

The 10 Commandments of Town-Gown Relationships:



**Assessing Past and Present
Interactions in Service to the Future**

Stephen M. Gavazzi

PRESENTATION AGENDA

- **Quick overview: Town-Gown literature**
- **The 4X4 Town-Gown typology**
- **Piloting the OCTA/Main findings**
- **10 Commandments**
 - **Culled from interviews with university presidents and city managers**
- **Study now in progress:**
 - **Land grant presidents and chancellors**
- **Discussion**

The Town Gown Literature: Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full?





The Glass is Half Empty

“Historically, town-gown relations have been a source of **difficulty, frustration, and annoyance** for both the town and the university”

Bruning, McGrew, and Cooper (2006)



The Glass is Half Full

“There is an important need to identify common issues and approaches... associated with having the college or university present. Communities without a post-secondary institution simply do not have this as a factor in their galaxy of community issues, wants, needs, and opportunities. **Most wish they did!”**

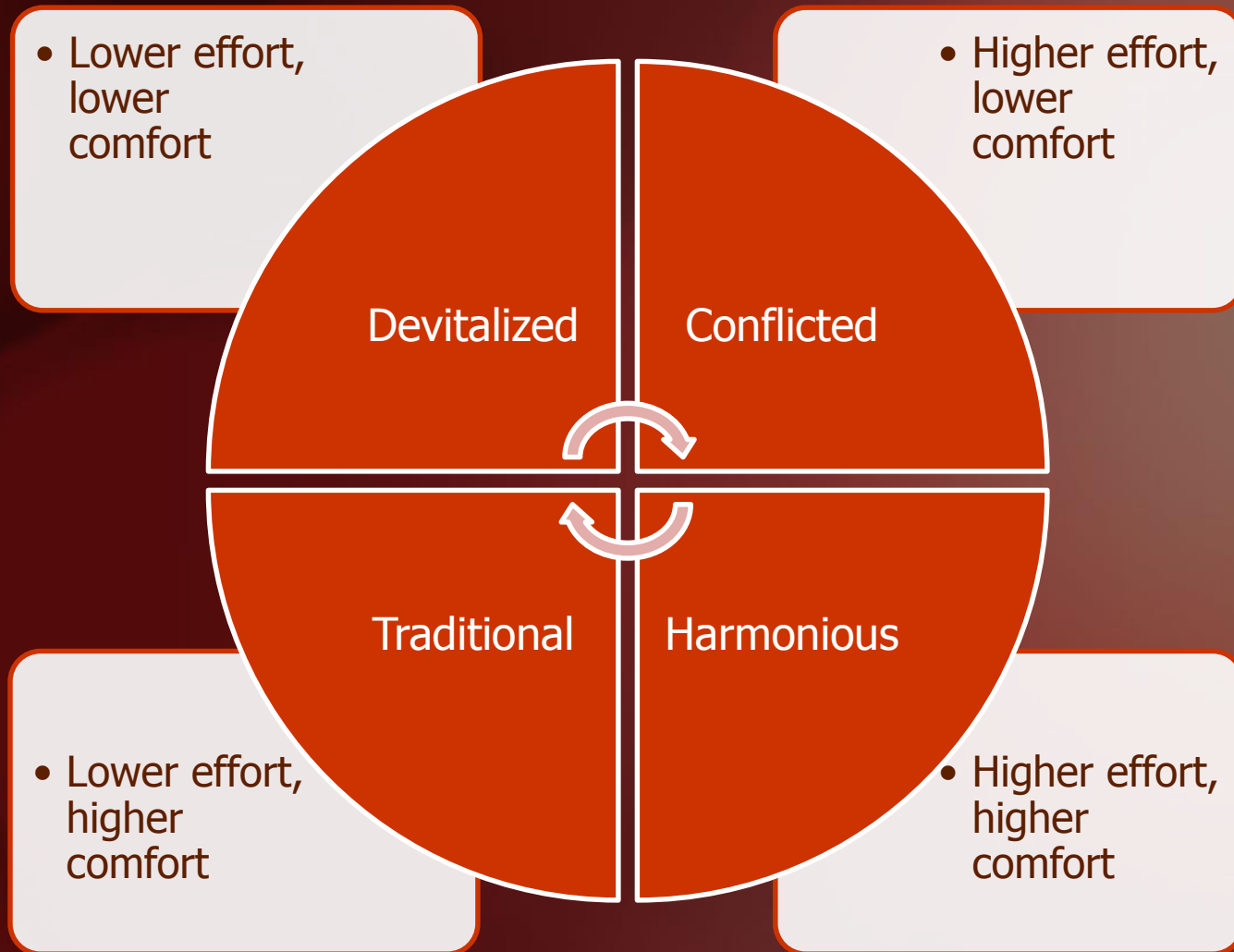
Fox (2014)



