Leveraging Opportunity: How a College and a University Can Engage in Community Development as a Social Justice Mission

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When attempting to answer the ubiquitous question regarding how universities integrate research, policy and practice in building social justice and community development initiatives, let me begin by stating that I do not believe that most universities necessarily do this integration work well nor comprehensively. Moreover, despite the innovative examples provided here in the symposium, I would contend that generally speaking, universities do a much better job of touting and celebrating this kind of work than sustaining and scaling up community development initiatives through our institutions.

In making this claim, I do not want to leave anyone with a false impression; in no way am I diminishing the importance of the public good undergirding the overall mission of higher education. Nor am I asserting that there are not university examples of sustained community development initiatives. Rather, I am merely highlighting the fact that interactions between surrounding neighborhoods/communities and universities are complicated by differences in relations of power, resources, and conflicting expectations and interpretations regarding what constitute successful outcomes.

So far, I do not believe anything stated here is at all controversial and is typically reflected in the language often associated with university and community relations such as "imminent domain" or "town and gown". Furthermore, the complex nature of relationships between universities, neighborhoods and communities is in my view, a somewhat universal phenomenon. Indeed, I have witnessed first-hand

through my own research in South Africa[1] that similar dynamics and tensions exist in very different locations, whether referring to urban forces that shape the lives in neighborhoods in Cape Town or North Philadelphia and the attendant tensions which can strain university and community relations.

This somewhat sober introduction has been provided to simply remind people that community development initiatives require vigilance, intense self-reflection and interrogation, and most importantly, a process of institutional codification to ensure continuity and hopefully promote replicable or scalable impact. Now that I have provided my sociological disclaimer, let me address the question of integration head on as this is the most difficult aspect of transformative community development work since it requires, in my opinion, four components:

1) University leadership seriously (as opposed to mostly rhetorically) committed to enhancing a public good, social justice mission, and informing and shaping local, state and national policy by contributing in-kind resources as a starting point for collaboration.

2) Progressive faculty open to viewing impact more broadly in relation to not only their respective research agendas, but also the utilization of their students (internships, assistantships, etc.) and the realignment of their academic programs. This also entails a willingness to apply their collective expertise to evaluate and improve existing practices and services and introduce new assessments, interventions and pilots.

3) Coordination of asset based partnerships between schools, universities, and non-profit and philanthropic organizations, based on a collaborative recognition of respective strengths and weaknesses and a willingness to share resources differentially depending on need and priorities.

4) Community leaders, neighborhood associations, networks and government agencies open to constructive dialogue with new and/or different service arrangements and providers.

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[1] See Gregory M. Anderson, *Building a People's University in South Africa: Race, Compensatory Education and the Limits of Democratic Reform* (Peter Lang, Inc., 2002).

When these four components of integration are aligned and in synch, universities and colleges are capable of doing impactful and sustaining work in partnership with neighborhoods and communities. A case in point involving Temple University is the Choice Neighborhood initiative in North Philadelphia. Temple, and in particular, the College of Education, is the lead educational partner for the $30 million Urban Housing Development (HUD) grant awarded to the City of Philadelphia. This grant essentially involves the complete overhaul of a public housing complex called Norris Apartments, which is adjacent to Temple University. In addition to the construction of a new public and mixed-income housing complex, the grant requires the provision of a number of Pre-K, K-8, and after-school activities attached to long-term goals and a host of educational outcomes.

Before I describe in greater detail the different elements of the community development initiative, however, I need to highlight once again the vagaries of university and community relations, as the Choice Neighborhood grant almost did not come to fruition. The reason for this "near miss" revolved primarily around a concern that the University could potentially overcommit institutional resources to the community development initiative. To address this concern, my colleagues in the College quickly assembled a matrix of in-kind resources and binding agreements between several service-related units on campus to ensure a sufficient number of student volunteers to support the educational programming required by the HUD grant. We also had to demonstrate to our President that the university would not be on the hook for providing unanticipated inputs that could inadvertently generate expenses not accounted for in the budget. Finally, the College had to convince the residents of Norris apartments that we would work in partnership with their coalition to consult with, and ultimately empower, the community and its leaders to sustain programming after the HUD grant expired.

