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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The creation of the UTS Social Impact Framework: A collaborative approach for transformational change

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Abstract

The relationship between education and public purpose has been historical and remains fundamental to the core mission of the higher education sector. Alongside the growth of engaged scholarship and practice, increasing and, at times, competing forces work to influence institutional focus and direction. Key amongst these are global university ranking systems, which have begun to shift their gaze beyond traditional notions of academic excellence to also consider impact and engagement. The tension between external and internal drivers for social engagement can fragment institutional focus and undermine community impact. In the face of this challenge, holistic institutional frameworks that systemically and culturally underpin, enable and make inherent engaged scholarship remain scarce. Their absence risks marginalising engaged university practice, teaching and research, thereby limiting the potential impact of universities. This article aims to address this gap in the literature by examining the question of how universities can create a whole-of-institution approach to their public purpose agenda. Using the University of Technology Sydney as a case, the development of the UTS Social Impact Framework is shared here. We detail the use of Appreciative Inquiry and Theory of Change as underpinning participatory methodologies that have resulted in a systems approach to change, based on institutional strengths. The resulting framework articulates a shared vision and outlines a guiding roadmap encompassing six domains of change, expressed as outcomes, and an additional three preconditions. Woven together, these create a robust image of the systemic and cultural dynamics needed to realise the shared vision of the university, ensuring that contribution to social outcomes remains a core mission of this higher

education institution. The adopted approach used in this study can inform the development of contextually relevant frameworks across the sector, with potential to reposition engagement, beyond an aspect of practice, as a systemic precondition that enables broader social change.

Keywords:

public purpose, engaged scholarship, higher education, system change, social impact

Introduction

The purpose of universities and the potential value they offer society are well recognised and debated (see, for example, Beaulieu, Breton & Brousselle 2018; Beere, Votruba & Wells 2011; Bradley et al. 2008). Through research, teaching and non-academic programs, universities have a tremendous capacity to contribute to solving complex social challenges.

Boyer (1996) iterated this notion in his seminal text, *The Scholarship of Engagement*. Citing examples that spanned 350 years of higher education practice, Boyer pointed to the historic link between education and public purpose. Responding to the ‘decline in public confidence’ (Boyer 1996, p. 11) in higher education institutions, Boyer argued for a renewed and strengthened connection to purpose as it relates to community benefit, stating that higher education institutions need to ‘become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and must reaffirm [their] historic commitment to ... the scholarship of engagement’ (Boyer 1996, p. 11). By leveraging teaching, research and service, higher education institutions, it was argued, could work alongside community partners to respond to societal challenges and arrive at mutually beneficial outcomes.

The introduction of the idea of scholarship of engagement brought reciprocal partnerships and practice with purpose into prominence. Since the publication of Boyer’s paper in the mid-1990s, efforts in this space have flourished. Indeed, the increasing number of cited cases of universities taking up their public purpose role through engaged scholarship illustrates a shifting landscape (Beaulieu, Breton & Brousselle 2018).

There is now a growing movement of engaged practice in higher education evidenced by increased publications, conferences, membership of networks and external investments (Hoyt & Hollister 2014). Across the globe, universities are increasingly, and explicitly, committing to this space through embedding affirmative statements in their missions and strategies, operationalising these through practice, and further evidencing their contribution through an engagement with established and emerging networks, reporting mechanisms and classifications.

A visible increase in networks and classification systems with a focus on enhanced university contribution to community speaks to the exponential growth in institutional commitment to this space. In 2005, the Talloires Network, an international association of higher education institutions established in support of engaged scholarship and the enhancement of university civic responsibility, came together with 29 signatories from 23 nations as its founding members. By 2019, the Network had grown to 388 members from 77 nations (The Talloires Network n.d.). A similar trend can be seen in relation to the uptake of the Carnegie Foundation’s Community Engagement Classification – an elective classification that recognises community-engaged higher education institutions and actively aims to support self-reflection, institutional growth and improvement in community-engaged practice (Giles,

Sandmann & Saltmarsh 2012). In 2015, 361 United States higher education institutions held the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification, with 83 of these receiving the classification for the first time (Brown University n.d.a). In the same year, the foundation began exploring mechanisms for extending the classification beyond the United States, with Ireland becoming the first international pilot site (Brown University n.d.b). In 2018, as the program continued its expansion, Australia and Canada joined the international pilot (Simon Fraser University n.d.; University of Technology Sydney 2018).

While the growth of engaged practice across the higher education sector is evident, it is important to view this growth within a context of, what is itself, an expanding sector. The late 20th and early 21st centuries have seen an explosion of higher education institutions worldwide (Collini 2012). In 2018, the estimated number of such institutions across 25 nations was set at over 21,700 (CSIC 2018) – rendering the number of recorded institutions in engaged scholarship networks pale in comparison. This exponential growth in the number of higher education institutions has been driven by the knowledge-based needs of the new global economy and corresponding increases in government and industry investment in developing and rising nations (Rhoads, Li & Ilano 2014).

Alongside the growth in engaged institutions, therefore, we see a growth in the number of institutions more broadly, some with aligned priorities and others that place greater importance on the drivers that potentially sit in tension with engaged scholarship and social impact. Even within the engaged cluster, it is important to note that the form, depth and scale at which institutions take up their public purpose role varies enormously. The growth in engagement also does not progress along a single trajectory and can easily change direction. When looking beyond the pockets of excellence, we in fact see a potentially fragile sector that is susceptible to diverse internal and external influences. An examination of one such area highlights the dynamics at play.

