

CREATE
COMMUNITIES CHANGE **UNIVERSITIES**

Putting the Town in the Gown
Putting the Gown in the Town

July 2015



Fern Tiger

- Founder, Creative Director
Fern Tiger Associates (FTA)
 - Oakland, CA-based strategy and design firm -- created to strengthen communities and organizations
 - *organizational effectiveness*
 - *communication solutions*
 - *community engagement*
 - *creative documentation*
- Professor, Urban Studies,
University of Washington Tacoma

Fern Tiger Associates



Overview of Presentation

- Background / Historical Context
- The Crossroad: Might it allow universities to change?
- “Authentic” Engagement
 - Case Study
 - Results
- Authentic University Engagement: *What does it take?*



Fern Tiger Associates



The Academy

Elite (religiously-based) havens for creating knowledge.

The City

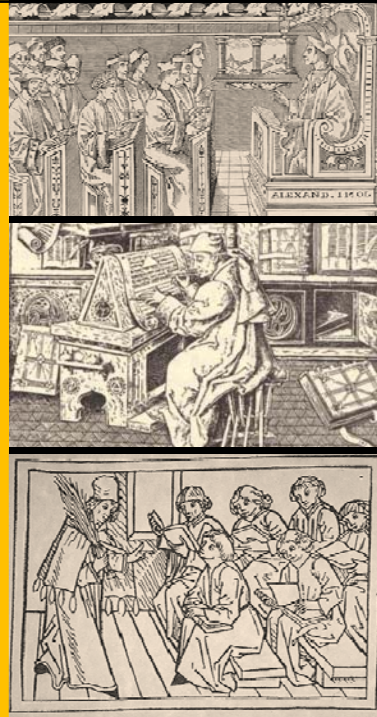
Gateways – Flourishing political, economic, and cultural centers.

Fern Tiger Associates

The Town/The Gown

- 1100s: Universities without campuses; masters rented lecture halls; students rented housing; cities provided “marketplace”
- Students /faculty wore distinctive academic garb; social symbol implying no manual work
- Students /faculty congregated in particular parts of the city
- Centuries of tension

Fern Tiger Associates



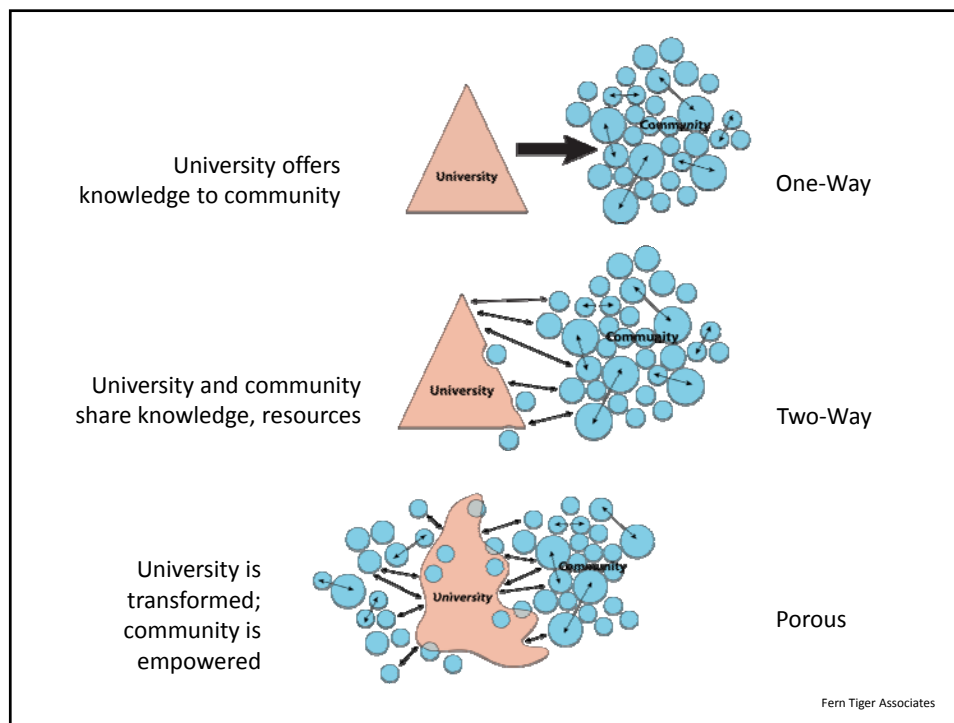
Changing Times : Changing the Tradition
The Call for an Embedded/Engaged University

