think UTK makes an effort and is offering support for this type of work more and more, but I'm not sure there is buy-in yet from all faculty/departments.*

Few respondents perceive UT engaging with the community as much as it could, although some enthusiastically endorsed what is being done. A large number of respondents commented on the recently increased focus on, and work in, engagement. Particular holes that were identified included the nearby Indigenous population, various underserved and marginalized populations, schools and community colleges, East Knoxville, and Knoxville College. Some feel the lack of engagement is due to concern over how legislators would respond. One critical comment noted: "there is clearly no vision for how UTK should and will create opportunities for sustained engagement, which is required to make a difference long-term." Others feel many UTK workers do such work independent of a university-coordinated program.

Some respondents chose to answer the question as a critique on the University's support of such work:

> *Community engagement is not considered a pillar for promotion of tenure line faculty; the workloads for most non-tenure track faculty include no time for anything beyond teaching.*

Others echo the perception that UTK does not reward such work. As noted above, a common response is the understaffing and overwork of faculty, and that being more responsive to engagement would require diminishing teaching or research – and a clearer University reward for engagement. Others note that as a research-intensive university, UTK has not made engagement a priority, and that faculty especially are focused on research production. More detail on this issue is provided in analysis of the question below.

In your opinion, what could UTK do to engage with the community more?

By far the most common response to this question was to incentivize and recognize engagement work as a central part of UTK expectations. Faculty added to this comment by noting how busy they were with the standard and quite extensive expectations on the tenure and promotion track. Many noted the stress faculty were under just completing the expected workload, which reinforced their calls to more consistently include engagement in tenure and promotion and annual review processes. But they also suggested providing more incentives to perform engagement work.

One respondent summed up many responses comprehensively and eloquently:

> *Find the people and programs who are doing this best on campus, at other universities; Pay them to play advisory roles for developing something like "best practices". Be in dialogue with, esp. those hardest hit by inequalities, in your community - what do they want/need? Pay them for their time. Invest immediately and for the long haul. Innovate and fund new positions for building meaningful community partnerships with integrity that are long-term and respected by the community. Communicate engagement to our students as something we do every day. Make their opportunities worthwhile. Deepen their understanding of problematic forms of engagement and the biases they carry into community work. Emphasize the collective, not individualized, gains to be made. Orient toward social change and transformation...that means things actually change, not status quo efforts but the hard thinking and work. Give your faculty who are committed to this work TIME, PAY, and RESOURCES. Not everyone will want nor should be coerced to do this; but many are trying to do this work and fulfill all the additional demands of teaching, research, and service that pull them away from engagement. Facilitate, incentivize and reward their efforts (not awards... but dollars and time). I could go on all day.*

Similar to that response, others mentioned that it would be useful to have a more concrete and clear way to link up with community organizations (as the database we are creating seeks to do). This would not only provide opportunities to faculty, but it might also introduce them to community organizations and send the message that departments and colleges care about engagement. In this same vein, many noted interdepartmental collaboration would also be useful, as would be creating opportunities to meet with community leaders.

Another very common response was to engage with Knoxville's disadvantaged communities by working especially with community organizations, but also in schools, community colleges, and, to a lesser extent, with the City.

Several note the challenging legislative environment, and how TN legislators might respond forcefully to working to address community needs.

Other responses included:

- Open campus to the public
- Have more workshops open to the public
- Make faculty aware of opportunities for community outreach, provide a list of faculty specialists to local organizations. Developing infrastructure that would allow community partners to express needs and then linking those needs with faculty and staff methodological or substantive expertise.
- Administrators should take the lead in connecting with community leaders to foster exchanges and opportunities to network.
- Planning activities that appeal to both a specific group and broad coalition of the community.
- Help our undergraduates engage, provide the leadership and support they need to staff and run efforts that establish new engagements.
- Call upon experts and movers in the community to share knowledge at UT.
- There needs to be liaisons between our communities and those from the university willing to engage.
- It is past time to foster a formal collaboration with organizations such as Highlander Research and Education Center to assist UTK in establishing better means to connect the diverse communities of the region.
- It might begin with introspective conversations about what community engagement looks like, which kinds of power relations and histories situate these exchanges, who is at the table and who's not, and how community engagement reproduces or introduces new inequalities that it was intended to address from the onset.
- Expect more courses to include outreach by students and faculty as part of students' education.

