Exploring University Engagement Through an International Lens: The Case of *Extensión Universitaria* in Panama

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Introduction

University engagement, along with teaching and research, are integral components of the educational mission of higher education institutions. These three missions must be present in the policies and strategies of universities, and mutually support and complement each other. This chapter discusses university engagement from an international perspective, specifically the case of Panama. The case will explore different factors within an international context that impact the conceptualization and development of university engagement, referred to in Latin America as *extension universitaria*.

The initial conceptualizations of *extensión universitaria* in Latin America arose from pressures of the middle class to democratize higher education (Ortiz-Riaga and Morales-Rubiano 2011). These

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conceptualizations were shaped to reaffirm the university's function of service to society through interdisciplinary efforts to analyze different problems (UNESCO 1998) and to promote social change (Serna 2007). Public policy is also part of the local context that guides the definition and scope of university engagement (Barker 2015). Since 2006, the higher education system in Panama has been party to substantial changes, through the enactment of laws that create a national system for evaluation and accreditation in Panama, in which university engagement is one of four factors that measures the quality of a university (CONEAUPA 2016).

University engagement occurs when the institution articulates a clear and unified culture in that direction (Philpott et al. 2011). To better understand institutional orientation toward the third mission, a qualitative content analysis of the mission, vision, and values statements of Panamanian universities is conducted. This chapter seeks to contribute to limited existing literature that contextualizes the university's third mission to Latin American countries.

Historical Context

At the beginning of the twentieth century, many Latin American universities were witness to movements that sought to democratize higher education. The most relevant was the Reforma de Cordoba in 1918, which took place in Argentina, and created a ripple effect across the region (Tünnermann 2000). One of the student organizations involved in the movement, the *Federación Universitaria de la Plata* (1919) referred to universities as "parasites" and expressed their vision of what universities should be like: "…the university of tomorrow will not have doors or walls, it will be open like space: big…". Through these movements, middle class citizens sought to gain access to higher education, which until then, had been controlled by the oligarchy and the clergy. The reform movements integrated the social mission of university, as a facilitator of social change and democracy (Del Mazo 1941).

In addition to the aforementioned movements that framed *extensión universitaria* in Latin America, many of the countries in the region also faced political challenges in democracy during this period. This meant that the initial conceptualizations of extension included the role of universities as protectors of democracy and sovereignty of the country. Jeptha Duncan (1940), the University of Panama's second president, spoke to this matter:

The time of conflict that the world faces today, places on the shoulders of Universities, including ours, new obligations… Our educational institutions in America, without omitting universities, are called to prepare new generations to live in this time of conflict; and are called particularly to cooperate in the defense of ideals and principles that are the foundation for democratic regimes under which we live in the Republics of this hemisphere.

Overview of Higher Education in Panama

Panama's higher education system is relatively young, as is the country's time as an independent and sovereign nation (since 1903). The United States government set up the first university in Panamanian territory, The Panama Canal Junior College, in the Canal Zone in 1933 to serve the United States military and civilian staff who were managing the Panama Canal (Montoto 2013). In 1935, the University of Panama was established as Panama's first public university, quite late if compared to other Latin American countries (Montoto 2013). Thirty years later, the first private university in Panama, the Catholic University Santa Maria La Antigua (USMA), opened. The University of Panama and the USMA were the only two Panamanian universities until the 1980's, when more private and public universities arose. Similar to other countries in Latin America, the 1990s saw a plethora of private universities in Panama emerge (Montoto 2013).

Today, in 2020, Panama has five public universities, with University of Panama as the oldest and largest in student enrollment. There are 17 private universities that operate in Panama and that have been accredited by the National Council for University Evaluation and Accreditation of Panama (CONEAUPA). Additionally, there are 2 private universities in the process of accreditation, and 11 universities that have permission to operate in the country, but have yet to be accredited by the CONEAUPA. The last official enrollment numbers for public universities is for the year 2017, where the five universities enrolled a total of 115,878 students. Private universities last reported enrollment numbers in 2018, of 67,784, totaling approximately 183,662 students in the system (Instituto de Investigación de AUPPA 2019; Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo 2020).

Legal Framework for Higher Education in Panama

The Ministry of Education serves as the government entity that recognizes and approves initial operation of universities in Panama. Additionally, the University of Panama and the other four state universities provide curricular approval of academic programs for private universities, through their leadership of the Academic Development Technical Commission (CTDA), which conducts oversight and supervision of academic and administrative operations of private universities.

