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ENGAGED LEARNING ECONOMIES

ALIGNING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT IN COMMUNITY-CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS

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Campus Compact

ABOUT CAMPUS COMPACT

Campus Compact is a national coalition of nearly 1,200 college and university presidents—representing some 6 million students—who are committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education. As the only national higher education association dedicated solely to campus-based civic engagement, Campus Compact advances the public purposes of colleges and universities by deepening their ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility. Campus Compact envisions colleges and universities as vital agents and architects of a diverse democracy, committed to educating students for responsible citizenship in ways that both deepen their education and improve the quality of community life. We challenge all of higher education to make civic and community engagement an institutional priority.

Campus Compact comprises a national office based in Boston, MA, and state affiliates in CA, CO, CT, FL, HI, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MA, ME, MD/DC, MI, MN, MO, MT, NE, NC, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, UT, VT, WA, WI, and WV. For contact and other information, see www.compact.org.

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Introduction

Higher education provides leadership in creating practical solutions to the challenges that face American society through both place-based partnerships and the cultivation of civic responsibility in students. Campuses collaborate intimately with their communities to address social issues and facilitate the growth of local economies; in so doing, they also transform individuals through education (Battistoni et al., 2003; Maurrasse, 2001; Boyer, 1990).

Although many campuses have long had economic development initiatives in place, the impact of campus engagement efforts on local economies has become increasingly important as the long-term effects of the global financial downturn take hold. With so much at stake, it is vital that colleges and universities focus their efforts on creating effective partnerships that move beyond short-term fixes to create a nexus of change.

By integrating economic development with civic and community engagement efforts in strategic and holistic ways, institutions can create *engaged learning economies* that have the ability to foster positive civic and economic change. The basic premise of an engaged learning economy is that civic engagement is the mechanism that connects economic outreach and democratic education.

In its classification description, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (n.d.) defines community engagement as “the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.” Key to this definition is the focus on collaboration and reciprocity, which lead to democratic partnerships among campuses and communities.

Engaged learning economies have the ability to foster positive civic and economic change.

Democratic partnerships are essential to engaged learning economies and to the continued development of economically vital communities. A democratic partnership values “inclusiveness, participation, task sharing and reciprocity in public problem solving, and an equality of respect for the knowledge and experience that everyone involved contributes to education and community building” (Saltmarsh and Hartley, 2012, p. 17). In an engaged learning economy, this democratic approach is leveraged for economic impact.

Campus Compact invites higher education leaders to reflect on their practices and envision what practical steps they can take to promote engaged learning economies within their communities. To facilitate this process, this paper describes successful approaches institutions take to foster civic engagement and economic development efforts that lay the foundation for an engaged learning economy. It also proposes institutional commitments necessary for developing engaged learning economies and identifies key elements for assessing and evaluating results.

As a nationwide coalition of nearly 1,200 college and university presidents dedicated to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education, Campus Compact is steadfast in the belief that the public purposes of higher education have never been more important. In the midst of dire warnings of economic and civic recession, we believe there is great promise in leveraging the power of community engagement to foster vital, vibrant, and healthy communities. Campus Compact has a long history of supporting campus-community partnerships (see, for example, Gray, Heffernan, and Horton, 2010; Scheibel, Bowley, and Jones, 2005; Torres, 2000; Zlotkowski et al., 2004; Zlotkowski et al., 2005), knowing that when higher education institutions engage with community partners in focused, dedicated, and meaningful ways, these collaborations have the ability to foster positive civic and economic change.

Through a committed and sustained dialogue starting with the framework presented here, Campus Compact encourages institutions to connect their economic development and civic engagement efforts in strategic ways that will have a long-term impact on civic and economic renewal, with education at its core.

|| **The Intersection of Civic Engagement and Economic Development**

This paper focuses on two forms of campus-community engagement: civic engagement and economic development. These two pursuits build upon different approaches, programs, and outcomes. Yet their purposes and processes overlap significantly, and when seen holistically, their outcomes may be similar.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement focuses on meeting broadly defined social and communal needs (Ehrlich and Jacoby, 2009; Saltmarsh, Hartley, and Clayton, 2009). In their civic engagement efforts, campuses pursue democratic partnerships that both address community needs and ensure benefit to the campus community. Partnerships are formed with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, schools, and other entities addressing social and cultural issues locally, regionally, and internationally.

