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All In: The Urban Mission: Philadelphia Conference Issue

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All In: The Urban Mission: The 2019 Annual CUMU Conference

Nyeema C. Watson[1] and Jennifer Johnson Kebea[2]

[1]Office of Civic Engagement, Rutgers University-Camden, [2] Lindy Center for Civic Engagement, Drexel University

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Editor: Valerie L. Holton, Ph.D.

The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) celebrated its 25th Annual Conference in October 2019. Convening in Philadelphia PA, this conference was the largest for CUMU to date, selling out weeks in advance and drawing representatives from across the United States, Canada, and South Africa. With the theme of All In: The Urban Mission, attendees gathered purposefully to examine how universities are striving to intentionally align their goals with the priorities of their host cities to affect desired change, drive economic development and inclusion, and address issues of shared importance.

Philadelphia provided an apropos backdrop for the conference. As the birthplace of American democracy, 18th century Philadelphia was the site where our nation's founding fathers went "All In" on a bold vision for a new and radical form of government. Today, in the 21st century, institutions of higher education continue to be bold as they aim to leverage their full power and influence to achieve more robust positive impacts as anchors within their communities.

To see the "All In" strategy in action within the Philadelphia region, the conference featured four local community experiences hosted by Drexel University, Rutgers University-Camden, Temple University, and the University of Pennsylvania. These experiences highlighted how all four of these anchor institutions are deeply embedded within their cities, engaging in a variety of community partnerships that focus on addressing community-driven needs. During these experiences, institutions showcased how they address essential topics including economic and workforce development, K-12 education and college pipeline efforts, health and wellness, hunger and homelessness relief, and affordable housing. Each institution demonstrated how they engage faculty, staff, and students in these efforts through academic courses, community-based research, and volunteerism. From each experience, it was clear the depth and breadth of institutional commitment to both addressing community needs and enhancing the teaching and research missions of the university, and gave conference attendees a sense of what an "All In" strategy entails.

Connecting to the Current Context

The articles featured in this issue take deep dive into many of the themes highlighted during the conference, sharing novel approaches and best practices. Each article provides greater context and detail on how universities are deepening their collaborations with community partners to address community needs and implementing strong assessment and research practices to gauge the impact of these partnerships and programs.

However, the world in which higher education and community engagement exist is rapidly changing and we must be adept at quickly pivoting to address new needs and challenges as they arise. During the time lapse between the conference to the publication of this journal issue, the United States has found itself in the midst of what is being referred to by many as a triple-pandemic. In mid-March 2020 the United States was first rocked with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in more than 120,000 deaths nationally to date. Soon thereafter, communities across the country began to feel the tremendous financial fallout from widespread state and economic closures implemented to stop the spread of the virus. The third wave of the pandemic, which has existed since before this nation's founding, arrived in the form of racial uprisings in the wake of the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd and the continued racial disparities and mistreatment faced by millions of Black people in America on a daily basis.

The intertwined and critical nature of this triple-pandemic will undoubtedly change both higher education and the communities it exists within for years and, likely, decades to come. As the guest editors of this journal, we encourage you to read each piece included in this issue, recognize the timeframe and context it was written during, and then consider the current context and reality. What burgeoning issues need to be addressed moving forward as they relate to community engagement in the midst of this triple-pandemic? How do we position higher education to be responsive to complex, interconnected, and evolving realities experienced by the individuals on our campuses and the broader communities we exist within? What role does higher education hold as it pertains to addressing ongoing and systemic inequality in this country and across the globe? These are essential questions that we must grapple with ourselves, at our institutions, and within our communities in order to advance the field and the relevance of our work.

In This Issue

The first piece featured in this issue is authored by Euan Hague, a professor of geography and director in the School of Public Service at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois. Hague is the recipient of the 2019 Barbara A. Holland Scholar-Administrator Award, an award presented annually by CUMU that recognizes individuals with a strong record of both administrative leadership and impactful scholarship. In his essay, Hague reflects on his 20-year academic journey as a geographer with a deep-rooted orientation towards community engagement and social justice that undergirds and guides his work.

The next pair of articles included in this issue focus on efforts locally and globally that aim to support underrepresented, first generation students in making a successful transition to higher education. While there has been a significant increase in the numbers of African American and Latinx youth who attend college, they still lag considerably behind their white and Asian counterparts. This is due in large part to access to a high quality K-12 education, appropriate preparation as to what to expect when they enter college, and the high cost of college overall. While the desire is there on the part of these young people to go to college, these barriers oftentimes prove insurmountable. However, Isabelle Cherney, dean of the School of Education and Social Policy at Merrimack College, Laura Douglas, president of Bristol Community College, Ellen Fischer, principal of the Early College Alliance at Eastern Michigan University, and Russell Olwell, associate dean of the School of Education and Social Policy at Merrimack address these issues by looking at equity focused, student centered dual enrollment programs from the perspective of both two and four year institutions and high schools. Using a case study approach the authors show how a well-developed program that focuses on student success from the beginning can provide opportunities not only to prepare these students for the academic rigor of college while in high school, but also allow them to achieve college credits for courses taken during this time that will also reduce time to degree completion and overall college costs.

In South Africa, the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus adopted an anchor institution model to address the lingering issues of apartheid by developing community engagement programs focused on increasing access to higher education as a way of ensuring that campus diversity mirrored the diversity in the community. In this article, the authors Nthabiseng A. Ogude, Kgadi C. Mathabathe, Nosipho Mthethwa and Regina White from the University of Pretoria show how the campus moved from a community engagement model that focused on a collection of community-focused initiatives to an anchor institution model that focused on how the entirety of the university could be used to address the social, educational, and systemic economic challenges of the community of Mamelodi. One of the core approaches of this anchor work is how the campus was transformed through the creation of various STEM after-school and pipeline efforts as a way of connecting young people to academically rigorous activities that will assist them in having the appropriate academic, social and emotional skills to be successful at the university and a pathway there upon completion of their studies.

Continuing with a global focus, Donna Nickitas and Nancy Pontes from Rutgers University-Camden, present a research study that utilized engaged civic learning and social justice frameworks to prepare undergraduate nursing students for work in an increasing global context. The analysis of their study demonstrated that students enrolled in a Spanish for Health Professions course not only increased their Spanish language fluency in the medical setting, but also demonstrated marked gains in global perspectives.

Exploring entrepreneurism in urban environments, Silvia Garcia and Nina Ustymchuck from IUPUI present a research study that examines the interconnectedness of urban entrepreneurism in relation to the community resources available to support the local business community. The research shared in this article utilized a mixed-methods approach to collect data and feedback directly from community residents and business owners, illuminating the significant social capital assets necessary to build a strong culture of entrepreneurship.

Reflecting on their roles as anchor institutions, Jennifer Britton, Don Liberati, and Anna D'Isidoro from Drexel University and Jami Leveen from Aramark, a food, facilities, and uniform service corporation, discuss how they moved from a typical contract-based food supplier relationship to a community-focused, mission-driven partnership that centers on strengthening the economic development of West Philadelphia. The article shares the successes and challenges of conceptualizing, developing, and executing a complex university-corporation effort to increase local hiring, supplier diversity initiatives, and local procurement; the policies that need to be put in place to make this relationship work; and a frank conversation about some of the limitations.

In the final article of this issue, Keristiena Dodge and Sachin Pawaskar, at the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO), underscore the importance of demonstrating impact through community engagement for higher education institutions. Dodge and Pawaskar describe UNO's multi-step process to address this critical issue from forming an institutional committee to guide the work, to creating a framework to systematically track, visualize, and share community engagement work and outcomes across the institution and beyond. The article includes a critical reflection and discussion about their process, key learnings, and recommendations for institutions that seek to follow a similar path.

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Invited Commentary

Connecting Courses, Curriculum, and Community in Chicago

Euan Hague[1]

[1]School of Public Service, DePaul University

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Editor: Valerie L. Holton, Ph.D.

Introduction

I am deeply honored to receive the 2019 Barbara A. Holland Scholar-Administrator Award from the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU), as I believe strongly in interconnecting the elements of an urban institution: students, faculty, and community members, and integrating these within the classroom, curriculum, disciplinary structures, and administrative best practices. Additionally, I suggest that such an integrative approach should be fundamental to our scholarly practice, as teaching, research, and community engagement inform and reinforce each other. Our institutions give us opportunities to draw upon considerable resources that can be used to aid disadvantaged communities and, as professionals in the academy, we are well-positioned to pursue pedagogy that can make a difference in our society.

My passion for such integrative practice is rooted in my home discipline of geography, which has long grappled with the question of the relationships between communities and the academy. In 2020, geography is a vibrant, theoretically innovative, and community-engaged discipline. At its core, the discipline asks spatial questions that seek to understand how places and landscapes are created and understood. This can be the physical geography of Earth's landscapes and their geomorphology, or it can be, as I have chosen to study, its human landscapes. People shape landscapes for specific uses; they give places meaning and construct built environments that express those meanings. Understanding landscapes and places as meaningful and as being continually made and remade by people through myriad decisions, both small and large, leads to questions about who has the power to shape a landscape or give meaning to a place. It leads geographers to ask why places are like they are; to interrogate representations of places; and to explore the contested hegemonic meanings of places. This leads to examining which people, politics, and political systems impose and control the production of meanings, of landscapes, and land uses, and how these relate to identities. Geographers are, therefore, driven to ask questions that put place and spatial relationships at the core of investigative analyses.

Within geography, many faculty are committed to community-based scholarship. Much of this engagement has been with urban communities and, over the past fifty years, has sought to advance a coproduction of geographical knowledge. Such practice was central to the influential work that became known in the early 1970s as radical geography. A vanguard for early entries of feminist, Marxist, and post-colonial thought into the discipline, radical geography sought "social relevancy" and "advocacy" for research projects (Peet, 1977, 2000), and was disseminated though *Antipode* its, at times irreverent, scholarly journal (Hague, 2002). The most explicit and subsequently celebrated expression of radical geography's immersive practice to produce research that advances community change was Bunge's (1971) bringing of geographical expertise to the service of the Detroit neighborhood of Fitzgerald (Merrifield, 1995; *Progress in Human Geography*, 2011). Peet (1977: 13-14), describes Bunge's approach and its attendant call for academic geographers as community-engaged advocates and activists:

> Geographers should form expeditions to the poorest and most blighted areas of the country, contributing rather than taking resources, planning *with* people rather than planning *for* them, incorporating local people rather than excluding them in an elitist way.

Work produced by Bunge as part of his Detroit Geographical Expedition (1968-73) was used to counter expansion plans of his former employer, Wayne State University, and by community organizations to advance campaigns against racially unequal schooling. "[A]dvocate geographers and planners," Peet (1977: 15) explains, "offered their professional expertise to disenfranchised groups to help them deal with powerful institutions and eventually to shift power to the presently powerless."

Although I am too young to have experienced the initial engagements of radical geography in the early 1970s, by the 1990s, flush with the discursive analyses of post-structuralism and the continued influence of Marxism, critical geography flourished, its theoretical syntheses and commitment to pursuing social justice resonating with a new generation of geographers who, by the early 2000s, had "significantly (if not completely) reoriented the discipline to the point where it is now—and this is not a total exaggeration—*the* center of radical social justice theorizing in the academy" (Mitchell, 2004: 765). Although both continuities and distinctions can be drawn between the radical geography of the 1970s and critical geography, Castree (2000, 956) raised a point that resonated with me and many of my peers, namely that the "spirit of engagement and activism" of the 1970s had been somewhat lost (cf. Hague, 2002) and, as a result, professional academics were less directly engaged in community struggles than those of previous generations. Yet, as Castree (2000, 959) outlined, "there is in principle nothing to stop today's critical geographers reaching out from the academy in order to improve the world they study." Attracted by such contentions, and a determination to pursue an academic career that could draw upon the radical and critical branches of geography to offer assistance to communities, I have consistently sought opportunities to collaborate with people in the cities where I have worked to better understand a central question that animates much geographical research, namely explaining the relationships between people and places.

My own community engagement is also something of a family tradition: I have childhood memories of my faculty-member father writing a book about the impact of urban planning on Scottish public housing and his work with the communities organizing in opposition to technocratic and top-down local development proposals (C. Hague, 1984). Re-reading his book for this essay, I find my own perspectives echoing his calls for "a radial professionalism," which "retain[s] an expertise, but that expertise would be rooted in self-awareness, with a consciousness of the ways in which the city is pervaded by ideology and sectional interests. It would be allied to the imagination to design alternatives and the technical ability to specify them" (C. Hague, 1984: 327). It was my father who suggested that when moving to Chicago in 2002 to take up a faculty position at DePaul University, I should draw upon the works of one of the city's most famous community organizers, Saul Alinsky (1969, 1972) who argues that it is important when working with community organizations to let the local residents set the agenda of important issues to be addressed. What follows are two examples from my teaching that, influenced by these precedents, seek to intertwine the classroom with the community.

Two Curricular Examples

At DePaul, I have been fortunate to utilize the existing curricular structure and associated institutional support to develop distinctive, community-engaged courses. At the undergraduate level, DePaul requires all students to complete one experiential learning course, which can be an internship, study abroad, community-based service learning, or another hands on class that meets learning outcomes, and one freshman Explore Chicago course, which is an introduction to the city, university, and academic practice. This curricular flexibility has enabled me to bring the resources of my courses, and the social justice foci of geographical theory and disciplinary practices, first, to assist community organizing through a long term community-based service learning guided research project and, second, to advance student learning through direct contact with community activists in an Explore Chicago course. Each course represents a different model of community engagement: the community-based service learning course could be described as inside-out, as the resources and expertise of the academy are brought off-campus and into the community to address community-raised concerns, in this case, questions by members of a community organization, the Pilsen Alliance, to help them understand the urban policies and practices that were restructuring and transforming the city and the neighborhoods in which they live. The second example from my Explore Chicago freshman course is outside-in, namely bringing activists into conversation with students who learn about the local community directly from those who live and work within it.

1. Community-based service learning

In 2003-04, with support from DePaul University's Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning, I entered an on-going partnership with the Pilsen Alliance, a nonprofit community organization that works in Chicago's primarily Latinx Lower West Side community. Based around an annual urban development course that integrated community-based service learning, this collaboration has led to both my students and myself making community presentations, attending community meetings, disseminating research findings through local galleries and self-published booklets, and engaging in community and city-wide discussions about affordable housing in a rapidly gentrifying area of Chicago (Hague, 2006; Curran, *et al*., 2007; Hague *et al*. 2008; C.Hague *et al*., 2011; Block, *et al.* 2018). Over the past fifteen years, this course has been reshaped, updated, and redesigned, but at its heart remain the relationships that my colleagues and I have built with the Pilsen Alliance community organization and the research that we have generated and shared with the community.

The Chicago neighborhood of Pilsen dates to the second half of the nineteenth century when it developed rapidly to house an immigrant population arriving primarily from Central and Eastern Europe. This population gave the neighborhood its name, Pilsen, derived from the Czech city of Plzeň. A center of labor activism, perhaps most famously the 1886 McCormick Reaper Works and 1910-11 garment workers strikes, Pilsen's population peaked at 85,680 in 1920 (Betancur & Kim, 2016). In the post-World War II era, Pilsen experienced a demographic change that echoed those seen in numerous U.S. cities as the white ethnic population moved to the suburbs and a new immigrant population began to arrive from Central and South America. By 1970, Pilsen was the first Latinx majority community area in Chicago (Betancur, 2005). Gentrification has since been transforming the neighborhood, in a manner that epitomizes the term as defined by its originator, Ruth Glass (1964, xviii):

> One by one, many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes… Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed.

In the 2000 Census, Pilsen's population was 44,031, 88.9% Hispanic, "with a $27,763 median household income compared to Chicago's $38,625" (Betancur, 2005: 62). By 2010 the median household income had risen to $35,611 (still below Chicago's $47,270) and, as the Latinx population decreased, property values rose (Betancur & Kim, 2016). By 2013, Betancur & Kim (2016) demonstrate, Pilsen's population had declined to 35,353 and 81.6% Hispanic.

It is in this context that my undergraduate urban geography course conducts a building inventory survey, which focuses on around 25 city blocks, approximately 850 properties, in the most rapidly gentrifying eastern areas of the neighborhood. In our preparatory and ongoing conversations with the Pilsen Alliance, we learned that the community organizers and local residents were very capable of telling the community's history and the stories of the impacts of gentrification that have made housing less affordable; where they needed support was in quantitative analyses and data visualizations that could display how their community was transforming in a manner that local officials would take more seriously than stories. As a result, we devised a project in which students annually collect data on a host of urban development indicators including zoning laws, property taxes, property sales and tax increment financing (TIF), the latter a "geographical approach to land use planning and development" that redistributes property taxes raised within a designated area to fund projects within that area and leverage additional private investment (Hague *et al*., 2017, p.3).

The course uses lectures, field trips, seminar discussions, and data analysis. Student learning occurs in three different locations: the classroom, a computer laboratory, and the Pilsen neighborhood. In lectures, I outline Pilsen's geography and history, and explore theories of gentrification, illustrating these with documentary films, PowerPoint presentations, and guest speakers. Required readings include seminal peer-reviewed geography articles on gentrification, such as Smith (1979) and Hackworth and Smith (2001), and shorter essays from newspapers and magazines, such as Lutton's (1998) overview of the neighborhood, and Avila's (2005) account of the controversial conversion of a building from a light manufacturing facility to condominiums. This reading assignment strategy enables students to grasp the complex information presented in scholarly articles and relate it to Chicago-area examples of similar urban processes. Students prepare questions and discussion notes based on these readings which are used in classroom group work, enabling peer-explanation and further review of the material. In field trips to Pilsen, I highlight recent disputes over, and locations of, condominium development, housing demolitions, and community protests.

Each student is allocated around thirty-five properties, approximately one block, of Pilsen to explore. Students visit their blocks, assessing the structural qualities of the properties and their current uses, and I show them how to collect publicly available data from City of Chicago, the Cook County Assessor, and the Cook County Treasurer websites. After completing this empirical research, students compile their data into an Excel file and, with my guidance, produce graphs and charts to illustrate a final report about housing development in Pilsen. The student reports are graded for course credit and are then shared with the Pilsen Alliance. Students have told me that the methods of data collection and analytical techniques I introduce help them pursue careers in urban planning, real estate, and community organizing. Further, students feel ownership of the data and expertise in relation to their block: many have said that the course was one of the most important of their undergraduate career.

One of the things that I wanted to achieve in this course was to see service learning as research-driven community engagement in which the production of knowledge is shared, with both the resources of and expertise from within the academy assisting the community organization. Consequently, the life of this course does not stop at the end of the academic quarter. Throughout the year, I employ students to collate the information produced in the course into a single combined database. Diagrams and information from this data set are supplied to the Pilsen Alliance on demand. I supervise undergraduate students skilled in geographic information systems (GIS) to work with the combined data set to map answers to questions pertinent to the Pilsen Alliance, such as where zoning changes have been granted in the previous twelve months or which properties that used to be owned by individuals are now owned by banks or LLCs, both situations that are often precursors to redevelopment, or where property values and tax assessments are increasing most rapidly (Figure 1). The community organization uses the information derived from the course for their campaigns to challenge the city's various development scenarios for Pilsen, to aid local residents in securing property tax relief, and to coordinate community conversations on the process of gentrification and its impact on Pilsen. Upon request of the Pilsen Alliance, I have offered seminars and public lectures about the course's research findings and about urban policies such as zoning and historic preservation, presented testimony at City Council meetings about neighborhood development, and have spoken about gentrification and community development to both English and Spanish-language local radio, television, and newspapers.

2. Engaging Community Organizers and Activists

In 2015 I began a co-teaching partnership with Michael James, a well-known Chicago activist and community organizer. James attended graduate school at University of California, Berkeley, leaving in the mid-1960s to work for the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) seeking to advance "an inter-racial movement of the poor" with Jobs Or Income Now (JOIN) in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood (James, 2013 [2006]; Gitlin & Hollander, 1971; Pekar & McClinton, 2008; Rothstein, 1969). James was a participant in the 1968 Democratic Convention protests, appearing on a PBS *History Detectives* episode that examined a protest poster he produced. He subsequently became one of the founders of *Rising Up Angry* (1969-75), a newspaper that expanded to become an organization that also led 'serve the people programs' like free health clinics, free legal services, and a host of similar services (De Zutter, 1989; Hague, 2008; Sonnie & Tracy, 2011; Tucker & Romero, 2016). James is also known locally for operating the Heartland Café (1976-2012) and its associated radio show, *Live from the Heartland*. Working alongside James, we developed a course entitled "Activists and Activism in Chicago Since 1960" that introduces around fifty freshman students each fall to community organizers and other people who have dedicated themselves to tackling the challenges facing neighborhoods in Chicago.

In this course, the syllabus is structured in a manner that pushes students to understand 1960s activism and its legacy through meeting people who have led activist lives and worked in community organizing. This intertwining of biography and local politics resonates strongly with students who see their own passions reflected in the comments of the speakers. Students are asked to make connections to today's issues and practices of community activism, and reflect on how much social progress has been made over the past fifty years. The interactions with community members take place both on and off campus. Indeed, my own role is primarily as coordinator and administrator: it is our guests that do the teaching. Whenever possible, we ask activists where we should meet in their community, and take the students to them. Thus, we put the places of activism into conversation with the activists themselves. Subsequent assignments ask students describe and reflect both on the comments of the guest, and the neighborhood that they traveled to and experienced. At other times, we invite speakers to join us in the classroom to tell students their activist biographies. Further, James and I take students to visit sites associated with his own activism, such as the John A. Logan statue in Grant Park, where the whole world was watching the clashes between police and protestors at the Democratic National Convention in August 1968, and Holy Covenant United Methodist Church which housed *Rising Up Angry*'s Fritzi Englestein Free People's Health Clinic in the 1970s.

Many urban universities have provoked community protest with the processes of campus redevelopment and resultant residential displacement, roles that institutions are slow to admit to and slower to atone for, and about which current students are typically unaware. To highlight this, another regular guest is José 'Cha-Cha' Jiménez, who in the 1960s founded and led the Puerto Rican activists of the Young Lords Organization (Mathewes, 2019). Under his leadership, in May 1969 local Puerto Rican residents threatened by urban renewal occupied McCormick Seminary Building, now part of DePaul's campus, temporarily renaming it the Manuel Ramos Building. Hearing Jiménez describe events to students as they sit on the building's steps is a powerful learning experience, one that I suggest resonates strongly because the teaching is happening in place. A second on-campus site is a cafeteria, the Pit, that was blockaded and occupied in 1969 by African-American students and the Young Lords Organization, as a contemporary student journalist described:

> Cha Cha Jiminez [sic], leader of the Young Lords, …stood in front of the S.A.C. [Schmitt Academic Center] to reportedly protect the black students inside from the white students outside. Cha Cha then walked into the Pit and raised his right hand in a clenched fist, a symbol of black power (Schneider, 1969).

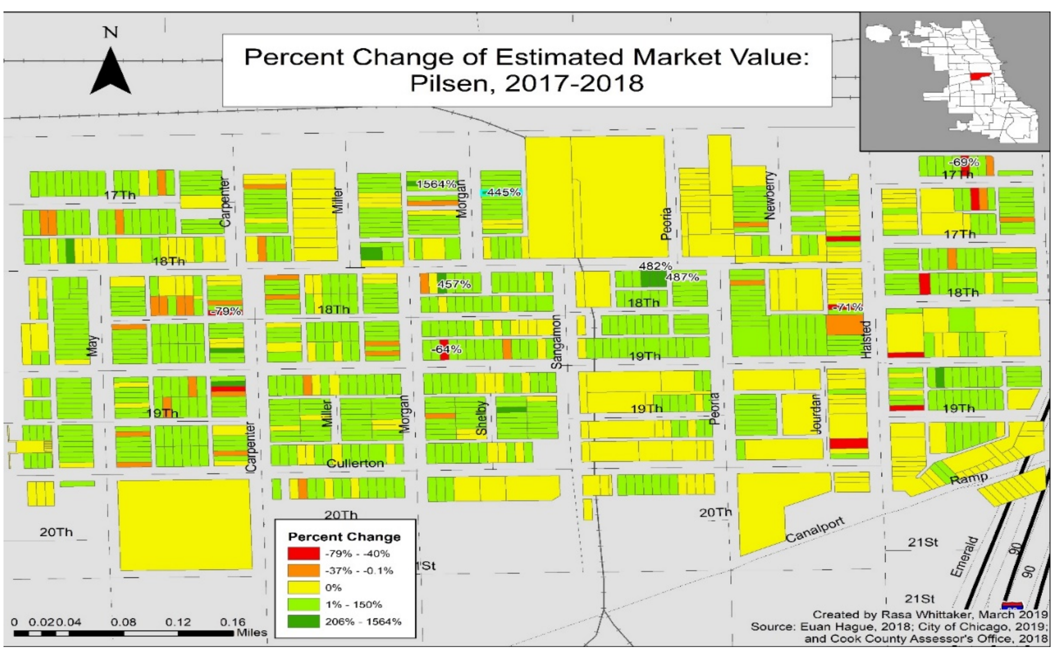
Meeting people at locations, in neighborhoods that have much changed in the past fifty years, gives students an opportunity to think about the issues which animate our speakers, such as civil rights, gentrification, community development, policing, and the impacts of societal change. Students are asked to reflect on other places, such as the anonymous apartments used by Jane to provide illegal abortion services across Chicago in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Booth and

Booth, 2008; King, 1993; Kaplan, 1997), and consider how community organizers operating out of storefronts and church basements led effective actions, as many similar organizations in Chicago continue to do. Such a course envisions community engagement in a manner that understands residents as educators, sharing their knowledge of the places in which our students live.

Conclusion

There are opportunities for community engagement on all our campuses; there are community members who can share their stories with our students and we have the expertise to pursue a radical professionalism at our institutions, practicing a pedagogy that can integrate faculty, students, and community residents in learning experiences. Indeed, one of the most heartening developments in during my twenty-year academic career has been that community engagement, and the practice of faculty and students collaborating with off-campus organizations, is increasingly common and increasingly perceived as best practice. Yet, I would suggest, it is still radical. Research-centered community engagement that generates knowledge that can be used to advance community goals and inform residents, that can strive to address and redress society's injustices and its uneven distribution of resources, and teaching that can engender change and make a difference, must be a central commitment of urban universities in the 21st century.

Figure 1. Percentage Change from 2017 to 2018 of Estimated Market Value by Property in Eastern Pilsen, Chicago. Properties with high decreases in value in this area are often vacant sites where houses have been demolished prior to new construction. The highest increases (over 450%) are typically newly constructed buildings. Map by Rasa Whittaker.



