

**THE VALUE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION:**

**AN IRISH CASE STUDY**

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## **Abstract**

In the current economic climate we are seeing a renewal of the debate over *What are Universities for?* (Collini 2012) with much focus around ‘value for money’ and the contribution they may make to economic regeneration. We argue here for a widening of this debate beyond economism and individual career enhancement to consider higher education as a public good and the social value it adds. In particular we explore the emerging notion of the ‘engaged university’ which is promoting social, public and civic engagement as a core function for higher education institutions.

The **Introduction** advances some of the current arguments around the role of the university and the need to consider the ‘public good’ or ‘social value’ component. We argue that universities need to become more vocal around the public value they deliver. We then consider the **Social Value of the University** in some detail where we focus particularly on the measuring of value in higher education, a contested terrain as many have noted. This provides us with a much broader perspective than simple ‘value for money’ approaches. Next we consider **The Engaged University** as a possible vehicle for advancing a more social, public or civic orientation for higher education. This perspective is then concretised through a review of **Civic engagement at DCU** (Dublin City University) as an example of Irish HEI activity in this area followed by **Measuring Engagement** which reports on a recent survey seeking to measure or put a value on civic engagement activities by staff at DCU.

## **Introduction**

For Stefan Collini: “Universities across the world in the early twenty-first century find themselves in a paradoxical position. Never before in human history have they been so

numerous or so important yet never before have they suffered from such a disabling lack of confidence and loss of identity” (Collini 2012: 3). Buffeted by the pressures of global competitiveness and the need to prove their ‘usefulness’ universities have sometimes reverted to economic arguments about their direct and, more often indirect, contribution to economic development. The limitation of this line of argument is that it tends to be individualistic and thus ignores the nature of the university as a public good. Being ‘useful’ cannot be reduced to the production of employable graduates if we are not to completely devalue what the purpose of this university is.

Over the last thirty years the processes of globalization have undoubtedly generated considerable economic dynamism. The downside of this is ‘commodification’ that is the belief that everything can be bought and sold including knowledge. Citizens become consumers and students become customers. The whole notion of pursuing new knowledge, forging a community of scholars and the basic freedom of intellectual enquiry has tended to take a back seat. There are undoubtedly huge pressures on universities to become ‘competitive’ in terms of research income, attracting star researchers, and preferably fee-paying students. This pressure is condensed in the ubiquitous ‘ranking’ systems now driving much of strategic thinking. However even today the university is a national cultural institution which is more akin to a national broadcasting association or museum than it is to a retail store or multinational company.

In a bid to rethink and re-energise the contemporary university there is now increasing attention being paid to its public mission. Historically, as Craig Calhoun puts it “Universities flourished on the basis of a sometimes explicit and more often tacit expectation that they would serve public purposes” (Calhoun 2010:46). Creating knowledge through research, transmitting it through teaching and learning, and applying it to social need is the business of

universities. Creating technically competent graduates and generating technological innovations for private profit might be necessary activities but they do not define what the university is basically about. While the market has encroached on socially driven priorities there is now – especially after the 2008-2009 Great Recession- a backlash which seeks to re-embed the market within social relation and the university within its community.

Sometimes neglected in current debates around the changing role of the university in the era of globalisation is the regional dimension. On the whole, universities have been characterised by low territorial embeddedness but recently policy-makers have focused on the regional regeneration dimension. John Goddard, for example, has called for a re-invention of the traditional 'civic university' to make it fit for purpose today, to “realise that its location helps form its identity and provides opportunities for it to grow and help others....” (Goddard 2010: 5). Globalisation has, paradoxically, strengthened the role of the region (compared to the nation-state) and we now see higher education institutions engaging in novel ways with stakeholders in what are becoming known as 'learning regions'. Learning and teaching is becoming more interactive and experiential as well as locationally specific.

It is at the local level that we are finding a renewed interest in engagement with society. Universities call it civic engagement, community engagement, social engagement and public engagement but the overall drift is clear. Whereas traditionally universities have been seen (and seen themselves) as autonomous institutions they are now striving for some form of local embeddedness. They want to be 'relevant' to their local communities, promote widening participation and access, and maybe engage, in forms of community knowledge exchange. There is a degree of self-interest here in terms of garnering political support and some advantages can be gained in terms of 'brand differentiation' but, nevertheless, there

seems to be a new society, - state - higher education paradigm emerging which sets the context for the discussion below on the social value of the university.

### **Social value of the university**

For many academics it is probably inherently wrong to conceive of the work of a university in terms of its 'value'. Civic engagement, for example, seeks to build partnerships and shared objectives with communities based on values such as reciprocity or social responsibility. Putting a monetary value on such work might be seen to devalue its ethical component. As one of us has said in the past in 'Measuring the social value of universities': "Not everyone within the higher education sector itself is convinced that valuation of higher education activity is a worthwhile task" (Kelly and McNicoll 2011: 4). We might end up just measuring what is easily quantifiable (number of students, number of publications, etc) and thus miss out on the more intangible ways in which higher education contributes to society. This is a challenge certainly, but not one we can escape.

Once we get beyond the notion that value is simply about financial value we can see how complex the issue of value really is. Even economic value is a much broader concept than financial value which measures actual money flows, because it embraces resources used and generated including time and such seemingly intangible elements such as 'quality of life'. The financial return to the individual student of a degree is only a very small part of what universities contribute to society. A holistic approach to the 'worth' of the university to society would have to take into account the social value generated by teaching, research and civic engagement but also any identifiable 'externalities' in terms of the broader social effects for example in relation to health, social mobility and intercultural dialogue.