(Cont'd from previous list)
- Integrate engagement's role clearly into the new Strategic Vision for the Campus and the Values for the System
- Have satellite sites where students / faculty from a variety of programs offered low-cost or free mental health services, tutoring, job coaching, parenting classes, health and nutrition services, and so on.

Even though half believed UT does not engage as much as it could, most (70%, 137 individuals) believe that their department, school, college, or office support community engagement.

From your perspective, does your department, school, college, or office support community engagement?

Figure 12

I don't know : 14.80%

No : 14.80%

Yes : 70.41%
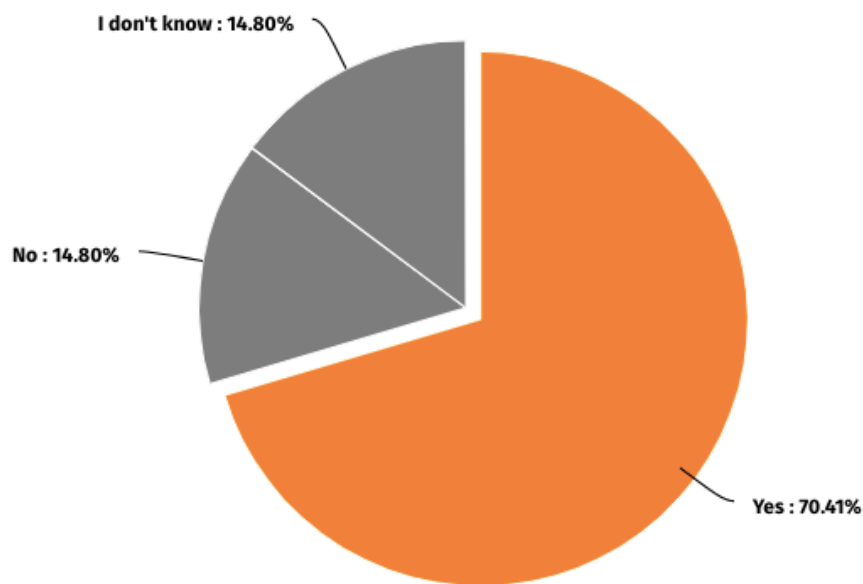
When asked to explain whether "your department, school, college, or office support community engagement?" some answers were useful, while others were less so. Many simply responded that their home units did indeed support engagement work, even suggesting such work was essential or part of their unit's mission. Several mentioned the support of departments but note the lack of support from colleges and the University. One comment is notable:

> 66 *In other words, my perception has been that whatever community engagement I do is above and beyond rather than essential to my functioning as a faculty member. They are happy with the work being done as long as it doesn't disturb or impede what they might consider the more important or fundamental work of traditional publication, classroom teaching, and committee service.* 99

Many responses referred back to the modal response in the previous question, how neither promotion and tenure nor annual reviews reward engagement, nor is such work recognized in the Faculty Handbook. Similar comments suggest the amount of work needed for efficient and collaborative engagement is neither understood nor rewarded.

Many also commented that they have heard nothing about engagement from any of the university units to which they belong. Others mentioned specific outreach campaigns hosted by units, as well as with community collaborators, and how that specific work is recognized. Others responded that they saw engagement valued only as public relations work. In the same vein, many commented that they see engagement supported in ways, but only as work done above and beyond traditional expectations.

Still others reiterated the need for central support and coordination:

> 66 *I'd like to be able to plug into a program without the sense I have to invent it. The university doesn't make clear what resources already exist -- they just promote the idea of engagement.* 99

Disinterest and ideas to shift towards interest and support

If individuals responded "no" to wanting to participate in community engagement work in the future, they were provided an opportunity to give an explanation about this disinterest. By far the most common responses had to do with lack of time as well as institutional support:

- High service loads.
- Lack of institutional support, including pay.
- Engagement is not valued by UTK.
- Non-tenure track faculty engagement is not valued by the institution.

> *I am already overloaded with research and teaching activities.*

What could UTK do that would foster or deepen your interest and willingness to participate in community engagement activities?

Most responses reiterated how engagement needs to be integrated into institutional expectations such as tenure and promotion, rewarded as such, and those doing the work provided with resources, including release time and funding. Those responses often elaborated on comments that there simply is no more time to do work that is not part of professional expectations.

