Purpose-Driven Partnerships That Transform People and Places: Cal State LA's Anchor Mission

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Abstract

California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA) has committed to becoming Los Angeles' premier educational anchor institution, forging meaningful partnerships that contribute to the overall well-being of the region. Cal State LA ranks number one in the nation for the upward mobility of its students (Chetty, Friedman, Saez, Turner, & Yagan, 2017). The Democracy Collaborative (TDC) developed the Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort to create a critical mass of colleges and universities committed to addressing economic, educational, and health disparities through engaged anchor mission strategies (Sladek, 2017). TDC identified five Thematic Anchor Dashboard Success Indicators as elements for establishing an engaged anchor mission mindset and structure. The Cal State LA example illustrates the importance of the themes and offers support for establishing field-wide best practices based on the principles outlined by TDC (Dubb, McKinley, & Howard, 2013; Sladek, 2017).

The university's experience suggests that successful implementation of its engaged anchor mission strategy will benefit from a comprehensive approach. The course and manner of its strategy consists of the five TDC indicators: (1) leadership support at the university's highest level; (2) incorporation of the anchor mission into the institution's strategic plan, and university-wide identity or brand-building initiatives; (3) establishment of anchor mission committees and structures to coordinate work; (4) promotion and advancement of place-based cohesive narratives and expectations to embed an institutional anchor mission culture and build trust; and (5) development and support for anchor mission coordinating and support catalysts to manage anchor projects. These require two additional elements, added to the list: (6) implementing data collection protocols, including the measurement of local community student success after graduation using Mobility Report Cards (Chetty et al., 2017); and (7) continuous and faithful relationship building with external partners.

Urban and metropolitan public comprehensive universities, such as Cal State LA and many of CUMU's member institutions have gained the experience and resources to serve and help transform struggling communities. CUMU and TDC's Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative collaboration can provide a coordinated structure for supporting institutions that have committed to an anchor mission strategy and for developing best practices and guidance to those considering an anchor mission.

Keywords: anchor institution; community engagement; university-community partnerships; upward mobility.

Introduction

California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA) is a regional comprehensive, multicultural, Hispanic-serving institution (HSI). It resides within a complex, dispersed, and diverse metropolitan constellation of economic and social needs, challenges, and opportunities. For more than 70 years, the university has served the central, east, and San Gabriel Valley regions of Los Angeles. The university has provided ladders of opportunity for first-generation college students, veterans, immigrants, and families throughout Los Angeles in pursuit of better lives. Since Cal State LA began, its mission has been to propel the communities it serves to greater prosperity. The current student demographic profile includes 88.5% of undergraduate students with demonstrated financial need, 72% who are low income and eligible for Pell Grants, and 58% who are first-generation college students. Approximately 64% of current students are Latino, and 83% come from Los Angeles, with 50% from within an 8-mile radius of the university and 75% from within a 14-mile radius. Approximately 70% of alumni reside in Los Angeles and almost 85% in Southern California (Cal State LA, 2018a). When Cal State LA students succeed and prosper, the immediate surrounding communities thrive.

Cal State LA has committed to becoming Los Angeles' "premier educational anchor institution," contributing to "the overall well-being of the region," and fostering thriving and progressive communities throughout the region through meaningful, collaborative, and mutually beneficial partnerships (Cal State LA, 2016). In April 2018, Cal State LA gained the opportunity to participate in the Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative, a joint project of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) and the Democracy Collaborative (TDC), affirming its obligation to enhance the economic and social well-being of its community (CUMU News, 2018). Smith, Pelco, and Rooke (2017) have described the challenge of demonstrating the social and economic community benefit value of universities. As policymakers, elected officials, the media, the community, and business leaders measure the impact of limited resources, and interest groups compete for budgetary support, it is tempting to argue that expenditures for higher education should focus on the traditional core missions of teaching, research, and service (Trani, 2008). However, the community benefit purpose and anchor mission of committed urban and metropolitan universities is "not a luxury or a tangential activity, it is core to the identity of the institutions, valuable to the other core mission elements, and essential to the vitality of the surrounding communities" (Smith et al., 2017, p. 27). Complementary partnerships and coordination between anchor institutions such as Cal State LA and surrounding stakeholders that show results add significant value and return on public and private investments, leading to greater future support for higher education and anchor mission initiatives.

This article analyzes the development of Cal State LA's ongoing work to propel the people and places it serves to greater and more resilient economic and civic development. It constructs an appropriate anchor mission definition to express Cal State LA's form of engaged anchor mission. *Mobility rate* is the term it uses for an indicator of successful university community impact (Chetty, Friedman, Saez, Turner, & Yagan, 2017). The authors then apply the Democracy Collaborative's Thematic Anchor Dashboard Success Indicators (Sladek, 2017) are then applied to evaluate the university's progress in establishing a community-engagement, anchor-mission development mindset and structure. The establishment of disciplined and committed engagement, data collection, messaging, and, most importantly, leadership support throughout

the institution and in the community are essential for building an anchor mission strategy. The analysis of the Cal State LA experience suggests that recommendations developed by TDC's Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort for fostering an engaged anchor mission strategy provide important lessons for colleges and universities. The indicators or guidelines for success should be a roadmap for establishing and advancing institutional anchor missions. The Cal State LA case offers support for establishing field-wide best practices based on the themes and indicators outlined by TDC (Dubb, McKinley, & Howard, 2013; Sladek, 2017).