Key amongst factors that influence the higher education field are the global ranking systems that now dominate the landscape in terms of how the sector values excellence and quality. Rankings, until recently, have shown little interest in assessing or rewarding the broader public or social benefit of universities. Their influence on engagement has been an indirect one, with a privileging of research intensity. Increased competition to do well in the ranking systems, which in turn allows universities to attract additional global research investment as well as income from international students, has led to claims that modern universities are allowing 'the more localized, public good function of the university ... [to] be lost in the fray' (Rhoads, Li & Ilano 2014, p. 29). A recent university-led initiative, the joint effort of King's College London, the University of Chicago and Melbourne University, speaks to the recognised inherent power of rankings. The body of work currently underway aims to recognise and elevate the value of engagement through proposing the inclusion of engagement specific indicators as part of existing ranking systems (Bull & Grant 2019).

More recently, global ranking system, themselves, have begun responding to a changing world that is requiring a demonstration of impact and engagement, creating a direct link between this space and rankings. The newly launched Times Higher Education University Impact Ranking, as an example, makes its attempt at measuring the impact of universities by using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framing (Bothwell 2018). Though the effect of this coupling, and the direct focus of the ranking systems on engagement and impact, is not yet clear, knowledge of the existing ranking systems and how they, in and of themselves, impact the higher education field (Hazelkorn 2013) would imply that intended and unintended consequences are likely. Relying on a limited set of quantitative indicators to

demonstrate engagement and impact inevitably results in inadequate proxies which, in turn, have the potential to misdirect behaviour.

Global rankings are but one of a diverse range of inevitable, and often necessary, internal and external influences that work to shape universities. Economic drivers, government funding patterns and policies, and related frameworks and assessments – such as the Research Excellence Framework in the UK and the Engagement and Impact Assessment in Australia – can pull universities towards or away from engaged scholarship and practice, and are also worth exploring. Combined, these forces can greatly impact universities.

Proposing a potential response to this context, this article provides a case study account of the University of Technology Sydney's (UTS's) approach to developing its institution-wide agenda for social change. The authors, as project leads and central actors in the process, provide an insider's lens. The resulting framework and the process by which it was created are detailed in an effort to support the building of intentional and strategic institutional responses that contribute to public purpose and progress the field.

Implications of the current trajectory and the case for a systems approach

Higher education institutions are increasingly engaging in socially related endeavours and, as such, the resulting teaching, research and service outcomes are offering increasing benefits to the community. The diverse set of levers that interplay with the sector means, however, that existing efforts can remain disconnected and even sit in tension with one another. Checkoway (2013, p. 8) speaks to this, stating that 'institutions have developed multiple purposes and, in so doing, [have] de-emphasized their civic mission'.

The risk of the current trajectory is that the dominant frames being applied to the sector, rather than deliberate strategic intent by the sector, can become self-fulfilling prophecies that limit the potential of what universities can, and do, truly offer. In effect, the intent of external influences, amplified by equally diverse internal drivers, can act as proxies for institutional purpose – thereby taking a more central role in higher education than intended.

A contextually relevant system approach is needed to break away from this emerging paradigm and offer a holistic perspective that extends beyond the diverse set of intentions currently at play. Setting comprehensive institutional agendas would counter the potential risk of mission drift in this space. Outcomes and their interrelationships would be detailed, as would be the preconditions required for achieving them.

As indicated previously, experience in this space is abundant. The increasing uptake of engaged practice across higher education has been accompanied by an equal measure of publications that share sector knowledge and offer reviews and insights into the field (Beaulieu, Breton & Brousselle 2018; Fitzgerald, Burack & Seifer 2010a, 2010b). This literature provides significant documentation of the historical accounts of progress in this space, perspectives on the enablers of engaged scholarship and good practice cases that detail interventions at the project, or program, level.

Although pockets of excellence are increasingly available for analysis, details of holistic institution-wide strategies and, in particular, methods by which they are derived remain scarce. The lack of detail on unified agendas in this space is also reflected in the annual institutional reporting, which tends to be dominated by 'backward-looking ... compliance disclosures'

(Adams 2018, p. 332) and narratives that share institutional successes across the student, teaching and research spaces.

In more recent times, there has been an increasing interest in impact measurement and reporting for monitoring and evaluation of institutional impact (see, for example, Fitzgerald, Burack & Seifer 2010b). In response to these emerging efforts, Lunsford, Bargerstock and Greasley (2012, p. 116) argue that the ‘breadth of indicators and measures support documentation efforts, but are not the kind of well-defined measures that could inform more systematic research studies’. In support of enhanced validity and reliability, more rigorous modes of assessment and measures are advocated (Lunsford, Bargerstock & Greasley 2012). Advancement in this way would not, however, negate the disparate nature of measures that speak to diverse efforts. Again, a well-defined institutional purpose as a unifier, and articulation of the processes by which they may be defined, are lacking.

In response to this gap in knowledge, a case study account of UTS’s approach to developing its institution-wide vision and agenda for social change is shared.

The process of developing the UTS Social Impact Framework

Social impact offerings are not new to any university, including UTS. Evidence of impact can be found across the organisation’s 30-year history – from the contribution of its diverse community through to its institutional impact. In 2016, when UTS embarked on the journey that resulted in the UTS Social Impact Framework, it began with this knowledge and understanding. Social justice was seen to be part of the institution’s DNA (University of Technology Sydney 2016).

