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INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES TO DETERMINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
IMPACT: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

By

Amanda Marie Bowers
B.S., Vanderbilt University, 2008
M.Ed., Vanderbilt University, 2011

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Education and Human Development of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
In Educational Leadership and Organizational Development

Department of Educational Leadership and Organizational Development
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2018

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A Dissertation Approved on

April 9, 2018

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to each and every coffee shop who made this dissertation possible.

Know that you are loved, and I will still be around but probably less often.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my entire committee for support throughout this process. To my chair, Jake Gross, who has served as an advisor since day one. Thank you for reading so many drafts of this. To Meera Alagaraja, who has been an encourager, motivator, and amazing sounding board during my time at Louisville. I have learned a lot from the curiosity and thoughtfulness you bring to your work. To Henry Cunningham, who has deepened my knowledge in this field and supported various research projects with insight and enthusiasm. Thank you for all of the time you made to provide feedback and help shape my understanding of community engagement. And to Lisa Hooper, the most supportive, dedicated, and wonderful mentor. I learned so much from how you conduct and organize your work and respect the rigor with which you pursue everything. I look forward to continuing to learn from you throughout my career. Thank you to each of you for your time, support, and contributions to my learning. I also want to thank Kelly Ising and the supportive staff at U of L and the students I had the chance to learn with and from, especially you, comps study partner. Thank you, Jeff, Geoff, Mark, Brian, Sandy.

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ABSTRACT

INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES TO DETERMINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPACT: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Amanda M. Bowers

April 9, 2018

This qualitative, collective case study is designed to examine the processes by which urban, metropolitan institutions determine the impact their community engagement has within the local community. The study addresses the lack of research on community engagement at the institutional level, the processes that track and coordinate engagement, as well as the perspectives of community partners in this work. Research is more developed regarding individual engagement activities and student learning outcomes than it is to institutional accountability structures or community impact. Studies that center the institution as the unit of analysis are needed to address these limitations in research and practice.

A collective case study using grounded theory was designed to address the research question. The use of grounded theory aligns with the exploratory nature of the research, allowing for data from institutional contexts to inform an area of research with limited models and theories. Three institutions were selected as cases to provide comparative data. Multiple data sources informed each case. Data were collected over

eight months, including a two-month pilot phase to revise interview protocols and planned implementation.

Findings across cases indicate that institutional processes vary, and determining the extent and impact of their community engagement efforts at the local level are limited. Respondents in all cases noted pockets of high engagement activity, and in some cases subsequent assessment, but these levels vary in quantity and quality. The capacity to determine impact was cited up to the individual project, program, or course level. Respondents further suggested the ability to identify, track, and report these activities, creating an institutional narrative on a particular area of impact, was limited without greater institutionalization of engagement. Community representation and voice in institutional assessment processes were limited or not included, though community input at the unit level was cited across cases. Findings suggest that as institutional capacity for engagement and its assessment builds (i.e. institutionalization), systematic solicitation of community perceptions of impact may serve as a proxy for realized community outcomes. Findings further indicate that greater attention to community engagement assessment can support institutional relevance, productivity, and mission attainment. Conclusions and recommendations for research and practice are presented in the final chapter.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has long held a commitment to pursue activities that benefit society, and “has an implicit responsibility to serve the public that created it and sustains it financially through tuition, government grants and contracts, corporate giving and partnerships, and public philanthropy” (Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2016, p. 245). Harkavy (2006) argues that the goal for higher education institutions is to contribute significantly to developing and sustaining democratic schools, communities, and societies, and Peterson (2009) suggests that the connection of academe to communities “can expand the social, cultural, and human capital of both local communities and universities and generally better our attempts at understanding and addressing social ills” (p. 541). Boyer (1996) argued that for more than 350 years higher learning and the needs of American society have been interwoven and interdependent, yet he also suggested that public confidence in higher education’s ability to lead this work had waned. In 1999, the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities stated that it was evident that with the vast resources across postsecondary campuses, higher education could and should be organizing around local and national needs in more coherent and effective ways.

Heeding Boyer's call to renew the work of the academy (1990), and to more intentionally connect the resources described by the Kellogg Commission (1999) to the most pressing needs within society, community engagement has gained traction in the last thirty years (Harkavy, 2016). Partnerships designed to mutually benefit higher education and local communities have become an emerging strategy to more effectively pursue education and development efforts (Eddy, 2010; Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004; Kezar, 2005). These partnerships vary widely in purpose and design. Service-learning, community-based research, and other research, service, and policy collaborations are designed to cultivate knowledge and scientific discovery, educate the citizenry, and generate public good across local, state, national, and international spaces. This compilation of activity is commonly understood as community engagement, or community- or civic-engaged scholarship, though the many variations in terminology reflect the diversity of the field (Giles, 2016).

How partnerships are designed and supported at a college or university also varies widely, shaped by institutional mission, priorities, and other contextual factors (Furco & Miller, 2009; Harkavy & Hartley, 2012). Institutions negotiate the degree to which they will focus on the "non-university world" (Buys & Bursnall, 2007), how they will determine what is of benefit to society, including the local public, and what strategies they will employ to fulfill this commitment. Increasingly, colleges and universities are choosing to integrate community engagement into their mission and institutional identity (Sandmann, Williams, & Abrams, 2009), yet how to do so in authentic, transparent, and responsible ways is a challenge for institutions across the country (Rosing, 2015). Amid the growing prioritization and proliferation of community engagement, campuses still

lack a clear understanding of how to determine engagement's contributions to the institution and the community (Driscoll, 2014; Hart & Northmore, 2010; Rosing, 2015).

Problem Statement

Colleges and universities increasingly require comprehensive and detailed reporting of community engagement as a mechanism of accountability to accrediting bodies (Norris-Tirrell, Lambert-Pennington, & Hyland, 2010; Sandmann et al., 2009), for distinctions such as Carnegie's Community Engagement Classification (Driscoll, 2009), as well as accountability to the community itself (Mayfield, 2001). Given the growth in partnership strategies and networks (Lasker, Weiss, & Miller, 2001), the inability to effectively track and measure movement toward specific outcomes is problematic. The utilization of partnership strategies is often done under the expectation that such collaboration will streamline resources and services, reduce costs, and lead to better results (Eddy, 2010). Without proper evaluation of the realized impact generated through community engagement, there is no tangible way of understanding the link between the investment of social and human capital, time, and resources to changes in the lived experiences of individuals and their communities. Improved institutional assessment is needed not only for recognition, marketing, and budgetary legitimization (Rosing, 2015), but to further reconcile understanding between ongoing actions and resulting outcomes across domains of accountability (Hart & Northmore, 2010; Holton, 2015).

The tension between an institution's need to accurately relate its engagement work and the inability to track or understand its impact in a comprehensive way is a challenge across the country (Driscoll, 2009; 2014). In her work studying institutions seeking the Carnegie Classification of Community Engagement (Carnegie

Classification), Driscoll (2009) found that “even the simple tracking and recording of engagement activities appeared to be difficult to maintain with a systematic institution-wide process” (p. 10). Research can address this challenge by helping reveal how institutions connect the vast amount of time, resources, energy, and human capital expended on community engagement with the tangible outcomes that result from the activity (Rosing, 2015; Holton et al., 2015). The challenge for institutions is to determine what difference involvement in local communities has made, for better or worse (Hart & Northmore, 2010; Rosing, 2015). This study is designed to examine the processes by which institutions make those determinations.

Higher Education’s Role in Community: Why Accountability Matters

Institutions at the focus of this study have a dedicated mission to serve their locality. They are often termed anchor institutions and play a large role in the vitality of their community setting. Anchor institutions, according to a review by Taylor and Luter (2013), can generally be defined as “large, spatially immobile, mostly non-profit organizations that play an integral role in the local economy” (p. 8), with an emphasis on the place-based, structural continuity that drives the anchoring role. Hodges and Dubb (2012) suggest that an anchor institution’s mission should “be defined as the conscious and strategic application of the long-term, place-based economic power of the institution, in combination with its human and intellectual resources, to better the welfare of the community in which it resides” (p. 147). Fitzgerald et al. (2016) propose additional intentionality to the missions of these institutions as universities:

“With increasing attention being given to the triple bottom line (social, environmental, and financial), it is important to consider how engaged

universities will direct resources to create educational programs in entrepreneurship, development of social enterprise businesses, regionalization of innovation, and transdisciplinarity, a core aspect of community engagement scholarship” (p. 246).