If we now accept that universities can and do benefit society, the next question is how we might measure or at least estimate that value. Given that higher education runs in public money it is only right that some form of social accountability exists. Certainly the fear might be that ‘valuation’ exercises might then feed into funding allocations but it would be doing civic engagement a disservice to leave it as just and intangible, ‘feel good’ optional extra. When we move to try and consider the ‘social rate of return’ that universities provide we are helping to move the debate beyond the ‘individual rate or return’ problematic which only considers the individual graduate. Furthermore, once we introduce the language of ‘social value’ we open the door to a consideration of how the ‘worth’ of higher education can be linked to the ‘values’ of the society within which it operates.

Given that a university is not a market – or even quasi- market - actor, financial value measurement is probably inappropriate to capture the value of its non-market impacts. The same could be said, of course, for libraries and museums, and for the ‘third sector’ in general. Kelly and McNicoll thus consider the ‘socially weighted’ economic valuation encapsulated in the ‘social return on investment’ (SROI) model (Kelly and McNicoll 2011: 19). It is an outcomes-based measurement tool, with stakeholder involvement and consultation. However, given the difficulty in applying it to higher education, Kelly and McNicoll propose, rather, an outputs-based measurement tool (given the difficulty in measuring social outcomes) that they call a Socially Modified Economic Valuation (SMEV) approach. At its simplest this model focuses on what higher education institutions do and what they deliver.

In terms of ‘community outreach’ the SMEV model would seek to weight socially the contribution of its activities. Thus activities in socially disadvantaged areas would be ‘worth’ more in terms of social value generated. By using the same type of social weighting for example which aids planning in the health sector for example (in terms of health outcomes),

the universities will be able to better assess their portfolio of activities in terms of the overall desired societal outcomes. It also allows for a better integration between strategic planning and the university's strategic goals and objectives. Furthermore, the model allows a university to customise its approach, for example, making civic engagement a priority mission or it may seek to differentiate itself by devising its own 'social weighting' to reflect the importance it places on local community activities.

We understand that measuring value in higher education is a contested terrain and may still invoke an economism we would wish to surpass. However, it is necessary to evaluate a number of successful attempts to generate 'hard' data in the value of university-community engagement to assess the method. One of the best documented is the Higher Education Community Engagement Model created in 2003 by several Russell group universities in the UK in collaboration with the Corporate Citizenship Company. The aim of this benchmarking model was to capture community activities which are conducted over and above the university's core purposes of teaching and research. It captures data on a number of key categories:

1. **Why contributions are made** eg charitable gifts (responding to community needs and requests with minimal expectation of a return for the university); community investment (investing in particular issues because they are in the university's interests long-term, so looking for a 'win-win'); core initiatives in the community (meeting the core needs of the university as the primary motivation, but structured in such a way as to deliver additional benefits to the community). Motives matter because they help assess what types of benefit need to be measured. Being clear about motives also helps build trust with wide audiences, and a basis for communication about future partnerships.

**2. Who is contributing** - A university is itself a broad community, composed of many different groups. To ensure transparency, whilst capturing the full range of contributions made by the university community as a whole, inputs are categorised by the particular group responsible for making the contribution.

**3. Types of contribution** - How the university contributes to a project can take three forms - cash, time and in-kind, with an additional category of management costs – i.e. the costs of managing the entire community engagement programme. Defining these categories helps to identify more clearly how the university contributes to the community.

**4. What is supported** – To get a picture of the types of projects supported in the community the subject focus (Education, health, environment etc.) of each project is identified.

**5. Where it is supported** – the geographic scope of each project is also identified.

**6. Type of beneficiary organisation** – details of the type of organisation (school etc.) that receives support from the university. Thus based on an assessment for each community oriented activity along these lines the university is able to establish consolidated information about both the costs and benefits of a community engagement programme.

In the 2010/11 **Business and Community Interaction Survey** HEFCE found that in real terms the contribution to society by higher education had risen by 41 percent since the 2003-04 survey and now had a monetary value of £3.302 million. Just in terms of cultural community events the UK HEIS in 2010/2011 attracted 1.3million people to free lectures and 1.7 million paid to attend performance events such as music, film, dance and drama. The universities are also found to have a major role in terms of local regeneration and leveraging in of EU funding. Many universities are engaged with regional and local partners around social regeneration projects contributing skills and creativity. It was found that some 375.000 people were employed directly by universities and colleges and that the student body accounted for £2.5 million personal expenditure off-campus.



Another study which carried out a novel appraisal of how universities benefit society was **Degrees of Value** by the New Economics Foundation (NEF 2011). It seeks to go beyond the benefits to the individual graduate (25% greater economic potential than the non graduate) and the benefits which 'human capital' provides in terms of economic growth. Volunteering is seen to generate higher aspirations among young people because of mentoring work which, in turn, is linked to greater 'social' inclusion. Thus the impact of one specific form of community engagement-namely volunteering-can be seen to be quite complex. Overall, though it impacts directly and indirectly in creating a more active or engaged form of citizenship. The emphasis is thus on the 'externalities' that is the indirect social impact of civic engagement activities.

The NEF Report covers some areas which are quite straightforward such as the provision of open cultural facilities by some universities. Thus, for example, the Warwick Arts Centre offers a high calibre cultural centre attracting over a quarter of a million visitors per annum. NEF estimated that in terms of increased local reputation for the university, and in terms of the cultural enrichment of the local community it was 'worth' £27 million. Much harder to estimate is the 'worth' of the university in terms of facilitating greater social mobility although they estimate that Manchester Metropolitan University's access and wider participation programmes in a low-income area contributes £147 million to society per annum, mainly in terms of the increased earning and spending power of graduates.