The higher education environment has experienced a drastic change in the last ten years, a product of the approval of higher education legislation. In 2006, the government passed a Law 30, which created the CONEAUPA. In 2010, the law was regulated, and the model and the process for accreditation were developed. In March of 2011, CONEAUPA presented its evaluation standards, and thus Panamanian universities entered their first national accreditation process. The evaluation standards matrix is composed of 185 indicators, divided into 4 factors of teaching, research, outreach, and administration.

Law 30 widely criticized by universities and other stakeholders, and in 2015, Law 52 was passed, which repealed and replaced Law 30, and created the National System of Evaluation and Accreditation for the improvement of the Quality of University Higher Education in Panama. This new Law 52 was regulated in 2018. These changes, coupled with political and government-related administrative challenges in higher education during this time have resulted in slow-paced advancements in the effective execution of public policy related to higher education.

Research in Panama

Universities in Panama are more focused on instruction than research (Montoto 2013), and research productivity in Panama, as well as in Central America, is low in comparison to other regions (Secretaría Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología 2016; Svenson 2013). Panama and Panamanian institutions rank very low in international university and research productivity rankings. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) is a global higher education company that offers products and services for universities and students, and releases the most-widely read university rankings in the world, alongside independent regional rankings (QS 2020). In 2020, only seven Panamanian universities are included in the QS Latin American

University Rankings, with the Technological University holding the highest ranking for a Panamanian university, at number 126. University of Panama ranks 149.

Furthermore, both universities are classified by QS with a "low" in research output, where research output is defined as "the research intensity of the University, based on the number of papers output relative to the University's size. University of Panama is also given a "low" classification in research output. QS also conducts a worldwide ranking, where *Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá* (UTP) is ranked 801–1000, and is the only Panamanian university to appear in the world ranking.

SCImago Journal and Country Rank is an online portal that ranks countries and territories using scientific indicators and outputs from information found in the Scopus database, by Elsevier (SCImago 2020). Panama ranks 106th out of 236 countries, nations, and territories that are listed in the ranking. If only Latin American countries are taken into consideration, Panama ranks 11th in Latin America and 2nd in Central America (after Costa Rica). One of the factors that drives low research productivity, is the almost "exclusive use of part-time faculty", where the focus is on instruction rather than research. "The model is similar to that of community colleges, but with less pay and job security for instructors" (Montoto 2013, p. 29).

Svenson (2013) studied Central American research efforts to better understand how Panama stood among a regional context. Central America does not contribute significantly to global research and development, where North America, Asia, and Europe contribute most of the research with 35.1%, 34.4%, and 25.7%, respectively (Svenson 2013). Central America accounts for 0.025% of research globally, and is part of the wider Latin American region that accounts for 2.5% of global research. Comparatively, Panama has a productivity of 10.70 publications per 100,000 inhabitants and the United States produces 127.47 publications per 100,000 inhabitants.

There is limited data regarding research, productivity, and PhDs in general for Panama, and its collection has been inconsistent through time (SENACYT 2016). The National Secretariat for Science and Technology in Panama (SENACYT) reported that in 2011, there were 1031 professionals who had a full-time dedication to research and development. Only 5% of these professionals possessed a terminal degree. The majority of researchers were employed by the government, followed by universities, and then by non-governmental organizations, with a distribution of

66.7%, 30%, and 3.3%, respectively (SENACYT 2016). In terms of research productivity, there are 120 Panamanian journals in the Latindex journal catalog, of which 13 are indexed journals (Latindex 2020). To compare, Costa Rica, Panama's neighboring Central American country, has 403 journals in the Latindex journal catalog, of which 68 are indexed (Latindex 2020).

The discussion regarding Panama's low research productivity is relevant for university engagement for two reasons:

- Research, through the scientific exploration of solutions to pressing issues, is one of the avenues through which universities can contribute to social change. If productivity is low, there will also be resulting limitations in the mission of engagement.
- It is common for discussions in the United States to refer to engagement as the "third mission", alleging a "third place" in priority, after research and teaching. For the case of Panama, and probably other countries with low research productivity, research does not necessarily supersede engagement in development, priority, or capacity. This proposition is further discussed toward the end of this chapter.