The focus on innovation and enhanced utilization of multiple university assets adds another layer to what Maurrasse (2002) notes is central to higher education’s social mission. Maurrasse suggests that due to its natural and historical employment of teaching, research, and service, higher education may be better positioned than corporations to work with and improve the lives of those within disadvantaged communities.

In order to leverage this possibility, Cantor (2009) suggests anchor institutions need to rethink not only institutional mission toward these commitments, but build corresponding values into institutional infrastructure, including reward systems such as promotion and tenure. This research explores how institutional infrastructure includes accountability and assessment processes to ensure fulfillment of dedicated missions to serve the local community. Watson-Thompson (2015) argues that colleges and universities need to be proactive in incorporating principles of community engagement into the institutional fabric, and institutionalize engagement across the multiple levels of departments, schools, and campus entities. “Academic institutions should ensure clear mechanisms for documenting, measuring, and evaluating the collective contributions of university partners in facilitating engaged scholarship for community impact” (p. 23). Engaged institutions are increasingly attempting to do so in more systematic, purposeful ways (Sandmann et al., 2009).

A mission toward public good is often fueled through a community engagement strategy focused on institutionalization of engagement, with a proliferation of partnerships as the driving force (Brukardt, Holland, Percy, & Zimpher, 2004). The prevalence of campus-community partnerships continues to expand across higher education trends generally (Eddy, 2010; Fisher et al., 2008), yet within anchor institutions they are particularly salient (Getto & McCunney, 2015). Eddy (2010) cites seven themes to help define the various motivations for creating partnerships in practice: (a) educational reform, (b) economic development, (c) dual enrollment or student transfer, (d) student learning, (e) resource savings, (f) shared goals and visions, and (g) international joint ventures (p. 3). Bray (2001) provides related, common rationales for participating in a partnership, including “shared experiences and expertise, mutual support, division of labor, increased resources, increased sense of ownership, extended reach, increased effectiveness, and evaluation and monitoring” (p. 6). Within these purposes, colleges and universities may collaborate as a critical stakeholder with high participation (e.g. Gardner, 2011; Harkavy & Hartley, 2012; Reardon, 1998; Small & Uttal, 2005), a contributing stakeholder with moderate participation within a network (e.g. Amabile, Patterson, Mueller, Wojcik, Odomirok, Marsh, & Kramer, 2001; Dempsey, 2010), and/or as an external resource with lower levels of participation (e.g. Selsky & Parker, 2005).

Anchor institutions work to leverage these different partnership purposes, types, and configurations to address local needs and opportunities. While most higher education institutions work toward similar goals, only certain institutions are explicit in their mission and organizational strategy to achieve them, which carries added

responsibility to accomplish. The anchor institution model is an increasingly appealing strategy to utilize large universities for community development work (Luter, 2016). In their research on community engagement at research universities, Weerts and Sandmann (2008) found that urban institutions, even more than their land-grant counterparts, had a dedicated and embedded culture of engagement and used that identity to advance their localized mission. This mission extends beyond educational goals to economic, social, environmental, and other impacts. Universities may be deeply embedded in regional work around educational outcomes, but such efforts can also yield economic advancements (Eddy, 2010).

With the explicit mission to advance these areas of impact, institutions need to know whether or not they have been successful in moving toward desired outcomes. Assessment assists in quality improvement and in tracking and ensuring local and regional transformation (Getto & McCunney, 2015). Hart and Northmore (2010) argue that evaluation is necessary to ensure that the university's intellectual and physical resources "are available to, informed by and used by its local and sub-regional communities" (p. 20). This enhances community and university capacity for engagement for mutual benefit, as well as ensures that resources are prioritized toward addressing inequalities within local communities. Holton and colleagues (2015) also emphasize the ability to leverage strengths and existing resources toward community-identified priorities through structured, systematic assessment.

The focus on the community domain is needed in community engagement assessment work, as it has been a largely neglected area (Bucher, 2012; Ferrarri & Worrall, 2000; Miron & Moely, 2006). In 1998, Giles and Eyler identified community

impact as one of the top ten unanswered questions in service-learning research. Six years later, Ferman and Hill (2004) cited the “paucity of studies” (p. 241) that report the perspective of community partners in higher education-community partnerships. In 2008 and again in 2014, Driscoll recounts the continuing challenge for institutions to assess community perceptions across local stakeholders. The renewed scholarship of engagement (Boyer, 1990) involves assessment not only by academic peers through “products (publications)” (Fitzgerald et al., 2016, p. 227), but assessment that meets the standards of both the academy and community representatives (Ramaley, 2014). “The prioritization of communities by academic institutions does not suggest that faculty, staff, and administrators cannot continue to engage in a variety of community settings, but rather that intentional opportunities are sought to coordinate commitment and investments in strategic places within and across communities” (Watson-Thompson, 2015, p. 24). Assessment of investments in communities facilitates better awareness between action and outcomes, as well as accountability to those within the community.

Purpose of the Study

In this era of renewed scholarship through community engagement, institutions are facing the difficult question of what difference they are making (Holton, 2015). This study is designed to examine the processes by which institutions determine the impact their community engagement has within the local community. The study addresses the lack of research on community engagement at the institutional level, the processes that track and coordinate engagement, as well as the perspectives of community partners in this work (Driscoll, 2014; Getto & McCunney, 2015; Hart & Northmore, 2010; Holland, 2009; Rosing, 2015; Watson-Thompson, 2015; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Research is

more developed as it pertains to individual engagement programs and projects and to college student learning outcomes than it is to institutional commitment or community impact (Driscoll, 2009; 2014; Holland, 1997). Analyses of engagement efforts have been done at the institutional level (e.g. Furco, 2001), yet research is lacking with the institution as the unit of analysis examining engagement holistically (Holland, 2009). Engagement activities occur across disciplines, departments, centers, and other units, and take many forms, across a spectrum of formal and informal partnerships. These differences make it difficult to track, categorize, and organize activity systematically, connected to the institutional mission (Franz et al., 2012; Furco & Miller, 2009; Holland, 1997). Foundational work has been done to develop assessment tools at the institutional level (e.g. Furco, 1999; Holland, 1997; 2006), yet the processes by which institutions compile and understand their community engagement activity is less clear. By focusing this study on process, findings can contribute to limited knowledge regarding how institutions manage the variability.

Due to the complex nature of community engagement and its many facets, examining this problem at the institutional level and focusing explicitly on outcomes within the community has been limited (Driscoll, 2014). Assessment has historically been piecemeal and difficult to conduct across individual units, resulting in incomplete and time-limited understandings of engagement as a comprehensive effort (Greenburg & Moore, 2012; Holton et al., 2015). In determining impact, institutions have struggled to get past measuring outputs of activities (e.g. number of student volunteers, number of engaged scholars), to measuring impact over time (Holland, 2009). “Ultimately the aim should be to measure impact and change, not just activity” (Hart & Northmore, 2010, p.

20). Attending explicitly to institutional processes promotes integrity within evaluative practices and may facilitate more accurate determinations of impact (Rosing, 2015; Rubin, 2000). This in turn will improve representations of impact to domains of accountability, including accreditors and external funders, students and their families, campus staff and faculty, as well as the community.

Study Design

This study employs a collective case and grounded theory approach to understand how institutions assess the impacts of community engagement. The qualitative research focuses on the *process* of assessment, rather than the institutional results of assessment practices. The grounded theory approach assists in moving beyond description to generate or discover a theory, or a “unified theoretical explanation” for a process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013), in this case institutional assessment practices for community engagement.