In Ireland, Campus Engage, a network for the promotion of civic engagement in Irish higher education carried out a survey in which provides valuable qualitative data. Half of the responding institutions (12 out of 24) reported that community engaged research was part of their institutions research strategy with a similar proportion saying the same for community-based or service learning as it is sometimes called. Volunteering, by both students and staff,

was a mayor feature of community engagement as it is usually defined in the Irish higher education sector. Overall, this survey found that “compared with international civic engagement activities within higher education, Ireland is at an early stage, despite signal advances in some intuitions” (Campus Engage 2010: p.13). That uneven development is now being addressed with support from the Higher Education Authority.

### **The engaged university**

We now need to unpack the elements of civic engagement work we are seeking to capture through the various evaluation models. First though, we should probably clarify the terminology used in relation to the ‘engaged university’ as it tends to vary considerably across countries. Public engagement became a common way of describing the broad relationship of a university with those external to it, as in the Beacons of Public Engagement. Social engagement would be a variant on public but with an implicit charge of equity as underlying the partnership. This has become explicit in some U.S. colleges which refer to schools or programmes of ‘social justice’. Community engagement usually refers to involvement with a local neighbourhood defined geographically. Civic engagement, again, would be a variant on these common terms which has a stronger mutual consultation or citizenship orientation.

Today it is possible to state a fairly widely accepted definition of the ‘engaged university’. Thus, for example, the international Talloires Declaration on the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education states that:”We are dedicated to strengthening the civic role and social responsibility of our institutions. We pledge to promote shared and universal human value, and the engagement by or institutions within our communities and with our global neighbours” (Watson et al 2011: xxiii). Higher education, from this

perspective, has a responsibility to serve the needs of society, over and above its own missions in regards to teaching and research. The engaged university is committed to a broad agenda, which some would see in terms of ‘corporate social responsibility- in which staff and students assume a commitment to a social good and play a positive role in local, national and global communities.

To be clear, the engaged university is a project in the making and not an actual type of university. Thus the UK’s Beacons for Public Engagement have issued a Manifesto for Public Engagement which states in its introduction that:

“We believe that universities and research institutes have a major responsibility to contribute to society through their public engagement, and that they have much to gain in return.

We are committed to sharing our knowledge, resources and skills with the public, and to listening to and learning from the expertise and insight of the different communities with which we engage.

We are committed to developing our approach to managing, supporting and delivering public engagement for the benefit of staff, students and the public, and to sharing what we learn about effective practice.”

The underlying argument, or philosophy, is that while higher education institutions already play an important social role this is not usually recognised by themselves, or by society at large. Furthermore, it is through public engagement that universities can (re)discover their own distinctive missions in terms of social transformation as well as gain hugely in practical terms through this engagement not least through experiential learning.

Many colleges, such as the ‘land grant’ universities in the US and the ‘civic universities’ in the UK, have a long history of engagement with the local communities which,

in a sense, they sprung from. One such institution (the University of Brighton) recalls how it “has emerged from its local communities. Established through the development of local trades colleges, and with a strong concentration on vocationally based learning, the university has a powerful natural bound with locality and communities” (Watson 2005: p.34). This type of pattern, with local variations of course, is more common than acknowledged in an era when all universities strive after placement in , sometimes dubious, global rankings. If we consider how higher education institutions were originally socially embedded then we might better understand the need for social (re) embedding today after some thirty years when market predominance has led to considerable dis-embedding.

What is very clear is that there are many national variations of the ‘engaged university’. The dominant conceptual model is that of the US ‘service mission’ which has its roots in the 1950’s (see Bawa and Munck 2011). The newly emerging dominant world power launched its overseas development model and its local community development model at the same time. Both were marked by a confident US position in the new world order as the former colonial powers faded in importance. Both had democracy at their core but, it must be said, a rather ethnocentric model of democracy which assumed the US as global model. Today it is very hard to see how this approach can be universalised given the gap between it and the world views of Islamic and other states, societies and higher education institutions. A new, more pluralist, model for civic engagement may yet emerge but at the moment debate seems somewhat stalled.

In the Third World the engaged university has always had a more directly political role. In general, particularly in South Africa and across Latin America, civic engagement has seen a quite explicit identification with the problems and aspirations of poor and marginalized communities. Universities - or, more often, individuals and departments within

them- have made a strong ethical commitment to redressing power imbalances and using their resources for democratic development. The UK model – which Ireland is arguably closest to – always had an implicit understanding of what the social democratic state was and about the civic role of the university. It was neither a business nor ‘service’ model à la US, nor explicitly political as in the Third World, rather more a tacit understanding that universities were a public good and had an inescapable and natural social role to play. That philosophy is now becoming more explicit once again.

One of the main features of the engaged university – especially following the 2007-2008 economic crisis – is its commitment to local and regional socio-economic development. Chatterton and Goddard have noted that while “all higher education embrace some notion of territoriality within their mission statements” in practice most universities, in particular, are “characterised by low levels of local territorial embeddedness (Chatterton and Goddard 2000: 476). Universities are now being urged by policy-makers to engage in a more meaningful dialogue with local and regional stakeholders who are not just consumers of their products. Teaching and research programmes are now expected to contribute to local and regional needs and universities are actively seeking to adapt their traditional models, sometimes opportunistically, and other times in a mutually respectful dialogue which does not sacrifice the still relevant role of the university as custodian of knowledge.

