Community Voices:

A California Campus Compact Study on Partnerships

Final Report

Written by Marie Sandy, Ph.D.

Research Team:
Elaine Ikeda, Ph.D., Nadinne Cruz, M.A.,
Barbara Holland, Ph.D., Kathleen Rice, Ph.D.,
and Marie Sandy, Ph.D.

April 2007

California | **Campus Compact**

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"I always tell the students, this is the beginning, this is not the end. This is the beginning of community-building and making things change in our community. Unless there is a growing body of people vested in that idea, we're not going anywhere. Maybe when they get that job in marketing they'll use a little bit of their time and talent to make this a better place to live in. That is, for me, what I want them to come away with. It is real hard to get there in a short period of time, but we hope the students will come away with something immediate, and a longer-term goal is that the community will become a better place."

— Community Partner

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I. Context of this Study

> *"I think a great partnership is when you stop saying MY students. They're OUR students. What are OUR needs? We share these things in common, so let's go for it."*

Overview

This study grew out of a conversation among service-learning practitioners at a retreat hosted by California Campus Compact. "What do our community partners think about service-learning? We think they are benefiting, but how do we know? Why do they choose to partner with us in the first place?" While reciprocity of benefits for the community has long been an intended hallmark of service-learning practice (Ferrari & Chapman, 1999; Honnet & Poulsen, 1989; Keith, 1998; Sigmon, 1979, Waterman, 1997), service-learning practitioners often do not know if, when and how this is achieved. To help its member campuses begin to answer these questions, California Campus Compact collaborated with four individuals who are deeply familiar with service-learning theory and practice and had experience in focus group facilitation to implement a process to better understand the diverse perspectives of long-term community partners collaborating with institutions of higher education, and to identify their recommen-

dations to strengthen well-established community-campus partnerships. This report highlights the results of this study and emphasizes the community partner members' voices through some of the direct quotations that helped lead us to these thematic interpretations. The number of quotations adds to the density of the text, but we felt that this was important to include, as it has not been commonplace for us in higher education to hear community partner perspectives in their own words. We felt that in most instances, community partners "said more than we can say," and we invite you, the reader, to join us in discovery through the interpretation of these voices.

Contributing to the Service-Learning Literature

This study focuses solely on the community partner "side" of community-campus partnerships. While there are many research topics and questions related to service-learning that deserve attention, including those that involve higher education faculty, staff and students, much has already been written about the benefits and impact on students and faculty in the service-learning literature, but to date, only a handful of studies have focused on community partners specifically. The field acknowledges that this area continues to be under-represented in the service-learning literature overall

(Birdsall, 2005; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Bushouse, 2005; Edwards & Marullo, 2000; Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Jones, 2003; Liederman et al., 2003; Sandy, 2005; Vernon & Ward, 1999; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). There are significant consequences of this gap in our understanding for future practice. The continued involvement of community partnerships with higher education institutions requires attention to their motivations and perceptions of the benefits of the partners from their own perspective; in the absence of the active involvement of community agencies and entities, it is difficult to imagine how service-learning might even exist. Many scholars, (e.g., Boyer, 1990; Bringle, 1999; Enos & Morton, 2003; Benson & Harkavy, 2000) advocate for community-campus partnerships to become an even more intentional component of actualizing the service mission of higher education, and community partners and their organizations have become recognized as linked to service-learning initiatives for both providing the service-learning experience for students and for evaluating its impact on faculty scholarship and student learning (Bailis, 2002; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Gelman et al., 1998; Jacoby, 2003; Jones, 2003). The growing number of academics and practitioners who voice concern about the lack of the community perspective in the literature may be indicative of a growing openness to learn more about the perspectives of community members and a willingness to transform our practice in light of their concerns. This has the potential to improve service-learning practice overall.

Participants Involved with this Study

Service-learning coordinators at eight diverse California campuses self-selected a total of ninety-nine experienced community partners to participate in fifteen focus groups to discuss their perspectives on community-campus partnerships. The participants were primarily supervisors and staff members from non-profit community-based organizations and public institutions, such as libraries, hospitals and K-12 institutions. The study included partners that the researchers considered to be in the advanced stages of partnership that, in order to have such longevity, would have considerable knowledge of partnership dynamics, barriers and facilitating factors. Similar campus-community partnerships are described as being in the "final" (Torres, 2000), "nurturing" (Dorado and Giles, 2004) or in the "cooperative" and/or "systematic and transformative" (Sockett, 1998) stages of partnership. Due to staff turnover at some organizations, some of the participants themselves were new, although the partnership between the organizations they represent and the higher education institution were well-established. The conclusions here may or may not have implications for newer partnerships because of the sample selection,, even though there were some "newer" partners included in this study.

In order to ensure broad relevance of the findings, the sites were selected based on the history and diversity of the partnerships and their institutional context; a mix of urban and rural, four-year and community college institutions, public and private, faith-based and secular, research-intensive, and liberal arts institutions were included from diverse geographical regions of California.

The research team took extensive measures to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the community partners was respected. No campus representatives were present during the focus groups, nor did any higher education partner have access to the data before we consulted with community participants and they agreed on the findings that would be shared with their campus partner and the field at-large. We structured the process in this way in an attempt to focus attention on community-partner perspectives in ways that were not immediately influenced by their partner campus faculty, staff and students. This effort to limit interpretations by the higher education voice is in some contrast to previous studies with community partners (e.g., Liederman, et al. 2003), where higher education partners were present during the data collection process.

The participants were not randomly selected by the researchers. Because the service-learning directors from the participating campuses self-selected the focus group participants and chose more established rather than newer partnership representatives, it represents a "convenience sample," and the research team recognizes the limitations in this. While much of the value of this current study is its breadth in context of diverse functioning partnerships -- it is one of the largest multi-site studies focused exclusively on community partners -- we believe there is much to be learned from those community agencies that choose to opt out of their partnerships with higher education. This could be an important area for future study.

Research Question

As recommended (Cruz & Giles, 2000), our unit of analysis was the community-campus partnership, perceived through the lens of community partner eyes. Our research considers community perspectives on effective partnership characteristics as well as their own voices regarding benefits, challenges, and motivations regarding partnership with an academic institution. Regarding partnership characteristics, we place this study in the context of four diverse models (Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, 1998; Holland & Ramaley 1998; Liederman et al., 2003; Torres, 2000) of effective campus-community partnerships (Holland, 2005). Since those models were developed largely from a higher education perspective, the research question we addressed was how well the community partner perspective does or does not align with current models proposed by higher education. Regarding partner perspectives of the benefits, motivations and challenges of their partnership with academic institutions, we place this study in the context of the work on partnerships such as Liederman et al., (2003) and Worrall (2005), but we are breaking new ground through our method of documenting community voices from multiple institutions without the direct influence or involvement of higher education partners.

"My concern, both philosophically and as a human being functioning in various communities local and international, has been, and is, with what can we do as human beings to assist each other in the creation of shared meanings and to work towards greater freedom and dignity? I am fascinated with philosophers who shake loose paradigms and clear the space for reconstructing concepts and related realities. Knowledge can be transformative and methodologies can dance with, and be in intimate respect for "what is…" Knowledge at its best does not dominate but co-establish coherence with other ordering processes of being and meaning. Some concepts and values enhance community. Others stultify it and cause stagnation."

— Bernard Den Ouden, Are Freedom and Dignity Possible?

"One of the most essential experiences a human being can have is that another person comes to know him or her better. This means, however, that we must take the encounter with the other seriously, because there is always something about which we are not correct and are not justified in maintaining. Through an encounter with the other we are lifted above the confines of our own knowledge…In every genuine conversation this happens. We come closer to the truth because we do not exist by ourselves."

— Hans-Georg Gadamer, Gadamer in Conversation

The Possibility of Reciprocity in Research Design

One of the ongoing challenges of the field of service-learning, as well as other "applied" fields of study, is the continuing gap between research and practice (Judith Ramaley and Amy Cohen, Personal communication, Portland International Service-Learning Research Conference, October, 2006). What kind of service-learning research is truly relevant to practitioners? And what are our obligations to those who participate in research studies? Part of our response to these questions was in the design of the project itself. Like all good partnerships, the research

design that was developed by the four research team members was a process, and involved integrating different perspectives regarding the purpose of research and appropriate qualitative research methodology for a large study. For us, the ethic of reciprocity, a hallmark of service-learning practice, informed the research model, as we sought to provide useful information to the participating campus-community partnerships while also informing the field at-large. This resulted in creating a two-tiered approach that included: 1) designing reports with information

Present research findings
to the field at-large

Analysis of themes cutting across all
15 focus groups and 8 campuses

Create 8 campus site reports for campus partners
based on community partner feedback

Transfer data to ATLAS.ti qualitative software;
Organize raw data based on protocol questions

Provide narrative transcripts and 15 draft focus
group reports to community partner participants

Review raw data with research team;
Develop formats for feedback to community partners and sites

Transcribing audio tapes and poster paper notes;
Write initial impressions of each focus group

2-hour focus groups at 8 California Campus Compact Sites:

15 focus groups   99 participants   1 facilitator, 1 scribe

Climbing the Data Mountain

particular to each participating campus and assisting in next steps to further conversations at these campuses, and 2) simultaneously developing publications that synthesized findings from all sites to inform practitioners and researchers more broadly. Applied hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1960/1970; Herda, 1999) and the principles of community-based research (Stoecker, 2005) provided the theoretical framework for this reciprocal design. They are both frameworks that fit well with the goals of community engagement and service-learning. The model of understanding in Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics – dialogical conversation – is focused on community. James Risser (2000) writes,

"In fact, philosophical hermeneutics speaks so strongly for community that it could be argued philosophical hermeneutics is about nothing other than a project of community" (p. 19). Ellen Herda (1999) also employs a hermeneutic approach "to acknowledge and understand that humans have the capacity to live together in community and to address and solve problems together in organizational and social settings" (p.1). Randy Stoecker's community-based research model (2005) provides a comprehensive outline for the steps involved in participatory research design.

One key distinction of our reciprocal approach is that it took longer, and produced a tremendous amount of data and reports. We began to refer to this research process as "climbing the data mountain." (See illustration on page 8.)

