



**The Open  
University**

# **Navigating the mainstreaming paradox of equality and widening participation**

Mainstreaming equity, opportunity and success in higher education, 15 April 2010

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# Mission and core values

- “The Open University is open to people, places, methods and ideas. It promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential.”



# OU Futures

Curriculum  
Strategy

Learning &  
Teaching  
Strategy

Research  
Strategy

Widening Participation Strategy

Equality Scheme



# Policies and processes

- Dedicated management groups for WP and Equality and Diversity which feed into high level Committees
- Some specialist job roles
- Specific objectives and actions assigned to named units
- Informal Networks for sharing good practice





# Success Indicators:

- Learning and Teaching Strategy
  - *Widening participation and equality – The University needs to continue to make a contribution to the widening participation agenda and support students from diverse backgrounds. New approaches to course design and the processes that support production and presentation will need to be assessed for their impacts on different groups of students, particularly those at entry level, so that the efficiencies, enhancements and transformations we make do not impede recruitment, retention and progression.*



# Success Indicators

- The Curriculum Strategy
  - *The curriculum response to the OU mission and values lies above all in how we translate into curriculum our commitment to social justice. By this we mean that at the core of our teaching should be support for equality of opportunity and outcomes.*
  - *While the University has widening participation aspirations and targets which are broader than those met by the curriculum alone, the curriculum should be configured so that it contributes to achieving widening participation targets.*

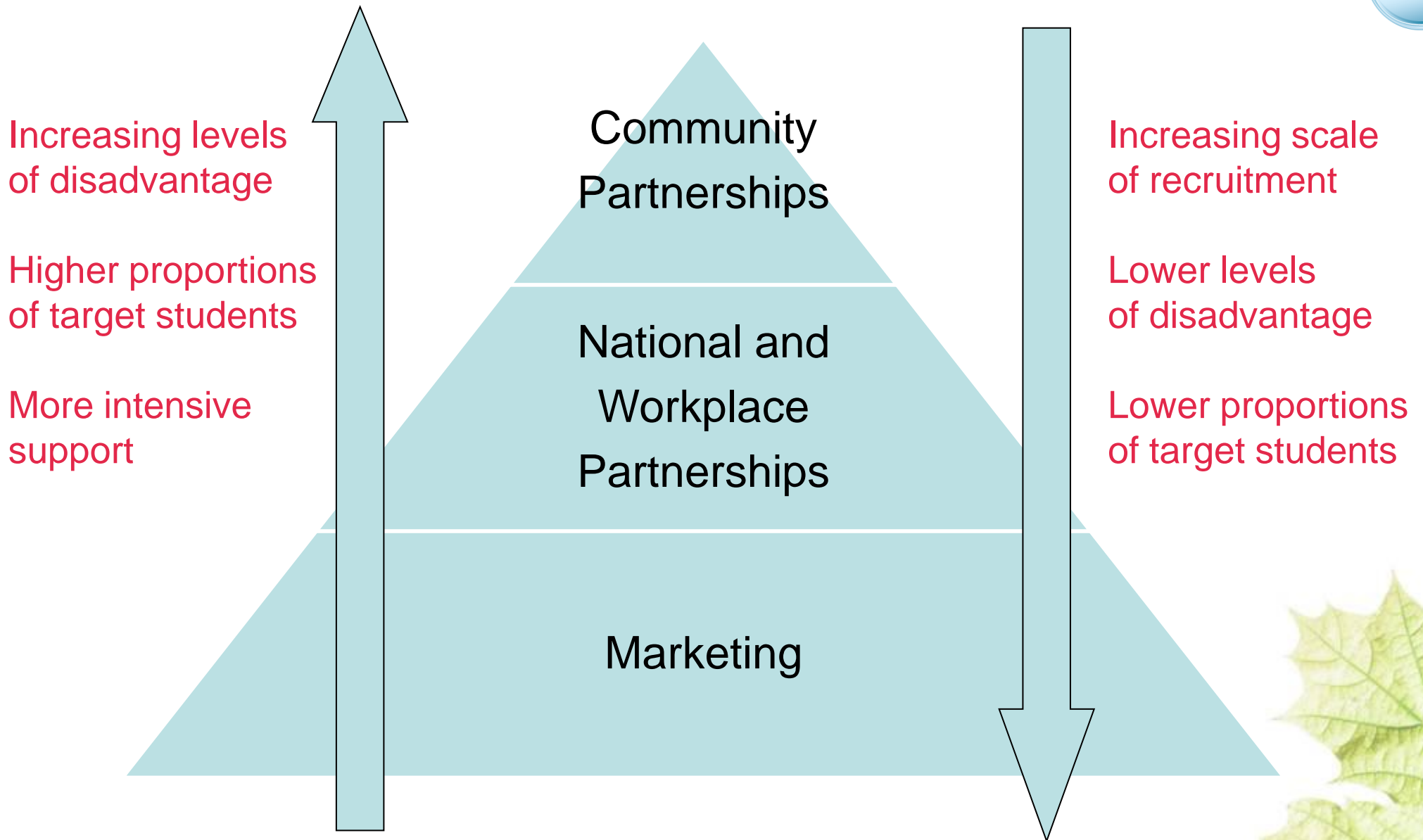


# Success Indicators

The Community Partnerships Programme; continuing to invest and learn the lessons

Aims to:

