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Enabling Academic Faculty as Key Players in Community Research Capacity Building: A Policy Framework for Collaborative Ventures

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Abstract # 59: Enabling Academic Faculty as Key Players in Community Research Capacity Building: A Policy Framework for Collaborative Ventures

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Objective: To describe and reflect on a process through which a governing policy was developed to enable and encourage academic faculty to commit significant time and intellectual capital to a not-for-profit organization created to enhance research capacity across the health system in the province of Alberta, Canada.

The Context: The SEARCH Program (Swift Efficient Application of Research in Community Health) was established in 1996, as a program to enhance the capacity of health organizations to do and use research, and to establish linkages between the academic and service delivery sectors. It was supported by the provincial research funding organization in a loose partnership with the universities, the regional health authorities and the provincial department of health. Almost ten years on, in a concerted effort to create a more sustainable future, SEARCH Canada was formed as a not-for-profit member organization. This step recognized the importance of continuing strong ties to the funding agency but also encouraged enhanced commitment from and accountability to the other partners.. As the new organization formed, the need to transition the relationships with key members and partners provided an opportunity to address shortcomings in the formal agreements related to faculty commitments in the program. This was particularly critical because the faculty members are based in a variety of environments where the roles they play in SEARCH are less recognized than other more usual academic research and teaching activities.

The Approach: The policy for engaging and remunerating faculty involved in SEARCH Canada was developed through interviews with faculty members and their deans or chairs; information from executives and documents from other similar organizations at arms length from universities; and meetings with stakeholders in the new nonprofit organization. The process resulted in a non-binding policy framework to guide faculty engagement, and also a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for signature by university departments and the not-for-profit to enable the transfer of resources and specific faculty members' activities within an overall organizational relationship. Careful stakeholder involvement was central to policy development..

Principal Findings: The topics which were important to address in the Framework for Faculty Engagement (FFE) were acknowledging the critical role and contributions of academic faculty to the program; the rationale and objectives for involving academically

based faculty (rather than full-time employees or contractors); the principles underlying the relationships; the specific activities and contributions of academic faculty; financial arrangements; faculty recruitment and retention; and evaluation of the contributions of academic faculty. Essentially, the approach identifies and more explicitly recognizes the contributions and responsibilities of Faculty members in designing and delivering SEARCH Canada services and programs. It identifies specifically expected elements of each team members role (such as participating with health authorities and supporting their staff in the use of research and evidence in practice), outlines responsibilities concerning ownership and use of information and intellectual assets, and formalizes the SEARCH Canada role within the university and college home bases.

Conclusions: Although community capacity building goals are not unknown through university community partnership, it appears that this particular form of community-university partnership is somewhat rare. The distinguishing feature is the depth of integration and ownership of the SEARCH Canada programs by academically based faculty at several universities and colleges in the province. Without this faculty, SEARCH Canada would not exist in its current form. All involved acknowledge the tremendous strength of this contribution. Despite this, it remains a challenge for mainstream university-based faculty to receive and maintain recognition and reward for SEARCH contributions within their academic bases.

Implications for Policy, Delivery or Practice: The intent is to provide a more explicit, well-understood and visible relationship for academic faculty involved with SEARCH Canada and to raise the level of recognition and reward from the academic community for faculty engaged in nontraditional capacity building activity.

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Enabling Academic Faculty as Key Players in Community Research Capacity Building: A Policy Framework for Collaborative Ventures

Introduction and Background:

Increasingly, there are pressures from funders and policy makers for various organizations involved in societal enterprises to ‘work together’. In the research domain, one manifestation of this is the expectation that those involved demonstrate that knowledge generated through research is answering relevant questions and being used to benefit society. Inevitably, universities, as key stakeholders in the production of new knowledge, must be involved in enterprises to enhance this desired societal return from research. In turn, it ultimately rests with researchers within academic institutions to fundamentally expand their traditional roles – moving beyond the conduct of research to become far more involved in helping to build the capacity required for the use of socially relevant research. This moves faculty members outside their normal scope of action and creates challenges in relation to the contributions that are usually recognized and rewarded with current peer review and academic performance appraisal. This has been noted as a specific challenge when expecting faculty to participate in activities that enhance knowledge transfer (Jacobson, Butterill and Goering, 2004).

The work reported here describes and critically comments on a process through which a governing policy was developed to enable and encourage academic faculty to commit significant time and intellectual capital to a not-for-profit member-owned organization created to enhance research capacity across the health system in the province of Alberta, Canada. The guiding intent of the work described was to provide a more explicit, well-understood and visible relationship for academic faculty involved with SEARCH Canada

and to raise the level of recognition within and reward from the academic community for faculty engaged in nontraditional capacity building activity.

The roles that university-based faculty may play beyond the traditional scope of the academy itself have been described and explored within the context of the frameworks that govern the relationship between the organizations involved. The organizational relationship between a university and an external entity frames the context within which individual faculty roles are defined, facilitated and rewarded. Much has been written about such relationships, often with respect to partnerships either with community agencies (e.g. Spoth et al 2004), or industry (e.g. Poyago-Theotoky et al 2002). And yet we still lack significant empirical experience of how such a process actually unfolds for the key stakeholders involved and impacted, in a sense ‘telling the truth’ about how intricate and messy the journey can be.