Many additional suggestions focused on how the university needs to create an infrastructure so that communication is facilitated and opportunities are communicated, relationships with community collaborators are created and nurtured, as well as providing incentives like release time and grants. The need for a university infrastructure is highlighted in the following comment: "Again, if I knew what the needs were, I would be happy to give my time. So some platform (database) that was something like a personal ad 'Nonprofit working on racial justice seeks data analyst to ….' would be really helpful."

Staff members also mentioned how they would like their work to be recognized, but that it must occur within work hours to really nurture the work – so recognize it as university work or supply release time.

Further specific suggestions (direct, representative quotes) include:

> *Grant money to support undergraduate or graduate student researchers during the summer and school year to get paid for their involvement with outreach, research, and educational initiatives.*

> *Provide stipends for community partners for the time and effort that they put into this work. Many community-based organizations run on little to no budget and could use the money and support.*

> *Help faculty with childcare.*

> *Decrease expectations for service-related work.*

> *Include community engagement in annual reviews and tenure & promotion standards. Right now, they're just treated as extra activities that don't really count for anything.*

> *Create workshops and seminars about community engagement, particularly for STEM fields that may not translate to immediate community development. Hold workshops to develop the skills necessary to be effective.*

> *Having an intermediary who can build up these relationships, and vet faculty or others to make sure they will actually make a positive contribution, could be very important. Also, if you want something done, pay for it. Outreach costs time -- with the new budget model, it'll cost money, too, if it is time taken from teaching*

> *Better advertising of the good work that our faculty are doing. Everyone likes to feel like their work is recognized.*

Further specific suggestions (direct, representative quotes) include:

> *Clearly explain what engagement the university would support and would not support, and why. Publicize opportunities for such engagement. Make clearer the value of such engagement.*

> *UTK could create a clearinghouse and faculty could access various opportunities through that threshold. I would be in favor of keeping faculty centered in this administrative office.*

> *I would love to see UTK create an "incubator" for community projects or non-profits - we could provide space, administrative support, seed money for project, and faculty buy-out for time to engage in the start-up. Classes via CSEE or Alliance for Better Non-profits would be very helpful, too.*

Future of engagement and opportunities for support

What would you like to see from UTK related to support for community engagement work?

There were large number of respondents who commented that such work requires significant investment of time, both to forge relationships and to do the work itself, and that because of that the 'benefits' often occur slowly. **This has to be recognized in a scholarly environment in which time is a very scarce commodity.**

Several of the comments below were repeated multiple times, and are organized in order of how often they were repeated.

1. More resources for faculty and community, including funding and time
2. More emphasis from the administration, and better information and coordination of opportunities across the university
3. An easily accessible list of small and large community leaders and organizations to present to those who wish to engage, and help engaging with community groups.
4. Recognition and reward in annual reviews and tenure and promotion
5. Support for social justice oriented work, or work that addresses inequalities, even when it contradicts the politics of the General Assembly
6. A Community Engagement Day to connect faculty and students to all the community outreach opportunities available to them
7. Focus on East Knoxville
8. Listen to community

Additional, noteworthy comments include (in no particular order or amount of repetition):

- Develop a system that also places value on community engagement by its employees and faculty
- Recognition that such work requires lots of investment into relationship-building, and so traditional academic products take a long time to generate
- Provide examples of such work
- Specific classes geared to helping nonprofits
- Greater visibility

One especially eloquent response:

“ *It could help to have consultants/advisors to help UTK staff and faculty navigate the establishment of partnerships. Consultation on specific partnerships would be more helpful than general training sessions. For example, we are entering into a new partnership which involved multiple community agencies and stakeholders, and we have many questions about how to structure the relationship so that it is mutually beneficial and allows for clarification of roles and domains of ownership.* ”

How could UTK better support faculty and staff participation in community engagement?

Like the above question, respondents produced answers that were repeated multiple times. Below are responses that are organized in order of how often they were repeated.

1. Course release or other ways to provide time
2. Funding, including pay
3. A 'clearinghouse' with opportunities centralized that faculty could look at and access." Greater communication about, aid in, and coordination of engagement
4. Valuing community-engagement in tenure and promotion and evaluation processes (make it part of the job)
5. Recognize the work/cultural change
6. Provide space and funding for community organizations
7. Help with grants that include engagement
8. Differentiate community engagement from service
9. Host a beginning of the year (or year-end) event to celebrate the recent/past community engagement projects and to provide information regarding opportunities for participation in upcoming projects prior to the initiation of the projects

What challenges do you foresee with community engagement due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

The global COVID-19 pandemic also served as a time of reflection on community engagement for respondents. The below answers are again ordered by number of repeats across respondents.