- Contribute to recruitment and completion targets
- Develop cultures of learning in families and communities
- Create positive learning experiences by raising self esteem and confidence
- Increase the University's understanding of the needs of these students and how best to respond to them
- Raise visibility and profile of the OU in these communities





# Enablers

- Institutional and individual leadership
- Strong evidence base
- Multi-method tailored approach
- External policy and legislation
- Funding arrangements



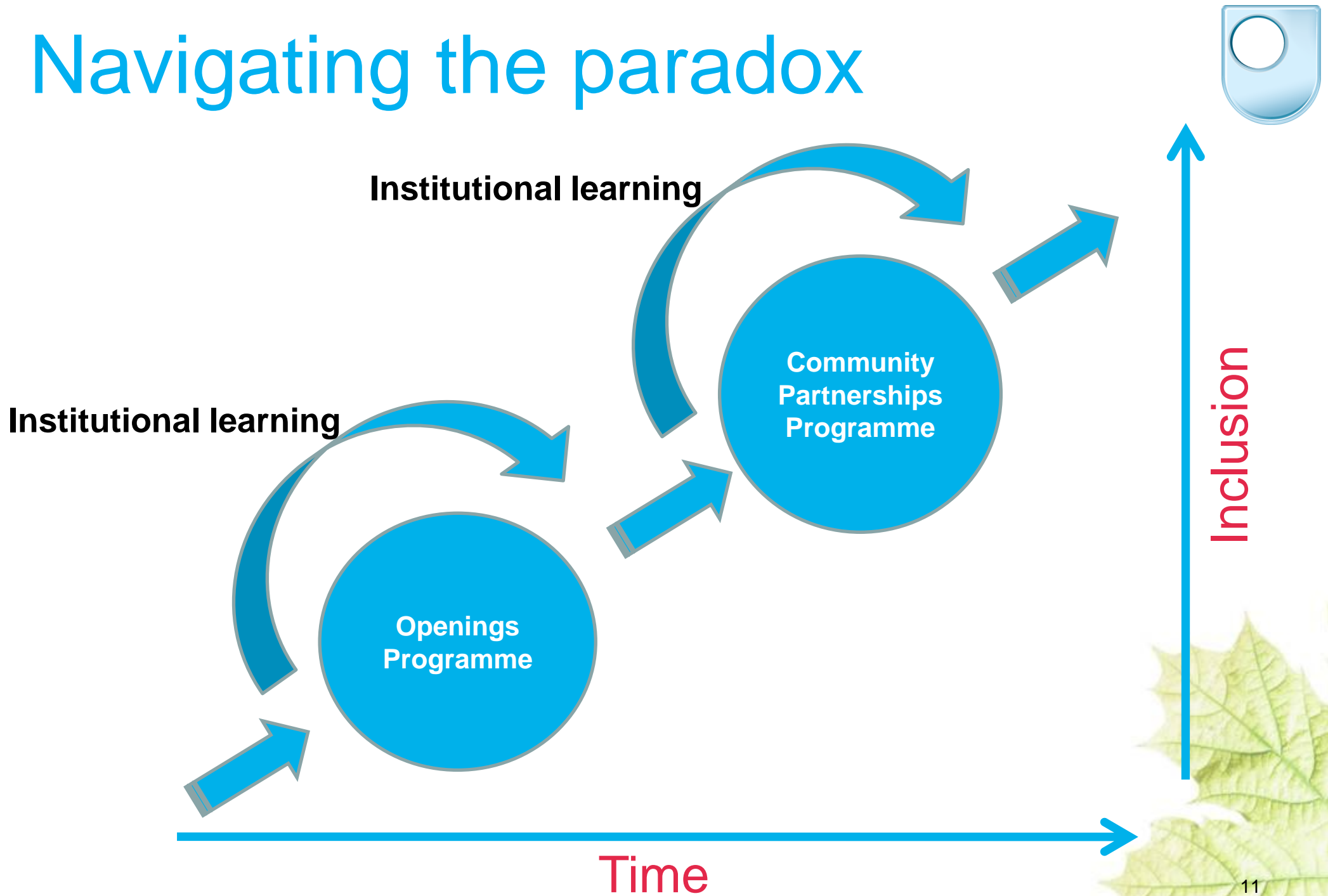


# Challenges and risks

- The paradox of mainstreaming: how do we mainstream whilst still maintaining focus and visibility?
- Size and complexity of the institution
- Developing a common understanding
- Financial uncertainties



# Navigating the paradox





# Contact us

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