PUBLIC POLICY, STANDARDS, AND BENCHMARKING OF UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT

The initial conceptualizations of the third mission in Latin America arose from pressures of the middle class to democratize higher education (Ortiz-Riaga and Morales-Rubiano 2011). These conceptualizations were shaped to reaffirm the university's function of service to society through interdisciplinary efforts to analyze different problems and to promote social change (Serna 2007). Public policy is also part of the local context that guides the definition and scope of university engagement (Barker 2015).

PUBLIC POLICY DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS

Panamanian law requires all universities approved to operate and confer higher education academic degrees to perform *extensión universitaria*, or university engagement. Law 52 includes university engagement as part of the definition of the university:

Institution of university higher education, created through law or authorized through executive degree, which has as a mission to generate, spread, and apply knowledge through teaching, research, university engagement, and production, as well as to shape suitable professionals, that are entrepreneurial and innovative, as well as citizens who are committed to national identity and the human and sustainable development of the country. (CONEAUPA 2016)

The following sections will expand and explore the mission and vision of universities, and how these statements commit universities to engage with the community in different ways.

The National System of Evaluation and Accreditation for the Improvement of Quality of Higher Education in Panama defines *extensión* (university engagement) as "a substantive function of the university, which consists of the set of activities through which the institution projects its action towards the social environment, thus transmitting knowledge and culture" (CONEAUPA 2016). Campus Compact (CC) is a national coalition of colleges and universities in the United States that are committed to the public mission of higher education (Campus Compact 2020). As one of its main initiatives, CC created the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, for colleges and universities who meet a list of criteria and indicators that reaffirm institutions' commitment to engagement. Carnegie defines community engagement as "the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (CC 2020).

The definitions held by both CONEAUPA and CC are similar in wording, but differ in scope. CONEAUPA's definition focuses on how universities project and transmit outward the different products of a university. This conceptualization, although not erroneous, falls short compared to conceptualizations of university engagement held by other institutions around the world. While CONEAUPA focuses on the outward projection of university production, CC uses words like "collaborations", "exchange", and "reciprocity" to clarify that community engagement is a two-way relationship between the institution and the community.

CONEAUPA limits the relationship between institutions and communities to one that is one-directional. Seeing as these definitions shape the subsequent criteria and indicators that measure accreditation (in the case of Panama and CONEAUPA) and a community engagement classification

(in the case of the USA and CC), it is important to keep these definitions in mind as the criteria and indicators are analyzed.

It is also possible to draw comparisons in the importance given to university engagement as a part of the accreditation process in different countries. Panamanian law establishes the mandatory nature of university engagement as part of the mission of all universities, and requires for universities to abide by certain criteria and indicators within this factor, in order to obtain institutional accreditation. United States regional accreditation agencies that conduct institutional accreditations do not always require for universities to be engaged with their communities. For example, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) indicates that university missions must address "teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service" (SACSOC 2018, p. 13). SACS further explains this criterion:

> SACSOC recognizes that some institutions may not include research and public service explicitly in their primary mission and that they may define research and public service in different ways. To the extent that the institution considers research and public service part of its mission, it should address those mission components appropriately in the statement and define them within the institutional context. (SACSOC 2018, p. 13)

It is also important to mention that the Political Constitution of the Republic of Panama makes community service mandatory for all students of the country, through the following article:

> The students and graduates of educational institutions will offer temporary services to the community before they freely practice their profession or job, by reason of mandatory Civil Service instituted by the present Constitution. The law will regulate this matter. (1972, p. 99)

The mandatory nature of service to the community by university students gives all Panamanian universities an inherent responsibility to develop and execute programs that are committed to the service of society. It also ensures the involvement of an important stakeholder in the process of university engagement: the student. Community service is also required at a school level, in order for the student to obtain a high school diploma.

University Engagement Accreditation Standards in Panama

There are other documents that also contribute to the operationalization of *extensión universitaria* in Panama. One is the evaluation matrix that is used by the CONEAUPA as the criteria and indicators that are required to achieve institutional accreditation. This document describes four different factors that are evaluated as part of the accreditation process: *docencia* (teaching), *investigación* (research), *extensión* (engagement), and *gestión* (management).

CONEAUPA's matrix expands on the glossary definition of university engagement:

> Set of activities of the higher education institution through which it projects action toward the social environment and transmits knowledge and culture. Activities include, for example, the professional practice with a social service character, internships, development of social projects, volunteer work, among others. Also university engagement contributes to form in the university community, a critical constructivist conception of national reality, and it perceives social, cultural, and environmental change to promote the dynamic adaptation and contribute to the creation of a social conscience and continuous improvement. It advances and spreads extra-university cultural research to conserve and enrich the cultural collection of society. It publishes its production through science, philosophy, literature, art, forums, debates, continuous education, among others, and creates links with the different sectors of society.