1. Social distancing limits face-to-face engagement opportunities
2. Difficulty of virtual engagement, including Zoom burnout
3. Many events cancelled or programs put on hold
4. Fear that others are not, or won't get, vaccinated
5. Faculty and community general stress and fatigue
6. Lack of access to technology for marginalized communities, as well as other barriers for them
7. New requirements of COVID limit ability to engage
8. Students and others are reticent to get involved with projects
9. Limited time, as COVID increased other obligations
10. Lack of interest
11. Inability to access engagement sites
12. Trust

Additional, noteworthy comments include (in no particular order or amount of repetition):

- A lot of organizations have re-evaluated their needs and their procedures, which may limit opportunities
- Most all the inequalities prior to the pandemic being amplified.
- Lack of information on the availability or need regarding community engagement
- Very hard to pivot to online services

Please share any other comments that you think would be helpful on the topic of university-community engagement.

The final open-ended question of the survey allowed respondents to express any final thoughts and perspectives on university-community engagement. We close the analysis portion of this section with several of those thoughts as they provided unique insights.

> **"**
> *I am always worried about extractive research relationships and I would like to see efforts to expand community engagement paired with tangible commitments from faculty, students, and the wider university about how it can support and advance community initiatives for racial, economic, immigrant, and gender justice.* **"**

> **"**
> *We have GOT to figure out how to break down barriers to diversity and inclusiveness if we stand a chance of really engaging with our community. As it stands, we have very few faculty members and students from the very communities that we serve.* **"**

> **"**
> *Having an intermediary who can build up these relationships, and vet faculty or others to make sure they will actually make a positive contribution, could be very important. Also, if you want something done, pay for it. Outreach costs time -- with the new budget model, it'll cost money, too, if it is time taken from teaching* **"**

> **"**
> *Thinking in terms of what is the biggest need in Knoxville, closest to UT and then, move outward.* **"**

> **"**
> *It needs to happen, it needs to be visible, it needs to be what the community wants.* **"**

The administration is in general out of touch with faculty activities and expectations. We are expected to perform as faculty at a research one institution without the resources or compensation, and now we are a bit leery about community engagement being levied as another expectation without the resources, staffing, or compensation to make it a meaningful and worthwhile endeavor.

I've probably said enough already, but I think it is so important for the University to increase its utility and visibility in the state. We need to become a desirable partner in community projects, and a respected source of skills and expertise that can stand its ground against reactionary elements in the state.

Serious work in this area requires systemic change in the campus that likely will take a number of years. But you probably know that! Good luck in making progress.

If UTK is serious about the place of community engagement, we must find ways of prioritizing this in the workflow of our faculty and staff.

People are very busy and even over-committed. This tends to keep participation down on all sides--audiences as well as organizers. It's a problem; how to bring in folks who would normally not even think of coming, and make them want to come? So it's not just the same people?

66 *Academic engagement should be connected to scholarship. If not, it is performed/provided carried out outside of the faculty role. the engagement requires academic outcomes such as publications, research, funding, presentations, students, etc. I am not sure what the Carnegie Designation now say about the engaged institution, however, involvement for involvement's sake is not an engaged institution but an institution with community active faculty.* 99

66 *If UTK is serious about the place of community engagement, we must find ways of prioritizing this in the workflow of our faculty and staff.* 99

66 *Make this and diversity related work a part of Elements and value it in terms of faculty annual review. Too often, these kinds of work are invisible labor and should not be so.* 99

66 *I think that this work needs to be incentivized heavily to encourage faculty to take the risk and endure the many challenges and setbacks to make it happen - these incentives will also communicate that the university truly values this work.* 99

66 *I hope you will publish/report the findings of this survey and invite those of us who are committed to outreach and engagement to coalesce around targeted projects.* 99

I believe it is important to have a consistent presence in the community. Having a consistent approach wards off the impression that the university only seeks to engage in the community when we "want" or "need" something. I have heard that particular rhetoric in the communities where other institutions that I've worked for are located.

As I understand it each college had a foundations director who solicits donations from alumni and businesses. There is also now a diversity director in each college (very exciting!). Can we / Should we have a community engagement director in each college that is working to set up partnerships in the same way the foundations director does?