The 4X4 Typology

**Based on the Gavazzi, Fox, and Martin (2014)
article in the journal
*Innovative Higher Education***

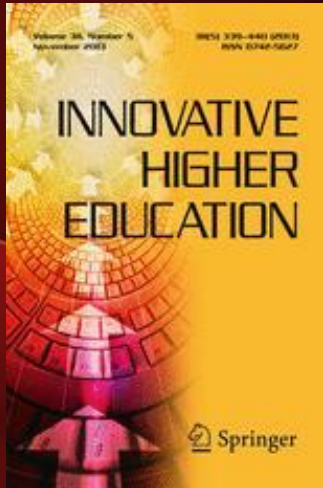
4X4 Typology of Town-Gown Relationships



The Main Challenge

- **Universities typically do not gather routine feedback from community stakeholders... Instead, higher education officials typically rely on anecdotal material or, worse yet, don't bother to ask for feedback at all.**
- **Hence, there is a need to take the guesswork out of understanding campus-community relationships!**

The Optimal College Town Assessment (OCTA)



Based on a second article written by Gavazzi and Fox (2015) in the journal *Innovative Higher Education*

The Optimal College Town Assessment (OCTA) Scale

**Taking the guesswork out of understanding
campus-community relationships**

Effort and comfort levels were significantly and positively associated with one another

- Indicates that greater contact between campus and community members will increase relationship contentment.**

Community member comfort levels are highest with students

- Provides evidence that students serve as a key connecting point between the campus and the community.**

Finding #3

The closest municipality reported the highest levels of effort and comfort, followed by the second and third closest towns

The First Law of Geography

“everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things” (Tobler, 1970)