Research Question

The following research question guides the study:

What is the process by which an urban, metropolitan institution determines the impact its community engagement activity has within the local community?

Collective Case, Grounded Theory Approach

“Each higher education institution uniquely presents its own cultural expression of community engagement relative to its geography, history, and, perhaps most importantly, its social and political agenda (or ‘mission’) at any given moment” (Rosing, 2015, p. 148). Given the place-based, particular nature of community engagement at any one institution (McNall, Barnes-Najor, Brown, Doberneck, & Fitzgerald, 2015;

Maurrasse, 2010; Peterson, 2009), a design is needed that can explore each institution within its own context. Case studies are employed when the researcher desires to understand complex phenomena within a bounded system of interest (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014), such as a university, and in context-dependent and place-based conditions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Lewis, 2003; Stake, 2005). Case studies are particularly useful in exploring how and why something happens (Yin, 2003; 2014), aligning with the intention to understand how assessment is conducted. Case studies also utilize multiple sources of data to explore the phenomenon of interest. Multiple sources of data are necessary in this research given the wide array of documentation and communication strategies institutions employ to manage community engagement practices, policies, structures, and assessment (Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013).

Yin (2003) suggests that multiple, or collective, case studies can provide more information toward a general phenomenon than a single case. A collective case study involves the investigation into a phenomenon, population, or general condition, identifying one issue or phenomenon of concern and selecting multiple cases to illustrate and explore the issue (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2015; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). By examining the procedural mechanisms institutions use to manage assessment across cases, greater insight into key elements is possible. It is particularly important in the current context of higher education to rethink university infrastructure and approaches to core institutional missions, requiring the sharing of effective practices (Ramaley, 2014). Current research is not clear on what specific institutional processes translate campus activity into demonstrated outcomes within the local community (Rosing, 2015; UNC,

2015; Watson-Thompson, 2015). Systematic data collection from individual institutions is needed to begin to model the linkages between process, action, and outcomes.

A grounded theory approach facilitates this study's focus on process. Grounded theory is useful in developing a theory directly from data collected in the field, focused often on process and action from the viewpoint of the participant (Creswell, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The approach assists in delineating what progression, or uniting theory, drives community engagement assessment as guided by the individuals doing the work. Without a clear understanding of how or why institutional assessment processes occur as they do, a methodological approach led by data gathered directly from institutions and institutional actors is most appropriate. This design enables a better understanding of intrinsic cases and their relation to one another to inform the larger question of assessment process.

Theoretical Framework

The research question embraces the inherent ambiguity and differentiation within institutional contexts while retaining coherence and consistency across cases. To guide this research, a framework is needed that addresses both the layers of community impact and the complexity of higher education institutions as systems. Chapter Two identifies limitations in the literature regarding community engagement assessment, including: (1) the focal point of assessment efforts has been too narrow, concentrated on individual programs or projects, (2) has not centered on the community, and (3) has not fully addressed higher education's institutional complexity. A theoretical framework was developed to address these limitations and situate the current study to advance understanding and explore recurring assessment challenges with renewed perspective.

The theoretical framework driving this research incorporates two complementary yet distinct frameworks as a guide. The first is Stoecker, Beckman, and Min's (2010) Model of Higher Education Civic Engagement Impacts, which employs a community development framework to conceptualize community impact. The model blends the higher education-institutional domain with the community domain, examining impact over time and across expanding levels of impact. The second is McNall et al.'s (2015) work regarding the concept of *systemic engagement*, which addresses the "messy" nature of engagement (Ramaley, 2014). McNall et al. introduce systemic engagement as a mechanism to examine engagement more holistically, accounting for institutional complexity and the dynamism across manifestations of community engagement. Together, these frameworks address the limitations in prior research by broadening more narrow focal points, centering assessment on the community domain, and addressing higher education's institutional complexity.

Sampling Strategy

Given the focus on the community domain, cases of interest include institutions with a stated intention to generate positive impact in the local community. Inclusion criteria included institutions that are urban, metropolitan, four-year, public, higher or highest research university, with a clear mission for sustained and meaningful community engagement. Indications of sustained and meaningful community engagement include membership in the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) and the Carnegie Classification designation. Institutions must have a stated focus on the local community, either within the institutional mission or as part of an institutional initiative

or strategic plan and self-identify as an anchor institution to best align with the central research question.

Systematic, non-probabilistic sampling provides as targeted a set of cases as possible for analysis. Mays and Pope (1995) describe this form of sampling as neither random nor representative, but a strategic determination of what groups, people, or cases will best be able to inform the research question. Furthermore, “This approach to sampling allows the researcher deliberately to include a wide range of types of informants and also to select key informants with access to important sources of knowledge” (Mays & Pope, 1995, p. 110). In this study, that includes both university and community stakeholders. The targeted number of cases for this study is three institutions, with 2-4 university stakeholder interviews as well as 2-4 community stakeholder interviews per institution. Creswell (2013) recommends one to four cases for a collective case study, while Yin (2003) advises that multiple cases studies require careful consideration of what constitutes relevant and similar cases, though more cases may help improve insight. The desired collection for this study is three institutions due to constraints including time and available resources, the exploratory nature of the research, and the alignment with Creswell’s and Yin’s recommendations for collective case studies. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Data Collection and Analysis

Case studies involve the collection of multiple types of data to aid in triangulation and to inform the research question (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014).

Accordingly, a variety of data sources were used in this study. Interviews were conducted with university unit(s) responsible for institution-wide reporting of community

engagement as well as interviews with community leaders involved in engagement and/or assessment of engagement. Documentation of community engagement activity was also obtained. This included website and online data, available archives and records, accreditation materials related to community engagement, and strategic plans or other documents that describe institution-wide efforts for community engagement in the local community. Observations, institutional descriptive data, community demographics, and other contextual materials available were also included and coded.

To collect these data, a common set of criteria were designed to organize and catalog information in a structured, systematic manner. This structure ensures data are constant across cases, as comprehensive as the research design intended, and replicable in successive studies (Yin, 2014). To facilitate structured collection of data, tables of data indicators and sources were created. Data analysis involved an iterative process of first-, second-, and third-cycle coding, exploring interview data, institutional characteristics, process elements, community characteristics, and other contextual data in conjunction with document analysis. The iterative coding included descriptive, process, in vivo, and evaluative coding to assist in constant comparisons. Tools used to assist in data analysis included a data accounting log, case analysis meeting forms, and a role-ordered matrix, described in detail in Chapter Three.

Data collection began with a two-month pilot phase, which included interviews with individuals from two universities with institutional characteristics similar to the inclusion criteria for full study institutions. Both interview protocols and the plan for implementation were subsequently revised and submitted for amendment approval by the

Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Louisville. The full study then began in August of 2017 and data collection ended in February of 2018.

Key Questions Associated with the Research

The review of the literature conducted as part of this research revealed three key questions that this investigation intends to address. Discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, each question has implications for both research and practice. First, the question of how institutions address the piecemeal nature of engagement work across highly diversified, segmented organizations like higher education campuses (Birnbaum, 1988) is still unclear (Holland, 2009). How do individual programs link together to create a coherent institutional picture of involvement in the community? Are single efforts better characterized as puzzle pieces in one coherent picture, or are they best manifest as individual actors? Furco and Miller (2009) note the needed transformation of components to an institutionalized whole: “To help ensure that the components take shape in ways that best facilitate the advancement of community engagement, the employment of an assessment process that can measure and benchmark each component’s development is essential” (p. 48).

Second, to what extent is a university able to center its community engagement work on the domain of *community*? With historical precedence, norms, incentives, and structures all oriented toward the institution and the expectations of academe (Fisher et al., 2008; Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010), how do institutions align their work and corresponding assessment processes toward community outcomes? The shift in focus to community engagement as a central value within institutions signals an epistemological turn toward greater inclusion of “community” within education. This in turn raises

questions regarding what the academy accepts as legitimate knowledge (Sandmann et al., 2008). This research attempts to explore institutional orientation to the community domain by exploring assessment practices.