The broad initiative within which this specific work is located, has the general thrust of enabling research ‘truths’ to be at least considered in the complex process of policy making and service delivery. The focus of this paper is the way in which work towards this possibility can be operationalized within the specific context of relationships between a community not-for-profit and universities.

Context:

The SEARCH Program (Swift Efficient Application of Research in Community Health) was established in the province of Alberta, Canada, in 1996, as a program to enhance the capacity of health organizations to do and use research, including strengthened links

across academic and practice settings. This was a period of immense change within the health system. In 1994, health care services in the province were amalgamated into 17 health authorities (further reduced to nine in 2003). SEARCH was initiated and sponsored by the provincial health research funding organization, and planned and delivered in consultation and partnership with interested stakeholders : the universities, the regional health authorities and the provincial department of health. In particular, faculty members located at the two largest universities in the province were involved in delivering the program from its inception. Increasingly, as the program matured, these university-based faculty members became the ‘brain trust’ of the program, and in 2005 are integral to the design, evolution, planning, management, delivery and evaluation of the program.

Almost ten years on, SEARCH Canada was formed as a not-for-profit member organization in a concerted effort to further achieve the goals originally articulated by the provincial research funding organization in establishing SEARCH, by creating a more sustainable future through formal commitments and an organizational structure reflecting those commitments,. This new organizational form recognized the importance of continuing strong ties to the funding agency but also encouraged enhanced commitment from and accountability to each of the practice organizations, the academic sector and government. As the new structure was formalized, the need to preserve, renew and formalize relationships with key participants emerged. This was particularly critical for the members of the faculty team, who were based in a variety of university and college environments where the roles they play in SEARCH is given less recognition than other more usual academic research activities.

Over the lifetime of SEARCH, the contributions of faculty members, working separately and collaboratively, had come to be recognized as a key ingredient for future success. Because of this and the learning gained over eight years as to the strengths and weaknesses of the existing arrangements, concerted effort was exerted over a one year period to work with faculty members themselves, department heads and deans to develop a framework within which to accurately reflect the engagement of individual faculty members with the SEARCH programs through the new entity. Two different formal agreements had been implemented to facilitate the engagement of faculty members in 1996 and 2000. The second framework, established as a 'terms of reference' for a grant, responded to concerns of the academics involved by trying to capture the general nature of the faculty role in SEARCH in terms of research collaboration, teaching and community service. Over three years, however, it became apparent that this formal document did not do justice to the understanding of the role, variations in that role across faculty members, and its contribution to the mission and goals of the academic institutions. A survey of the faculty team in 2003 confirmed their commitment, indeed excitement, about being involved in the SEARCH program. In addition to specific attributes about the program which they valued, faculty members described being involved in something 'exciting', 'world class, or something that is 'going somewhere'. Despite their commitment to the program, it was also clear that their involvement was not generally well understood or recognized in their institutions, and their contributions with the program (and, going forward, the new entity) needed to be better articulated and seen to contribute to, and not detract from, their responsibilities as faculty members within a university.

During the eight years of the program under the research funding organization, while individual faculty members were recruited and committed to the program, transactional negotiations and agreements between the program and the universities occurred at the level of department heads or deans. In consultation with individual faculty members, they agreed to specific time contributions of faculty members in return for an amount of money to enable this contribution. At the time that SEARCH Canada became an autonomous organization, there were 9 of 12 faculty members (all of whom were involved with SEARCH on a part time basis) located within one of three universities. Subsequently agreements have also been put in place with two additional colleges. Although relationships with several organizations and groups were key to the new nonprofit the focus of this paper is on the relationship with the universities, given the importance of faculty members to the organization.

Literature:

Relationships involving more than one organization have been described along several dimensions, including structural aspects, benefits or reasons for collaborating, barriers and factors that contribute to successful relationships. Universities have a history of forming relationships with industry partners and community agencies. These partnerships or alliances are becoming increasingly common and gaining momentum. Benefits ideally accrue to both partners. Industry, for example, gains access to expensive research and development resources and an educated, highly skilled workforce (Nimtz et al 1995). Universities are able to conduct research in practical settings, and may receive sponsorship funds (Nimtz et al 1995, Heidrick et al. 2005). Students are afforded valuable

on the job training and employment opportunities (Heidrick et al. 2005, Elmuti et al.2005). University partnerships with public service organizations for the purposes of research and training develop for similar reasons and are also increasingly common (Bernal et al.2004, Bringle et al. 2000, Savan and Sider 2003). Of particular relevance to the SEARCH evolution is a description of the PROSPER model, a partnership between public schools, universities and linking agents formed to guide capacity building in state public education systems (Spoth et al.2004).