Many higher education institutions today seek to be, or become, relevant to the city or locality they are based in. Gone are the days when local relevance was seen as the second prize while the first prize went to those who achieved ‘global excellence’. Thus in 2010, the Creative Dublin Alliance was formed, led by the local authority but with the enthusiastic participation of all the Dublin city-region universities alongside the business sectors. Its objective was a knowledge-economy based globalisation and regeneration of Dublin in what

was clearly a win-win alliance for higher education and the private sector. Another example was the early social engagement survey, carried out by Cambridge University in which sought to demonstrate the local relevance of what was at the time the premier national university in the UK. Regional and local engagement may also, to be clear, serve the needs of a university.

The engaged university is more, though, than an economic driver through technology transfer. Its staff and students are also citizens so the engaged university overlaps with the active citizenship agenda. As John Goddard puts it: “Future graduates will need more awareness of the major issues facing the world and their part in it if they are to be effective engaged citizens” (Goddard 2011: 23). Thus, for example, student volunteering often seen as the main plank of student engagement is really not sufficient. The engaged university, in the global era, will need to rethink the syllabus to see if the existing disciplinary boundaries are conducive to an understanding of the world around us in all its complexity. We may be providing the technical skills that society requires but are we developing the critical understanding of major contemporary problems and their possible solution?

Today’s university exists in a complex multi-scalar world where local, regional, national and transnational scales of activity interact in novel ways. Knowledge has always been transnational but universities have tended to be national in outlook. Today universities seek to be locally embedded and relevant to their local communities, while at the same time being conscious of the global dimension. In the past the ‘regional university’ was perceived as less prestigious than the ‘national universities’. Such rankings are irrelevant today as the regional dimension assumes increasing importance with the ‘hollowing out’ of the nation-state due to the pressures of globalisation. The engaged university thus has many

stakeholders, engages with diverse communities and has to deal with competing visions of how it might succeed.

### **An Irish case study**

Civic engagement is defined as a mutually beneficial relationship between the university and the community, understood in its broadest sense to encompass local, national and global groups committed to social, economic, political and cultural development. It encompasses a range of activities through which staff and students engage with the needs of communities and also seek a development of their own social understanding through active and global citizenship. In brief, civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of communities through the development of appropriate knowledge, skills and values. It should not be seen as an optional add-on or even as a 'third stream' activity as it is sometimes called, as it lies at the very core of the university's strategic outlook. Engagement with society, with enterprise, with communities and public engagement more broadly, is an integral element of what the contemporary university is about or should be about.

Engagement is a multi-level process as befits the position of the university in a globalised, connected, networked, information-based era. It occurs at a local level and addresses the particular needs of the community; it is also increasingly regional in scope, and, as ever, has a national orientation but it is also firmly European in its vision and scope. Finally, it is also global in outlook and universities are very cognisant of the relationship between the local and the global which are interlinked both spatially and socially.

We no longer hear so much about universities as “ivory towers” divorced from the real world. Today, the complaint is more about the “corporate university” dancing to the tune of the big pharmaceuticals and other corporate players. Many commentators now refer to the phenomenon of “academic capitalism,” as learning for learning’s sake is giving way to the business agenda.

While not wishing to deny that the contemporary university is affected by the market in many ways, we must note that it is also part of the community. The engaged university recognizes that it is part of the community around it. The success of a university is very often completely intertwined with the prospects of the civic community of which it is a part. A thriving university boosts the town or city in which it is situated. Likewise, a dynamic city is good news for any university trying to make its mark in a global knowledge system. The productive interaction and mutual engagement between the university and the wider community are beneficial to both in many ways. It is now increasingly acknowledged that universities can play an important role in community development, in support of civil society, in a knowledge-based global economy, and in a socially challenged world. This can lead to enhanced human and social capital development; improved professional infrastructure and capacity building; and, more broadly, to benefits for the socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural dimensions of the wider community. The contribution toward the development of active citizenship is an intangible but significant addition. To generate debates on issues of significance to communities is also an area where universities can contribute directly to the quality of life.

The main component plan of university strategy that impacts on students as global citizens, apart from the internationalization strategy, is the civic engagement strategy—if indeed they have a separate civic engagement strategy, which is not always the case. This was a new departure for DCU for the 2006–2008 strategic period. DCU is a relatively young university



with a strong science and technology orientation but sited on the north side of Dublin that has the highest indices of social deprivation. The argument was that community or citizenship was, or should be, the third leg of university core business alongside teaching and research. The main plank chosen to implement this new strategy was the opening of a teaching center in neighboring Ballymun in partnership with the local regeneration company Ballymun Regeneration Limited. North Dublin in general and Ballymun in particular had exceptionally low levels of access to higher education and the town/gown divide was at its widest. In June 2008, the university's community-based learning center was opened in an approximately 130-square-meter educational facility in the heart of Ballymun, with planning for this exciting venture going back to 2006. We were joined by the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Council (VEC) in an innovative partnership to produce joined-up thinking that could help bridge the gap between the formal educational qualifications of local residents and university-entry requirements.

The Shangan Road center had already begun to act as a real window between a severely disadvantaged neighborhood and the world of higher education. But, within DCU, this social and educational experiment causes waves across the system. How to "mainstream" it? How to resource it? Should we expand our activities? Do we mediate all our community engagement activities through the center? These are, of course, the problems of success.