Engaging with communities in ways that contribute to the civic and social improvement of all partners helps campuses meet institutional goals such as student learning outcomes, faculty research, and institutional development. Furco and Miller (2009) describe the goal of engaged colleges and universities as working “synergistically to build and sustain an institutional culture in which community-engaged research, teaching, and public service are valued to the extent that they become fully infused within the academic fabric” (p.47).

For many campuses, the primary goals of civic engagement revolve around educational benefits, including enhanced student learning outcomes, increased student retention, and the development of civic-minded graduates who will serve as future leaders. Engaged students gain practical and applied experience while serving community and campus needs. The value of student participation in creating democratic partnerships is clear and well documented (Jacoby and Mutascio, 2010; Long, 2002; Zlotowski, Longo, and Williams, 2006). McCauley et al. (2011) suggest that students actively engaged in university-community partnerships are better prepared for practical leadership roles after graduation, and that students who partner with community members learn to be agents of

change within a community rather than hierarchal leaders. Institutions that practice civic engagement are modeling the non-hierarchal relationships necessary for vibrant democratic societies.

Service-learning, community-based research, engaged scholarship, and social entrepreneurship are critical aspects of civic engagement. As academics and practitioners collaborate, educators leverage different perspectives and generate useful organizational knowledge that can be incorporated into the classroom (Boyer, 1996; Barge and Shockley-Zalabek, 2008). These democratic partnerships encourage researchers, students, and community partners to participate in the co-discovery of knowledge in ways that enhance, and to some extent displace, knowledge from the traditional, disciplinary locale of the campus. Norms surrounding research and scholarship are questioned and redrawn so that tacit knowledge—knowledge that is held in the community—comes to the fore. Teaching and learning occurs beyond the classroom, allowing those participating to reach new and innovative outcomes.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development in the higher education context is the practice and philosophy of generating measurable economic returns in communities through college and university engagement. This type of engagement may take several forms:

1. *Direct economic support* through institutional employment, purchasing, and resource sharing.
2. *Human capital development* through the education and training of students, staff, and community members.
3. *Knowledge transfer*, or the application of scholarship to promote external innovation.

College and university employment creates an economic multiplier effect (Shaffer and Wright, 2004). Each new job created at local institutions infuses the local economy with additional funds. Universities and colleges also invest in the community through direct purchasing power (Hahn, Connerty, and Peaslee, 2003). Institutions may make the commitment to purchase resources locally and employ local workers when possible. Blackwell, Cobb, and Weinberg (2002) note that “education can be viewed as an investment in human capital and, as such, imparts a regional economic impact to the extent that graduates remain in the area and have higher lifetime earnings” (p. 89). Furthermore, evidence suggests that the diffusion of knowledge from engaged colleges and universities promotes economic recovery through the creation of innovative and highly adaptive environments (Zuiches, 2009). This can lead to the economic revitalization of communities as creative incubators, employers, and local investors.

A learning economy—one that focuses on knowledge, especially new knowledge—is important to the overall economic strength of the nation (Lundvall and Johnson, 1994). Greenwood, Griffin,

The diffusion of knowledge from engaged colleges and universities promotes economic recovery.

Owen, and Pfalzgraff (1996) argue that higher education not only enhances the quality of the labor force but also attracts further business activity. In an increasingly globalized market, continued innovation is a key to economic strength. Leveraging campus research and resources promotes this type of economy (Shaffer and Wright, 2004; Trani and Holsworth, 2010).

Colleges and universities can lead the way by supporting innovative venture capital projects, advancing applied research, and encouraging campuses and communities to build on existing assets. Each of these actions plays an important role in developing knowledge-based economic growth. New ventures create the most new jobs (Shaffer and Wright, 2004). Applied research is a major source of innovation; hence, legislators and funders are increasingly calling for applied research from the institutions they fund. Building on existing resources, rather than focusing on deficits to be fixed, encourages private enterprise to make prolonged commitments to a locale (Adams, 2003; Benson and Harkavy, 2000). Colleges and universities are uniquely situated to focus efforts locally. Campuses that are community anchors are embedded into the fabric of specific communities and locales. This presence increases the success of local economic development efforts.

