On overcoming the barriers to regional engagement: 

Reflections from the University of Lincoln

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• **Interesting Case**

  a) **Rapid development** from a branch campus to a full-range, multi-disciplinary university in 20 years

  a) Focused to **respond to regional economic needs** through national and international collaboration

'best thing to happen to Lincoln since the Romans'
Study Approach

Twin Objective of examining the

- role of the University of Lincoln in its local region
- barriers involved in engagement

Explorative Case study

1. Interviews (staff of the University, Industry partners, the County Council, Graduates of the university)

2. Secondary data (policy documents, strategies, reports, websites)
Findings - engagement

- Contributions to regional development through various collaborations

1. Local Support
   - Business Incubator, Sparkhouse
     - Supporting over 230 new and growing businesses and creating 230 new jobs
     - Training for SME's

2. Industry collaboration
   - Siemens (University has helped to embed the company through supply of local graduates while developing research collaboration)
     - led to establishing the first purpose-built engineering school in the UK in 25 years.
Findings – engagement 2

3. The University of Lincoln and County Council

- key drivers for regional innovation
- Common goal is to increase innovation potential within the region

‘[...] we are getting new businesses to relocate here just because of the university. I think the Science park [...], is really gaining momentum.’ (employee, County Council)
Findings - barriers

- Internal barriers
  - Intellectual property rights
  - Capacity and volume of staff
  - ‘Poor’ marketing efforts / Communication

- Cultural gap (university-businesses)

- Graduate retention

- External barriers
  - Government interventions and policies
  - Low educational level / Lack of ambition
  - Local infrastructure and economic structure
Findings – barriers 2

Government Interventions and policies: ‘when Brexit was announced, some of our clients lost 20% of their workforce over-night and you know the shock waves that happened […] those sorts of things impact on us hugely […] our challenges are externally-driven, political challenges’ (staff, UoL).

Graduate retention: ‘[…] well there are no jobs, some who could actually get jobs just have the big cities like London on their minds’ (graduate, UoL).

Staff capacity: ‘I am expected to know the entire breadth of qualifications and curriculum because you have to do that, because you can’t go to a company and say, well I’ll get somebody to get back to you…’ (staff, UoL).
Reflections: on overcoming the barriers

• Universities are \textbf{constantly pushed to reassess their role and relationship} with the identified stakeholders and communities

• \textbf{Strategic planning is required} in understanding and managing the diverse partnerships, also to avoid undesirable consequences of adapting new collaboration models (Jongbloed \textit{et al.}, 2008)

• The UoL addresses the issue of lack of knowledge-based businesses in its strategies by adapting the concept of a ‘\textbf{tough leader}’ - the spirit of innovation and experimenting new practices in teaching, research, partnerships (UoL Strategic Plan, 2016-2021)

• \textit{In the end it comes down to the collaboration and actions between individual universities and businesses to determine whether the partnership is successful} (BIS, 2012)
Conclusion

The quest to engage, requires *strategizing* on the part of UoL and a *concerted effort* from all stakeholders.
Thank you!

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