Once again, CONEAUPA presents a definition of engagement that is one-sided, where the university projects itself outward, through different contributions through society. To further understand how engagement is measured in Panamanian universities, the main components and indicators are presented in Table 8.1.

Panamanian accreditation establishes that some of these indicators are "essential", meaning that it is an absolute requirement that the university comply with the standard, whereas other indicators are classified as "important", or "convenient", and allow flexibility in the reported level of compliance. With ten essential indicators each, the university engagement factor and the research factor have the lowest number of essential indicators, and teaching and management factors have approximately twice as many essential indicators each. This is an indication that although

Table 8.1 Components and indicators that measure university engagement in Panamanian accreditation policies

Component	Sub-component	Indicators
University engagement policies	Policies, organization, and planning of university engagement Plans, programs, projects, activities, and services	Policies that promote and regulate university engagement Administrative unit responsible for university engagement Correspondence between programs and engagement activities with the mission, vision, values, and institutional plans University engagement policies are disseminated to the members of the university community Needs assessments for university engagement and services required for society University engagement programs offered to society, based on the results of the needs assessments Specific programs that promote the creation of new enterprises Communication to society of the engagement programs Perception of university community in relation to the image that the institution projects externally related to social responsibility Results of engagement projects
Equal opportunity	Attention to social groups with low resources	Assistance that the university provides to sectors or social groups with low resources Impact of assistance provided by the university to these groups

Table 8.1 (continued)

Component	Sub-component	Indicators
Relations with external national and international institutions	Ties/links	Policies for establishment of relations with national and international institutions Administrative unit responsible for the international relations or international cooperation of the university Institutional programs to promote internationalization of the university Follow-up to programs of internationalization of the institution and its programs Ties with companies, public or private institutions, professional and business organizations, centers of assistance or other organisms of proven quality and prestige at a national level and international level Exchange and mobility of faculty, students, and administrative staff at an international level
Extracurricular activities and continuous education	Continuous education	Policies that promote and regulate continuous education. Extracurricular activities and continuous education programs directed to the university community and to society Societal participation in general in the programs of continuous education Specific programs that promote the conservation of natural resources and the environment

(*continued*)

Table 8.1 (continued)

Component	Sub-component	Indicators
Alumni	Ties between the university and alumni Alumni contributions to society	Policies that promote and regulate the ties of alumni with the university
		Activities directed to the ties of alumni and the university
		Established contact and communication channels with alumni
		Relation of numbers of alumni and numbers of enrolled students
		University contribution to the labor insertion of alumni
		Percentage of alumni who feel satisfied with the theoretic and practical education received at the university
		Percentage of alumni who are satisfied with the services that the university offers
		Alumni groups that are formally constituted
		Percentage of alumni that obtain a job the first year after they graduate
		Meaningful contributions of alumni at a national level
		Meaningful contributions of alumni at an international level
		Studies conducted by the university about perception and effectiveness in the education of alumni

Source: Evaluation Matrix for Institutional Accreditation, Engagement Factor (English translation by the author)

engagement and research are required for all higher education institutions, there is an implicit expectation that these factors are not fully developed within universities in Panama.

Also, based on Table 8.1, we can conclude that the standard for university engagement in Panama is based on five main areas: internal university policy, equality, relationships with external institutions, extracurricular activities and continuous education, and alumni. Contributions to society and the community are expected to occur through the execution of the latter four areas.

Benchmarking University Engagement

Campus Compact (CC) also encourages universities to apply for a Carnegie Classification in Community Engagement, a classification for which institutions may voluntarily apply for, denoting their consolidated involvement and achievements in the area of university engagement. CC and Carnegie dictate certain indicators of engagement for community colleges can be applied to compare and benchmark CONEAUPA's current indicators and standards for university engagement. The 13 main areas evaluated to obtain a Carnegie Community Engagement Classification are summarized in Table 8.2.

CC introduces the execution of engagement as something that occurs across different aspects of university life. For example, several of the indicators are embedded within activities involving teaching, learning, academic disciplines, and faculty work; so, instead of keeping teaching, research, and engagement as separate activities, CC acknowledges that these interact among each other, and that this interaction is conducive to an environment that effectively embeds community-based work.