PARTNERSHIPS THAT FOSTER SHARED VALUE

A successful learning economy is more than just a commitment to place, innovation, and start-up ventures. Effective campus leaders create economic incubators with the potential to meet numerous local and regional needs. By developing strong partnerships that advance the assets of the campus and the community alike, community-campus initiatives can generate long-term economic impact. This concept of “shared value” (Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, 2011) moves beyond social responsibility, philanthropy, or even social sustainability for campuses and enterprise. It recognizes that the health of the community hinges on the development of successful partnerships.

As communities partner with institutions of higher education to alleviate economic struggles, innovative and meaningful pathways to economic development emerge. Campuses can learn from these partnerships about how economic engagement can grow businesses, increase employment, open the job market, and use research to inspire economic innovation.

It is important to note that successful community partnerships are reciprocal, requiring democratic interactions, collaboration, and mutual investment (Harris, 2009). In such partnerships, community members are co-creators of

goals, initiatives, and assessment. Both the campus and community partners have the capacity to make meaningful gains from their interactions. For this to happen, civic engagement must be intimately tied to the educational mission of institutions and to community needs and resources. Similarly, economic development efforts must reflect and support the campus's research, development, and training goals while contributing to overall community health. Each partner in the process—including students, faculty, administrators, and staff, as well as private and public community representatives—helps create an engaged learning economy that serves both the community and the campus.

Effective campus leaders create economic incubators with the potential to meet numerous local and regional needs.

III **A Call, and a Commitment, to Action**

Civic engagement—traditionally the domain of student and academic affairs—and economic development—often a separate action run by research, knowledge transfer, and economic outreach offices—are two common and successful approaches to college and university outreach. When campuses merge these two areas of interest and develop appropriate democratic relationships, the result is an engaged learning economy.

STRATEGIC SUPPORT OF PARTNERSHIPS

The key to creating an engaged learning economy is to develop a cultural and structural framework that supports effective partnerships. This framework can help administrators, faculty, staff, students, and community partners view their diverse engagement efforts as part of a larger strategy designed for maximum impact on both civic and economic development. It also conceptually promotes the dynamic flow of knowledge, ideas, and practices among those within institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, and public enterprise committed to building vibrant and growing communities.

This layered approach to engagement promotes efficiency by allowing a single project to serve multiple campus and community interests and aligning work across partnerships to solve pressing economic and social needs. The result is a more robust and healthy economy built upon innovation and the continual incorporation of state-of-the-art knowledge. The engaged learning economy articulates a vision of higher education that serves the public good by partnering with communities to support strategic economic development by building on existing assets. Ultimately, a successful engaged learning economy helps communities stay innovative and colleges and universities remain relevant.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Creating an engaged learning economy entails consciously committing to several guiding principles, including the establishment of democratic partnerships, the alignment of campus policies and practices with the goals of the engaged learning economy, and community capacity building.

Commitment to democratic partnerships.

Community partnerships help balance power relations between communities and institutions, to the benefit of both.

When partnerships are democratic and egalitarian in nature, cooperation increases and tensions decline, allowing for knowledge transfer between entities and easier relationship maintenance (Dumlao and Janke, 2012). Furthermore, it allows higher education institutions to model for students the civic behavior necessary to democracy.

Community partnerships help balance power relations between communities and institutions.

Commitment to the alignment of goals, policies, and practices.

In an engaged learning economy, campus policies, practices, and projects are constructed not only to achieve specific economic goals but also to encourage sustainable development. Faculty engagement incentives, along with transparent and easily navigable knowledge-transfer policies and practices, ensure that community engagement is both mutually guided and mutually beneficial. This commitment generates organizational change and supports the future growth of engaged institutions.

Commitment to capacity building.