The process for this qualitative study is as follows: Depicted as the "bottom" of the data mountain, fifteen two-hour focus groups were held at eight different campuses. We used focus groups as our strategy of inquiry because we wished to obtain data from a large sample across multiple communities and sought "meaning and sense-making" (Weick, 1996) more than the numerical data that would be provided through a survey instrument. All of the participating campuses in this study have many different community partners, We felt that focus groups were therefore best suited to obtain information than individual interviews, as we could make "explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (Morgan, 1989). Accepted standards for focus group processes and hermeneutic fieldwork (Marshall and Rossman, 1989;

Herda, 1998) informed the research design. After a review of the relevant literature, the research team refined the questions for the protocol, which were presented in a semi-structured interview format with guided participation by the facilitators. Participants addressed questions concerning their motivations, benefits, challenges and recommendations that were similar to some of the areas of inquiry that Liederman et al., (2003) and Worrall (2005) studied.

We involved seasoned scholars in service-learning who were familiar with service-learning concepts and focus group facilitation because a level of familiarity with the subject matter is necessary for research conversations to be productive (Gadamer, 1960/1975; Herda, 1999) and a particularly high level of trust was required to do this research. The facilitators were neutral in the sense that they were not employed by the campuses and did not have a vested interest in the findings of each of the groups. Small stipends were awarded to community partners for their participation.

Another distinction of this study in comparison to other studies of community partners, e.g., Liederman et al., (2003), is its place-based approach. We wanted to experience these partnerships on their "home turf," so researcher-facilitators traveled to each of the participating campuses; each focus group included partners with the same institution. All of the focus groups were arranged by service-learning office staff at locations that were convenient for their partners, usually in conference rooms on campus, but occasionally in community centers or at local restaurants. The importance of location is often overlooked in academic research (Grunewald, 2003; Henderson & Frelke, 2000; Oldenburg,

1989; Sandy, 2005), and including this variable in our design had important benefits. Participants discussed concrete details of their partnerships, and the researchers were able to tease out distinctions between different partners with the same higher education institution. The conversations seemed to be more meaningful for the participants because they all had experiences working with the same higher education institution. It seems that the very act of convening the focus groups may have already begun to benefit the partnerships there. Participants shared ideas with one another and suggested solutions to directly benefit their particular partnerships at all focus groups.

Further up the data mountain, we outline our analysis process. Data were collected by charting participant responses on easel paper, note-taking and audio-taping and transcribing participant responses, all of which generated more than 350 pages of raw data. We developed categories and themes to identify patterns, since our goal was to discern a set of characteristics across all partner responses. For each question on the protocol, the researchers developed a relational scheme that clustered participant responses according to themes. Notes from the audio-taped sessions were provided to participants to check for understanding. Data were coded and analyzed using Atlas-ti software, and hermeneutic "constant coding" approaches (Herda, 1999) were used to check themes. Initial research categories were developed based on the protocol questions and additional categories and themes were developed after an analysis of the data. The team worked with community partners to check for understanding and completeness using methods derived from community-based practices.

In keeping with the spirit and intent of this work, we took equal care in providing feedback for community partners and campuses as we did in crafting materials for the field at-large, the steps of which are depicted near the center of the mountain. Utilizing key aspects of community-based research methodology (Stoecker, 2005), we consulted with participants on the thematic interpretations, and in writing final reports for their campus partners. They also were involved with the cross-analysis of all the data generated from all of the focus groups. In accordance with accepted practices of hermeneutic and ethnographic qualitative research, direct quotations were shared with community partners in the development of themes and categories for both the meta-analysis and campus reports.

This report includes the analysis from all eight sites.

" *Yes, [the community-campus partnership], is about organizations, it's about students, but it is about common values that are much deeper. What we're learning to do, whether we're students or whether we're a non-profit, is doing something that is actually moving us as a community, a path of achieving process along the context of what we care about.* "

II. Characteristics of Effective Partnerships

Susan Gomez, community partner, Pitzer College

Several entities in higher education have developed criteria for best practices of partnerships in various ways. Important examples include: Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH), (1998); Campus Compact, (Torres, 2000); the Wingspread Report, (Honnet and Poulsen, 1989), Housing and Urban Development Department's list of characteristics (Holland and Ramaley, 1998), and the study by Liederman et al., (2003) that describes the characteristics valued by community partners. Holland (2005) notes that while many of these lists contain unique aspects related to the context in which they were developed, there is a high level of convergence in their recommendations that provides a vision of ideal partnerships. In our study, we hoped to see if these best practices developed by higher education conform to feedback from community partners based on their experiences. To explore this issue, it is important to note that we asked community partners to list the *characteristics* of effective partnerships and then rank their top three priorities, while higher education groups developed *sets of best practices* for campus-community partnerships. We found that there is indeed convergence in how community partners define the characteristics of effective campus-community partnerships and the best practices developed by higher education, but they ranked their priority characteristics somewhat differently than what is usually described in the best practices of partnerships literature, and there were also some differences in the language used. These distinctions in language use could indicate that there are differences in how partnerships are practiced, as suggested by Bacon, (2002), who notes that "differences in language may reveal underlying differences in the group's values, goals, or beliefs" (p. 35). The sets of best practices developed by higher education groups were usually lengthier, of course, as they were presented in written documents that had gone through numerous iterations before publication. Community partner responses to key characteristics were understandably briefer, but the "flavor" was also slightly different.

A comparison of both lists is shown in the text box on the next page.

**Community Partners: Characteristics
of Effective Partnerships**
*(List of highest ranked characteristics
from community partners)*

1. Relationships are essential
2. Communication—clear and ongoing
3. Understanding one another's
   organizations—mutual goals
4. Planning, training, orientation, and
   preparation
5. Shared leadership, accountability
6. Access to, and support of, higher
   education
7. Constant evaluation and reflection
8. Focus on students—placement fit

**Higher Education: Best Practices of
Campus-Community Partnerships**
(Paraphrased from Holland, 2005)

1. Explore and expand separate and
   common goals and interests
2. Understand capacity, resources and
   expectations of all partners
3. Evidence of mutual benefit through
   careful planning and shared benefit
4. For partnerships to be sustained,
   the relationship itself is the
   partnership activity
5. Shared control of directions
6. Continuous assessment of
   partnership process and outcomes

III. Emerging Themes: A Walk through the House that Partnerships Built

Diagram of a house showing:
- **Need to let off steam sometimes** (chimney)
- **Social Justice & Transformation of Knowledge** (roof)
- **Benefits for Community Partners**
- **Benefits for Higher Ed Institutions**
- **Benefits for Students**
- **Common Gathering Room**
- **Under Construction** / **Civic Arts & Crafts Room**
- **Relationships are Foundational**
- **Common Ground Floor: Partners in Educating Students**

Since we are now at the "summit" of our data mountain, we hope to express our findings succinctly while honoring community voice. To organize the findings, we will borrow the visual metaphor of a community-campus partnership as a house, developed by Susan Gomez (see page 11 for photo), a member of a community-campus partnership in Ontario, California (Sandy, 2005). Metaphors are known to be a powerful mode of understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Taylor, 2002), and visual metaphors are helpful to organize thoughts and concepts. The components of a house, including a strong foundation, the ground floor, the different "rooms" where partners primarily reside, the common spaces where they come together, and the roof under which we all dwell, provide an adequate way to describe some of the themes included in this study. All of the rooms are connected, and the structure of the whole is improved as members of the different rooms interact more. This section also includes anonymous quotes that were culled from the texts of all focus groups held at the eight campuses. Individual quotes support a particular theme and are not listed as part of the same conversation. As always, the words of the community partners have value beyond what can be fully interpreted by us. We hope you enjoy reading them.

Relationships are Foundational
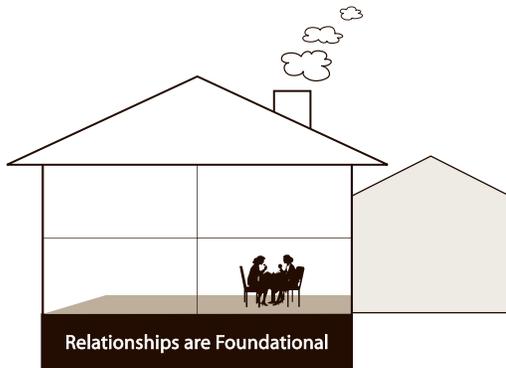
The Most Essential Characteristic: Relationships are Foundational

" You can't assume the partnership will stay what it is. It needs to be fed. "

" It is like you're weaving. You are weaving the community closer. It is about relationship-building. It's like a collective and the more people at the party you have, the stronger you become. "

" If you're just going to do an event, and another event and a project, a project, a project, it doesn't feel like you're connecting the dots. You're not growing

anything. It has to be sustainable, and I think you only get sustainability when you're building relationships and there's a certain humanity to the whole thing. "

Aspects of valuing and nurturing the partnership relationship were uniformly stressed as the highest priority among all the groups. They emphasized that the relationship itself is foundational to service-learning and that the quality of all other activities rely on this. This supports the claim by Dorado and Giles (2004) and Benson and Harkavy (2000) that community partners value the relationship with the university beyond a specific service-learning project. This finding also provides support for the claim posited by Skilton-Sylvester & Erwin (2000) that people can begin to cross the borders that commonly divide university and community members "through the development of caring relationships and reflection on those relationships" (p.73). It is in some contrast to the study conducted by Bushouse (2005), who found that small non-profit organizations were more likely to prefer arrangements with minimal required staff time, with presumably less emphasis on relationship-building.

Here are some of the things they said about their experiences with satisfying and challenging relationships with higher education:

"I think trust and relationships are a big part of it. So therefore when you talk about these things in a clear way -- of course there are always things that come up that you didn't expect -- when they do come up, you have a base to go from.... Then there's that

In their own words, community partners stressed these key aspects of successful relationships:

Openness, keep the door open
Horizons are open
Understanding each other
Nurturing
Ability to say no
Generous spirit
Personal touch, personal connections
Partner recognition
Mutual Respect
Feeling more like a family
Visceral
Fluid, not stagnant
Responsive, think outside the box
Honesty
Trust each other
Flexibility, give and take
Symbiotic relationship
Becoming community
Caring about mutual goals
Appreciation
Voluntary passionate commitment

'relationship thing' you develop after you have an experience with someone. So now if the service-learning coordinator looks at me funny, I know, "OK, let's do that." I know we can do that. It reinforces what you started out with."