Finally, given higher education's institutional complexity (Birnbaum, 1988; Ramaley, 2014; McNall et al., 2015), how can institutions aggregate activities and assessment in a holistic, coordinated approach? To what extent is technology needed to facilitate a consistent and comprehensive process? What does "good communication" look like across the university? What are "good communication practices" between university and community members involved in coordinating community engagement and its assessment? Rubin (2000) contends that "The development of an intellectually rigorous framework for evaluation of partnerships requires more than appropriate indicators of effective process or outcomes. The research must be based in the formulation of meaningful questions that relate to the core objectives of the partnerships and the programs that support them" (p. 220). Holton et al. (2015) suggest that few tools exist to identify, track, or measure that meaningful data. Examining how institutions approach these questions deeply and comprehensively will contribute to the growing, collective knowledge base.

Summary

This collective case, grounded theory study is designed to address critical gaps in the literature base regarding institutional assessment of community engagement within the community. By systematically examining three institutions within their own context and across cases, a unified theoretical explanation may emerge. By approaching this research using grounded theory, data are derived directly from those involved in the

process, giving voice and expertise to not only the university stakeholders involved in assessment, but community representatives as well. Community engagement researchers know more about how engagement partners work well together than the outcomes and impact these partnerships produce (Granner & Sharpe, 2004; Nichols et al., 2015). This study builds toward better understanding of outcomes resultant from community engagement by examining institutional processes to determine impact. As scholars within this field continue to better understand linkages between process, action, and outcomes, research and practice will benefit.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following chapter reviews the literature on community engagement, focusing on campus-community partnerships, and the processes by which institutions determine the impact such activity has within the local community. Given the breadth and variation in this topic, the review focuses on urban, metropolitan universities with a dedicated mission toward engagement, necessitating accountability to institutional practice and realized outcomes. Emphasis is placed on the process by which institutions determine impact in accordance with the guiding research question. The chapter begins with a framing of the review, including a description of articles included and key terms. Next, the context for community engagement is considered, including common characteristics of partnership work, the processes that drive it, and what outcomes such processes are intended to generate within communities. Institutional processes to track and manage community engagement activity to make determinations regarding its impact are then examined. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations in current research and practice across the literature.

Framing the Review

Before delving into available research on assessing community engagement, it is necessary to delineate the type of literature guiding this review as well as the terms

associated with community engagement work. Brabant and Braid (2009) note that definitions associated with community engagement, such as service-learning and civic engagement, vary widely, but also suggest that each institution should define related terms in accordance with their own educational mission and local context. This is a common practice (Beere, 2009; Eddy, 2010; Giles, 2016). The variation highlights the difficulty in nailing down a singular definition for community engagement or any term within it, yet the mutability of the work allows for individualization and authenticity in localized environments.

Included Literature

The body of literature on campus-community partnerships spans a wide domain of practice and incorporates varied definitions and manifestations of collaboration (Ikeda, Sandy, & Donahue, 2010). The lines of formality and informality blur throughout partnerships, as do demarcations of roles, responsibilities, and accountability. Additionally, many within the academic community have cited collaborations may lack the rigor to make partnership work worthwhile for publishing purposes, may lack knowledge about how to conduct partnerships effectively, and may feel as though appropriate incentives are not available (Buys & Bursnall, 2007). This influences available literature. The implementation of these partnerships is also a place-based practice (McNall et al., 2015; Peterson, 2009), carrying distinctive structures, characteristics, and stakeholders unique to a particular collaboration and context. This distinctiveness can make the production of systematic or generalizable research difficult, as can the issue of failing to measure progress over time (Furco & Miller, 2009).

Amid these challenges, significant and rapidly growing literature on campus-community partnerships has contributed to the knowledge base (Rubin, 2000). Research and commentary often span domains of practice including service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Jacoby, 1999; 2003), research-practice partnerships (Coburn & Penuel, 2016; Donovan, 2013), community-based participatory research (e.g. Bess, Doykos, Geller, Craven, & Nation, 2016; Brown, 2010; Plumb, Collins, Cordeiro, & Kavanaugh-Lynch, 2008), community coalition work (e.g. Garland, Crane, Marino, Stone-Wiggins, Ward, & Friedell, 2004; Granner & Sharpe, 2004), and larger community networks, such as collective impact models, designed to address local development needs including education reform (e.g. Flood, Minkler, Lavery, Estrada, & Falbe, 2015; Henig, Riehl, Houston, Rebell, & Wolff, 2016). Coburn and Penuel (2016) suggest that literature often focuses either on the dynamics of the partnership or on their outcomes, failing to address both and limiting understanding of the full spectrum of impact. While the inclusion of these differing types of partnerships in a literature review impairs the ability to exhaustively examine a single collaborative structure, it does afford the opportunity to examine differing structures as they converge and diverge around the question of how partnership processes translate into local community outcomes. It also parallels the challenge institutions face to aggregate such diverse activities.

Examining the various forms of community engagement conducted within postsecondary institutions, a wide array of research and commentary emerge. Bray (2001) suggests that the nature of partnerships “varies widely in different settings and at different points in time” (p. 5), and for this reason, singular characterizations are not practical or preferred. It is unrealistic to conduct an exhaustive account of every relevant

article given the study context. Instead, the following examines representative literature as it relates to the primary research question. The majority of articles included in this review are focused on campus-community partnerships, which include service-learning, experiential education, community-based participatory research, engaged scholarship, and research-practice partnerships. Articles describe campus-community partnership foundations, models, frameworks, best-practice, power dynamics, orientations, and assessment practices. Literature on community coalitions, community psychology, cross-sector, and collective impact models are also included as they inform engagement oriented toward community development.

Articles for this review were identified through an iterative process, utilizing the *Academic Search Complete*, *Education Full Text*, *ERIC EBSCO*, *PsycINFO*, and *ProQuest Direct* databases. A series of keywords and terms were searched within every database, which coincided with a thesaurus search in each database for the most appropriate version of each term for that site. The keywords searched throughout included a combination of the following: *partnership*, *collaborative*, *campus-community partnership*, *community engagement*, *evaluation*, *assessment*, *measure*, *outcome*, *impact*, *institutional strategy*, *goal setting*, *higher education*, *colleges and universities*, and *postsecondary education*. These terms were also modified in subsequent searches according to each database in use. For example, *Education Full Text* suggested the use of “partnerships in education” rather than “partnerships,” and *ERIC EBSCO* recommended the use of “goal orientation” rather than “goal setting” or “goal determination.” Given the breadth of the search, over 4,500 articles were reviewed for their relevance, and approximately 455 articles were included and cataloged for this review. As is evident by

the search of such broad, extensive concepts, some subjectivity and decision-making was left to the researcher to determine fit and usefulness of an article to the research question.

To reduce possible bias in selecting relevant articles, inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed. In regards to partnership characteristics and processes, which have broad commonalities regardless of the focus of the work, multiple disciplines were included such as education, community health, mental health, youth development, social services, and others. As it pertained to outcomes and impact, articles were included if the authors made specific reference to a type of outcome or impact intended. Articles were excluded if they did not discuss the concepts of partnership characteristics, processes, or outcomes to inform institutional processes. These were commonly more descriptive in nature or focused on another element of partnership work. To review institutional processes to determine impact within the literature, far fewer articles emerged that were relevant to institutional-level strategies. A subsequent search within the journals *Metropolitan Universities* and the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* was conducted to look for articles that may inform the central research question, targeting the last eight years (since 2010). This produced an additional 17 articles not found in previous searches, which led to additional literature on institutional processes explicitly.

Included articles are primarily descriptive, offering commentary and synthesis of research or practice, overviews of campus-community engagement broadly in the areas of process, outcomes, and institutional assessment processes. Fewer articles that would address the research question have been empirical in nature, in particular quantitative studies (Granner & Sharpe, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Rubin, 2000). There is also

a lack of research on community impact (Stoecker et al., 2010). Taken together, this review positions the current study in the context of available literature and provides an overview of what is known regarding assessments of impact from community engagement activity.