A Holistic, Engaged Anchor Mission Strategy

Definitions of anchor institutions frequently center on concepts related to place: permanence, roots, or community. According to Community-Wealth.org, "Anchor institutions are nonprofit institutions that once established tend not to move location" (retrieved July 2018 from https://community-wealth.org). The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) further defines anchor institutions as "those entities, public, private or nonprofit, that have significant capital investment and mission focus rooted in a particular community" (retrieved July 2018 from http://www.lisc.org/los-angeles). Anchor institutions can be universities, hospitals, religious or cultural organizations, amusement parks or entertainment resorts, sports teams and stadiums, government agencies or complexes, convention centers, museums, foundations, or transportation hubs (Cantor, Englot, & Higgins, 2013; Walker & East, 2018). The Democracy Collaborative identifies an institution's anchor mission as "consciously applying their long-term, place-based economic power, in combination with their human and intellectual resources, to better the long-term welfare of the communities in which they reside" (Dubb et al., 2013, p. v). In another TDC report, *Higher Education's Anchor Mission: Measuring Place-Based Engagement*, the college and university anchor mission is described as a symbiotic relationship between institutions and communities to take on the most difficult challenges of underserved and under-resourced stakeholders (Sladek, 2017).

Economist Michael Porter has used the term "anchor institution" to single out colleges and universities as "powerful economic engines" that, taking a strategic view, can drive revitalization in their adjacent communities (CEOs for Cities, 2010). In this description, universities operate like large businesses and leverage their financial and commercial influence to spur local economic development (Initiative for a Competitive Inner City & CEOs for Cities, 2002; Porter, 1997, 2016). Other scholars have criticized this view for an overreliance on private sector solutions and "wishful thinking" (Bates, 1997; Harrison & Glasmeier, 1997). Baldwin (2017) has questioned the economic expansion initiatives of several large universities that are swallowing communities and generating considerable revenues with questionable public benefits.

Smith et al. (2017) describe the university anchor institution approach as part of "three community-university partnership paradigms: (a) the community engagement model, (b) the anchor organization model, and (c) the collective impact model" (p. 9). They explain that these partnership models can provide insight and value, alone or in tandem, and that no single approach or template can inform the disparate community benefit missions of universities. The Cal State LA model of anchor mission proceeds from a holistic, integrated conception of community impact, based on reciprocal interdependence, and university-community co-production for the public good. This deeply rooted engagement is deliberate and considers the

university as both "social glue" and an "economic engine" for the communities it serves (Cantor et al., 2013, p. 20).

A Deeply Rooted Anchor Mission as an Engine of Upward Mobility

One measurement of community benefit that universities with an anchor mission should explore is student upward mobility. In one recent study, the Equality of Opportunity Project set out to answer the question: "Which colleges in America contribute the most to intergenerational income mobility?" (Chetty et al., 2017, p. 1). The economists who conducted the study analyzed federal tax forms and other data for more than 30 million college students from 1999 to 2013, using the results to create what the researchers called Mobility Report Cards. They ranked every college and university in the United States. At the top of their list: Cal State LA (Chetty et al., 2017).

The researchers calculated the portion of each institution's students whose families fell in the bottom quintile of the income distribution and the portion of students who, in the years after college, ended up in the top income quintile. The product of those two numbers yielded the mobility rate. Many elite institutions, such as the Ivy League universities, scored well for their low-income students' future success but relatively poorly in terms of access for such students; that combination resulted in unexceptional mobility rates. Similarly, many institutions that offered broad access to those of low income scored poorly in terms of their students' future success, again resulting in modest mobility rates. Cal State LA scored highly for both low-income access (above the 95th percentile among all institutions) and high success rate (near the 90th percentile), resulting in the number one mobility score, 9.9%, more than five times the national average (see Figure 1).
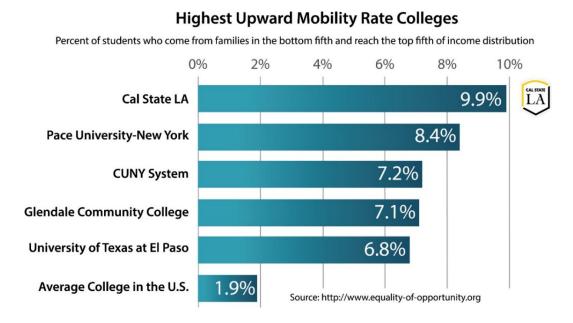

Figure 1. Top-ranked institutions for upward mobility as calculated by the Equality of Opportunity Project.

The question of access for low-income students remains crucial. In their study, the researchers noted:

> Many of the highest mobility rate colleges—such as the California State colleges and a number of community colleges—are not highly selective institutions in terms of student observables such as SAT scores or based on students' revealed preferences. This suggests that these colleges could potentially be "engines of upward mobility" by producing large returns for students from low-income families.
>
> (Chetty et al., 2017, p. 5)

The rate of upward mobility is a powerful gauge of community impact for colleges and universities pursuing an engaged anchor mission strategy. This is particularly true of regional comprehensive universities situated in urban and metropolitan areas such as Cal State LA. Its students generally come from the local community (83% from Los Angeles, 75% from within 14 miles), are low income (88.5% with demonstrated financial need, 72% low-income Pell eligible). The majority are first generation (58% of parents did not attend any college, 79% of parents did not graduate from a four-year college or university), and most graduates continue to reside in and serve their communities after graduation (70% of alumni reside in Los Angeles) (Cal State LA, 2018a). These local students are supported, thrive, graduate, and succeed, providing increased economic and social stability in their communities.