Institutional Orientation of *Extensión*: The Panama Case

An engaged university demonstrates its commitment through an institutional mission and strategy, providing a direction for leadership and allocation of resources toward that commitment. Furthermore, an institutional mission drives the sense and orientation to the activities of the university. Organizations such as CC and CONEAUPA view university mission statements as a fundamental aspect that allows for university engagement to occur. For example, CC requires that "the institution's mission statement explicitly articulates its commitment to the public purposes of higher education and is deliberate about educating students for lifelong participation in their communities" (CC 2019). Furthermore, CONEAUPA indicates that universities must demonstrate that they have correspondence between programs they offer and the engagement activities that are mentioned as part of mission, vision, values and institutional plans" (CONEAUPA 2016).

Table 8.2 Summary of criteria to obtain Carnegie classification for community engagement

Criterion	Description
Mission and purpose	The mission of the institution explicitly states its commitment to engage with the community and to the public purpose of higher education
Academic and administrative leadership	Academic and administrative leaders of the institution support and play an important role in the strategy and support to make community engagement possible
Disciplines, departments, and interdisciplinary work	The institution ensures that community engagement is developed across different disciplines, and that enough opportunities exist for students to participate in structured initiatives for community-based work, or in solving community-based problems
Teaching and learning	The institution provides students with formal and meaningful learning opportunities, integrated in the curriculum, with a consideration of civic engagement, community expertise, and community-based work
Faculty development	The institution generates opportunities for faculty to learn about and develop community and service-learning based courses
Faculty roles and rewards	The faculty are rewarded and recognized for their contributions to engagement, and engagement is included as part of the institution's tenure and promotion guidelines
Support structures and resources	The institution has structures, resources, and procedures in place to properly support, inform, and document community-based work
Internal budget and resource allocations	The institution allocates proper financial resources to staff and supports community-based work
Community voice	The community is represented, has a voice, and plays an important role in the institution
External resource allocation	The institution makes available resources for community partners to enrich learning environments for community-building projects
Coordination of community-based activities	The institution effectively coordinates community-based activities and informs and provides access to relevant stakeholders regarding these activities
Forums for fostering public dialogue	The institution facilitates dialogue regarding relevant public topics and brings together stakeholders from the community
Student voice	Students participate and have a voice in important institutional committees, as well as are encouraged to advocate for issues that are important to them and their communities

Source: Elaborated by the author with information from CC 2019

Methodology

This study applied qualitative methods, through content coding and an InVivo coding strategy, to provide an understanding of how Panamanian universities conceptualize university engagement through their mission and vision. Furthermore, results are analyzed using an inductive approach that allowed the findings to emerge from the "frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in the raw data, without restraints imposed by structured methodologies" (Thomas 2006, p. 238). The steps below provide an outline of how I collected and analyzed the data:

1. I created a list with all universities—public and private—that had obtained institutional accreditation from the CONEAUPA, and I checked online to ensure that the universities on this list had institutional websites, with public access to their mission, vision, and values statements. All accredited institutions had operational websites, and I was able to find their mission, vision, and values statements with relative ease. The study focuses on these 22 universities, because they have demonstrated compliance with the minimum required standard for university engagement. It is important to mention that additional to these 22 accredited universities, there are over 20 more private universities that operate in Panama, but have not undergone accreditation processes yet. These were excluded from the study sample.

2. I collected the texts related the mission, vision, and values statements for all public and private universities in Panama who are currently accredited by CONEAUPA. It is important to highlight that while all institutions ($n = 22$) had mission and vision statement, there was some variation with how institutional values were presented, where some universities simply stated what their values were, and others described or elaborated on each value. Furthermore, three universities did not provide their institutional values in their website, so for institutional values, the sample size was reduced to 19.

3. The data was translated to English and arranged in a spreadsheet that allowed for easy text searches, where each row was a university and the columns were university name, public or private category, mission, vision, and values.

4. I sought to identify emerging themes in the data, through the localization of texts that directly or indirectly referred to university

engagement in the mission, vision, and values statements. I used InVivo coding as a coding style, because it honors the voice and the original words of the institution (Saldaña 2009), and can help detect cultural nuances in the language being used by the institutions. During the first cycle of coding, codes were generated through recurrent phrases and key words found in the analyzed texts.