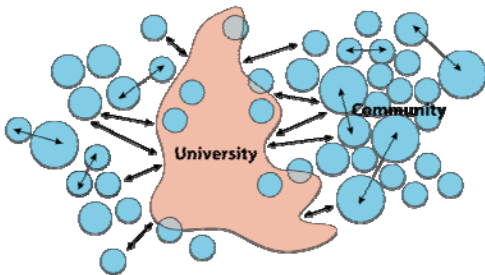
Fern Tiger Associates

Engagement Challenges / Confusion

- Limitations of academic schedules
- Misaligned incentives/goals
- Pressure to publish (acad/populist)
- Students interested in experiential learning; unskilled/inexperienced
- Haphazard coordination
- Sketchy continuity of relationships
- Lack of rooted faculty experience
- Long histories of mistrust
- Scarcity of university-wide, sustainable, successful examples

Fern Tiger Associates





Authentic University Engagement

- Honest flow of information (transparency)
- Lay people on same playing field as academics and institutional reps
- Co-creation of research design and knowledge
- Commitment to community thinking, brainstorming, analysis
- Use of results to influence decisionmaking
- Necessitates transformation of university as well as community

Fern Tiger Associates



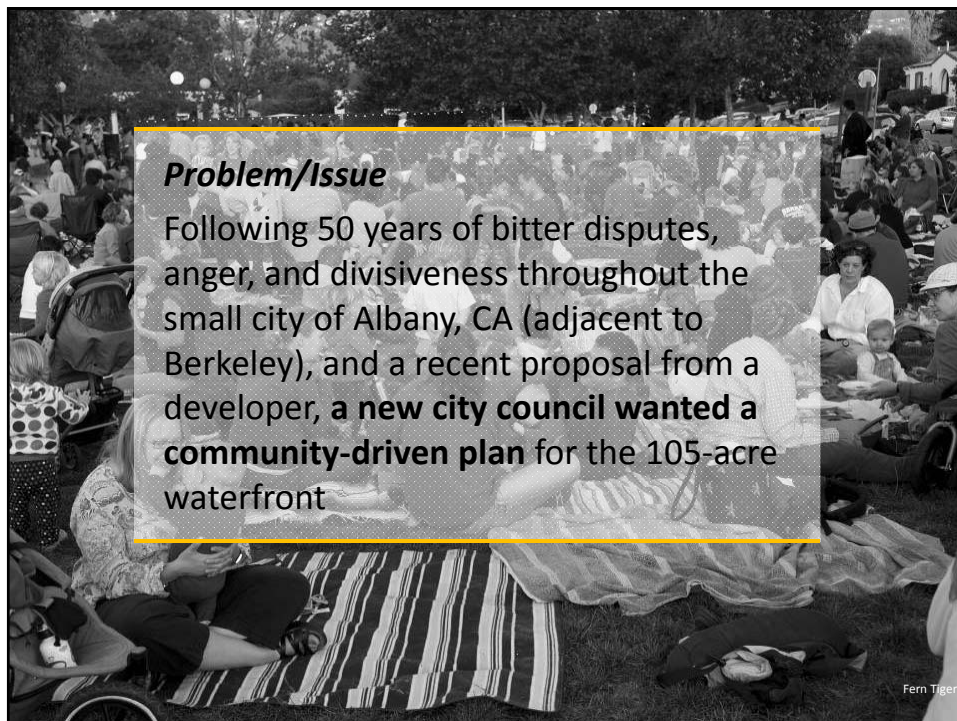
Authentic Community Engagement
Voices to Vision : Albany, CA

Fern Tiger Associates

Some FTA Engagement Project Topics

- Public Schools (grade configuration and integration planning)
- Energy Self Sufficiency
- Land Use
- **Community Vision**
- County-wide Vision
- Biotech Education
- Hospital Planning in Neighborhood
- Corporate/City/Community Agreement and Benefits

Fern Tiger Associates



V2V: *Physical/Social Context*

- Spectacular views; last “undeveloped” parcel
- Privately-owned land (yielding taxes) adjacent to public land
- Current use: Racetrack
- History of conflict
- Small city with big waterfront presence

Fern Tiger Associates



Voices to Vision : Preparation

Researched waterfront history/ current media and conducted interviews with 80+ residents and stakeholders to understand community dynamics

Initial Findings:

- History of conflict and community polarization
- Widespread misinformation
- Sense that small city was being dominated by adjacent cities through participation of non-residents in decisionmaking

Fern Tiger Associates



Voices to Vision : Process and Tools

- Part 1: 40 identical 2-hour neighborhood sessions in 8 weeks – (am/pm/weekends) in public settings, [10-50 people per session]
- *Part 2 – 10 sessions, one weekend*
- Tables of 6 people
- Engaging graphic tools
- 5 distinct, sequential participatory activities (each garnering data)
- Extensive RSVP process, reminders, thank yous (Albany only)
- Sought participation beyond “usual”