Across many facets of the organisation, this was, in fact, the case. Examples demonstrating excellence across student engagement, research, business operations and teaching peppered numerous publications (see, for example, University of Technology Sydney 2016).

Cited cases of excellence are not always reflective of their broader context (Lunsford, Bargerstock & Greasley 2012), nor do they sufficiently reflect holistic institutional impact. As Boyer articulated in his 1996 paper, ‘what’s also needed is not just more programs, but a larger purpose, a larger sense of mission, a larger clarity of direction’ (p. 20).

This nuanced understanding of the landscape shaped the purpose of the journey. UTS moved away from reflective reporting on institutional best practice to take a proactive approach to setting its own agenda in relation to the public benefit role of universities. The UTS Social Impact Framework, therefore, began with the intention of developing an encompassing cross-institution, cross-faculty agenda. An agenda that would guide future efforts and support learning and growth through demonstration of the institution’s collective impact towards a shared vision (University of Technology Sydney 2017).

EXECUTIVE SUPPORT ALONGSIDE BROAD PARTICIPATION

The creation of the UTS Social Impact Framework began with support at the highest level of the organisation, with the initial mandate for developing an institution-wide response to social change emerging from the office of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Attila Brungs. This level of support was echoed across senior executives and actioned through the establishment of the Executive Director, Social Justice role. The Executive Director role was deliberately established as an integrator role across the university. This position was independent of a faculty, but reported to the Provost alongside Faculty Deans. The Executive Director had considerable

resources at her disposal, initially through the Equity and Diversity Unit of the university and later through the establishment of the UTS Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion. Further funding was made available to employ a Manager of Social Impact to work full-time on the development of the framework.

The process for developing the framework was, however, far from a top-down approach. Over 150 UTS students and staff, both academic and professional, and encompassing casual, fixed-term, permanent, part-time and full-time representatives, actively engaged in the process, ensuring broad input that was representative of the whole university.

SELECTING AND STRUCTURING PARTICIPATION

The initial design of the process aimed to gather contributors with a broad range of experience and expertise from the university community. In order to ensure the presence of sufficient knowledge in specific relevant areas, three working groups – focusing on academic and professional ‘staff’, ‘students’ and ‘organisation’ – and a steering group were created.

The external ‘community’, as a specific cohort, was not included in this initial phase of the process. The reason underpinning this decision was the fact that the work being undertaken was focused on developing an organisational theory of change as opposed to a programmatic or impact framework. Insider knowledge of processes and systems was therefore seen as essential. The boundary between the internal and external community was also seen to be porous. For example, some students and staff involved in the initiative lived in the local community, other students were also industry partners, while still others had been connected to outreach programs prior to arriving at UTS. These members could input diverse knowledge into the process. Whilst this phase, and what we are reporting on in this article, primarily relied on the voice of our internal community, this work has led to similar processes being applied to our local community engagement practices. As an example, Appreciative Inquiry is being used as part of local precinct efforts in order to uncover community needs as a precursor to informing the potential role of the university.

Participation in the identified groups was to result from a combination of self-nomination and direct appointment. Self-nomination was sought via an open invitation issued through the office of the Executive Director, Social Justice, with participation being further encouraged by the Vice-Chancellor. The initial invitation offered two positions for each of the groups that were to be established. Direct appointments were to make up the remainder of the positions, with the aim of each group comprising 15 members.

Over 160 applications were received for the eight self-nominated positions that were made available. An examination of these revealed the calibre of the candidates, the richness of their experience and the depth of knowledge across the organisation. Recognising that the development of the framework would only be strengthened by the involvement of the diverse array of applicants, the organisers opted to change the design of the process rather than limit the pool of candidates. As such, a fourth group – the Advisory Group – was formed, to which all applicants were invited.

Based on the quality of the self-nominated candidates, the portion of appointed positions was narrowed. The pool of self-nominated candidates was assigned to the various working groups, ensuring diverse representation in terms of faculty, unit and role. Directly nominated positions were then used to balance the representation.

By the completion of the selection process, 137 staff and students were identified as key participants. These students and staff came together for a year-long process, both as part of

their individual groups and as an entire cohort, to develop the UTS Social Impact Framework. Together, the participants brought cross-institution input and support to the process.

The specific make-up and contribution of each group was as follows:

- **The Advisory Group**

One hundred and thirty-seven UTS academic and professional staff and students, representing a diverse cross-section of the university, self-nominated to be involved in the process. The group included undergraduate and postgraduate students and casual, fixed-term and permanent staff from every level of the organisation. Initial student numbers were deemed to be insufficient, with a total of five joining the Advisory Group. In response, an additional process was put in place to specifically recruit students. Working through student leadership groups, a further 20 students were engaged. Members came together at the start of the journey to contribute their knowledge through an Appreciative Inquiry process, the details of which will be shared in the next section of this article. The group met two other times across the year to provide feedback, check assumptions and respond to questions that emerged through the process.

- **Working Groups**

Three working groups were formed around the areas of 'Staff', 'Students' and 'Organisation'. Membership was based on expertise in relation to each subject area. Indigenous voice and equity considerations were also deemed significant and therefore each group had representatives from Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research and the university's Equity and Diversity Unit. Working Groups actively contributed to the development of the framework and supported verification through alignment with existing research. In addition to the Advisory Group meetings, Working Groups participated in two workshops.

- **Steering Group**

Senior leadership from across the university, including from Jumbunna and the Equity and Diversity unit, made up the Steering Group. The group offered a meta-perspective, worked to synthesise the effort of the Working Groups and supported the socialisation of the work across the institution. The Steering Group joined the Advisory Group meetings and came together for an additional two workshops across the 12-month period.