"I'd say non-formal phone calls, emails, not having to set up traditional meetings. Just like ''Hey, we'll stop by the campus.'' It is not formal every time, it doesn't have to be formal, but it makes it more comfortable... So I think being flexible and having the time to do that really can nurture and develop that relationship so it can last a long time."

"A lot of this falls under understanding your partner. How many times have I been on the phone with a partner and this thing called a bell rings? We have this thing in high school called bells. [everyone laughs] My whole life revolves around these bells,

"OK, it's now fourth period I need to say good-bye." You need to know where each other are coming from. And if they say the word pedagogy more than three times in one sentence, [people laugh] you've lost me. I'm just a teacher, I'm sorry!" [more laughter]

Community partners often have a wealth of experience in building relationships with individuals from many different types of agencies – this may even be necessary for their survival in some cases, as resources become scarce and some funding sources mandate collaboration as part of their funding criteria. One of the key distinctions community partners describe in partnering with higher education institutions is the difference in scale. Higher education institutions are often much larger, with more stable resource bases, staff, and relative power. The representation of

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racially and ethnically diverse partners may also be different. As emphasized in the 2003 Liederman et al., study, these are important aspects of the relationship that must be taken into account to ensure partnerships are satisfying to both partners.

"When you're a small organization partnering with a large organization, that relationship may be a little different than if you're one large organization partnering with another large organization. So the equity issue must always be looked at – just looking at economics, diversity, trying to make it a level playing field. So that [differences in size of partnering organizations] needs to be looked at and taken into consideration so that it's not dismissed, so as the work moves forward, that's all taken into consideration."

Community partners also described the fact that the higher education institutions often have many different individuals or even campus entities involved with community engagement and service-learning, and they do not all communicate well with one another.

"There is total non-communication among [the university's service-learning] programs. And we are stuck in the middle of that."

"Between different parts of teacher ed, they have different opportunities for student teaching, and one group feels strongly that their program is the best, and another feels their program is the best and then they cram them all into your campus at once. And if you can't take them, you're a traitor and a heretic."

Common Ground Floor
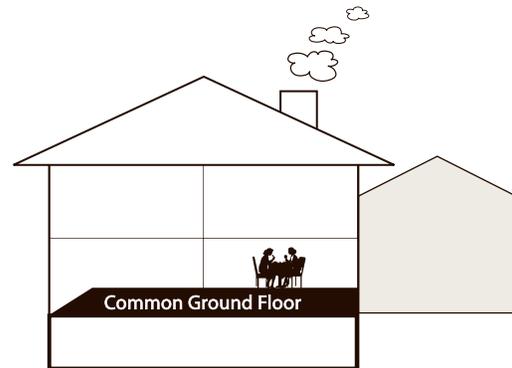
Common Ground for Community Partners and Higher Education

"We are co-educators. That is not our organization's bottom line, but that's what we do."

One of the most compelling findings of this study is the profound dedication of community partners to educating college students, even when this is not an expectation, part of their job description, or if the experience provides few or no short- and long-term benefits for their organization.

"I should add that I'm a frustrated teacher! I see [service-learning] as an opportunity to influence the next generation. I see it not just as we're getting those wonderful volunteers, but we have an opportunity to train and influence and sensitize people to deal with the issues the clients of our agency face. It can influence their family relationships, it's going to influence their career choices, and it is maybe going to help them deal differently with people they meet on the street."

"I would say the work is about change. That's something we do, bring about change with the students. They first get here, and they just want to get the work done, you know, get their 30 hours in. But once they start connecting with the kids they want to stay longer. They usually end up with a valuable experience at the end of the semester."

"It is nice to feel that you're involved with education too, that your learning doesn't end and it is nice to be involved with college students."

The experienced community partners included in this study spoke of their shared goals regarding student learning at the inception of the partnership. They repeatedly stressed that participating in the education of college students was a more compelling reason for becoming involved in community-campus partnerships than more tangible "transactional" short-term benefits to their agency or organization. Our finding of this deep, shared interest among higher education and community partners is different from some studies published previously. For example, Bushouse, 2005; Scheibel et al, 2005 describe campus-community partnerships as based on differences in self-interest where participants must continually negotiate to ensure their different needs are met. Enos and Morton, 2003 suggest a continuum of "self-to-shared-interest," where partnerships function first as a "transactional" partnership with distinct self-interested objectives and then move toward developing shared goals to a "transformational" relationship based on a sense of a shared, common good. A recent study by Worrall (2005) affirms

this perception of community partners, indicating that they first become involved with service-learning to gain access to additional resources and then stay involved over time because they enjoy their role as community educators. One possible explanation for our finding of shared goals at the inception of the partnership is that community partners who are motivated to educate college students may be more likely to remain in long-term partnerships, such as the long-term partners included in this study. More research may be needed to explore the perceptions of newer partners or those who chose to terminate their partnership with higher education to explore this topic. Because the desire to educate college students was such a robust theme found in this study, however, it seems to demonstrate that more community partners are motivated by a desire to participate in the education of college students than the field previously acknowledged. We may be closer to the transformational ideals described by Enos & Morton (2003) than we previously realized.

Deep Capacity to Educate College Students

While educating students was an initial motivation for these community partners, their commitment to educating students may have grown over time as they became more experienced. They demonstrated a remarkable awareness of and level of student learning outcomes for career development, civic engagement, academic course content, diversity and multi-cultural skills, and personal development.

"[Students] come from the university hoping to help us build a house, but with service-learning in context, that same student would understand why there is a lack of affordable housing, what is the impact of a lack of housing on the community, on a low-income family, on a neighborhood. Part of the challenge is broadening the scope of what the specific work a student might be doing at an agency and helping them understand that in context. That is really a tough thing to do, and it seems like it is often our responsibility as community partners to help make those links."

"We help students develop some empathy for others. I tell students that come that everybody is differently-abled. We are all differently-abled, some are more obvious than others. There is a real kindness and understanding that develops, and I try to explain to others that life is fully inclusive. You get to pick who your friends are, but you have to participate in life, and you'll meet many people that are different than you, and you have to accept them where they are. And it is like a light that goes on in their eyes because when you are working with a child with cerebral palsy, you're seeing how they're struggling. 'Maybe someday you'll have a child with that.' Or we have a lot of drug

babies in the program, and they ask why is this child this way, and explaining to them that it is because their parents do drugs. And sometimes the students just look at me, and I think, well maybe I am working on a different subject here! [everyone laughs] It is just that whole understanding that is going on, and when they come back and mirror the words about being differently-abled, I know they've gotten it. It's exciting."

"We're teaching responsibilities, the organizational culture, 'this is the dress code,' and getting them familiar with that, but also asking them what is it you want to bring here as well."

Common Hopes for Students

"Well it is real clear to me that they can make a difference, not just with students that they're working with, but the school, with the community, with society. There's really no limitation to what they can do in terms of making an impact, for social change."

"I would hope that students have a good experience and felt that their academic life was enhanced as one of the goals. I also hope that they have a real-world experience, so that their job skills are honed up a little bit and they become better candidates for better paying jobs."

"I hope that a young person can say, 'I can make a positive change in the community where I live.' On the other hand, I think it is also about, 'where does one find meaning in life?' That's why I am involved [with campus-community partnerships]."

Benefits for Community Partners

Distinct Benefits for Community Partners

As a previous qualitative study with community partners affirmed (Bacon, 2002), relationships are the major vehicle through which learning and knowledge generation take place for community partners, and through which they accrue tangible benefits. While all partners demonstrated a deep dedication to the education of college students, their description of other motivations and benefits for being involved in service-learning varied, and appeared to be on a continuum of those who spoke more about transactional or self-interested benefits provided by individual college students to those who described a need to contribute to the common good overall. The benefits community partners describe in this study can be categorized as 1) direct impact and 2) enrichment. A summary appears in the text box on the next page.

1. Fulfilling a Direct Need

(1a) Impact on Client Outcomes

By engaging in relationships with non-profit clients, college students have a positive impact on client outcomes, such as youth, English learners, the elderly, homeless and disabled. As described in many other studies (e.g., Birdsall, 2005; Jorge, 2003; Schmidt and Robby, 2002; Vernon and Foster, 2002), college students are highly valued as age-appropriate role models for youth and given credit for raising educational outcomes and ambition among youth. Service-learners engage with people in a variety of other settings as well, and provide companionship for the elderly and for other non-profit clients such as the homeless.

"The college is right in our back yard for a lot of these high schools. It is great to have the college students come because then these kids will think about going to college. It shows that college is possible."

"The key benefit from students is the impact on seniors, to be here and relate to the seniors. It is an opportunity for an intergenerational experience. Their hearts break when the students leave. The bonds they have are really wonderful to see. It is really, really good for our clients."

"One of the things that is such an incredible blessing for us is the fact that our guests receive affirmation that the fact that they're breathing means something. The students think that they are just volunteers. The students will come to prepare food or play air hockey or have a game of checkers, just have a conversation. It is a tremendous affirmation that they're worth that time. It means a lot."

⚜ Benefits for Community Partners

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1. FULFILLING A DIRECT NEED

    a. By engaging in relationships with non-profit clients, college students have a positive impact on client outcomes, such as youth, the elderly, homeless.
    b. Service-learners help sustain and enhance organizational capacity. They are critical additions to the workforce.

2. ENRICHMENT FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND PARTNER AGENCIES

    a. Community partners receive personal satisfaction by contributing to educating students and the university overall, and by making a difference in their community.
    b. Community partners remark that enthusiastic students are a pleasure to work with.
    c. Community partners enjoy opportunities for learning and reflection:
        — Opportunities to reflect on practice enhances their organizational development;
        — Opportunities to learn content knowledge from students and faculty; and
        — Opportunities to gain access to expertise and participate in research.
    d. Partners may enjoy greater prestige through their association with higher education, which may lead to a greater ability to leverage resources.
    e. Partner organizations identify future employees, volunteers, donors.
    f. Community-campus partnerships increase community capacity by building social capital among community agencies.