Part of the mission of colleges and universities is to expand capacity for teaching, learning, and research. To facilitate sustainable change in communities, this philosophy must be applied to outreach efforts as well. Community capacity expands when institutions commit to applying new research to community needs. It also expands when colleges and universities facilitate the application of new knowledge and grouping of interests to achieve a common goal in partnership with the community. The end result is a community able to incorporate campus resources while contributing perspectives that help the campus build its own capacity.

Campuses across the country are enacting these principles in promising and powerful ways, but by no means are these the only possible aspects of a commitment to an engaged learning economy. There is ample opportunity to develop, adapt, and elaborate on these concepts to best support each unique campus context. These principles are meant to provide a starting point for campus leaders in their discussion of the engaged learning economy.

IV The Engaged Learning Economy in Practice

Following are illustrations of how these guiding principles play out in practice, including key qualities of democratic partnerships, campus policies and practices that support economic development, and ways that campuses and community partners can collaborate to build capacity. Examples from Campus Compact member colleges and universities demonstrate the varied ways that campuses are putting these principles in place to create engaged learning economies.

ESTABLISHING DEMOCRATIC PARTNERSHIPS

■ *Partnering agencies acknowledge the importance of understanding and maintaining strong relationships with one another.*

In an engaged learning economy, campus and community partners foster deep commitments to each other and to their shared work by engaging all participants in economic development and civic engagement efforts that meet mutual goals. This reciprocal, democratic commitment to sustaining relationships can be difficult and subject to ongoing dialectical tensions. Being comfortable with and addressing these tensions openly and consistently is vital to maintaining healthy relationships (Dumlao and Janke, 2012).

President Jim Harris of Widener University observes, “true democratic partnerships are created through shared learning experiences” (personal interview, May 18, 2012). Widener University has made a conscious effort to develop the economy of the financially distressed city of Chester in southeastern Pennsylvania. Regular community information sessions and open forums about the university’s work in the community, as well as Harris’s visible public presence, are part of an ongoing relationship-building process. For example, when community partners identified a need for a new health care center, Widener University donated a building near the campus and agreed to pay taxes on the property. In addition, through a series of community forums, the university worked with community members to determine which other businesses the building would house.

“True democratic partnerships are created through shared learning experiences.”

The Service Learning Institute at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) also has structures in place to ensure effective communication with partners and others in the community. The institute utilizes key students, staff, and faculty as community liaisons who familiarize community partners with campus practice and translate community needs to campus constituents.

The effort these institutions put into building strong relationships with community partners allows for the reciprocity needed to maintain truly democratic partnerships.

■ ***Community members and campus staff, faculty, and students co-locate on and off campus.***

Co-location, in which the campus and the community share staff members and/or facilities, is another tactic that engaged campuses use to foster and maintain external relations with community partners. This connection keeps lines of communication open, allowing campus faculty, administrators, and students to stay connected with community needs while broadening community access to complex institutional structures.

Co-location can take several forms, from sharing space on and off campus to establishing shared job responsibilities for staff and faculty. For example, California State University, Fresno, houses two economic and community development initiatives—the Collaborative Regional Initiative and the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley—that are operated by community nonprofits. The campus serves as a facilitator for multiple stakeholders to come together and plan regional development projects. At the University of Georgia’s Archway program, the university partners with local communities to develop mutually agreed upon projects. Faculty liaisons are assigned to each community to facilitate dialogue between the partners. Leadership is joint, with both campus and community leaders participating. In addition, Archway is located in spaces both on and off campus, allowing the partners to communicate regularly in person as well as virtually.

In both of these examples, co-location facilitates active interaction and sustained relationships that break down barriers and allow the partners to work together in support of campus-community projects and goals.

■ ***Community organizations and businesses co-develop knowledge with campus partners.***

The co-development of knowledge involves campuses and communities partnering to identify and explore new avenues of research. Wolfe (2009) argues that knowledge transfer should go both ways. While campus actors may have access to the most recent and cutting-edge research, public and private community organizations may have greater insight into possible applications for that research. Campus partners can see their role as facilitating the flow of knowledge between the campus and the community, thus co-developing new avenues for research.