Analyzing the literature on partnership processes and outcomes, depictions of collaboration can be captured along a continuum as they appear throughout various texts. Acknowledging that it is an iterative process and not merely a static or linear continuum, partnership work is nonetheless regularly characterized by its antecedents or inputs, including the context or environment that informs a particular collaboration, followed by the processes or actions employed. These elements then move into outputs, outcomes, and impact, captured by various terms and indicators (Stoecker et al., 2010). The sections of this review explore the literature in this format, from inputs and context, to processes and activity, to outputs and outcomes leading to impact (see Figure 1).

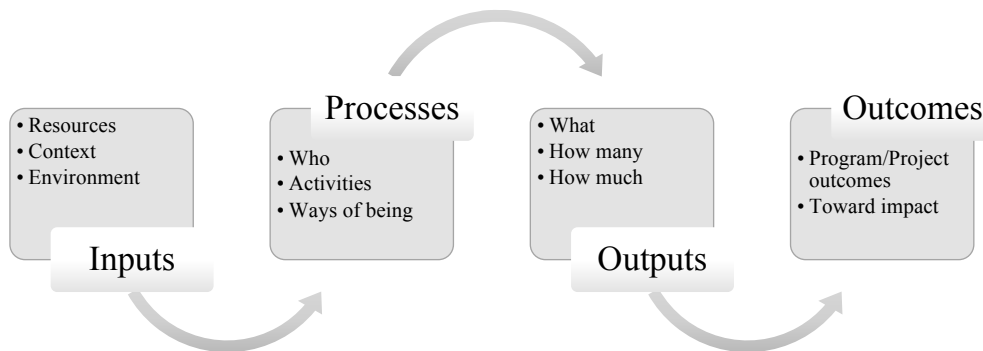


Figure 1. Path to examine literature on determining impact from community engagement.

Defining Terms

Many terms are used to describe the work of higher education institutions within the communities in which they reside (Getto & McCunney, 2015). Collaborations range from large-scale, multifaceted projects to a single collaboration among a higher education

and community representative. To guide this review, a brief discussion of what is meant by collaboration, partnership, community engagement, community, and impact follows to help align interpretation of terms related to the research question.

Collaboration. Both *collaboration* and *partnership* are constructs that hold many meanings depending on their context and contributors (Bedwell, Wildman, DiazGranados, Salazar, Kramer, & Salas, 2012; Kania & Kramer, 2011). Bedwell et al. (2012) present a multilevel conceptualization of collaboration, in which they highlight the distinction between collaboration as an emergent process versus a prescribed organizational state of being. For Bedwell and colleagues, to describe collaboration as a relationship structure denies it the inherent sense of dynamism and constant change it possesses, and the authors treat the concept of collaboration as a living, moving organism. Collaboration is defined as, “An evolving process whereby two or more social entities actively and reciprocally engage in joint activities aimed at achieving at least one shared goal” (Bedwell et al., 2012, p. 3). This aligns with Amey, Eddy, and Ozaki’s (2007) contention that the literature supports the idea that partnership is about process and should be seen as a living system. Given the constant evolution of collaborative efforts, the processes by which collaboration takes place are an iterative exploration, particularly how these processes inform the production of outcomes.

Partnership. While collaboration is a broad term capturing the living, fluid nature of joining together, partnership is often used to describe a more concrete relationship. Coburn and Penuel (2016) note that the term partnership is used widely in U.S. education and can refer to a number of different expressions of research and practice, such as consulting agreements, use of school environments to test innovation,

and sites for teacher training and internships. Eddy (2010) suggests that, “Each partnership employs definitions of partnership or collaboration that suit its distinct context and group goals that may result in a lack of shared meaning when use of similar terms in fact carries different meanings for those involved” (p. 4). This can lead to confusion, yet it also reflects the individuality of practice and the personalization inherent in the work. The Carnegie Foundation (2017) describes partnerships as focusing on “collaborative interactions with community and related scholarship for the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, information, and resources (research, capacity building, economic development, etc.)” This definition is found in the current application for the Carnegie Classification and assists institutions in differentiating among various terms found in throughout application process.

Scholars use different terminology to describe campus-community partnerships and the stakeholders involved. Characterizations may include working with the local community (Sandmann & Plater, 2009; Leiderman, Furco, Zapf, & Goss, 2002) with local, regional/state, national, global communities (Driscoll, 2009), with community stakeholders (Tumiel-Berhalter, Watkins, & Crespo, 2005), or, commonly, with community partners (Eyler, 2002; Harkavy & Donovan, 2000; Jacoby, 2003; Sandy & Holland, 2006). The term *partnership* is “most often applied to the relationship and interactions between the community and the campus” (Clayton, Bringle, Senior, Huq, & Morrison, 2010, p. 5), yet these authors also suggest terminology is not used with the consistency and precision needed to fuel better analysis. This inconsistency is illustrated by the articles included in this review. The term “campus-community partnerships” (CCPs) is commonly used to describe the relationships between institutions and

communities, and is thus the guiding terminology used in this review for its applicability to numerous contexts, recognizing terminology shifts according to context (Giles, 2016).

Community engagement. Campus-community partnerships are the building blocks of community engagement (Bruskardt et al., 2004). Partnerships are fostered through forms of collaboration between postsecondary institutions and a local community partner or partners (i.e. schools, nonprofits, government agencies, faith-based institutions, businesses). The Carnegie Classification, a high distinction of community engagement capacity awarded to 240 institutions in 2015, is a central avenue for defining and tracking processes and outcomes within CCPs. The Carnegie Foundation defines community engagement as a “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities...for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (New England Resource Center for Higher Education [NERCHE], 2016). The idea of reciprocity is both paramount and pervasive in campus-community partnerships, as they require a high level of intentionality of practice, specifically aimed at generating mutual benefit (NERCHE, 2016). These concepts, as both antecedents in orientation to the work, and as processes throughout collaboration, are the foundation upon which other contributing partnership elements are built (Tyler & Haberman, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). For this reason, as well as its wide usage, the Carnegie definition of community engagement is the guiding language used in this study. Other institutions and partnership initiatives may utilize related but variant forms of the Carnegie definition tailored to their own context. For example, Suarez-Balcazar, Harper, and Lewis (2005) define partnerships as “an explicit written or verbal agreement between a community setting...and an academic unit to engage in a common

project or common goal, which is mutually beneficial for an extended period” (p. 85). In practice the “explicit” agreement may be more loosely or tightly understood, but this characterization is helpful to demonstrate how language may vary, as will the nature of activities pursued. Engaged scholarship, service-learning, internships, and volunteerism are described next to help illuminate distinctions among community engagement in practice.

Engaged scholarship. Engaged scholarship is a key component to community engagement, driven by the assumption that higher education institutions should be playing an increasing role in addressing societal needs (Peterson, 2009). Both practice and paradigm, engaged scholarship has been defined in a variety of ways, subject to what Sandmann (2008) termed “definitional anarchy,” yet remains informed by Boyer’s (1990; 1996) seminal work. More recently, Giles (2016) suggested engaged scholarship is moving toward a “big tent” in lieu of continued anarchy, converging around an increasingly common understanding of the terms *community-engaged scholarship* and *civically-engaged scholarship*. Yet, differences in terminology continue to plague an institution’s ability to clearly articulate their own community engagement story (Getto & McCunney, 2015). According to Barker (2004), engaged scholarship “should employ research, teaching, integration, and application scholarship that incorporates reciprocal practices of civic engagement into the production of knowledge” (p. 124). While the production of knowledge is important to this work, the practical application from bringing campus and community together is a driving component.