Finding #4

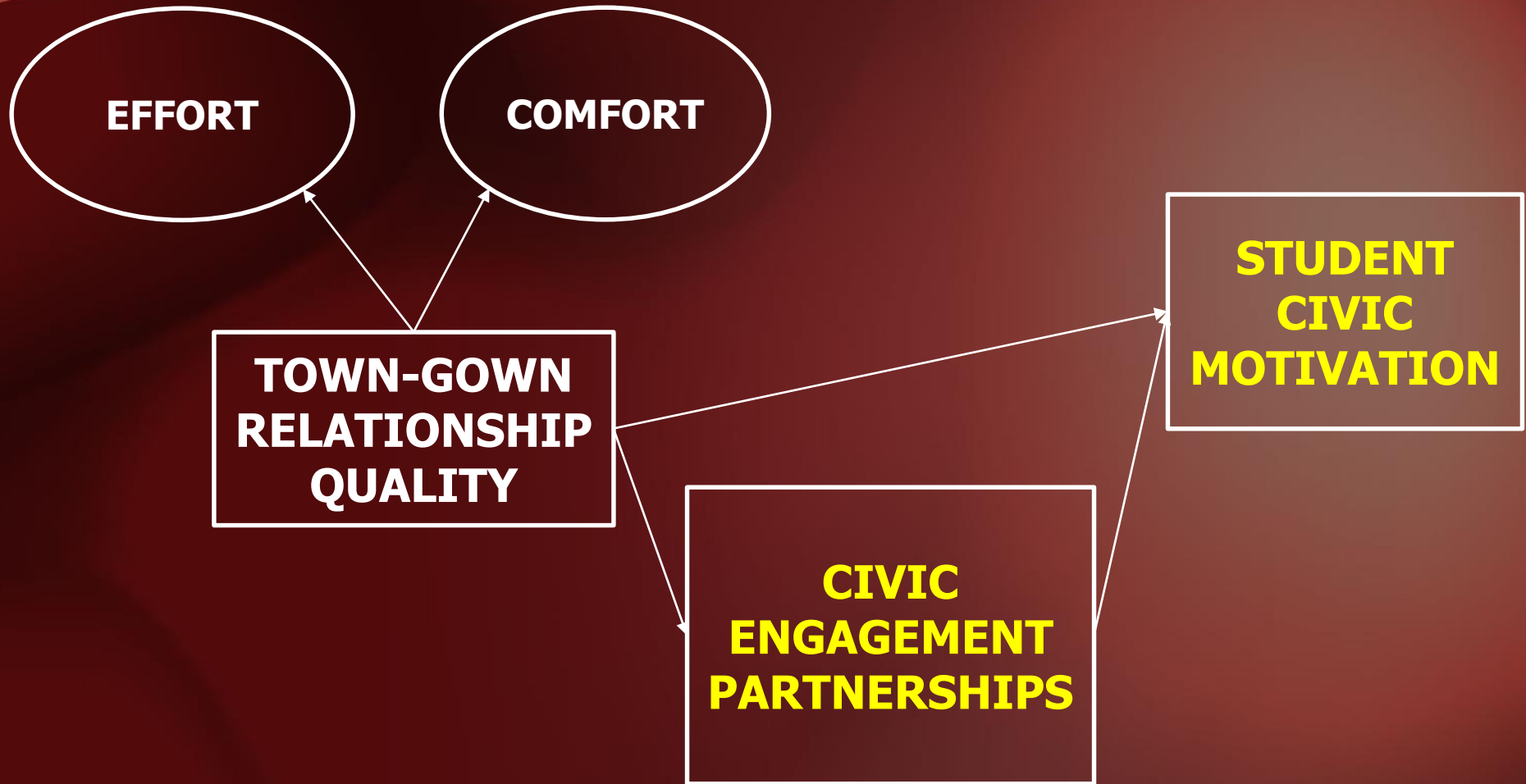
Perceived comfort levels were highest among business owners, followed by non-profit leaders, and then educators

Discriminating the relationships between and among different community members really matters!

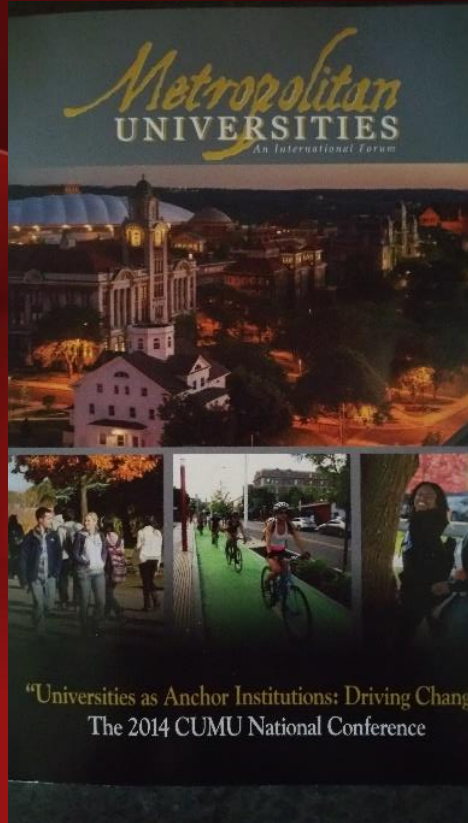
Why should people interested in institutional assessment care about this?