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Original Research

Early College High School/Dual Enrollment 2.0: Evidence-Based Approaches to Engage Youth and Families for Educational, Career, and Community Development

Isabelle Cherney,[1] Laura Douglas[2], Ellen Fischer[3], and Russell Olwell,[4]

[1,4]School of Social Education and Social Policy, Merrimack College, [2]Office of the President, Bristol Community College, [3]Early College Alliance, Eastern Michigan University

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Abstract

Urban universities have long faced a critical challenge to help K-12 schools, students, and families effectively access a college education. While colleges and universities have embraced strategies such as charter and partner schools, these interventions do not always result in a robust pipeline of students entering the higher education system. For higher education leaders, addressing the needs of students and their families to attain an affordable college degree is an important part of education and community development in the communities near campus. Early college programs, particularly those with a focus on equity and student support, can provide high school students with an exemplary preparation for college, as well as college credits that can be used to reduce time to degree and college costs. In three case studies of early college programs, students' college credits earned, grades earned while enrolled in the program, and eventual college enrollment and graduation rates are the key metrics. Lessons learned include the importance of leadership and policy support for these programs, as well as designing the program to address equity issues from the beginning.

Keywords: Education, Community Development, College Affordability, College Success, Low Income Students

Early College as a Strategy for Metropolitan Universities

Urban universities face a series of key challenges in order to survive and thrive over the next two decades. In most locations nationwide, the population of high school graduates is shrinking, making it more difficult to recruit a freshmen class (Grawe, 2018). Second, low-income university students struggle to navigate the college/university system, and may drop out/stop out or graduate slowly, while still incurring student debt (Bjorklund-Young, 2016; Yuen, 2019). Finally, colleges and universities struggle with how to best leverage their resources to help the surrounding community, with the local K-12 system often the greatest area of need. Deepening and extending these key relationships has been an area of focus for many metropolitan universities, who have attempted to focus their efforts on top institutional priorities (Holton, et al., 2016).

Early college strategies, while not a panacea for urban and metropolitan colleges and universities, can help address each of these issues. Early college programs, in which high school students take college classes on a college campus, can help colleges and universities develop academically talented students while those students are still enrolled in local high schools, can help boost enrollments in key areas of the college, and help increase the educational access and educational achievement level of the surrounding community. Unlike dual enrollment programs, where high school students take college-level classes from high school faculty at their present school, or university-connected partner schools, students in early college programs:
(a) typically take courses on the college campus; (b) are part of a state designation process, and are committed to K-16 alignment; (c) provide comprehensive wrap-around services to students; and (d) possess a purposeful process for developing college readiness in academics and social emotional learning. The success of these interventions make early college programs a rich source of learning for higher education in terms of retention, student success, and developing a culture of inclusive excellence.

Early college programs have existed for two decades, and the research evidence on their effectiveness, mostly drawn from the evaluation of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded-projects, has been compelling (Berger, et al., 2013; Nodine, 2011). However, one weakness of the model to date has been that those students who might benefit the most from this programming (non-white students, immigrant students, students from low-income families, first generation college students) can be left out of this programming, with middle and upper-class families taking advantage of the program disproportionately (Education Trust, 2020; Fraire, 2018).

To address this weakness, early college programs being launched now by urban colleges and universities and their partner K-12 school districts have embraced a program design that focuses on equity, and using an evidence-based approach, connecting youth less likely to attend college directly out of high school with programming designed to support their efforts. This article presents perspectives from a range of institutions (high school, two-year institutions, four-year institutions, and philanthropic investors) that are rethinking these early college models to maximize community impact and affordability to students and families (American Institutes for Research, 2009).

From Dual Enrollment/Early College to Early College 2.0

The evidence of early college success in Texas and North Carolina, the two states with the greatest participation in early college programs, has been among the most promising in the area of high school reform and higher education transformation (Hall, 2013; Nodine, 2011). In both states, colleges and universities developed early college programs that gave students greater access to college credits, often on the college campus itself. The programs in Nodine's study drew from a diverse group of students in Texas, 66% Hispanic, 63% economically disadvantaged, and 74% first generation college students. The evidence from these efforts is largely positive: as high school students took more college-level classes, their odds of graduating high school, enrolling in college, and succeeding in college level coursework improved. For example, more than a third of the early college students in Nodine's study had already received enough credit for an Associate degree while still in high school (2011).

While the students above seem like ideal students to develop and recruit, early college and dual enrollment students remain controversial in higher education. The recent report from the University of Texas system illuminates the gulf between the views of some college faculty about these programs, and the quantitative evidence of student success. This report was initiated by faculty concerns about dual enrollment students, who allegedly were not performing up to standard in their classes and in the next classes in sequence (Troutman et al., 2018). The quantitative evidence of dual enrollment/early college success in the Texas study was overwhelmingly positive. As stated within a report from the University of Texas system, "compared to students who are not credit-bearing at the time of the college admission process, dual credit students: are more likely to be retained and to graduate from a UT System institution; have higher 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-year GPAs; and have fewer semester credit hours at the time of graduation." Though the report cannot make a distinction between dual enrollment and early college efforts, it highlights the positive impact of students arriving on campus having successfully completed college level work (Troutman, et al., 2018, p. 4).

However, the benefits of early college and dual enrollment did not always reach the students who might need it most. Particularly in dual enrollment programs, higher income families, students, and their high schools might be able to access these programs at a higher rate than their lower income peers (Jones, 2014). The students who would benefit the most from early college, including non-white students, first generation college students, and immigrant students, would be left at the mercy of the information they might receive from their guidance counselor or school district. In a study of dual enrollment in Pennsylvania, Museus, Lutovsky, and Colbeck wrote that “unfortunately, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, dual enrollment programs at the institutional level have disproportionately served already privileged high school students” (2007).

This selection bias meant that even if early college and dual enrollment were having a positive impact in these states, it might have an impact that would only make educational gaps more pronounced. Gilbert has argued that, at the college level, he sees inequality in his survey course classroom, as students from higher income families fulfill his requirement before college through dual enrollment coursework. He writes that, “for middle-class suburbanites, college is potentially one year shorter and thousands of dollars cheaper than it is for students of lesser means, who must spend more time in college and take on more debt to earn the same degree” (Gilbert, 2017).

As states have drawn on the models of Texas and North Carolina, they have attempted to correct for this selection bias by building equity into the early college system from the beginning. In Massachusetts, a coalition that includes local foundations, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Jobs for the Future have all insisted on a model that foregrounds equity and access. Colleges or schools seeking early college designation must demonstrate a commitment to student access to early college programming. As a result, the programs in Massachusetts have been developed explicitly to serve low-income families, with a focus on students of color and students from immigrant backgrounds. Prospective programs must also show that they are addressing the needs of students with learning challenges, as well as students with English Language Learner status (Massachusetts Early College Initiative, 2019).

The Massachusetts Departments of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education collaborated to create principles for officially designated early colleges in the Commonwealth. These would guide efforts by the state’s public and private institutions in creating early college opportunities. The principles are: (a) Equitable Access: targeting underrepresented students in higher education; (b) Academic Pathways that are well integrated and aligned with college and career; (c) Robust Student Support in both academics and advising; (d) Connections to Career through workplace and experiential learning experiences; and (e) High-Quality and Deep Partnerships between high schools and colleges. While not every approved program is equally strong in all five areas, the approval and continuing review process help programs develop more equitable programming as they scale up (Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, 2020). In Michigan, early colleges apply for recognition through the state Department of Education, and are held to the design standards of the National Middle College Consortium, which includes deep sustained collaboration with college partners, aligned academic programs from the ninth grade through 60 credits, student support appropriate to the needs of the students and the demands of the college, and continuous organizational improvement (National Middle College Consortium, 2020).

The Evidence for Early College High School Success: Three Case Studies

Over the past decade, early college and dual enrollment strategies have proven to be a powerful strategy for helping low-income and underrepresented students gain access to higher education and be more successful students once they arrive to college full time (An, 2013; Troutman, 2018). The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) has validated two important studies that show the power of the early college model. Research done in North Carolina on early colleges using random assignment, where students were selected for the program based on chance, revealing that early college outcomes are not simply due to selection effects. The college enrollment rates of students in racial/ethnic minorities enrolled in early college in this study was 8% higher than their comparison peers, and the rate of college enrollment for economically-disadvantaged students in these programs was 11% higher than their non-program peers (Edminds, et al, 2017). The second WWC-endorsed study drew on data from five states to show that 63% of students randomly assigned to early college enrolled in post-secondary education, as opposed to their traditional peers who enrolled only 23% of the time (Song and Zeiser, 2019).

Financial analyses show that early college programs are a solid financial investment, generating a return of 15:1 on dollars spent (AIR, 2019). However, the real power of the early college model for metropolitan universities can be found in local case studies that show how institutions can adapt this strategy to meet their educational and community development goals. The three case studies of early college programs described below were chosen to represent the breadth of this field by institutional type (four year and two-year institutions, public and private colleges). The case studies also capture programs at different stages of development and evaluation; one program has years of quantitative data about student achievement, one that has three years of data, and one that is just launching its first cohorts of students. Each case study uses student achievement data, retention data, and data about enrollment and persistence in higher education to measure success against that of traditional high school students.

Case Study 1: Two-year public urban community college

Bristol Community College (Bristol) is located in southeastern Massachusetts and serves the city of New Bedford, one of the most impoverished cities in the Commonwealth, with a poverty rate over 20%, almost double the Massachusetts average (Southcoast Health, 2016, p. ii). The area has traditionally been home to industries that required little formal education, such as commercial fishing, and the decline of these industries has left many in the community, particularly recent immigrants, out of the recent economic boom. While there have been efforts to rebuild the economy around new fields, such as renewable energy, there is a mismatch between the jobs coming available and the characteristics of the population, a situation which Bristol has stepped in to bridge.

One way to address this skills gap has been to focus early college efforts on fields that the area will need to build new industries, particularly engineering. Community colleges exist at the perfect point to address this issue, as they work intensively with local K-12 schools, including technical and career high schools, as well as with four-year universities. In this case, the community college leveraged these relationships to build a pipeline from high school into B.S.E. programs while also reducing the cost to families.

Through the early college program, students at local technical and career high schools are able to take classes in high school that count towards their Associate degree at Bristol. Many of these high schools have invested heavily in pre-engineering programs and have the equipment and personnel necessary to give their students a solid start on obtaining the Associate degree. Next, the students transition to Bristol, but are guaranteed future admission to the University of Massachusetts–Dartmouth if they are successful in their courses and complete their Associate degree. While students are at the community college, the program also provides connection to UMass Dartmouth, including: (a) access to the university's library, fitness center, bookstore and dining halls, while attending Bristol full-time; (b) collaborative on-site academic advising and priority registration at UMass Dartmouth; (c) career development workshops; and (d) a UMass Dartmouth ID card that provides access to UMass Dartmouth events including sporting events, musical and theatre productions, and speaker programs.

Graduating from Bristol, students in the program are then eligible for UMass Dartmouth award merit scholarships of at least $2,500 a year if they have earned a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher and are enrolled as a full-time student. The program reduces overall costs as well; Bristol students who sign up for and meet the guidelines of the Commonwealth Commitment program attend UMass Dartmouth at a fixed rate of tuition and fees throughout their remaining two years of study, a 10% rebate on tuition and fees per semester, as well as the MassTransfer tuition credit, which this year covered 10% of tuition and fees, a total of approximate 40% savings. Bristol also creating a health careers early college program for English Language Learners, in which high school students will take college level ESL coursework as well as health classes. By the time of graduation from Bristol, these students will be fully bilingual health workers, a needed group in the workforce of an area that has many aging residents.

These strategies are both enrollment strategies and community development strategies for Bristol, which is a community college that serves several urban centers. It is both encouraging students to complete their K-12 credential, and then providing a clear, finite pathways, in terms of both time to degree and cost, to students and families who are wary of both higher education and the associated load debt. This program strengthens the ties between K-12 schools and the community college, as well as between the community college and its 4-year partner university. Finally, it embraces the emerging diversity of the area, seeing the strengths of the Spanish and Portuguese speaking population as an asset in health care fields, rather than viewing it as a deficit to be remediated.

Case Study 2: Public College, Urban Master's Institution

Early College Alliance @ Eastern Michigan University (ECA@EMU) began as a K-12 effort to improve access to high quality education across Washtenaw County in Michigan. The program's cornerstone was a local intermediate school district, which brought together member districts to form an innovative consortium to govern the program. These K-12 leaders approached Eastern Michigan University about the program, and built an agreement to house the program at the university, and to purchase courses and credits for the students through the consortium.

ECA@EMU is a good example of community "in-reach" to a university. ECA was not part of an educational or enrollment strategy on the part of the university, but instead an attempt by K-12 educational leadership to utilize the university as one component of a larger plan to improve educational outcomes. This relationship developed organically over several university presidencies, and now ECA is a critical partner in EMU's education and broader student retention efforts.

Ellen Fischer's research on the Early College Alliance students documented the impact of the program at Eastern Michigan University, providing hard numbers and fair comparisons of the impact early colleges can have (Fischer, 2016; Fischer & Olwell, 2018). While the few studies published on early colleges have examined national and state data, they do not dig into the post-graduate experiences of students from one institution, and do not have a readily available comparison group to track early college students against. Fischer, studying one institution, Eastern Michigan University, was able to compare early college students directly to the students with whom they are sitting in class, traditional college first year students. When examined this way, some key results stand out:

- Early graduates have earned Bachelor's degrees at far higher rates than their non-ECA peers, with most ECA graduates continuing their education at Eastern Michigan University.
- Early college students were equal or greater in diversity than their peers across the county.
- African-American students benefited from early college enrollment and were able to graduate at a higher rate as a result.

In addition, National Clearinghouse data for ECA@EMU cohorts demonstrates just how powerful the early college model is for diverse students. For the 2010 ECA cohort, the percentage of students graduating from a four-year college in four years was 74%, compared to a statewide average of 27%. For African American students, the difference is even more stark: 67% of students graduated within four years of college, as opposed to a statewide average of 13%. The 2012 cohort has maintained these high levels of achievement, with students in that cohort graduating college at a rate of 71%, as opposed to a state rate of 29%, and African American students graduated at a 71% rate, as opposed to a 13% rate statewide. For African American students, early college provided an edge of over 500% in four-year college graduation rates (National Clearinghouse Data, provided by Early College Alliance, 2019).

Programs such as ECA have a lot to teach urban colleges and universities about how to help students develop the skills and resources to navigate the college classroom and broader campus. Students in ECA spend the first part of their early college experience working with ECA teachers, who work with students on academic as well as “soft skills” that are critical for college success. As students prove that they are ready for the college classroom, they are enrolled in Eastern Michigan University classes, with a goal of earning up to 60 college credits in the experience. Students in ECA choose what courses to take and can build a program around their strengths as well as on their future educational and career path.

Early college programs such as ECA have developed facilitated support for students as they move into college classes, and expertise in the type of teaching, mentoring, and advising that allows students to thrive. College leaders can emulate the focus that early colleges have on social and emotional learning. Early college students learn non-academic strategies to successfully navigating a college classroom. They learn explicitly how to interact with professors, how to seek help when not succeeding in class, and how to learn from failure. Additionally, they directly learn what college-readiness guru David Conley describes as key “academic behaviors,” such as note-taking and study skills (Conley, 2007). Finally, early colleges can provide a pipeline of students ready to be successful on campus, and who are used to navigating the foibles of that system.

Early college programs such as ECA@EMU also can help colleges and universities fill seats in classes that have become less popular with traditional undergraduates. ECA pays for the seats it purchases in EMU’s classrooms (at a discount), providing a steady stream of tuition revenue from students that the university does not need to pay to recruit. Most of these classes are traditional general education and introductory STEM classes, which many traditional students avoid with the help of AP and transfer credits (Gilbert, 2017). For colleges and universities facing a declining population of traditional-age high school graduates, early college provide customers for classes who often stay to matriculate at the college, providing high caliber academic students who are already familiar with the campus and its operations

Case Study 3: Four Year, Private Institution

The Merrimack College - Abbott Lawrence Academy (ALA) Early College Program was launched in the 2017-18 academic year, as part of the effort to reform the nearby Lawrence public schools. The process was initiated by the superintendent/receiver of Lawrence public schools, Jeffrey Riley, who requested a new program in a lunch meeting with Merrimack's President Christopher Hopey. The design for the program was to allow students in the high school's Abbott Lawrence Academy, a competitive exam school, to take courses on Merrimack's campus during their junior and senior years. This would help the school attract and retain top high school students in the district (many of whom were leaving for private school options in eighth grade), and give those students in the program a better chance at admission to selective colleges. Support teachers at the high school worked with early college students when they were not on the college campus to help provide needed academic assistance.

Lawrence public schools serves a city that is among the poorest in Massachusetts, with a population in schools that is majority non-white, majority immigrant, and majority first in their family to attend college. The students attending the program were representative of school children in the city: 84% Latinx, and over 80% eligible for free or reduced lunch. By focusing on Lawrence high school, this program addressed the needs of students in the region who would benefit from this effort, as well as bringing greater diversity to the college campus, as the college student body is currently 15% students of color (Registrar Data, 2018). To make attending Merrimack a real possibility for the Lawrence students, Hopey also made plans for a scholarship program for top graduates of the program. Ten of the inaugural cohort of early college students were selected as Pioneer Scholars at Merrimack College for Fall 2019, receiving a full-tuition/room and board scholarship for their four years on campus (Merrimack College Pioneer Scholars, 2020).

In fall 2017, the first cohort of 64 students was divided into two sections of political science/United States government, and two sections of human biology which included a 2-hour weekly lab. Students take the other subjects in the spring term. Last year, these students achieved equal or higher grades in classes than their college counterparts enrolled in the same Merrimack courses, taught by the same faculty, and the overall course pass rate in the early college was 98% (Merrimack College Registrar Data, 2019). In fall 2018, Merrimack added choices for the ALA senior class in the subjects of psychology and engineering. Starting in spring 2019, the program expanded by offering courses in areas including human development and human services, education, computer science, politics, criminology and criminal justice, and mathematics, including calculus I and introduction to statistics. The program serves over 150 students, both juniors and seniors at Lawrence High School, at the present time.

Sample programs of study to continue at Merrimack were created to help students see the opportunity to finish college early or to get a head start on graduate school, and to see the connection between their studies and a career path. Possible pathways for these students include education, human development and human services, biology, STEM fields, and political science. As a result of this curriculum work, the Merrimack/Lawrence high school program has been designated by the State of Massachusetts as an official early college program, the only private college in the state to have achieved this recognition.

Since the beginning of the program, ALA students have scored in the same range as their Merrimack peers, with some courses/semesters higher than first-year Merrimack students in similar classes, and some slightly below. The high school seniors, in classes mixed with Merrimack peers, have scored above a 3.0 GPA overall, even without the academic support that was built into their junior year classes (Merrimack College Registrar Data, 2019).

Early college student perspectives

A key framework in the field of evaluating early colleges comes from the work of Michael Nakkula and Karen Foster, who, in their case studies of two pioneer early colleges, drew attention to the changes in the way early college students think about themselves. They found that early college programs changed students' view of themselves (Nakkula & Foster, 2007; Jobs for the Future 2011). Longitudinal research showed that early college graduates were adept at problem solving on their new campus, took on leadership and service commitments while in college, and drew upon the academic strengths of their school in their choice of major (JFF, 2013). In a well-designed and implemented program, early college students move from hoping or believing that they can be successful in college to a student who has successfully completed college-level coursework; students go from thinking about college as a "possible self" to an "expected self," confident they can navigate upcoming challenges in college and beyond (Nakkula & Foster, 2007). These findings and this framework have held up throughout the longitudinal studies of early college outcomes directed by Nakkula, which continues to the present.

When students in early college programs talk about their experiences, they point to both an individual gain of educational skills, but also to a broader community and civic impact that the program can have. Participating in an early college program, for students in cities such as Lawrence, is an act of resistance and defiance to the stereotypes about their city and about their community. Thus, early college programs are a way in which local colleges and universities can both support youth and the urban communities they are part of, and to help redefine the public image of those communities. As one of early college students wrote about the Lawrence program:

> As a student in the Lawrence Public School system, it is easy to feel counted out. There are so many stereotypes of us being lazy, stupid, ungrateful, or uninterested. But in Abbott, everyone who is enrolled in these Merrimack courses has a goal, has big plans for their future. Allowing us to take these courses further prepares us for these bright futures we aspire to, and shows Lawrence in a different light. We aren't dropouts, class skippers, etc. A focal point of being an Abbott student is "being the future of Lawrence". This partnership with Merrimack College is helping not only US see that, but the rest of our city, and those around us… Taking college classes has raised my self-esteem, and made me feel as though I am paving the way for my future. (Quoted in Cherney, 2019)

Another Lawrence student, who was awarded a scholarship, connected the early college program to larger issues of community development and university/community relations in her graduation speech, stating:

> [The early college program] shows that Lawrence has so much to offer and that we are not "the city of the damned" as we have been portrayed as. … This partnership between Abbott and Merrimack College is the first of its kind: kids are graduating high-school with college credits from a private 4-year university, and that is something to celebrate. Merrimack College is doing what other colleges or universities wish they could do: creating and maintaining hard-working and goal-oriented individuals who will stop at nothing to achieve their goals. (Student graduation speech, 2019)

For students in Lawrence, this struggle to redefine their community and their image is intrinsically political, a direct rebuttal to political figures such as President Trump, who has denounced the city of Lawrence by name of several occasions for contributing to New Hampshire's opioid issues (Lawrence Eagle, March 19, 2018).

For the city of Lawrence, early college programs, such as Merrimack's, provide a chance to develop leaders among youth, who will hopefully return to the area as adults. As more students in the high school are able to attain a college education, the proportion of college graduates in the city will rise, and young people will have a network of parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, neighbors, and community members who are able to reach back and help them navigate the college process. For Merrimack College, the early college and Pioneer Scholars are a major investment in the future of the community, and a way to encourage student and community aspirations for college degrees. The Pioneer Scholars program was recognized by Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker in his 2020 State of the Commonwealth address as an example of boosting educational impact and saving families' tuition dollars (Baker, 2020).

Lessons from Case Studies for Urban and Metropolitan College Leadership

The communities served by most urban colleges and universities are often in former industrial or manufacturing areas, where a college degree was not previously a prerequisite for middle-class income. Early college can be a strategy for areas such as these to develop a larger population of residents with a 2 or 4-year college degree, who can both raise the average earnings in the area, as well as be a resource for helping family members and community members aspire to and succeed in college.

In all three cases, there were very similar lessons for college and university leaders. First, a strong partnership between K-12 and college and university leaders was needed to make the system work. Unlike many educational partnerships, early college is a strategy that is "all in," as K-12 leaders are trusting the college with their students, and the college is trusting that the K-12 students will achieve on campus. Strong personal relationships between K-12 and higher education leaders is a prerequisite for success in this area.

Second, as programs get underway, leaders must find ways to expand them or extend their impact. At Bristol, early college efforts expanded from a program designed to provide a cost and time-effective means to training engineers to a program that could meet the needs of English Language Learners in local high schools and the needs of local employers for a skilled workforce. At Eastern Michigan University, early college changed from being a tenet in buildings and purchaser of credits to a partner in developing student success programming. At Merrimack College, early college moved from being a program for local 11th and 12th grade students to become part of the campus, through the Pioneer Scholars initiative.

A third lesson is that early college programs can also make urban areas more appealing to parents and students. ECA@EMU brought many families to Ypsilanti, Michigan each day for school, giving them a different perspective on a city long dismissed as blighted. The programming at Bristol is part of an economic renewal of this gateway city, as it transitions towards a future based on industries such as renewable energy and health care. In Lawrence, students and families view the early college program as a way to prove critics of the city wrong, and to raise the profile of their dynamic and entrepreneurial hometown.

In all cases, early college students are a key source of learning for college and university leaders. Understanding how early college students can be able to achieve such high grades in the classroom can help college and university help all of their students. This access to data and learning is a key advantage of early college over partner school and professional development school models, as it provides a real-time look at student success and barriers right on campus.

At the state and policy levels, the key lesson is that attention to diversity and equity needs to be central to policy and processes from the beginning. As early college programs are developing and spreading, a strong state policy that promotes equitable access and backs it up with sufficient, stable, and sustainable funding can make a significant difference in student outcomes.

A Caveat: The challenge of funding for early colleges

One of the key challenges for any leadership in early college is to find funding. While early colleges can be lean, and can take advantage of district and college resources, they remain resource intensive. Successful early colleges build powerful relationships between faculty, staff, and students, and these require smaller-than-usual ratios of students. School finance often relies on the lower costs for students in the lower grades to subsidize the expenses of high school programs, and separate early colleges cannot draw on this funding. Unless school finance policy allows for per pupil support of early college programming, this funding will always be cobbled together from grants, K-12 budgets, and higher education subsidies, which is an unstable base on which to build any educational venture.

Conclusion

While many colleges and universities in cities across the nation have invested in creating partner schools, often helping create charter schools in their areas, fewer have taken the full jump to creating early college programs. While there is value in creating partner schools, and in creating pipeline programs with local schools, there is a quantum leap of commitment to creating and running an early college. Early college programs represent a commitment by higher education to bring local students onto their campus every day, and to encouraging and developing those students towards a college education, whether it is at the home campus or elsewhere. These programs represent an investment of time, energy, and mentoring that is far beyond what is usually possible at a partner school. Ultimately, campuses learn and gain as much from early college programs as the students, families, and K-12 teachers. However, these programs represent a leap of faith in young people, and campus leaders, faculty, staff and the campus community must decide is worth the effort.

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Original Research

Mamelodi Pre-University Academy: Aligning Campus Strategic Goals to Achieve a University's Anchor Institution Strategy Mandate

Nthabiseng A. Ogude,[1] Kgadi C. Mathabathe,[2] Nosipho Mthethwa[3] and Regina White[4]

[1]Office of the Dean, Mamelodi Campus, University of Pretoria, [2]Department of Community Based Research and Postgraduate Studies, Mamelodi Campus, University of Pretoria, [3]Office of the Dean, Mamelodi Campus, University of Pretoria, and [4] Pre-University Academy, Mamelodi Campus, University of Pretoria

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Abstract

The University of Pretoria (UP) adopted an anchor institution strategy and designated the Mamelodi Campus as a faculty with a focus on community engagement with the primary goal of broadening educational pathways to post-secondary school attainment. As a conceptual shift from the community engagement literature, the Mamelodi Campus identifies the role that it plays and its relationship with the Mamelodi community as part of its "anchor" institution strategy. This paper provides an overview of how two strategic goals of the university, namely widening access and success and strengthening social responsiveness, have manifested over a decade through designating STEM access programs to a campus located in the impoverished township of Mamelodi. The anchor mission entails improvement of the access programs through incorporating the student voice, as well the improvement of the after-school programs (ASPs) by formalizing a Pre-University Academy (PUA). The PUA is a signature academic program geared towards fostering articulation between the high school initiatives, access programs, and the mainstream programs to ensure a seamless transition from secondary school to graduation. A case study methodology was followed to highlight the lessons drawn from the provision of the programs which resulted in forward and backward articulation to close the school-university gap while addressing systemic educational problems left by the legacy of apartheid. The paper further elaborates on the process followed to cement the anchor mission through the PUA as well as make recommendations to strengthen anchor institution strategy efforts in similar contexts

Keywords: Anchor institution, community engagement, STEM, extended curriculum programs, after-school programs

Introduction and Background

The shift in South African higher education institutions from being academically exclusive to becoming engaged, inclusive, and diverse has been progressive since independence in 1994 (Birch, Perry & Taylor, 2013; Hendricks & Flaherty, 2018). In the overview on South African University history, Strydom (2016) takes note of the role of South African universities under the apartheid regime, whereby the focus was solely on the milestones the universities achieved, with little or no mention of the universities' function in their socio-economic and political contexts. South African universities, under the apartheid regime, seemingly romanticized their roles as higher education institutions whereas the post-apartheid narrative of universities is critical and cognizant of the socio-political and economic landscape of the communities in which they are embedded (Strydom, 2016).