If the university is not an ivory tower, nor an extension of the business world, then it needs to be seen as a socially embedded institution. There are dense social networks that some may wish to call social capital, tying in the university with its local community. These can include social, economic, cultural, political, and sporting links. Social embeddedness is a two-way street, a relationship that is sometimes fraught but always productive. One of our university's international partners at Arizona State University (ASU) put it like this when describing their design aspiration to be socially embedded: "Every university is geographically situated.

Every university *has* a place, and every university *is* a place. We must leverage our place, leverage our unique locale and its culture. We must leverage the cultural diversity of our locale, its economic and cultural heritage, its social dynamics, and its aspirations” (Arizona State University 2011). The university is, or should be, firmly committed to social transformation and the pursuit of knowledge for the benefit of the community. A socially embedded university becomes anchored in a community, with its positive democratic and communal values.

In its turn, the university can put its considerable intellectual resources to imaginative uses. Some universities do not seem conscious of the place they inhabit, but some smart universities make use of their surroundings and create mutually beneficial linkages with local communities and neighborhoods. DCU is a Dublin city university in a very real sense. It does not exist only in an anonymous international academic market. Local issues impinge on us in a direct manner; for example, in relation to the Metro North project designed to create a rail link between Dublin city center and Dublin airport passing through DCU, or the siting of IKEA (a major Swedish furniture outlet) in Ballymun. For its part, DCU, as a sizable public institution, has the ability to bring community issues to light with a certain degree of independence and moral legitimacy. As a player with considerable weight in our local communities, the university needs to act in a socially responsible manner. If it loses its social relevance and denies a commitment to academic citizenship, it is in danger of making itself irrelevant.

Universities are well placed, we would argue, to link the requirements of the economy with the demands of citizenship. The production of knowledge was once engaged in for its own sake; now we see the instrumentalization of knowledge by market requirements, undermining the traditional elitist role of the university. The contemporary university can regain a positive role by prioritizing social goals, by researching in socially relevant ways, and by placing

social inclusion at the heart of its mission. DCU intends to play an increasing role with regard to the community around it. It is well placed to bridge the gap between science, technology, and citizenship. Science needs to be relevant to people, and to engage with the day-to-day life of the citizen. Technology, not least, information and communication technology, permeates the world around us, but it needs to be humanized.

We could also argue that DCU (as other universities in their own settings) is also well placed to bridge the gap between the global and the local. We are constantly reminded that we live in a global knowledge economy, but we also live in particular places. In DCU's case, it is firmly embedded in Dublin's Northside, a hinterland characterized by acute deprivation but also a great creative dynamism. For DCU, its civic engagement strategy is not an add-on, something nice to do during the good times; rather, we are firmly committed to building our civic engagement role by promoting DCU in the community in all its aspects, and working alongside others to promote social, economic, and cultural development in our part of the city.

### **Measuring engagement**

There are many challenges to assessing the overall impact or value of the work of a university to the economy and to society. As a complex organisation producing many different outputs there are several dimensions to university impact, dimensions that are financial and socio-cultural as well as educational. In considering the broader impact of any university there is also the challenge of finding ways to reflect the value of non-monetary or non-market benefits generated by universities. Dublin City University is a case in point. It is a not-for-profit organisation, like other Irish Universities, and there are many areas of its work which are not intended to be commercial ventures or to generate profit. Such activities (e.g.

providing free legal advice clinics for local residents) are an important part of the University's ethos of civic engagement but it can be difficult to capture or assess the value of these activities alongside others that have clearer financial flows associated with them or which give a financial return.

The underlying methodology for this framework has previously been elaborated in detail in a number of reports and associated papers. A key point is that this vision of holistic impact assessment and valuation is rooted in the principles of welfare economics and involves the application of cost-benefit analysis techniques to higher education outputs. The methodological approach follows accepted theory and practice for economic appraisals and programme evaluation - as used by the World Bank and the UK's HM Treasury as well as being compatible with the analytical techniques recommended by the Irish Government's Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit. The valuation concept is relatively straightforward, although the entire valuation task (covering the entirety of the University) would be an extensive one for a single organisation to tackle and could not be undertaken within the parameters of the current pilot project. However the key goals of this pilot project were:

- to lay the ground work for further development by practical application of the theoretical approach to at least some aspects of the University's work
- to consider the lessons learned in the course of the pilot and make recommendations for next steps towards achieving holistic valuation
- in particular to consider the steps required to develop credible evidence and metrics for assessing some of the 'non-market' aspects of the University's work such as civic engagement.

Part Two of this report gives a number of exemplar case studies where we are piloting the output valuation. Reflections on the lessons learned from the pilot study and the next steps next steps that could be undertaken to usefully extend the analysis are included in the last section (Conclusions and Reflections) of the report.

The previous part of the report highlighted the importance of Dublin City University as a major economic player in the city – generating output and employment and contributing to Irish GDP. However the analysis stops short of putting any valuation on the impact of what the University actually does. It does not consider the broader value generated by the University’s teaching, research or outreach work. For that, a different approach is needed.

This section of the report applies the new and holistic approach to valuation, taking examples of DCU ‘non-market’ engagement activities and applying economic ‘shadow-pricing’ techniques to impute the economic value to society of the outputs delivered. Shadow-pricing is a tool used in cost-benefit analysis and is a recognised way to estimate the value of an output where an actual financial flow does not exist or where it is clearly a ‘non-market price’ (for example it is a ‘nominal’ or and ‘administered’ price.) Shadow-pricing is about finding ways to impute the underlying economic value of an output which cannot be observed by looking at financial value alone.