Evaluating the Cal State LA Anchor Mission

Sladek (2017) examines efforts to track the success of colleges and universities in advancing the financial and social well-being of their surrounding communities. She describes the Anchor Dashboard project, in which six urban universities working with CUMU and the Democracy Collaborative sought to develop a "framework of metrics that can help to tell their stories, gather baseline data on community conditions, and document the internal capacities and external partnerships necessary to advance their work" (p. 2). Such data, the project partners determined, is essential for anchor institutions to assess the needs of neighboring communities, especially those that are low income; track improvements in institutional initiatives; and advocate for promising efforts.

The six institutions in the project, collectively referred to as the Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort, were among the 33 U.S. colleges and universities selected in April 2018 to participate in the Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative by CUMU and TDC. The institutions won invitation for their demonstrated commitment to pursuing an anchor mission strategy. Cal State LA is the only Los Angeles-area university and one of two California institutions selected for the inaugural class of anchors (CUMU News, 2018).

The Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort identified five top success indicators for adopting an anchor mission (Sladek, 2017, pp. 12-22):

1. Leadership support at the highest level (conceptual and financial support).
2. Incorporation of the anchor mission into strategic plan (and goal setting).

3. Anchor committees/internal relationship building.
4. Implementing data collection protocols.
5. Relationship building with external partners.

In this section, the project applies these five success indicators to evaluate Cal State LA's efforts to establish an engaged anchor mission mindset and structure focused on community development, and to illustrate the university's progress while identifying areas for improvement.

Leadership Support at the Highest Level

The Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort emphasized the essential role of top leadership in confirming that anchor work is an institutional priority and in generating broad support across an institution's constituencies. An administrator at one of the cohort universities described the need for a "champion in a leadership position to drive the ship—specifically, clearly communicate the vision, gain buy-in, empower others to act on the anchor mission, and garner resources to fund the effort" (Sladek, 2017, p. 12).

William A. Covino took office as president of Cal State LA in September 2013. In his previous post, as provost at Fresno State University, he led efforts to advance civic learning and community engagement. For his work there, Covino won the William M. Plater Award for Leadership in Civic Engagement by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (Cal State LA, 2013). Upon arriving at Cal State LA shortly thereafter, he set out to build on its longstanding legacy of deep community engagement. The previous president, James M. Rosser, had been a recognized advocate for access, equity, and inclusion in higher education (American Council on Education, 2012). Covino immediately championed a bold vision for the university. In his first month on campus, during his first speech on the day before fall classes began, he reminded students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends, and community partners who had assembled for his convocation address that Cal State LA was "first and foremost, a university dedicated to the public good" (Covino, 2013). He described the foundation of the university's success as "engagement," and explained:

> We have come a long way from the "ivory tower" detachment that characterized many American universities during the last century. The CSU [California State University system] has become an exemplary model of "working for California" through outreach and community engagement initiatives that have made our campuses a driving force for student success and economic development. Continuing distinction and achievement, for the CSU in general and for Cal State LA in particular, requires that energetic interaction become an integral part of our mission, vision, and values, not only as a commitment to working with external partners, but also as a guiding principle for teaching and learning. (Covino, 2013, p. 7)

In those first few months, Pr. Covino began deploying resources to community engagement and restructuring the university's executive leadership to manage better this institutional priority. He recruited senior leadership and staff with extensive experience working with the region's diverse communities, including business, government, community-based organizations, education, and the media. The university strengthened and reorganized its advancement, communications,

development, and public and governmental affairs units so that all were to report directly to the president's office. Pr. Covino established the Faculty Visioning Task Force to seek recommendations from the faculty on establishing or modifying academic programs "that will better align with the existing and future needs of the greater Los Angeles region" (Willard, Zelman, Haras, Prabhu, & Gutarts, 2015). The task force was charged with conducting a needs analysis and research on issues such as expected workforce and community demands in Los Angeles; student learning, including community engagement and service learning; and issues concerning underrepresented students in urban education. The task force proposed that Cal State LA become an anchor institution as a way to leverage the university's myriad longstanding partnerships with entities in the community (Willard et al., 2015).

Between his first convocation address, shortly after arriving at the university, and his investiture several months later, Pr. Covino (interview, 2018) was encouraged by what he heard from the Faculty Visioning Task Force and people he met across the university and the Los Angeles region. Cal State LA, he learned, was a vital social, economic, and educational engine for the public good that must do even more to support the communities it serves and to help solve the region's most complex and exigent challenges. In order to emphasize the central focus that community and civic engagement serves with those inside and outside the university, Covino chose to amplify and highlight this message during the week of his investiture (W. A. Covino, interview, 2018). The week featured events that highlighted what he referred to as Engagement, Service, and the Public Good. Cal State LA would be an anchor for the region. The ribbon cutting for a new Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good launched a full week of activities devoted to the university's focus on its role in support of the community.

Pr. Covino also initiated the inaugural Academic Senate Distinguished Lecture on Engagement, Service, and the Public Good. Longtime Los Angeles labor leader Maria Elena Durazo delivered the inaugural lecture.