The post-apartheid University of Pretoria has adopted an anchor mission strategy whereby the anchor strategy mandate aims to improve the economy and infrastructure of the communities in which it is located and thus do away with societal ills, paving the way for academic access, success, and community engagement (Hendricks & Flaherty, 2018). In its endeavor to provide access to higher education, employment, and security, the university is cognizant of the importance of diversity, particularly to ensure that the campus community mirrors the socio-economic and racial diversity that exists in the South African community (Hendricks & Flaherty, 2018; Strydom, 2016). The policy adopted by the university aims to eliminate barriers between academia and the community and to foster community integration and improvement.

In light of the university's exclusive past, the policy places emphasis on the support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Hendricks & Flaherty, 2018; Strydom, 2016). The university has thus designated the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus as a hub for community engagement with a focus on enhancing access and successful student learning, as well as strengthening social responsiveness and impact in society. The Mamelodi Campus is geared towards broadening educational pathways for postsecondary school attainment through provision of access programs in science, engineering, technology and mathematics (STEM). The purpose of this article is to show how, with the adoption of an anchor institution strategy, the Campus' activities moved from a community engagement approach (focused on student learning, transformation of faculty into engaged scholars, partnerships fostered through teaching, learning and research) to an anchor mission approach (community impact driven through a variety of activities such as procurement, hiring practices, as well as teaching, learning, research and service). Our understanding of how the two constructs differ and are similar is informed by the recent article by Norris and Weiss (2019). While community engagement projects can be global in nature, anchor institutions define community in terms of local contributions. The emphasis for community engagement work is on how institutions work with the community as opposed to where the engagement occurs. Although the university has an office that focuses on its social impact nationally through community engagement activities, the Mamelodi campus employs a hyper-local approach towards implementing an anchor mission geared towards addressing the socio-economic challenges in Mamelodi. The campus fulfills its anchor mission by forging partnerships with entities working in the Mamelodi education ecosystem to increase the number of youth attaining post-secondary school qualifications. Mamelodi township has an estimated population of 334,577; this excludes the burgeoning informal settlements, which places the estimated total to approximately one million residents, most of whom are predominantly black. With only 9.5% of the population having had access to higher education, Mamelodi is an urban community with a high unemployment rate whereby 18% of the households have no income while 73.7% of the population are of working age,15-64 (Census, 2011). Although plagued by social and economic ills, the Mamelodi Township is rich in cultural, educational, infrastructural, social, and economic diversity and is therefore fertile ground for the implementation of an anchor strategy; these factors render the mobilization of assets and resources amongst the university and the community accessible and sustainable (Cantor, Englot, & Higgins, 2013). A process of reflection and consultation with internal and external role-players led to the development of a campus anchor strategy that would not only address the community engagement mandate of the campus but also achieve the strategic goals of the university.

In 2017, the Kresge Foundation awarded UP and Rutgers University-Newark (RU-N) a planning grant towards their anchor institution strategies in their respective communities in Newark and Mamelodi. The UP Mamelodi Campus thus developed an anchor mission strategy called the Mamelodi Collaborative (MC). The MC addresses five key areas: (a) broadening educational pathways for post-secondary school attainment; (b) leveraging the arts and culture; (c) science and the urban environment; (d) strong, safe and healthy neighborhoods; and (e) economic development and entrepreneurship. These key areas focus on bridging the poverty, crime, education, and unemployment gaps in the Mamelodi community through community and district partnerships and a data led approach.

This paper focusses on the niche area of broadening educational pathways and, more specifically, access and success to tertiary studies in STEM for the youth of the community. The paper elaborates on how the campus arrived at a more comprehensive approach to broadening pathways to STEM and closing the school-university gap through pre-university activities and access programs.

Literature review

An anchor mission strategy is the intentional deployment of an institution's geographically bound assets and economic power to revitalize neighborhoods where individuals face historic barriers to economic growth and survival (Dragicevic, 2015). The anchor mission strategy is implemented by anchor institutions which are described as large, non-profit organizations grounded in communities to ensure the mutually beneficial progress and well-being of the communities in which they are rooted (Dragicevic, 2015; Friedman, Perry, & Menendez, 2014). Anchor institutions are largely developed in urban societies where the institutions mobilize their resources towards the strengthening of the surrounding neighborhood (Dragicevic, 2015; Ehlenz, 2018).

Due to global socio-political, socio-economic, and resource instabilities, universities have had to reinvent themselves in order to remain relevant in the ever changing world and communities in which they are embedded and function (Ehlenz, 2018). The focus of universities both theoretically and practically has changed over the years from being academically exclusive, which hindered educational access to the broader community, to universities being agents for neighborhood revitalization, change, and development (Birch et al., 2013; Ehlenz, 2018; Hendricks & Flaherty, 2018; Smith, Pelco, & Rooke, 2017). The systematic review by Nkoana and Dichaba (2017), addresses the increasing core mandate of university-community engagement (UCE) across South African universities with aims to alleviate the poverty, inequality, and unemployment in the South African community. The study, however, highlights how the lack of a UCE framework and a data trail may do more harm than good as the systemic review noted the lack of UCE data and reports from other institutions around South Africa. Although South African universities run community engagement programs countrywide, the, University of Pretoria is the first of its kind in the country to adopt an anchor mission mandate. The adoption of an anchor mission strategy is a major shift in community engagement literature towards a measurable impact in collaboration with the community in a defined geographical location as well as developing the locality intentionally and holistically compared to community engagement activities that emphasize service-learning often to meet the requirements of a university curriculum.

Universities driven by socio-economic constraints within the societies in which they are embedded build mutually beneficial partnerships with other community institutions, towards affecting a positive change thus acquiring the anchor institution status (Bergen & Sladeck, 2019). The report by Hahn, Coonerty & Peaslee (2005) states that the focus of an anchor institution should be developing the economy of the community despite the challenges that anchor institutions face in the planning and collaboration of community outreach programs as well as interdisciplinary programs. Various universities have adopted and successfully implemented the anchor strategy. However, Bergen and Sladeck (2019) argue that while the anchor mission strategy may improve the quality of life of the targeted communities as a whole, it may not improve the welfare of permanently resident low-income and oppressed individuals in those communities and will, in fact, drive them out of the community due to the ripple effect of a higher standard of living. Anchor mission strategies thus fall short in addressing the development of generational wealth of the poorest individuals in their allocated communities (Bergen & Sladeck, 2019).

Through the use of surveys, Ehlenz (2018) compared the theory and application of the anchor mission strategies to examine the extent to which universities invest in neighborhood revitalization. Ehlenz (2018) states that theoretically, the likely advantages associated with the successful implementation of the university anchor mission strategy is the notable development and improvement of infrastructure, security, social, economic, as well as the quality of life of the targeted communities. The structural and economic development is thus meant to encourage investor buy-in and, in turn, affect the educational and school going trends of its learners and students in the community (Ehlenz, 2016; Ehlenz, 2018). Such is evident in the anchor institutions addressed in Hendricks and Flaherty (2018) where the infrastructural development and community engagement, as well as economic investment by the University of Pennsylvania, Midtown Detroit, and the University of Maryland saw an increase in the economy, safety, and investment in the areas.

The literature consulted highlights the success of international universities in the implementation of the anchor mission strategies while few studies exist which address the application of the anchor strategy in the context of South African universities. The predominant factor that stands out in the university anchor mission strategy literature is the data driven evaluation and monitoring of anchor mission strategy activities. Furthermore, the successful anchor strategies mentioned above focus increasingly on the infrastructure and economy of their neighborhoods and do not elaborate on the implementation of the education access, retention, and success of learners and students in the community schools, as well as the students enrolled in the universities.

Unlike international universities where notable success in the implementation of anchor strategies is evident, South African universities lag behind in this regard (Bank, 2018). Consequently, the University of Pretoria, in its implementation of the anchor strategy, has noted these gaps and seeks to not only improve the infrastructure and economy of the communities in which its campuses are embedded, but to also improve academic access and success, as well as foster sustainable community development that enhances the lives of the communities in which the university is located (Hendricks & Flaherty, 2018). The impact of the university through community outreach is vital in addressing the needs of individuals in the community and thus it is important to have a research and data driven approach in addressing societal constraints in the Mamelodi community. The University of Pretoria has set out to achieve its anchor mission of extending and improving academic access and success for the youth of Mamelodi through its after-school programs which have been in operation since 2012.

After-School Programs

After-school programs (ASPs) with a strong academic focus, are one of the ways in which civil society has responded in an attempt to counter student under-preparedness. ASPs have a long history globally and the conditions that shape their development reflect societal concerns regarding child development (Lauer, Motoko, Wilkerson, & Apthorp, 2006). The concerns vary from one society to another, hence ASPs vary widely in goals and practices, making it difficult to assess their effects as interventions. Adding to this complexity is the need for ASPs to be developmentally appropriate and attractive to participants. Several scholars who have conducted systematic reviews of ASPs (Lester, Chow & Melton, 2020) found that while a number of promising models exist, many exhibit encouraging and yet methodologically flawed evidence of effectiveness. Programs that provide greater structure, a stronger link to the school-day curriculum, well qualified and well-trained staff, and opportunities for one-to-one tutoring hold promise.

The absence of academically rigorous research in the operations and outcomes of supplementary programs is demonstrated in the seventh systemic review summary conducted by International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (Snilstveit et al., 2016). The review evaluated the impact of interventions for improving learning outcomes and access to education for learners in low and middle income countries. Snilstveit et al. (2016) demonstrated that most programs operate with little evidenced led practices. There is a need for future studies on after-school programs to implement rigorous designs and report on aspects of program quality. Improving the rigor in the design of the programs as well as the evaluations of after-school programs is crucial and can provided valuable information to realize the potential of after-school programs (Kremer, Maynard, Polanin, Vaughn & Sarteschi, 2015; Lester, 2020).

Elements of an ASP for redress

From the literature it is clear that a meaningful ASP model should be able to at least consider the socio-economic situation of the learner and structure innovative measures to minimize its negative impact for success in school and beyond. In addition, the model should provide the learner with the skills set relevant to the demands of the 21st century. The following elements are proposed as crucial to the success of an ASP for redress: (a) a learner responsive environment through parent-school-community partnerships; (b) academic preparedness/ readiness; and (c) post-secondary school awareness referring to college and career prospects.

A learner responsive environment through parent-school-community partnerships

The African saying, "it takes a village to raise a child" rings increasingly truer in a context where youth is responsible for criminality on school premises. Schools can no longer turn a blind eye to societal ills as it no longer only manifests itself in the home environment. Healthy school, family, and community partnerships lead to improved academic learner achievement, self-esteem, school attendance, and social behavior (Lemmer, 2007).

A learner responsive environment refers to an environment where educational matters are addressed through joint efforts of educators, learners, parents, members of the local community, and the education department. Such an environment makes learners equal contributors to the partnership by encouraging them to be engaged in their schoolwork. As much as Lemmer (2007) was talking from a schooling perspective, the same collaborative approach is necessary when it comes to ASPs. These programs are best positioned at the interface where all entities meet. After-school program models without a collaborative approach, tend to "take the responsibility of teaching off the hands of the teacher." The comparative limited time available to after-school practitioners is already putting the prospect of obtaining superior results at risk. A similar message is communicated if ASPs are run separate from parental involvement.

Support programs can therefore have greater impact if they are school based or communicate a strong school/parent/ASP partnership aimed at the specific needs of the learners of the school. It then continually contextualizes the leaners' environment and allows for greater alignment between ASP and school activities. Teachers and parents could also have input in what the learners need at a specific point in time. Children become used to a longer school day which can enhance their work ethic.

Academic preparedness and college and career readiness

Kivunja (2014) asserts that whereas a learner or student in the past would have been considered academically prepared if they possessed the traditional core subjects and skills domain (i.e. the 3Rs of reading, -riting and –rithmetic) appropriate for a particular exit level, this is now considered inadequate. The learning and innovations skills as well as the digital literacies skills are additional prerequisites for academic preparedness. Academic preparedness is inextricably linked to college and career readiness, hence it is upon the institution and community to instill the career and life skills domain in the individual.

This paper therefore addresses how the University of Pretoria, Mamelodi campus, through the decade long provision of the Extended Curriculum Programs (ECPs) and ASPs, lessons learnt and a data-led approach, aligned its strategic goals of access and success and social responsiveness to achieve its anchor strategy mandate. The paper aims to answer the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. How did the University of Pretoria's strategic goals of widening access and success and improving social responsiveness and impact manifest through the Extended Curriculum Programs and the After-School Programs between 2008 and 2018?
2. What lessons were learnt through the provision of these programs which enabled an improved strategy that addresses the school-university gap in a holistic manner?
3. What processes and activities did the campus engage in to arrive at a data led-approach in broadening educational pathways and cementing the anchor institution strategy in the Mamelodi community?

Context

Typical of the South African urban model developed under apartheid, the Mamelodi Campus, previously known as Vista University, is situated on the urban periphery, approximately 20 kilometers north-east of the capital city, Pretoria. The apartheid government established the Vista University in 1981 (Landman 1989) to provide university-level education for black persons in urban areas, with particular reference to the training of secondary school teachers. The post-apartheid Minister of Higher Education, Kader Asmal, designated UP as one of the institutions to incorporate a Vista Campus as part of the reconfiguration of the higher education system, which was legislated in 2002 (Akor 2008:172). The council designated the Vista Mamelodi Campus as a community engagement hub with a focus on providing access to STEM programs after a 2007 review of how the Vista Mamelodi Campus could contribute to the academic repertoire of the University of Pretoria.

By designating the campus a hub with a focus on STEM the university aimed to contribute to addressing this challenge of poor education systems, inadequate service delivery, and poverty which are still defining characteristics of township communities. Such challenges are a consequence of the socio-economic injustices that transpired in the country during the apartheid regime which affected predominantly black communities (State of the Nation, 2019).

One of the enduring challenges in the education system in South Africa is the low number of high school learners from disadvantaged communities that access STEM study programs. In fact, statistics have shown that the number of students who qualify with a National Senior Certificate (NSC) for entry to degree study, and those who have passed important "gateway" subjects such as mathematics, physical science, life sciences and English (home and first additional language) remain limited (Department of Basic Education, 2016). This is due, in part, to limitations and challenges in the schooling system. To that end, in 2008 the university introduced three access programs at the Mamelodi Campus, to replace the University of Pretoria Foundation Year (UPFY) program which was a STEM pre-university bridging program previously offered at the Hatfield Campus. These access programs are the Bachelor of Science extended curriculum programs in biological and agricultural sciences, physical sciences, mathematical sciences, and economic and management sciences. ECPs have been introduced with support of the Department of Higher Education and Training to address under-preparedness of incoming students for the mainstream programs at higher education institutions.

Unlike the UPFY, the ECPs are formal degree programs and students register for a BSC degree from the onset. ECPs are considered more effective in terms of articulating with the mainstream programs (Rollnick, 2010). The ECPs offered on the campus thus constitute the nucleus around which the academic identity of the campus is developed and are aimed at widening access to mathematics, commercial, and science-related careers for largely first-generation students coming from disadvantaged school backgrounds. ECPs are particularly important in South Africa where under-preparedness for university study is a majority rather than a minority phenomenon now and into the foreseeable future.

Teaching in the ECPs is specialized to give students the necessary support to address under-preparedness. Studies conducted between 2014 and 2016 have determined the positive impact of the Mamelodi campus ECPs and have proven the success of ECP's while citing areas of improvement (Engelbrecht, Harding & Potgieter, 2014; Ogude, Meyer, Mwambakana & Mthethwa 2019). Following the positive results from these studies the campus turns its focus towards the development of a model that would address the school-university gap prior to students enrolling at university, that is, while they are at school. If successful, this strategy which entails backwards articulation (Case, Marshall & Grayson, 2013) can complement the forward articulation of ECPs resulting in a holistic approach to close the school-university gap and provide access to larger numbers of students.

UP Strategic Goals and the Mamelodi Campus

UP has identified five strategic goals as its key focus areas from the year 2019 going forward, namely:

1. To enhance access and successful student learning
2. To strengthen the University's research and international profile
3. To foster and sustain a transformed, inclusive, and equitable University community
4. To optimize resources and enhance institutional sustainability
5. To strengthen the University's social responsiveness and impact in society

The Mamelodi campus is designated the university's social innovation hub with a focus on strategic goals one and five.

Student Access, Success: From Extended Curriculum Programs to ASPs

ECPs have succeeded in widening access for students into STEM and economic and management sciences fields since their introduction on the Mamelodi campus. For the past decade the student population on the Mamelodi campus has grown by over 200% from the initial 300 in 2008 to 850 in 2018 which comprises approximately 10% of the total first year intake (Bureau for Institutional Research and Planning, 2017) The overall module pass rate during this period has also been consistently high, averaging 83%, which is in line with the benchmark of the Department of Higher Education and Training of 82% (Bureau for Institutional Research and Planning, 2017) . Since 2008, ECPs have been the flagship academic programs of UP's Mamelodi Campus and the bedrock on which the thematic multi-disciplinary nature of the campus, its academic identity and its anchor strategy the MC, was conceptualized in 2018 (Birch et al., 2013).

In light of the major successes of the ECPs, and as the nucleus around which the anchor strategy is conceptualized, it became important that they are strengthened even further from an institutional perspective. This necessitated a critical reflection on how the programs contribute by ensuring that more learners from Mamelodi, access the ECPs as well as other UP mainstream programs. This reflection resulted in the following observations: (1) The numbers of learners that apply to the University of Pretoria from the Mamelodi schools have seen an upward but steady trend between 2014 and 2017, at 346, 336, 346, and 362, respectively. However, there is a concern that these numbers declined in 2018 to 246 and are generally very low. To put these numbers into perspective, of the 496 grade 12 learners from the 20 Mamelodi schools, 31%, obtained a university entrance in 2017. Thus, the numbers that applied in 2017 constitute 73% of the Bachelors passes obtained by the twenty schools in Mamelodi. The target is to increase this number by 20% in 2021 to 93%, an average of 4% per year. (2) Unlike the application rate, the realization rate, that is the number of students that are admitted to the university, including the Mamelodi Campus, has been on a downward trend over the three years, 2015, 2016, and 2017 standing at 70%, 66%, and 63% respectively. This number may not be as high as it should be as admission point scores of some of the learners may not meet the UP criteria for admission.

In light of these observations, the university had to reflect on the extent to which its goal on access aligns with its anchor role in the Mamelodi Community. With such few students gaining access to the university, there was a misalignment which needed to be addressed. Furthermore, the university resolved that it could make a contribution beyond enabling students' access to its academic programs by advancing its social responsiveness mandate. In this way, the university can contribute broadly to educational achievement through strengthening access to other tertiary institutions as well.

In an effort to further broaden access to STEM, in 2012 the Mamelodi Campus introduced a STEM ASP, in partnership with the Gauteng Department of Education's Tshwane South District Office, which is responsible for the schools in Mamelodi and surrounding areas. The target group of the ASP was 450, grades 10 to 12, learners from 20 high schools in Mamelodi, Nellmapius, and Eersterust. The ASP initiative was intended as an additional pathway for previously disadvantaged learners to gain admission to primarily STEM programs at the University of Pretoria. Lessons learnt from the research conducted on the ECPs thus led to the introduction of the STEM ASP to increase the chances for the learners of Mamelodi high schools to access the ECPs or mainstream programs and address the school-university gap through backward articulation. Studies have shown that intervention at the ECP stage is rather too late given a schooling system that is consistently producing underprepared students (Case et al 2013).

Student Access and Success and the STEM After-School Program

An introduction of the STEM ASPs to improve the performance of grade 10 to 12 learners in mathematics and physical sciences from the 20 high schools in Mamelodi and an associated Teacher Mentorship Program offered to mathematics and science teachers for grades four through nine, enabled the campus to reach about 300 schools and up to 180,000 learners indirectly. An evaluation of the ASPs showed that in 2015, 33% of students in the ASP learners were admitted to UP (mainstream and extended programs). In 2016 this figure rose to 45%, an increase of 14%.

Cognizant of the need for collective impact, the campus formed a strategic partnership with providers of similar programs in the Mamelodi area in 2015, herein lay the novelty of the ASP model employed. These partnerships significantly enhanced the impact of the ASPs. Learners participated in weekend mathematics and science classes offered by one of the partners called *Kutlwanong: Promaths* and attended the UP ASPs once a week for self-paced tutorial exercises using e-learning software. In addition, learners benefited from the many enrichment and empowerment activities offered by an internal UP entity, JuniorTukkie, ranging from life skills, study methods, time management, computer literacy, and reading skills development to bursary information and assistance with admission applications. Learners also attended the JuniorTukkie spring and winter school program for grade 10 to12 learners, which were offered on campus during school holidays. The partnership with external entities was further strengthened by partnering internally with several academic departments such as the Department of Educational Psychology and the Department of Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education, as well as student-led organizations such as the Postgraduate Student Association for the Natural and Agricultural Sciences (PSANA).

From the period of 2013 to 2018, assistance in mathematics and physical sciences was provided to an average of 800 grade 10 learners, 440 grade 11 learners, and 320 grade 12 learners. In total, 44 pre-service teachers served as tutors and, in the process, consolidated their own science and mathematics understanding and developed familiarity with the government prescribed curriculum. This ensured effective lesson planning and opportunities to develop best practices to better address learners' struggles with mathematics and physical sciences. Teachers were exposed to the diversity of the school-going community and were hence better at classroom management which significantly reduced the learning curve associated with beginner teachers.

The Impact of the After-school Programs

Between the years 2015 and 2017, the After-School Program (ASP) had one level of intervention for learners in addition to the Teacher Mentorship Program, reaching approximately 500 students a week in grades 10-12 and 100 teachers in the TMP. Learners selected on merit from the 20 schools attended STEM enrichment programs in which an e-learning platform was used to supplement the traditional chalk and talk teaching provided in the school and by other NGO's working in the education space in Mamelodi. Although the Mamelodi mathematics and science program had a limited footprint, it had notable qualitative and quantitative achievements.

In partnership with local community projects such as Kutlwanong, the reach of the ASPs in the Mamelodi community learners expanded. Awareness campaigns like the Career Fair hosted on the Mamelodi Campus of the University of Pretoria contributed to learners' exposure to the possibilities within the University of Pretoria. This led to an increased awareness towards higher education access, more so towards enrollment in the University of Pretoria as a result of exposure and access to higher education premises. It was vital that the learners' progress was tracked through the collection of learners' quarterly school report cards so as to ensure that learners benefitted positively from the programs through an evaluation and reflection on the teaching and learning methods in the programs.

A comparative evaluation of the mathematics and physical science marks of the 2018 cohort indicated that the learners that enrolled in the ASPs performed above the national average. In mathematics, 48% received symbols higher than a level four (50-59%) while 22% attained over 70% (level 6 – 7). Nationally, only 10% of learners obtained more than 50% in mathematics. in physical sciences, 53% of the ASP learners obtained over 50% and 29% of them over 80%. Nationally, only 12.5% of learners obtained more than 50% while 14% of the learners achieved level seven. One ASP learner achieved an exceptional 98% in Mathematics and 100% in Physical Science. In 2014, an average of 20% of the grade 12 learners in the program registered at the University of Pretoria. In the following year this number almost doubled to 33%. This trend continued, with 44% of the cohort of 2016 qualifying to enter UP (Bureau for Institutional Research and Planning, 2017).

Figures 1 and 2 below compares the symbol or grade distribution in mathematics and science for the cohorts of 2016, 2017, and 2018. The data shows that the 2018 cohort performed significantly better than the 2016 and 2017 cohorts which validated the improvements that were brought about by partnering with various role-players for a more holistic approach.

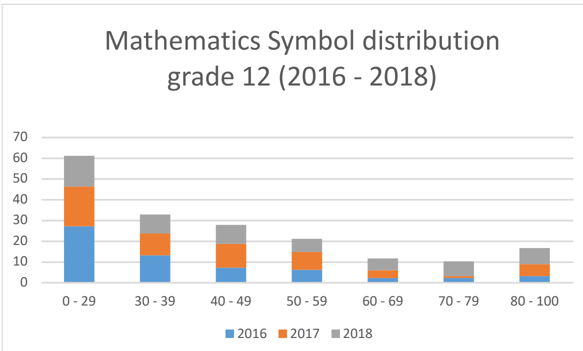

Figure 1 mathematics symbol distribution

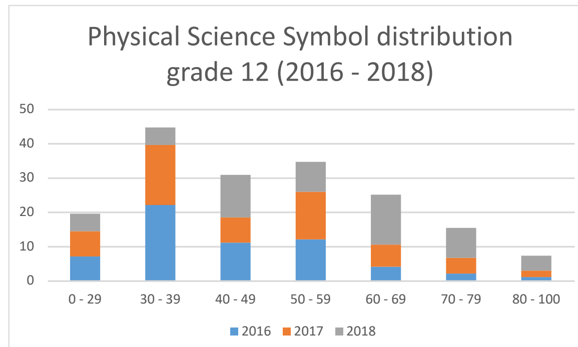

Figure 2 physical science symbol distribution

Towards the end of 2018, learners completed a survey from which we gathered that 79 out of a 121 participants, 65%, received provisional acceptance from a university. It is difficult to obtain accurate figures for actual registrations post completing secondary school, since we only had access to the database of the University of Pretoria. Of the candidates registered at the University of Pretoria, approximately 20% enrolled in the following programs: financial services, engineering, the built environment, medical sciences and BSC.

Twelve students that commenced their studies in the ASP and qualified to go into the degree programs at the University of Pretoria underwent semi-structured interviews on their experiences in the program. The interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. Two themes emerged from the data analysis namely, aspiration for further studies and academic benefits of the ASP. Extracts from the qualitative data have been provided as examples of learner responses to the interview questions.