All of what we might call the above due diligence work had to occur within three months of the submission of the grant and while preparing with the Philadelphia Mayor's staff to make an accompanying presentation to the selection committee. I would be remiss if I did not also point out that we completed a significant chunk of this foundational work while I was still transitioning from Colorado to Temple

University[2]. I share this to highlight the serendipitous and fine line that separates a successful community development initiative from a concept that never sees the light of the day.

Once the HUD grant was awarded, I started to fully grasp the opportunity for the college and university to serve as an anchor for instigating change in a geographically designated area with historic ties to Temple. Due to the nature of the Choice Neighborhood initiative many of the key stakeholders were already involved in the work. These stakeholders included the Philadelphia School District (SDP), the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) and several long-standing non-profit organizations operating in the region. Furthermore, both college and university resources (particularly those involving students and to a lesser degree, faculty) were already committed to supporting targeted (Pre-K to K8) educational and community programs and engaged in setting and evaluating milestones and long-term outcomes.

Initially, the College of Education was primarily responsible for assessing the efficacy of the educational activities with some oversight of the respective non-profits, Pre-K centers and K-8 schools tasked collectively with the delivery of related services. However, early on in the planning process, my colleagues and I saw what might be called a leveraging moment to develop a comprehensive, community place-based, multi-generational strategy. This anchor strategy hinged on a desire to better align our historic access mission and social justice values with our academic programs and student internships (at both undergraduate and graduate levels)[3]. Equally important, we began to look for opportunities to link our faculty expertise by incenting individual as well as more institutional (existing centers, institutes and federally funded programming) research agendas to congeal around collaboratively funded projects.

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[2] I need to warmly acknowledge James Earl Davis, the college's Bernard Watson Endowed Chair in Urban Education. James Earl, who prior to my arrival, served as the interim dean was instrumental in both stewarding the college through the choice neighborhood proposal stage and advocating for Temple University to serve as the lead educational partner from the HUD grant and the City of Philadelphia.

[3] For instance, we initiated a college-wide audit of all the required practicum and internship sites for our undergraduate and graduate students to see where we could provide a critical mass of support and greater overlap of our work in schools, non-profits and childhood and mental health organizations operating in the region. We also introduced a new undergraduate degree, Human Development and Community Engagement, which we carefully built new internships around to provide our students with new "non-teacher education" clinical experiences.

Starting with the recognition that our collective strength as a College of Education was its hybridity vis-a-vis a multitude of disciplines and fields operating in our academic programs, centers and institutes, it became clearer that our expertise and research capacities spanned life-long learning opportunities and encapsulated both rigorous and diverse methodologies4. With a growing body of evidence and research pointing to intergenerational approaches as the most effective way to revitalize neighborhoods and communities and address poverty, we decided to "double down" if you will on the investments already made via the $30 million HUD grant. The primary intent was to build on and expand the activities already promised in the choice neighborhood initiative by exploring the possibility of creating a multigenerational facility on the outskirts of Temple University.

The proposed facility (anticipated board approval in May 2017 for construction) would house a 4-star, Keystone rated Early Childhood Center and a host of integrational clinical and assessment services featuring: dental, medical, as well as family counseling clinics, workforce/professional development programming, educational testing, as well as college and career-ready advising. The reality was that the vast majority of proposed services were already being provided in a piecemeal fashion both within my college (though our academic programming and by a number of our centers, institutes and clinics) and among other academic units on campus. The challenge was to cohere and enhance these services in such a manner that the proposed facility could be embraced as a community, as opposed to university, asset.

To accomplish this goal, we needed to overcome several obstacles involving restricted university funding streams (bond/debt capacity issues) and limited operations (no billing or fee collection capacity as well as staffing and other related resource constraints) at the college-level. In an attempt to overcome the university funding stream challenge, I convinced Temple University's Board of Trustees (BOT) to approve the purchase of a vacant lot near the edge of campus previously owned by the School District of Philadelphia in the hope of developing an Early Learning and Community Engagement Center. In doing so, I pledged to the

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4 Indeed, the College boasts a myriad of critical lens and skill sets ranging from school, counseling and educational psychology, applied behavioral analysis and special education, English as a second language, adult organizational development and higher education, sociology and urban studies, history and public policy, to traditional teacher preparation and school leadership programming.

university leadership that I would within a two-year period come up with a plan for their consideration that could support the building of a new facility without undermining the university's bond capacity or increasing its debt.

