

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COLLOQUIUM 2018

The second annual community engagement colloquium was held on 29th and 30th October 2018 at the School of Public Health. The colloquium had a great attendance on both days and there was a good representation from the public, academic and the student community.

The theme for the colloquium was 'Ethical co-creation through sustainable partnerships: Connect and create'. Prof Vivienne Lawack (DVC Academic) highlighted that the theme for the colloquium was developed based on the discussions, debate and analysis of the conversations that were held at the 2017 event. Prof Priscilla Daniels (Director CEU) prefaced that higher education institutions are challenged to ensure that the knowledge generation process is co-owned and co-created. Academic researchers need to engage in research processes that acknowledge the community as experts of their respective contexts as this validates their experience and ensures that the knowledge generated is relevant to their contexts.

DAY 1: KEY NOTE ADDRESSES

The Rector, Prof Tyrone Pretorius introduced the keynote speaker for day one, Prof Heidi Van Rooyen (Executive Director of the Human and Social Development Programme at the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa). She delivered a thought provoking presentation and set the scene for the deliberations over the two days. In her keynote, she challenged the authenticity of research processes and whether active engagement occurs consistently, whether it was rhetoric or an actual lived experience that is evident in the practice of the scholarship of engagement.

The second keynote delivered by Dr Marlene Le Roux was equally stimulating as it highlighted the need for community engagement practices to challenge the social constructs on which societal differences continue to be perpetuated 24 years into the South African democracy. The keynote addresses set the scene for purposeful interaction during the Question and Answer sessions and opportunities for networking during the tea times and lunches were evident.

DAY 1: PRESENTATIONS

The second half of the first day provided opportunity for several presenters to engage in two concurrently run sessions according to the following two themes:

1. Theme 1: Ethical co-creation of knowledge in collaboration with community partners (seven presenters provided concrete examples where collaborative research projects with community partners resulted in the co-creation of knowledge) (Chairperson: Ms Melanie Burke)
2. Theme 2: Navigating inter-professional collaboration to transdisciplinary research spaces for community engagement (six presenters provided examples of knowledge production through transdisciplinary research process) (Chairperson: Dr Anita Martin)

Dr Maurtin and Ms Burke were the chairpersons for the parallel sessions and upon reconvening, provided an overview of the sessions and concluded the proceedings for Day 1.

DAY 2 PRESENTATIONS

Prof Daniels provided an overview of the first day as an introduction and identified the purpose for the day, which involved a series of presentations as well as a purposeful engagement in the initiation of the development of a charter of principles for community engagement at UWC through a world café experience.

Ms Viola Manuel, Prof Moenieba Isaacs, Mr Charl Davids and the Bishop Lavis Action Committee, Dr Fanelwa Ngece-Ajayi and students from the World Mission Society provided thought provoking presentations and highlighted principles and values in their respective community engagement activities. The message reinforced by each speaker was that scholarly engagement activities should engage citizens and contribute to the transformation agenda.

THE WORLD CAFÉ EXPERIENCE

The world café engaged four groups that rotated around the following four themes; citizenry and partnerships, values and diversity, knowledge generation/methodology and sustainable development. Each group had 15 minutes of engagement around the respective themes. The themes were principles identified from participants of the courageous conversations at the 2017 Colloquium. As the purpose for Day 2 was to initiate a charter of principles for community engagement, the principles identified in 2017 provided the theme for each world café group. Each facilitator was also requested to provide a reflective report of the world café sessions, which will also feed into the final reporting process.

CONCLUSION

The second annual colloquium was well received by the attendees. The keynote presenters were excellent in establishing and setting the tone of the colloquium. Presentations that followed reinforced the importance of co-creating with communities, the students, academics, community and other sectors engaged in purposeful discussions, and excellent networking opportunities were facilitated. The colloquium provided an excellent engagement opportunity for initiating a charter of principles for Community Engagement.