Aspiration for further studies and motivational attendance/parental support

> *My Dad even when he was chilling told everyone at home I was attending the University of Pretoria though I was in Grade 10. I had no chance of failing. He would look at my marks and say how I will tell people you had a bad mark. You cannot afford to get a mark lower than 80%.* (Student 3 TM – 2nd year Medical Student)
>
> *My Mom never went to University so she wanted one of us to go there.* (Student 4 YM)

> *I came for friends, food, education, and that feeling of being at University* (Student 1: NP, now 2nd year Engineering)

Academic Benefits of the After-school Program

> *I think when you come here* (ASP) *and you are behind at school; you learn. By the time they do the work at school you already know the topic.* (Student 5 SM)
>
> *I met other top learners from other schools, we share information and past papers, we formed a network. We improved our communication skills in front of strangers, learners came from different schools and this helped us not to get into cultural shock at University.* (WS)
>
> *Online programs like MoMaths, quizzes, computer literacy was an advantage*. (TM)

The incorporation of the ASPs towards redress in the Mamelodi community showed prominence in the Academic Preparedness and College and Career Readiness element of the program's model. The students interviewed identified skills which the programs developed in them which they identify as life-long skills such as communication, information, and thinking skills were among the frequently mentioned. According to the student feedback, the programs enhanced their discipline knowledge and made it easily transmittable to their respective study fields towards a smooth high school-university transition. Such are skills and attributes which the ASPs hoped to develop in ASP learners and thus promote academic readiness and success and have successfully done so.

Emergence of the University of Pretoria Pre-University Academy

Following several improvements between 2013 and 2018, the after-school programs offered on the Mamelodi campus now include those offered by the university itself as well as external partners working in the Mamelodi educational ecosystem. In 2019 the campus initiated the Mamelodi Pre-University Academy (PUA), which houses all the pre-university programs hosted by itself and other partners on the campus premises. Through the PUA the campus is able to follow a multi-stakeholder approach to extend its reach from the initial 500 beneficiaries to 30,000 youth in Mamelodi. The PUA is a signature initiative of the Mamelodi campus which is geared toward fostering articulation between the school level initiatives, ECPs and the mainstream programs to ensure a seamless transition from secondary school to graduation. The PUA has identified three research focus areas as its core business, focusing on college readiness and awareness, teacher professional development, and engendering scientific literary and an interest in science. The first focus area of the PUA is two-pronged to cater for the initiatives designed to foster post-secondary school awareness and readiness. The PUA ensures that the university strategic goals of access and success and social responsiveness and impact are aligned with the anchor mission strategy, the Mamelodi Collaborative.

University of Pretoria's anchor strategy

An assessment of the ASPs offered by the campus during the conceptualization of the campus' anchor strategy identified several strengths and weaknesses which informed the redesign of the ASPs into the PUA. The following strengths were identified:

- Multi-level intervention through structured Memoranda of understanding with the different partners such as private business, non-government organizations (NGOs).
- The collaboration with the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) in both the learner and teacher program with both parties, UP and GDE, gaining from the partnership with the shared goals of improving student outcomes and pecoordinated coordinated approach including the principals, parents, and learners.
- Implementation of a group mentor program for the learners. The mentors are former Mamelodi Mathematics and Science Program (MMSP) learners that are studying at the University of Pretoria.
- The success of the model for ECPs as a Gateway to Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and other careers at the university.
- Possible further leveraging of funds from other sources including international funders.
- The creation of a bursary fund by the Alumni of UP who started their careers at the UP Mamelodi Campus.
- International collaboration with Rutgers University-Newark and the sharing of methodologies.

Similarly, challenges identified were as follows:

- The lack of a rigorous data-led approach to pre-university provisioning to determine the efficacy of the programs and to track student progression from high school through tertiary studies at the different institutional types, ranging from universities, universities of technology (UoTs) or technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges.
- The lack of a structured research program or agenda that can enable the university to measure the impact of the programs on student success.
- The lack of articulation agreements with partner institutions of higher learning

To strengthen efforts towards broadening educational pathways for post-secondary school attainment, the campus set out to address the above weaknesses while leveraging on the strengths and the university's infrastructure, capacities, and networks (both internal and external) to build strong educational pathways from early childhood development centers to high school. The campus identified four education networks, the early childhood development (ECD), primary schools, high schools, and university education networks. The networks address access to quality early childhood education on the one end, and access to tertiary opportunities on the other through targeted community-based projects.

A Data-led Approach: The Mamelodi Community of Learning Collaborative (MCLC)

By the end of 2018, stakeholder participation has increased from the initial five partners that came together in 2015, to more than 20 external stakeholders and six faculties, as well as a number of undergraduate and postgraduate student organizations. In February 2019 the MCLC was established, building on the lessons and experiences of our international partner Rutgers Newark's City of Learning Collaborative (NCLC). The MCLC is a multi-stakeholder partnership between the University of Pretoria, Mamelodi Campus and the GDE's Tshwane South District, Technical, and Vocational Education and Training Colleges, and non-government organizations involved in youth development and the business sector. The aim of this partnership is to address pipeline problems within the educational system and to foster a post-secondary school-going culture in the Mamelodi Township and surrounding areas. The partnership has been formalized to enable a multi-stakeholder provisioning towards strengthening and broadening educational pathways in all four education networks under the rubric of the MCLC.

Partnership with the key role players enables UP, Mamelodi Campus to consolidate its collaboration with the Gauteng Department of Basic Education's Tshwane South District and a network of stakeholders to achieve the goal of broadening educational pathways by using a data-led approach to monitor and measure the impact of all the interventions provided by itself and the MCLC partners. Work on a data clearing house has already commenced. This work entails exploring establishing a link between the data analytics platform of the Department of Basic Education, SA-SAMS to the UP data platforms. Should this be successful, the database will track students from entry into high school right up to the workplace. The campus also envisages extending the mainstream student success initiatives to the ECPs by developing a data-led at-risk student identification and referral system.

Conclusion

Previously the ECPs and ASPs offered on the Mamelodi Campus primarily focused on achieving the access and success strategic goal of the UP. Adoption of an anchor institution strategy broadens the community engagement mandate to broadening educational pathways to postsecondary school attainment and thus achieving not only access but also its social responsiveness mandate through providing access to various institutions of higher learning as well as fostering a college going culture in Mamelodi. The alignment of the access and success and the social responsiveness goals of the university with its anchor strategy through the

Mamelodi Collaborative incorporating a Pre-University Academy is a major achievement for the role of the university in the community.

In ensuring that that the anchor mission is sustainable through the MCLC, which is underpinned by measurement and tracking of the impact of partnerships in community engagement, the university can track the outcomes of the community programs and outreach. Data collection, measurement, and evaluation of partnerships and programs are of high importance in the anchor institution partnerships (Provinzano, Riley, Levine & Grant, 2018). The literature and the work presented in this paper served to highlight the need for more research and more rigorous research methodologies into the impact of anchor mission strategies, more so in the South African context. To address this need the Mamelodi Campus in partnership with Rutgers University - Newark has developed a more deliberate research agenda, which will entail formulating research projects with methodological rigor around the anchor institution strategy of Mamelodi Campus. To this end a research unit, Unit of Access and Success for Students in Transition (UASST) is in the process of being established. The unit will support all inter, multi, and transdisciplinary research related to the anchor mission of the campus. Continued tracking and report of the PUA and MCLC in subsequent studies is therefore of vital importance.

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Original Research

Around the Corner, Across the Globe: Developing Global Citizens through Civic Engagement

Donna M. Nickitas[1] and Nancy M.H. Pontes[2]

[1,2] Rutgers School of Nursing-Camden

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Abstract

Nursing educators wrestle with preparing the future nursing workforce to meet the needs of underserved, vulnerable populations in marginalized communities who suffer significant health disparities and social injustices. This article illustrates the integration of engaged civic learning (ECL) within a social justice framework that prepares baccalaureate nurses as global citizens to provide culturally congruent health care around the corner in local communities and learning abroad programs across the globe.

Multiple partnerships with local organizations were strengthened, with ECL integrated across the nursing curriculum and aligned with local needs of community housing, schools, churches, shelters, and fitness centers. The nursing faculty at Rutgers School of Nursing-Camden collaborated with language professors to develop a Spanish for Health Professions program to increase communication between students and the high percentage of Spanish-speaking populations served locally and globally.

A mixed-methods design evaluated program outcomes using descriptive data, student reflections, and the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI) to assess students' experiences and global learning related to learning abroad during their college experience. Results from pre-surveys to post-survey results showed significant improvement (*$p < .05$*) in global learning in 16 of 35 question items. As students journey from entrance into nursing school until graduation, ECL develops them into engaged global citizens.

Keywords: Spanish education, cultural competence, service-learning, engaged civic learning, learning abroad

Around the Corner, Across the Globe: Developing Global Citizens through Civic Engagement

Four million nurses in the United States, as well as 20 million nurses across the globe, provide high-quality, transformative health care to increasingly diverse populations. Nurses are the lifeline to care delivery and their contributions are critical to elevating a future workforce that is civically minded and socially responsive, including advancing health across the globe with a societal commitment to care for all people everywhere. As nursing and other health educators prepare the future workforce to fill the health equity gap among diverse, often vulnerable communities, a specific skill set beyond technical nursing competencies must include interpersonal communication, critical thinking, and cultural humility (Nokes et al., 2005; Sabo et al., 2015).

This article illustrates how integration of engaged civic learning (ECL) within a social justice framework develops nurses as global citizens to provide culturally congruent health care services within diverse settings, including around the corner in local communities and learning abroad programs across the globe.

Cultural Humility

Cultural congruence is a highly valued aspect of nursing and health care delivery; it is central to the concept of caring and person-centered care. A related concept, cultural humility, is seen as an important pathway toward cultural congruence. Foronda et al. described it in the following way:

> In a multicultural world where power imbalances exist, cultural humility is a process of openness, self-awareness, being egoless, and incorporating self-reflection and critique after willingly interacting with diverse individuals. The results of achieving cultural humility are mutual empowerment, respect, partnerships, optimal care, and lifelong learning. (Foronda et al., 2017, pg. 215)

Cultural humility is "other-oriented," and involves the balance of listening and observing with curiosity and respectful inquiry. Another important aspect of cultural humility is a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation, and nursing students can be introduced to this practice through reflection and critical thinking (Sedgwick & Atthill, 2019; Schuessler et al., 2012). The concept of power imbalances applies to the nursing profession as we rethink our perceptions of provider and patient relationships. Individuals are experts on their symptoms, their strengths, and their lived experience. Reframing the provider-patient relationship without power imbalances empowers individuals to embrace their own health decisions. Nurses often describe themselves as patient advocates, but in terms of cultural humility, nurses should advocate for “systemic humility,” which is often lacking in health care delivery, especially among those most vulnerable whose human rights are often overlooked and ignored (Foronda et al., 2017).

Social Justice as a Foundation for Nursing Practice

Social justice is defined in several ways (Boutain, 2005), but based on concepts of human rights and equality can be defined as "how human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people at every level of society" (Edmund Rice Centre, 2000, pg.1). Social justice is inextricably linked to nursing and health through interrelated concepts of equity, access, participation and human rights (Westwood, 2019). According to Faden and Bowers (2011), the most important population health goals for social justice are the improvement of health and wellbeing and the mitigation of social determinants that negatively impact health and wellbeing. The United State’s Healthy People 2020 (HP2020) overall goal to increase health equity and eliminate health disparities is based upon principles of social justice (Braveman et al., 2020).

Concepts of social justice are heavily nuanced and systemically interconnected with social determinants of health and health disparities. Vulnerable populations are groups who have more health disparities, including a higher burden of disease, injury, disability, or mortality, when compared to other population groups. Populations with these disparities cannot be explored outside the context of their lived environment, and often require supportive social networks as they are more likely to live in communities lacking supportive social environments: well-designed built environments with safe and walkable access to stores and transportation, playgrounds, and schools (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine, 2017). Instead, their communities often have crumbling infrastructures that reduce access to safe outdoor environments, efficient transportation, and quality educational systems. Likewise, these communities have limited access to high quality health care, which not only challenges wellbeing, but impacts longevity (Arias et al., 2018). Herein is the essence of a health equity gap.

Health equity allows individuals and communities to have the opportunities needed for optimal health and longevity. Although systemic oppression lies at the root of these inequities (Westwood, 2019), community leaders and residents who embrace the values of fairness and inclusion can use an equity framework to advance opportunities for neighbors living in marginalized communities (Faden & Powers, 2011). To eliminate barriers to health access and equity, there must be policies and programs to address the fundamental conditions necessary for achieving good health, especially among populations that have experienced cumulative disadvantage or stigma (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, & Medicine, 2017).

A major challenge for nursing and other educational programs is how to increase student awareness of vulnerable populations and how the health equity gap profoundly impacts the health and wellbeing of entire populations. Often there is a disconnect between curricula and practice: nursing students are often more focused on acute care practice in hospitals, and while essential, they overlook these health-harming social determinants, especially once hospitalized individuals are discharged and return to living in their community (Baker & Baker, 2017; Sabo et al., 2015). Many of these overlooked factors contribute to expensive readmissions, medical errors, and other complications, that if better understood, could be foreseen and mitigated early on (Makary & Daniel, 2016).

One approach to bridging this health equity gap and the social-determinant divide is the integration of civic and socially responsible learning. In the case of nursing education, high-impact pedagogical practices target social, economic, and political dimensions of health that are nested in communities with vulnerable populations (Sabo et al., 2015). This approach creates a dynamic partnership between educational institutions and communities that creates a mutually beneficial relationship. Moreover, universities, as anchor institutions, support efforts to meet the challenges facing their local community, city, county, and region with service-learning that fosters civic engagement through integrated efforts and partnerships. In turn, civic engagement builds and releases social capital, which is necessary to strengthen community among nurses and builds networks of reciprocal social relationships (Persut, 2002). Thus, an anchor institution within an urban city becoming civically engaged and socially responsible is a means to overcome systemic oppression among specific groups and populations (Sabo et al., 2015).

ECL is a teaching strategy that enhances courses across a wide range of disciplines. Innovative partnerships with community organizations help deepen students' understanding of course content through active engagement with communities beyond the campus. Students engage in service, advocacy, and other forms of participation that connect course material to the efforts of real people to make a positive change (Yorio & Fe, 2012). Civically engaged learning activities are experiential and address human and community needs via structured opportunities for learning; they involve thoughtful reflection and are respectful of the concept of reciprocity between the civic engagement experience and the individuals served (Markus et al., 1993; Nokes et al., 2005).

Although ECL is integrated throughout curricula in many nursing programs, educators struggle to train the nursing workforce to leverage communities for long-term impact (Small, 2019). In this program, it was essential to partner with the university's Office of Civic Engagement, which already had multiple established connections to the local urban community and beyond. Due to the coexisting relationships developed over the past 40 years, program implementation worked through them to connect with interested community partners (Hill & Powell, 2012). Through their guided Civic Engagement Faculty Fellows Program nursing and other faculty members developed or enhanced their courses using best practices for implementing ECL into curricula.

As a result, students at their entrance into the nursing school through graduation embark upon a journey toward becoming engaged global citizens who can address needs of increasingly diverse populations within their practice. Examples of their civic engagement include local preschools and schools, organizations to help those with housing and food insecurity, community health centers located in low income housing programs, school-based health centers, veteran centers, and a state-of-the-art recreational facility for economically disadvantaged community members.

ECL courses contribute to Camden and the region while preparing Rutgers University–Camden students for lives of active citizenship and informed leadership. Research reveals that ECL is superior to traditional classroom learning, especially lecture format (Ciacco & Walker, 1998; Markus et al., 1993). ECL has been linked with increased GPA (Newell & Saxena, 2018) and "joy in learning" while students gain a larger sense of who they are and the value of their contributions (Finley, 2016). The outcomes of ECL are impactful in several dimensions for both the university as an anchor institution, directly, and as a provider of much-needed services to the community while student-learners gain personal insights and new knowledge about advocacy, activism, and civic duty.

Spanish for Health Professions Program

The Center on Aging Society (2002) reports more that 37 million adults in the U.S. speak a language other than English and some 18 million people, 48%, report that they speak English less than "very well." One challenge encountered with ECL courses is the difficulty communicating effectively with a large percentage of community members in a city where nearly 50% of residents are Spanish heritage speakers, many with limited English proficiency (DataUSA, 2017). Communication barriers are factors that impact the amount and quality of health care individuals received. For example, Spanish-speaking Latinx persons are less likely than White persons to visit a physician or mental health provider or receive preventive care, such as a mammography exam or influenza vaccination (Fiscella et al. 2002).

Overall, health-related errors are the third leading cause of death in the United States and account for more than 250,000 deaths per year (Makary & Daniel, 2016). Communication errors related to language and cultural differences are a major cause of these mistakes (Schyve, 2007). Conversely, Spanish language proficiency among health care providers is associated with improved cultural competencies (Rubenfeld et al., 2006), and increased patient satisfaction (Sherrill et al., 2016). Nurses must overcome language barriers to reduce medical errors.

The challenge of language and cultural differences prompted our strategic partnership with the department of World Languages and Cultures that had developed a course entitled Spanish for Health Professions. In 2016, we applied for and received a grant from the Department of Education to expand international studies and Spanish for Health Professions courses, and we collaborated with Ana Laguna who started the Spanish for Health Professions courses, and with her colleague, Dana Pilla, further expanded the courses into a fully expanded Spanish for Health Professions program. In 2018, a new certificate program was offered, which embeds ECL with the courses. The expanded program, offered in-person or online, enables both novice and heritage Spanish-speakers to increase proficiency through four course levels and offers ECL internships and learning abroad courses to Spanish-speaking countries, expanding the footprint of students who wish to make a positive impact, possibly lifelong, on vulnerable populations. Often, students whose heritage language is not English feel disadvantaged compared to other students, but becoming a Spanish medical interpreter turns a perceived liability to an advantage. At the same time, communicating in the preferred language of those served improves health equity and quality for the community, and demonstrates cultural humility as a core value of human caring and compassion.

Learning Abroad as a Path Toward Becoming Global Citizens

Learning abroad programs were developed to further enhance nursing students' growth, cultural competence, and capacity as global citizens (Kelleher, 2013; Lin, 2001). The concept of global citizenship is often attributed to learning abroad programs without a clear delineation of its concepts or educational outcomes. Hans Schattle described six concepts listed here and described below as foundational to global citizenry: awareness, responsibility, participation, cross-cultural empathy, international mobility, and personal achievement (Lewin, 2009). A key component of developing global citizens is what Lewin (2009, Pg 14) describes as the willingness to build relationships and, "nurture a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar setting."

A common challenge with learning abroad programs is a mismatch between student learner and organizational partner needs. For practical reasons, schedules are set with rigid timetables and limited free time, only to be met with student and faculty frustration as the realistic schedule and activities unfold. Too often student learner objectives and departure planning lack cultural congruency with international partners. Ouma and Dimaris' work (2013) emphasizes principles of cultural humility such as increased flexibility built into the plan and the removal of power differentials with the international organization so a mutual partnership evolves. Faculty should provide students with anticipatory guidance about expectations and the importance of flexibility as a part of global learning.

Learning abroad courses within Rutgers School of Nursing-Camden are designed to help develop global citizens and to foster students' own belongingness while abroad. Key building blocks of these programs are ECL activities and language immersion within the Spanish-speaking countries of Guatemala, Cuba, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Pre-departure activities described as best practices for learning abroad included lessons on the country's social and political history, the health care system and their health disparities, basic Spanish language instruction, and cultural differences (Visovsky et al., 2016). Thoughtful debriefing sessions, along with guided reflection during the experience, were the most important teaching strategies to help students think critically and evaluate concepts related to their sense of belongingness and global citizenry (Lewin, 2009; Schuessler et al., 2012).

While abroad, specific experiences were selected to strengthen connections within the group and acclimate them to the country. Students visited local markets, learned Latin dances, and participated in cultural festivals and religious ceremonies. Depending on the country visited, students' ECL projects included stove building among indigenous highlanders, and health screening and education programming in schools, elder centers and women's circles, with Spanish language immersion throughout. After guided reflection journaling and group debriefings which helped students think critically, these experiences were then deconstructed and reframed within a social justice framework emphasizing health equity and cultural humility. A few individual quotations from students were included below based on interviews and reflections from their Photo Reflection Journals. Box 1 and 2 contrain descriptions of the existing courses.

Box 1

An example of International Engaged Civic Learning in Guatemala:

The course entitled Health and Healing in Guatemala: A Service Learning Journey involves three pre-departure meetings in preparation for the in-country experience. The preparation focuses on preparing the student to engage with the highland community in a culturally congruent manner. Group work focuses on preparing health and educational outreach activities. Students are partnered with a non-governmental organization (NGO) whose goal is to produce "hope and not dependency." Their mission is to "innovate transformational models of development that break cycles of dependency" through engagement with indigenous communities that fosters their interdependence to live well within their own culture and community (Highland Support Project, n.d.). Because the use of indoor wood stoves causes premature death among these highland communities, they have built thousands of stoves one community at a time.

Cultural immersion and team building activities:

- Boating, hiking, tour, and lunch at a coffee cooperative
- Ziplining
- Large market visit
- Stove building
- Planning educational activities

- Volcanic mineral hot springs relaxation after stove building is completed
- Highland village reciprocal activities:
- Women's circle ceremonies by Maya villagers
- Stove demonstration by local masons
- Stove-building collaboration between a village family and a group of students.
- Family health screening (height, weight, blood pressure, fasting glucose, vision).
- Health Education (lay midwife training, group, and individual nutrition education).
- Fire ceremony by Maya Priest

Student Reflection and Debriefing:

- Daily reflective journaling
- Debriefing during and after the learning abroad experience
- Students create web-based photo reflection journal using guided reflection

> "...This trip was something I will be telling my grandkids about…people I met who changed my life forever for the better. I found out a lot about myself that I wasn't completely aware of…. I learned many things on this trip and I plan to take with me the rest of my life." (Student reflection)

Box 2

An example of Global Experiences 2

Title: Population health in Cuba through sustainable community development

This learning-abroad course introduces students with an overview of population health through the lens of community development within the Republic of Cuba. The emphasis of this course is to introduce key concepts of the Cuban health care system and sustainable community development:

1. Why they are important and how connections among social, cultural, educational and environmental systems are core to successful community development and health.
2. The second goal of this course is to provide a set of tools for students to utilize while interacting with the Cuban people in the community, health and educational settings.

This course also emphasizes Spanish language immersion activities within the community, thus combining engaged civic learning while increasing Spanish language proficiency. Upon return, students will analyze how lessons from the Cuban experience can be applied to U.S. communities with vulnerable populations experiencing poverty, health disparities, and poor health outcomes.

“The forced disconnection from social media and texting allowed me to enjoy those around me and to be more perspective,...This experience has changed me.” (Student Reflection)

Program Outcomes and Impact

The Spanish for the Health Professions Program evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to identify outcomes. First, enrollment data was compiled to demonstrate the increase in enrollment and successful completion of the Spanish for Health Professions courses. Grant funding was the catalyst for partnerships between the School of Nursing, the Offices of Learning Abroad and Civic Engagement, and the department of World Languages and Cultures. Within three years, there was a five-fold increase in enrollment, and course offerings increased from two to eight. Although rapid course growth alone does not guarantee successful learning, it reflects students’ interest in increasing their Spanish proficiency as future health professionals. At the conclusion of the first interpreting course in Spring 2019, 22 students passed the national exam and were certified for providing medical interpretation within hospitals and other health organizations. This certification also provides a path for nurses and other health professionals who are Spanish heritage speakers to quickly increase the Spanish interpreter workforce, which will decrease health care costs, reduce communication errors, and help bridge the equity gap.

The newer ECL and independent study courses in the certificate program include several outreach activities within the local underserved community. Students at a large non-profit health and fitness centers provided nutritional information to guide clients’ food selections at the organization’s food pantry. Recently, this partner organization awarded the 2019 class Volunteer of the Year, which attests to the positive outcomes of the course. One certificate student describes below how this program is essential to increasing health equity among the underserved Latino/Hispanic populations:

> The number of Spanish speakers in America will continue to grow, and I’m pleased to be a part of the university’s award-winning effort to ensure they can receive health care from someone who can communicate with them in their native language,” she says,…, “It felt good to be doing work in my hometown, helping Spanish speakers get the most out of the healthcare system. (Rutgers-Camden NewsNow, 2019, pg.1)

***Table 1**: Spanish for Health Professions Enrollment Increase*

Academic Year	Courses	Student Enrollment
2016 - 2017	Spanish for Medical Professions 1 Spanish for Health Professions 2 (added)	98
2017 - 2018	Spanish for Medical Professions 1 (added online) Spanish for Health Professions 2 (added online) Spanish for Health Professions 3 (added online)	188
2018 - 2019	Spanish for Health Professions 1, 2, 3 (traditional/online) Spanish for Health Profession Internship (added) Community Medical Interpreter National Certificate (added)	253
Total		539

Note: This table demonstrates the increased enrollment with the expansion of the Spanish for Medical Professions course in fall 2016 to an entire Spanish for Health Professions Program Certificate Program by spring 2019.

Learning Abroad Programs

In general, learning abroad courses are regarded as valuable, but they often lack prospective-design program evaluation and improvement strategies. Some faculty may question the value of more costly international programs versus less expensive local service-learning programs. In order to measure learning abroad student outcomes, we evaluated students both before and after the learning abroad experience (prospective/retrospective). Students were surveyed (N = 40) in the learning abroad courses to Cuba and Guatemala during the spring 2018 semester. More than 50% of the students enrolled in these programs were nursing majors in baccalaureate, accelerated BS, and RN to BS programs; other majors included business, Spanish, and health science majors. Over 50% of the students enrolled identified as Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African American, Asian, or mixed race. The pre-evaluations were performed at the beginning of the semester in mid-January. The post-trip evaluations were performed approximately one month after the study-abroad trip was completed.

The instrument selected to evaluate students was the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI) (Research Institute for Studies in Education, 2017). GPI is a validated tool to assess students' experiences and global learning related to learning abroad during their college experience (Braskamp et al., 2014). Test-retest reliabilities ranged between .57 and .73, and internal consistency had coefficient alpha reliabilities between .657 and .773. Intercorrelations between three subscales were sufficiently independent (145, .324, .241). The 35-item questions can be further classified into three dimensions: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal (Iowa State University, n.d.). For this report, only preliminary data is reported for the 2018 cohort using individual items rather than the three dimensions. Permission was obtained from Iowa State University to administer the GPI for two years (2018 to 2020). Paper and pencil surveys were administered the first week of class, followed by a post-test one month after students returned from their learning abroad experiences. As a post-versus-pre instrument, data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 24 using within-subjects (post – pre) *t*-tests for each of the 35 individual item scores, as visible in Table 2. Within-subjects *t*-tests subtract post minus pre responses and estimate whether the result is significantly greater than zero. Some items are worded so favorable items are the highest value, while other items are worded so favorable items are the lowest value.