Practical application manifests in several ways. Barker (2004) created a taxonomy of engaged scholarship practice, which includes public scholarship,

participatory research, community partnerships, public information networks, and civic literacy scholarship. This taxonomy was developed to help in clarifying the complexity of engaged scholarship in action, though Barker notes that there is still fluidity among the five approaches. Boyer (1990) suggests that teaching, research, and service must work in unison toward the benefit of not only the academy, but “the world beyond the campus” (p. 75). Faculty must weave the important work of independent research with the practice of good and integrated teaching, including relevant experiences for students to connect theory and practice, and to tie this work in service and collaboration with the communities in which they interact. The Commission on Community-Engaged Scholarship in the Health Professions (2005) characterizes this as scholarship that “involves the faculty member in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community... Community-engaged scholarship can be transdisciplinary and often integrates some combination of multiple forms of scholarship” (p. 12). Collectively, engaged scholarship is redefining interpretations of what it means to pursue the public good, and higher education is confronting the institutional and faculty roles in striving toward it (Amey & Brown, 2005; Hartley, Saltmarsh, & Clayton, 2010).

Service-learning, internships, and volunteerism. As collaborations among higher education institutions and communities proliferate, opportunities for college students, including graduate students, to blend academic learning with real-world experience is also growing (O’Meara & Jaeger, 2006; Seider & Novick, 2012). Jacoby (1996; 2003) defines service-learning as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and

reciprocity are key concepts” (p. 5). Service-learning increased significantly through the early 1990’s and 2000’s (Eyler, 2002; Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010), and the number of students who complete an internship at some point within their college experience has also increased (Eyler, 2009). Student volunteerism and civic participation continues to be promoted on college and university campuses, and the number of students volunteering internationally is also rising (Sherraden, Lough, & Bopp, 2013). The emphasis of this practice has traditionally focused on student learning and the development of citizenship attitudes and behaviors (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Checkoway, 2001; Eyler, 2002), yet its design has characteristically been a response to entreaties for greater engagement from universities and colleges in the amelioration of societal ills (Donovan, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999).

“Service-learning is an educational methodology which combines community service with explicit academic learning objectives, preparation for community work, and deliberate reflection” (Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2001, p. 1). The Kentucky Campus Compact describes this methodology as teaching that uses meaningful service as a way of helping students learn the academic material and understand the real-world relevancy of the discipline while at the same time meeting a real community need (Kentucky Campus Compact, 2017). The combination of service work with direct links to academic material, fueled by time spent in reflection, are the commonly identified tenets of service-learning work (Bringle & Hatcher, 1997). The community is integral to the experience, yet the ways in which students, faculty, and community will interact and where they will focus their work varies.

Experiential education takes students into the community, through internships and apprenticeships, trainings, service-learning and advocacy programming, cooperative education, and/or other workshops (Carver, 1996; Eyler, 2009). These activities link field and work experience to a student's development. Opportunities may or may not have an explicit reflection or an academic component, and may or may not be paid, but are often arranged to align with a student's area of study. Volunteerism, or service, is characteristically a part of service-learning, but as a practice may not necessarily incorporate critical thinking activities or academic learning, nor financial compensation. Morton (1995) differentiates assorted characterizations of service, suggesting activity falls into the community service paradigm of charity, projects, or social change, emphasizing the importance of social change. All efforts along the spectrum of experiential learning assist in helping college students transition from the school environment to the workforce (Eyler, 2009), and become better equipped to contribute to the communities in which they live and work (Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010). Faculty, students, staff and administration at an institution combine these various forms of research and applied learning and service in a multitude of ways. Yet, purposeful employment of community engagement activities toward mutual benefit requires more intentionality, planning, monitoring, and structure (Rosing, 2015; Sandmann, Williams, & Abrams, 2009; Zhang, Zeller, Griffith, Metcalf, Williams, Shea, & Misulis, 2011).

Local community. Community is frequently defined in broad terms, when defined at all. Literature labels *community* as the local community (Sandmann & Plater, 2009; Leiderman et al., 2002) local, regional/state, national, global communities (Driscoll, 2009), community stakeholders (Tumiel-Berhalter et al., 2005), and community

partners (Eyler, 2002; Harkavy & Donovan, 2000; Jacoby, 2003; Sandy & Holland, 2006). This terminology can reflect subtle differences in the nature of the collaboration, though it can also mask the complexities at play within such general idioms. There is a delicate balance between recognizing and naming distinctions among collaborators and the practicality of grouping and generalizing them. Communities are diverse organisms and should not be assumed to be monocultural (Checkoway, 2001; Sandy & Holland, 2006). Cultures and political nuances within each distinctive setting change the nature of collaborative work (Peterson, 2009). As Gelmon and colleagues (2001) put it, “there is no one ‘community’” (p. 83).

Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, & Herremans (2010) contend that scholars generally believe communities can be characterized by either geography (region or space), interaction (social relationships), or identity (sets of beliefs, values, or experiences). These varying paradigms often interact with and influence one another, blurring a clear understanding of which individuals and spaces retain ownership of community, and seldom are clear definitions available. *Community* may also be characterized as *neighborhood*, which shares definitional fluidity. Luter (2016) suggests there are at least six different components to a neighborhood, including (a) the physical or built environment, (b) the people, (c) the organizational network, or the formal and informal organizations and groups formed within the neighborhood (d) the institutional network, consisting of all supportive services such as law enforcement and schools, (e) the neighborhood economy, which refers to the informal and formal ways that residents are able to participate in the exchange of goods and services, and finally (f) the neighborhood proximities and access. These components inform characteristics of local community.

With a lack of consensus on what constitutes community, however, institutions define local community capriciously, though it is rare that community is explicitly defined at all (Bowen et al., 2010; Beere, 2009).

Impact. Impact is also defined in several ways, complicating approaches to measuring it. Community engagement activities are intended to positively impact many stakeholders, including: (a) college students and faculty, (b) the higher education institution and specific departments within it, (c) community partner organizations and their constituents, such as K-12 students, adult learners, or other clients, as well as (d) communities at large. In her analysis of Carnegie Classification applications, Driscoll (2014) notes that while assessment of college student outcomes is deepening, the assessment of community engagement's impact on faculty, the institution itself, and in particular the community is in need of improvement. Stoecker et al. (2010) describe levels of impact within the community, starting with individuals and moving out toward systems impact through the lens of community development. While research has provided a general understanding of these varying levels of impact from prior studies, the processes by which impact is generated, tracked, and communicated within community engagement initiatives is less clear (Rosing, 2015; Holton, Early, Jettner, & Shaw, 2015). The following sections examine the literature from context, to process, to outcomes and ultimately impact.

The Context for Community Engagement

Community engagement does not take place in a vacuum (Eddy, 2010). Manifestations of engagement activity are influenced by a multitude of factors. These include the environment of the institution, its history with the community, the culture and

norms of higher education and of the community, the preferences of key economic, social, and political leaders, as well as the varying beliefs, values, collaboration and communication styles, and orientations to the work of those involved (Fisher et al., 2004; Kecskes, 2006). These interacting elements help shape the prevalence and nature of community engagement in a localized space, and as different elements shift and change, other elements in turn are affected and the landscape shifts (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). This fluctuating foundation must be understood in order to respond to and advance community engagement activity, yet there are common threads that run through the work. Commonalities help bring structure and clarity to an otherwise variable set of conditions and practices and set a framework by which to then organize, track, and assess the impact of activity as well as establish best-practice.

Partnership Characteristics

Campus-community partnerships, which drive community engagement at an institution (Fisher et al., 2004), share many core characteristics. Scholars affirm that campus-community partnerships are built on communication, respect, trust, good leadership, a willingness to commit and to build strong relationships, and centrally, on reciprocity (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Tyler & Haberman, 2002; White-Cooper, Dawkins, Kamin, & Anderson, 2009; Williamson, Young, Murray, Burton, Levin, Massey, & Baldwin, 2016). Campus-community partnerships rely heavily on relational, interactive, and interpersonal ways of being, and are not sustained without the necessary relationship-building (Bosma, Sieving, Ericson, Russ, Cavender, & Bonine, 2010; Clayton et al., 2010; Eddy, 2010; Maurrasse, 2002). Relationships are developed through

projects, courses, and initiatives, generating shared benefit and learning (Holland, 2001; Nichols et al., 2014).

