

Welcome to the CHESP website

Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships (CHESP) is a project of JET Education Services . Taking its cue from the White Paper on the Transformation of Higher Education 1997), CHESP aims to support South African Higher Education Institutions to engage in the development of historically disadvantaged communities through the development of appropriate institutional policies, strategies, organisational structures, and accredited mainstream academic programmes. Central to the CHESP approach is the development of partnerships between communities, higher education, institutions and the service sector.

SYNOPSIS OF PROGRESS & FUTURE DIRECTION - September 2004

Lazarus, J. 2004.

**JET EDUCATION SERVICES**  
**Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships**  
**CHESP**

**SYNOPSIS OF PROGRESS & FUTURE DIRECTION**

September 2004

**1. Introduction**

The *White Paper* on the Transformation of Higher Education (1997) laid the foundations for making community service an integral part of higher education (HE) in South Africa. It calls on higher education institutions (HEI's) to 'demonstrate social responsibility ... and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes'. It stated that one of the goals of HE is 'to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of HE in social and economic development through community service programmes'. It showed receptiveness to 'the growing interest in community service programmes for students' and gives in-principle support to 'feasibility studies and pilot programmes which explore the potential of community service in higher education.'

During 1997 and 1998 the Ford Foundation made a grant to the Joint Education Trust (JET) to conduct a survey of community service in South African HE the results of which was published in two monographs. Key findings of the Survey were: (i) most HEI's in S.A. included community engagement in their mission statements; (ii) few HEI's had an explicit policy or strategy to operationalise this component of their mission statement; (iii) most HEI's had a wide range of community engagement projects; and (iv) generally these projects were initiated by innovative academic staff and students and not as a deliberate institutional strategy for community engagement. Building on the results of this survey the Ford Foundation made a further grant to JET in 1998 to establish this Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships (CHESP) Project.