Table 2: Pre - Post Results of 2018 Cuba/Guatemala Learning Abroad Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI)

Question Item	Post	Pre	Post - Pre	*t*	*p*
I consider different cultural perspectives when evaluating global problems	4.46	4.17	0.29	2.40	.021
I rarely question what I have been taught about the world around me	1.93	2.42	- 0.50	-2.30	.027
I am informed of current issues that impact international relations	4.02	3.39	0.63	4.44	< .001
I understand how various cultures of this world interact socially	4.27	3.88	0.39	2.90	.006
I know how to analyze the basic characteristics of a culture	4.17	3.66	0.51	3.35	.002
I can discuss cultural differences from an informed perspective	4.55	3.95	0.60	3.77	.001
I have a definite purpose in my life	4.32	4.07	0.24	2.13	.040
I can explain my personal values to people who are different from me	4.54	4.20	0.34	2.48	.018

I am willing to defend my own views when they differ from others	3.95	3.56	0.39	3.98	< .001
I put my beliefs into action by standing up for my principles	4.10	3.78	0.32	2.06	.046
I do not feel threatened emotionally when presented with multiple perspectives	4.46	4.10	0.37	2.73	.009
I think of my life in terms of giving back to society	4.24	3.90	0.34	2.56	.014
I work for the rights of others	4.05	3.73	0.32	2.31	.026
I consciously behave in terms of making a difference	4.37	3.93	0.44	3.24	.002
I frequently interact with people from a race/ethnic group different from my own	4.73	4.46	0.27	2.56	.014
I intentionally involve people from many cultural backgrounds in my life	4.51	3.95	0.56	3.21	.003

Note: Number of Participants (N) = 40. We only report items for which there was a significant improvement post-test compare to the pre-test

Of the 35 questions, 16 of them showed significant improvement ($p < .05$) in the post-versus-pre assessment. Given the small sample of 40, it is likely that a larger sample would have more items showing significance. Some of the responses to note were concepts of "giving back," "making a difference," interacting with people from different cultures, having "purpose" in life, and considering different cultural perspectives. These responses demonstrate movement toward cultural humility, advocacy, and an interest in interacting with other cultures and racial/ethnic populations.

Future evaluation will focus upon reinforcing the areas of significant improvement and addressing those areas in need of greater cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, these data will be combined with 2019 data, which will enable further review according to the three cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions.

Conclusion

Robert Caret's (2019, Pg. 10) vision for higher education parallels our own goal, "to graduate educated, enlightened citizens who are ready to go to work in all facets of life to make their lives, their communities, and our nation [world] better." Undergraduate nursing students are ignited by personal insight, skill development, and opportunities gained through local and global ECL, that propels them toward becoming engaged citizens who advocate for social justice, become change agents, and demonstrate cultural humility (Nickitas et al., 2016). Each student, in their way, becomes a socially responsive learner as they journey toward global citizenship. From the time students enter the university until graduation, faculty have numerous opportunities to create pathways for ECL that are influential and impactful, including grounding civic learning within a social justice framework, and equipping the nursing workforce to care for culturally diverse populations. Thus, being civically engaged creates a possible place where a student's "deep gladness and the world's deep hunger coincide" (Buechner, 1973, pg. 95).

Implications for Practice and Future Research

Further research is needed to identify specific pedagogical interventions to optimize student development, especially during the current COVID-19 era of less physical human connection within communities. Existing challenges are now layered with limitations of a pandemic, where vulnerable communities need more connection, not less, from academic institutions and health professionals. Students, in turn, need safe options to create a place for their "deep gladness" that is unexpected, but no less effective.

Now more than ever, a social justice framework for developing global citizens is paramount in order to accomplish HP2020 goals for health equity and the elimination of health disparities (Braveman et al., 2020). Preparation of future nurses within this paradigm is essential, but nonetheless insufficient without increasing language proficiency nurses and other providers that is congruent with the community. Pedagogical goals in nursing and other health programs should consider including both cultural and language competencies with a commitment to rigorous measurement of health outcomes in order to bridge the equity gap and accomplish the HP2020 goals.

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Original Research

Seeking Inclusion through Local Entrepreneurship Training Initiatives in Low-Income Communities

Silvia C. Garcia[1] and Nina Ustymchuck[2]

[1]Office of Community Engagement, Indiana Univeristy-Purdue University Indianapolis, [2]IU McKinney School of Law, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

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Abstract

Understanding the role of local resources in enabling or constraining the development of entrepreneurial activities in urban communities holds important implications for community placed-based initiatives led by urban universities. This article analyzes the societal and interpersonal factors that affect the outcomes of an entrepreneurship center created in 2016, in partnership with an urban university within a low-income community adjacent to campus. The center was created to address the needs of local residents wanting to launch new businesses, as well as supporting small business owners in the neighborhood who desire to grow their businesses and capitalize on the neighborhood's proximity to large city anchors. The study uses a mixed research design to understand, through the voice of residents and local business owners, the potential of the center as a catalyst for local entrepreneurship and inclusion, and proposes ways in which community resources can be used to bolster entrepreneurial success. Results reveal the need to strengthen local entrepreneurs' social capital and social competences in order to promote access to financial and business resources. Local businesses must be used as significant assets to build upon in order to strengthen entrepreneurial capacities and cultivate community attitudes towards entrepreneurship.

Keywords: entrepreneurship training, community resources, university-community partnerships

Introduction

In 2014, a residential neighborhood within a Midwestern city was given a special designation as part of a local initiative to transform strategic urban locations into places where people choose to live and work. The development was linked to a larger vision aligned with the city's plan to develop urban villages. Aligned with the neighborhood's 2015 Quality of Life Plan, residents and neighborhood organizations were enthusiastic about creating a center to give residents access to entrepreneurship training and microloans and/or other lending programs for business start-ups, as well as provide local businesses with services and technical assistance.

To advance the community plans, in 2016 a local public university was awarded a grant and private funds to create a place-based entrepreneurship center. The university served as fiscal agent and provided staffing, planning expertise, and advice on partnerships, curricula, and services for the targeted population. The center hired a full-time manager and recruited the first group of program participants for the business accelerator program in fall 2016. University faculty, local businesses, and community leaders are members of the board of directors. The university builds relationships on behalf of the center, helps in the identification of funders for co-investment and collaboration, and contributes with business resources, training, as well as financial support to aspiring and existing business owners.

In an interview to 18 local business owners, Gramlich, Hurtubise, Lockard, and Santos (2018) identified five areas of needed support: networking with other business leaders, better communication with city officials and agencies, stronger sense of community, advocacy for merchants and small businesses, and neighbors' involvement with the retail community. These results added to previous findings by Bresnahan, Diaz, Hay, Smith, and Walden (2016) who observed low levels of interaction of local business owners with other businesses in the neighborhood. Both studies revealed the need to strengthen social capital.

This mixed methods research provides specific information about the observed needs. We collected data from center clients and staff, local residents, non-profits, and small business owners in the community to address two research questions:

1. What factors affect the entrepreneurial activity in the neighborhood?
2. How can the university and the entrepreneurship center leverage the community social and business resources to support entrepreneurial growth?

Entrepreneurship training and inclusion

Entrepreneurship training programs run under the assumption that the development of entrepreneurial skills can help overcome barriers frequently posed by the lack of educational background required to access traditional jobs (Laney, 2013). Underlying training efforts, there is an assumption that important entrepreneurial skills that are not part of the individual's arsenal of inborn aptitudes can be developed (Henry, Hill & Leitch, 2005). The characteristics of entrepreneurship programs vary depending on training needs and expectations, context of application, and population served (O'Connor, 2012). In consequence, the wide variety of programs in existence have led to different forms of classification. Henry, et al. (2005) use the categorization developed by Jamieson (1984) to distinguish between three types of entrepreneurship training: education about enterprise, education for enterprise, and education in enterprise. Education about enterprise educates students on setting up and running a business, mostly from a theoretical perspective. Education for enterprise focuses on aspiring entrepreneurs for a career in self-employment, encouraging participants to set-up and run their own businesses. Education in enterprise, "deals mainly with management training for established entrepreneurs and focuses on ensuring the growth and future development of the business" (Henry, et al., 2005, p.102).

Valerio, Parton and Robb (2014) distinguish between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship training programs. Entrepreneurship education comprises academic programs that target secondary and higher education students, while entrepreneurship training programs are non-formal options targeting a wide range of potential users. Entrepreneurship training can target "vulnerable, unemployed, inactive individuals, or necessity-driven potential entrepreneurs," "highly skilled, innovation-led, or opportunistic potential entrepreneurs," and "practicing entrepreneurs" including "individuals owning informal, micro and small enterprises all the way to high-growth potential enterprise owners" (p. 33). Training is expected to increase socio-emotional and technical skills associated with entrepreneurship as well as entrepreneurial activities and outcomes, such as employment rates and profits (Valerio, et al., 2014).

Several studies have evidenced positive relationships between training and entrepreneurial intentions (Dehghanpour, 2013), entrepreneurial skills (Dumas, 2001), entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Ehrlich, De Noble, Jung, & Pearson, 2000), and the need for achievement and internal locus of control (Hansemark, 1998). Findings also connect entrepreneurship training with business outcomes. Training improves small business performance and results (Bennett & Barkhuizen, 2014; Tambwe, 2015) and increases entrepreneurial activity (Cowling, 2009). Individuals who receive training have 1.5% more probability of starting a new business, and are 3% more likely to be owner-managers of small businesses (Cowling, 2009). However, the effects of training depreciate over time in reference to starting a business and business scaling-up and profitability (Fairlie, Karlan & Zinman, 2015) as well as in sales and profits (Berge, Bjorvatn, & Tungodden, 2015). Even though there is plenty of evidence of associations between training and outcomes at the individual and business level, the effects of training on unlocking the potential of individuals and communities in improving their circumstances through active participation in the economy have been difficult to isolate and substantiate (Bettcher, & Mihaylov, 2015; O'Connor, 2012).

Factors affecting the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training

The effects of entrepreneurship training on entrepreneurial activity depend on several moderating factors such as level of education (Nabi, Liñán, Ertuna & Gurel, 2011), prior work experience (Startiene & Remeikiene, 2009; Wiger, Chapman, Baxter, & DeJaeghere, 2015), and motivation (Sriram, Mersha, & Herron, 2007). Similarly, interpersonal skills (Baron & Markman, 2003) and timely access to resources such as capital, social networks, and policy (Isenberg, 2011) can booster the long-term effects of training. The following is the explanation of some of these interpersonal and societal factors.

Interpersonal factors

Starting and running a business is usually a risky adventure requiring a significant amount of effort and levels of social capital and investment that most nascent entrepreneurs in low-income communities may not possess. (Anderson & Miller, 2003). Entrepreneurs need social capital, including networks, status, personal ties, and referrals, to enhance their access to knowledge and cooperation and to foster their opportunities to receive funds (Baron & Markman, 2003; Grant and Baden-Fuller, 2004). Minority small business owners operating in low-income communities find particular hurdles connected with the lack of bridging and linking social capital (Williams, Huggins & Thompson, 2018). While bridging social capital connects people horizontally between socially heterogeneous groups, linking social capital vertically connects poor people with others who hold influential positions in formal organizations. Bridging and linking social capitals are important in low-income communities to reduce exclusion and increase trust in formal institutions (Middleton, Murie & Groves, 2005). However, as Williams et al. (2018) found, entrepreneurs in deprived communities mobilize resources primarily through socially homogenous groups, mainly with people who have similar characteristics and backgrounds and are inside their immediate circle of contacts. Consequently, they do not use bridging and linking forms of social capital to grow their businesses.

Social capital alone is not enough for entrepreneurial success; entrepreneurs need to build social competences that allow them to take advantage of the fact that they have access to social and business networks. Baron (2014) defines social competence as the "array of skills that assist individuals in interacting effectively with others" including "the ability to perceive others accurately, to express one's own emotions and reactions clearly, to be persuasive, and to make a good first impression on others…" (Baron, 2014, p.26). While social capital helps entrepreneurs to gain access to other groups, social competence "plays an important role in determining the outcomes of their experience" (Baron & Markman, 2003, p.44). Outcomes can translate into new funding, knowledge, partners, or buyers. The authors suggest that, "providing entrepreneurs with appropriate training in social skills might assist them in their efforts to exploit opportunities and launch new ventures" (p.58). Social competence is an antecedent of social capital (Lans, Blok & Gulikers, 2015); therefore, more attention must be given to increasing minority small business owners' abilities to build relationships across heterogeneous groups and with formal institutions.

Societal factors

The conditions under which the entrepreneur operates, societal factors, such as regulatory, economic, and social conditions, also affect the entrepreneur's success (Wiger et al., 2015; Baron, 2014). Societal factors allude to six domains of the entrepreneurship ecosystem: markets, human capital, supports, culture, and finance and policy. These factors interact in highly complex and specific ways to shape the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Isenberg, 2011). Entrepreneurial ecosystems are shaped by the geographic context and the social construction of entrepreneurship that co-evolves with the dynamic of each community (Malecki, 2018; McKeever, Jack, & Anderson, 2014). These ecosystems are not geographically bounded; instead, they are defined by a relational nature that incorporates the entrepreneur's network of organizations and individuals, locally and globally (Clarysse, Wright, Bruneel, & Mahajan, 2014). Consequently, it is difficult to develop a unique understanding of the sequence of events that make the ecosystem operate in a way that favors entrepreneurship (Malecki, 2018). There may be regions where certain elements of entrepreneurial ecosystems are precarious and still operate satisfactorily.

A recently published study in the United States (Kugler, Michaelides, Nanda, & Adbayani, 2017) found that there are proportionately fewer businesses operating in low-income areas, and lower levels of business investments. In general, small low-income communities tend to have less robust human capital, market limitations, less developed infrastructure, smaller networks, less developed or inexistent structures of support, and lower financial resources than large urban centers with established ecosystems. Therefore, small communities must "rely on other components and engage in strategies that allow them bolster their deficiencies" (Roundy, 2017, p.252) leveraging tangible and intangible assets to overcome existing limitations. Some of the existing elements of the ecosystem such as community resources (i.e. community values and loyalty, social bonds, positive role models), local institutional support (i.e. local university, funders, investors, government, and service providers) and training opportunities can be used as advantage to bolster entrepreneurial success and overcome physical and financial limitations. This study identifies some of these resources in a local context.

Methodology

Program Context

The entrepreneurial center is located in a working-class, residential neighborhood with more than twelve thousand residents. The median population age is 31; 26% of the population are African Americans and 30% are Latinx. Poverty rate is 39%, and more than half of the households have income below $25,000. During the last few years, development financial institutions, funding organizations, local investors, local government, and anchor institutions have collaborated in the revitalization and connectivity of the neighborhood to downtown (LISC, 2020). On the northwestern edge of downtown, between the neighborhood and the campus, the university, together with global corporations, and research institutes are creating an innovation district, planting future economic growth for the city (16 Tech Community Corporation, 2020). The neighborhood has also witnessed the growth of an organic art district, perceived by community leaders as positive for business. The neighborhood ranks 31/99 in the number of jobs among all neighborhoods in the city (SAVI, 2020) and has in operation more than 144 small businesses, mainly in construction, social services, including health and education, arts, entertainment, and food services (Gramlich, et al., 2018).

Design

The study uses a sequential mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2014) that employs quantitative followed by qualitative data collection methods and multilevel sampling (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Quantitative (close-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data were integrated during analysis, interpretation, and discussion.

Data collection methods

Online Survey: An online survey was used to collect primary data. Invitations to take the survey were distributed via Qualtrics. The purpose of the survey was to get first-hand information of the reach and effects of entrepreneurship training on clients' capabilities, status, and performance after receiving services. The survey was content-validated by the center staff and included 36 questions that collected information about business characteristics (location, number of employees, and kind), business networks, entrepreneurial intentions, services received at the center, self-perceived change in entrepreneurship skills, business outcomes, perceived barriers to entrepreneurship, and areas of needed support. The skills listed in the survey to measure self-perceived change in entrepreneurship skills were extracted from the description of the center training activities. Survey data was analyzed using SPSS for frequencies, cross tabulations, and median comparisons.

Qualitative data collection: Focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and an open-ended questionnaire were used to deepen understanding on survey results about capacity building, business outcomes, barriers to entrepreneurship, and business networks. The principal investigator and research assistant conducted four 45-minute semi-structured interviews with four center staff members. Community leaders and members of the neighborhood association responded to a short-emailed questionnaire containing five open-ended questions about business opportunities in the neighborhood, changes in local economic activities, and the potential for participation of local entrepreneurs in these changes. The interim director of the center invited a purposive sampling of community business owners and non-profit directors to four focus groups. One focus group was attended by non-profit directors, and three were attended by business owners. Focus groups were conducted by an independent investigator and observed by the research team.

Interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The results of the interviews, focus groups, and open-ended questionnaires were analyzed using thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). The qualitative analysis software NVivo was used by the investigators to code and aggregate the data into categories and themes. Data coding and interpretation was a collaborative process, involving the principal investigator and research assistant.

Participating population

The survey targeted 100% of clients in the center database by October 2018. 356 current and prior clients received online invitations to complete the survey. Only 40 individuals (11%) finished the survey. 50% of survey respondents were neighborhood residents. 64% (27) identified themselves as female, and 25% (10) as male. Among local residents, nine (9) were female and seven (7) were male. 55% of the respondents were between 30 and 49 years old and 76% had college education (55% were college graduates). 50% had a household income over $40,000. Twenty-nine respondents (72%) were business owners; of them, 23 were business owners when they used the center services for the first time. The number of non-resident business owners (16) was higher than the number of resident business owners (13). The center offers the following services: 10-week business accelerator program, free business workshops, presentations and seminars, one-on-one business coaching, networking opportunities (through meetups, round tables, conversations), and brief assistance to target specific business needs (i.e. vetting a business idea). The three most used services by survey respondents were free business workshops/presentations/seminars (19); business coaching (17); and the10-weeks accelerator program (11).

In total, 12 local business owners and four non-profit directors participated in the focus groups. Five community leaders responded to the open-ended questionnaire. The instructor of the 10-

week business accelerator program, two business coaches, and the former program director of the center participated in semi-structured interviews.

Findings

Findings combine qualitative and quantitative data into seven main themes. The first two themes denote the effectiveness of the center in building entrepreneurship skills and business creation. The next four themes summarize the main barriers and areas of needed support reported by participants: business networking, social competence, financial support, and community trust and support. The last theme, roots in the community, emerged as a community asset.

Capacity building

The survey measured perceived changes in skills since the first occasion clients received service/support at the center. Using post-then-pre questions (Rockwell & Kohn, 1989), we asked respondents to report perceived changes in entrepreneurial skills. Wilcoxon signed ranks tests were used to compare pre and post ranks. Results in Table 1 indicate statically significant pre and post differences (significance level = .01) for "come up with a new business idea" ($Z = -2.673$, $p = 0.008$); "clearly explain my business idea to others" ($Z = -3.234$, $p = 0.001$); "networking" ($Z = -2.887$, $p = 0.004$); "estimate the amount of start-up funds/capital" ($Z = -3.755$, $p = 0.001$); "estimate consumer demand" ($Z = -4.000$, $p = 0.001$); "determine a competitive price for your product/service" ($Z = -3.051$, $p = 0.002$); and "design an effective marketing campaign" ($Z = -3.419$, $p = 0.001$). Differences between pre and post media ranks in the skills "identify the need for a new product or service" and "fund my business start-up/growth" were not statistically significant at .01 significance level. Test results show that survey participants perceive improved performance in seven of the nine skills listed in the survey.

Table 1: Entrepreneurial skills. Post-then-pre results

Entrepreneurial Skills	Median pre	Median post	*Z*	p-value
Come up with a new business idea	2.00	3.00	-2.673	0.008
Clearly explain my business idea to others	2.00	3.00	-3.234	0.001
Identify the need for a new product or service	2.00	3.00	-2.496	0.013
Networking - make contact and/or exchange valuable information with others	2.00	3.00	-2.887	0.004
Estimate the amount of start-up funds/capital	2.00	2.00	-3.755	0.001
Estimate consumer demand	2.00	2.00	-4.000	0.001
Determine a competitive price for your product/service	2.00	2.00	-3.051	0.002
Fund my business start-up/growth	1.00	2.00	-2.556	0.011
Design an effective marketing campaign	2.00	2.00	-3.419	0.001

Further Wilcoxon signed ranks tests were conducted to compare results between college graduate clients (22) and clients with some college, higher education, or less (18). We also compared business owners (29) with non-business owners (11). College graduates perceived improvement in four skills: "come up with a new business idea" ($Z = -2.741$, $p = 0.007$); "estimate consumer demand" ($Z = -3.000$, $p = 0.003$); "determine a competitive price for your product/service" ($Z = -3.051$, $p = 0.002$); and "estimate the amount of start-up funds/capital" ($Z = -2.810$, $p = 0.003$). Clients with some college education, high school or less did not report significant improvements in any skill after receiving services. Business owners perceived improvements in four skills: "clearly explain my business idea to others" ($Z = -2.673$, $p = 0.008$); "estimate the amount of start-up funds/capital" ($Z = -2.919$, $p = 0.004$); "estimate consumer demand" ($Z = -3.317$, $p = 0.001$); and "design an effective marketing campaign" ($Z = -2.640$, $p = 0.008$). Non-owners did not perceive improvement in any of the skills.

Business start-ups

The survey inquired about the number of new businesses created by clients since the first year of operation of the center. Eleven new businesses were established after 2016. Three of the new business owners graduated from the 10-week business accelerator program, received business coaching services, and mentoring. One of them received seed money for start-up. The other eight received business coaching (5) or attended networking events (3). Neighborhood residents owned eight of the newly established businesses and only one was located in the neighborhood. The survey also inquired about intentions to create a new business within the next two years. Seven of the 11 respondents who, by the time of the survey, did not own a business, expressed intention to open a new venture within a year time, and two said that they would be starting a new business after one year.

Business networking

The need to build business networks was mentioned several times during interviews, focus groups, and in the survey. In the survey, we asked clients about the main barriers to entrepreneurship in the neighborhood. To the question about needed areas of support, respondents expressed that they needed opportunities to connect with investors (60%), with established entrepreneurs (50%), and with clients (45%).

In a focus group, one participant said "I want to be a part of the financial ecosystem of minority communities. Because I think one of the issues minority business owners have with staying in business is access to consumer markets, to successfully sell their stuff" (Participant 3, Focus Group 2). Small business owners expressed that the structures to promote and facilitate collaboration and networking are scarce, leading to missed opportunities to participate in larger ventures. During the fourth focus group, participants conveyed in the idea of a “glass ceiling” that does not allow them to grow their businesses. They agreed that they would not be able to push “their way up” if they do not collaborate. One of the participants who said to have been “underneath the glass and above it” expressed the need for spaces to collaborate:

> …if I was in this room before I had a conversation with [bidder] about letting that contract go, and we had tagged that level of conversation, I’d tell you, you could knock down the framing, you take over cleaning, we could have done some major things, but I turned the contract down. Yeah, I turned the contract down, I actually won that contract. (Participant 5, Focus group 4)

Having a strong network is key to survival especially during rough times, as voiced by this participant who said that she had the help of the landlord, who “waived [her] rent while the roads were closed for constructions.” She added “the economic development person in the [area], sends people into my business, talks about my business and buys whenever they have an event. I also got a grant from them. [I have] Friends that help me with extra work at fairs” (Participant 1, Focus group 3).

Social competence

Participants shared the need to develop social competence skills. Coaches shared that clients are not getting practical training in how to network although networking is an important part of the conversation. The instructor mentioned:

> [in trainings] we don’t really do an exercise, we don’t provide that opportunity to have that experience… we don’t take them to a networking event, or we don’t create a networking event.... I do show a video to them that teaches them strategies for networking, which is what everyone finds very helpful, but … I don’t challenge them to go out and utilize the formula and then come back and report to the group. Or we don’t do a field trip where they have to go out and network and utilize what they observed or took from the video and apply it to practice. So, I think … they don’t have that experience… (Instructor)

Focus group participants communicated that in order to take their businesses to next level they need to be able to see the results of networking and to recognize the opportunities to transform casual contacts into partnerships and profitable business opportunities. One of the participants expressed to have her calendar “booked out with networking,” but she needs to have “strategic meetings about the way business works, and what needs to happen.” She expressed that it is a question of “strategy versus networking.” As she stated, strategy allows you to move from just shaking hands to “win business…successfully complete the business and leverage that contract to the next contract” (Participant 2, Focus group 4).

When we asked community leaders if local entrepreneurs were prepared to become active participants in economic changes, one of them wrote in the questionnaire, “a fair number of [neighborhood] entrepreneurs started a business without understanding how to avoid pitfalls and what is necessary to run a successful business.” From another leader’s perspective, a way to address this gap is by “providing current local businesses with the opportunity for soft skills training, cultural understanding, professionalism attributes, and understanding of community engagement.”

Financial support

In the survey, respondents identified lack of support from government (35%) and lack of funding (35%) as primary barriers to entrepreneurial success. Low access to business resources (23%) was also considered among the five main barriers. When asked about the stage of development of their businesses, 10 out of 28 survey respondents (36%) expressed that they “still struggle to generate enough cash flow and get enough customers to stay in business.” Eight (29%) responded that their businesses have enough clients but still cannot generate enough cash flow to finance growth. Only two respondents (7%) described their current businesses as profitable with sufficient size and product-market penetration. The businesses reporting to be in good shape were created before 2014. Most of the struggling businesses were created in 2016 or after.

In the focus groups, business owners revealed that part of their struggles is their limited access to funding opportunities, particularly because there is a tendency to favor applicants with better credit history or better connections. A participant stated:

> I have been on the inside of some of those grant funding things, and they seemed to go, to be awarded to the people that are connected. … it’s the people who don’t really need it, it’s like well-healed, well-off connected to government white people are getting grants... You know they’ve got bank accounts, big ones. So, I would love to see some programs come through that are more about grit, determination, inspiration, fortitude, and aid to the community not a detriment to the community. (Participant 1, Focus group 3)

One business owner said that she would like to have “more access to grant programming for small businesses…”. She continued “…being able to find out about them is very difficult and then there are requirements that you may or may not be able to provide especially for people like me who don’t like to do the paperwork and stuff. … [I need] Someone to walk me through it”. This was confirmed during interviews with coaches who noted that most incoming clients lack information about the requirements to access public and private funding. One coach shared “[clients] want someone to give them the funds, and they don't understand what a true investor is and how those relationships and contracts are structured”. In addition, aspiring business owners do not always have the required conditions to have access to traditional credits for not having a strong credit history or the financial stability they need in their businesses and households, which increases the costs of repayment.