Faculty, staff, and students at Old Dominion University co-develop new knowledge with private enterprise to address practical questions related to defense problems—a large part of their local economy. Small defense firms are located in the campus’s business technology park. Through a range of service-learning, co-op, and internship programs, students and faculty work with these companies over time to help fulfill government contracts. Taking a different approach, the University of Vermont’s Senior Experience in Engineering Design program gives engineering students the opportunity to develop capstone engineering projects through a broad range of private and public partnerships. Students complete a different project with a different company every year so that the transfer of knowledge is widespread. This program offers students and faculty an opportunity to obtain practical skills and gives employers access to expanded intellectual capital.

ALIGNING CAMPUS GOALS, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES

■ *Policies and processes support the free flow of knowledge among business, community, and the academy.*

Campus policies should support the reciprocal transfer of knowledge among all partners. Knowledge should flow from the campus—including from faculty, students, and staff—into the community in ways that encourage innovation and a learning culture, and knowledge from the community should flow back to campus in ways that promote community interests. Policies and processes that make this diffusion of information and technology transfer seamless for partners both on and off campus can support dynamic knowledge flow. These policies should support the goals, needs, and assets of the community and the institution and should be focused on removing barriers to access for community members who want to be part of the knowledge-transfer process.

Eastern Washington University’s Institute for Public Policy and Economic Analysis has developed the Community Indicator Project, a shared venture with the local Chamber of Commerce that allows community organizations to access and manipulate economic data collected by the university. This collaboration helps individuals, businesses, and nonprofits make informed decisions regarding voting, policy, spending, and other civic and economic goals. To encourage knowledge flow, the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh has created a campus consulting firm called the Business Success Center that connects local community organizations and businesses with faculty and student expertise.

These examples use different policies and processes to encourage knowledge flow, but each provides a medium for the community to access intellectual capital on campus. Likewise, these structures offer institutions insight into the needs and interests of the community, which can be used to develop applied research opportunities.

■ ***Faculty are leveraged to embed civic engagement and economic development into academic and disciplinary cultures.***

Integrating economic development and civic engagement involves transforming faculty and disciplinary cultures to incorporate the components of an engaged learning economy. Institutional support, which is necessary in many ways in order for a campus to participate meaningfully in local development, is especially important for embedding this work into academic life.

By aligning programs with faculty culture and practices, institutions can leverage campus structures to support an engaged learning economy. At the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, for example, campus leaders have incorporated community service and engagement into faculty promotion and tenure procedures. These reward structures encourage young faculty to engage with the city and state in meaningful ways. As Dr. Art Dunning, the University of Alabama System's Vice Chancellor for International Programs and Outreach, notes, "engagement and outreach efforts are best accomplished by aligning projects with existing faculty and disciplinary cultures" (personal interview, Feb. 27, 2012). Dunning utilizes faculty development and mentoring programs as a vehicle for working with senior and junior faculty to understand disciplinary cultures and then embed engagement efforts within the specific context of each discipline.

Campus policies should support the reciprocal transfer of knowledge among all partners.

■ ***Courses employ collaborative community-based learning.***

Rich community-based experiences necessitate that institutions integrate their research and teaching missions with community needs. Both students and the community gain the most from these experiences when community engagement projects are linked directly to opportunities for joint reflection and intellectual discussion.

Students who participate in the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Service Learning Academy give community presentations at the end of their community research projects. Dr. Paul Sather, Director of the Academy, observes that this practice not only takes knowledge back to the community, it also "creates new and maintains old relationships and is an important marketing tool that regularly demonstrates the university's impact on Omaha" (personal interview, Feb. 14, 2012). The University of Iowa's Initiative for Sustainable Communities embeds advanced students in communities before the beginning of a developmental or applied research project. This allows students to familiarize themselves with the needs, culture, and assets of the community while encouraging the community to see students as active partners instead of outsiders. In both cases, active collaboration ensures that campus and community partners gain the greatest benefit from their investment in joint research projects.