Regardless of the structure or form these partnerships take, common benefits and challenges or drawbacks are frequently noted. Benefits include: sharing resources, the diffusion of research or technology (Poyago-Theotoky et al. 2002, Nimtz et al. 1995), knowledge transfer (Heidrick et al.2005), positive effects on curriculum and local economy (Poyago-Theotoky et al. 2002) social development (Savan and Sider 2003), two-way knowledge transfer (Poyago-Theotoky et al. 2002), appeal to prospective faculty or staff (Nimtz et al.1995), ability to influence research so that it is more relevant to practice environments (Nimtz et al.1995), improved knowledge, problem-solving and decision making capacity of partners (Savan and Sider 2003), networking and contact opportunities (Savan and Sider 2003, Heidrick et al. 2005), and unique ability to tackle complex problems that have been resistant to existing approaches (Silka 2004).

Potential challenges or drawbacks include: negative impact on a culture of open science, reduced quantity and quality of basic science, effects on the types of questions addressed, less time for university staff for university responsibilities (Poyago-Theotoky et al.2002,

Silka 2004), conflicts of duty and commitment (Nimtz et al. 1995), differing goals, agendas, priorities, expectations (Savan and Sider 2003, Elmuti et al. 2005), diminished control over proprietary information and intellectual freedom issues (Nimtz et al. 1995), cultural differences (Elmuti et al. 2005), difficulties maintaining long-term sustainable relationships (Savan and Sider 2003), inequitable distribution of power and control (Savan and Sider 2003) and challenges to disciplinary assumptions (Silka 2004).

Successful partnerships more often have the following characteristics: stable and supportive environment, trust and respect, critical dialogue (Phelan et al. 2004) and effective communication (Elmuti et al. 2005), a flat knowledge and power base (Phelan et al. 2004), understanding of cultural differences, leadership, organizational structure and legal issues, institutional policies and contractual mechanisms, capacity and resources, faculty workload (Nimtz et al. 1995), and commitment by all parties involved (Elmuti et al. 2005).

The Approach:

Several primary considerations determined the approach to formalizing the framework for faculty engagement. First, relationships already existed (many of them of many years duration), both with individual faculty members and their departments. The relationships that had been formed during the first eight years between university entities (individual faculty members and in most cases, their departments) and SEARCH were solid and valued by both sides. Second, although the vision for the overall undertaking was evolving it was not changing fundamentally. Nonetheless, the governance arrangements

under which it would be continuing were changing, which meant different roles and relationships among the organizations involved. Third, the new entity was to be a collaborative venture, no longer under the direct control of the provincial health research foundation. Finally, it was seen as important to formalize and standardize, to the degree possible, the framework within which to engage faculty in the activities of the new nonprofit, in order to enable growth and development of the new organization.,

Based on this group of factors, the approach to drafting the policy involved several key activities:

1. Exploration of other organizations working collaboratively with universities for shared purposes where university based faculty were an integral part of the operations of the organization.
2. Interviews with key stakeholders in the new nonprofit corporation (individual faculty members, department heads and deans). These interviews were held one on one, and also involved group discussions to seek clarification on areas where there were differing perspectives or where motivations were unclear that required discussion and agreement. These interviews resulted in the drafting of the Framework for Faculty Engagement.
3. Critical aspects and orientations of the Framework required extensive discussion, clarification and negotiation, particularly with faculty members. Two areas generated significant interaction; the development of and agreement to the policy concerning intellectual property; and the assurance of and allowance for

flexibility of the specific arrangements regarding individual faculty members (as reflected in the addenda).

4. Concerted efforts focused on preserving and building trusting relationship processes as an inherent component of Framework development and implementation.
5. Meeting with institutional stakeholders (deans and directors) to finalize key parts of the collaboration agreement. About six months before the formal launch of the new organization, a meeting was held involving 14 individuals: 3 Senior Faculty members; the Board Chair and Acting CEO of the new SEARCH organization; and 7 Deans or Department Directors; who were key representatives of those entities that were expected to be signatories to the MOU from the academic institutions. This group reviewed the Faculty Framework Agreement and provided specific input to areas where there was some lack of clarity or differing perspectives. The areas generating the most discussion included:
 - How to describe the nature of the contributions of faculty members;
 - How to evaluate and give credit for these contributions (whether as research, teaching or service);
 - Appropriate intellectual property policies that reflect shared intellectual capital and integrate with existing institutional policies;
 - The nature of the relationship between faculty members and SEARCH Canada (through aegis of their own department or through their consulting firms).

Framework for Faculty Engagement:

The approach described above yielded four products that set the stage for the continuation of faculty activity and contributions within the nonprofit structure. These products included a report on frameworks in use by similar organizations, a framework for faculty engagement, a memorandum of understanding between each relevant academic entity (department, faculty, division, college) and SEARCH Canada, and a template for an addendum that would articulate specific roles for individual faculty members and the remuneration or compensation to the department or faculty related to that.

The approach also highlighted the importance of existing and trusting process relationships that were critical to advancing policy development and acceptance.