While relationship-building is widely accepted as a foundational element, partnership functioning is also dependent on the ability to navigate contextual and environmental conditions, available resources, assets, and capacities, as well as timing, seasonality, and continuity (Ferman & Hill, 2004; Fogel & Cook, 2006; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). Amey et al. (2007) suggest that context “typically involves internal and external organizational factors, sociopolitical climate, human resource concerns, and timing” (p. 7), which must be navigated within higher education’s increasing culture of austerity (Getto & McCunney, 2015). Other contextual elements relate to the historical traditions of academe, involving in part the transition from positivist epistemological assumptions of distanced objectivist research (Boser, 2006) to a more applied, intentional connection of theory to practice (Mayfield, 2001; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005).

For the scholars leading this transition, research and resulting literature began to turn from doing work *on* or *for* a community toward doing work *with* the community (Bucher, 2012; Jacoby, 2003; Sandmann et al., 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Fisher et al. (2004) position these historical tensions within the question of whether a university’s central purpose is to serve as “an ivory tower removed from local parochialism or a learning experience engaged directly with the world” (p. 17). Context thus involves navigating the higher education and community milieus, which often carry different sets of expectations and incentives that drive behavior (Ferman & Hill, 2004; Nichols et al., 2015).

A key characteristic of partnerships is this negotiation of differing needs. Norris-Tirrell et al. (2010), in their model describing campus-community partnerships for revitalization of metropolitan neighborhoods, portray the university setting as being driven by a philosophical core. This core, or what might also be described as traditional norms of academe, can hinder partnership processes due to three main components: (a) A particular field's content-based knowledge and theory building, (b) pedagogical theories, and (c) discipline-based norms. "The result of these three core components is often a discipline-based, silo mentality that maintains status quo values, reinforced through (institutions of higher education) structures, such as departments and colleges" (p. 176). Amid these norms, campus-community partnerships must contend with the unique characteristics of the higher education institution, which include its hierarchical, formal, and insular nature (Fisher et al., 2008; Strier, 2014). Due to the inherent tension between formality and hierarchy and the often democratic and collaborative work of partnering, tensions arise. Harkavy and Hartley (2012) note that at the University of Pennsylvania, as well as at other research universities, the tendency is toward fragmentation rather than collaboration. This poses challenges to getting partnership efforts off the ground and sustaining them for a meaningful period of time. Miller, Deacon, and Fitzgerald (2015) suggest that universities claim to value collaboration, but do not support it or reward it. "Related processes need to be altered in order to render these more collaboration friendly in terms of respecting community processes and not giving primacy to the university process" (p. 104).

Influenced by the pulse of this central core, incentives, roles, rewards, and opportunities for involved stakeholders in turn either stimulate or hinder subsequent

activity (Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010). These elements influence the environment and iterative processes, including forming a leadership vision, responding to external demands and opportunities, and developing an internal critical mass. Institutionalization of sustained engagement occurs when “organizational structures are established to support local engagement, and when a critical mass of colleagues embrace the value of this work” (Harkavy & Hartley, 2012, p. 17). If the tensions among forces are strong enough, Norris-Tirrell et al. argue, change may occur. Resources and structure are needed, such as a dedicated community engagement office, to see this increased activity and change (Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013). Boundary spanners, or those who serve as a bridge between academic and community stakeholders, are also needed. Boundary spanners “have the courage and the interest to treat both groups as of value and as having something to contribute to the other” (Bartunek, 2007, p. 1329), and serve a role in convening various stakeholders and imaging new ways of solving messy, complicated problems (Ramaley, 2014).

Summarizing characteristics. Community engagement is reliant on strong relationships and reciprocal practices. The historical and current context of academe affects those relationships and actions within it, and as such, stakeholders must be cognizant of driving structures, incentives, and expectations. Partnerships must navigate structural factors, as well as underlying assumptions, tensions, habits and norms at play that collectively influence the ability to conduct and benefit from collaborative efforts. What takes place within these partnerships is discussed next, as partnership processes and dynamics are connected to the outcomes these partnerships are able to generate (Schulz, Israel, & Lanz, 2003).

Partnership Processes

Processes fuel activities such as service-learning, community engaged research, and work in community-based initiatives. Different types of partnerships emphasize different collaborators and clients (e.g. faculty, practitioner-experts; K-12 students, adults in continuing education classes), anticipated outcomes (e.g. student learning, published research, professional development), and motivating purposes (e.g. health education, community empowerment). Partnership models across the literature in turn emphasize different aspects of process depending on these variations, as well as how stakeholders approach the work. Models may highlight relational ways of being (e.g. Bringle & Hatcher, 2002), environmental and contextual conditions (e.g. McNall, Reed, Brown, & Allen, 2009; Schulz et al., 2003), philosophical and structural components (Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010), equity-generating processes (e.g. Bess et al., 2016; Officer et al., 2013), or power-responsive practices (Sandmann, Kliewer, Kim, & Omerikwa, 2010; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). Elements of partnership processes illustrate how outcomes are generated and provide context for the development of institutional procedures to track and assess engagement.

A central element to partnerships in practice is relational, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways of being (Fogel & Cook, 2006; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). This involves intentional, concerted efforts to build and maintain high levels of trust among partners (White-Cooper, Dawkins, Kamin, & Anderson, 2009). Bringle and Hatcher (2002) view campus-community partnerships as a series of interpersonal interactions, and mutuality and reciprocity contribute to the development of high functioning relationships. The authors suggest it is helpful to think about partnerships as one would think about

romantic or friendly relationships, both in the development of bonds and in ongoing processes to sustain them. Bringle and Hatcher describe phases of relationships, including initiation, development, maintenance, and dissolution, as well as dynamics within relationships, such as the understanding and responsiveness to differences in power and the types of exchanges that may take place. The authors propose that partnerships must be equitable and fair, but do not have to be exactly equal in all respects to be worthwhile to each stakeholder. Maurrasse (2002) echoes the importance of relationships in campus-community partnerships, stressing the input of time. Particularly if an institution has a negative rapport or has been perceived to have failed the community in the past, “the relationship could take several years to develop any genuine mutual trust. It is for this reason that evaluation of these partnerships should pay significant attention to process” (p. 135). If care is not taken to consider the conditions present within partnership work for all stakeholders, the success of the collaboration is at risk (Peterson, 2009).

Beyond relational components, there are environmental and contextual factors that influence partnership processes. These factors include previous collaboration, the community’s response to identified problems, geographic or cultural diversity, as well as structural factors such as how membership and formalization of processes are managed (McNall et al., 2009). Important within processes is shared leadership, two-way and open communication, cooperative development of goals and a shared vision, participatory decision-making processes that are flexible and build consensus, and recognition and resolution of conflicts (Barnes, Altimare, Farrell, Brown, Burnett, Gamble, & Davis, 2009; Sargent & Waters, 2004). Alongside these behaviors, McNall et al. and Schulz et

al. (2003) suggest that partners negotiate the sharing of power, influence, and resources, as well as evaluating task goals and process objectives and ensuring organized meetings. Yarnall, Tennant, and Stites (2015), evaluating workforce education partnerships, list other environmental factors central to assessment, such as the labor market context, as well as partnership quality and instructional quality.

Processes to support community engagement also include philosophical and structural components, such as the norms of academe and physical spaces dedicated to supporting partnerships (Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010). Welch and Saltmarsh (2013) surveyed the institutional infrastructure of over 100 successful applications for the Carnegie Classification 2010 cycle to explore organizing structures. The primary focus was on what organizational and facilitation elements within institutions of higher education contribute to the increased pervasiveness of civic and community engagement. Inputs and processes ranged from having a physical office and staff, adequate office space, and reporting structures, to student leadership practices, faculty fellowships, and collaborative grant proposals. Welch and Saltmarsh collected 66 characteristics of these infrastructure centers and organized them into categories including institutional architecture/policy, center infrastructure, center operations, center programming for faculty, center programming for students, and center programming for community partners. The authors found that structure does promote practice, and formal leadership is needed to promote the work.