"Our kids really look up to our tutor mentors. We have found that their grades go up; there's a different focus. They see possibilities, they see a different light as far as education. We can say the same thing as an adult, but they don't hear it the same way. You bring a university student in, who still has the modern look, the teenage look, and they can relate."

(1b) Sustaining and Enhancing Organizational Capacity

Service-learners are a critical part of the workforce of some partner organizations and help sustain and extend the capacity of K-12 and non-profit organizations, often enabling them to take on new projects that would have remained "on the back burner." They also enhance the workforce in various ways by becoming future staff, donors and volunteers.

"Our program would probably not survive if we do not have service-learners. It's economics. We couldn't possibly hire the number of people we need to do our programs."

"Benefits-wise, there are large-scale benefits. We can come to the one class and recruit 25 volunteers and increase our volunteer-hours by 800 hours in one fell swoop. Where else can we go and get this large number? Then we have a professor who

holds them accountable and the class staff provides follow-up. In terms of benefits, it is expanded ten-fold."

"But also with service-learners for me, we've been able to do things that we've had on back burners forever. In non-profits, it is always so hard to get those new projects going. Again, you throw it at a service-learner student and they run with it, they do it. It has been an asset to us to be able to get other projects off the ground. Even though they're there for a short amount of time, they make a huge impact."

2. Enrichment for Community Partners and Partner Agencies

(2a) Personal Satisfaction and Organizational Development

Another major benefit to community organizations of partnering is staff satisfaction and organizational development. Participating in service-learning to educate students about their profession or advocacy issue is often part of the mission of community partners as well. It is often affirming, energizing and enjoyable for staff to be involved, and some have even returned to college themselves.

"This is one of the best aspects of my job. It keeps me happy, it keeps me fresh."

"It is my way of educating the university. When you become a working adult, give back."

"I feel privileged to be a part of this campus. It impacts my perspective as a professional. You get intellectual, mental stimulation working with a university."

"It impacts our teachers. The students bring what they learn about education to our school. In reverse of that, I find that

the teachers enjoy having someone around. The teacher gets to be a role model for that service-learner and a resource."

"My staff members are going back to school…after being a mentor to college students. There's that membrane of exchange and our seasoned people decide to go back."

(2b) Enthusiastic Students

Much like their higher education counterparts, community partners described the joys and challenges of working with young people. Overall, their experiences with students were positive.

"The student leaders that I have had the opportunity to meet and have the opportunity to work with are just outstanding young people, very committed."

"With interns, you never know who you are going to get. But they always open the door to something. The first gal saved me. The second gal introduced me to a professor at this campus and he did a project with us, which led me to Larry, who is sitting in this room! It is always something delightful, at least it has been so far. I'm batting 100. The key opens up the door and I have a resourceful, smart, willing person to help me out."

(2c) Learning and Reflection

When partnering with higher education institutions and supervising service-learners, partners reflect more on organizational practices, and gain from the intellectual assets of the academic institution by learning new information from students and obtaining greater access to academic research from faculty. Partners are often able to further their organization's goals by garnering greater access to the prestige associated with the academic institution.

"I work in a consortium in the college that includes students and faculty from many different agencies and schools, and from my perspective, I need to be the best agency I can be. Not only are the students looking at me but they are looking at me in comparison to the other agencies that they are interested in. In all levels it forces us to be more professional. We have to look at our ethical values because they ask those kind of questions."

"Every time you come to do an orientation with students, you learn about your job. "Oh yeah, that's right! That's what we do."

"At one point I got my butt kicked in many ways with the interns, and it ended up being very positive for me. So there's something about having another person in the class, it kind of gauges what is going on. It is hard to put a measurement, but there is more evaluation or more analysis that goes on as a result of having them in the classroom."

"I focus on the resources that might be tapped in. Where else can you get a couple of Ph.D.s working on a problem in technology on a high school campus? There are a lot of resources that can be tapped into."

(2d) Access to Prestige Associated with Higher Education

The connection with higher education has the potential to provide credibility to grassroots organizations. With the prestige of higher education comes responsibility, and there some partners expressed concern about this as well.

"Before this grant, no one would listen to us. Everyone would say, 'Yeah, that's your problem, it's over there.' But the university is listened to. And now it has opened up a lot of eyes."

"This campus has more financial resources, more people resources than a lot of the other partners. There is prestige in working with university partners. Having this campus as a partner adds more credibility to what you are doing."

(2e) Identifying Future Employees, Volunteers, Donors

Community partners often gain greater visibility for their organization by partnering with higher education and often use it as a recruitment tool for identifying potential staff.

"It generates support, donations, and awareness of our organization. And we need that. So even though the partnership may not be working the best for us, we still participate because of that need."

"We hire volunteers often. They work out and end up staying. Our challenge with volunteers is getting rid of them."

"With one student, even before he completed his hours we hired him."

(2f) Increasing Community Capacity

Social capital among community partner agencies is often strengthened when universities foster linkages among community partners with whom they are affiliated. This finding corroborates Gelmon, et al., 2001 and the study done by Vernon and Foster (2002) that found that "service-learning and volunteer programs are conduits for building social capital in a community." The partners expressed strong benefits from being convened by the academic institution as a source for enhancing community networks and relationships.

"The university has brought us together as partners. That's a real important outcome of this university partnership and it has grown. It has brought different partners together from different towns, [as well as different partners] from the same town."

"It think it has helped us be better collaborators and also to know what is available in the community. Because of our connections with everybody, we're really learning what is already been invented and we don't have to re-invent."

"I've had the opportunity to work with everyone around the table over time, and you're probably not going to find that on other campuses. It underscores the magnitude of how much the university has over our community -- it is really a critical treasure chest of tools for the community."

"When a deal or a project opens up, you want to expand your partnership with another organization. Partners open up to each other so the whole network becomes richer, so even if I am somewhere else, and I know somebody could work well with this campus, I say, 'Ah, I've got this partnership, let me recommend them to you because this partnership would be really great for you.' A positive relationship and the trust that's built enables you to grow in all kinds of different directions and also facilitates their growth, the partners' growth."
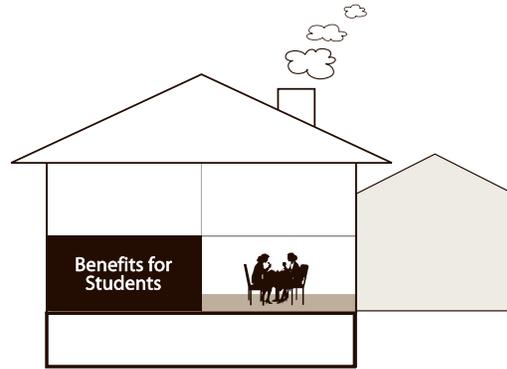
Benefits for Students

The emphasis on benefits for students is where the intersection of shared mission and vision of community partners and higher education partners becomes manifest. During the focus groups, community partners spoke most passionately about their hopes for students. They expressed a great depth of knowledge about potential benefits for students and a commitment to the learning goals. Their descriptions mirror the benefits described by advocates of service-learning in higher education indicated in the literature, such as the academic benefits for students, impact on civic engagement, student retention, career development, and personal development (e.g., Eyler et al., 1997; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Feldman et al., 2006; Ferrari & Chapman, 1997; Gallini & Moely, (2003); Sax & Astin, 1997; Shiarella, 1998; Strage, 2004). A summary of the benefits for students appears in the text box on the next page.

✺ Benefits for Students

1. Students engage in opportunities to experience diversity, overcome stereotypes, and build intercultural communication skills.
2. Students may experience internal transformation, and cultivate their "humanity."
3. Students better understand academic content.
4. Students gain exposure to and awareness of organizations' core issues and the non-profit world.
5. Students benefit from career planning, workplace preparedness, and skill building.
6. Students practice civic engagement and participation in politics/government.
7. Students enjoy deeper connections with community that can enhance well-being.
8. Students may develop a sense of greater self-efficacy and enjoy being treated as a professional.
9. Students may cultivate a commitment to lifelong service.

Their comments largely mirror what is known in the service-learning literature, so this section is briefer than the previous section on benefits to community partners. Here are just of few of the quotations from community partners about the benefits they believe students experience by engaging in service-learning at their agencies.

Experiencing Diversity/Overcoming Stereotypes

"It helps to broaden them to the range of experience[s] of human beings. I don't know how students will use that."

"And you know they get these students from the Midwest and they are all white and rich. [everyone laughs] And they come here, and it is so exciting to see them understanding a community, where we're actually communicating about who we are, what our relationships are, what we have to offer each other, how we can work together, under- *stand better the common, each others' values and each other's shared values. We're on a path that's individual and shared."*

Internal Transformation: Cultivating Humanity

"Working with students is an opportunity to put them in a situation where the students are changed internally. It's an internal change. It's that internal change that you can't really quantify. I'd say it's a passion, a passion that they didn't have before they came here."

Career Preparedness

"That's how I found my job. I was an intern, and after a year of being an intern with them and doing community service with them I was offered a job after I graduated. It keeps you from being in a bubble where you're like, 'Oh my gosh, I'm graduating, what am I going to do?'"

Civic Engagement

"On a more global level, it encourages students to have a voice in government, to take an active part in their future, in our future. That's why there is a push for service-learning."

Providing a Sense of Connectedness

"[I]t almost saves some students. A lot of students are [from] out of state. When I was a student I wasn't in touch with many African Americans, and hardly any African American students because there are very few here, and I felt very isolated. And I think that, when I went to this campus and I felt really isolated and I really did walk around with a chip on my shoulder. Now the service-learning center will purposely take these students to our site so they can feel more connected. I think for a lot of African American students, when their only connection is campus, it's very important to have links to the outside world."