Community trust and support

In the survey, clients were asked to judge whether starting a business in the neighborhood was worthwhile/worthless; rewarding/disappointing; without risk/risky; exciting/unstimulating; and easy/challenging. More than 60 percent of the respondents described starting and running a business in the neighborhood as worthwhile (65%), exciting (65%), and rewarding (61%). However, respondents also expressed that starting a local business was somehow challenging (38%) and not without its own risk (31%). We compared the responses given by residents and non-residents using the Chi-Square test of independence and found that residents were significantly more likely ($p < .05$) to find opening a business in the neighborhood "worthless", "risky" and "challenging".

Focus group participants also talked about community support. When asked what motivated her to continue to work, one of the participants in the second focus group said "if I would have a community behind me, I think that would motivate me to keep going." Business owners think that the community's lack of trust on their competencies affects their capacity to find investors and gain access to consumer markets. During the fourth focus groups, one business owner expressed "there's trust issues. Our whole community at large has trust issues". One participant of the second focus group said "black people don't like to support black businesses because they expect us to disappoint them" … She continued, "A lot of times, and this is really unfortunate, but like they expect for yours to not be of quality if it's a black business…." She then added, "it's just, it's really a whole layer of… It's just a cultural nuance… to like not to support each other for systematic oppression…we've been taught to not support each other and work together on purpose…and it comes into everything" (Participant 3, Focus group 2).

Focus group participants agreed on the need to build trust in order to create a strong business environment. Without community support, small businesses will find it difficult to take advantage of the opportunities that present to them.

> I just bid on [name of bidding] and actually won. I won a contract for 1.2 million dollars… and I had to turn it down for a couple of reasons. One reason was, is that we left out some stuff. But, even at 1.2 million dollars, with our community we can figure it out. But I didn't have enough community support if you will, to be able to confirm and be confident that I was good (Participant 3, Focus group 4).

Rooted in the community

We asked survey respondents what motivated them to become business owners. Most of them (55%) have an internal motivation (always wanted to be an entrepreneur) and do not seem to be strongly driven by external circumstances like retirement. Through the focus groups, we also learned that local entrepreneurs are motivated by giving back to the community. Connecting with the community, contributing to community wellness, equity, and inclusion underpins their entrepreneurial success and is part of their mission as entrepreneurs. One focus group participant stated, “I want to have a space that reminds people that we’re all better together, and then use the different tools to uplift voices of those who have been silenced. ….And then the last thing is to show other women of color that these spaces are for us and if they’re not then we can create them” (Participant 2, Focus group 2).

Business owners revealed wanting “to keep our dollars in our community so that our businesses can grow.” As a participant in the second focus group said, “I want my business to be the foundation to help me build into myself, my family, my legacy, and create more business, to create for my community.” They propose investing in the community by hiring people to help them and sustain that growth. One participant commented, “you know it’s that cyclical effect … it goes around… I’m trying to set up something better for my son and the generations that come behind him”. New entrepreneurs want to create opportunities for the underserved, “keeping it in house and …feeding the community, giving folks jobs” (Participant 2, Focus group 4).

Discussion

The entrepreneurship center was created as a local initiative supported by the university to incentivize new local entrepreneurial ventures that would contribute to social and economic development. Study results suggest that the services provided at the center effectively develop key entrepreneurial skills. However, college graduates reported greater skill gains, which may suggest that services are targeting audiences with higher education levels, defeating the whole purpose of inclusion behind training initiatives in low-income communities (Anderson & Miller, 2003; Kugler, et al., 2017). This could also be used as a reminder of the moderating effects of higher education (Nabi, et al., 2011). The survey revealed reasonable levels of entrepreneurial intentions (seven out of 11 potential business owners reported intentions to open a business within the next two years) and business creation (11 new businesses after 2016). However, only one of the eleven new businesses were located in the neighborhood. This may be an indicative that the focus of the center is still at the micro-level, on individuals’ skills and actions, but disconnected from expected community outcomes.

Connecting entrepreneurs to markets, service providers, other entrepreneurs, local lenders, and investors should be a common practice of community-placed entrepreneurship training programs (Knox, 2017; Korsching & Allen, 2004). Results show a disconnect between local small business owners and the resources they need to grow, partly due to lack of socialization of local entrepreneurs among them and with the larger entrepreneurial and financial organizations. This was previously found by Bresnahan, et al., (2016) and Gramlich et al., (2018), leading to efforts to create a merchant association. While the merchant association is a step forward, connecting the association with umbrella and government organizations will be crucial in building linking social capital (Williams, et al., 2018), promoting inclusion, and increasing trust in formal institutions (Middleton, et al., 2005). Contributing to build social capital should come with the intention to develop social competences (Baron & Markman, 2003). In this sense, training must include the development of skills that increase the entrepreneurs' ability to build effective relationships across heterogeneous groups and with formal institutions (Lans, et al., 2015), gaining access to resources and exposure to entrepreneurial models otherwise not available to them.

Findings also suggest that entrepreneurs need improved access to funding opportunities adapted to their needs and circumstances, as well as increased knowledge of the requirements and mechanisms to pursue funding. Currently, the center facilitates cash awards to trainees and information of microfinance options available to small businesses. Some of the information currently provided comes from the Small Business Administration and the Chamber of Commerce. Based on the results of this study, these efforts are not enough. Together with skill training, the center should increase opportunities for financial support, which has proved to be a promising practice to promote self-employment in low-income contexts (Berge, et al., 2015; Blattman & Ralston, 2015). For early start-up businesses, grants (cash or in-kind) and awards are more appropriate than loans due to lack of collateral, perceived risk, and high interest rates (McKenzie & Woodruff, 2013). Accessible information from lending and grant programs and help throughout the submission process is also needed. Another needed strategy is to advocate on behalf of local aspiring and existing business owners who are underrepresented, ensuring equal access to funding opportunities.

Results show that local entrepreneurs need a favorable business environment with higher levels of trust from residents, entrepreneurs, and investors. Roundy (2016) advises that community narratives and values are important contributors in shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Negative community beliefs and attitudes towards new entrepreneurs can act as deterrents for business enterprise creation. As reported in this study, non-residents seem to understand more clearly the economic potential of the neighborhood than local residents, which may affect how residents take advantage of the current investment boom. The university and the center have an important role in supporting entrepreneurs by ensuring that neighborhood residents understand and support entrepreneurship (Roundy, 2017). The university, along with community leaders and community organizations, can collaborate in building better relationships between residents and local businesses by using strategies that bring people together, such as community conversations (Born, 2012) or other community-building practices. Such practices open spaces for listening to residents, local businesses, and state institutions, providing opportunities for greater and deeper participation in decision-making and social capital building. Likewise, the university will hear local perspectives on business development in the neighborhood and adapt center programming to better suit local needs while developing awareness and fostering trust (Gavazzi, 2015). Inclusive community activities like these will lead the way to strengthen social bonds and reinforce the social assets that will be used to overcome existing limitations (Roundy, 2017).

A remarkable finding was the sense of social responsibility expressed by business owners in their desire to support the community while and after growing their businesses. This relates to the concept of embeddedness discussed by McKeever et al., (2014) and Moriggi (2019). Embeddedness views entrepreneurship as a socialized relational process in which the entrepreneur is part of the social context and their actions are partly motivated by the desire to respond to the needs of this context. Together with social capital, embeddedness is an important mechanism for identifying opportunities and local resources, and generating strategic options. Embeddedness is a community asset that must be leveraged by the center to involve business owners in the implementation of strategies to strengthen local entrepreneurship (McKeever et al., 2014). Co-developing and co-implementing training services and strategies with the local entrepreneurial community, paying attention to local information, needs, and skills will increase community impact and labor market outcomes (Betcherman, Dar, & Olivas, 2004; Brooks, Donovan & Jonhson, 2017). By being intentional in incorporating local businesses in the identification of training gaps and implementation of a wide diversity of meaningful learning experiences, the university and the center will help reduce the relational and social barriers that hinder resident participation in training experiences.

Conclusion

Urban universities have a leading role in promoting economic and social inclusion for vulnerable populations (Conway-Turner, 2019). In accomplishing this role, universities need to be responsive to communities through community-based initiatives that value the power of community-university partnerships as an influential strategy not only to enhance responsiveness to local needs, but also to increase stakeholders' commitment to results (Cantor, Englot, & Higgins, 2013).

Study results show that the entrepreneurship center created by the university in 2016, to date has had a limited impact on community outcomes and in promoting social and economic inclusion. The study revealed the need to strengthening entrepreneurs' social capital (networks, status, personal ties, and referrals) in and outside the community, and social competences (skills that assist individuals in interacting effectively with others) to promote access to local and external resources and entrepreneurial knowledge. Additionally, it was found that business owners perceive lack of trust in the community which affects their access to local markets. Results also confirm that local small business owners need better and more equal access to financial, business, and community support to grow their businesses.

We identified strategies that the university and the center can leverage for and with local residents and institutions to provide more opportunities for entrepreneurial success and economic inclusion. The university should focus more on the social assets of the community and further connectedness among organizations and individuals that currently work in isolation towards common goals. Well-established partnerships with local community organizations and local businesses will allow the university and the center to better understand the needs of the community and establish strategies that cut across individual and organizational efforts to remove the existing barriers.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the study is the low response rate to the survey, which may have created significant nonresponse bias. Another limitation was the use in the survey of “post-then-pre" (Rockwell & Kohn, 1989) questions that utilize retrospective self-reporting. Limitations include the emergence of satisficing (Lam & Bengo, 2003) and the use of cognitive strategies to provide socially desirable responses instead of exerting the substantial efforts necessary to optimally answer a survey question. Additionally, Hill & Betz (2005) mention validity concerns such as recall bias or degradation or distortion of memory.

Implications for future research

Efforts to break the barriers to entrepreneurship in low-income areas must start by identifying the enabling and constraining factors to entrepreneurship and developing mechanisms of support. The article provides enhanced understanding of the factors that drive and hinder entrepreneurship in this particular neighborhood, and suggests ways in which the university can contribute to build a favorable entrepreneurial environment through stronger community-university relationships. Further studies must be focused on deepening understanding about what practices can be enacted by urban universities in different contexts to promote entrepreneurial success.

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Original Research

From Transactional to Transformational: Drexel University and Aramark Collaborate on Mission

Jennifer Britton[1], Jami Leveen[2], Don Liberati[3], and Anna D'Isidoro[4]

[1] Office of University & Community Partnerships, Drexel University, [2] Communications and Strategic Partnerships, Aramark, [3]Department of Business Services, Drexel University, and [4] Office of University & Community Partnerships, Drexel University

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Abstract

This analysis of the supplier relationship between Drexel University and Aramark offers a demonstration of the potential for intensifying an anchor institution's local economic inclusion strategies by leveraging the economic power of supplier partnerships. The operation of a major food service contract represents a substantial set of campus jobs and procurement, but this economic activity often remains outside the remit of economic inclusion efforts when the institution has no contractual influence over it. When an anchor institution can partner with a major supplier that shares a commitment to community impact, it offers opportunities to strengthen an anchor strategy. This article describes how Drexel University and Aramark used their campus food service relationship to deepen Drexel's anchor mission and core strategic priorities and Aramark's enterprise sustainability agenda, including the value of the negotiation process, and a set of outcomes in the form of initiatives in food insecurity, local economic inclusion and community engagement, research and technology transfer, and student co-op employment. Both the relationship building process and its outcomes offer a model for other institutions as they look to leverage the untapped economic activity of the major service suppliers.

Keywords: anchor strategy, enterprise sustainability, procurement, auxiliary services

Introduction

There is an accelerating movement in higher education as an increasing number of institutions are establishing an “anchor mission” to more intentionally invest in the communities in which they are embedded. Many of these institutions are looking for tools and strategies that can move them to a next step beyond the impact of business activities like direct hiring and purchasing. Strategic collaboration with major suppliers can enrich and deepen an ambitious anchor mission, multiplying the mission’s scope and reach. Additionally, when suppliers have their own enterprise sustainability goals, there is mutual benefit when they are open to exploring a deeper relationship with clients that are embedded in community.

Drexel University and its campus food service supplier, Aramark, have built a mission-driven collaboration that reaches beyond the traditional boundaries of institutional contracting to deepen and enrich the commitment that each organization has to the communities in which they are embedded. Drexel has articulated a clear set of policies and practices regarding the university’s direct purchasing in the West Philadelphia communities surrounding its campus, but the purchasing and hiring done by suppliers chosen for major service contracts has represented a segment of institutional economic investment that has been largely out of the university’s control. Drexel used the opportunity of a change in food service providers to build expectations for local purchasing, social impact activity, student participation in food research, and student access to cooperative education employment positions into a new contract, and the early results are promising.

This analysis builds on existing work that describes the mechanisms of higher education anchor strategies and it represents a meeting point between literature and scholarship that examines corporate social responsibility and sustainable supply chain management. This study addresses a gap in the literature where these issues overlap: when colleges and universities collaborate on civic-mission-driven goals with their major suppliers. For professionals in higher education who are responsible for advancing an anchor strategy in their institution, it offers an example of a successful process that may be extrapolated to other settings.

The Drexel-Aramark partnership demonstrates how universities and their major service suppliers can leverage their relationships with one another to deepen their respective mission-driven work. The lessons learned about collaboration are informed by the perspectives of the authors who participate in crafting and supporting Drexel’s anchor mission and in negotiating and cultivating Aramark’s food service contract with the university. These lessons represent the authors’ reflections on the implications of such institutional relationships for advancing an anchor mission beyond the powerful but limited scope of direct purchasing. The analysis and supporting evidence offered here is based on the direct shared experiences of the authors in this process, and conversations with other participants. The facets of the relationship and negotiating process chosen for description here are featured for their relevance to the intersection of these two organizations' community-facing missions.

Background

Drexel University and Aramark

In 2010, with the arrival of university president John Fry, Drexel established a plan to align the institution's core functions with a civic engagement mission (Fry, 2010). Established in 1891, Drexel is a private university located in West Philadelphia, with more than 26,000 students. It is known for its emphasis on cooperative education, or "co-op," in which students participate in up to 18 months of work experience as part of their graduation requirements. Having identified three dimensions in which an institution of higher education could carry out a civic engagement mission, Drexel has been developing strategies not only around its (a) academic mission; (b) its volunteer power; and (c) its operational and business functions, how the university hires workers, purchases needed goods and services, and builds and renovates buildings and spaces. Drexel further articulates a mission as an anchor institution by recognizing an obligation to the neighbors, communities, and other stakeholders located in the West Philadelphia neighborhoods near the University City campus (Office of University and Community Partnerships [UCP], n.d). This work is supported and centrally coordinated by the UCP. UCP incorporates a number of community engagement functions including: (a) the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement, which handles traditional student engagement as well as pedagogical supports for faculty; (b) the Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partners, which is a neighborhood-based resource center inspired by cooperative extension; (c) an economic inclusion team who focus on local workforce access and small business support; and (d) a suite of early and K-12 education initiatives. Drexel's administrative departments like Human Resources, Procurement Services, and Business Services are also drivers of the civic engagement work, especially as related to institutional investment, and UCP works closely with them to achieve local economic inclusion goals. In the case of the Aramark relationship, Business Services and Procurement Services took the lead, with UCP acting as a support resource.

As Drexel has refined its approach to using the university's business expenditures to direct investment into West Philadelphia, it became apparent that there were untapped opportunities to deepen the anchor mission, namely through major service contracts. Outsourced business relationships for services like food, vending, and security represent economic activity on campus, jobs and purchasing, mainly, over which Drexel had not previously asserted influence. By rethinking the approach to such contract negotiations with fresh expectations regarding economic inclusion values and access for students, Drexel could unlock a set of opportunities for community stakeholders and for its academic mission.

With a corporate headquarters situated in Center City Philadelphia, just across the Schuylkill River from Drexel, Aramark is a food, facilities management, and uniform provider serving clients like Fortune 500 companies, major sports teams, healthcare providers, educational institutions, iconic destinations and cultural attractions, and numerous municipalities in 19 countries around the world. Aramark has roughly 270,000 employees and the company prides itself on its innovative approach to the services it offers, as well as on a comprehensive enterprise sustainability strategy.

Aramark identifies employee engagement, empowering healthy living, environmental sustainability, and local community investment as the main features of its enterprise sustainability strategy. The strength of the program has netted the company recognition as one of Fortune's "World's Most Admired Companies" (Fortune, n.d.) and as an employer of choice by the Human Rights Campaign and DiversityInc. (DiversityInc, n.d.) Aramark sums up its goals with the notion of making a positive impact on people and planet: enabling people to prosper on a healthy planet while supporting long-term business growth.

Considering the "people" part of this approach, Aramark supports employee wellbeing through an array of benefits and opportunities such as a culture of employee volunteerism, wellness benefits, a front-line education program, and a suite of employee health support services; the company likewise considers the wellbeing of its consumers through a range of healthful food offerings. Strategies for local, ethical, and inclusive sourcing act as a mechanism for community-level investment. For the "planet" side, the company reduces its environmental footprint by sourcing responsibly, operating efficiently, minimizing food waste, and reducing packaging.

Supplier relationships in context

There is a gap in the literature at the intersection of institutional anchor missions and issues of corporate social responsibility and sustainable supply chain management, and we hope to establish a foundation for future work in this area. First, a closer look at Philadelphia is useful. In 2014, the city had the highest poverty rate among metropolitan areas with more than one million people. There is a growing need for building local economies that function for all, and inequality, low wages, and underemployment are entrenched in many localities (CLES and Democracy Collaborative, 2019). Today, Philadelphia relies on educational and medical institutions for much of its employment and economic growth (Harkavy, 2016); the city has one of the highest concentrations of anchor institutions in the country, with educational and medical institutions (eds and meds) comprising 12 out of its 15 largest employers. An anchor institution may be defined as an entity with long-standing or permanent ties to a location with no intention of leaving (Birch, et al., 2013). At the turn of the 21st century, the term anchor institution was created by economist Michael Porter who described a major corporation situated in a community that provides area residents with stability through employment and vibrancy.

The anchor institution's landscape is complex. However, when institutional and campus growth fails to take into account the needs of the often-marginalized neighborhoods nearby, it can exacerbate issues like housing affordability, and can drive residential displacement. These kinds of impacts seem at odds with institutional civic engagement work that aims to offer support and resources to organizations and residents in such neighborhoods; it may be the case that a well-developed local engagement strategy has followed a period of growth, or that an institution lacks internal coordination among these functions, or in some cases may simply not be concerned with the status of neighboring communities. Faced with such tensions between different institutional functions, universities often must reconcile their ambition to expand and grow against a civic mission (Thomas-EL, 2019).

A higher education movement centered in community engagement has surfaced and continues to develop as a mechanism for addressing poverty, racism, gentrification, and health inequity in the communities influenced by these institutions, and in part to address or ameliorate the local impacts of institutional growth. The response has encouraged the advancement of service-learning, volunteer projects, community economic development initiatives, and community-based participatory research towards generating mutually beneficial partnerships that deliver positive impact in nearby communities (Harkavy, 2016). Colleges and universities have an immense potential to be an integral part of community wealth building that prioritizes environmental, social, and economic justice. In this regard, anchor institutions influence the social determinants of health, a framework that looks past individual health to examine the way structural forces such as income, education, and social organization impact a person's well-being (Chinn, 2011). Harnessing this potential can influence local economies such that capital, rather than abandoning the area, can be held and regenerated, contributing to the recirculation of income when the economic opportunity, dignity, and safety of communities are prioritized and supported (CLES and the Democracy Collaborative). Researchers suggest that, despite this inherent potential, what may sometimes be lacking is "a deep and intentional drive to maximize the potential of [the institution as an anchor]" (CLES and the Democracy Collaborative). This prompts the question: how vigorously committed are anchor institutions to their role as agents of economic and social change? To what extent do they leverage the tools available to them to advance an anchor mission? The analysis provided here illustrates how Drexel turned a major supplier relationship into one such tool.

Institutions, then, that embrace such a commitment can engage their corporate partners in deepening this economic mission. Foundational corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature points to CSR as "the obligations of businessmen [sic] to pursue those policies, make those decisions, or follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of objective and values of our society (Bowen, 1953). Walton (1967) establishes that "social responsibility recognizes the intimacy of the relationships between corporation and society and realizes that such relationships must be kept in mind by top managers as the corporation and the related groups pursue their respective goals." The three pillars of CSR, clients, people, and community, aim to put humans and the planet first through intentionally operating in social, environmental, and economic responsibility (Peterson, 2019). When major business partners with CSR agendas can connect with anchor institutions working to establish strong connections with surrounding communities, impacts may be multiplied. This requires strategic systems thinking: who are the players? What are the incentives? What policies and procedures are in place that limit how anchor institutions and their business partners can procure from community businesses? (Clarke, 2017). System mapping can aid anchor institutions in understanding how to shift functions and structure to be more purposeful in their operations, routines, values, relationships, and resources (Clarke, 2017).

Some research suggests that anchor institutions can use sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) as an avenue to further disseminate their missions through corporate partnerships. A supply chain is defined as "a dynamic process that includes the continuous flow of materials, funds and information across multiple functional areas within and between chain members" (Jain et al., 2009). From an organizational perspective, the contributions to interorganizational relationships have been made through transaction costs and later complemented by contracting verbiage and the consideration for social change (Rodríguez-López et al., 2017). Research places an emphasis on the importance of early-formed relationships, trust, and dependence between organizations for their capacity to enhance innovation. It is suggested that a feedback process favoring communication, dependency, and trust ultimately allows partnered companies to establish a cycle of improving business results from better supplier relationships (Rodríguez-López et al., 2017). These factors may inform various institutional pressures in order to navigate other powerful organizations, missions and entities upon which anchor institutions depend, and the desire to fulfill the obligation an anchor institution has to its community (Sayed, et al., 2007). Snyder (2019) advocates for a new social contract in supply chains, one that furthers a business's self-interest and, at the same time, considers others. Contractual parties can serve as moral agents to show and act on human compassion. Sayed further suggests that supply contracts are sets of promises, an inherently moral act (Snyder, 2019). SSCM illustrates that participating parties have the opportunity to learn and grow together, to adjust their relationship as needed, and to build upon a shared purpose. In the new social contract that Snyder supports, anchor institutions and corporations can use their partnerships as a way to achieve greater economic efficiency while simultaneously working toward shared moral pledges. In the Drexel-Aramark relationship that we discuss here, there is an explicit moral purpose that drives both Aramark's enterprise sustainability strategy and Drexel's development of a comprehensive anchor mission.

Discussion

Drexel and Aramark formed a relationship in 2016 when Drexel invited Aramark to take over campus food services, and the relationship has been evolving through a set of distinct phases.

This discussion is arranged in a rough chronology of the development and negotiation process through which Drexel and Aramark set up an operating agreement and set of initiatives that have served to advance both Drexel's anchor mission and Aramark's community commitments. With each successive phase, from the fast launch through formalizing basic contractual needs, and from exploring options for building on the basics through the emergence of four distinct initiatives, the potential of this supplier relationship as a strategic tool deepened. In this analysis, the importance of intentional trust building over the course of ongoing contract negotiation and management is critically important, and while processes with major suppliers at other institutions may unfold in different ways, in this reflection the time that it took over the course of these four phases to forge a trusting working relationship has been instrumental.

Establishing a New Business Relationship

Because of a disruption with a prior food service provider, Aramark arrived in the middle of an academic year and launched its presence at Drexel without a contract in place. Once Aramark was able to establish routine operations, the contract negotiation proceeded.

Drexel understood that the first priority was to ensure that Aramark was well integrated into the campus culture. From Drexel's point of view, the first 18 months of the relationship largely focused on Aramark getting comfortable with the campus, acclimating to the Drexel culture, and ensuring that the core dining program met students' needs. A food service supplier is the university's largest direct service provider to students. Food service is a high-touch relationship that has significant impact on the campus living experience, especially for first-year students, so getting this right is critical for the university, and doubly so because the food service supplier is providing nutrition to students who largely live in rooms that do not have full kitchens and, therefore, often cannot cook for themselves.

For its part, Aramark understood its goal as providing quality food and creating a positive student experience that would support academic success while also enabling clients to attract and retain students and talent, to operate efficiently, and to grow effectively. A long-time leader in the higher education market, Aramark has an understanding of what students are looking for in a food service experience. When the relationship with Drexel started in 2016, Aramark was eager to work with Drexel to reimagine the campus dining experience and what a deeper and more collaborative relationship could look like.

Accordingly, the early days of the relationship were focused on the immediate need to get the student dining program stabilized. Over the subsequent negotiating process of several months, however, a deep and lasting collaboration emerged, and a range of opportunities were uncovered where collaboration could flourish.

Building Mutual Trust and Identifying Opportunities through Contract Negotiation

Developing a business relationship of this scope requires significant effort, and building relationships across negotiating teams takes time. For Drexel and Aramark, the process fostered mutual trust and created space for developing new ideas. Both teams felt it was critical in the first year to establish a foundation of developing common standards, common vernacular, and shared goals and expectations. Drexel's Business Services team, which commonly handles major service contracts relating to campus life and student services, and the Aramark local and regional teams enacted this first level of relationship building through a series of regularly occurring project meetings to ensure strong lines of communication regarding the core dining program.

A food service contract is a complex agreement addressing service, student satisfaction, financial performance for both organizations, and insurance and standard-of-care requirements. The process of developing a contract allows both organizations to set specific performance goals and expectations for each other. During the first year of operation, an internal agreement incorporated the basics of the dining program, but as contract negotiation between Drexel and Aramark played out, opportunities emerged to set broader goals around the general nature of the relationship.

After the initial year, as operations stabilized following the rapid launch, and the core functions of the dining program were being met, the teams felt confident about looking for ways to take the relationship to the next level, moving beyond the day-to-day core program management and thinking about how to operationalize a set of broader goals. The complexity of Aramark's business presented significant opportunities for Drexel to leverage the relationship. As a normal part of business operations, Aramark purchases food and supplies, hires individuals to work at dining locations, hires and trains individuals to be managers and supervisors, and deploys volunteers. At the same time, Drexel was actively thinking about how to deepen the relationship with its key suppliers as part of a larger institution-wide commitment to economic inclusion and local economic development, a buy and hire local strategy. The timing was right to figure out a way to work together to achieve broader impact.

In addition to the core program requirements that were detailed in the contract and were standard for comparable service contracts, Drexel introduced the idea of support for key university initiatives including local economic inclusion and support for Drexel's strategic priorities around food insecurity, student co-op, community engagement, and licensing and technology transfer. While the focus on these strategic priorities was somewhat ambiguous in initial 2016 contract negotiations, the respective teams have spent time during 2018 and 2019 defining, in more detail, where Aramark and Drexel can work together most effectively around food and jobs. Eventually enshrined in the contract was a set of best effort expectations for Aramark to align with Drexel's local investment strategies along with reporting and evaluation requirements.

From Higher Ed Nuts and Bolts to Strategic Contracting: Auxiliary Services as Relationship Builder

When developing a business relationship like this, the role of a university's auxiliary services department is critical. An auxiliary services department sits between university administrators and various suppliers, including those for food service, and often acts as both a translator and a connector. Inside the institution, the various organizational structures contiguous to auxiliary services can tend to favor goals that lean towards the poles of either the contract compliance and financial delivery or the student experience. Auxiliary services can help balance the two priorities.