There are a range of techniques that can be employed. These include ‘revealed preference’ techniques (which rely on observations about actual behaviour – for example what is paid for something similar elsewhere, or willingness to spend time) and ‘stated preference’ techniques (which seek to impute a value based on what people may be hypothetically ‘willing to pay’ for something if they were required to pay for it). Revealed preference techniques are generally regarded as more reliable as they are based on observed behaviour. In this study we have used ‘revealed preference’ measures exclusively.

Another important aspect to using cost-benefit analysis techniques in a holistic framework to assess economic value generation is that it is also legitimate to apply sets of ‘social weights’ to the outcome economic evaluation. Application of a ‘social weight’ means that a higher value can be imputed to an activity that affects the target group compared to one which affects other groups. This is in the interests of ‘equity’ and is appropriate when the project, programme or activity being assessed affects higher policy priority social groups. This is particularly relevant in some of the case studies presented, where the DCU initiative is explicitly targeted at priority groups.

In the case study examples where social weights are applied, these have been based on sample distributional weights from the UK Treasury Green Book. The Green Book is a UK government handbook of good practice for policy evaluation and provides guidance on approaches to valuation of non-market impacts. This includes using weights to impute additional value to policies or projects that are targeted at particular priority groups such as low income groups. Sample distribution weights are given in the Green Book, based on income quintiles with positive weights given where the beneficiaries are in the bottom two income quintiles. The top two quintiles have negative weights with the third quintile being neutral.<sup>1</sup>

### **Case Study: DCU in the Community**

DCU in the Community is a University initiative that is intended to act as a bridge between the local community and the University. It does this by promoting access and participation in educational programs that benefit the residents of the University’s host community of North Dublin. Its Community Based Learning Centre is located in the Shangan neighbourhood in

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<sup>1</sup> See : The Green Book : Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government TSO 2003 & 2011  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/220541/green\\_book\\_complete.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220541/green_book_complete.pdf)

Ballymun. DCU in the Community continually seeks to develop partnerships in the community through its advisory board, participation in Campus Engage (the national third level network for the promotion of civic engagement) and its outreach efforts in the Community.

DCU in the Community has five core programmes of engagement, all of which seek to promote access to education

- Bridge to Higher Education;
- Provision of FETAC Level 5 Modules;
- Community Maths Programme;
- Project FUTSAL and the Ballymun Football Foundation Programme;
- Summer School

The Bridge to Higher Education Program consists of three tiers of classes that prepare students to apply for admission to degree programs through Dublin City University. Classes comprise 10 – 12 week modules that address basic academic skills and strengthen students' research and study skills in preparation for certain professional areas of interest. In addition DCU also offers courses to DCU in the Community students that help to integrate them into third level classes at DCU and programs that encourage their participation in campus life. The completion rate of students enrolled in college preparatory modules during 2011 was 70%.

FETAC Level 5 programmes are delivered in partnership with local education and training providers in conjunction with Whitehall College of Further Education, Community and Family Training Agency (CAFTA) and Ballymun Men's Centre. All five FETAC Level 5

component awards which can include topics in nursing, marketing, human growth and development, social studies; and working with groups can apply toward selected DCU modules and degrees.

The community maths programme (piloted in 2012) is aimed at addressing a range of community needs – from parents who would like to better support their children in learning maths to those adults seeking to enhance their finance and budgeting skills. Courses also help students who are preparing for their leaving certificates and those seeking tutoring for undergraduate courses as well as secondary education courses. Some of the maths classes are run within the Bridge to Higher Education programme.

DCU in the Community is partnered with the Football Association of Ireland, Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. and Whitehall College of Further Education to run one of three pilot FUTSAL (Football Used Towards Social Advancement and Learning) hubs. PROJECT FUTSAL is a joint initiative between the Football Association of Ireland, the Welsh Football Trust and Interreg. The goal of FUTSAL is to provide education and work opportunities for people in disadvantaged areas and support community regeneration via employment and volunteerism in the field of sport.

The FUTSAL programme consists of an academic year of adult education, football coaching education, volunteering opportunities and work placements. Participants study for a range of FETAC accredited modules in the area of General Education, Health, Fitness and Sport in the Community, as well as selected FAI modules, such as Coaching, Referee Education, and Strength and Conditioning. Additionally, the programme has a strong disability coaching and



disability studies component. Students from DCU's School of Health and Human Performance designed a series of Masterclasses for the programme for 2012. In this way, the Ballymun programme draws on DCU's expertise in Sport, Health and Human Performance to introduce participants to state of the art sports education.

DCU in the Community offers summer courses which included topics related to recreation and health as well as those that will prepare students for college including “Building Self Confidence,” “the Mature Student Experience” , “Needs of the Elderly” and Photographing People and Portraits.

DCU in the Community also regularly offers study support and course application preparation, facilitates volunteering in the community with an annual ‘Volunteer Fair’ and responds to community need ( such as offering English Conversation classes for non-native speakers. )

Three different approaches were applied to shadow-price DCU in the Community activities.

(1) A Market-equivalent fee (a ‘parallel price’) was used to impute a value for the full time FUTSAL programme. (Table 4.) To determine a ‘market-equivalent fee’ for the FUTSAL programme we reviewed a range of courses (including FE Colleges) offering similar types of coaching and training activity. The official ‘full economic cost’ of this level of course has been stated by the Department of Education and Skills at €3653 .<sup>2</sup> While this is still an ‘administered price’<sup>3</sup> rather than a ‘market price’, it is likely to reflect the minimum economic value being delivered.