Benefits for Higher Ed. Institutions
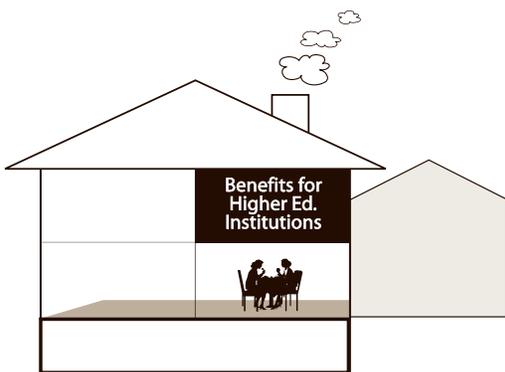
Benefits for Higher Education Institutions

"Their role is to help educate people and what better way to help educate people? We help fulfill the main role of the university. We help people learn on the ground."

When discussing the benefits of partnerships for higher education institutions, community partners often emphasized the benefits for students described in the previous section. Some benefits were unique to the institutions as a whole, however. Importantly, these community partners indicate that they have seen evidence that higher education institutions are deepening their collaborations with other higher education institutions and are breaking down the institutional barriers because of their campus-community partnerships. Birge, Beaird and Torres (2003) note that this is notoriously difficult to do. This is a potential outcome for service-learning that can help deepen the public purpose of higher education. A summary of all benefits for higher education appears in the text box on the next page.

Assistance in Educating Students

"It improves the quality of education that this campus offers. I had a lot of students say to me, 'OK, I've read it in books, I've read the theory, but now I've seen it in real life. Now I get it.' That combination of the real life experience with the theory, the words have better meaning. The learning sticks better because they have something tangible to relate to."

"All aspects of the community are serving the university by being in relationship to them. Community leaders give back to institutions. The exchange goes both ways."

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✳ Benefits for Higher Education

1. Community-campus partnerships and service-learning fulfills the university mission for student learning, such as providing:
   — Critical, engaging educational opportunities for students;
   — Opportunities for students to develop experience with diversity and multicultural competency;
   — Workplace experiences for career preparedness for students; and
   — Opportunities for civic engagement for students.
2. Community-campus partnerships provide positive publicity and community "credibility."
3. Service-learning for students can provide a "safety net" for some students that can increase the retention rate.
4. Community-campus partnerships help further research goal through greater access to research sites, and more opportunities to publish, and obtain research grants
5. Higher education partners learn from community partners about how to engage in partnerships.
6. Campus-community partnerships help build connections among higher education institutions
7. Community-campus partnerships can help fulfill the higher education mission for social justice and contributing to the common good.

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Cultivating Lifelong Service

"We talk about lifelong learners, why not lifelong servers?"

Positive Publicity and Community Credibility

"The university also needs to have a presence in the community. The university needs recognition. The 'ivory tower' is frowned upon."

"I think this campus is not looked at so much about being just a research school that comes down and does research and publishes it some there. They're out there in the community trying to make a difference."

Expanding Academic Research

"I think sometimes that the university people, in allowing us this door …to come and contribute and to work together, also helps them in their research, putting educational books together so that there's writings left behind of social justice, or how the community is growing, diversity, other issues."

"If I was a professor…I'd really want to work with a school, not just send students, but actually get myself in there, do data, measure, try on different things."

Learning from Partners: Building Social Capital among Higher Education Systems

"I've seen how when we were first invited to join in partnerships with universi-

ties, each college had their own agenda, and they weren't open to have classes changed or reformed to fit the needs of the community. As the partnerships started coming in, I've now that there is intra-collaboration with the universities. I see it the most with this campus."
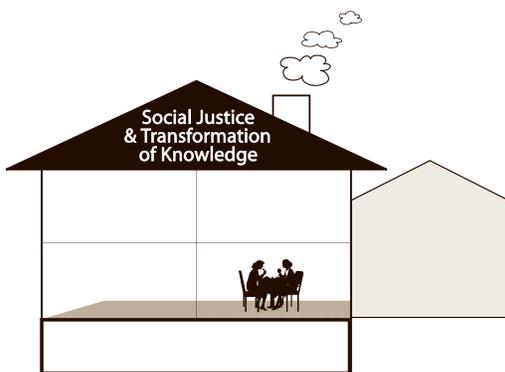
Commitment to Social Justice

1. Motivated by the Common Good

Like their higher education partners, some community partners described their motivation for being involved with community-campus partnerships as related to a common struggle for social justice and equity, a way to strengthen common values, build their community, and impact the greater good.

"Being a participant in social change. This should be the ultimate goal."

"Yes, it is about organizations, it is about students, but it is about common values that are much deeper. What we're learning to do, whether we're students or whether we're a non-profit, is doing something that is actually moving us about where we are as

a community, a path of achieving progress along the context of what we care about."

"I really hope that the university believes in the words they use to define themselves. In my mind, a primary goal of education is not for the self but is for the other, for everyone -- engagement in social justice. If the university really believes that that's a fundamental goal of education, my hope again, is that things in the long run can change in positive ways."

Many voiced these aspirations in terms of hopes for student learning:

"It is a moment of formation for the college student. Youth has an idealism about it. Wherever you come from and whatever your background has been, there is a way to be formed, to be stretched in your views. I think that by working at these places that are represented here today, the volunteers can see the world differently and their lives can be formed by these other ways of looking. Of course, this takes a social justice point of view."

"I do believe education is one of the major inroads to try to create equity. And I would say that it is imperative that campus community partnerships are about that goal. Yeah, everybody. Higher education organizations should have that public education facility for the community. In our case, we had high school students or kids that are planning to drop out or have dropped out or are drug dealers or are rehab people, and they may not even live [in the target neighborhood] but are being recommended to come and participate [in this university-sponsored program]. It is an opportunity for them to be able to enter a system that they might not be able to enter period. But until these partnerships continue to happen, we won't be able to scale that change…

We're investing in the equity that we hope we'll see happen."

2. Transformational Learning for the Common Good

At several focus groups, community partners spoke of their desire to contribute to the common good in terms of the ways in which community-campus partnerships can transform knowledge by bridging the gap between theory and practice, and provide opportunities for reflection that can change both our knowledge and practice. This may speak to the development of new knowledge generation that connects the different ways of knowing in community-campus partnerships that Bacon (2002) describes.

"I think what is unique is that it pushes forward this question about what is education for. For the students that are in college, it offers that novelty because of what they're learning from the community."

"And it gets at, 'This is the pedagogy thing. But this is the real thing.' The college kind of lives in the world of theory, and we live in the world of reality, and we hardly get to think about the theory because we're rushing from work. This is a place to try on this theory or this practice and let's see if it works."

"Partnerships expand the world. They close that gap [between theory and practice]."

3. Who is on the "Roof?"

It is notable that those community partners motivated by the hope for social justice describe this phenomenon

in ways that faculty and students speak of social justice. Like their higher education partners (Holland, 2002), some emphasized social justice a great deal, while others did not mention it at all. This may well be a personal preference in describing their motivations for engaging in this work, and their motivations are likely as varied as the motivations voiced by higher education practitioners, some of whom emphasize the role of service-learning as pedagogy while others stress civic engagement goals or social justice. But, as Dorado and Giles (2004) posit, relationships in campus-community partnerships are influenced by institutional as well as individual factors. The "ease" of the partnership experience seemed to make a difference in whether or not individual community partners emphasized benefits that were more short-term for themselves or altruistic. Those who described themselves as actively struggling with the logistics of the partnership or frustrated in their relationships with campus partners seemed to take the most "transactional" approach in ensuring their institution received direct short-term gains to make the partnership worthwhile. Community partners that seemed to experience fewer of these obstacles often spoke more about desire to further the common good. Again, this seems to refer back to the quality of the relationships of those partnerships:

"It is really exciting to know that the avenue for this engagement and pursuit of social justice is through relationship. Everything that is described here is relationship."

IV. Recommendations

Civic Arts &
Crafts Room
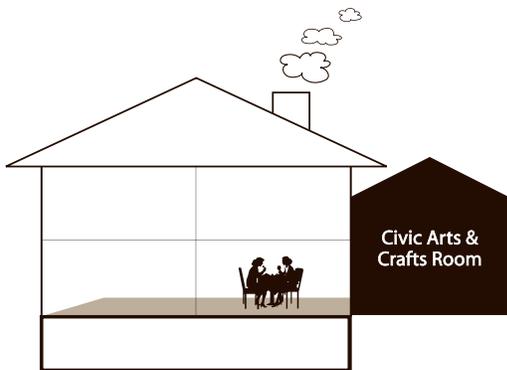
Civic Arts and Crafts: Addressing Challenges

"Partnerships are fluid, not stagnant. Things change over the years as the two sides are involved with each other. Programs change over the years when the needs change. Hopefully, the development comes from both sides."

"For a partnership to work is not to have this tunnel vision where only this concept must happen. Everyone who is involved should be able to script their ideas into that."

This room in the house, depicted here as the "garage" and labeled "civic arts and crafts," is the place where we develop new tools to address challenges. It will always be "under construction," because partnerships, by their nature, are processes in flux and require constant nurturing. There will always be a level of adjustment that must take place as we become aware of changes in circumstances and consider what our particular situation requires. This section describes some areas with room for improvement.

1. Engaging More with Faculty

Community partners involved with this study discussed several challenges and ways to improve campus-community partnerships. Most importantly, these partners note that engaging with faculty is the critical piece and often the "missing link" in community-campus partnerships. This is a profound missed opportunity.

"Communication with professors seems to fall apart. We would appreciate a heads-up from them about what they're going to do and what their goals are."

"Maybe the faculty should have to do fifteen hours."

"We hope professors are learning from their service-learning students that come back and report on our experiences so that we can have this kind of seamless education. If professors aren't learning some of this

stuff from their students that come back, then they're missing the boat."

A summary of all of the top challenges experienced by community partners are listed in the text box below:

was an overwhelming clamor among these community partners that faculty should be more directly involved with their sites and faculty should work to better understand the culture, conditions and practices of their community

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☀ Civic Arts and Crafts: Addressing Challenges to Improve Campus Partnerships

1. Partnerships are stifled when faculty are not involved.

2. There is a need for more collaboration in curriculum planning, adequate orientation and agreement on learning goals.

3. There is a need for greater sensitivity to ensure mutual respect, recognition and celebration among partners

4. There is a need for greater fairness and openness in accessing higher education: reducing "favoritism"

5. There is a need for much more evaluation and feedback

6. Tracking hours is often a hindrance – community partners are more concerned about adequate duration for the learning experience than hours.