This proposed plan features, on the one hand, a public-private partnership in which an outside developer would construct and own the new facility where the Early Childhood and Community Engagement Center would operate.   On the other hand, Temple University maintains ownership over the property and essentially guarantees paying all rental charges and is responsible for the master lease over a 30 to 50-year period. Furthermore, the developer would seek New Market Tax Credits to reduce the overall cost of the building and to keep the square footage rental charges below market value. We are now in the final stages of negotiations with the developer and I hope to have BOT approval in May 2017.

The second challenge concerned the limited operational capacity of the college. By proposing a public-private partnership, I had to make certain that the college could demonstrate to the university that the organizations and units operating in the new facility could indeed afford to cover the rental charges over a designated period of time as enshrined in a long-term master lease. This meant that I had to simultaneously commit to moving a portion of my College's operations, and in particular, the related centers, institutes and clinics currently under the auspices of the college, to the new facility. I was able to demonstrate this possibility financially because under our responsibility center management (RCM) budgeting system, my college was already paying square footage rental charges to the university. In other words, I could substitute paying rent to the university by covering a significant chunk of the rental charges in the new facility and paying the developer instead. In turn, the university would recover valuable space given up by my college that was desired by other academic units, who were willing to pay Temple increased rental charges to expand their footprint.

Having created a business model that made a public-private partnership potentially viable, we then needed to mitigate the financial risk to the college by seeking outside non-profit partners and other academic units on campus willing to operate and pay rent within the new proposed facility. Truth be told, there was no way for several reasons, that the college could operate a facility like the one proposed without partners. In the first place, while we certainly had the faculty expertise to

design a cutting edge Pre-K curriculum, as well as early childhood and elementary education pre-service teachers to participate in the classrooms, we did not have the permanent teaching staff. In addition, the college did not have the staffing infrastructure to sustain an early childhood center nor the billing capacity to draw down Head Start funds. As a consequence, we explored potential partnerships with several non-profit early childhood providers to assist the college. With the support of a planning grant from the Fund for Quality, Public Health Management Corp and William Penn Foundation, the college entered into a proposed agreement with the Montgomery Early Learning Center (MELC).

MELC has the vision, the experience in similarly challenged neighborhoods, and the organizational stability required to strike up an effective partnership with the college. MELC also had the necessary capital and billing capacity to commit in principle to paying the rental charges required by the developer. We have struck similar potential agreements with other high quality non-profit organizations. For example, we are seeking to partner with the Jewish Educational and Vocational Services (JEVS) to provide and expand adult workforce development training in partnership with the college's Center for Technical Education and our Intergenerational Center. We are also working with SPIN Inc., to partner with our family counseling, testing and applied behavioral analysis clinics and our Institute on Disabilities.

Again, it is important to note that not only do these long-standing non-profit organizations extend the potential impact and quality of the multi-generational services offered to the community, but they also provide a crucial source of rental fees to be paid to the developer or Temple University (depending ultimately if the public-private option is approved to build the new facility). Moreover, these potential partners offered the possibility to collect different and new (for the college) sources of revenue in the form of state and federal dollars available to us via new fee-for-service arrangements.

There is one other component of the proposed Early Learning and Community Engagement Center that is both noteworthy and critical to the expansion of services: the proposed dental clinic and medical practice to be run by our colleagues in the Schools of Dentistry and Medicine, respectfully. Without these services and expertise, the proposed Center would not have garnered what might

be called the "cross-over" capacity, which is required to deepen the buy-in of the university. Such buy-in is important to sustain a community development initiative and to serve as an open invitation for other academic units and university services to potentially join and collectively augment efforts to revitalize North Philadelphia neighborhoods and communities.

Having taken considerable time and space to lay out how the college and Temple University extended its shared vision and mission for rebuilding the urban economy, I want to now turn to the specific question of what incentives and motivations can be shared for engaging faculty and staff. I should point out that on the staff side, the motivations were frankly much easier to identify and harness. Simply stated, the composition of the staff at Temple University, like many public, urban universities and colleges, is far more diverse (age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status) than the faculty. As a result, efforts to create meaningful opportunities to support communities are more often than not, met with great enthusiasm by our staff in part because many of them can relate to the lived experiences of the surrounding neighborhoods.