Figure 1: Formal Relationships Among Entities

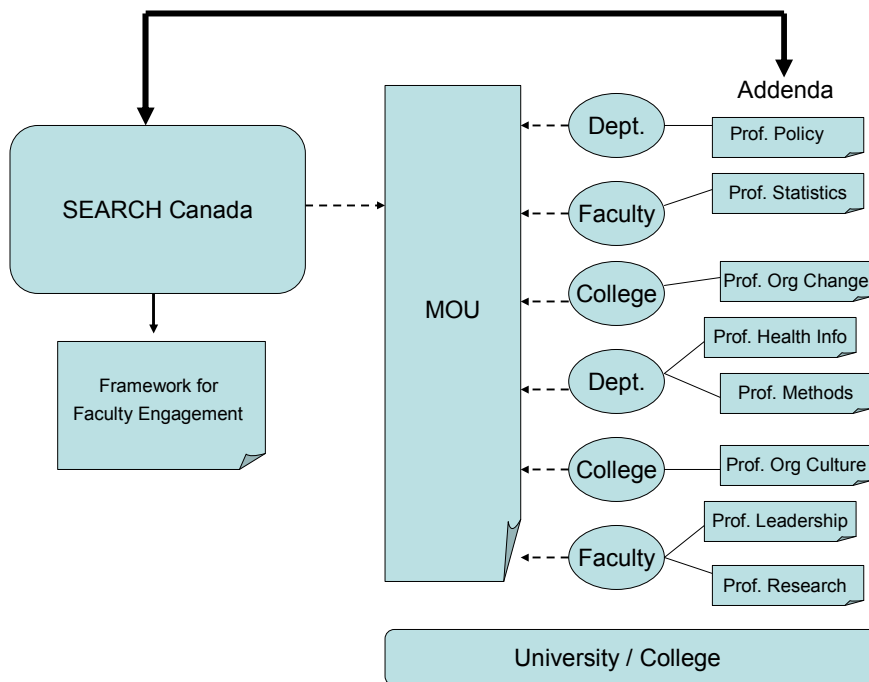


Figure1 depicts the relevant use and parties involved in the development and use of the various documents. The solid line depicts a specific arrangement with a department regarding the involvement of one or more individuals. The Framework for Faculty Engagement is a policy document developed, with extensive consultation with stakeholders, by SEARCH Canada to provide its corporate policy framework for engaging academic faculty in its endeavors. The Memorandum of Understanding reflected key points in the Framework for Faculty Engagement and was designed as a non-binding statement of understanding and intentions. The Addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding was designed to be binding; it allowed for the specification of the nature of obligation for an individual faculty member, and documented the remuneration that would be associated. Under the Memorandum of Understanding, a number of different faculty members within a department could be associated with SEARCH Canada through separate Addenda. This built in a necessary flexibility to the specific arrangements governing individual faculty responsibilities and requirements.

Principal Results: The Policy Documents and Their Implementation

The Policy Documents

The Framework for Faculty Engagement was the foundational policy document which endeavored to outline the goals and principles of the relationship between the not for profit organization and the academic institutions. It tried to address all the dimensions that had been identified as relevant to codify (and in some cases extend) in the existing arrangements between SEARCH and academic entities. From this document, the MOU

and Addenda related to each individual faculty member evolved. The elements addressed in the Framework are listed in Table 1. For each element, a brief description of the contents of that section is provided.

Essentially, the approach makes explicit many aspects that were implicitly understood in the first years of the program, and also articulates some thoughts that had ‘matured’ over the years of evolution of the program and were deemed important to state explicitly. It includes more detailed description than previous agreements of potential activities, specific benefits to the academic department, roles and responsibilities in recruitment, communication and evaluation.

The stakeholders all agreed that the principles covered by the FFE should be reflected in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the level of the institutional unit with which the faculty member was most directly affiliated, and within which they would receive evaluation and recognition. The MOU was therefore considerably shorter but nonetheless covered similar ground. It was framed as a facilitating document that may indicate potential funding support, but specific agreements would follow in addenda, so that with an MoU established, there was flexibility over time as to the specific individuals and their roles, but the organizational relationship and commitments would be stable and ongoing.

Table 1: Faculty for Framework Engagement:

Framework Component	Illustrative Inclusion
Preamble and Background	Brief history; key features of faculty involvement (e.g. all faculty are involved with SEARCH on part time basis only; relationships have always been between SEARCH and faculty or department.
Goals of SEARCH Canada	Six goals include: evidence use; collaborative network; culture shift; integration and sustainability; dissemination of knowledge; contributions to knowledge generation.
Central Role of Faculty	Faculty are involved in design AND delivery of curriculum; faculty important source of intellectual capital for program; faculty members have ongoing personal commitment.
Purpose of the Framework for Faculty Engagement	To provide parameters within which to enable, support and nurture the engagement of individual faculty members
Assumptions	Value accrues to SEARCH, academic institutions and the health system in province Achieving SEARCH's goals involves change in all parts of system: health professionals, health organizations, universities, funding bodies, government departments.
Objectives of Involving Academic Faculty in SEARCH Canada	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure intellectual capital in the research community is brought to bear 2. Bridge academic and practice boundaries 3. Increase capacity for collaborative, system-linked research 4. Produce research ABOUT knowledge transfer and processes inherent in SEARCH programs.
Principles of Engagement	Including: trusting, informed, respectful and flexible relationships; commitment to ongoing evaluation of SEARCH Alberta accomplishments to ensure excellence; mutual benefit for all involved.
Activities and Contributions of Academic Faculty	List of all the potential roles – e.g. program design, team leadership, virtual learning support, research network development, research project support, relationship facilitation.
Benefits for Faculty Members and Their Department or Faculty	Lists benefits for individual faculty members (e.g. involvement with colleagues in a collegial, flexible and responsive environment; funding; participation in network) and for departments (e.g. enhanced knowledge translation capacity, student recruitment and placements, access to well developed and evaluated curriculum materials).
Financial Arrangements	Describes in a general way that financial support will depend on the extent of involvement of faculty members. Cash transfers are designed to be enabling; and not akin to a 'fee for service'. Financial arrangements for full time academic faculty will be through the department.
Formal Arrangements	Memorandum of Understanding between SEARCH and department is general in nature; Addendum relates to contributions and compensation to department relating to individual faculty member.
Faculty Recruitment and Retention	Gives principles for faculty recruitment , e.g. core faculty are recruited primarily on the basis of 'fit' with the goals and needs of SEARCH and career stage, aspirations, plans etc of the faculty member.
Communication and Evaluation	Involvement in SEARCH will be evaluated in ways respectful to the particular context; all parties are committed to a system that yields assessments that are meaningful in both SEARCH and academic environments.

The preamble to the MOU stated that it was based on several beliefs: there were three beneficiaries to the arrangement (faculty member, institution, SEARCH Canada); the importance of enhancing the impact of research on health system outcomes; the importance of evaluation; the necessity for deepening ties between health service delivery organizations and institutions of higher learning; and the desirability of having formal agreements as simple and uniform as possible across the province..

The Addendum was designed to relate to a specific faculty member and was where contractual commitments were identified. It was designed as a 2 page template, listing all the potential contributions a faculty member could make, and the expected time commitment from the faculty member and associated financial remuneration to the department or faculty. The Addendum also included a clause related to intellectual property which said in essence that, subject to the intellectual policies of the institution, the Faculty Member agrees to comply with SEARCH Canada's intellectual property policy (which is specified). The intent and content of the IP policy – which essentially proposes a shared use rights approach (as opposed in ownership on the part of SEARCH Canada) – was critical to faculty member sign off to agreements.

Operationalizing the Arrangements

It was anticipated that the MOU would be signed with each of the respective faculties or departments within 6 months of the meeting with institutional stakeholders and that this would form the basis for specific agreements regarding each of the faculty members by the time of the end of the preexisting agreements which terminated in July 2005. In reality, the process did not unfold as envisioned. When the MOUs were sent to the

individual in charge of each faculty or department (9 departments in five institutions) they took a variety of trajectories within the respective institutions: in three cases (including both community colleges which were getting involved formally in SEARCH Canada for the first time) the agreements were signed at the institutional level within six weeks after being received; in some cases the agreements were transferred from the department or faculty to a university level administrative department (such as Research Services, Legal, or Academic) and in these cases took up to 7 months to be signed (in some cases, discussion is still ensuing about who in the institution is the most appropriate signatory to this agreement.); in some cases, while the agreements were signed within 2-3 months, the ability to deposit and access the related funds was delayed up to 7 months and longer. Despite unexpected delays, the specific Addenda relating to the contributions of individual faculty members were signed in all cases. The program continued to operate with the usual faculty contributions continuing uninterrupted despite the absence of finalized legal and financial transactions. In almost all cases, faculty members have been involved on an ongoing basis in the activities of SEARCH Canada so it is 'business as usual' from their perspective.

Analysis and Conclusions:

The process of developing framework policy documents and their implementation was instructive. In this section, we reflect on the lessons learned and insight gained in order to comment specifically on how we might recommend that others involved in a similar undertaking proceed.

Wildavsky (1979) describes the policy process as ‘certainly exhausting, hardly exhilarating, but hopefully enlightening’. Although he was referring mainly to the public policy process, the same could be said of the organizational policy process as experienced in this work.

Below, we reflect on the process described here through selected lenses of literature related to interorganizational relationships: processes of creating collaborative processes and specific consideration of university / industry partnerships. . In this section we reflect on our experience through consideration of these other perspectives, and identify the insights gained through this. In the final section, we discuss implications of our findings for others in similar situations.

The Process of Working Together

Strategic alliances have been described generally as intentional, interorganizational relationships created to benefit the organizational partners and ultimately, the organizations’ consumers (Bailey and Koney, p 4). Alliances vary along many dimensions, variously described as mandated versus voluntary, degree of coupling or breadth of hybrid purpose, for example (Borys and Jemison 1989). This paper is mainly about formalizing a relationship that had been evolving over a number of years. In the situation where conditions and motivations exist to cause organizations to want to create a high commitment relationship it is useful to consider the process through which this relationship evolves.