7. The academic calendar, additional workload, transportation, and maturity of students were typically mentioned as challenges that partners have learned to live with. Liability was also mentioned.

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2. Collaboration and Co-curricular Planning

Community partners indicate that they continually seek avenues to interact directly with faculty through ongoing, reciprocal relationships, become collaborators in designing the service-learning curriculum, and engage with faculty more deeply in the work of their agencies. As Gelmon et al. (1998) advise, community partners and faculty need to become more cognizant of community strengths and needs, to work together to come to agreement on a clear message for students, and to create more appropriate service-learning experiences that are linked to the classroom. There

co-educators. Because they consider themselves to be role models, these partners expressed considerable concern about student learning goals, and would like to be a part of authentic planning processes.

"Communication and clear goals haven't been there for us. They ask us to come up with projects. The psychology class didn't apply to all of our students and the faculty member didn't communicate that.

"I have to say I was in the same situation where I felt like, 'well what is really required of them?' I wish I would have a syllabus to go by to know what they are doing."

And you ask the students, "What is the intention of your being here"? "I don't know. I'm just here to do hours."

"Just this year I got asked to join in a discussion piece in terms of administration and I went, and realized what I was really doing was seeing the new guidelines for the new programs the college wanted to do and helping them to put the label that they met with us. So they can say, well we met with so and so. And occasionally I am guilty of that myself so I can't blame them for it. [everyone laughs]. It was a nice lunch but that's it."

The impact of their weak connection with faculty is disturbing. All eight focus group sites indicated that it was fairly commonplace for faculty to create assignments that were illegal or inappropriate for their workplaces, and that curriculum or schedule changes often occur without their consent or prior knowledge, causing significant disruption for agency staff.

"We'd like to at least know what's happening. University students very typically will be given assignments by a prof like, "Teach a PE lesson because!" "Test an ESL student." "Do WHAT?" [everyone laughs] "Well you need to go back and tell your prof that can't happen." And then they come back again and say that they've been directed to do these things. And the poor kids just stand there like, 'we don't know what we're doing.' And they say my prof told me we could do this."

"Basically, the challenges are about articulation with professors. Groups are set up by the professors without calling us and they're just showing up and all they're going to do is observe. That throws a real kink in the program. They send groups through,

or just show up and say 'We'll be taking pictures and this and that.' And you need clearance with that, especially pictures."

"The face and the heart [service-learning office staff] have to educate the faculty, and they are the toughest nuts to crack over there. I had an example this year where the professor changed the syllabus and didn't tell me. I had a string of people coming in and asking for all kinds of things, 'I want this, I want press releases, I need this. And after you give me this, I need an hour of your time to answer these questions.' And there were 56 students. I wish the faculty had said, 'Look, there's a change here.' Getting everybody on the same page is an ongoing process, it is this process of navigation. Without a face and a heart, I don't think that would be possible."

"As a partner, you get that not everyone is on the same page, and to try to figure out that. What are some requirements from one class versus another class? A lot of times that is just communication because a lot of times the professor hasn't gotten on board in the same way. It doesn't have to be adversarial, it is just trying."

Related to the issue of appropriate learning goals was how to provide adequate orientation for students prior to their service experience. Clearly, there is a need for greater collaboration on student preparation to ensure the service experience is meaningful for everyone. Some partners felt that students were not prepared and felt that their higher education partner should do more to prepare students regarding the learning goals, workplace etiquette, including proper attire, and basic information about the organization's mission or population being served. Most community partners provided some type of

orientation on-site, and indicated that the time required to train them meant that the number of actual service hours was low or in the case of very short-term service requirements, even non-existent.

"I don't know if this campus has an orientation program before they put students out there. It would seem that that's the place for students to be instructed in proper workplace behavior because these are jobs for them. They should be given instruction in proper dress, behavior, all that stuff."

"It would be good if the orientation could be done in the classroom so it wouldn't take up the hours with us. There is a tremendous time issue. But the time can make the learning more effective in the classroom. They have common experiences to share which enhances the learning in the classroom."

Community partners stress that honoring the conclusion of service-learning experiences and partnership projects can be just as important as coming to agreement on learning goals and orientation. Many felt that it was important to design closure activities for the students and client populations on-site, as well as to provide opportunities to celebrate the partnership between the higher education institution and community partner organizations. This, they acknowledge, takes advanced preparation and resources, but providing opportunities for partner recognition and celebration is an important way of valuing relationships among service-learners, those they serve, the community partners and higher education staff and faculty.

"I think it is nice when students have closure with whatever student they've worked with, a letter or something. Often-

times, the student will treasure that note or something. I've always had that in the past, and this year that was missing. They did the hours and they were gone. Our students were kind of sad, in a sense. It was sad even for me."

3. Sensitivity and Mutual Respect

To strengthen campus community partnerships, many agencies and institutions stressed the need for more respectful interactions with higher education partners as well as communication infrastructure that is sensitive to their particular workplace culture and organizational infrastructure. They point out that communication is not a "one size fits all approach." K-12 institutions, for example, may require processes and procedures that are distinct from social service non-profits since they usually have different hours of operation and often more hierarchical and complex chains of command.

"It is pretty hit or miss with the [higher education student leader coordinators]. They're students, sometimes they don't get up until 4:00 in the afternoon, and well, that means we're probably not going to get to talk that day." -- K-12 Partner

"At times there is a sense of arrogance from the university level that I feel coming, that I am directed to do things by various university employees or told to do things or plan. Changes happen and it causes a lot of frustration. There is a view there, we are kind of viewed as a guinea pig setting in which we should be thankful to have students placed and we should be just happy it is happening to us."

Working to cultivate better relationships with partners on an ongoing basis is critical to ensure the survival of these partnerships.

"To me it seems that there just needs to be some time and acknowledgment, and recognition of the partnership between our public schools and the university. And there's not. There's a lot of problem-solving, but there's not a lot of backup planning. There's a lot of reacting to things, rather than recognizing what we have here."

"And knowing each others' worlds. You know that you don't know each other's worlds when things aren't going so well."

"We are not consulted when they make up these new mandates. We're the guinea pigs that are supposed to be thankful."

4. Access and Fairness

Focus group participants spent considerable time strategizing together on how to gain greater entrée to their higher education institution partner. In larger institutions, the service-learning office may represent only one of several possible connections for community partners. They are well aware that there are often special benefits associated with developing relationships with particular faculty members, departments, or programs that might even provide additional financial resources for them. This process can be mystifying even for experienced partners.

"To what extent are all the agencies aware of all these different opportunities? Is the university reaching out to community organizations, and not just with a piece of the puzzle but the bigger picture? I learned about things [from other focus group participants] I have never heard of before today."

"There should be a more formal process for soliciting involvement. Right now, it is hit or miss based on a relationship that you are fortunate to have."

"It's about the relationship and it goes both ways. Professors have their favorite places and they may not know what else we have to offer."

"In the student teaching area, they now have different placement requirements [state requirements], like you have to have certain kinds of kids in your classroom, special needs students, ESL students. And what's happened is some schools get a lot of students and some don't see any. So it is very frustrating, so last year I didn't have special needs students but this year I do, but they never call because they assume I never have them. And so there's that communication where, do I need to tell you every semester?"

The processes for making these connections are not necessarily funneled through service-learning offices and may not even be "public," as the agreements are often arranged through personal relationships between faculty and individual agencies. While recognizing that all partnerships are based on relationships, these partners expressed a great deal of concern about fairness and many suggested that there be ways to standardize access for all partners. Many hope for more access to classrooms on campus, but also expressed concern about how recruitment processes for students are usually handled in these situations, often pitting them in a popularity contest with other organizations where the most enthusiastic guest speaker "wins." One partner commented, "I feel like I'm kind of in a roadshow to get students. It is not ideal." Some partners suggested more partner fairs and mixers, curriculum planning sessions, websites, videos, and other forms of communication infrastructure.

"We need a communication system that we could tap into."

"We need to work on the matching. Sometimes I feel, "How come it is always that organization over there that gets the students? Partners have a pretty good idea of what they can gain…You want them to get the overall picture, both the students and the professors."

Additionally, advanced community partners often feel that they are left out of the loop after a partnership with their agency has been established. While there are usually orientations for new partners, these partners would also like opportunities to meet and plan with faculty.

"Long-term participants would really like to have that contact meeting. Getting together with colleagues, having those connections. The reception feels different in a meeting where you can get some work done."

"Now they have orientations for the new partners, but what about us? The need to all be on the same page doesn't go away. The new partners could learn a lot from our experiences too."

"I can imagine that an in-service of some kind for both the university and the cooperating teachers and administrators, why not? Sit down for just a day before you go back to school. Sit down and have a regular conversation about what are your expectations."

5. Evaluation and Feedback

Successful partnerships include feedback and evaluation processes so partners can check in with each other to ensure their work together can continue

to evolve. These partners expressed a great deal of concern over learning outcomes for students as part of this process. Overall, partners report that they are rarely informed about assessment and evaluation outcomes for student learning and would like to know more. Some partners asked for evaluation plans to be developed. At many of these campuses, evaluation processes for service-learning do exist, but the information is rarely provided to the community partners.

"I think it is very important that in the very beginning you need to build into the goals the process to reflect, and to learn, knowing that you may not have the perfect answer in the very beginning. Hey, this is the process of learning together, but let's make sure we have that debrief time."

"We have no formal way of knowing what type of learning has taken place. What are the college students learning?"

"What changed for you? We talk about organizations changing or how they changed our clients, but I want to know how THEY [college students] have changed. We hope they are changed by these relationships but I want to know that we actually ask them these types of questions as a form of accountability. How has it changed for them? That would show me that they learned something or that something had happened."

"It is horrible to find out at the end that a student has missed something when you could have nipped it in the bud. I ask students for writing sometimes. I try to make it easy on them, just give me something from your journal. And they panic, 'We're supposed to do a journal too?' I don't know what you're supposed to do."

"We hand in evaluations about the students, and I know they evaluate us. It would be nice to know what happens with all of that."