In addition, the historic public access mission of Temple University resonates with both progressive staff and faculty. Although it may be hard to quantify, there is a palpable connection to the mission of the university that does indeed inform how our staff, faculty and students view themselves and their respective vocations as servant leaders. This connection is especially powerful among our students, who to varying degrees chose Temple University because of its urban location and its social justice mission. Moreover, when factoring in that the vast majority of the students in the College of Education require internships, practicum placements, clinical observations, and in-classroom experiences to complete their degrees and obtain the necessary certifications, it should come as little surprise that work in the surrounding communities, schools and neighborhoods are taken up by students with earnestness and a deep-rooted idealism[5].

However, I do not want to overstate the power of a "calling" to help others, especially in the case of faculty, since their motivations are more complicated and

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[5] Illustrative of this vocational, social justice impetus is the growth of our relatively new, non-teacher education related, Human Development and Community Engagement Degree, which despite being introduced only two years ago without great fanfare and marketing, is now our second largest undergraduate degree in the college.

hinge on providing incentives related to what academics care most about: their individual subject matter or content areas. Indeed, the best way to reach the hearts and minds of faculty is to create opportunities for their scholarly work to garner greater support, resources and attention by facilitating new collaborations that enable documented impact in their fields of practice, and the arenas of policy and research. In this regard, my job as dean is fairly straightforward, albeit not always easily executed: that is, hire great faculty, find more sponsored funding and philanthropic dollars and create better infrastructural support to allow for the highest level of faculty productivity.

In the case of the proposed Center for Early Childhood and Community Engagement, I was able to appeal to several areas of faculty strength in the college. These areas ranged from early childhood literacy, special education, disabilities studies and clinical assessments featuring school, counseling and educational psychology, to organizational development and adult learning. Equally important, the proposed Center gave me the ability to attract new faculty who were interested in social justice and community engagement, and who were willing to partner with existing assets in the college or create new entities to address gaps in practice, research and policy.

Two examples come to mind regarding how the community development initiative can serve as a magnet for new and exciting faculty. The first occurred with much fanfare and a considerable degree of controversy: the recent hiring of Sara Goldrick-Rab. Some of you might know Sara's important work on college access and affordability, while others may recognize her more for her social media exploits and recent inclusion on an ominous national watch list targeting progressive faculty. We were able to bring Sara to Temple because of important college assets promoting equity, such as our Gear Up and Upward Bound grants. In turn, Goldrick-Rab was interested in creating a proposed, HOPE Center for College, Community, and Justice. This Center is committed to translational research focused on rethinking and restructuring higher education, social policies, practices and resources to create opportunities for all students to complete college degrees. Sara's new proposed center is slotted to be part of our multi-generational community engagement facility.

The second example of the magnetic power of the community development initiative and our anchored, place-based strategy, is the recent cluster hiring of faculty interested in creating another new center on assessment and evaluation. We have attracted and hired no less than five new faculty just in the last three months, who have all committed to contributing to this new proposed assessment and evaluation center. In combination with key existing faculty at the college, we now have the breadth of subject matter and qualitative and quantitative methodological expertise to do case studies and large scale evaluations on a host of topics. These topics span toddlers and infants, early childhood literacy, middle grades science and math, career and college-readiness programming, mental and behavioral health, organizational development and adult learning across the life span.

Without the capacity to validate what works as well as what is not successful in terms of practices, pilots and interventions in neighborhoods and schools, there is no hope of replicating and scaling up community development initiatives. To enhance validation efforts, I have strategically used one-time funds to provide startup for new faculty to use with two important qualifications: first, that the total amount of dollars available cannot be individually released without faculty contributing to research in the areas of assessment and evaluation; and second, a portion of the available funds must be used to support other colleagues in the college, who are capable and willing to collaborate on joint projects.

By building incentives around assessment and evaluation work of new and existing faculty, the motivations of our scholarship and research in the areas of teacher education, school redesign and leadership, have been refocused. In particular, we are using our assessment and evaluation acumen to serve as a catalyst for another crucial component of our place-based, community development initiative in north Philadelphia: the creation of a new proposed school network partnership with the SDP.

This new partnership hinges on the college working with a finite number of K-8 schools, centers for technical education (CTEs) and secondary schools primarily located in Network 4 of the Philadelphia School District; a grouping of North Philadelphia schools under the leadership of a regional superintendent. The underlying intent of this complementary strategy is to once again utilize the full breadth of faculty and student expertise and related academic programming to

promote the turnaround or transformation of the regional network that serves a large number of school-age children in the immediate neighborhoods surrounding Temple University.