5. During a second cycle of coding, the codes were organized and assigned to four categories. These categories became a landscape of how universities visualize engagement, through a primary narrative within the mission, vision, and values statements. Figure 8.1 demonstrates the code landscaping that was generated as part of the qualitative analysis, using methods proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018). In code landscaping, I manually organized the different codes into an outline format, assigning larger sized fonts to codes according to the frequency in which they appeared in the data (Miles et al. 2018). The purpose of this exercise was to portray in a more visual manner, the general importance of each theme, and how I arranged it into different categories.

Limitations

This study attempts to explain how universities shape their conceptualizations of engagement through their mission, vision, and value statements. The main limitation is that these statements tend to be quite general, and do not allow for a deep understanding of how engagement actually takes form within institutions. This limitation gives way to an opportunity for future studies that seek to confirm *if* and *how* universities do what they write they will do in their mission, vision, and value statements. Furthermore, the coding methods and analysis was conducted by one person, and does not allow for the calculation of inter-rater reliability to ensure the trustworthiness of the process. Furthermore, it is also relevant to disclaim that as a stakeholder in higher education in the context that was researched, I have subjective values, biases, and inclinations that may influence the way the data was coded and interpreted.

Universities shape:

Professional human resource

People who have an integral formation and humanistic culture

Citizens who are patriotic

Who will:

Contribute to the sustainable development of the country and region

Be of service to society

Furthermore, universities will honor the following institutional values:

Equity (Education as a public social right)

Solidarity

Diversity and Tolerance

Social commitment and responsibility

And seek to be:

Recognized nationally and internationally

Fig. 8.1 Code landscaping of university engagement conceptualizations present in mission, vision, and values statement

Findings

This study accomplished the identification of different areas and themes that indicate how accredited universities in Panama conceptualize university engagement. The study also provides a better understanding of how universities define their role as institutions that are expected to contribute and maintain a relationship with society. Through the application of the aforementioned methods, this section will present and elaborate on the

main themes surrounding university engagement in Panama. I also provide examples of the texts that were obtained for this study, and how they are linked to each theme. Some of the examples also illustrate differences between how public and private universities express their commitments to engagement. The themes are presented below:

Sustainable Development of the Country/Region

Half of the universities in the sample ($n = 22$) framed engagement as their contribution to the development—sometimes referred to as sustainable development—of the country and/or region. All references of development in the text were found in the mission and vision statements, and in some cases, these were area specific, where universities focused on contributions to the development of the labor sector or the maritime sector, for example. Below are some examples of how universities integrate development as part of their institutional statements. The statements below came from private universities, indicating a clear commitment to this theme as part of a university engagement mission:

"…to actively contribute to the development of the region".
"…to contribute to the progress of the country".
"…committed to the sustainable and human development of the country".
"…committed to the development of the country".
One public university expressed:
"…To generate appropriate knowledge to contribute to sustainable development…".

Equity

Equity is a concept mostly regarded as an institutional value by the universities that mention it. Equity is also linked to one of the fundamental notions surrounding university engagement, in which higher education institutions must serve a public mission. Furthermore, the frequency of appearance of equity as an institutional value, not only in the statements of both public and private universities, demonstrates broad recognition of their expected role in the democratization of higher education.

Ten institutions mentioned equity as part of their institutional values, or embedded equity within their mission and vision statements. Four of

the five public institutions include equity in their values (the fifth public university does not have institutional values published in its website), and six private universities mention equity. Furthermore, two institutions (one public and one private) mentioned the public mission of higher education. Although the public mission of higher education tends to have more relevance in other contexts, in Panama, this theme was not mentioned with enough frequency to warrant its own section

Below are some examples of how universities write about equity:

"…climate of well-being and equity".
"…social and environmental equity".
"…for the transformation of an inclusive and equitable society".
"…within a framework of responsible accessibility that is equitable and just".

Nationalism and Civic Education

One of the drivers of the Cordoba Reform and its ripples across Latin America was the importance of university engagement for the objective of protection and promotion of democracy and democratic values. Early conceptualizations of university engagement in Panama, dating back to the 1940s, focused on this aspect, as evidenced through University of Panama's role as a protector and defender of the country's sovereignty and democracy (Duncan 1940).

The University of Panama maintains its mission to shape "citizens and professionals… with national critical conscience", and it is accompanied by six private universities that commit to a role in shaping citizens with a sense of patriotism and nationalism. Some mentions of this mission are featured below:

"The university…as a space of encounter and reflection for the country"
"…willing to defend, promote, and perpetuate history and conscience of the national and future projection of Panama".
"Patriotism: Highlights love for the country and all that it represents as a cultural and historically grounded nation".