6. Implications for Tracking Hours

Overall, community partners expressed a high level of frustration with mandatory hour requirements and did not feel that this was a particularly useful indication of student achievement or impact on the community partner site. Many felt that the designated hour requirement sends the wrong message to students and were sometimes distressed by the amount of paperwork this requirement generates.

"I'm very concerned about the students that just want to get their hours done. That's not service-learning…Some are just doing community service, and that's defeating the purpose."

"We have a lot of students in the beginning of the semester, then you don't see them in the middle of the semester and then you see them at the end of the semester because they have paperwork for you to sign."

"That last week at the end of the semester when they're trying to cram all these hours in, that puts a lot of pressure on me. Another thing that puts pressure on me is having these groups come in. That's tough. So far just for the spring semester I've had 11 groups come in. There's a lot of paperwork to process for these people. Every individual kid has this paper – that's very time consuming."

An unintended outcome of the emphasis on hours seems to be a misunderstanding of the term, 'service-learn-

ing.' One partner commented, "The only difference [between service-learners and volunteers] is in the tracking of the hours; the service-learning students are much more interested in it if you are tracking their hours." Community partners were unanimous in expressing their desire to provide service-learning experiences of adequate duration that would be meaningful for service-learning students and for their non-profit clients. Partners working with campuses that required less than twenty hours reported the most distress with the hours requirement and the most concern about the adequacy of the service-learning experience, in terms of the quality of the education experience for students, and the short and long-term benefits for their organization. One said, "How valuable is it to the student to spend 10 hours someplace? What have they really learned?" Their concern corroborates the literature conducted with service-learning students and supervisors on the importance of time as a learning factor (e.g., Eyler et al., 1997; Mabry, 1998; Patterson, 1987). As expected, many other community partners with longer time commitments from service-learners sought to increase the time allotment as well. The time required for training, orientation, and background checks is sometimes longer than the duration of the service-learning commitment. In some instances, a short-term commitment on the part of service-learners could even be harmful when working with sensitive populations such as refugee children.

"A lot of our young clients have issues with abandonment. They've lost family members. So, I've noticed over the years that the kids kind of stop connecting with the volunteers because there is so much in

and out. But the ones that stay for a longer period of time, the kids are more willing to trust and build a relationship. But they are more hesitant, they expect them to disappear in a few months, and always ask, 'What happened to so and so?'"

7. Other Challenges

Community partners frequently mentioned the maturity level and accountability of students as common challenges, but they also said that they felt responsible in working with students on these issues as part of their role as co-educators. Other challenges community partners described include accommodating the academic calendar, managing logistics related to transportation, and liability issues. Overall, these are issues that these community partners have learned to live with, but they require ongoing negotiation.

"You were talking about dress. That comes up a lot. It is very interesting to see the attired coeds that come on our campus. And we don't let our kids dress like that; we don't let our staff dress like that."

"Timeframe is a bit of a problem, but you'd rather have them than not have them!"

"It's not like you don't KNOW it's January and what is going to happen."

"Logistics. Proximity matters. Students often have problems with transportation. The organizations and schools that are closer to the campus have an easier time getting internships."

"The background screenings cost money. You have to do a background screening if you are working with youth – that is mandatory, and that can be challenging."

"We do struggle with confidentiality issues, liability issues, maturity issues."

As Liederman et al., (2003), emphasize, it is important to be "meticulous with the details" to ensure that the characteristics of effective campus-community partnerships are put into practice. While faculty involvement, co-planning, evaluation and celebration are all usually included as important characteristics of effective partnerships (e.g., Honnet & Poulsen, 1989; Torres, 2000), the community partners involved with this study indicate that there is a need to practice these principles more diligently, and to place a much greater emphasis on co-teaching. It is not enough to know, but to act on what we know.

The community partners involved with this study persevere despite the challenges described here. As Miron and Moely (2005) report, there are still significant benefits to community-based agencies and positive interactions with higher education partners in the absence of co-planning and authentic collaboration, but these partners indicate that the "status quo" is often unacceptable.

Common
Gathering Room
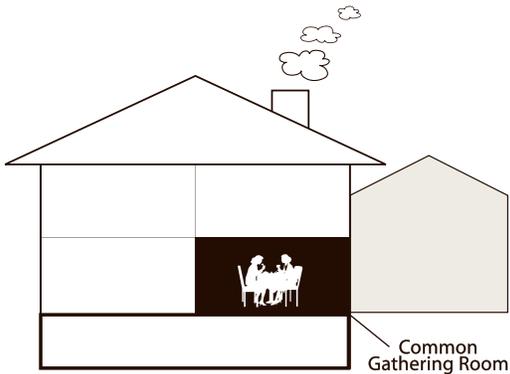
Common Gathering Room: Recommendations

"Thought alone moves nothing. Only thought that is tied to action can do so." — Aristotle

While the partners listed many challenges, most of their solutions focused on spending more time planning together, meeting face-to-face with faculty and others to coordinate the educational experience for college students, celebrating and evaluating together, building relationships and strengthening networks among partners. Some overall recommendations are listed in the text box below.

The community partners' emphasis on the importance of relationships points to further recommendations for transformations in higher education practice:

1. Value relationships. As service-learning coordinators are well aware, the need to cultivate positive relationships in campus-community partnerships is complex because of the sheer number and diversity of partners involved, and because partners and situations change over time. Community partners expect their higher education institution partner to connect with them personally. On the "macro-level," new practices may need to be instituted to ensure more equitable access to campuses, while on the "micro-level," partners must continue to engage in on-going relationship-building. Rather than feeling inconvenienced by requests

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☀ Gathering Together More Frequently in the
Common Room: Recommendations

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1. Value relationships.

2. Hold conversations regularly about partnership process and outcomes.

3. Involve faculty directly. Joint curriculum planning, face-to-face pre-semester meetings and orientations for professors and all community partners.

4. Consider ways the academic institution can help build social capital. Design group projects/larger scale community projects.

5. Balance relationships and fairness in expanding communication infrastructure.

6. Develop other accountability options to complement tracking of hours.

7. Get together more. Play together – let off steam!

for participation, community partners ask for more campus visits, more face-to-face meetings, and greater inclusion in orientations and planning sessions. These partners stress that building effective community-campus relationships involves communicating roles and responsibilities clearly, working to better understand different workplace cultures, demonstrating sensitivity about how to best communicate with one another, and expressing appreciation for one another.

2. Hold regular conversations about partnership process and outcomes. The research team recommends that higher education institutions consider sponsoring or participating in conversations among all partners to reflect on their formal partnership arrangements, informal communication links, critique current practice and collectively identify ways to strengthen partnerships, document impacts, celebrate achievements, and build networks.

3. Involve faculty more directly. This is the most critical area for improvement. Experienced partners need a way to connect with faculty to plan the curriculum, negotiate the placement of students, and assess and evaluate the service-learning experience. At a minimum, partners desire to see the syllabus and the specific learning goals and expectations for students so they can contribute to an effective learning outcome. Partners want faculty to visit their sites and perhaps even volunteer in order to truly understand the partner's organization and assets. While they did not usually make specific requirements for recognition, their strong self-identity as co-teacher warrants attention from the academic institution.

4. Consider ways the academic institution can help build social capital. An important asset of community-campus partnerships involves developing connections among community agencies and the campuses. Higher education institutions and service-learning offices may therefore wish to find ways to participate in the long-term development of their community and to develop longer-term service-learning activities that involve the campus as a whole.

5. Develop new, more facilitative roles for service-learning office staff. While the gate-keeping and coordinating function may be essential for beginning partners, expanding activities related to convening faculty, community and students together for curriculum planning, evaluating, networking and celebration is a more critical role for service-learning offices to play for advanced partnerships. Service-learning offices can also expand their role as an information hub for activities and opportunities sponsored by the academic institution, such as serving as a community bulletin board for local event.

6. Clarify student accountability. While tracking hours has been a favored way for higher education to document accountability and impact, this is often seen as an impediment by community partners. Appropriate duration of the experience and an emphasis on learning may be a more appropriate measure for achievement than hourly requirements.

Some structural implications and future practice for service-learning offices.

Service-learning coordinators or practitioners may take special note of some of these trends described by community partners and consider additional roles their offices might play.

1. Service-learning offices may function as gatekeepers.

"Advanced" community partners that have been involved with higher education for a number of years, such as those involved with this study, may require different types of support from service-learning offices than newer partners. Findings by Vernon and Foster (2002) reinforce the best practices literature (Campus Compact, 1999) by indicating that community partners, particularly those in the early stages of partnership, express much more satisfaction in their campus partnerships when there is a service-learning office in place to facilitate the placement of students and to provide an accessible contact point. There is convergence on this point in the four models of higher education literature as well (Holland, 2005; Campus Compact, 2000; Holland & Ramaley, 1998; Liederman et al., 2003; Torres, 2000). While the experienced community partners involved with this study expressed very high satisfaction with the staff of service-learning offices, there is some evidence that service-learning offices often function as unknowing gate-keepers or barriers for these partners who seek to make authentic connections with faculty.

"Is it just the service-learning coordinator that cares about this program?"

"I've never developed a relationship with a professor. I work with the service-learning coordinator primarily, and some students."

"[The service-learning office] keeps the list [of participating faculty]. They have a lot of concern that administrators come and get hold of the list and recruit students before they assign them."

These partners expressed a tremendous depth of awareness of academic culture and campus politics; some sites were worried that the service-learning offices do not have support of the higher education institution overall, and are viewed as against the norm of the campus culture. They recognize that faculty are essential to their ongoing collaboration with the higher education institution and would appreciate more assistance from service-learning offices in making those connections.

2. The language of service-learning may be confusing.

While all partners expressed a deep understanding of the goals of service-learning when discussing their hopes for students, many community partners hesitated when directly asked to provide a definition of service-learning. It may be important for service-learning professionals to know that for a significant number of these community partners, the term 'service-learning' did not resonate with them. The field of service-learning overall may be experiencing shifts in language use, as the terms, civic and community engagement become more prominent.

Here are some of their comments on the term "service-learning."

"It is the buzz word for the last number of years. I'm always skeptical about what really works, and what's substantial here."

"I don't really use that language."

"OK, do community service and you'll be awarded. This is the first time I'm thinking about the terminology."