Several authors have written about the process through which collaborative or partnership entities evolve (Ring and Van de Ven 1994; Wood and Gray 1991; Bailey and Koney 2000). Ring and Van de Ven (1994) presented a model that envisions relationships progressing through phases of negotiation, commitment, and execution with each stage involving both formal and informal dimensions. Progression through successive phases is based at least partially on an assessment of efficiency and equity. This is consistent with the motivation for moving to one umbrella framework within the SEARCH situation. It was deemed desirable to have a common framework that was transparent to all parties.

In the SEARCH case, all three phases had been successfully implemented for the first 8 years of the program through relatively informal, (initially verbal) agreements between the SEARCH program and university departments. As the number of departments and universities increased, and SEARCH evolved to become an independent nonprofit organization, there was a desire to create a more formal and consistent agreement on the part of the new SEARCH organization. This was perhaps partly due to the magnitude of the importance of this relationship to its endeavors. The negotiation phase of this new level of partnership (described in this paper), resulted in a draft Memorandum of Understanding (negotiated between department heads and the SEARCH program). On movement to the commitment phase, however, when departments were asked to sign the MOU (which in and of itself had no specific obligations but rather described the philosophy and parameters under which the two parties would formally contract for services, there was reluctance, or at least uncertainty on the part of some university departments, or the wider university research offices, about how best to proceed. Despite

the uncertain and protracted path towards signing of the MOU, the third stage of the process as described (i.e. execution) continued without interruption. This was no doubt due to the fact that the individuals involved had for the most part, a long history of involvement and commitment to the program.

One might 'muse' about whether it is necessary to push to get university level commitment to these agreements, or whether things should persist 'as they were' with the department level fairly informal interaction apparently 'working'. One could argue, that if one benefit (as suggested by Bailey and Koney 2000, p 130) of partnerships is to promote organizational and system reforms, then efforts should be made to have these formal 'statements of understanding' signed. However, despite the lack of universal signing of the 'statement of understanding', all departments and faculty members are continuing with their specific commitments to the program (and appropriate funds as agreed are changing hands).

The predominant insight through examining the processes of collaboration in this case study is that relating to the roles and importance of varying levels of administration within the university setting. Although no clear path exists, in retrospect it would have been wise to understand more about the requirements within universities relating to signing agreements or statements of principle. Over the course of several years, effective, satisfactory relationships were established between university departments and the external entity such that the program of interest to both university faculty members and SEARCH grew and thrived. When attempting to take these arrangements to a higher

level of formality, those previously involved felt the need in some cases to involve a university level entity which in many cases caused delays and confusion with the process.

University-Industry Relations

The literature on university-industry relations takes one particular type of alliance and explores the benefits and challenges for the institutional members of the alliance. In the case of SEARCH Canada, the health service organizations were seen by the academic sector as the ‘industry’ partners, and SEARCH Canada in some ways as the mechanism for an ‘industry-university’ relationship. Much of this literature has focused on the research commercialization relationship (Streharsky 1993, Poyago-theotoky et al. 2002; Nimtz et al 1995; Heidrick et al 2005), but there is also a growing focus on the opportunities and challenges of universities in relation to industry’s need for training and knowledge management, not only applied research (Garrick et al. 2004). The challenges faced by the faculty members engaged in SEARCH Canada may reflect that only recently is there an emerging recognition that multiple types of relationships may benefit both industry and academia: not only a relationship whereby research is transferred through technology commercialization, but also relationships where knowledge is transferred, and research informed, through innovative educational roles and partnerships that contribute to knowledge management at the point of research application. (Garrick et al. 2004).

The trade-offs for universities described in relation to fundamental research commercialization resonate with the ambivalence evident within the academic institutions about SEARCH faculty members contributing to the research capacity of the health system, rather than directly to research on the health system. Whilst the academy

is interested in rapid diffusion of knowledge, curricula informed by industry needs, and two-way knowledge transfer (Poyoga-Theotoky et al 2002), there is concern about the impacts of industry relationships on the quality and quantity of basic research, a narrowing and/or biasing of the questions addressed, and less time from faculty for internal teaching and service (Poyoga-Theotoky et al 2002). The tensions between these benefits and costs may have been expressed in the complex and unpredictable institutional responses to a policy framework that outlined a new and different faculty role related to knowledge development and transfer mediated through a 'jointly owned' university-industry not for profit. Garrick (2004), in his analysis of the opportunities for universities in the increasing need of industry for work-based learning and knowledge management, points to the importance of valuing benefits not only linked to research activity, but also to "researching and developing desired training and development options, innovative new forms of learning". These benefits were clearly part of the academic sectors' interest in SEARCH, but the operationalisation of this interest seemed caught within a consideration of 'trade-offs' informed by alliances focused only on the research mission and not on the educational and social mission of universities.