He oversaw the opening of the Cal State LA Hydrogen Research and Fueling Facility, which is devoted to teaching and advancing clean transportation technologies, and manufactures and dispenses hydrogen to drivers of fuel cell vehicles. Pr. Covino also announced the "cradle-to-career" program GO East LA: A Pathway for College and Career Success, in collaboration with the Los Angeles Unified School District and East Los Angeles Community College. These projects and initiatives were evidence of the president's commitment to providing staffing and financial resources to an engaged anchor mission strategy.

Pr. Covino capped off the investiture week by reaffirming his message: "At our fall convocation, I spoke about the importance of engagement as a force that defines our mission as a 21st century public university" (Covino, 2014, para. 24). He expressed that institutions that engage and serve others are what Robert Greenleaf (1972/2009) described as servant institutions. He voiced Greenleaf's appeal in his investiture address:

> If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to *raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant* of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them. (Greenleaf, 1972/2009, para. 6)

Reflecting on Greenleaf's call to action and the university's defining commitment to engagement, service, and the public good, Pr. Covino (2014, para. 46) insisted that "Cal State LA will become a regenerative force." He declared that together the university community would "become more deeply committed to the well-being of our city and our region, more clearly focused on becoming a powerful engine of social mobility, and more fully aware that compassion and caring for one another are at the heart of what education means" (2014, para. 51). His vision was clear and unequivocal: Cal State LA would be a catalyst for community well-being.

Incorporation of the Anchor Mission into the Strategic Plan

High-level leadership and budgetary support are necessary but not sufficient. The institutionalization of a university's engaged anchor mission must also inform its strategic plan (Sladek, 2017). The report of Cal State LA's Faculty Visioning Task Force (FVTF) (Willard et al., 2015) was the precursor and foundational framework for the university's conceptualization of an anchor mission strategy. The task force, consisting of 23 members of the faculty, and the university's provost, conducted surveys of faculty and students, several student focus groups, and three town hall forums, and received input from regional organizations before issuing its report. The FVTF concluded (Willard et al., 2015) that an anchor mission strategy was "a successful university-level strategy for facilitating community engagement" (p. 9), and the report's first recommendation was to "Define Cal State LA as an anchor institution and build this designation and its implications into future strategic planning, curriculum and fund-raising efforts" (p. 28). In the introduction to the report, the authors describe a "renewed identity" for the university that:

> would more directly involve students, faculty, administration and staff to respond to pressing challenges in our neighborhoods. Reimagining our urban mission does much public good: it allows the University to collaborate and strengthen ties locally, to increase the social mobility of our students, and to provide multiple benefits for our students, the university and the very same communities from which our students come. (Willard et al., 2015, p. 3)

In October 2015, Cal State LA initiated a strategic planning process and created a Strategic Planning Coordinating Committee (SPCC) chaired by the provost, Lynn Mahoney, and comprising faculty, staff, students, and administrative representatives. The effort continued well into the next year, drawing about 2,500 stakeholders from across the university and the community. The FVTF informed both SPCC's work and the president's call for greater regional engagement and service. The subsequent Strategic Plan presented in August 2016 underscored the centrality of the university's evolving engaged anchor mission. The first sentence of the university's mission is "Cal State LA transforms lives and fosters thriving communities across greater Los Angeles," and the university's vision states that Cal State LA is dedicated to "serving the public good through initiatives that engage local, regional, and global communities in beneficial partnerships" (Cal State LA, 2016). One of the four pillars of the plan, designated as a strategic priority area, is engagement, service, and the public good. This phraseology, conceived and consistently applied by Pr. Covino, now stands as an abbreviated representation of the Cal

State LA form of anchor mission—a broad, holistic, and engaged strategy for collective impact. Specifically, the plan affirmed that the university would strive to "become Los Angeles' premier educational anchor institution and contribute to the overall well-being of the region" (Cal State LA, 2016). Additional key initiatives in the strategic plan are:

- Increase and strengthen community outreach partnerships.
- Expand service-learning opportunities.
- Foster a thriving and progressive region through meaningful collaborative partnerships among and within the University, alumni, and communities of the greater Los Angeles area.

Anchor Committees and Internal Relationships

The Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort identified the essential role of a university-wide committee to ensure the realization of anchor mission objectives and strengthen cross-divisional collaboration (Sladek, 2017, p. 14). To facilitate the implementation of engagement, service, and the public good as a priority in the strategic plan, the university established a consultative group with representation from stakeholders throughout the campus. This group coordinates and expands the university's engaged anchor mission work. The Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good provides staff support and expertise to the consultative group and serves as the organizational hub for the university's anchor effort. In addition, the president's executive leadership team, consisting of the five vice presidents, includes anchor mission updates, presentations, and planning as part of its regular meetings.

The Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort also recommends that communications and messaging resources be part of the university's anchor mission strategy. This advice is crucial for developing a place-based engagement culture and anchor mission mindset throughout the university. The Cal State LA communications and public affairs team has carefully crafted the university's engaged anchor mission brand. It has synthesized the shared visions and work of Cal State LA and the communities, people, and places it serves. The team transmits an ethos of engagement and service in support of the anchor mission at every opportunity, via multiple platforms, methods, and media. Zavattaro (2018) has examined the value and use of place branding, marketing, and communications in public sector organizations. She describes the power that meaningful names, logos, language, taglines, and other symbols can have for public institutions such as universities, particularly when inclusion and engagement are key priorities. Indeed, place branding can convey an institution's public purpose, or in Cal State LA's case, its anchor mission. Such efforts have catalyzed the university's efforts to improve collaboration between academic divisions and between academic and business-side operations.

