

TU in the Community

ANNUAL REPORT

Innovative

Launched in April 2009, *TU in the Community* is an interactive searchable database that encompasses all of TU's community engagement research, projects, and people.

The *TU in the Community* team has worked over the past year to share this innovative database with the campus community. The following report captures the strides and successes that *TU in the Community* has made during its first year.

Collaborative & Fostering Partnerships

- **Community and families** now have one 'go to' place to find all of the resources Towson University has to offer. The Community Projects Database allows users to search by location, category, department, and name. A unique contact form and toll free number guarantees a response within 24 hours.
- **Students** have access to a searchable database of Service Learning Courses as well as information on finding internships and volunteer opportunities.
- **Faculty and staff** have an easy method of finding and collaborating with colleagues. *TU in the Community* provides a resource page to find grants, journals, and upcoming conferences. In addition, the website exposes professional research and projects to the outside community including potential partners.
- **Business, nonprofit and government agencies** use *TU in the Community* for BRAC resources and to access consolidated information on recruiting interns and hiring employees from TU.



Functional & User-Friendly

TU in the Community is user friendly. The *TU in the Community* team provides constant support for faculty and staff via face to face meetings, email, and phone. The 'GA tool' allows for a graduate/student assistant to have access to their profile so that they may upload projects on their behalf.

Community Projects Database Key Features

Collaborator function— faculty and staff can recognize partners in their projects. This reduces the chance of duplication.

Mapping function— A web enabled map locates projects happening across the region. Additionally, a dynamic campus map shows which faculty and staff are involved in Community Engagement by building (i.e. Smith Hall).

Search by category— Users can find projects based on relevant categories including: Health & Wellness, Science & Technology, BRAC & Military Affairs, Environment, etc.

What we have heard from users...

"I shared my project with my community partner and they were thrilled to get such high-level notice."

"Being able to find all the parent & family resources in one place was awesome."

"The website was easy to navigate but having a live person available for tech-support really made the difference."

Key Statistics

19,000 unique visits since site launch in April 2009

140 active faculty and staff profiles

Buzz-worthy & Spreading the Word

Faculty, staff, and community members want to know: "What is *TU in the Community* and how can I be involved?" Over the past year the *TU in the Community* team has been spreading the word to everyone that will listen.

- Presentations to **over 25 departments and over 450 faculty and staff** across campus
- Introductory and demo videos created for users
- Exhibitions at campus-wide events
- "Reference Guide" distributed to faculty and staff containing information on the tool and how to work with the *TU in the Community* team
- Monthly blog posts on Towson University's Outreach Blog (www.TUOutreach.com) featuring a *TU in the Community* project
- "What's New with *TU in the Community*" electronic quarterly newsletter distributed to users featuring profile highlights, new site features, community engagement resources, and scholarship opportunities



Producing Results

Qualitative Measurements

- **Multiple daily contacts** with community members, non-profits, businesses, prospective students, and parents through website. Contacts have resulted in sponsorship opportunities for Athletics, internships and volunteer opportunities for students, business partnership opportunities, faculty research partnership opportunities, and relationship building with the greater community.
- **Recognition as a best practice** from other higher education institutions both locally and globally. The Maryland Campus Compact is interested in sharing this website and strategy across Maryland. Two Universities in South Africa have requested our consultation on the process and implementation strategy.

What's Next?

With the great success of the website comes additional needed support. This year the *TU in the Community* team focused on introducing the website and community projects database as a resource for the institution and our partners. Moving forward, the tool requires support to mature as well as a focus on adding projects and community based research being led by our engaged faculty and staff.