*"I have a hard time with language, because I don't see students going out there and doing the service. It is learning. We learn by doing. We learn about our community by being in it. I always kind of hate the term. Maybe it should be **mutual learning**."*

The answer to the question, 'what is service-learning,' may be less important than the question itself, as campuses and communities work to develop common understandings about this work that we do together.

3. Higher education institutions can act as citizens and community partners.

A significant number of partners at the various sites called for larger-scale, longer-term projects that would involve entire classes or multi-disciplinary teams on campus.

All of the community partners at the participating campuses stressed that they would welcome more opportunities to network with their campus partner and other partnering agencies. They indicated that they often desire more coordinated involvement in larger-scale community development initiatives, and some recommend that the campus take

on a leadership role in bringing community members together.

"I would like to get out of the internship approach, to look at what has to happen for the broader purpose…I've been pushing for [the university] to take a larger-scale community-based look at some of these things, so students can interact over a longer time-span, allow a lot of students to [participate] and also have a more inter-disciplinary approach throughout the project."

It may be that due to the importance that higher education institutions play in the development of social capital in rural areas (Miller, 1997), it was predominantly the community partners based in more rural areas in our study who voiced interest in larger-scale, coordinated development initiatives. In contrast, in the urban areas we visited, the relationships community partners have with any one campus did not appear to be as critical for them because they routinely partner with so many different higher education institutions. In fact, community agencies in urban areas may help bridge connections among universities:

"We had a partnership with two universities. So these two universities and two sets of students never partnered and at the end of our program student were saying we should have one or two classes on social welfare for our child development department and vice versa. I know there is a linkage now with the professors and that had never happened before."

A few community partners – in both rural and urban settings -- voiced concern that higher education campuses and service-learning offices focus too

much on individual courses and pro-
grams and not enough on the obligation
of the higher education institution to
participate fully as an entity in commu-
nity development. This study's partici-
pant sample may not have had adequate
representation among those who might
work with academic institutions on
longer-term community development
projects in ways advocated by Harkavy
(1999) and Bringle et al. (1999) to ad-
dress this matter adequately, however.
As an area for future study, it might
be interesting to learn if higher educa-
tion partners grow more committed to
longer-term community development
as they spend more time engaging in
service-learning work.

Need to let off
steam sometimes
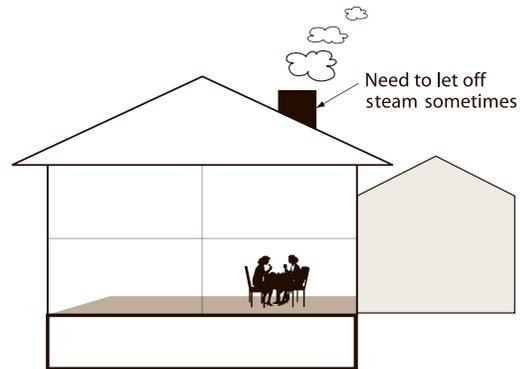
The Chimney

The chimney of the house is a
reminder to us to let off steam once in
a while. Community partners involved
with this study emphasized the need
to spend time together informally with
their higher education partners. It is also
a reminder that all partners may need
to 'speak their mind' on occasion, to
ensure that the partnership is enjoyable
and beneficial for everyone involved.

V. Conclusion

Community partners tell us that cultivating positive personal relationships is foundational for effective community-campus partnerships, and it is through relationships that most of the benefits of partnership occur. The common ground of partnerships that community partners share with their higher education partners is their profound commitment to educating students. While they appreciate the distinct benefits they incur through their relationship with higher education, they spoke most often about their dedication to the education process and often, a desire to further the goals of social justice. They also expressed a deep awareness of the benefits and motivations of students and higher education institutions overall, and are highly savvy in navigating higher education institution systems. They also pointed to areas where there is room for improvement in already strong partnerships, such as gathering together more often to deepen relationships and enhance social networks, planning with faculty, streamlining entrée to the higher education system, and considering ways to engage in longer-term community development.

We hope our house metaphor has been a useful way of describing this study's findings. While we have outlined many of the elements of a partnership "house," we recognize that a house is not the same thing as a home. The outcome of partnerships results from the quality of relationships, and the transformational outcome that we hope for is a partnership house becoming a home where we all might belong. We encourage you to consider hosting your own conversations with community partners to identify new ways of "dwelling with" community and campus partners. Appendix A includes a series of questions that may assist you in designing a focus group or meeting for community partners. A final reminder is that while we can do our best to help structure conversations to meet specific goals, good conversations take on a life of their own. Hans-Georg Gadamer, whose work helped provide the theoretical framework of this study, may have described this best:

> " *A conversation is something one gets caught up in, in which one gets involved. In a conversation, one does not know beforehand what will come out of it, and one usually does not break it off unless one is forced to do so, because there is always something more you want to say. That is the measure of a real conversation. Each remark calls for another, even what is called the "last word" does this, for in reality the last word does not exist. The fact that conversations lead us to better insights, that indeed they have a transformative power, is something that each of us has already experienced personally.* "
> — (Gadamer, 2001, p.59-60).

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Starting your Own Community Partner Conversations

Goal-Setting

🏠 What are the goals of your meeting? Would you like to obtain a general pulse on the perspectives of community partners? Or, would you like to bring community and campus partners together to identify ways to strengthen your campus-community partnership? Do you want to hold a meeting to design action steps for curriculum planning with community partners and faculty? What questions are important for your campus? You may wish to hold a smaller session with a few community and campus partners to design questions for your session.

🏠 Who would you like to invite? What are the benefits for including new and established partners together, or holding a meeting with only experienced partners?

🏠 How will you record the session? Will you assign a notetaker and a facilitator? How will the identities of the facilitator and notetaker impact the focus group? What kinds of stories are you likely to hear, given who is facilitating? Will they speak more freely if they consider the facilitators "neutral" and not a part of the campus? How would they respond to a faculty member, dean, student or service-learning coordinator in these roles?

🏠 Should the group design ground rules for listening and speaking? How will you handle issues of confidentiality?

Considerations for Setting the Stage

🏠 What setting will be most comfortable for participants? Would it be helpful to provide driving, parking and public transportation directions to the location? Parking permits?

🏠 What do we need to bring to the session? Food and beverages? Easel charts and markers? Nametags?

Next Steps

🏠 What next steps are needed after the focus group is completed? How will you present information learned from the session to this group? How will it be shared with others? Will you reconvene the group to discuss findings with campus partners and design plans of action? Will you provide hard copies of the summary from the notes? Will you consider setting up a series of check-ins with community and campus partners to see if the action items are implemented? [How often would you want to meet? Depending on the outcomes of your conversations, you might consider meeting twice a year, or even quarterly. You might develop smaller work groups that would like to meet on different action items].

Community Partner Conversations Protocol
2.5 Hours

WARM UP EXERCISE/BRIDGE TO MOVING INTO FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Purpose:
This is a very quick way to do introductions and set a tone that eases people into talking in a focus group. The "junk drawer" metaphor also tends to encourage humor, and allows for the possibility of somewhat irreverent comments about partnerships. The "ordinariness" of a junk drawer also makes it more possible for each person to have something to say, which, in turn, increases the likelihood that participants will feel easier about speaking up during the focus group.

Equipment: Poster paper, pens

Script:
To get us started and to have a fun way to do introductions, I'd like you to think about a junk drawer that you have at home (maybe in your kitchen, or a desk drawer…that place where you throw things that you don't know what to do with…etc.). Think of that drawer and share what you have in that drawer…just call it out and I'll write them up on the poster paper. What do you have in your drawer?

Quickly write whatever is called out. Keep writing until your paper is full or until people seem to be done listing. Just be sure each person has called out an item.

Script:

So, this is what I'd like us to do next.

I'd like each of us to take a turn to tell us 4 things:

❑ Your name and how you want to be called here.

❑ Organization you represent.

❑ Partnership work you're involved with.

❑ Item from the junk drawer list and how it reminds you of something in your work or experience with the community-campus partnership.

PRELIMINARIES

1. Now that we've gotten to know a little bit about each other, let's take a few moments to discuss how we'd like to communicate with each other in this session. How can we

be sure that we are communicating respectfully with each other in this session? List on poster paper.

2. If applicable, facilitator describes any confidentiality agreements pertinent to this session.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We would like to get a better understanding of the partnerships that you have developed or are a part of. We'd like you to think about partnerships with other organizations in general, and with (insert COLLEGE name here) in particular. Chart responses to each of the questions.

1. What are characteristics of an ideal partnership between two or more organizations? Facilitator should be prepared to encourage the group to think in detail. Be prepared to ask probing questions to get them to look at partnerships comprehensively in ways that you are not leading them, but encouraging them to be thorough.

2. Is partnering with higher education unique from partnering with other kinds of organizations? If so, how?

3. How would you describe your role and responsibilities in your partnerships with higher education institution(s)?

4. What motivates you to participate in partnerships with higher education? What are the benefits, impacts on you? Your organization? Community members you serve?

5. Let's list the challenges/concerns (or non-ideal) characteristics of partnering with a higher education institution.

6. What are the impacts/benefits on students? What do you hope students learn from their experience with your organization?

7. Why do you think higher education institutions want to partner with you? What are the impacts/benefits for higher education institutions?

8. What do you know about service-learning or community-based learning?

9. What are your hopes for community-campus partnerships in the future?

COLORED DOT EXERCISE

We want to hear how you think partnership work can be improved. Please go through the list of ideal characteristics that we just created [for question 1] and identify the items that warrant focus and attention as the most important next steps for improving community-higher education partnerships? We are giving you a set of dots: three red, three yellow and three green.

Like a traffic light, please list the highest priorities for improving your campus-community partnership, with red as the highest priority. Put a red dot on ones that rank #1, yellow dots on ones that rank #2, and green dots on ones that rank #3.

Then, you can move into the conversation of where the dots were clustered. (Maybe give an example here) "It looks like several of you identified stronger communication with faculty as an area to focus on, what about that issue feels important to you?"

10. To make the ideal real for your partnerships with the college, what strategies or resources or tools would help improve the way you work together? (Brainstorm a list) Attend to both operational/logistical and to content issues.

CLOSURE

Thank participants, remind them of what will happen next…