Solidarity

Solidarity, like equity, was one of the most frequent occurring institutional values, with mentions across seven institutions. This value is considered part of an institutional conceptualization of engagement, because some of the definitions integrate the community as the receiving party of the action. For example, one institution defined solidarity as "support and collaborate with our community when it requires help, without expecting something in exchange".

Professional Human Resource

The most predominant mention of engagement in university mission, vision, and value statements is the training of future professionals, and the expected impact and contributions that these professionals will have in the development of the country. Although the codes "shaping of future professionals" and "contribution to the development of the country" were analyzed separately, they are inextricably linked, and universities tended to establish the relationship between one and the other.

This code makes different appearances in institutional mission and vision statements, and also evidences the clear focus of Panamanian universities as teaching universities. Although some universities express their teaching missions as a path for individual self-improvement, most express their teaching mission with an external perspective, formalizing the expectation that the education this person receives will be put to the service of society.

Below are some examples of how Panama universities articulate their mission of shaping professionalized human resource:

"…development of professional and leadership talent for companies and organizations of the region".

"…shaping of suitable professionals with command of technology and modern and efficient tools".

"…with actions of quality, ethics, leadership, entrepreneurship, and innovation".

"…education of human talent with a business mentality".

"…to shape competitive professionals".

"…to offer highly qualified professionals to society".

"…with professionals excellence and specialized human resource".

It is relevant to mention that most universities mention entrepreneurship and innovation across the board—in their mission, vision, and value statements—as main competencies that they seek to generate in their students and that these institutions, in part, contribute to the formation of human resource required by businesses and the country, through these competencies. Although there is an argument to be made that education of professionals is part of the teaching mission and not university engagement, it is important to mention these institutional priorities because they become a mechanism through which the university projects itself to society, and shapes how its external contributions look like. This trend is also a potential area of research in higher education in Panama, because it is relevant to continue to study how universities implement and interpret their role in shaping students that are innovative and entrepreneurial.

Diversity and Tolerance

Panamanian universities consider diversity and tolerance as institutional values within engagement. Other terms are also used to refer to these values, such as multi-culturality and fraternity, but all are share similar descriptions. Below are some examples and definitions used by universities to refer to these values:

> "Tolerance: We promote respect toward each other's ideas, practices, and beliefs".
> "Fraternity: Sense of family and belonging".
> "Multiculturality: Appreciation of cultural diversity as a fundamental base of respect and equity".
> "Attention to diversity" and "Respect for diversity".

Service to Society

Institutions view service to society as a result of the education they provide. Universities expect that their graduates will place the knowledge and competencies they have gained through their higher education degrees at the disposal of society's more pressing needs. Examples of mentions of this area of engagement are:

> "characterized by ethical, scientific, social, entrepreneurial leadership at the service of society".
> "…with purpose to contribute to necessary social change".

"…responsible for their role towards society to which they owe themselves to and from which they nurture their projects".

"To develop an environment that has integrity and is ethical, vital to achieve a more just society".

Social Commitment and Responsibility

While "service to society" became a recurrent theme embedded in university mission and vision statements, "social commitment and responsibility" was mentioned almost exclusively as an institutional value, and universities provided definitions of interest for separate analysis. Eleven universities (four public and five private) mentioned social commitment in their values statements. The frequency of both of these themes clearly indicates that service to society and social commitment is one of the main components of university engagement in Panama. Some of the definitions for social commitment as an institutional value are mentioned below:

"Social commitment: Committed to society in shaping of its members".

"Commitment: Provide answers to the needs of the current world".

Social responsibility: Calling, commitment, and capacity with which the university tends to the needs of the environment and the university community".

Integral Formation and Humanistic Culture

Ten institutions mentioned that they seek to shape people who are integral in their formation, referring to the importance of multi-disciplinary education, as well as humanistic education as an educational approach. Humanistic education "teaches a variety of skills needed for functioning in today's world", and helps students achieve self-confidence, self-respect, and respect for others (Kirschenbaum 1982). It also uses skills such as communication, problem solving, decision-making, and critical thinking to expand and enhance teaching strategies (Kirschenbaum 1982). Some institutions include human values as part of the wording included in this code, to strengthen the argument that universities are not only responsible for training professionals with specific skills that the job market requires, but are also responsible for the generation of citizens that have human values and skills that will be a positive influence in the community and

society. Some examples of integral formation and humanistic education are:

> "…promotion of an integral culture".
>> "…people who are integral and humanists".
>> "…with integral formation".
>> "…quality in the integral formation of human resources".
>> "…within the framework of human values".
>> "…with a humanistic approach".
>> "…pillars of humanistic development".

