

BETTER TOGETHER:

WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY AND OGDEN CITY'S COLLEGE TOWN INITIATIVE

Larry Abernathy Award Application · 2015





Three years ago, Weber State University (WSU) and Ogden City established the College Town Initiative. The initiative has led to an ongoing partnership that opens new doors to future opportunities and collaborations. This partnership has resulted in the adoption of a College Town charter, the creation of various working committees and further integration of university and city life.

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COLLEGE TOWN

College Town Charter

On Oct. 1, 2013, Ogden City and WSU held a College Town charter signing to formalize an ongoing partnership. The charter includes the adoption of a vision statement and provides a structure to sustain continued relationships and coordinated efforts. It creates a safe place for dialogue on any topic between the city and university.

Vision: Our community is known as a unique and vibrant place where Ogden City and Weber State University mutually pursue economic, educational, recreational, social and cultural initiatives. This effort creates pride and tradition that bind college and town together.



WSU President Charles A. Wight, Board of Trustees Chair Alan Hall, former WSU Student Body President David Wilson

COMMUNITY

Community Partnerships

WSU has worked with Ogden City and local organizations for more than 125 years to provide quality programs and educational opportunities. As a result of these efforts, the WSU Center for Community Engaged Learning received the esteemed 2015 Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This acknowledges WSU's long-term commitment to the greater Ogden community and the university's dedication to teaching students through community-engaged learning.

Not wanting to have a strong college-town relationship all to itself, Ogden also invited other cities to become closer to their university. Ogden City and seven other nearby cities have adopted a Keys to Our Communities resolution to generously welcome the university into their neighborhoods. Officials expect that additional cities and counties will join as well.



ACADEMIA

Academia

Numerous initiatives at WSU support a positive academic environment and provide learning opportunities within the community.

In the fall of 2014, Ogden City, the WSU Walker Institute of Politics & Public Service and the university's Division of Continuing Education hosted a Citizens Academy course to help residents and students learn how local government works.

Additionally, students have been engaged with city leaders on campus through Talk of the Town meetings. These meetings generally focus on student-centered topics such as transit and parking. The nationally recognized WSU debate team has also attended City Council meetings to debate topics of local concern such as predatory towing. Ogden plans to use some research gleaned from these debates for forming policy that will benefit residents.

A new Weber Speaks program also allows WSU communication students to prepare public speeches and present these during City Council meetings.



WEBER STATE

Weber State Downtown

Ogden is nationally recognized for its historic downtown area. The university and city partnered to restore a 1920s building into a truly unique future-focused space. Weber State Downtown now offers convenient access to a university bookstore, ticket office and Continuing Education courses. Entrepreneurs and business startups have also leased space for brainstorming the next big idea.



Board of Trustees Chair Alan Hall, Ogden Mayor Michael Caldwell, WSU President Charles A. Wight, WSU mascot Waldo

COMMUNITY

Community Events

The initial energy of this partnership came as a result of a joint effort to plan a community celebration in honor of former WSU basketball star Damian Lillard, who was selected by the Portland Trailblazers in the 2012 NBA Draft. Three community celebrations honored Lillard, and Ogden Mayor Mike Caldwell presented him with a key to the city.

The city has since partnered closely with the university to host numerous homecoming events and downtown pep rallies. The WSU Athletics Department has also been generous in providing complimentary tickets for city employees and public safety officials to attend football and basketball games.



RECOGNITION

Recognitions

This partnership has provided increased opportunities to recognize the many positive things happening in the Ogden community. The city has recognized numerous successes of the university including community and cultural events, athletic and academic teams, theatre productions, student leaders and professors. As WSU celebrated its 125th anniversary, the city was heavily involved and placed 125 WSU flags around the Ogden City Municipal Building block.

On Nov. 4, 2014, WSU presented Ogden City with a joint presidential citation recognizing the unwavering community support from city leaders, business owners, nonprofits and residents.



Support of Local Businesses

A student discounts program provided information about deals that local businesses offer. More than 20 businesses participate in this program. Efforts are now underway to provide options for businesses to support the college-town effort in other ways, including prominent displays of WSU memorabilia.

Each semester, student leaders also present Wildcat Choice Awards to businesses that have been exemplary in showcasing WSU pride. A decoy meeting is set up between a business owner and the mayor. Students then surprise the business with a flash mob and present the award.

Diversity Connections

The city and university have partnered to embrace the unique and diverse makeup of the Ogden community. Meetings have been held with 15 representative ethnic groups to discover better ways to inform and engage these groups. The city has worked closely with the university to adopt proclamations declaring a Hispanic Heritage Month and Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service in Ogden.

In addition, efforts are currently underway to develop a diversity charter, which is anticipated to be signed on June 30, 2015.

The diversity charter will create a joint diversity council composed of representatives from the university, city and each of the 15 groups. An executive committee will also be created to oversee the initiative. Members of the joint diversity council will serve as ambassadors with each of the 15 groups to build trust and serve as liaisons.



TOURISM

Tourism

Each year the Ogden Marathon brings more than 10,000 visitors from across the country to the community. WSU has been a major partner in this, and the Runners Expo for this event is held on WSU's campus.

In the summer of 2014 Ogden City hosted more than 700,000 visitors during numerous community events. WSU provided a downtown shuttle and volunteer ambassadors to help greet visitors. The university also helped spruce up vacant buildings by installing quality window clings and graphics downtown.



CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion

This partnership has a profound impact on the Ogden community. In an extraordinarily brief period of time, city and university leaders have been able to create a college-town environment conducive to both student and community learning, growth and development.

Many of these successful efforts are being presented at conferences and meetings, including the International Town & Gown Association, Utah Campus Compact and the International Association for Research on Service Learning and Community Engagement.

As city and university leaders develop new ways of supporting each other, new joint endeavors will continue to make town and gown relations an integral part of the Ogden community and beyond.