(2) For volunteering work (Table 5), we applied the ‘opportunity cost’ of an hour of volunteer delivery time at minimum wage rates.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2013092500071> (Statement from Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon))

<sup>3</sup> i.e set by government rather than freely in the market

(3) The remainder of the activities delivered (Table 6) were priced using participant time-cost (with a rate derived from official sources.) The time-cost approach is frequently used in for evaluation of transport initiatives and we drew on the recommended time cost figures used by the Irish Government for evaluation of transport and related projects. <sup>4</sup>

Table 4: Value of one year’s delivery of FUTSAL<sup>5</sup>

FUTSAL Programm <sup>e</sup>	Numbers Enrolled and completing course in 2012 (Year 1 Part 2 and Year 2 Part 1)	Equivalent ‘market-rate’ for annual fee	Imputed Economic Value	Application of social weights ( as a targeted programme it is assumed that all participants are from the lowest income quintile)	Socially Modified Economic Value Estimated as being between
	41	€3653	€149,773	1.9 – 2.0	€284,569- £299,546

This used a market equivalent fee to impute the economic value. Income distributional weights derived from the UK Treasury Green Book were applied to give the ‘socially modified economic value.’

<sup>4</sup> Parameter Values for Use in Cost-Benefit Analysis of Transport projects Goodbody Economic Consultants in Association with Atkins 2004. The rates given were 2002 prices. We uprated these to 2012 according to the method recommended, in line with changes in GDP per person employed.

<sup>5</sup> If the ‘all enrolment’ figure was used, 55 people were enrolled, this would imply a higher value

Table 5: Valuation of DCU in the Community-facilitated Volunteering.

Opportunity cost of Volunteer time across a range of DCU in the Community activities	Volunteer numbers	Average hours per volunteer delivered across DCU programmes in 2012	Total Hours delivered	Rate (assumed as minimum wage rate for adult with 2 years' work experience)	Economic Value
	42	13	630	€8.65	€5450

This used the opportunity cost of volunteer time at minimum wage rates.

The social weighting of volunteer time in this case is neutral because it is assumed that the engagement in volunteering is in itself reflective of the volunteers' own social weight preferences.

Table 6: Valuation of other DCU in the Community Outputs.

Calendar Year 2012	Hours Delivered	Participant numbers	Total Participant Person Hours	Hourly Rate <sup>6</sup>	Economic Value €
Bridge into Education	128	16	1088	7.8	8486.4
FETLAC 5	75	37	660	28.1	18546
Digital Media iMac	20	9	180	7.8	1404
Boxing Clever	24	20	248	7.8	1934.4
Maths for parents	4	4	16	7.8	124.8
Physics Workshop for older learners	1	12	12	7.8	93.6
Mentoring (individuals)	112	1	112	7.8	873.6

<sup>6</sup> Time values are based on official sources: Parameter Values for Use in Cost-Benefit Analysis of Transport projects Goodbody Economic Consultants in Association with Atkins 2004. The values were compiled for use by the Department for Transport. The rates given were 2002 prices. We updated these to 2012 according to the method recommended, in line with changes in GDP per person employed. The outcome 2012 rates used were €7.8 for 1 hour of Leisure Time and €28.1 for one hour of 'work' time. We applied the lower leisure time rate for all non-accredited activities and the work hour rate for the accredited activities, to reflect the higher value of accreditation to individuals.

Mentoring (Groups)	18	126	2268	7.8	17690.4
English Conversation classes	20	12	240	7.8	1872
Drop in pre-prep sessions for mature students	5	2	10	7.8	78
Summer School	26	57	1482	7.8	11559.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>6316</b>		<b>62662.8</b>

This uses the time-cost approach to each hour of participant time spent. Discussion with DCU in the community staff indicated that around 90% of all general DCU in the community are participants are from low income ‘priority groups.’<sup>7</sup> Assuming that the 90% are from the lowest quintile income group, with the remaining 10% of participants from the ‘mid’ quintile (i.e ‘neutral’ group), the appropriate weighting (1.9) can be applied to the economic value result (reflecting the greater social value being delivered). This would have the effect of giving a Socially modified Economic Value of €113,418 for the activities measured in Table 6.

Taking all of the elements together, the overall value generated by a single year’s outputs from (2012) DCU in the Community was considerable.

Table 7: Summary of value generated by DCU in the Community

	Economic Value	Socially Modified Economic Value
FUTSAL	€149,773	€284,569
VOLUNTEERING	€5450	€5450
OTHER ACTIVITIES	€62663	€113,418

<sup>7</sup> DCU in the community students range in age from 18 to 75 years of age. Approximately 60% of students come from Ballymun. There are significantly more women attending with the male to female ratio being 3 : 7. Over 90% are unemployed and receiving welfare benefits while the remaining 10% work part time. In addition to their lack of financial assistance, many are returning adults who are balancing the demands of family while enrolled in college courses.

TOTAL	€217,886	€403,437
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Dublin City University was the first Irish University to develop a Civic Engagement Strategy in 2005 as part of its core mission to transform lives and be a driver of social and economic development in the local, regional and national community. The University has embedded the concept of civic engagement and civic responsibility across its academic programmes, with an awareness among all staff and students that the University is not an ivory tower but is part and parcel of the surrounding community. This has led to extensive civic engagement activity both as part of, and as extensions to, academic programmes. This aims to have a far reaching and positive impact upon the social and economic wellbeing of all Dublin citizens, ranging from the very young to its more mature members as well as those on the margins of the community.