Early in Pr. Covino's tenure, for example, as the Faculty Visioning Task Force was concluding its work and the Strategic Planning Coordinating Committee was taking shape, the university commenced an initiative to update, refresh, and enhance its brand. The president encouraged the branding committee to explore the essence of Cal State LA's identity and develop new symbols and messages to communicate that identity. After extensive consultation with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community, civic leaders, and university partners, it became clear that at its core, Cal State LA *is* Los Angeles and the university serves Los Angeles.

Figure 2. A new Cal State LA logo, right, was introduced in 2015 to replace the previous long-standing design, left.

In the ambitious words used by TDC to describe anchor institutions, the university's purpose is to "address tenacious community challenges" (Sladek, 2017, p. 2). Cal State LA ordered new logos to indicate the institution's role in shaping the city of Los Angeles (see Figure 2). New messages and accompanying campaigns emerged to express the university's mission and identity, and to inspire and energize greater support for public engagement. These included taglines such as "Engagement, Service, and the Public Good"; "Pushing Boundaries"; "LA's Public University for the Public Good"; and "We Are LA." Promotional videos (click here to view) amplified Cal State LA's brand through symbols, images, and words.

Implementing Data Collection Protocols

The need to collect data to document anchor mission outcomes has proven to be a significant challenge identified by the universities in the Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort. Sladek (2017) summarizes their outlook:

> The main goal of the Anchor Dashboard project is to collect data—to show that aligning university resources with the local community actually results in improved outcomes for low-income communities. While the anchor committee collaborates to develop the infrastructure and plan for collecting data, tracking data is not straightforward. Along with funding anchor work, standardizing and institutionalizing data collection has been the biggest struggle of the Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort. (p. 15)

Sladek (2017) notes that successful anchor strategies are likely to incorporate a variety of decision-making approaches, such as building anchor goals into existing initiatives or designing new programming based on the data collected, or conducting environmental scans and other analyses to assess the needs of institutions and their surrounding communities (p. 17). While Cal State LA pursues each of those approaches, it acknowledges that it can do a more robust job of measuring outcomes, ensuring that it meets its goals, and collecting relevant data. The university is looking forward to its participation in the CUMU and TDC Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative and learning data collection and analysis best practices from the other collaborating institutions pursuing anchor mission strategies.

Currently, Cal State LA participates in a comprehensive survey spearheaded by the Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort as part of the Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative. The goal of this survey is to gather a set of core metrics that will aid in establishing baseline measures for anchor mission work in each strategy area. This anchor-institution alliance effort should yield valuable insight and guidance for participating colleges and universities. However, "there is unlikely to ever be a single plug and play" model that fits the diverse circumstances and contexts of all of the initiative participants (Sladek, P. 7). One metric that demonstrates community impact, and validates a college or university's anchor strategy, is the previously cited Mobility Report Card research by Chetty et al. (2017). The upward mobility rate of low-income students from underserved communities who graduate from the institution is a compelling statistic: Cal State LA leads the nation in this regard. As outlined previously, these local students graduate and maintain local residence, anchoring their communities by advancing racial and economic equity.

As the university has gathered available data for the anchor mission initiative, it has uncovered relevant information that illustrates community benefit. For the last nine years, the university has tracked several procurement measures that affect the local community and the public good. Cal State LA is the only university in the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system that has exceeded the system's Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise procurement goals in each year measured, doubling the goal in eight of those years (Cal State LA, 2018b). Similarly, Cal State LA exceeded the system's small-business procurement goals in eight of those nine years, and had the highest average percentage spend, again leading the CSU (Cal State LA, 2018b). Further, local businesses receive approximately 10% of the university's procurement spending (Cal State LA, 2018b). This impact may continue to grow, as data reported in the *Los Angeles Business Journal* (Fine, 2018) showed that of public sector employers in Los Angeles County, Cal State LA had the highest percentage gain in workforce from 2017 to 2018, at 23%, and its budget grew by $14 million. With more than 28,000 students and almost 3,100 employees (86% of employees live in Los Angeles County), the university has a potent economic footprint in the communities it serves. Cal State LA's participation in the Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative has brought greater focus to data collection and analysis that measures institutional impact. The collaboration has already produced promising results.

Relationship Building with External Partners

It is instructive to view Cal State LA's community benefit initiatives not as a sequence of one-time or temporary projects, each bringing in new partners, but as part of a continuum in which significant longtime partners return to take part in later initiatives. The guiding principle is to leverage existing relationships while forging new ones, seeking mutual benefit for all parties. Building trust and continually working to improve communication between campus and community are essential to establishing and maintaining such relationships. As Sladek (2017) writes, "A university having a shared destiny with their local community can be a powerful strategy in confronting a whole host of issues" (p. 21).

One way that Cal State LA has expanded its reach is by bringing partners on site in pioneering colocation initiatives. Partnerships located on campus include:

- A STEM-focus public charter high school serving local low-income students;

- A public-county, fine-arts focus high school;
- A 20,000-square-foot grant-supported bioscience business incubator;
- The Hertzberg-Davis Forensic Science Center (Forensic Science Center).