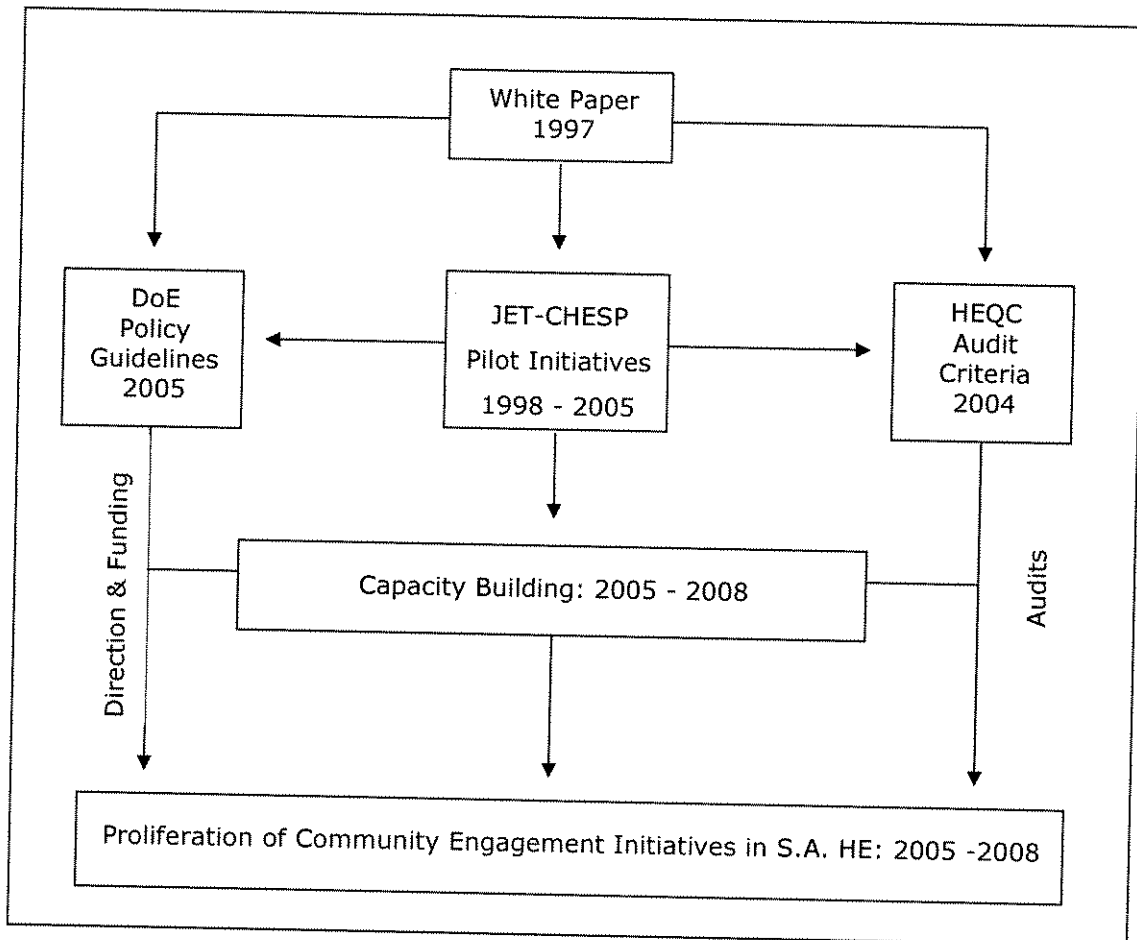
**2. Aims of the CHESP Project**

Taking its cue from the White Paper which calls for 'feasibility studies and pilot programmes which explore the potential of community service in higher education' CHESP has to date essentially been a pilot initiative designed to provide direction for taking the community engagement agenda to scale in South African HE. The specific aims of CHESP are:

- To support the development of pilot programmes that give expression to the community engagement mandate of the White Paper
- To monitor, evaluate and research these programmes and
- To use the data generated through this research to inform HE policy and practice at a national, institutional and programmatic level.

Figure 1 locates the CHESP Project within the development context of community engagement in S.A. HE.

**Figure 1: Development of Community Engagement in S.A. Higher Education**



### 3. Progress to date

#### 3.1 HEI Initiatives

During the past 4 years JET supported the conceptualization, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and research of 182 accredited academic courses (Table 1) across 10 HEI campuses including 39 different academic disciplines and 6,930 students ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> year to Masters level (Table 2). These courses all embraced the principles of service-learning, linking teaching, learning and research to local community development priorities. JET will be selecting a sample of exemplar courses to contribute towards a monograph on 'Service-Learning in the Disciplines'.

In addition to the monitoring, evaluation and research of the above programmes, JET currently supports numerous research projects on community engagement in HE. Specific areas of research include: (i) the role of community, faculty and service agencies in community-HE engagement; (ii) student assessment in community engagement; (iii) organizational structures conducive to community engagement; and (iv) quality assurance of community engagement and service-learning.

**Table 1: Service-learning courses supported by JET**

HEI	YEAR				
	2001	2002	2003	2004	TOTAL
CUT				7	7
PENTECH				7	7
RAU				5	5
UCT				6	6
UFS	12	18	4	8	42
UND	5	7	2	1	15
UNITRA	4	7	6	5	22
UNP	12	14			26
UWC	2	6	9	7	24
WITS	5	15	6	2	28
TOTAL	40	67	27	48	182

**Table 2: Number of students participating in courses supported by JET**

HEI	STUDENT LEVEL					
	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year	Masters	TOTAL
CUT	25	8	109	10		152
PENTECH	175	140	60	61		436
RAU				542		542
UCT			120	259	101	480
UFS	864	432	256	449	232	2233
UND	186	128	158	61	23	556
UNITRA	241	144	322	151		858
UNP	10	54	319	45	9	437
UWC			51	567	18	636
WITS	76	187	204	93	40	600
TOTAL	1 577	1 093	1 599	2 238	423	6 930

Based on the research data generated by JET several HEI's developed institution-wide policies and strategies to operationalise community engagement and service-learning. Most of these institutions have allocated resources towards establishing campus-based structures (e.g. CHESP Office; Office of Community-University Partnerships; etc.) and senior staff appointments to facilitate the implementation of their community engagement policies and strategies. JET intends to develop a 'generic' policy that could be adapted by HEI's throughout South Africa.

During 2004 JET developed draft 'Guidelines to Good Practice of Service-Learning'. With reference to this guide, JET is in the process of developing survey instruments to measure good practice of service-learning at an institutional, faculty, departmental and programmatic level. These instruments

could be used for institutional self-evaluation and external audits conducted by the HEQC.

During the past few years JET supported the development of several graduate programmes designed to build the capacity of academic staff to develop curricula that include the principles of service-learning. The most comprehensive of these, a two-year graduate programme in Community – Higher Education – Service Partnerships, was registered at the UKZN in 1999. Since then several HEI's developed an accredited module on service-learning as part of a graduate programme in Higher Education Studies. JET is currently working with 12 HEI's on the development of capacity building programmes for academic staff to include community engagement in accredited academic programmes.

