

## Wayamba University of Sri Lanka Award for Excellence in Community Engagement

- ***Awarded to an individual or team who have made an outstanding contribution to the community or built strong links with the community through outstanding partnership and collaboration.***

### **Definition of Community Engagement**

Community Engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices (CDC, 1997).

Collaborations with branches of government and not-for profit organizations are eligible under the Community Engagement Award.

The community engagement activities of the University reflect its mission. The University's Mission incorporates a strong commitment to our communities and the central role it plays in contributing to enhance the lives of people and sustainability. Wayamba University of Sri Lanka (WUSL) desires to be an 'engaged university' where its engagement with its surrounding communities is based on a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and expertise.

At WUSL, we consider community engagement to be a collaborative process that connects the University with communities of all scales in a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience in the context of partnership, trust, respect and reciprocity. Through engagement with our communities we create inspiring student learning experiences, innovative and relevant research, and ultimately, stronger and more vibrant communities and regions.

This Award recognises contribution of academics' (individual or group) engagement towards critical issues in society and is evidenced through community identified impact. **Community impact** is defined as active citizenship that results in enhanced community capacity to address key societal issues within an identified community of interest. This award considers the service activities of an individual or a group, where their contribution as citizens is based on their experience and knowledge as a member of the university community.

**Community engagement** is considered as a scholarly method through which University creates future-ready graduates and research that is relevant to the needs of our communities and the challenges of the future. It is a critical component of academic practice at WUSL and is recognised and celebrated through annual awards.

Community involvement in WUSL encompasses both **civic and scholarship-related activities**. In general, community engagement can be evaluated in terms of process and

impact. The community engagement process includes capacity building, responding to identified needs, and working in partnership. The effect of social engagement is assessed by clarifying relevance, scholarly output, responsiveness, satisfaction, and mutual benefit.

Community engagement is an application of **scholarship**. This type of activity incorporates the process of involvement, partnership and extension of academic practice through community engagement as a critical aspect of scholarship. It provides opportunity for academics to do scholarly investigation on social problems and their community contexts.

**Citizenship activity** is considered to be a service. It is evaluated in terms of civic and academic or professional contribution to the community. Service itself is a subset of community engagement.

### Criteria

Nominee/s or applicant/s must demonstrate excellence in collaboration and engagement with the community. Community engagement may involve a range of activities, including:

- Service to the community, including providing voluntary services as a consultant or advisor
- Leadership positions on boards and committees or community activism which enhances the reputation of the University in the wider community
- Partnerships with the community, such as planning and engagement in **joint University-Community** events and activities, which builds and strengthens the community's engagement with, and perception of the University.

Nominee/s or applicant/s should demonstrate how the activity results in the enhanced capacity and/or capability of a community within an identified community of interest.

They should provide evidence of how the community has benefited as a result of the activity.

### Application/Nomination Process

- Any permanent staff member can nominate an individual or a team for the Excellence Award.
  - Self-applications are also permitted.
  - All permanent WUSL employees are eligible to be nominated.
  - Depending on the quality of the nominations, one award winner may be selected for each award sub-category (team or individual). An award may not be made if the candidates or teams do not reach the minimum score as specified in the evaluation criteria.
- **Individual nominations (where applicable)**

The nominee must be informed before submitting the nomination.

- **Team nominations (where applicable)**

Team nominations would not normally exceed 6 members unless exceptional circumstances apply. Team leaders of the nomination should be informed before the application is submitted to ensure that team composition and contributions are accurately reflected. A team member may be defined as someone who has made a significant contribution.

## Reporting Period

The Community Engagement Awards recognise engagement excellence during a calendar year, 1 January to 31 December.

## Re-nominations

A nominee or recipient of a Community Engagement Excellence Award cannot be the recipient of an individual award in two consecutive years for the same or substantially similar achievement.

## Awards ceremony and prizes

All finalists are invited to attend the annual awards ceremony, where the award winners are announced. Award winners will receive a certificate of recognition, and a plaque.

Any award recipient who is no longer employed by the University at the time of the announcement of the awards will not be entitled to receive an award.