This last facility is the largest municipal, regional crime laboratory in the nation, a facility second in size only to the FBI crime lab at Quantico, Virginia.

These collocated partnerships produce cooperative synergies that enhance the university's anchor mission by affording university students and faculty the opportunity to collaborate directly with partners.

For example, the Forensic Science Center merges scholarship with training in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), and the California Department of Justice (Cal DOJ). The center brings together resources from multiple entities to serve students and the community at large. The joint facility houses the crime laboratories of the LAPD and the LASD, as well as Cal DOJ training facilities. It is also home to Cal State LA's School of Criminal Justice and Criminalistics. Students benefit from working with the best crime scene investigators from the LAPD and the LASD. Its minor, bachelors', and master's programs enroll more than 1,000 students seeking to specialize in criminal justice and criminalistics. The school also houses the California Forensic Science Institute, whose mission is to support scientific advancement and its effective utilization in forensic laboratories through in-service training, student engagement, public education programs, and research, advocacy, and public policy in the fields of criminal justice and forensic science. This past year, the center's partners, working with Los Angeles high schools and community colleges, established a college pathway program for local students interested in criminal justice and criminalistics careers.

The Forensic Science Center is one of many significant partnerships that the university has depicted in a map of Los Angeles County (see Figure 3). The map lists more than three dozen initiatives and collaborating institutions in the broad areas of high technology, community development, urban planning, education and child development, economic and workforce development, civic learning, community health and wellness, and culture and the arts. These include outward-facing initiatives to which Cal State contributes student and faculty service, experience, and expertise. Others bring the talents of outside participants and members of the wider community to Cal State LA's classrooms, laboratories, and the campus. These partnerships, as diverse as they are, share a common goal of being mutually beneficial (for the university, its partners, and the communities it serves) and contributing to the public good.

To ensure the success of high-impact, sustainable public-benefit initiatives, universities must provide resources, support, and organization to implement community projects. Institutions must have or develop *anchor-mission coordination and support catalysts* to serve as the structural backbone for anchor mission efforts. Two anchor-mission catalysts that have provided support and leadership for Cal State LA community partnerships are the university's Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs (PBI) and the Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good.

PBI and the center support four projects that serve as examples of community partnership engagement that enhance Cal State LA's anchor mission. Mind Matters, a campus-wide presidential initiative addresses the lack of mental health services and support in the under-resourced communities of the university's students. The Prison Graduation Initiative, in which Cal State LA, working with the state, provides an in-person B.A. degree completion program for incarcerated students. Civic University, a program in which PBI collaborates with the office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti to raise civic awareness. In addition, the Southeast Los Angeles Initiative is a collaboration of the university, PBI, local stakeholders, and several foundations focused on community empowerment.

Underserved communities have a higher prevalence of psychological distress, and face more obstacles to accessing behavioral-health services (National Center for Health Statistics, 2015; Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2016; American Psychiatric Association, 2017). Pr. Covino and Ms. Debbie Covino launched the Mind Matters initiative to coordinate a comprehensive university-wide approach to help students, since many from communities lacking adequate mental health resources, to better manage stress and anxiety and reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues.

The initiative provides students with resources including mental health awareness training, counseling services, and peer mentoring, as well as therapeutic activities such as yoga and guided meditation. Through Mind Matters, more than 700 students, faculty, and staff have been trained in mental health first aid, enabling them to more readily recognize signs of stress and anxiety among students and, if necessary, direct them to meet with professionals in the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) office. In 2017-18, 355 more students than in the previous academic year met with CAPS counselors, a 24% increase that was due in part to greater campus awareness of mental health issues (Cal State LA, 2018c).

The Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good collaborates closely with the Mind Matters Task Force, which includes representatives from CAPS, and students, faculty, and staff from across the university to create and direct campus-wide strategies and activities. The center oversees Mind Matters Town Halls, an interactive, problem-solving program. The town halls, initiated in 2015, are an integral part of the required Introduction to Higher Education course for first-year students. Students learn about the connection between mental and physical well-being and academic success, work in groups to solve real-life scenarios, and then use the tools they have learned to develop action plans to improve the quality of life on campus and in the community. More than 1,700 students, half the incoming first-year, first-time class, participated in the town halls during the 2017-18 academic year (Cal State LA, 2018d).

The Mind Matters initiative benefits not only students, but also their communities. As noted previously, a majority of Cal State LA students are the first in their families to attend college and reside near the university. Mental health services in these communities are not readily available or easily accessible. Moreover, many students come from homes in which parents do not always understand the pressures associated with the pursuit of academic success, or where mental health issues suffer stigma and go undiscussed. By assisting and supporting students, Mind Matters also assists and supports their communities. The community benefit will soon expand into a new program to provide mental health first aid training in Spanish and English to parents as part of