National and International Recognition of the Institution

Eight institutions broadly include national and international recognition as a part of their institutional mission or vision. While this aspect of university engagement may not seem equally relevant as other public missions that generate meaningful contributions to society, this code is relevant to the discussion because it is linked to expectations that are established by university accreditation, through the accreditation indicators (See Table 8.1). Panamanian accreditation recognizes external recognition within its conceptualization. One of the components of the accreditation matrix indicates "relations with external national and international institutions". Universities are then measured by the amount of agreements, contracts, or projects they present with external institutions, and the accomplishments that are achieved as a result of these collaborations. Universities conceive recognition through the following phrases:

> "…recognizes nationally and internationally".
>> "…recognized for its quality".
>> "…recognized as a leader in integral formation".

Discussion and Reflections

The case of Panama and university engagement should generate certain reflections regarding relevant challenges in engagement that other contexts may also be facing. First, we find how public policy in higher education can limit the direction and scope in which universities can focus their engagement efforts. For example, we explore how definitions of engagement

contained within national laws may be generating a one-sided relationship with communities, society, and the business sector. Furthermore, one of the limitations of this study exposes another relevant challenge of implementation. Panama does not currently have a systematic method that can facilitate the measurement of university engagement, much less, a method that can help verify the impact that university engagement has on society.

Earlier in this chapter, we presented Panama's weak performance in international research indicators, such as SCImago and QS rankings. We introduced the argument that there are currently no universities in Panama that are research universities. After the analysis of university engagement conceptualizations in university mission, vision, and value statements, we find that it is possible that for some universities in Panama, university engagement occupies second place of relevance of university mission, after teaching. We also theorize that the ideal scenario, according to Panama's institutional accreditation policies, is that research and engagement should both occupy equal relevance within a university.

Using an inductive approach to explore and find meaning to the different codes that were generated in the process, we can generalize how accredited universities in Panama frame university engagement.

1. Universities shape, train, and educate their students to become a professional human resource, with an integral formation and humanistic culture, as well as citizens who are patriotic.
2. These students will then contribute to the sustainable development of the country/region, and be of service to society.
3. Universities practice values of equity, solidarity, diversity and tolerance, and social commitment and responsibility, as part of their institutional commitment to engage with society.
4. Universities will project themselves toward society in a way that will help them obtain national and international recognition.

These conclusions can be visualized through a code landscape image, which summarizes how engagement is embedded within university mission, vision, and values statements.

There is an array of laws and definitions that are a part of public policy surrounding higher education and expected contributions to society as part of the university mission. These are somewhat limited in scope and

one-directional, when compared with other definitions, conceptualizations, and criteria of evaluation. Although public policy does not establish prioritization of university missions, Panama's current accreditation matrix suggests that teaching is the university's first mission, and research and engagement both have the same level of priority. This conclusion is made based on a number of "essential" indicators assigned to the research and engagement factors of accreditation, and twice the number of essential factors in the teaching factor.

Campus Compact's orientation documents for universities that seek Carnegie Classification in Community Engagement suggest that university engagement is most effective when embedded into everything a university does, placing a special emphasis on university policy and resource allocation, as well as engagement within the teaching and learning process. This institution also emphasizes the reciprocal relationship that should exist between universities and society, with ample opportunities for both to be in contact with each other, with the joint objective of facilitating positive societal change.

Universities are expected to "transcend weak notions of reciprocity and pursue principled collaborations" that allow them to truly serve their communities (Dolgon et al. 2016, p. xix). These authors also question the emphasis placed on indicators and variables that measure engagement, and favor methods that will measure more serious impacts and proofs of social change. This chapter presented different factors, such as history, policy, and institutional missions that shape the context in which university engagement occurs in Panama. It also opens the door for future studies that delve deeper into the execution of university engagement missions, and how these come to life within the curricula, student life, ties with the community, accomplishments, and measurable contributions to society. Future studies could expand the scope beyond coding and analysis of text, and explore how universities execute and implement what they write in their statements. For example, some universities in Panama include in their statements that they promote nationalism and civic education. Future studies could explore how these universities integrate these values into student learning experiences, and to what level universities follow through with that they write in their mission, vision, and value statements.

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