■ ***Training and educational programs support community members' personal and economic advancement.***

Higher education's core assets are its intellectual capital and its ability to educate. These assets can be wielded to engage community members in training and other outreach programs geared toward developing the local economy. This strategy opens up opportunities for a wide range of campus stakeholders, including alumni and trustees as well as students and faculty, to get involved with community-based partners. Successful community education programs increase the community's intellectual and economic capital while providing meaningful civic experiences for students and others.

One program at the University of San Diego offers local low-income women micro-loans to start small businesses.

The program pairs each participant with a business student who guides the

new owner in developing a business strategy. Community members gain the benefit of students' consulting expertise while students learn about the economic and social impact of micro-finance.

At the University of San Francisco, the McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good has partnered with The Magic Zone to develop, fund, and support programs designed to increase the employability of youth who are transitioning out of the family and into full-time employment. In both cases, the campuses utilize their institutional strengths to engage in activities that build local economic health.

Integrating economic development and civic engagement involves transforming faculty and disciplinary cultures.

Because of their connection to the Morrill Land-Grant Acts, designed to “promote the liberal and practical education of industrial classes,” land-grant institutions have a particular strength in areas of outreach, and more and more are aligning traditional extension activities with civic engagement. Oregon State University realized this potential in 2007 when the President's Commission on Outreach and Engagement developed a definition of outreach and engagement that explicitly highlights the value of reciprocity with diverse local partners and focuses on enhancing student learning, faculty scholarship, and social and economic prosperity in the state of Oregon (President's Commission Final Report, 2007). The university created a new Division of Outreach and Engagement that continues to develop and maintain partnerships throughout the state, such as the Master Gardener program, which prepares community members to educate others about sustainable food systems through an innovate program combining classroom training and volunteer experiences.

BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

■ *Campus partners see themselves as responsible not only for conducting research but also for facilitating its application.*

For institutions to maximize their economic impact while also promoting civic engagement, it is important to approach research in terms of its practical application. Collaborating with community partners to think through research development and application allows campus-community partnerships to foster an innovative economy that is built upon the ongoing exploration of new opportunities.

Tulane University and Xavier University, both in New Orleans, have a unique partnership that allows them to draw on the strengths of both institutions to develop joint research projects and programming that address the city's needs. Local partners are hired as part of research programs, students volunteer in the community, and both institutions support the development of knowledge that attracts new industries and diversifies the local and state workforce. With community partners so intricately tied to the research agenda of the partnership, community and academic knowledge become deeply intertwined.

Syracuse University leadership also firmly connects research and engagement in ways that have a direct impact on the community. The Near Westside Initiative brings together the university and other institutions of higher education, foundations, businesses, nonprofits, city and state government bodies, and local residents to revive the neighborhood closest to Syracuse's newest buildings. Faculty and students work with local partners to develop and plan community-based research that informs initiatives to promote healthy housing options, artist communities, and sustainable food systems, all of which bring in investment and economic development. These kinds of research partnerships build the capacity of communities and institutions to make meaningful contributions to economic vitality.

■ *Campuses integrate regional interests into development projects.*

Aligning campus and regional interests is about understanding and mobilizing existing community assets (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). In conjunction with partners in the community, campus actors can assess a region's strengths and needs and then align campus resources to meet those needs.

Community colleges often exemplify this form of alignment. Susie Burch, Executive Director of Economic Development and Continuing Education at Flathead Valley Community College in Montana, notes that "because of the inherent mission and purpose of community colleges, they tend to be very responsive to regional interests" (personal interview, May 30, 2012). Recognizing that the Flathead Valley area possessed a wealth of artistic talent, Burch's office partnered with the Montana Arts Council to offer workshops to artists interested in developing viable marketing and business models for their art.

The integration of regional interests into campus development work often requires a convener to bring multiple interests together. Dr. Nicholas Holton, a faculty member at Kirtland Community College

Aligning campus and regional interests is about understanding and mobilizing existing community assets.

in Michigan, thinks community colleges are “uniquely suited to this role because they are deeply embedded in the communities they educate” (personal interview, June 4, 2012). Under his guidance, Kirtland has partnered with the River House, a shelter that serves the homeless and survivors of sexual and domestic violence in four northern Michigan counties. This partnership offers the shelter’s residents access to Kirtland’s educational resources so they can develop plans for future economic and personal stability. It also allows Kirtland students to gain practical experience at the shelter while learning about an array of social issues.