The aspirational goal of this targeted work is for students, teachers, and leaders to learn and operate in healthy, sustainable ecosystems that improve educational and social/emotional/behavioral/physical outcomes. To this end, we have committed the college to engaging in four key areas to expand opportunities for north Philadelphia youth and prepare them for college and career:

1) Evaluation, Assessment, and Monitoring for Ongoing Decision-Making in all partner schools.
2) Support Core Instructional Delivery (first phase involves literacy in K-5 schools).
3) Social-Emotional, Mental, Behavioral, and Physical Health (RTI, Trauma-informed care, screeners, etc.) interventions for students and teachers.
4) Talent Recruitment, Professional Development, and Retention (using our Teacher Quality Partnership funded Residency-based teacher education program and a host of PD provided by students and faculty).

We are currently in negotiations with one of the largest Philadelphia-based philanthropic foundations to receive a 3-5 year, multi-million dollar grant to support our partnership with Network 4. Our intention is to build sustainable and validated models of improvement and excellence in the neighborhood schools.

Combined, our nascent partnership with a specific network of schools and the anchoring of the proposed Early Childhood and Community Engagement Center, is emblematic of a multi-generational, place-based strategy that expands on the community development initiative stemming from the Choice Neighborhood grant. We believe that the approach is both sustainable and serves the needs of our undergraduate and graduate students, while also having the potential to improve the life chances of people residing in neighborhoods and communities surrounding Temple University. This lifelong learning model features an integrated framework to collaborate with other academic units on campus, in partnership with non-profit and philanthropic organizations, government agencies and the school district.

In making this work central to our social justice mission and values, we are not naïve to either the challenges ahead, or the countless efforts of universities that have failed to sustain these models or generate lasting and positive outcomes. In fact, it is our principled belief and commitment to assessment and evaluation that we hope will drive our practice and when necessary, compel us to change our approaches. Our research will inform policy and also help to hold all partners accountable to ensure that the programs, pilots, and interventions, both within and outside the college and university, generate high quality services supported by evidence.

There is much talk these days about the notion of collective impact and I must admit that, on occasion, I have been swayed by the term. In full disclosure, I have used the concept of collective impact to frame the work we are doing to enact change and revitalize neighborhoods. I have since learned however, that collective impact is more a process, as opposed to a ready-made framework; it implies a set of strategies that we as of yet, do not know whether the planned activities and practices, will in combination, produce transformative results. This somewhat humbling observation is critical to remind us all daily that our biggest challenge is, and will continue to be, managing the relationship between the university and impacted neighborhoods and communities.

Indeed, in meeting with community leaders and visiting churches and neighborhood gatherings, I have come to understand and appreciate that the big "T" logo that stands for Temple, is frequently viewed as standing instead for "takeover" in the eyes of some folks in the community. In order to address these perceptions, the work before us must always begin and end with a commitment to listening to, and learning from, the surrounding communities, neighborhood associations and their organizations and leaders. Without meaningful and respectful dialogue that produces short-term and longitudinal results, we run the real risk of alienating neighborhoods and communities, and ultimately failing to fulfil our social justice mission.

A case in point involves the establishment of an after-school program in Norris apartments. After community leaders expressed deep frustration with another non-profit organization charged with providing the service, we were asked by the Philadelphia Housing Authority to "takeover" the program. After listening intently

the Norris residents' concerns, we came to the conclusion that the after-school program was initially unsuccessful because the prior non-profit partner did not include "a training the trainers" model to sustain programming once the choice neighborhood funding was inevitably spent down.

The residents' desire to redefine the after-school program represented a simple, yet perfectly rational perspective that hinged on a self-empowering model of engagement. The residents rightly felt that by providing the neighborhood with resources was a necessary but insufficient condition to ensuring long-term success. Instead, what was required was the provision of training of specifically targeted residents committed to helping support their children and run the after school program on their own. This approach meant that the dollars available to support the after-school work were better utilized by residents seeking training rather than the College of Education parachuting in to run the program ourselves.

I conclude with this small example because it was a turning point in our relationship with a neighborhood and a residential complex that our faculty, staff and students pass each day on their way to work or study. Although the total amount of funding involved was tiny in the grand scheme of things, we were able to build trust together. Without such trust, there is no ability to move the needle and sustain transformative work between communities, neighborhoods and universities. The lesson gleaned: folks want to do for themselves as opposed to others doing for them, as there is no better approach to promote self-determination and important role modeling in the community.