The auxiliary services department of a university typically oversees services and programs that serve as the backbone to the university and the student experience. Its name depends on the institution, including auxiliary services, business services, campus services, and university services. The portfolio often varies among different universities, but it traditionally includes the main service-providing contracts like dining, vending, the bookstore, and mail services. The auxiliary services portfolio may also include housing, parking, licensing and trademarks, the identification card program, student centers, and real estate. At Drexel, this office is known as business services.

Drexel's business services delivers a set of programs and services essential to students and employees, aiming to foster dynamic campus destinations and community relationships. Business services administers campus dining, vending and retail, DragonCard services and the DragonDollars program, on-campus parking services, and mail service.

Business services' approach to balancing financial delivery and student satisfaction was to first consider how to best advocate on behalf of the institution and students as Drexel and Aramark began negotiations. Looking at internal business practices and at how peer institutions operate, it became clear that the best way to support Drexel's broader strategic initiatives in this partnership was to start small. Local hiring, shared in more detail below, is an example of starting small. Although the impact was substantial, a local hiring strategy was relatively easy for Aramark to implement, and candidate recruitment fit into a structure already developed by Drexel. Additionally, it made sense to look for ways to weave Aramark's current business practices into initiatives that already existed at Drexel. Business services spent time meeting with the Drexel departments that had a stake in the Aramark relationship, including student life, the office of University and Community Partnerships, and procurement services to better understand their goals in order to better inform conversations with Aramark with these interests in mind. With a contract in place, part of the work was to then connect the right people in each organization to generate project development around the shared priority areas.

Local hiring is an example of this approach in practice. The opportunities in this area were clear: Aramark hires many people each year, and Drexel is committed to creating economic opportunity and access to jobs for West Philadelphians. In addition, Aramark offers jobs with fair starting wages and benefits, which meets another of Drexel's goals to not simply generate local jobs but to facilitate career pathways with family sustaining wages. Launching a collaborative local-hire effort meant first consulting with Drexel's economic inclusion team who, under the auspices of the Office of University and Community Partnerships, coordinate workforce access and small business support programming focused on West Philadelphia. Business services needed to understand their engagement process, how they prepare jobseekers for interviews and working, and how they support employers. The next step was to engage with the Aramark on-site human resources team to understand their process and hiring rhythms, followed by bringing the teams together.

Mapping contract negotiation around core priorities

In contract negiations, suppliers may sometimes be faced with a range of client requests to support various intiatives over and above the core deliverables of the contract itself, and this can be especially true in the higher education space. One of the most effective practices over the past year in the Drexel-Aramark relationship has been making the connection to the university's strategic opportunities a frequent and regular part of the ongoing conversation. The Drexel team looked for opportunities to connect various initiatives at Drexel to the core dining program rather than asking for investments that felt like extras unrelated to that service. This has been a useful lesson and one that Drexel now considers in all of its significant supplier relationships.

An additional factor in this relationship building has been attention to the intersections between the wants and needs of the students and the broader goals of the university. Students and parents are increasingly asking for more when it comes to what a university dining program can offer. Of course, they want great food that is served by a friendly staff, but they also increasingly care about where the food is sourced, how the program impacts the local community, and how the institution's food service supplier supports their school's educational mission as well as alumni businesses. These expectations overlap with Drexel's anchor mission. Ongoing work to connect key personnel at Aramark to researchers at Drexel in, for example, food and hospitality, has generated opportunities that support student learning, healthful food choices, and local purchasing, opportunities that are now fully realized and offer benefits to the core campus dining program.

The Payoff to Building Mutual Trust: Enriching Mission-Driven Initiatives

As in any relationship, there have been challenges with the Drexel-Aramark partnership. At times, Drexel and Aramark have had difficult conversations about contract deliverables, and about how to address any inadequacies that may arise. In the end, though, when trust is established and there is mutual respect in day-to-day communication, it is easier to overcome occasional disagreements and problems.

In instances of any contractual dissatisfaction, problem, or crisis, Drexel's business services office takes the approach of continued conversation. Whether with Aramark or any other major service supplier, proactively getting ahead of problems and taking a position of transparency has served well for supplier relationships. When Drexel communicates operational changes to the supplier as soon as a new need or problem emerges, along with a candid assessment of the institution's needs, it helps the supplier make any adjustments they need to implement in their service delivery. Further, preventing these problems being conveyed as surprises serves the project of trust building. As Drexel and its suppliers weather the COVID-19 crisis that has profoundly disrupted campus service contracts, the negotiating teams are leaning on this established atmosphere of forthright communication about evolving needs on the part of both Drexel and Aramark to lay the groundwork for an eventual service recovery.

Jointly, the teams realize that they are in a long-term relationship and that all share an interest in great outcomes for students and for each organization. The slow and intentional process of planning, and especially planning around mission, contributed to this atmosphere of trust between Drexel and Aramark. With that foundation, each has been able to take risks on mission-related initiatives that have fed back into the success of the process.

A working group with executives from both organizations has identified four key priorities for project and initiative development in addition to the core dining program:

- Drexel and Aramark will address food insecurity on campus. There is a growing number of students who are food insecure, and Aramark is uniquely positioned to provide guidance and support in this area.
- Drexel and Aramark will align initiatives and resources around local economic inclusion and community engagement. Aramark has several programs currently funded and being deployed that can be leveraged to create immediate impact in the neighborhoods surrounding Drexel.
- Drexel and Aramark will work together on technology development and finding places where academics, research, and industry intersect, with the Drexel Food Lab work observed as a prime example.
- Aramark will get engaged in the Drexel co-op program. As an international employer, Aramark has an opportunity to provide rich and deep co-op opportunities for Drexel students that can become a pipeline of talent into their organization.

These areas of emphasis, the teams believed, would allow Drexel and Aramark to reach beyond the traditional food service vendor transactions to develop a deeper relationship and create impact for Philadelphia communities while delivering benefits for both student learning and Aramark's sustainability goals.

Addressing Food Insecurity

Many college students across the United States face food insecurity (Payne-Sturges, Tjaden, & Caldeira, 2017), lacking consistent access to the nutrition they need to lead a healthy life, with implications on their academic performance. When contract negotiations launched with Drexel, Aramark already had a set of practices in place to address student food insecurity. For example, the company is a research and development funder of Swipe Out Hunger, a student-led movement to end college hunger, and it also supports the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University, an action research center focused on access to healthy food on college campuses.

Aramark had also implemented the following practices in dozens of campus locations:

- The Food Donation Program provides gets unused and unserved food to qualified non-profit organizations, including student groups and the local campus community.
- Aramark donates funds, food items, or space to a number of university-managed food pantries.
- Aramark works with organizations like Swipe Out Hunger to facilitate the transfer of student meal swipes and leftover dining plan dollars to peers in need.

With these practices already a part of Aramark operations in other locations, there was an opportunity to connect the work of Drexel undergraduate student and now-alumnus Evan Ehlers to this supplier partnership. Ehlers leads a non-profit called Sharing Excess, which focuses on food insecurity on the Drexel campus and around Philadelphia, as well as building a model for other institutions to follow (Sharing Excess, n.d.). Drexel's business services team connected Ehlers with key personnel at Aramark to explore how Aramark could support this initiative.

The outcome, an agreement with Aramark to support a student meal swipe donation process, has been an important piece of how Sharing Excess works. Ehlers notes of the relationship with Aramark:

> After nearly two years of collaboration and planning with Drexel and Aramark, we implemented a sustainable program that could anonymously redistribute donated guest meal swipes to students in need. In the first hour that we launched the program, we received over 240 meal swipe donations. What started out as an idea in my mind has evolved into an effective solution to a very real problem

> thanks to the support of Drexel and Aramark. Together, we are now achieving our shared vision of no student ever going hungry on campus. (E. Ehlers, personal communication, November 11, 2019)

Aramark's support for Sharing Excess, brokered by business services, represents an intertwining of food service, a basic institutional function, with student learning outcomes and achievements, a focus on community impact and greater good, as well as the student life cycle experience of an entrepreneurial alumnus.

Local Economic Inclusion and Community Engagement

In late 2018, business services and Aramark launched a pilot small batch purchasing program with The Enterprise Center (TEC), a West Philadelphia business development nonprofit that houses a commercial kitchen and business support services for local food entrepreneurs. This small batch program created an opportunity for TEC's small suppliers to provide food services and products to Aramark for integration into Drexel's on-campus dining program. This arrangement speaks to Aramark's interest in integrating the goals of strategic sourcing, supply chain sustainability, and supplier diversity inclusion, while also supporting Drexel's anchor mission to increase campus purchasing with West Philadelphia businesses. The business case for the connection comes from satisfying student interest in the kinds of locally produced and culturally relevant food products that TEC can provide.

For Aramark, implementing a relationship with TEC meant moving away from a traditional transactional supplier/provider relationship. Exploratory conversations looked for places where TEC's objectives could provide value for Drexel's dining program, and they uncovered opportunities where Aramark could not only purchase products and services from TEC's culinary members, but also help their entrepreneurs build exposure and capacity around the Drexel campus. Since the program began, TEC's local and minority-owned businesses and their products have been featured in catering menus, residential dining, special events on campus, and a bi-weekly farm stand for students with dining plans.

TEC's vice president Kim Carter has facilitated major institutional food service connections with the culinary entrepreneurs that the organization supports, stating "We work with Aramark (Drexel), Sodexo (University of the Sciences) and Bon Appetit (University of Pennsylvania)" and three businesses have scaled into a move into Center City Philadelphia's Reading Terminal Market thanks to the consistent volume that these connections provided, Torityeah, Sweet Nina, and Birdie's Biscuits. As noted by Carter, "we currently do weekly business with Aramark with an average of six vendors: Tuck-Ins, Sweet Nina, Jillian Bakes, Birdies Biscuits, Shop Sho's Granola, Amira Delights, Brightland Coffee, Tortiyeah and KakeMi. The vendors sell at retail location on campus and at the farm stand" (K. Carter, personal communication, November 11, 2019).

Carter also notes, “the relationship with Drexel and Aramark has been a game changer for the small local businesses. It has provided the vendors with consistent revenue and exposure to a new demographic. This relationship provides an opportunity to sell to universities and their food service companies. It also provides local food options, provided by small businesses, to students. The vendors feel at ease with working with Drexel and are enjoying the opportunity to engage with the students.” Carter identifies important impacts of Aramark’s small batch purchasing program, including supporting the West Philadelphia economy, revenue for small and local businesses, job creation, and supporting minority and women-owned businesses. She further points to an additional pond-ripple, stating “The TEC vendors shop locally, so the program has an extended impact in the surrounding communities” (K. Carter, personal communication, November 11, 2019).

The scale of Aramark’s local purchasing suggests the potential for further developing this priority; Aramark’s total purchasing in Philadelphia zip codes during fiscal year 2019 on the Drexel account alone added up to roughly $3.5 million, representing 48% of its total spend on the account.

As noted, along with its emphasis on local purchasing, Drexel also focuses on local hiring as part of its set of anchor strategies, and the Aramark contract offered the opportunity to deepen the commitment to workforce access for West Philadelphia jobseekers. Following a process that included developing an understanding of Aramark’s personnel needs, business services facilitated a handoff of Aramark’s site hiring managers to Drexel’s economic inclusion team, and the first material outcome of the collaboration has been a joint job fair during the summer of 2019. Ultimately, 15 new associates joined the Aramark at Drexel team as food service workers, cashiers, utility workers, and catering attendants.

In addition to linking with Drexel’s local purchasing and hiring priorities, Aramark has aligned some of its existing community commitments with Drexel’s volunteerism and service and education access priorities in West Philadelphia. The global volunteer program Aramark Building Community engages chefs, dietitians, and other employees to help families learn about and gain access to healthy food, support local community centers, and offer hospitality and food related career skill-building. Aramark employees at Drexel have participated in Aramark Building Community Day since 2017 with more than a dozen employees volunteering each year. The team has hosted food drives, collecting 161 pounds of food to support the regional food access organization Philabundance, and in 2018 and 2019, employee volunteers created hundreds of craft kits in partnership with Project Sunshine for children receiving treatment at local hospitals.

Aramark has also aligned its Aramark Ignite program, funded by Aramark Corporation and administered by The Urban League of Philadelphia, to support Drexel’s goal of providing high-quality education opportunities and career pathways to West Philadelphia K-12 students. The program, now entering its second year, provides workforce skills through school-based workshops around college prep and career-readiness. Aramark Ignite is coordinating with Drexel to provide additional resources specifically to students at West Philadelphia High School.

Technology Development and Research Initiatives: Drexel Food Lab

The integration of the Drexel Food Lab into Drexel's relationship with Aramark is another example of generating outcomes on multiple levels, in this case supporting both student learning and student health. This aspect of the collaboration responds to student customer demand and is an extension of Aramark's initiative with the American Heart Association to provide "plant-forward" menu components. Led by Jonathan Deutsch, professor of culinary arts and food science, the Food Lab engages culinary arts students in food product development and culinary innovation. Under the guidance of culinary arts faculty and professional chefs, Food Lab students develop recipes and cooking techniques with the goal of creating customized food products for clients.

For its collaboration with the Food Lab, Aramark developed a creative brief that shaped the syllabus for a culinary arts course. Aramark then invited the students to the company's Philadelphia headquarters to work in the Innovation Center development kitchen where Aramark chefs shared their standard development process with the students. From providing hands-on opportunities to developing new recipes to spending time in a commercial kitchen, the chefs and students were deeply engaged in the learning process. This provided an enhanced learning experience for the students while also generating a deep and meaningful impact with the development chefs by giving them the opportunity to connect with new perspectives and to share their expertise and experience.

One graduate-level product development course created a set of menu items that have since been rolled into Aramark's vegetarian and vegan portfolio, becoming part of Aramark's larger effort to satisfy an increasing demand for plant-based meals. As a result of this partnership, three vegetarian sandwiches developed by Drexel students were piloted in Drexel's dining hall, a buffalo cauliflower wrap, a grilled Portobello mushroom sandwich, and a roasted beet salad and goat cheese sandwich, which are now also part of Aramark's menu database for their higher education, healthcare, and business dining clients.

Drexel Co-op and Aramark

Drexel is known for its co-op program, which enables students to explore career options and to gain real-world, paid experience in their fields ahead of graduation. During 2019, there has been significant effort by both organizations to identify a set of co-op opportunities throughout the

Aramark system. Given Aramark's scale and complexity as an organization, they are poised to become a key strategic partner for Drexel in this area.

Aramark currently employs two student co-ops onsite at Drexel's campus, and are looking to expand that number at their global headquarters. The goal is to add up to 10 positions in departments throughout the organization, including information technology, marketing, communications, accounting, and other areas. The positions support the corporate team and help develop future talent in Philadelphia. Aramark wants students to walk away from the experience with potential employment contacts in its college hire program, which offers resources like career counseling and resume advice, and hands-on experience in projects that are vital to the day-to-day functioning of Aramark's workplace.

Through this co-op arrangement with Aramark, one of the largest local employers in the Philadelphia market, Drexel is able to demonstrate the ways a traditional supplier relationship can be expanded and integrated with the different strategic institutional priorities. The benefits extend beyond student training: the university has a deeper array of co-op positions available to their students while Aramark gains access to a well-prepared local talent pipeline.

Conclusion

For universities ready to move beyond direct institutional purchasing in their anchor strategies, this account offers a model for deepening a local anchor strategy in a way that also supports some of the institution's core priorities around teaching and research. For Drexel, the opportunity to collaborate on a mission with Aramark has helped launch a high-profile student and alumni-driven food insecurity project. Incorporating this major supplier relationship into the anchor strategy for local economic investment has netted access to a swath of new campus jobs for West Philadelphia residents, and has generated substantial spend with local food entrepreneurs. The relationship enriches student training through Aramark's work with the Drexel Food Lab while offering student diners a new array of healthful menu choices that have been developed by their own peers. Finally, the student co-op connections that are being established with Aramark offer a boost to student learning experiences and opportunities.

In the process of fostering a deeper and more meaningful relationship with the Drexel team, Aramark has observed that the company has been able to broaden the depth and breadth of its impact in Philadelphia by adding employment and purchasing opportunities and expanding on its community engagement and volunteerism activities. The work to support Sharing Excess adds value to Aramark's own food insecurity efforts. Aramark has benefited from the innovation of Drexel students, such as rolling new recipes into their menus, and it anticipates that developing a talent pipeline with Drexel will have consistent future payoffs. Finally, the process of building out a mission-focused contract with Drexel has created an important template that Aramark can use with other university clients.

This analysis is limited to one university and one of its suppliers, and while this represents a powerful example, there is much potential for broadening the area of research. Comparative studies that consider different types of institutions would offer much to the anchor-mission movement. Drexel is a private university with the advantage of a great deal of agility in adjusting its purchasing policies, whereas state and state-affiliated university systems often have significant legislative constraints on purchasing. There is also a place for exploring the implications of this work with corporate suppliers who may not come to a university contract with a well-articulated corporate social responsibility or sustainable supply chain management agenda. In this scenario it will be important to ask: what is the capacity, and what tools are needed for achieving a meaningful contribution to an anchor strategy?

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METROPOLITAN *Universities* OPEN ACCESS
Original Research

Innovation through Community Partnership Mapping and Analytics

Keristiena Dodge[1] and Sachin Pawaskar[2]

[1]Office of Academic Affairs, University of Nebraska at Omaha, [2]Department of Information Systems & Quantitative Analysis, University of Nebraska at Omaha

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Abstract

Higher education institutions are increasingly required to provide a measured response to perceptions that challenge institutions' value proposition as assets to their communities. This article focuses on best practices in the campus' efforts to create a pathway to demonstrate community impact. The ability of systematic tracking of partnership and project data is foundational. This article discusses how institutions' research agenda can expand from basic metrics to analyzing leading indicators of partnership success, and how a sophisticated dataset can be ultimately leveraged to measure impact. The article concludes with a reflection of the challenges faced by other higher education institutions and the commonality in institutions' desire to systematically track and visualize community engagement efforts.

Keywords: impact, measurement and assessment, data, strategic planning

Introduction

Metropolitan institutions are extensions of their local, regional, and global communities. Bardo writes, "A metropolitan university is not merely a university *in* a city, it is *of* the city. Its focus is on the total educational needs of its area and the interlinkages of those needs with the changing and shifting conditions in the world at large" (Bardo, 1990, p. 42). The concept of the metropolis is boundless rather than limiting, and institutions' ability to connect their identity to the metropolis allows them to thrive by bringing relevance to their instruction, research, and service missions.

Several years ago, the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) launched a campaign with the slogan "Welcome to Our Campus, Otherwise Known as Omaha." This campaign reflects UNO's metropolitan identity and intrinsic values of engagement and collaboration. This identity originates in the 1908 founding documents, which identify the purpose of the then University of Omaha as "the promotion of sound learning and citizenship" (as cited in Owen, 2016). Indeed, civic and community engagement are inherently connected to the learning process at UNO.

On an annual basis, UNO offers over 600 community-engaged courses, including service-learning and community-based learning courses. Each year, around 6,000 to 7,000 unique students are involved in some form of community engagement at UNO. Through service-learning, community-based learning, engaged research, and volunteerism, UNO engages hundreds of community partners. UNO is also home to the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center (CEC), which houses campus and community organizations. The CEC is a catalyst for community engagement by bridging campus and community and igniting opportunities for collaboration.

In the 1970s the University of Nebraska Board of Regents' vision for UNO as Nebraska's metropolitan institution was to be "an institution aware of its role in the societal mission of achieving a better life for all" and one that is "concerned more with society's welfare than with its own self-preservation" (cited in Owen, 2016).

As profound as this statement is, predominately external forces have changed the higher education landscape. Similar to other institutions, UNO faces increased scrutiny. Higher education institutions must provide a measured response to perceptions that challenge institutions' value proposition as assets to their communities. Metrics and research should be central to this response.

While increased scrutiny highlights the importance of establishing metrics for community engagement, the desire to create engagement metrics largely derives from the campus community. In 2015 and 2016, the UNO Office of Academic Affairs engaged the campus community in a community engagement self-assessment. In this research study, campus leaders, faculty, and community engagement professionals were interviewed to gain a better understanding of unit-specific community engagement conceptualizations and the desired direction for the institution-wide engagement research agenda (Starke, Shenouda, & Smith-Howell, 2017). There was consensus regarding the importance of measuring impact of engagement efforts. The desire to measure impact was two-fold, both internally and externally focused. Internally, the critique was that while UNO tracked student participation in community engagement, no substantial research was conducted on the impact of the engagement experience on the students (e.g. retention, civic engagement, employment). Externally, interviewees expressed frustration with UNO's inability to demonstrate systematic community impact beyond project-level outcomes and/or anecdotal evidence.

The desire to measure impacts is not unique to UNO. This has been an area of focus for many engaged institutions (Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996, Elder et al., 2008; Flynn, 2015; Holton, Early, & Shaw, 2015; Jenke & Medlin, 2015; and Rosing, 2015). The importance of quality assessments, outcomes, and evidence of impact is widely recognized. Incorporating assessments into institutions' engagement practices increase accountability, data-driven decision making (Gelmon, 2000, Gelmon et al., 2001), and are a characteristic of institutionalized engagement (Furco, 2002). Institutions, such as Portland State University, recognize that measuring impact is important for institutions to "demonstrate their value to the community at large as well as to legislative bodies" (Flynn, 2015, p. 169).

Based on UNO's self-assessment, Engagement Cabinet[1] administrators sanctioned the creation of the UNO Community Engagement Measurement, Assessment, and Evaluation Committee (hereafter Engagement Measurement Committee). The goals of this committee include the creation of a framework for strategic data gathering, analysis, and reporting, and the formalization of an institutional engagement research agenda. Central to UNO's research agenda is the creation of a mechanism that allows for systematic partner-centered tracking, analysis, visualizations, and multi-layer mapping.

This article focuses on UNO's efforts to create this framework for partnership analysis and visualization. The framework illustrates best practices and challenges. The goal of this article is to provide practical insights that could facilitate other institutions' efforts to track partnership engagement.

The article starts with a brief description of the Community Engagement Partnership Initiative framework while focusing on the importance of leveraging service-learning and the agile/scrum methodology. Then the authors address the value of data democratization, which can only occur if the framework is driven by campus input, reflects community voices, is dynamic and inclusive, and tailors information to accommodate various audiences. Finally, the article discusses how a strategic framework must address sustainability concerns and should be integrated into institutions' strategic planning process, which ensures relevance of community engagement and its data collection. While the framework allows institutions to demonstrate and

[1] The engagement cabinet at UNO consists of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Dean for Graduate Studies, the Executive Associate to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Community Engagement and Director of the Community Engagement Center, and the Vice Chancellor for Student Success.

visualize community engagement, it is not the end goal; rather, it is an integral and strategic stepping stone in institutions' roadmap of measuring community impact. The article concludes with a reflection on the challenges faced by other higher education institutions and the commonality in institutions' desire to systematically track and visualize their engagement efforts.

The Community Engagement Partnership Initiative

In 2016 UNO recognized that despite its national recognition for community engagement, including Carnegie Classification, a Presidential Award Recipient in the Honor Roll, and an Excellence in Community Partner Engagement Award, the institution was lacking a comprehensive listing of its community partners. While units across the institution were highly engaged, UNO was unable to answer simple questions about how many community partners it was engaged with, who these community partners were, what the focus was of the engagements, where the engagements took place, and the type of engagement. Without this information, UNO was not positioned to "study the impact both of individual partnerships and across partnerships" (Driscoll, 2014). Similar to other institutions (Flynn, 2015; Holton, Early, & Shaw, 2015, Rosing, 2015), UNO recognized the need to track community partnership data.

As a response to this need, the Engagement Measurement Committee collaborated with multiple graduate-level, service-learning capstone classes in the College of Information Science & Technology to create the Community Engagement Partnership Initiative (CEPI). CEPI is a framework that allows UNO to track, visualize (including through multi-layer mapping), and analyze its community partners and projects.

The CEPI mapping and analytics framework serves multiple levels of utility. On the micro-level, this tool allows UNO to answer questions and provide complete transparency regarding community partnerships and projects, including responses to the 'who, what, where, when, why, and how' questions. The table below provides some of the types of questions UNO can expect to ask and answer.

Table 1. Micro-level utility (illustrative; not comprehensive)

Category	Question
Who	Who are the community partners we are engaged with?
	Who are the campus partners (college and units) involved in community engagement?
What	What organization types do UNO's community partners represents (e.g. nonprofit, government, schools, etc.)?
	What is the focus of the engagement work?
	What are the outcomes associated with the projects?
Where	Where are our community partners located?
	Where or which legislative districts are we engaged in?

When	When have we engaged with our community partners?
Why	Why are we engaged?
How	How long have we engaged with our community partners?
	How many community partners are we engaged with?
	How engaged are we in our community?

While providing transparency and answers to the questions above, CEPI also becomes a powerful mechanism that visualizes the extent of UNO's community collaborations, thus demonstrating how UNO is operationalizing its metropolitan mission.

Below is an example of one multi-layer map that demonstrates collaborations with community partners by legislative districts (Figure 1). The visualization is dynamic and allows users to drill down to answer specific questions by using the filters. Each dot on the map represents one community partner and the interactive nature of the data points allows for complete data transparency.