### 3.2 Council on Higher Education (CHE) Initiatives

The Founding Document (2000) of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) identifies knowledge based community service as one of the three areas for the accreditation and quality assurance (QA) of HE along with teaching and research. In May 2001 the HEQC requested JET's assistance to develop standards for the QA of service-learning. During 2002 and 2003 JET and the HEQC jointly convened several national meetings with HEI stakeholders and commissioned the drafting of standards for the QA of service-learning. A condensed summary of the standards were included in the HEQC's Criteria for Institutional Audits released in May 2004.

In 2001 JET contributed a section entitled 'Community Service in Higher Education' to the CHE's Annual Report to Parliament on the State of Higher Education in South Africa. In the same year the CHE invited JET to present a paper at its 3<sup>rd</sup> Consultative Forum on 'Building Higher Education Contribution to South Africa's Economic, Social and Intellectual needs'. In August 2004 the CHE requested that JET submit a chapter on Community Engagement in Higher Education for the CHE State of Higher Education after Ten Years under Democracy (SHETYD) Report to Parliament. The report will be released towards the end of 2004.

During a recent meeting between JET and representatives from the HEQC it was agreed in principle that the HEQC and JET would explore a formal partnership on driving the community engagement agenda forward in S.A. HEI. A draft proposal for this partnership will be considered by the HEQC and JET during the next few weeks. One of the activities to be included in this collaboration will be a national conference on community engagement in HE.

### 3.3 Department of Education (DoE) Initiatives

Since the start of the CHESP project JET maintained a close working relationship with the Higher Education Branch of the national Department of Education (DoE). JET has run seminars on service-learning in the DoE and organized a session on service-learning at the DoE Curriculum Conference in April 2004. In December 2000 the Ministry of Education requested that JET draft policy guidelines for community engagement in HE. Based on JET's research, interviews with key HE stakeholders, two reference group workshops and reviews by two local and two international scholars, draft policy guidelines have been submitted to the DoE and are currently under review. It is anticipated that these guidelines will be released for comment early 2005.

#### 4. Overview of the CHESP Project Development Focus: 1999 - 2008

Table 3 provides an overview of the development focus of the CHESP project from its inception in 1999 to 2008. During 1999 and 2000 JET worked essentially with a number of HEI's to conceptualize institution-wide plans and strategies for community engagement and service-learning. This work was supported by a two-year accredited graduate capacity building programme registered at the UKZN. During the following four years (2001-2004) JET supported these institutions to implement their community engagement policies and strategies while monitoring, evaluating and researching its implementation.

**Table 3: CHESP Project development focus from 1999 - 2008**

PROJECT FOCUS	YEAR			
	1999-2000	2001- 2004	2005 -2006	2005 - 2008
• Planning	****			
• Capacity building	****	**	****	****
• Implementation		****		
• Monitoring & evaluation		****		
• Research		****	**	
• Dissemination			****	
• Replication			**	****

Key: Primary focus \*\*\*\* Secondary focus \*\*

##### 4.1 Focus of Activities for 2005 and 2006

Based on the data generated through JET's research, the focus of JET's activities during 2005-2006 will be on (i) publishing and disseminating the lessons learnt from the CHESP pilot phase and (ii) building local institutional capacity to conceptualize and implement community engagement as an integral part of mainstream academia.

Publications will include: (i) examples of institution-wide policies and strategies on community engagement; (ii) a Guide to Good Practice of Service-Learning; (iii) a Good Practice in Service Learning Assessment Manual with a range of assessment instruments; (iv) a monograph on Service-Learning in the Disciplines including a range of exemplar case studies across a variety of academic disciplines; (v) a Students Guide to Community Engagement; (vi) a Service-Learning Faculty Development Manual and (vii) a concept paper on community engagement in HE.

Reflecting on JET's work over the past few years, building the capacity of institutions to conceptualize and implement community engagement remains the most significant challenge to taking community engagement to scale in S.A. HE. Information generated through JET's research, the pending DoE policy on community engagement and the HEQC's community engagement criteria provide the necessary direction and tools to take community engagement to scale. However, in themselves, they do not provide the human resource capacity to conceptualize and implement a community engagement agenda. It is critical therefore that the direction and tools provided be accompanied by programmes that build the understanding and capacity of HEI Executives, Academic Planning

Officers, Quality Promotion Officers, Deans, Heads of Departments/Schools, Programme Conveners, and Lecturers to conceptualize and implement community engagement as an integral part of the mainstream academic activities of HEI's. If JET does not rise to this challenge, the work of JET over the past few years will remain at best the interest and passion of a hand full of academics and HE administrators with limited impact on HEI's that did not have the opportunity to participate in CHESP. Capacity building will include: (i) building the capacity of those who have been involved in the CHESP initiative to publish their work on community engagement and service-learning; (ii) developing a S.A. community engagement and service-learning consulting corpse to assist local HEI's to implement a community engagement agenda; (iii) institutionalizing accredited graduate service-learning capacity building courses as part of degrees in higher education studies; and (iv) piloting service-learning capacity building programmes at a number of S.A. HEI's.