the Cal State LA Parent Academy. The academy educates parents of first-year students about the rigors of university life so that they are better prepared to help their children achieve academic success and well-being.
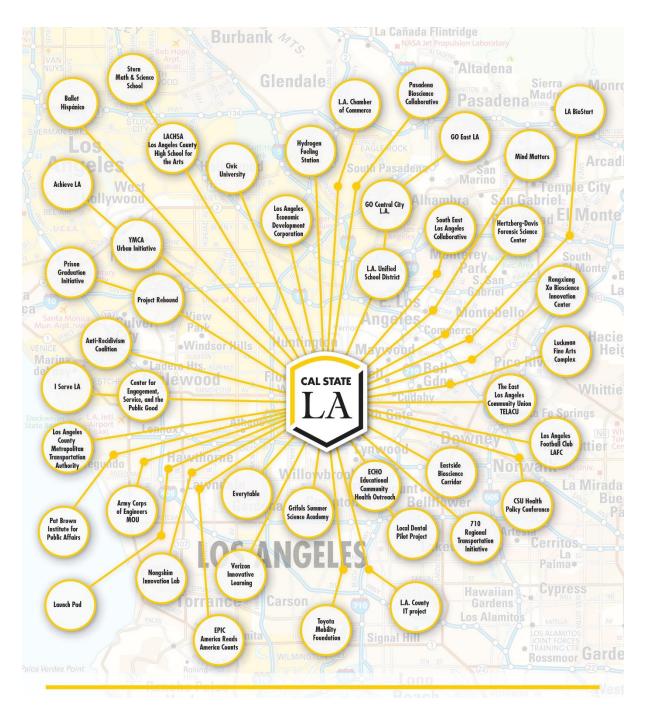

Figure 3: More than three dozen initiatives and collaborating institutions illustrate the broad reach and diversity of Cal State LA's partnerships across Los Angeles.

The Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good has extended the university's anchor mission to the incarcerated, their families, and their communities, many of which the university already serves. Cal State LA has developed a bachelor's degree completion program for incarcerated individuals against a backdrop of increased national and state focus on the importance of rehabilitation in prison reform. Federal mandates to reduce prison overcrowding and California voters' support for reducing strict sentencing guidelines, providing rehabilitation services, and increasing parole opportunities have advanced in concert with an aggressive push for reforms by state leaders (Beck, 2018). However, as thousands of inmates begin to be released (many of whom have been in prison for long periods) city, county, state, and local leaders are grappling with the question of how best to transition them back into the community (Beck, 2018). This question underscores the importance of rehabilitation programs, especially educational programs such as the Cal State LA Prison Graduation Initiative.

Through its Prison Graduation Initiative with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Cal State LA is the only university in the state to provide an in-person B.A. degree completion program for incarcerated students. Cal State LA is also one of only 67 colleges and universities in the country to participate in the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, which allows incarcerated students to pursue bachelor's degrees and receive Pell Grants to help pay for their educations. A RAND Corporation meta-analysis found that those who participate in correctional education programs have 43% lower recidivism rates than those who do not, and that individuals enrolled in college courses have a 51% lower chance of recidivating (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, 2013). It is also less expensive to educate than to incarcerate:

> Over the past three decades, state and local government expenditures on prisons and jails have increased about three times as fast as spending on elementary and secondary education. At the postsecondary level, the contrast is even starker: from 1989–90 to 2012–13, state and local spending on corrections rose by 89 percent while state and local appropriations for higher education remained flat. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, para. 1)

Prison Graduation Initiative students will earn their B.A. degrees by taking two courses per semester (including summers). Students released before completing their degrees receive automatic enrollment as Cal State LA students to continue their educations at the university. The Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good has also established a support program for previously incarcerated students called Project Rebound. It coordinates additional arts, writing, and advocacy initiatives in partnership with organizations such as Corrections to College California, the Words Uncaged Project, the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, California Humanities, and Renewing Communities (a joint initiative of the Opportunity Institute and the Stanford Criminal Justice Center).

Cal State LA's Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs (PBI) is an important support catalyst and a key contributor to the university's civic-based, anchor-mission initiatives. Former Governor Pat Brown, who created the California Master Plan for Higher Education, located the institute at the university and envisioned it as an entity meant to invest deeply in the nearby community. In 2013, LA Mayor Eric Garcetti reached out to PBI to co-create an education program, which became Civic University (Civic U), to promote greater civic awareness during a time of growing

voter dissatisfaction. Turnout in California's primary and general elections, for example, has declined significantly since the 2008 presidential vote (Public Policy Institute of California, n.d.). In Los Angeles, according to a PBI poll, 63% of registered voters believe that special interests have more power than voters do in city politics and government (Cal State LA, 2015). The objective of the project is to show participants that they can be, in fact, effective advocates for their communities.

The Los Angeles city budget has since incorporated Civic U to provide training to leaders of the city's 97 Neighborhood Councils. Those who complete the training earn certificates from Cal State LA. The program has expanded to provide education about Los Angeles County's government, the Los Angeles Unified School District, and the council-manager form of government in operation in most of the county's cities. Civi U has also presented the training throughout the region to social services agencies, high school students, business organizations, international groups, government officials, and leadership development programs. The informative, research-based, and accessible curriculum provides participants with the knowledge and tools to engage and influence government and their representatives, leading to more inclusive and responsive policy and decision-making. In recognition of its work, PBI recently won a three-year grant from the Weingart Foundation to expand the program's reach.