Leaders at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston recognized that their own students needed access to social services and support, such as food banks and tax assistance. The college addressed this need by mobilizing public and private partners to create a “single-stop” center on campus for students to access multiple social services at once.

■ ***Community partners have the capacity to absorb and utilize knowledge.***

A challenge for many institutions is to resist the urge to move into the community too quickly (Harris, 2009). Most community projects and businesses are accustomed to working with minimal human and financial resources. Campuses may look at the local landscape and react by mobilizing their greatest resource, human capital, to help. Too much investment too fast can be detrimental; without the resources and infrastructure to support partners’ capacity to host student volunteers, faculty researchers, or campus staff, community organizations can find the campus to be a burden rather than a resource.

To address this issue, campuses must make a conscious effort to enter communities slowly, allowing time for the community infrastructure to accept the influx and to help build capacity for community organizations. In response to the economic distress of its home city, the Camden campus of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, has mobilized faculty consultants to increase the capacity of local secondary schools to improve performance and graduation rates. Faculty and students are working with local schools to help them expand their capacity to assist middle and high school students. This effort is intentionally designed to be small and focused at the start of the partnership. Faculty and students are not only expanding the capacity of the school to accept new volunteers, they are also developing the strong relationships necessary for more comprehensive projects.

The engineering program at Purdue University North Central is working with ArcelorMittal, the largest steel company in the world, to support Indiana's long-established steel industry. Students in mechanical, electrical, and computer engineering programs apply for and complete internships with nearby facilities, where they spend the summer learning about the industry. The partnership works because ArcelorMittal employees help the engineering faculty decide what to teach in class. The Steel Workers of the Future program has slowly built capacity in the local steel economy by aligning research with industry goals and preparing students to be productive members of the workforce.

✓ **Using Assessment to Advance Program and Institutional Goals**

Every aspect of an engaged learning economy should incorporate assessment. Without thoughtful assessment, institutions can neither measure nor demonstrate their impact on the community. Without a concrete understanding of impact, it is difficult to mobilize the successes of an engaged learning economy in supporting the institution's strategic, marketing, and fundraising goals. Assessment also ensures that institutional and community assets align with agreed-upon outcomes and allows continual program improvement. In this context, strategic assessment is embedded in and strengthens democratic partnerships and builds the capacity of those partnerships to create and sustain vibrant economies.

Campuses and communities need first to focus on what they are trying to achieve. As Saltmarsh and Hartley (2012) warn, "The heart of the issue is one of purpose. What larger purpose are we trying to achieve? A lack of clarity causes all kinds of mischief. It leads to fragmentation...as individual programs seek their own narrow ends rather than looking beyond those confines to a larger purpose that might unite their efforts. This leads to an 'impoverishment of imagination'" (p. 291). Outcomes must match the assets that are available from both the campus and the community (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993) and be agreed upon democratically.

Those charged with assessing progress toward an engaged learning economy must recognize that there is no single evaluation form or measure that can be applied to every campus and community relationship, just as there is no single way to create an engaged learning economy. However, focusing on which economic outcomes the partnership wants to tackle will help contain the work and encourage effective impact assessment. In addition, beginning with agreed-upon outcomes allows the assessment to become fully integrated into institutional marketing and development strategies, as well as within the community's communications efforts.

Focusing on which economic outcomes the partnership wants to tackle will help contain the work and encourage effective impact assessment.

Existing assessment models (e.g., Gelmon, et al., 2001; Holland, 2006) contain elements that can be modified to work on a variety of campuses. These models incorporate many of the same underpinning philosophies that are articulated in an engaged learning economy, such as democratic partnerships and institutional alignment of goals, policies, and practices. They support both quantitative and qualitative approaches to measuring impact, and recognize that social and cultural realms of impact are also important to economic development.