THE GUIDING PROCESS

Two process models informed the development of the UTS Social Impact Framework: Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros 2003) and Theory of Change (Funnell & Rogers 2011; Rogers 2008). In this section of the article, we detail their use within the context of this initiative.

Social change initiatives are often based on problem-solving models of change, which tend to hold a deficit approach. They begin with the challenges being faced and examine potential root causes that require a response. In contrast, Appreciative Inquiry offers a strengths-based approach that is solution focused. The model proposes a multi-step process that begins with an inquiry into 'the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be' (Bushe 2013, p. 41). Appreciative Inquiry operates under the assumption that the questions most often asked by institutions set the direction in which they move. Shifting the dialogue from the deficits to strengths, therefore, is believed to result in positive asset-based narratives that lead to transformational change.

Recognising the real strengths of UTS, we began our process with Appreciative Inquiry. Following the model's established guide on formulating appreciative questions (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros 2003), an interview template was developed. The questions asked participants to share cases of social impact at its best at UTS and then guided them to further elaborate on related enabling factors. Potential barriers were touched upon by asking participants to articulate their wishes for what could be different.

The simplicity of the tools and the structured nature of the questions meant that this phase of the initiative could be carried out in a participatory fashion, with those involved in the process both contributing and collecting stories of impact. The initial gathering of the group, therefore, brought the Advisory Group together across three sessions, where members interviewed each other and documented the narratives that were to underpin the institution's shared purpose and interrelated set of outcomes.



Figure 1 Across three separate meetings, Advisory Group members interviewed each other to uncover stories of social impact at its best at UTS and their enabling factors.

These initial sessions resulted in the collection of extensive rich data in the form of qualitative interviews and written responses to questions. Textual analysis, as a qualitative approach (Corbin & Strauss 2015), supported the development of the purpose statement that remains central to the framework: that UTS is an agent for social change.

Informed by grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss 2015), content coding was used to develop an initial set of five categories as descriptive representations of the themes that emerged from the narratives. The five categories, as detailed in Table 1, became the basis of the next phase of this initiative.

As illustrated later in this section, the rich data gathered through the Appreciative Inquiry sessions continued to inform the development of the framework as the process unfolded and the thematic areas evolved.



Figure 2 Making sense of the data gathered through the initial Advisory Group meetings.

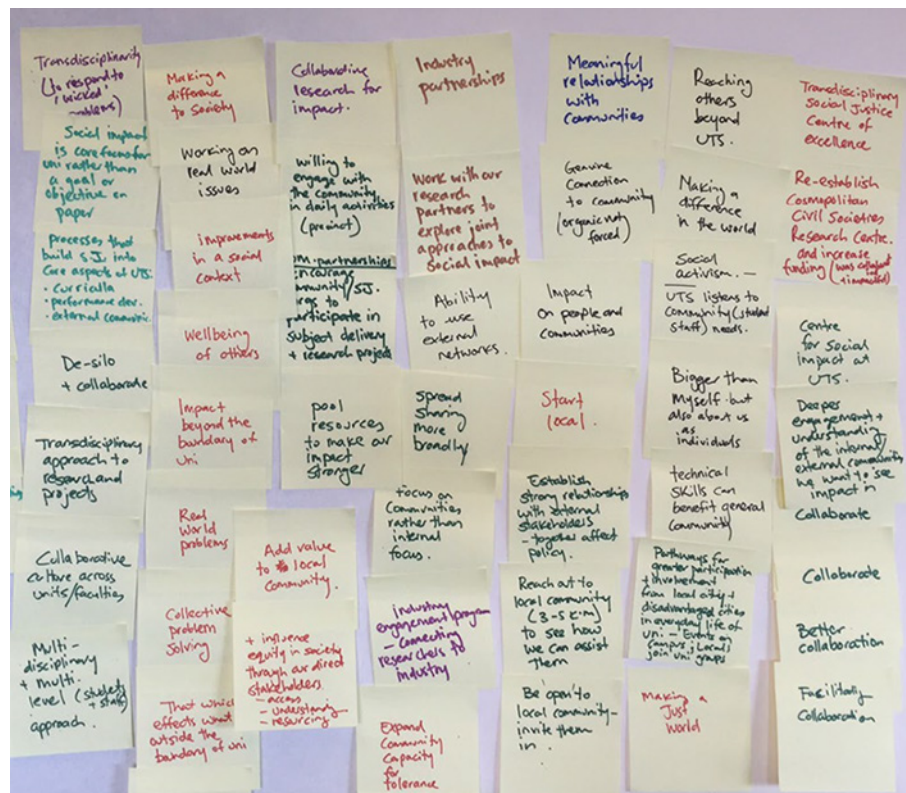


Figure 3 Sample comments highlighting the need for internal and external connections and collaborations.

Appreciative Inquiry, as previously asserted, is a strengths-based approach that begins with the best of what already exists within the organisation. By focusing on the internal assets, it results in the development of a strong foundation that can support contextually relevant pathways forward. Being conscious of the focus on internal strengths inherent to this process, we wanted to ensure that any factors beyond our immediate gaze were not missed. As such, our work informed by Appreciative Inquiry was complemented by a second layer of activities that used Theory of Change as a guiding model.