If the campus wanted to be really serious about it, it could be a part of the performance review system. This would require that there are many more smaller opportunities that fit a larger population on campus, things that can be done remotely, things that require asynchronous work, etc.

This would be a really radical shift but I also think it is the sort of radical change that would not only make national news, but would both drive away some current and prospective employees and draw in others who see the value. This sort of big change could also transform the Knoxville and East Tennessee area into an example of how land grant institutions can be proactive with their mission.

Conclusions and next steps

There is clear interest among UTK faculty and staff in performing engagement work with the Knoxville community. Some are already doing this important work, and more want to do so. Yet many feel like the information and opportunities available to them about university-sanctioned engagement work is limited. Additionally, many of those interested in engagement work do not know how to come into contact with community members with whom they could collaborate.

Faculty and staff are also deeply concerned about the lack of time to do engagement work on top of other responsibilities, to the point that few are willing to take on more work without relief from pre-existing duties. Still others are concerned with the way that outside powers, such as the state legislature, would respond to engagement with the community. Finally, there is a clearly expressed need for greater clarity regarding what engagement work is available and useful to do, and guidance on best practices on how to do it well.

In concluding this report, and reflecting on the previous one on community interests in collaborating with UTK, we offer ideas of how to incorporate some of these changes both institutionally as well as culturally at UTK. If UTK takes on this work as the flagship campus, the collaboration we nurture could also serve as a model for other UT campuses across the system.

Make engagement research a part of the tenure and promotion process for tenure-track faculty and annual review process for non-tenure track faculty and staff. Although several individual departments recognize community engaged research, we suggest that the administration could encourage more engaged research and connection to the wider Knoxville area by making it clearer that this work is recognized as part of the pathway in both review and promotion processes. This work also needs to be facilitated by not only removing other obligations; engagement work itself must be rewarded and incentivized. Faculty and staff already feel overburdened, and adding more responsibilities without incentives is an unstable and unrealistic pathway to ensure that engagement work is valued and done well.

This could be accomplished by doing the following:
- Work with administrators on engagement promotion and recognition processes. This could look like incorporating and shifting existing responsibilities of faculty and staff or even the creation of new types of faculty and staff positions.
- Establish funding streams to allow for course buyouts for semesters and/or fellowships for longer commitments for faculty with teaching responsibilities to accomplish community-engaged research.

Establish, fund, and staff a research collaboration center. Many of the struggles and suggestions that faculty and staff provided here show that faculty and staff need more institutional support to accomplish more engagement work. A research collaboration center would address many of the how-tos of collaborative research, and allow faculty and staff to have a direct line to support in establishing and maintaining collaborative research relationships with community members and organizations. Additionally, a collaborative research center would be a first stop for community members and organizations to begin research and collaboration with the wider UTK campus. In a research collaboration center, community members and organizations would be able to bring their own ideas and expertise, and seek assistance in establishing relationships and connections of already interested faculty.

Both this report and our previous research shows that bridging the gap between the community and UTK will require more than events or online tools. Both community members and UTK workers need consistently available help to make and nurture those connections in an institutional setting to which the university has an abiding commitment. A research collaboration center would serve as a connection point for UTK faculty and staff and the Knoxville community and expand the capacity of the Office.

Activities that a research collaborative center could accomplish from our perspective include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Train and educate faculty and staff on community research and engagement practices and resources available to them at the university level.
- Monitor and report on engagement work across the UTK campus for internal use and external certification.
- Establish, maintain, promote, and put to use two interactive databases: one of engagement researchers for internal and community use; and the second of community needs as identified by representative organizations.
- Advocate for more engagement activity within university departments.
- Spearhead outreach campaign in the community for new engagement opportunities.
- Create staffing infrastructure in the center that accomplishes both administrative and research support as well as partnership needs for faculty, staff, and community members

A funded research collaboration center would significantly increase UTK's ability to conduct engagement work, facilitating the needs, interests, and expertise of the Knoxville community to be better and more consistently addressed by skills found among professors, lecturers and staff. Such an effort requires commitment by the administration. There are certainly sources of grant-funding that may augment the work of such a collaboration center. But UTK has already had the ultimately unsuccessful experience of such a center relying primarily on external funding. The HUD-funded community partnership center designed by John Gaventa (Sociology) and Fran Ansley (College of Law) ultimately failed because it was forced to rely on external funding after the initial grant ended. This experience, as well as those of other such centers across the US, confirms that engagement collaboration requires a secure funding base.