Town-Gown relationships really matter in terms of your outcome variables

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL



Data Collection as Part of a Mobilization Effort

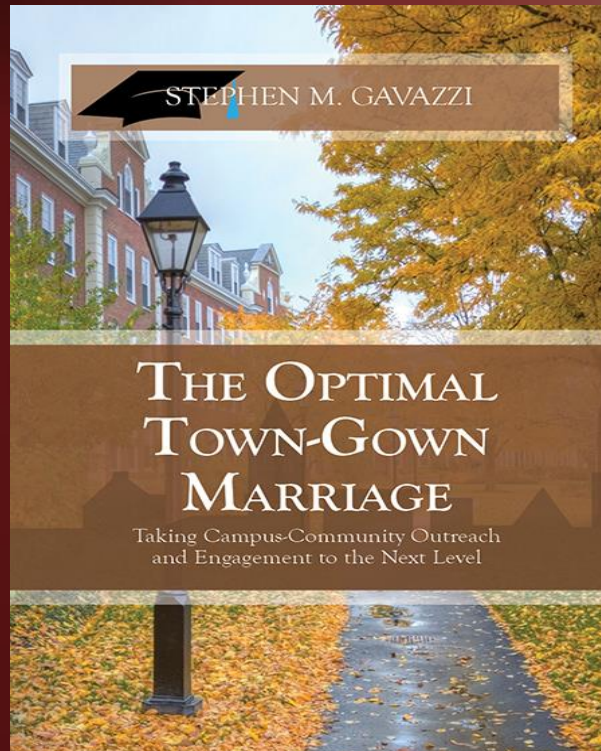


Based on a third article
written by
Gavazzi (2015) in the journal
Metropolitan Universities

The Town-Gown Relationship Mobilization Cycle



Interviews of Presidents and City Managers contained in the *Optimal Town-Gown Marriage* book



Interviews with Presidents and City Managers

- **Initial interviews conducted with 4 university presidents and 4 city managers**
- **Semi-structured interview process with items focused on town-gown issues**
- **Questions focused on what these leaders did to create **harmonious relationships****



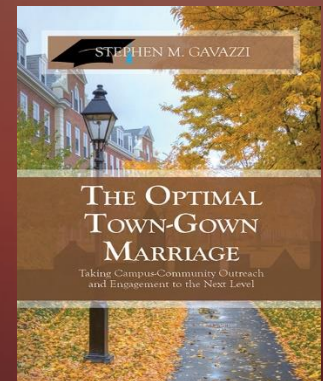
The Initial Results

**Analysis of interview data yielded
10 consistent themes**

Town Gown 10 Commandments

Town-Gown Commandment #1:

Thou shall give high priority to efforts that build more harmonious relationships between campus and community members.



University President Quote

"There is nothing more important than having a great relationship with your city. My belief is this. You can't have a great university and a shoddy city. And you can't have a great city without a great higher educational system."

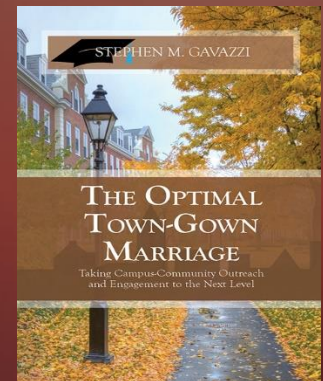
University President Quote

"Therefore, it's incredibly important to work diligently to ensure that those town-gown relationships are powerful and positive."

Town Gown 10 Commandments

Town-Gown Commandment #2:

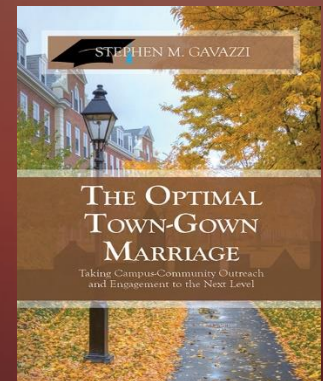
Thou shall not miscalculate the time involved in developing and maintaining harmonious campus-community relationships.