Theory of Change (Funnell & Rogers 2011; Rogers 2008) is a framework that can support the demonstration of how and why an intended change happens in a particular context. It links what an organisation does to what it hopes to achieve through a process of identifying an overarching purpose and then backward mapping to disclose the necessary preconditions and objectives that are needed to make the vision a reality. This process results in an outcomes framework that can support the development of interventions and indicators, against which progress can be tracked.

In contrast to the act of determining outcomes as a logical progression of why activities are undertaken, the practice of backward mapping ensures that all necessary preconditions to the desired change are considered. Theory of Change as a process, therefore, seeks to identify each of the necessary outcomes that together become sufficient for achieving the shared purpose (Taplin & Clark 2012).

Table 1 Five categories as descriptive representations, alongside supporting quotes from the Appreciative Inquiry interviews, 2017.

Representative categories	Quotes: What are your wishes for the future?
1. Staff are enabled to maximise their social impact	<p>'Recognising social impact... [and] engagement in UTS promotion guidelines (this could be communicated more)'</p> <p>'Disciplines and transdisciplines in vibrant collaborations'</p> <p>'Training for mental health awareness etc. for casual staff'</p>
2. Students and graduates are ethical and empowered citizens	<p>'Having and seeking a diverse student base is central to our approach to recruitment, not an add on'</p> <p>'Developing truly inclusive curriculum with a focus on developing individuals with the social impact focus and the willingness to enact change at whatever level they feel that they are able to'</p> <p>'Not just targeting specific areas of social impact (e.g. Racism stops with me campaign) but adopting an approach that gives students and staff who are already involved to be able to start/facilitate a movement for social impact - give them AGENCY'</p>



Table 1 continued

Representative categories	Quotes: What are your wishes for the future?
3. UTS enables systemic changes for social mobility	<p>[Work towards] empowered citizens and social mobility'</p> <p>'Social mobility. Idea that changing the cohort of the Law School would have a flow-on effect to the profession and therefore society more broadly'</p> <p>'Power of education'</p>
4. UTS's commitment to social impact is reflected in its strategies, resourcing and policies	<p>'Ingraining social impact considerations into the policies, structures, systems so that it becomes part of UTS' DNA and cannot be broken by changes in leadership'</p> <p>'That it becomes mainstream in our growth strategy. We are making large demands of our staff, and this has to be central to staff and students everyday experience if it is to have the depth of meaning that we are capable of'</p> <p>'Move away from the dominance of financial impact measures, requirements to A+ publications in favour of targeting local constituents who can really use information'</p>
5. Meaningful internal and external community connections and collaborations are in place	<p>'It is shared outside of the university - UTS' commitment and vision of itself as social justice/ impact university is recognised by others outside of UTS'</p> <p>'Enhance and establish better community partnerships'</p>

The data generated through the first phase of this initiative was used as the starting point for the Theory of Change sessions implemented. A sequence of Working Group and Steering Group workshops began with a high-level Theory of Change based on this information. Respective groups iteratively worked to further develop the framework, in each case beginning with the purpose statement, or a high-level outcome, and then backward mapping the necessary set of preconditions.

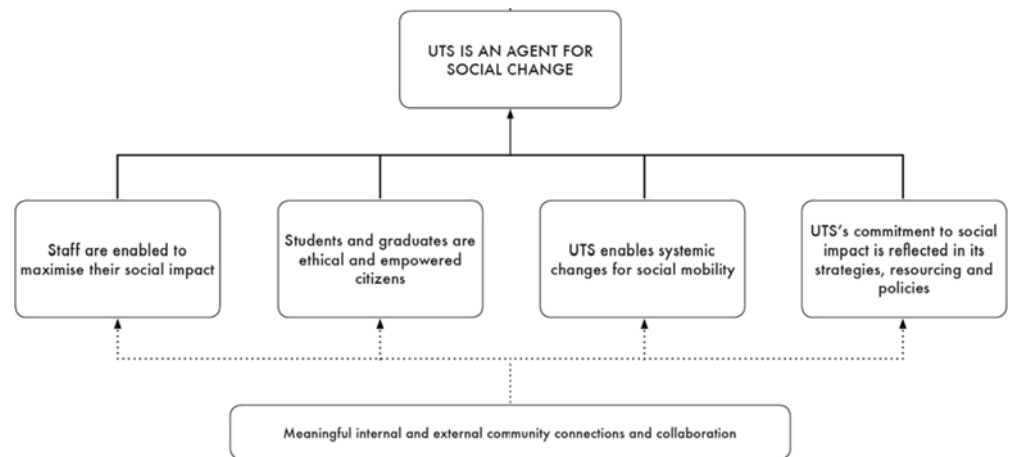


Figure 4 The initial high-level Theory of Change based on the data gathered through the Appreciative Inquiry sessions.



Figure 5 Student Working Group meeting to contribute to the development of our Theory of Change.



Figure 6 Verification of a later development of the UTS Social Impact Framework against the narratives shared by the Advisory Group.



Figure 7 Progressive development of the Theory of Change that resulted in the UTS Social Impact Framework. For a detailed version of the development of the framework, see: <https://tinyurl.com/vn6act7>

Upon completion of each round of Working Group and Steering Group meetings, the Advisory Group reconvened to verify content and clarify questions. The emerging framework was also validated against the initial narratives gathered through the Appreciative Inquiry

sessions and against existing relevant research. The process progressed in this manner, cycling through Working Group, Steering Group and Advisory Group gatherings until, through consensus, the UTS Social Impact Framework was delivered.