## Application Process

The application will have:

- The applicant or nominee/s name, email, Faculty/Department.
- For team nominations, details will need to be provided for all team members.
- A 100 word concise overview of the nomination, including
  - a description of the contribution, initiative, program, project or activity
  - how this outstanding and exceptional achievement or success exceeds normal expectations of performance.
- Responses to the selection criteria (max 500 words)

The response should include:

- the contribution, initiative, program, project or activity; and
  - how this significant and outstanding achievement addresses the award-specific criteria given in the evaluation criteria given below.
- Two (2) supporting letters – one each from external stakeholder and internal stakeholders (staff or student) not exceeding two A4 pages highlighting the importance, mutual benefits and impact of the engagement.
  - A curriculum vitae of applicant/nominee.
  - Evidence must be attached as an annexure.
  - The applicant/nominee is responsible to prepare all required documents.
  - The person nominates the person must endorse the work of the nominee using a cover letter.

## Evaluation criteria – Award for Excellence in Community Engagement

- 1. Demonstrated positive impact on the community:** What has been the societal benefit of the collaboration? What is the identified problem, opportunity or societal issue does it address? To what extent has this collaboration improved outcomes for the community and higher education? **(weighted: 25 marks)**
- 2. Collaborative approach:** How, and by whom, was this activity initiated? What role did each party play in identifying the challenge, determining goals and designing the program? What ongoing role do the parties play in this initiative? What were the

obstacles encountered and how they were overcome in this relationship? Are there any positive impact to the culture, attitudes, behaviour or values from the partnership? More broadly, how does the initiative contribute to collaborations between the relevant communities and higher education sector? **(weighted: 25 marks)**

3. **Innovation:** What makes the activity innovative in concept, objective, approach, design, delivery or content? Has the collaboration produced any unexpected benefits for the partners? **(weighted: 15 marks)**
4. **Demonstrated mutual benefits:** What societal benefits has each partner derived from the initiative, and on what scale? To what extent has it successfully addressed the core problem or challenge faced by the community or higher education partner? What tangible benefits has the WUSL enjoyed? Has the initiative grown and/or attracted new participants since its inception? Has the initiative resulted in any further collaboration on other matters? **(weighted: 25 marks)**
5. **Sustainability and scalability:** How will the initiative find sufficient resources to continue running in the longer term? Are the relevant communities committed to sustaining the initiative into the future? Is the initiative scalable and potentially applicable to other relevant communities or institutions? Does it have the potential to significantly promote and elevate community engagement in the Higher Education sector as a whole? **(weighted: 10 marks)**

### Rating Scale

The extent to which the applicant meets the requirements of a specific criterion can be rated on a scale of 1-5. These ratings shall then be multiplied by the weighed marks (eg. For the criteria 5, if the applicant scored a rating of 4, then  $4 \times 10 = 40$ ). Final marks will be calculated as the summation of rating x weighted score (i.e. out of 500) and then converted to 100.

5 = the application excels in meeting all the requirements of the specific criteria

4 = the application is more than acceptable in meeting the requirements of the criteria

3 = the application meets the requirements of the criteria at an acceptable level

2 = the application meets the requirements of the criteria at a level below average

1 = the application does not meet the requirements of this criteria at all.

Nominations/applications will be reviewed and selected by a committee appointed by the Senate.

Evaluation panel:

1. One (1) member nominated by the Senate among its members (where possible, not from the faculties of the applicants)
2. Two (2) external members with experience in the community programmes affiliated to the government or not-for profits organizations (who have no connection with the work claimed by the applicants and with no conflict of interest).

Committee recommendations will be made on the basis of the information submitted; the committee does not solicit additional information. The marks are given by the evaluators independently and the average marks are considered for the selection of the awardee.

An applicant must score a minimum of 75% marks for the eligibility of the award. If an applicant/nominee is not selected for the award after scoring more than 75% marks, he/she will be awarded a merit award.

Additional members with specific expertise may be invited based on the applications received by the Selection Committee.

The Committee may invite applicants for an interview, if deemed necessary.

The Committee may decide not to make an award for the year under review if it is of the opinion that no applicants qualify for the award.

**Submitted to the ADPSEC by:**

Professor Renuka Silva – Director, Centre for Quality Assurance

Professor Nisha Kottarachchi – Department of Biotechnology, Faculty of Agriculture & Plantation Management

Dr Asankha Pallegedara – Senior Lecturer, Department of Industrial Management, Faculty of Applied Sciences

Dr Nimali De Silva – Senior Lecturer, Department of Nanotechnology, Faculty of Technology

Dr Tusita Somaratna – Senior Lecturer, Department of Pathology, Faculty of Medicine

*Revised based on the comments given by the ADPSEC held on 10.1.2023*