Models of university-industry agreements in the case of technology transfer also offer interesting comparisons in considering the options available in a relationship for capacity-building. These agreements generally range along a continuum of principal-agent contracts, ranging from the firm as principal and researcher as agent to the university researcher as principle and firm as agent (Poyago-Theotoky et al 2002). Poyoga-Theotoky states that "most agreements are in the middle". When external

agencies engage the skills and knowledge of faculty members as teachers and facilitators, co-managers and system influencers, as well as researchers, a similar middle ground must be found to capture the benefit for both sectors in the alliance. The SEARCH Faculty Engagement Framework attempted to articulate not only the specifics of such a role, but also the shared benefits. The very attempt to establish a more explicit agreement, which came to be seen primarily as a legal contract, may, however, have mitigated against the kind of collaborative relationship which “requires inputs from both university and industry”, and which is noted as being reflected increasingly in informal, non-contractual relationships such as an educational partnership or consultancy arrangements, rather than formal contracts (Peyago-Theotoky et al. 2002). It is possible that the effort to identify, articulate and thus value and recognize the faculty role in non-traditional, practice-linked capacity building, moved institutions to a perspective and process informed by models of research commercialization, which do not reflect the fundamentally collaborative, ongoing and non-commercial alliance that SEARCH is based upon. YES!!!

Case descriptions in the literature also point to some pragmatic approaches that address the challenges of “academic institutions’ bureaucratic red tape, competitive ethic and long term view” (Nimtz et al, 1995) The SEARCH Faculty Engagement Framework, adopted some of their suggestions (as highlighted below) , but not all of these solutions:

1. A ‘bottom up’ approach (starting with relationship at the working level of the researchers) rather than top down (starting with relationship between senior administrators: The existing relationships between SEARCH faculty, staff and

- participants ensured the continuity of the relationships and eventual success of formal agreements.
2. A very brief contract document, because “Trust flexibility and responsiveness are hallmarks of successful high tech ventures and such a short contract reflects these assumptions”: The effort to clarify the contributions and value of faculty members led to much longer and more complex documentation of the already established relationship, and may thus have undermined rather than reinforced the existing trust, flexibility and responsiveness that characterized the partnership.
 3. Ensuring common language and communication methods: SEARCH benefited from an 8-year history of common endeavour which had already ironed out many differences in language, culture and assumptions, so that language was not a major impediment to agreement.
 4. Expecting time and resources required to navigate legal and internal financial processes to be higher than anticipated: in the case described here, most effort and resource was dedicated to drafting and agreeing to the documentation, and not enough time and resources were anticipated to be needed to achieve full implementation.
 5. Dealing with proprietary commitments up front: an Intellectual Property Policy for SEARCH Canada, which was acceptable to the faculty team and consistent with the academic institution policies, was completed prior to the Faculty Engagement Framework and set the stage for rapid agreement in this area

Discussions of university-industry partnerships thus may explain some challenges that emerged through the process of establishing the SEARCH Faculty Engagement Framework and agreements: a) from conceptual disconnects because cost-benefit analyses were based on familiar models which too narrowly defined the nature of the alliance, b) from contractual misunderstandings where collaborative agreements appeared to be commercial contracts and c) from practical gaps in the planning and process.

Although community capacity building goals are not unknown through university community partnerships (see Spoth et al 2004), it appears as though this particular form of community-university partnership is somewhat rare. The distinguishing feature is the depth of integration and ownership of the SEARCH Canada programs by academically based faculty at several universities and colleges in the province. Without the academically based faculty, SEARCH Canada would not exist in its current form. All involved acknowledge the tremendous strength of this contribution. Developing an enduring framework for future involvement was made possible because of a long history of trusting and respectful relationships.

Closing Comments

Despite the delays in signing of the formal agreements among all parties, the programs are being delivered (and indeed continue to be a hotbed of innovation) in much the same way as they always have been. One might well ask the question about whether creating an MOU was a wise thing to do; and secondly, did it matter whether or not it was signed? The rationale for this effort was to provide a more or less consistent framework within which to structure contractual relationships with those faculty members who were critical

to the success of the new organization. The intent was to reduce some of the time (and potential conflict) associated with negotiating a different contract with each faculty member (and their respective department head), and to provide a consistent approach to the recognition of faculty roles. In fact, in the short run, there was a great deal of time spent discussing the MOU and in the end it was not always signed nor was it considered in many cases essential to the transaction, which was based on the much less comprehensive Addendum. Having the framework articulated (if not formalized through signatures) may have increased the level of comfort for department heads to make contractual obligations on behalf of one or more of their faculty members.

The various institutional responses to the MOU causes one to ask if there may have been a better way to make the points that were in the MOU. For example, as the documents were non-binding in any event, could a statement sent along with the request for specific contracts with each faculty member (even as an inherent part of the contract) have been just as effective? Did uncoupling the statement of philosophy and intent from the contractual document make it more difficult? Did the fact that the statement of philosophy and principles was called a “Memorandum of Understanding” make a difference? In Canada, there are instances of organizations working in the health research funding sector who sign ‘Memoranda of Understanding’ that are expressions of shared commitment in certain areas and agreements to operate in a particular way (without any specific collaboration in mind).