The Resulting UTS Social Impact Framework

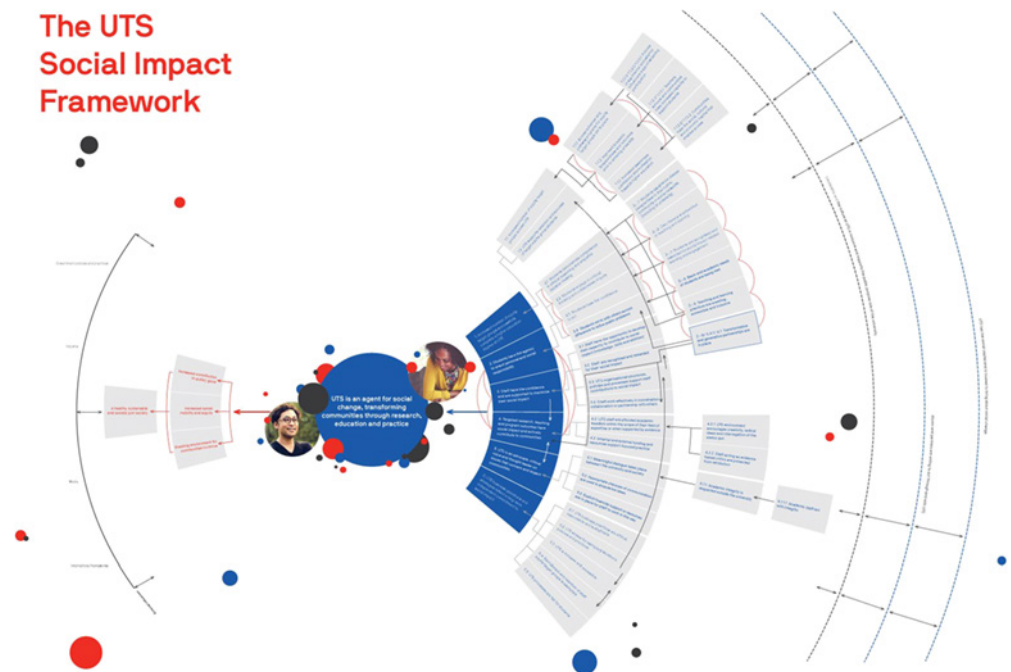


Figure 8 The UTS Social Impact Framework articulates the university's Theory of Change and the outcomes needed for UTS to reach its vision of being an agent for social change. For a detailed version of the framework, see <http://bit.ly/SIF-UTS>

The UTS Social Impact Framework (University of Technology Sydney 2017) acts as a roadmap that articulates the university's vision, in terms of its public purpose role and its intended pathways for change. At the heart of the framework is the shared vision for UTS's role in this space. That is, UTS seeks to be an agent for social change, transforming communities through research, education and practice. The desire to see UTS take up this role is based on the belief that this will result in:

- Increased contribution to public good;
- Increased social mobility and equity; and
- Environments enabling communities to thrive.

By positively influencing these three core areas, it is believed that UTS will contribute to a healthy, sustainable and socially just society.

The Theory of Change articulated in the framework essentially offers collective understanding of how this desired vision for UTS can become a reality. In order for UTS to be an agent for social change, six domains of change have been identified as overarching

outcomes that are each necessary, and together become sufficient for the purpose statement to become a reality. These are:

- **Domain 1:** Students from under-represented target groups participate in, and successfully complete, a higher education degree at UTS.
- **Domain 2:** Students have the agency to enact personal and social responsibility.
- **Domain 3:** Staff have the confidence and are supported to maximise their social impact.
- **Domain 4:** Targeted research, teaching and program outcomes have social impact and actively contribute to communities.
- **Domain 5:** UTS is an advocate, critical voice and thought leader on issues that concern and impact communities.
- **Domain 6:** UTS business operations and strategies reflect a long-term independent commitment to social impact.

Though articulated as separate domains, the inherent relationship between students and staff (both academic and professional), and their impact through research, teaching and practice are recognised and demonstrated via the interlinking of Domains 2, 3 and 4.

In essence, these six domains offer outcomes that work together to support UTS to achieve its purpose. Each domain is also reliant on its own set of interrelated outcomes and interventions as prerequisites, as outlined below.

Domain 1: Students from under-represented target groups participate in, and successfully complete, a higher education degree at UTS

In order for students from under-represented target groups to participate in, and successfully complete, a higher education degree at UTS, they need to access UTS in increasing numbers. They also need to be supported by the institution to stay at university and complete their higher education degree.

Accessing a higher education institution itself relies on three interrelated outcomes: relevant access schemes and pathway programs need to be in place; potential students need to have improved academic awareness and outcomes prior to entering university; and they need to have awareness of, and the confidence and motivation to, engage in higher education. Enabling all three factors are the policies of key internal and external influences.

The latter two outcomes relating to awareness, confidence and motivation are made achievable through teachers, schools and communities having increased capacity to support students – and through communities having the social, cultural and economic capital to enable access.

Domain 2: Students have the agency to enact personal and social responsibility

While students arrive with considerable civic capacity, UTS also recognises its institutional role as an enabler in this space. The outcomes that are needed, and work together, to achieve Domain 2 are:

- Students demonstrating competence in ethical reasoning and empathic decision making;
- Students engaging in critical thinking and collaborative inquiry;
- Students having the confidence to act; and
- Students working with others across difference to solve public problems.