Town Gown 10 Commandments

Town-Gown Commandment #3:

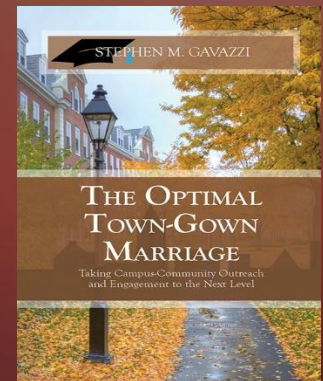
Thou shall honor your campus and community partners.



Town Gown 10 Commandments

Town-Gown Commandment #4:

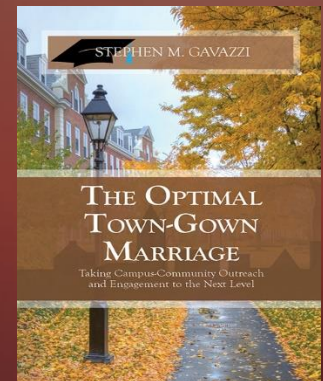
Thou shall seek win-win outcomes wherever and whenever possible in campus-community interactions.



Town Gown 10 Commandments

Town-Gown Commandment #5:

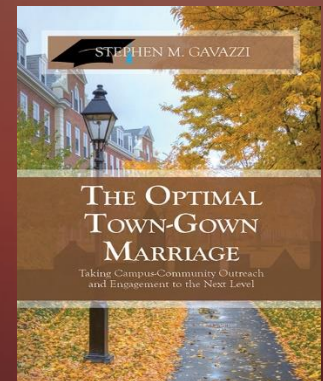
Thou shall remember that students are the most important point of connection between campus and community.



Town Gown 10 Commandments

Town-Gown Commandment #6:

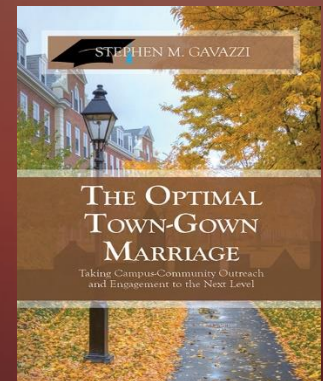
Thou shall know the power of your alumni, especially those living in communities immediately surrounding the campus.



Town Gown 10 Commandments

Town-Gown Commandment #7:

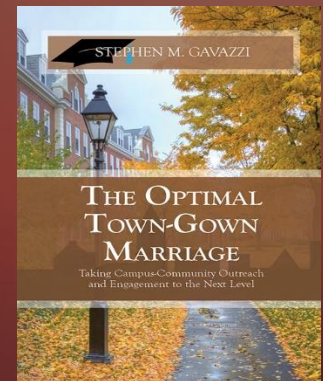
Thou shall respect the notion that faculty members represent the face of both campus and community.



Town Gown 10 Commandments

Town-Gown Commandment #8:

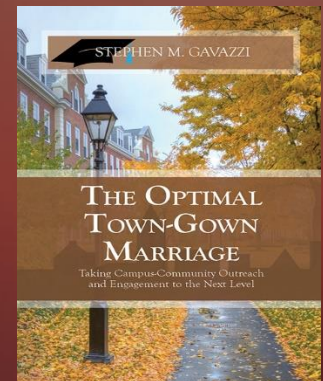
Thou shall appreciate the history of the campus-community relationship you inherited.



Town Gown 10 Commandments

Town-Gown Commandment #9:

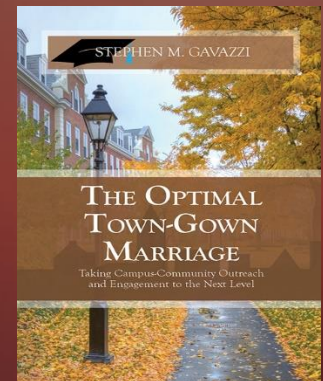
Thou shall continuously assess the present state of the relationship between campus and community representatives.