Fern Tiger Associates



Voices to Vision : Results

- 1 in every 10 adults participated (unduplicated)
- Unanimous Council support for new “vision” and conceptual plan for waterfront; 500 people at final presentation of vision

Fern Tiger Associates



6 Months Later: Big Surprise

- University / Nat'l Lab desired second campus (project much larger than community vision; labs not in vision)
- Albany site one of 6 finalists selected by university (secretive selection)
- Government ownership impacts tax revenue/local control
- University process not “engaging;” presentations, limited Q&A
- Community demands information; FTA develops new process
- Result: community not supportive of university plans; community doesn't trust university



Students, workers demand community benefits agreement for Richmond Bay Campus



Respect Richmond Coalition hosts speak-out, protests outside chancellor's residence



Community members turn up the heat on UC Berkeley over Richmond Bay Campus

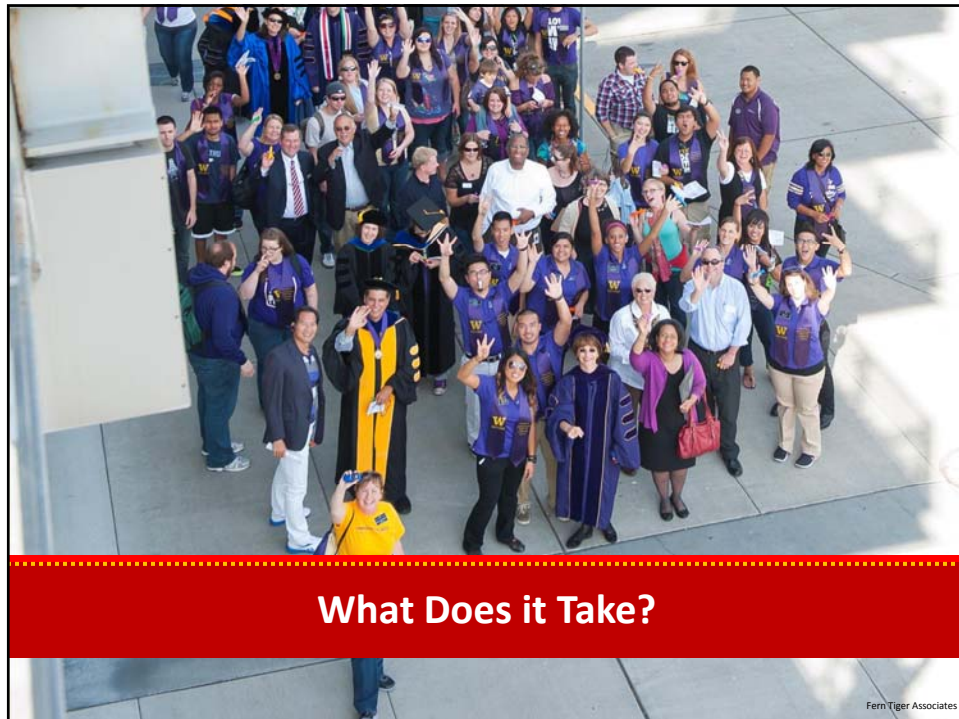


Differences between FTA and Universities

- Trained creative professionals doing the work vs. faculty and untrained students
- Neutral facilitation and design vs. research agenda and biases
- No pre-conceived solution/process vs. methods to satisfy courses/research
- Responsive to community vs. institution
- Additive knowledge vs. continuously tearing down and rebuilding knowledge
- Multi-year engagement vs. academic schedule (24/7 vs. class time)
- Continuity vs. rotating cast
- Long commitment vs. changing agendas

Fern Tiger Associates





Conclusion

- A strong, working definition of an empowered partnership
- A shared ethos (evidenced by university mission and understood by campus)
- The “will” to be transformed (by the process and the solutions)
- Intentional, transparent decisionmaking
- Full support for community “empowerment” (going well beyond “service”)
- Leadership at the highest level of the university
- Clear expectations of university and community
- Shared responsibility for outcomes
- Trust and respect
- An “additive” approach

Fern Tiger Associates 2013

CREATE
COMMUNITIES CHANGE **UNIVERSITIES**

“It’s more than a program; it’s an attitude.”

***“University people don’t see themselves
as part of the community
and they don’t have a passion for change.”***

***- from interviews with more than 200 ASU
stakeholders + visits/interviews at more
than 15 American universities***

Fern Tiger Associates