Together, these proficiencies enable students to take personal and social responsibility and positively impact the communities of which they are a part. These factors themselves rely on the following set of interrelated outcome areas:

- Students experiencing diverse perspectives from their home, community and social networks (including at university);
- Civic literacy being embedded in teaching and learning;
- Students being recognised and rewarded for social impact related learning and engagement;
- Basic and academic needs of students being met; and
- Teaching and learning practices being enabling, accessible and inclusive – with this outcome also acting as a contributor to Domain 1.

One final outcome sits alongside these factors as a necessary precondition to Domain 2, as well as to other key domains of change in the framework:

- Transformative and generative partnerships being in place.

The establishment of long-term relationships, grounded in mutual trust, will enable two-way learning opportunities that can result in deepened knowledge, improved capacity and impactful engagement in social change. This outcome is related to three other areas of the framework. As detailed in the relevant sections below, transformative and generative partnerships also contribute to Domains 3 and 4. They also have a direct relationship to notions of social capital and trust – a precondition which we detail later in the article.

Domain 3: Staff have the confidence and are supported to maximise their social impact

Social impact and the desire to support the positive transformation of communities are embedded in the fabric of UTS. A clear demonstration of this is the contribution of UTS staff. As established earlier in this article, staff work vigorously, both within and externally to their professional roles, towards social change. UTS values the contribution of its staff and, through institutional strategies, processes and programs, it can further recognise and support staff to maximise and multiply their impact.

Four complementing necessary conditions have been identified in relation to this domain. For staff to be supported to maximise their social impact, the following outcomes need to be realised:

- Staff need to have the opportunity to develop their capacity to contribute to social impact (knowledge, skills and abilities);
- Staff need to be recognised and rewarded for their social impact;
- UTS organisational structures, policies and processes need to support staff contributions to social impact; and
- Staff need to work effectively in coordination, collaboration or partnership with others. As previously indicated, the outcome relating to transformative and generative partnerships relates to Domain 3, making a direct contribution to this outcome statement.

Domain 4: Targeted research, teaching and program outcomes have social impact and actively contribute to communities

The UTS social impact agenda is ambitious in scale. In addition to its focus on widening participation and its contribution to enhancing the social impact of students and staff,

the achievement of UTS's vision for change requires a whole of institution approach that brings together the efforts of the university community. To this end, a commitment to targeted research, teaching and programs that have social impact and actively contribute to communities is required. Transformative and generative partnerships that are reciprocal and interdependent in nature are, again, a necessary precondition of this outcome. Deeply integrated and longstanding relationships can give meaning and relevance to selected zones of focus.

In addition, three other factors need to be simultaneously realised. These are:

- UTS staff need to be afforded academic freedom within the scope of their field of expertise or when supported by evidence. Academic freedom, itself, is reliant on two factors: the UTS environment encouraging creativity, radical ideas and interrogation of the status quo, and staff acting as evidence-based critics being protected from retribution;
- Internal and external funding and resources need to support focused practice; and
- Research, teaching and program practices need to be ethical.

Domain 5: UTS is an advocate, critical voice and thought leader on issues that concern and impact communities

Universities act as vessels through which social, cultural and human capital flow and grow. With this comes advocacy and thought leadership responsibility. To effectively take up this role, UTS needs to engage in meaningful dialogue with society. This form of exchange requires both trust and respect for academic integrity by communities – and this in turn relies on academics acting with integrity.

Two other outcome areas sit alongside meaningful dialogue with society in supporting advocacy and thought leadership. They are:

- Appropriate channels of communication need to be used to popularise ideas; and
- Explicit financial support or resources need to be in place for staff to work in this way.

Domain 6: UTS business operations and strategies reflect a long-term independent commitment to social impact

UTS's investment in the Social Impact Framework reflects the organisation's long-term commitment to the public purpose role of the institution. The critical role the organisation itself plays in bringing about social change is well recognised and acted upon in its operations.

The roadmap identifies five outcomes that can work together to further enhance UTS's position in this space. They are:

- UTS business practices need to be ethical, responsible and sustainable;
- UTS must strive for exemplary workforce policies and practices;
- UTS must be inclusive and accessible;
- Recruitment and retention of staff from under-represented target groups must be exemplary; and
- UTS processes must be fair for staff and students.

Preconditions

The six domains covered, and their respective prerequisites, speak to the change that is needed at UTS in order for its public purpose intent to be realised. Underpinning these are a number

of significant elements – articulated as preconditions – that also need consideration. The preconditions act as foundational elements that support the domains, without which change would not be possible.

These are shared through the framework under two broad categories:

- **UTS leadership and culture**

UTS leadership and culture underpin the domains of change identified. Without supportive and inclusive cross-level leadership and culture, the desired change at UTS would be unattainable. In the framework, this is represented by the precondition statement: Leadership and the culture at UTS is inclusive and supports the public purpose role of the university.

- **Social capital and trust**

Social change does not happen in isolation. Meaningful relationships, strengthened by mutual trust and respect, are essential preconditions to the transformational change to which UTS seeks to contribute. An area of significant importance, therefore, is UTS's social capital, both within the organisation and in terms of the relationships it holds with the communities of which it is a part. Relating to this is the relationships that the institution holds with its alumni and partners, who can support greater social impact by acting through, and with, UTS.

External influences

The impact of external influences on universities is well recognised and referenced earlier in this article. The framework identifies four significant external influences that can impact progress in positive or negative ways. These are: Government policies and practices; international frameworks; industry demands; and media.