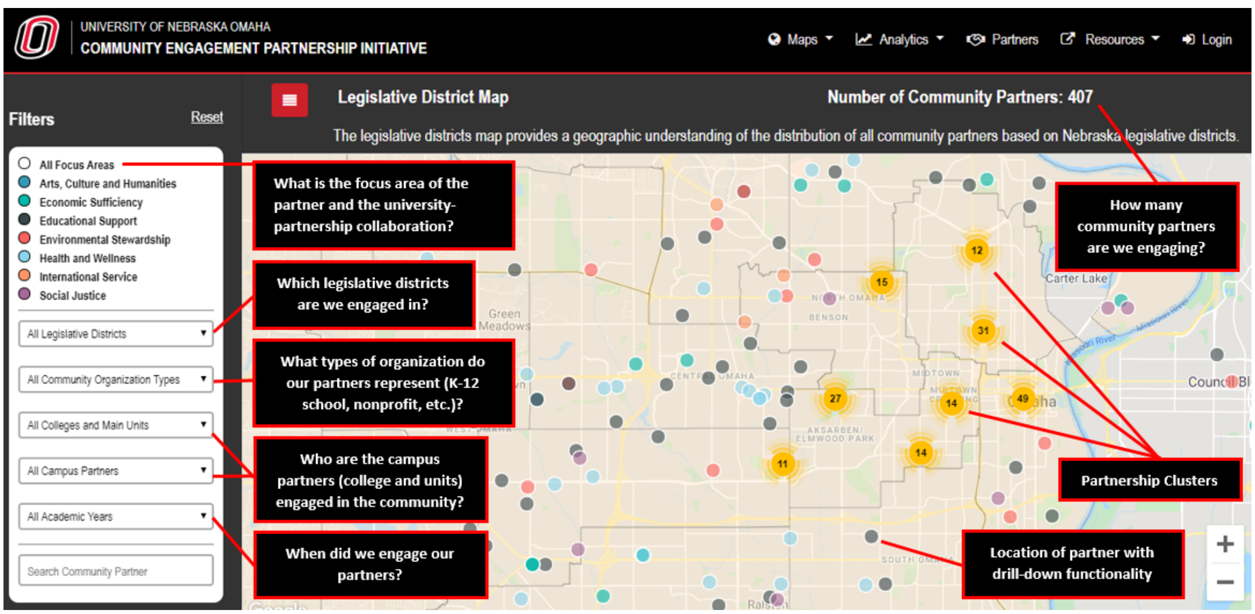

Figure 1. Dynamic and interactive legislative district multi-layer map (based on a limited dataset)

Leveraging Service-learning

Universities today have several important missions, among them advancing student learning, scholarship, and community engagement. A key part of the CEPI innovation was to connect these three important goals by leveraging service-learning. Service-learning is a method of teaching that combines classroom instruction with meaningful, community-identified service. This form of engaged teaching and learning emphasizes critical thinking by using reflection to connect course context with real-world experiences. Service-learning faculty collaborate with community organizations as co-educators and encourage a heightened sense of civic engagement and personal responsibility for students while building capacity and contributing community impact (UNO SLA, 2019). Figure 2 shows the traditional service-learning model.

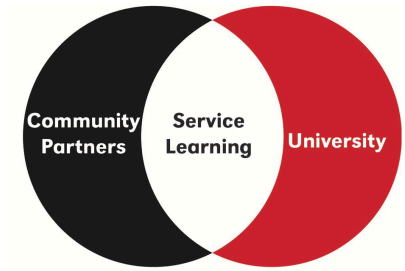

***Figure 2**:* Traditional service-learning model

Developing CEPI through several graduate-level service-learning capstone courses was more challenging than simply engaging the services of professional developers and consultants, or to outsource it to a software development company. Outsourcing the assignment was not an option for the Engagement Measurement Committee, as the committee has no operational dollars or budgetary discretion. By leveraging service-learning classes, UNO was able to create the software without utilizing significant financial resources. More important, however, is that this framework demonstrates UNO's commitment to community engagement. How better to reinforce such a commitment than to connect its creation to student learning outcomes, thus reflecting the ethos of a metropolitan university?

Agile Framework

Students in graduate-level service-learning capstone courses developed the CEPI framework over three semesters. The students were enrolled in the Management Information System program in the College of Information Science and Technology.

The capstone students created a statement of work in collaboration with the Engagement Measurement Committee. The requirements were developed using the agile scrum framework and methodology (Neon Rain Interactive, 2019; Drumond, 2019; James, 2019; Westland, 2018) over several two-week sprints. At the end of each sprint, there was a demo which allowed the committee to provide feedback and iteratively build the software. The iterative process of testing the technology, providing feedback, and having the issues fixed in the following sprint resulted in significant efficiency and responsiveness. Figure 3 demonstrates the agile scrum methodology.

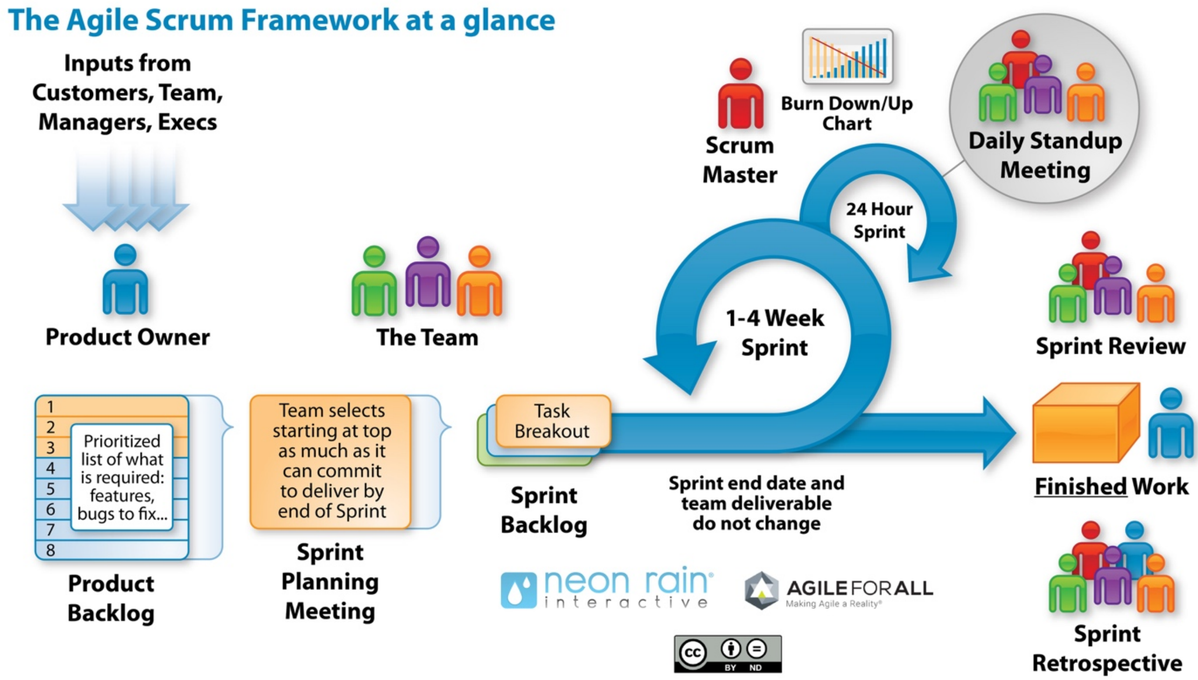

***Figure 3**: Agile scrum framework methodology*

Data Democratization

Fragments of community partnership data often exist in silos, and non-expert users must be able to exploit it to extract knowledge, gain insights, and make well-informed decisions. The value of the knowledge discovered from big data could be of greater value if it is available for later consumption and reuse (Espinosa, Garriga, Zubcoff & Mazon, 2014; Winter, Wiseman, & Muirhead, 2006; Brown, Bammer, Batliwala, & Kunreuther, 2003; Shalowitz et al., 2009) especially in community groups from low-income neighborhoods. Such community groups have the most to gain from full access to data, yet the least capability to achieve that access or make use of the data once they have it. The gap is often filled by intermediaries who provide access to data and assist with analysis (Sawicki & Craig, 1996). Universities fill in the role of such intermediaries by empowering community groups to participate fully in planning and policy discussions that affect their neighborhoods. Universities, such as UNO, play this role of information providers. Data democratization leads to better transparency, which allows universities, government, and community leaders to work more cohesively by using better data to enhance decision-making capabilities. For those benefits to occur, buy-in is essential.

Community Partner Voices

Since partners are central in the CEPI framework, ensuring community support for this effort was important. After two capstone courses were completed, the Engagement Measurement Committee engaged community partners to solicit feedback. The committee conducted a seminar presentation and six community partner focus groups, reaching more than 50 community organizations.

The Engagement Measurement Committee collaborated with the Service Learning Academy and demonstrated the mapping technology for the partners during the service-learning seminar, an annual week-long opportunity to bring community partners to campus with the goal of facilitating engagement. Based on this, the committee decided that more in depth focus groups would be valuable. Following the seminar, the Service Learning Academy sent out requests for focus group participation to its community partners. The Engagement Measurement Committee doubled the number of scheduled focus groups with the goal of limiting participation to around 10 participants for each focus group. To the extent possible, community feedback was incorporated into the third capstone class' statement of work. Feedback deemed out-of-scope was placed on a roadmap for future development

The community partners' input proved invaluable and provided a refreshing perspective on the framework. While CEPI allows for community partners to access data, UNO is responsible for data entry. Partners confirmed that this was an appropriate approach but wanted to ensure that all collaborations with UNO would be reflected in the framework. Partners were also positive about the creation of CEPI and recognized that it meets an almost universal need, namely the need to demonstrate organizations' partnerships outreach efforts.

Furthermore, partners questioned various aspects of the framework. Some feedback reflected a reaction to how the framework was set up, including how categories were established, whether they were appropriate, and how their respective organization fit into the categorizations. This feedback led to expansions in our categorizations.

Transparency was another interest of the community partners. While partners appreciated the information, they critiqued reports that included aggregated data without the ability to drill-down and get to the underlying data. The latest iteration of the technology provides drill-down functionality to aggregated numbers, thus increasing transparency. In addition, responsive to the partners' feedback, the third capstone class improved the ability for data to be exported to Microsoft Excel and PDF.

Much of the feedback was analytical and resulted in discussions on how to recognize complex issues such as partnership sustainability, intensity, and networks. This led to a variety of innovative analyses within the application. The community partners pushed the committee's way of thinking by discussing how engagement is becoming more holistic and connects to multiple topics rather one overarching focus area. This resulted in a significant change in the data model and allowed for projects and partnerships to connect to a variety of subcategories and a creation of a holistic score.

Importantly, the focus groups provided insights on how partners envisioned using the technology to advance their own goals. Understanding this vision allows the committee to make development decisions to benefit UNO and its community partners.

The Engagement Measurement Committee was surprised to learn that despite its primitive stage, community partners were aware of the framework and were utilizing it to some extent. For example, during community partner focus groups, two organizations that are part of the same coalition to advance access to the arts in K-12 schools, discussed how they reviewed the CEPI data during a coalition board meeting. The data demonstrated how both organizations were collaborating with UNO and the same K-12 school to offer arts programming to that school. Based on this, the coalition made the informed decision to expand access to other schools.

Campus Buy-In

Community engagement breaks down silos. The tracking of community engagement, and the potential design of a systematic framework for visualizing engagement, cannot happen in a silo. Campus buy-in is essential in the ability to do institution-wide engagement tracking and analysis. UNO's movement towards systematic partnership data tracking, analysis, and visualizations was based on campus input. First, the initial effort to move towards community partnership tracking was a direct result of the feedback received in the engagement self-assessment. Indeed, the basis for tracking partnerships was laid by the assessment participants, which included administrators, college deans, faculty members, and engagement professionals.

Wilhite and Silver (2004) warn that stakeholders can become disengaged if an atmosphere of "pseudo-consultation" exists. In this instance, the campus community believes that although their feedback is solicited, it will not affect decision-making. Therefore, it is essential that in each feedback instance input is analyzed and incorporated. The campus community systematically and consistency provided feedback on the CEPI framework which was essential to the decision-making process. A few efforts of campus input are worth highlighting:

First, the engagement mapping efforts were presented at several campus-wide Strategic Planning Forums. In one of the 2017 forums, the audience representing faculty, staff, and students were asked to evaluate a prototype and provide feedback. This resulted in over 100 suggestions and comments. The overwhelming support resulted in the Engagement Measurement Committee's efforts in advancing its prototype by working with the capstone students. Improvements, based on the suggestions, included: (1) the expansion of dataset with a variety of metrics, including project-level details, student involvement, engagement types, cascading campus partners, and organization types; and (2) incorporating legislative districts as a core component of all maps, visualizations, and reports.

Additionally, campus participants asked important questions about the equity of partnerships and alluded to potential gaps in partnerships and sustainability of partnerships. While these questions did not have an immediate response, they were placed on a roadmap for further analysis and have been, to some extent, addressed in future iterations of the technology.

Secondly, the Engagement Measurement Committee was essential in providing strategic input. This committee consisted of representatives from the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Success, and included the Community Engagement Center, Service Learning Academy, and the Office of Civic and Social Responsibility, as well as representatives of units with expertise in assessment and evaluation. These units regularly collaborate with campus and community partners, and therefore are well positioned to provide feedback. Before every capstone, this committee decided on its primary goals and identified stretch goals for the capstone. After each capstone class was completed, the committee had an opportunity to test the technology, provide user experience feedback, and reassess the various components of the framework. The feedback varied from technological fixes to data model changes, and from implementing logic-based forms to expanding the captured metrics.

Finally, engaging faculty members for input was non-negotiable. Faculty teach service-learning and community-based learning classes, lead engaged research efforts, and mentor students through many curricular and co-curricular engagement opportunities. In partnership with the Center for Faculty Excellence, focus groups and small meetings were scheduled to solicit feedback. The feedback from faculty members provided a unique perspective of the framework. Feedback included incorporation of definitions of all metrics, clarification of what should be included and what should be excluded from the database, and the request for faculty recognition within the framework. Faculty were also critical of the prospect of adding another reporting layer to their workload and stressed the importance of connecting the framework to faculty activity systems.

Whereas previous iterations of the framework provided recognition to the units involved in the collaboration, there was no way to capture the faculty and/or staff involved in the project; the newest iteration incorporates this important component. In addition, a user guide was created with expectations on what to include in the application, and definitions were embedded throughout the technology. While we were unable to respond to concerns related to additional reporting requirements immediately, this advancement has been discussed with university leadership and is recognized as a top priority for future development, as discussed in the sustainability section.

The process of allowing stakeholders, whether internal or external, to voice their opinion results in buy-in and commitment. Lencioni (2002) explains that the process of creating buy-in through creating opportunity to allow stakeholders to voice their opinions should not be mistaken for a desire for consensus. Buy-in grows, in part, when feedback is genuinely solicited in an iterative process and when this feedback is systematically incorporated in the decision-making process, where appropriate.

Dynamic and Inclusive

To facilitate campus buy-in, it is important that any data presentation is relevant to specific units. While campus leaders may be interested with the institutional community engagement data, college deans and unit chairs/directors are primarily interested in engagement data relevant to specific units. This means that each map, visualization, chart, table has to be dynamic by incorporating drill-down capabilities to colleges and main units, as well as departments, schools, and campus programs. The ability for each unit to be recognized for its partnerships and collaborations in the framework, in addition to the buy-in process, resulted in various units requesting to enter their data into the CEPI framework.

Further, it is important to recognize the different needs of various internal stakeholders. UNO is a decentralized campus in which units conceptualize community engagement in different ways (Dodge, Starke, Smith-Howell, & Woods, 2019). The engagement dataset should be inclusive and flexible to avoid disengagement from specific campus units. For example, while the majority of the community engagement efforts occurs with nonprofit community partners, there are specific colleges that have expressed the importance of including small businesses as part of the community partnership definition. These colleges facilitate community-based learning for the public good with micro-businesses.

By implementing an organization type dimension to the dataset, UNO is able to include community engagement efforts with these colleges' business partners, while still allowing end-users to differentiate (and possibly exclude) specific organization types from the data presentations. Therefore, the dataset should be inclusive enough to allow for relevance to all units, while providing data integrity through clear definitions, labeling, and user interactions.

Audiences

It is important to recognize the myriad audiences that could have interest in community engagement and partnership data. The key is to reframe the same information into slightly different presentations relevant to different audiences. For example, filters allow users to drill down to answer specific questions. Each data representation is dynamic and allows for unit-specific drill-down functionality, making the data presentations relevant. In addition, UNO has developed specific presentations tailored towards different audiences. For instance, the application embeds legislative districts in reports. The ability to ask questions at the legislative district level is a question most often asked of university leadership and is critical to win support from state and local government officials.

Data-Informed Strategic Direction

Once the metrics are institutionalized, the dataset is developed and the basic data representations are visible, with the strategic importance of such frameworks becoming visible (macro-level utility). The analytical structure allows UNO to address strategic questions, including the ability to identify strategic alliances, discuss equity in resources and issues addressed, and provide an innovative framework for measuring impact.

With the CEPI framework, questions that were previously difficult to conceptualize, let alone answer, became attainable, including the ability to analyze social networks and partnership intensity. The issue of partnership intensity has been a point of discussion in the Engagement Measurement Committee, faculty input, and community focus groups. All stakeholders recognize the need to differentiate between low touch vs. high touch and/or sustainable partnerships. For example, if an institution engages with Partner X during a one-day volunteer event, that is a different relationship, with different outcomes and impacts, than the relationship with Partner Y that includes multiple projects, over a longer timeframe, engaging a larger number of different campus units, addressing a multitude of societal issues, and through multiple different types of engagement. Analyzing and weighing the importance of these variables is essential to advance from basic metrics to leading indicators of success.

Strategic questions include the ability to recognize that there are certain societal focuses that the university is more engaged in than others focus areas. This information does not necessarily warrant action or correction; it could be that a particular focus area is of strategic interest to the institution. However, without the data representation and transparency, there cannot be an informed decision. Other macro-level questions include gaps in community partners (who is the institution not engaging), equity, and saturation of engagement.

Sustainability

One of the greatest challenges facing engagement-tracking systems is sustainability. While there will be individuals on campus willing to enter data, many will refuse or lose interest in the technology. It is essential that a plan is created to ensure sustainability. Application Program

Interfaces (APIs) provide unique opportunities to increase sustainability by connecting the framework with existing systems that may already capture engagement data.

Mol (2016) warns about survey fatigue amongst university students, a phenomenon reflected in the self-assessment interviews and faculty focus groups. This reinforces the importance of leveraging existing data sources and demonstrating their use prior to requesting new data input. To address this concern, UNO created an engagement data inventory that identified engagement data points, definitions, sources, timeframes, and limitations.

Higher education institutions often require faculty members to enter data into faculty activity technology. While faculty activity software contains important engagement data, it is often underutilized, leading to frustration with faculty members. Holton, Early, and Shaw (2015) reinforce the importance of leveraging faculty activity data. The next step for the Engagement Measurement Committee is to develop data APIs that will allow for integration with campus systems, starting with UNO's faculty activity software. Not only will such an integration lead to valuable data and increased sustainability, it is also responsive to faculty focus group feedback, which could facilitate buy-in.

It is important to recognize that integrating two disparate systems via APIs takes work and can be challenging, especially since it requires some technical expertise, but more importantly, it needs buy-in from different levels within an organization. From a technical perspective, integrating different institutional processes and technology systems that have different data frameworks might seem problematic at first glance, but APIs have been created precisely to solve this problem and allow multiple systems using different technology stacks and frameworks to work in concert. The latter is more difficult, because it requires organizations to overcome existing culture and behavior challenges, which often have silo mentality; overcoming these requires buy-in at the highest levels within an organization.

The architecture of disparate software systems becomes a tangled web of inefficient processes and standalone applications with siloed data points (Think Automation, 2020). Within higher education, there is near universal recognition that insights connected to the toughest challenges are buried in data housed in multiple siloed systems. Overcoming this challenge requires a fundamental change in the way an institution thinks about, manages, shares, and applies data to achieve its strategic goals. It takes a sustained investment, strong leadership, and campus-wide buy-in. The key for universities to building something sustainable is to work on "Thinking of Data as an Institutional Asset, Not a Departmental One" (Ellucian, 2020). Early discussions with the institutions' information technology departments are advisable to ensure that all stakeholders can place system integration on their respective development roadmaps.

APIs are driving a new wave of innovation centered on sharing services. Industries want to learn more about APIs and their potential to transform business processes. In general, APIs offer institutions the opportunity to scale and foster innovation while reaching a wider audience (Glowtouch, 2016; Readwrite, 2008; Chomko, 2010; Iyer & Subramaniam, 2015; Little, 2015). Furthermore, much of the higher education information technology already incorporates APIs. APIs are worth the investment if institutions are truly concerned about the sustainability of their framework. Institutions should not be asking individuals to enter engagement data in one system and re-enter similar information in another system, as this is a recipe for disengagement.

Strategic Plan Integration

Strategic plans of metropolitan institutions often emphasize community engagement which is a sign of commitment. When designing a framework for tracking community engagement, alignment with the strategic plan and planning process is advisable. The Engagement Measurement Committee conceptualizes this in the following ways: 1) by institutionalizing metrics and targets, and 2) by elevating the relevance of the engagement work through alignments with strategic priorities.

Depending on the institution, there may or may not be metrics, targets, and benchmarks tied to the community engagement objectives and strategies. Most institutions do an abysmal job of monitoring whether they are progressing toward their goals, and many struggle to know if they are on track for a given year.

At UNO, leadership implemented technology that ties metrics to all strategic planning initiatives. In effect, the technology (UNePlan) allows units to align initiatives with the strategic plan and operationalize audacious goals by creating (multi-year) roadmaps with metrics/targets. The desire to institutionalize metrics makes data-driven frameworks (for example CEPI) more relevant, as they provide a mechanism to monitor progress, thus increasing accountability.

Another way of aligning the framework to the strategic plan is by integrating it with campus priorities (Holton, Early, & Shaw, 2015). As indicated by Furco (2002), an alignment of engagement to campus priorities demonstrates 'sustained institutionalization.' While sustainable commitment to engagement is reflected in mission statements and strategic plans, the role of community engagement should advance as a method for achieving institutional priorities.

For example, through the strategic planning process, UNO identifies topics to bolster its strategic goals. In 2019, the entire campus rallied behind the Completion Imperative with the goal of implementing a multitude of initiatives to support students' pathway towards graduation. In 2020, UNO announced six interdisciplinary Big Ideas of strategic importance to the campus.

Incorporating these strategic priorities within the framework adds another level of relevance to the Community Engagement Partnership Initiative as it allows UNO to track its partnership data based on the new priorities.

Critical Reflection

UNO is not unique in its approach to track and assess partnerships. Critical questions may arise regarding the process of creating the technology and its effectiveness. For instance, one might wonder if the creation of such platforms is a good use of university resources. One way of reflecting on this question is by recognizing that universities are at the forefront of technology innovation and have been incubators of many products used in everyday life (e.g. the internet, Google). One of the goals of academia is to provide opportunities to explore creating new products, technologies, and platforms that benefit the community at large. Furthermore, as reflected in the best practices, the pathway utilized was in fact efficient, cost-effective, and meets a significant institutional need.

Others may wonder why institutions would build their own platform instead of using a commercial product. For UNO, it was important that the creation reflected the best practices described in this article. This includes responsiveness to campus and partner input, data model sustainability and flexibility, and adaptability to support dynamically changing priorities. Furthermore, the creation of CEPI was grounded in service-learning. One of the considerations with Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) products is that they are in either early stages of development or do not meet all the nuanced needs of specific universities and communities. Each university has different and specific engagement goals, understandings, and frameworks; building a platform that can meet such a level of customization is a challenge. However, the authors recognize that the creation of a standalone platform can be a significant undertaking and advise institutions to reflect on the efforts done by others, including marketplace products.

The most important questions relate to whether the creation of the partnership framework results in behavior changes, either related to data entry or informed decision-making. Taking a conservative approach, the answers are unknown at this point, although there are certainly positive indications. From a data entry perspective, community engagement units have entered data resulting in over 400 active partnerships and 1,000 engaged projects. Furthermore, other units on campus have expressed interest in entering the data. However, in the absence a full campus-wide rollout and API implementation, the database reflects a limited dataset.

From an information consumption perspective, the data has been used in a variety of situations to respond to basic partnership questions (list of partners, number of partners, specific projects by partners, etc.). More recently, UNO started efforts to expand local/regional international experiences. CEPI was used to gain a better understanding of existing efforts, including:

- What projects (local and beyond) connect to international topics?
- Who are UNO's international partners?
- Who are UNO's local and regional community partners that have collaborated on topics related to international engagement?
- Who are the key campus stakeholders interested in topics related to international engagement?

The example referenced earlier in this article of community partners reviewing CEPI in board meetings, recognizing duplication of efforts, and changing strategy to collaborate with different partners is an example of strategic, data-driven decision-making. While there are certainly indications that the framework is leading to a desire for data entry, information consumption, and data-driven decisions, in recognition of challenges ahead, it is premature to declare success.

Conclusion, Strategic Vision, and Next Steps

Implementing a framework for understanding community partnerships provides institutions the ability to move beyond basic metrics into leading indicators of success, while simultaneously visualizing the scope of community engagement. The vision for the Community Engagement Partnership Initiative, however, goes beyond basic partnership and project metrics. While tracking partnership/project data is essential, CEPI is only a starting point in UNO's ability to measure societal impact. Partner interviews and focus groups will be important to assess the roles, process, decision-making, perceptions, and partnership outcomes (Driscoll et al., 1996; Gelmon et al., 2001).

The Engagement Measurement Committee has identified a research agenda that would leverage the existing CEPI dataset. The goal is to connect qualitative research methods to the existing CEPI dataset leading to quantifiable outcomes by dataset dimensions, including geographical location, legislative district, focus area, types of engagement, and others. Community partners have expressed interest in participating in interviews and/or focus groups to facilitate this process.

Higher education institutions should move towards the systematic and strategic tracking and visualization of their community engagement. The incentive to do this might differ by institution, although it will often be a combination of several factors, including: 1) the urge to demonstrate the value proposition of higher education, or respond to allegations or the lack thereof; 2) the curiosity to understand the impact is of the institution's community engagement efforts, for example on a particular societal issue, location and/or district, or partner; and 3) the desire to be strategic about community engagement through informed decision-making for example related to gaps, avoidance of duplication, saturation, and alliances.

At the 2019 Philadelphia Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU), three institutions presented homegrown systems that allow for community engagement tracking and reporting. The three institutions, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the University of Pittsburgh, and Georgetown University, recognized the need and the existing gaps in institutions' ability to systematically track and visualize community engagement. The support expressed by the audiences indicates that other institutions struggle with similar questions.

The authors recognize that the approach and solutions outlined in this article is one among many. Every institution has its own processes and systems, which have several unique facets, and no one solution can address all of these. The challenge faced today is the lack of an agreed upon common framework and ontology as it relates to data for community engagement and service-learning. The authors encourage institutions to explore other approaches and solutions, including available options in the marketspace or potentially creating a homegrown solution that fits the institution's needs. An institution's data journey should be one that engages a variety of stakeholders at various stages and recognizes that priorities may shift; systems, therefore, must be flexible and easily adaptable.

UNO's roadmap to the CEPI framework was not without challenges. Many of the best practices described were in response to those challenges. CEPI started as a signature initiative of the Engagement Measurement Committee and developed into a formalized framework based on campus input, buy-in, and desired new features. CEPI's progression from a prototype to a formalized framework took deliberate effort and time, and scaling it up further can only be sustained with institutional investments.

While UNO, the University of Pittsburgh, and Georgetown University have moved towards a formalized framework of tracking and visualizing community engagement, institutions should start their own journey. Though formal structures are advantageous, they are not a prerequisite to engagement tracking. UNO built multiple prototypes and relied on informal data collection mechanisms, including Excel spreadsheets and ad-hoc data requests, before creating this structure. Informal mechanisms are an appropriate starting point and require few investments.

Whether formal or informal, institutions should recognize that tracking partnership data is an essential step towards measuring community impact. Higher education institutions are hubs for innovation, collaborations, and positive societal impacts. It is, indeed, part of our social contract and our collective ability to demonstrate these outcomes is in our strategic interest.

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