## **5. Conclusion**

'Armed' with publications generated through JET's research, the pending DoE policy guidelines on community engagement and the HEQC's community engagement audit criteria, the stage will be set to move from the CHESP pilot phase to the role-out of community engagement in all S.A. HEI's. During the next few years JET intends to mobilize the knowledge and expertise developed at the HEI's who have participated in CHESP for the benefit of all S.A. HEI's. Institutions that have participated in CHESP have made significant progress with embracing a community engagement and service-learning agenda. It is anticipated that institutions that have not had the opportunity to participate in CHESP will have the benefit of learning from the lessons of those who have.

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# Getting involved in the community

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Community engagement offers higher education institutions (HEIs) the means to create new generations of genuinely involved and concerned citizens. Chapter seven of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) report advances pilot project experiences as a guide to this neglected area.

"Service" remains undefined in HEI policymaking, planning and resource allocation. The old concept of academic "outreach" has now shifted towards "community engagement" to describe a "less paternalistic, more mutual and inclusive community-higher education relationship". In the CHE report, service is presented "as a vehicle for engaging the other primary functions of higher education (teaching and learning and research) in a more reciprocal relationship with the social and economic development priorities of South Africa, for the public good".

Community work of this kind is guided by two important distinctions: first, who are the primary beneficiaries of the service, and, second, what is its primary goal. Five

categories of community service have potential interest for HEIs and their local communities.

- Volunteerism and community outreach (or "extension service") engage students in activities whose primary beneficiary is the recipient community and whose goal is to provide a service. Volunteerism is generally altruistic, extra-curricular, and small-scale. Community outreach activities, however, are initiated from within the HEI. They are more structured and may generate academic credit or research publications.

- Internships and cooperative education (also called "field education") engage students in activities where the primary beneficiary is the student and the primary goal is student learning. Internships are generally integrated with the curriculum to give students hands-on practical experience in professional programmes such as social work or medicine. Cooperative education gives curricular opportunities related to the curriculum but not necessarily part of it, to enhance students' understanding of the area of study. It has been used extensively in technikons.

- Service-learning (sometimes called "academic community service" or "community-based learning") engages students in activities where both community and student are primary beneficiaries and where goals are to provide a service to the community as well as to enhance student learning. It integrates scholarly activities with responses to community needs. Proponents say that "it reconnects higher education to society" by linking the academic mission with pressing contemporary social problems.

Little is written about community engagement, and the CHE information is based largely on work done by the Joint Education Trust (JET), which conducted a survey in 1997 and 1998 to examine higher education community engagement and drew on studies of HEI programmes around the country. Between 2000

The old concept of academic "outreach" has now shifted towards "community engagement"

and 2004, the JET supported about 200 accredited academic courses designed to incorporate service-learning. These included 39 academic disciplines across nine HEI campuses and involved more than 6 000 students from first year to master's level. A monitoring and evaluation exercise identified some of the factors that determined success:

- In the conceptualisation phase, success came from addressing a need that the recipient community considered important, designing the course in collaboration with the community, and analysing feasibility in terms of finances, logistics, and readiness of community and students to participate.

- For successful implementation, critical factors included preparing students and community, placing students appropriately, aligning student capabilities with community needs, planning the logistics and resource allocations, integrating the theory of the discipline with the service provided, and allowing structured time for critical reflection. Students responded with overwhelming enthusiasm; many had

improved their relationship and leadership skills and project planning abilities, and learnt through experience about cultural differences and cultural stereotyping. The process is complex and time-consuming, however: frequent turnover of students can affect continuity, and the logistics can involve committing, fitting in with academic timetables, and ensuring student safety.

Looking ahead, the potential of HEI community engagement is ready to be tapped. Policy is about to be finalised and community service is included among the Higher Education Quality Committee's audit criteria. The future suggests partnerships with local government to help implement development plans, and benefits for HEIs include having a local community context for integrating teaching and research programmes with development priorities.

In the words of the report, HEIs cannot "go-it-alone" in this field but must reach out and get involved — working with recipient communities, local authorities, and service agencies includes everything that the term "engagement" implies.