Discussion

Utilising an integrated approach that weaved together Appreciative Inquiry and Theory of Change allowed UTS to create a comprehensive framework that builds upon institutional knowledge and simultaneously draws upon the broader context. The participatory approach and comprehensive reach across the organisation were important aspects of the initiative as they paid respect to UTS's existing role and achievements in this space. By working alongside an engaged community, the process for developing the framework harnessed existing efforts and knowledge as foundations for driving the strategy forward.

Many of the factors identified through the process reiterate notions expressed in well-established research. The significance of reward and recognition (O'Meara 2012), the need to find an alignment with social inclusion strategies and recruitment, the need to work across disciplines for the purpose of solving public challenges, and the need to share this information beyond academic publications (Hoyt & Hollister 2014) are just a few examples. The proposed framework builds on these understandings by unifying the elements under a single and expanded umbrella. In doing so, it brings potential new considerations to how these aspects interrelate and are understood.

This notion can be demonstrated through an examination of the broader debate around the scholarship of engagement, where the act of engagement itself often takes a central position. Although the contribution of engaged scholarship to society is well understood, the enabling factors and barriers are often presented as separate cases and debated in isolation. They can

even lack the link through to the impact of engagement or the desired change that results from engaged scholarship.

In comparison, the UTS Social Impact Framework begins with the institutional purpose and impact statements. This shift in focus reformulates the interrelationship between many of the previously identified factors, repositioning them as a set of connected and related outcomes that directly contribute to the institution's social change agenda. Transformative and generative partnerships and engaged practice therefore sit alongside reward and recognition – for both academic and professional staff – as critical and necessary systemic preconditions that enable broader social change.

For UTS, the development of the framework has resulted in a system response that brings strategic connection to diverse efforts from across the university. The interconnection supports effectiveness and enables the organisation to identify new strategic interventions that can step it closer to where it needs to be.

The influence of the UTS Social Impact Framework on institutional direction and action is already evident. Public purpose and social impact are central to the new UTS 2027 Strategy (University of Technology Sydney 2018a), with the framework being adopted as the evaluative tool that supports the organisation to evidence its impact and move towards its purpose. A significant demonstration of the institution's commitment to this space is its investment in the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion as the body responsible for driving delivery of the framework and strengthening social impact across the institution. The presence of the Centre has itself led to the emergence of cross-institution interventions, including a university-wide mapping project that hopes to enhance understanding of the organisation's social impact efforts and create new links across teaching, research and practice.

Some examples of new areas of work across the domains that have emerged following the development of the framework include:

- **Domain 1: Students from under-represented target groups participate in, and successfully complete, a higher education degree at UTS:** New Widening Participation Strategy that challenges traditional notions of practice with the intention of significantly increasing under-represented target groups.
- **Domain 2: Students have the agency to enact personal and social responsibility:** An expansion of the university's SOUL leadership program to include ethical leadership training.
- **Domain 3: Staff have the confidence and are supported to maximise their social impact:** Evaluation capability building offered to staff in order to support enhanced understanding and demonstration of social impact.
- **Domain 4: Targeted research, teaching and program outcomes have social impact and actively contribute to communities:** New Social Impact Practice and Research Grants to support engaged scholarship.
- **Domain 5: UTS is an advocate, critical voice and thought leader on issues that concern and impact communities:** The official signing of the Climate Emergency Declaration by the university and the institutional support that enabled collective action in the lead-up to and during the climate change strike.
- **Domain 6: UTS business operations and strategies reflecting a long-term independent commitment to social impact:** The Social Impact Framework placed at the heart of UTS 2027 strategy.

Aside from providing strategic organisational direction that informs practice, developing a whole-of-university response also enables the university to negotiate its relationship with external influences in a strategic and empowered manner.

In the case of social impact or engagement rankings, for example, the university may very well choose to engage in order to benchmark its data or better understand its position in the context of a global sector. Concerns of reductionism can be countered by the depth and breadth of the university's framework. Utilising a systems approach ensures that externally driven factors, and the more readily measurable preconditions and outcomes, do not silence their equally relevant social impact counterparts. In other cases, the framework may challenge the validity of external measures and give the university the power to disengage.

In essence, the framework ensures a holistic and intentional response, and enables the institution to advocate for the public purpose role of higher education in its most comprehensive form.

Concluding comments

Although the participatory nature of the methodology utilised in the development of the framework makes it contextually relevant to UTS, application of the framework and adoption of the mechanism by which it was developed may bring real potential value to the broader sector. Testing the relevance of the process, the set of outcomes and the language adopted in the framework against those of a broad range of urban and regional institutions, both locally and internationally, offers rich research opportunities.

The UTS Social Impact Framework is still in its infancy. Whether the framework succeeds in driving 'institutional attentiveness' (Strum et al. 2011, p. 6) to a shared set of social impact goals remains to be seen. The framework, as an outcome in itself, acts as a guide to inform UTS strategies, policies and practices, and underpins evaluation processes. It offers the pathways to change and gives the institution the evidence-based underpinnings that can support advocacy for a holistic and strategic response to the public purpose role of universities.

The participatory and strengths-based methodology used in creating the framework has provided a strong foundation. The journey ahead, however, remains uncharted and will bring with it significant challenges. The internal and external drivers that compete for attention are themselves historic and deeply entrenched. In the face of such challenges, sustaining, and growing, the institutional culture and interconnecting the pockets of excellence that have informed the work to date will remain critical. Continued research, alongside implementation, will allow this work to gain and share knowledge in the hope that the framework maintains its focus towards enhanced impact.

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