While not the only ways to consider assessment, the following elements reflect the thinking and work that must be a part of any assessment process. In an engaged learning economy, successful assessment may include:

- A commitment to supporting the goals and practices of democratic partnerships.
- A focus on integrating multiple aspects of development (social, cultural, etc.) into the economic impact rubric.
- Dedication to developing, improving, and refining assessment measures that are used strategically to promote sustainable initiatives.
- Adherence to the use of assessment as a process for eliciting community feedback to improve programming.
- Support for aligning resources from the institution and the community in ways that support mutually agreed upon goals and outcomes.

The examples below demonstrate how drawing these elements together in creative ways can help institutions and communities work together to address issues of economic health and prosperity.

Assessment not only allows a campus to measure and improve progress toward program goals but also provides a framework for articulating the institution's value to its various stakeholders. At Xavier University, a combination of traditional economic impact analysis and studies on the human capital effect of the institution are used to assess the university's social and economic impact in the region (Blackwell, Cobb, and Weinberg, 2002). The economic impact analysis focuses on the institution's operational spending from both local and non-local sources, calculating in dollars how much the local economy benefits from the university's presence. The impact of human capital is captured with an innovative measure that estimates the effect of attendance at Xavier on graduates' decisions to stay in the area. These measures bring together data that already exists on operational spending, alumni, and community impact.

California State University, Monterey Bay, has leveraged its extensive network with the community into well-developed goals that focus on both social and economic development of the historic Chinatown neighborhood in Monterey Bay. University leaders recognized that to assess impact fully, they needed to find a comprehensive and reliable way to track the campus's involvement with the community. To accomplish this, CSUMB has invested in a comprehensive data management system that incorporates community partnerships and outreach into its existing institutional research and student-tracking system. At the end of each semester, students are required to report their service-learning, volunteer, and other engagement activities. This information is then incorporated into the same data system that tracks other important measures such as retention. In this way, CSUMB is able to monitor relationships, create powerful signals both internally and externally that this work matters, and lay the foundation for future impact assessments.

At the University of Iowa, faculty, graduate students, and community partners worked together on the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities to create the Sustainable Dubuque Indicators. These indicators are used to assess economic impact and change in the region. Unlike traditional economic impact studies, these indicators take a holistic approach to the concept of economic development by including social and cultural measures into the assessment of a community's vibrancy. For example, the initiative measures traditional economic indicators such as job creation, but it also looks at indicators of long-term sustainability and economic health such as the gender wage gap. (See the boxed insert, below.)

SUSTAINABLE DUBUQUE INDICATORS

1. **Growth in gross domestic product (GDP)**—Growth in per capita GDP from previous year.
2. **Net job growth**—Percent change in total employees.
3. **Unemployment rate**—Percent of residents who are unemployed.
4. **Economic sector diversity**—Index measuring diversity of the MSA (metropolitan statistical area) economy through employment by sector.
5. **Poverty**—Percent of city residents living in poverty.
6. **Gender wage gap**—Female earnings as a percentage of male earnings for full-time, year-round workers.
7. **Debt burden**—Outstanding municipal debt per capita.
8. **Interest rate on municipal bonds**—True interest cost on general obligation bonds issued by the city of Dubuque in a fiscal year.

VI Next Steps

This paper provides a framework for the conversation on the engaged learning economy but recognizes the need for further work. As campus and community leaders move forward, Campus Compact invites all partners to continue to explore how colleges and universities can more closely link their economic development and civic engagement efforts. To engage higher education and community partners, Campus Compact is committed to providing support, resources, and training around the following questions:

- How does higher education successfully incorporate economic development into the framework of the engaged campus? What is needed to support institutional alignment for an engaged learning economy?
- What does effective assessment of the individual and collective impact of this work on student learning and community needs look like?
- How can institutions and communities catalyze strategic partnerships to tackle pressing community challenges? What are the best strategies for developing democratic partnerships?

Campus Compact's 2012 Presidents Leadership Summit will contribute further to the conversation, as will the efforts on individual campuses to build and strengthen partnerships that lead to economic vitality. As demonstrated throughout the paper, there are powerful practices that can be built upon and elaborated as the work moves forward. In addition, Campus Compact invites you to explore and share examples of best practices around the commitments and aspects of the engaged learning economy at www.compact.org. Join us as we continue this exciting conversation.

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