For example, students enrolled in the School of Nursing and Human Sciences engage in a service learning placement with voluntary organisations as part of a module on ‘Marginalisation and health’; they also undertake a health campaign in year 2 and a health action project in their final year. In addition to encouraging volunteer activity and enabling their students to engage in service learning, the School of Nursing and Human Sciences, in partnership with the Dublin Region Homeless Executive, has developed a Graduate Certificate in Homeless Prevention and Intervention. This program is the only one of its kind offered in Ireland and allows students to work directly with homeless individuals and health /social care agencies who provide services to them. Other schools also promote civic engagement linked to their own subject specialisms. Law and Government regularly provide legal advice clinics with both students and staff providing free legal advice to local residents and to refugees (through the Irish Refugee Council) who could not otherwise afford it.

Raising aspirations and increasing participation in higher education from across the community is also a key aim. Many academic schools - such as Physical Sciences, Computing and Fiontar run regular events and programmes to encourage children and young people to visit the University Campus, possibly for the first time. The School of Physical Science hosts a “SciFest fair” (science festival) that includes a competition and exhibition of projects, science demonstrations in the college laboratories and allows students the chance to win prizes.

‘Taster’ or ‘fun’ events are held in isolation but linked in to opportunities to allow students to learn more about STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) related careers and engage in “hands on” learning. Students also have the options of enrolling in the Compute TY program through the School of Computing. This course enables students to develop practical computing skills and gain certification from DCU for their work. In addition to Compute TY, the School of Computing is also part of a global volunteer led program, Coderdojo, which allows children of all ages to learn programming and web design in a creative and fun environment.

Other DCU Schools, such as Business, Biotechnology, Mathematics and School of Electrical Engineering have also formed partnerships with local schools and/or businesses that provide students with opportunities to learn more about these disciplines by engaging them in activities that enhance their ability to work collaboratively with others and arouse their intellectual curiosity. The School of Education’s Intergenerational Learning Program, the Nursing School and the Biomedical Diagnostic Institute (BDI) have collaborated with DCU in the Community by providing writing and science related workshops for mature learners and nursing classes in health and diagnostic testing. The Business School provides students with opportunities to work with organizations in the community in an effort to

address particular issues or problems causing difficulties or preventing organizations from making the most of opportunities present in their operating environment. Such collaborative efforts between companies and students allow students to contribute to solutions that provide both economic and social benefit to the community of Dublin and beyond.

When approaching the valuation of the civic engagement programmes that are linked to degree programmes care must be taken to avoid double-counting of outputs. In the ‘ideal’ situation where all of the university outputs are being valued (the ‘holistic’ approach) part of the value of the embedded civic engagement would form an integral part of the value of the degree being followed. In this case the civic engagement value would not be additional to the value of the degree course but would be subsumed within it (with the full economic value of the degree taking into account these distinctive features.) A line should be drawn to differentiate between placements and projects that are accredited within a course and those activities which are additional or wholly voluntary. Only activities that are additional, unaccredited or wholly voluntary would be counted separately for valuation purposes.

Likewise activities with schools which may form part of ‘routine’ student recruitment activity should be differentiated from those whose primary purpose is to raise aspirations or increase public understanding of science, maths or of the arts . In the latter case, recruitment of students to DCU may occur as a result but it is not the *primary purpose* of the activity.

Valuation examples are given below of two of the sets of outputs related to academic programmes but which are clearly additional.

Table 8: Valuation of the outputs of free Legal Advice Clinics (School of Law and Government)

	Estimated Number of Hours of Legal Advice	Shadow Pricing applied Sample hourly rates	Imputed Economic
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	Delivered over 1 year	charged by Irish Solicitors <sup>8</sup>	Value
Senior(Staff)	50	€220	€11,000
Junior (student/trainee)	200	€150	€30,000
Total			€41,000

We did not have information on the socio-economic characteristics of advice recipients and have assumed a neutral social weighting i.e. that the social value is equivalent to the economic value. (It may also be noted that the willingness on the part of the staff and students to give their time to this activity may also, similar to the general volunteering activity, be reflective of their own social weight preferences.)

It should be highlighted that these were only a subset of the engagement activity taking place at DCU. Complete coverage of the engagement activity at DCU would enable a more complete picture of the value of the ‘additional’ civic engagement activity taking place.

### **What next?**

The findings reported above highlight the importance of taking the broader economic and social value of programmes into account when considering their worth to society and whether expenditure on the programmes is justified. It should be remembered that the purpose of this type of exercise is not to generate ‘big numbers’ but to provide evidence for the benefits of programmes that can be used within a cost-benefit analysis. The results can inform policy and

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<sup>8</sup> Rates taken from European Commission (2007) Study on the Transparency of Costs of Civil Judicial Proceedings in the European Union. Country Report: Ireland

decision-making on whether the economic and social value of the benefits delivered exceed the financial costs of producing them. Undertaking a full cost-benefit analysis was beyond the scope of this pilot study – however this pilot study with valuation of a subset of DCU civic engagement outputs clearly shows how holistic economic valuation can reveal the underlying value of ‘non-market’ university outputs, which might otherwise be overlooked. In a broader sense, and reflecting back on our earlier arguments this new approach to ‘measuring’ civic engagement provides us with great opportunities within higher education to provide robust metrics to an area of work once (still?) regarded as ‘fluffy’ by many senior managers mainly because it does not seem to lend itself to the KPI’s beloved of all strategic plans.

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