It did not appear that there were any particular clauses or statements in the MOU that were problematic. It seemed rather to be the question of legitimate authority to make

enter such an agreement on behalf of the institution that created consternation and complexity. Uncertainty, internal and external and at many levels, about the proper process and potential implications within the university for entering such an agreement was very problematic. Changing protocols, expectations and management strategies within the institutions seemed to impede action. This suggests that mindful attention to the 'process' of developing the relationships within which an MOU can be accepted is essential. The formalization of informal practices to be embraced by all stakeholder across all organizational and professional situations and from multiple perspectives, is not easy and requires considerable and protracted effort.

Speaking Truth to Universities: Who Speaks to Whom?

Cracks are appearing all over the academic landscape. Votes of non-confidence in university presidents are spreading. Boards of governors are wrestling with university senates in efforts to expand their jurisdiction over academic matters. Testy relations have formed between universities and provincial governments. As one senior government officer stated in response to a survey of the perception of universities among provincial governments officials: 'Our approach is just to starve the buggers to death and hope they'll react as we'd like' (Emberley, 1996).

Emberley was writing during the 1990's about cracks in the traditional power base of universities as institutions of 'academic freedom' and as powerful voices regarding learning and research, at a time when federal and provincial funding for social goods

such as health and education were diminishing. And while we have begun to see a turning around of resources and some significant new injections of funds, it is arguable that the strength of old sources of power and influence has begun to change. While this change has not obviously altered the traditional core powerbases of universities, it has left room at the edges for new stakeholders to wield some influence.

In our effort to develop new policy mechanisms to involve academically based faculty to engage in nontraditional practice-based learning activity, new stakeholders have been allowed to interact differently to support different but not necessarily aberrant learning goals. To this extent, a shift in power, however subtle, has been initiated. Using Clement's (1994) frame, three 'key features' of organizational life are being affected; the university culture, the leadership for change within the university and the existing network of power. As academic 'cultures' become more open to at least incremental changes, it is possible that a broader range of stakeholders will contribute to 'leading' such change. New stakeholder constituencies, as sources of new power and influence, can in turn impact and widen the existing network of power. The potential for 'lateral leadership' (Khul et al, 2005) to create less threatening sources of shared innovation and partnership may be one pathway for involving academics more legitimately in what still may be seen as nontraditional work. The value of shared conversations among a broader set of leaders should be carefully considered and nurtured when attempting to change and/or formalize new relationships. Finally, creating time and sustaining energy for the critical role of inter-organizational learning as a source of new power and growth for all partner organizations involved needs further examination and reporting.

Implications for Policy, Delivery, Practice (and next time);

The intent of undertaking the development of a policy framework, non-binding agreement and specific transactional contract was to address the identified needs of faculty members and their institutions in participating in and recognizing a province-wide collaboration with a nonprofit organization, representative of all stakeholders. It was intended to provide a more specific and visible relationship for academic faculty involved with SEARCH Canada and to raise the level of recognition and reward from the academic community for faculty engaged in nontraditional capacity building activity. While it is still too early to assess the ultimate impact of this approach, there were some challenges encountered during the implementation phase. If undertaking a similar initiative in future where a community based organization (even if funded and governed by a group that includes academic members) wishes to create a collaborative agreement with the institution, there are several questions that should be considered with respect to implementation.

1. What is the usual process through which institutions enter into collaborative agreements with outside agencies? Eg at what level of the university are these agreements signed, considering size and ultimate intent of the relationship? Are there special and specific meanings associated with documents labeled ‘Memorandum of Understanding’; and what are the policies around signing these on behalf of the university or the department?

2. Does the institution consider this relationship part of research, service or education? (Or something else?) How do they view this commitment and what are the implications of that point of view?
3. How does a university categorise its partnerships with external bodies? What are its stated aspirations in this regard and which models of relationship are available within the financial and legal processes? Do these models fit the category of partnership being pursued? Do they fit the stated aspirations?
4. What is the right type of document to express the relationship effectively? What is the minimal length required to capture the critical points that need to be made? What should be the title of the document to reflect the nature of relationship it is expressing?
5. What are the supportive processes that are essential to successful engagement? Do these processes vary according to the nature and category of the partner? In what areas of the organization do the processes occur and what is the communication mechanism between these areas?

Mathew Arnold (Emberley, 1996) suggested that “No one ought to meddle with the universities, who does not know them well and love them well”. Our experience suggests that Arnold was right. When wading into formal arrangements with universities, particularly when these alliances move outside the traditional territory of academia, treading carefully is still important even when you are known and well liked. Early experience indicates that a collaborative approach built on existing and trusted interactions allows informal inter-organizational arrangements to become more formalized. However, it will be important to follow the progress, that these more

recognized arrangements for faculty engagement working with SEARCH Canada might achieve, before we know whether speaking truth to power has been enabled.

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