PBI also serves as an anchor mission catalyst for Cal State LA's collaboration with the Southeast Los Angeles Initiative, an effort to seek solutions to persistent challenges in a historically under-resourced area. Southeast Los Angeles (SELA), also known as the 710 Freeway Corridor, consists of 11 small-incorporated municipalities and 4 unincorporated county areas just south and east of the city of Los Angeles. These include unincorporated East Los Angeles, right on Cal State LA's doorstep, and other neighborhoods from which the university draws many of its students. SELA suffers from myriad social and political problems, with limited attention from major civic institutions. The residents of SELA are mostly low income. Some 57% of the adult population is foreign-born, compared with 44% for Los Angeles County as a whole; about 88% identify as Latino, according to a study commissioned by the California Community Foundation (CCF) and PBI (2017). The study noted that the percentage of residents holding bachelor's degrees is less than a quarter that of the county as a whole. While the need is demonstrable, the response of public and private agencies has not been sufficient. Furthermore, the CCF-PBI study found that SELA constitutes something of a "nonprofit desert," in which residents lack access to the services and benefits that nonprofit organizations provide elsewhere in Los Angeles County. The analysis of the study area found that there was one nonprofit organization for every 764 residents, compared with one for every 291 residents of Los Angeles County as a whole (CCF & PBI, 2017).

The SELA Initiative emerged when CCF approached PBI in 2016 to help engage residents, elected officials, and other stakeholders in SELA so that they could become a more effective voice for the region. As a backbone organization for the initiative, PBI assumed the task of identifying scholars able to research public policy issues affecting the area, and to convene stakeholders to help convert research findings into policy. PBI has organized several "Summits of Possibilities" to discuss concerns, review research, and consider policies to improve community well-being. This became the SELA Initiative, with additional funding partners, including the Weingart Foundation and the Ballmer Group. In turn, the initiative has led to the

relaunch of a previous effort, the Southeast Los Angeles Collaborative, a group of stakeholder organizations devoted to strengthening the Southeast Los Angeles area. Through PBI, Cal State LA serves on the Collaborative's board alongside many educational, social service, environmental justice, economic development, and other nonprofits and public agencies.

Soon after the SELA Collaborative relaunched, Cal State LA joined with another of SELA's partners, the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles, to develop a community initiative called Achieve LA. The program, announced in November 2017, seeks to pave a pathway to college for youth in the under-resourced communities of Southeast LA. Achieve LA offers mentoring, tutoring, college admissions advisement, and dedicated programs at Cal State LA and the local Rio Vista YMCA for students and their parents. Achieve LA is the first such YMCA program in the United States. The partnership focuses on neighborhoods characterized by poverty, low educational attainment rates, high unemployment, and lack of access to healthcare and childcare.

Conclusion

The Democracy Collaborative's Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort is dedicated to creating a critical mass of colleges and universities committed to addressing economic, educational, and health disparities through engaged anchor mission strategies (Sladek, 2017, p. 25). TDC identified five Thematic Anchor Dashboard Success Indicators as ingredients for establishing an engaged anchor mission mindset and structure. The Cal State LA example illustrates the importance of the five themes and offers support for establishing field-wide best practices based on the themes and indicators outlined by TDC (Dubb, McKinley, & Howard, 2013; Sladek, 2017).

The university's experience suggests that the successful implementation of an anchor mission strategy will benefit from a comprehensive approach. That approach includes: (1) leadership support at the highest level of the university (conceptual and financial support); (2) incorporation of the anchor mission into the institution's strategic plan, and university-wide identity or brand-building initiatives; (3) establishment of anchor mission committees and structures to coordinate work; (4) promotion and advancement of place-based cohesive narratives and expectations to embed an institutional anchor mission culture and build trust; (5) development and support for anchor mission coordinating and support catalysts to manage anchor projects; (6) implementing data collection protocols, including the measurement of local community student success after graduation using Mobility Report Cards (Chetty et al., 2017); and (7) continuous and faithful relationship building with external partners.

The deliberate and disciplined establishment and implementation of an anchor mission by colleges and universities can enhance the economic, political, and social vitality of low-income, underserved communities. "The stronger and more broadly held anchor mission goals become within institutions, the more opportunities will be identified to help reduce disparities in home communities, and build meaningful partnerships with outside groups to advance those goals" (Sladek, 2017, p. 25). Urban and metropolitan public comprehensive universities, such as Cal State LA and many of the CUMU member institutions are well able to serve and help transform struggling communities. CUMU and TDC's Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative collaboration can provide a coordinated structure for supporting institutions that have committed

to an anchor mission strategy and for developing best practices and guidance to those considering an anchor mission.

This work and the insight and information derived from the initiative are essential for communicating the public benefit and collective impact of higher education. Many authors have written about persistent inequality and the lack of upward mobility in society. The Cal State LA experience suggests that an emphasis on engagement, service, and the public good can increase upward mobility and provide significant community benefit. By connecting learning and scholarship with a clear mission to enrich the quality of life, colleges and universities can be the engines of urban and regional transformation. Cal State LA President Covino described the inherent value of investing in the well-being of communities during his sixth and most recent fall convocation address to the university community:

> We have demonstrated that universities can and must extend their reach beyond the walls of the institution and into our communities. The university of the 21st century is a university that transforms people and places. The times in which we live are calling—demanding—for us to be more. By embracing our identity as an engaged anchor institution in Los Angeles, we must make our social value clear. The challenges and opportunities facing Los Angeles are *our* challenges and *our* opportunities. (2018, p. 3)

Such calls to action by leadership, coupled with sustained resources and committed students, faculty, and staff working with dedicated partners, can spur change in communities. Indeed, to embrace an anchor mission is to accept responsibility for the collective well-being.

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