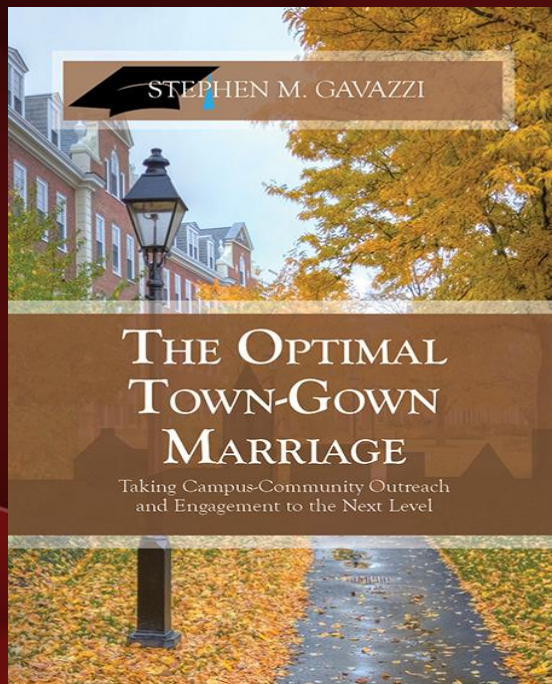


Town Gown 10 Commandments

Town-Gown Commandment #10:

Thou shall leave the campus-community relationship in better shape than you found it.





**Book Available
on Amazon**

**The Optimal Town-Gown Marriage:
Taking Campus-Community Outreach and
Engagement to the Next Level**

Study Now in Progress

- **Interviews sought with 1862/1890 Land Grant Presidents and Chancellors**
- **Main focus:**
 - **Studying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that land grant institutions face as they attempt to meet the regionalized needs of the communities they serve.**

- **To date, 30 presidents and chancellors have agreed to participate**
 - **18 of those senior leaders already have been interviewed at the time of this presentation**

Initial Findings

- **Great sensitivity to the idea that there is a wide range of opinion on the exact definition of the land grant mission in the 21st Century, and how exactly that mission directs the university's actions to meet community needs**

Initial Findings

- Also a wide range of opinion about what **specific engagement activities** the university should be undertaking to meet those community needs.

- **One significant issue: the land grant's historical **focus on agriculture**.**
- **This raises questions about a number of related issues, including:**
 - **involvement of the non-agricultural disciplines in engagement**
 - **the existence and effectiveness of engagement activities in more urban geographical settings.**

Initial Findings

- **The presidents and chancellors also have voiced widespread recognition that land grant universities have struggled to create a narrative that explains the importance of their engagement work to external constituents.**

- **As a result, many community stakeholders do not seem to place high value on the activities of the land grant university.**
 - This is felt most powerfully in the **decline of state support** for public universities (land grant and otherwise)

So What's the Solution?

- **The presidents and chancellors are raising many questions related to leadership issues**
 - **Consensus emerging on our need to find better ways to be *more responsive* to community needs (**greater effort**) and to raise greater awareness of those activities (**greater comfort**)**

Revisiting the Kellogg Commission

Responsiveness was the first of seven characteristics or “tests” about the “engaged” university in the Kellogg Report

“We need to ask ourselves periodically if we are listening to the communities, regions, and states we serve.”

Revisiting the Kellogg Commission

"Do we offer our services in the right way at the right time? Are our communications clear? Do we provide space and, if need be, resources for preliminary community-university discussions of the public problem to be addressed."

Revisiting the Kellogg Commission

"Above all, do we really understand that in reaching out, we are also obtaining valuable information for our own purposes?"

We Return to the Beginning...

Bottom line: Eliminate Guesswork! We have to do a better job of directly assessing:

- how community members perceive our efforts to respond to community needs and**
- what the impact of those activities are in terms of making stakeholders more comfortable with what we do!**



DISCUSSION

What questions or thoughts do you have?

Thank You!

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