

Introduction

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The Faculty for Social Wellbeing, besides being an essential institution within the University of Malta, is also a Faculty which has a strong sense of community belonging, “a sense of membership and mutual concern that enables needs to be met” (Leviten-Reid et al., 2020, p. 18). In the case of the Faculty, perhaps differently from other Faculties, the sense of belonging and solidarity is with persons who are among the most vulnerable members of society. Faculty members - whether academics, students or administrative staff – are aware of their connection and commitment to others which “has been found to foster citizen participation, collective action, and civic engagement” (Leviten-Reid et al., 2020, p. 18). Within the Faculty, these three elements abound but are not always visible or acknowledged, and much less advertised. Although the concept of not blowing your own trumpet is one to be lauded, bringing community engagement into the spotlight, as this magazine sets out to do, has a number of advantages. First of all, it can highlight the connection between the Faculty and its stakeholders, including service users, who are, ultimately, the beneficiaries of the Faculty’s operations. Through the various community engagement initiatives of its members, the Faculty allows its stakeholders to drive its operations and make them relevant to society and its wellbeing. Secondly, knowing about community engagement initiatives can encourage more community engagement and make this the declared norm within the Faculty. In this way, alongside teaching/learning and research, being engaged in the community could be acknowledged as the third arm of University life. The third advantage is that, through this magazine, the contributors will have the opportunity to create awareness about their particular involvement in the community. This could be seen as a form of advocacy and will raise the profile of the Faculty in being attuned to societal needs. It could also provide faculty members with points of reference and information about areas where they lack expertise.

Social wellbeing is made up of many facets and knowing which of these facets is not being addressed and requires attention will contribute to the Faculty’s holistic involvement in the community. The magazine, besides highlighting a number of areas which the Faculty is involved in, also uncovers areas which do not feature so prominently. This will help the Faculty identify research gaps and areas where more investment is needed.

Having the different interests and passions exhibited as they are in this magazine, is testament to the Faculty’s richness and to the contribution it is making to society. Dedicating the magazine to community engagement is also a confirmation of the Faculty’s commitment to this important aspect of its functioning. May this magazine serve as an acknowledgement and appreciation of the various forms of engagement being undertaken by the Faculty members and may it encourage more participation and collaboration between the Faculty and its stakeholders.

Reference:

Leviten-Reid, C., Matthew, R. & Wardley, L. (2020). Sense of community belonging: exploring the impact of housing quality, affordability, and safety among renter households. *Journal of Community Practice*, 28(1), 18-35, DOI: 10.1080/10705422.2020.1718050.