While appropriate structures and physical spaces are needed operationally to facilitate effective processes, other components focus on ways of being that generate equitable practices within partnership settings. Officer et al. (2013) focus on an

institution's potential role in local education improvement, and present ways this may be done to facilitate sustained commitments to educational achievement. Inputs include reciprocity, collaboration, and effective communication, as well as an understanding of the partnership and each stakeholder's capacity and limitations. In addition, cultural awareness and practices that are democratic, egalitarian, transparent, and collegial are all critical to a high-functioning relationship. As these elements interact, Officer et al. share five key practices that enhance conditions for student success, drawing from Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton's (2010) work. These include: collaborative leadership, instructional guidance, professional capacity, learning climate, and authentic parent/community engagement. These processes focus on a school setting, though the emphasis on equity is transferable. Bess et al. (2016) for example, in their book on community-based participatory research, link the processes involved in building respect, humility, and egalitarian practices to the realization of outcomes that may arise from those processes.

Impact is associated with both ways of being as well as what outcomes can be observed from those processes. Additionally, partnerships typically have a specific setting of focus, such as a middle school or a health clinic, which requires content expertise as well as an awareness of the needs of that population or site. This specificity affects the ability to consistently and accurately track activity by determinations of impact, particularly over extended periods of time (Nichols et al., 2015). For example, Bosma et al. (2010) discuss a school-based environment similar to that of Officer et al. (2013), and present essential considerations for partnerships involved in school-based service-learning programs. The authors highlight both the individuality of school-based

service-learning as well as more general principles of effective process that would apply in any number of contexts. Within their research, Bosma et al. include keys to partnership success, adding insight into partnership characteristics that drive fruitful collaborations. The ten characteristics are: (a) communication, (b) shared decision making, (c) shared resources, (d) expertise and credibility, (e) sufficient time to develop and maintain relationships, (f) champions and patron saints, (g) being present, (h) flexibility, (i) a shared youth development orientation, and (j) recognition of other partners' priorities. These 'keys to success' help inform not only school-based literature, but equity-generating practices and processes more broadly.

The balance of power and respect for others throughout the collaboration also matters within process. Suarez-Balcazar et al.'s (2005) interactive model of collaboration for campus-community partnerships illustrates elements of this component. Six key partnership characteristics are identified, including:

1. Developing trust and mutual respect
2. Establishing adequate communication
3. Respecting human diversity
4. Establishing a culture of learning
5. Respecting the culture of the setting and the community
6. Developing an action agenda

In order to delve into these processes, however, the partnership must first negotiate how to gain entry into the community, potential challenges and threats, conflicts of interest, power and resource inequality, time commitments, and potential budget cuts or termination of funding that may impact the work. The model emphasizes an awareness

of power at the partnership's beginning. A perpetuation of unequal power dynamics may lead to a deficit-based approach, ultimately limiting the potential for desired social change (Peterson, 2009). Marullo and Edwards (2000) ask, "Do educational institutions operate their community partnership programs in accord with social justice principles?" (p. 908). For an institution to accurately address this question, it must attend to not only partnership outputs or outcomes, but the processes by which those outcomes are generated.

Summarizing process. Partnership processes are driven by interactive, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial practices. Across different types of partnerships, ways of being serve to sustain and advance the work, leading toward desired outcomes. These ways of being include maintaining solid relationships, navigating and attending to environmental and contextual conditions, as well as philosophical and structural components, and pursuing equity-generating and power-responsive practices. By attending to these process elements, partnerships are more likely to generate desired outcomes (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005).

Partnership Outcomes

Momentum has been building over the last several decades toward accountability in education, "which has emphasized outcomes rather than inputs and processes, and has opened the doors for entrepreneurs and others to try different approaches for accomplishing these improved outcomes" (Smith & Petersen, 2011, p. 25). Partnerships are one such approach in higher education (Eddy, 2010). According to Amey et al. (2007), in order for partnership processes to move toward desired effects, a framework is needed that questions the outcomes, benefits, and costs to a partnership. Within the body

of literature on campus-community partnerships, partnership characteristics and processes are well-established, while the outcomes and impacts they produce are less understood (Granner & Sharpe, 2004; Grobe, 1990; Nichols et al., 2015; Noonan, Erickson, McCall, Frey, & Zheng, 2014). “Highlighting elements of educational collaborations is a way of evaluating their effectiveness and efficiency” (Amey et al., 2007, p. 8-9), and informs effective process, yet it does not fully address the question of what observed outcomes result from processes. What is needed in addition to assessment of process-effectiveness is an assessment of process-outcomes within a local community setting (Driscoll, 2014; Rosing, 2015).

What are outcomes? To understand outcomes within community engagement assessment, the distinction between outputs and outcomes must first be made (Hart & Northmore, 2010). For the purposes of this study, outputs can be thought of as “the plans, projects, and other tangible items produced directly by the collaborative effort...and outcomes are the effects of the collaborative process and its outputs on changing social and environmental conditions” (Mandarano, 2008, p. 457). Yet how successful process translates to outcomes over time is less clear. For instance, Coburn and Penuel (2016) ask of research-practice partnerships, “How does the design of partnership, or particular strategies they use, matter for the process and outcomes?” (p. 48). Behn (2003) draws from public management literature to put it another way, stating: “How are the various inputs interacting to produce the outputs? What is the organizational black box actually doing to the inputs to convert them into the outputs? What is the societal black box actually doing to the outputs to convert them into the outcomes?” (p. 592). Examining these linkages requires attention to both process and

outcomes, and is critical to realizing a strong accountability system (Nichols et al., 2014; Rosing, 2015). Sustaining a collaboration “requires ongoing attention to and deliberation about collaborative process and outcomes. It is clear that emphasizing collaborative process at the expense of outcomes, and vice versa, undermines collaborative efficacy and sustainability” (Nichols et al., 2014, p. 85).

The differentiation of process and outcomes can also be difficult. In their study on community partner perspectives within campus-community partnerships, Ferman and Hill (2004) found that while respondents “were all cautiously optimistic about the potential of higher-education-community research partnerships, several wondered just how effective they are in strengthening long-term organizational capacity and in supporting measurable improvements in community development” (p. 254). This type of questioning may result from a confusion of process and outcomes, a lack of evaluation to determine project or program outcomes, or a lack of communication of what outputs and outcomes resulted from the work. Tracking the number of stakeholders or organizations involved in a partnership, for instance, is a measure of success but it is a measured output and not a measured outcome (Hart & Northmore, 2011).

Evaluating a partnership intervention without concurrent investigations into other impacts, particularly implicit or indirect impacts within the community, leaves critical information overlooked. Vernon and Ward (1999) noticed an absence of participation by members of the community in discussions regarding the impact of their work in that community, illustrating that effective evaluation of engagement must include those within the community to understand impact more accurately. Ferman and Hill (2004) assert that in an increasingly placeless world, the place-based nature of both campuses

and communities gives them a heightened sense of purpose to improve their shared space. Research is needed to understand how this is realized and present assessment practices that support accountability to that end. The next section examines outcomes described in the literature, as they help shape institutional assessment processes.

How are outcomes described in the literature? To understand the production of outputs and outcomes throughout community engagement literature, it is useful to start with how evaluation is organized generally. Rubin (2000) identified six types of analytical writing about campus-community partnerships:

1. Self-study accounts by participants in partnerships
2. Local evaluations of partnerships
3. Proposals and discussions of methods for evaluation
4. Collections and comparative analyses of case studies
5. Creation of permanent data systems about multisite programs
6. National evaluations of programs that support local partnerships

While this literature helps broaden understanding of what takes place in campus-community partnerships, research is often relegated to one partnership, one case, or one course as a focus of a study or descriptive article (Hart & Northmore, 2010). The examination of collaborative efforts as they link together to create substantive improvements within a local geographical area is therefore difficult to weave into a coherent picture given how piecemeal insights can be (Holland, 2009). Yet, literature is full of conceptualizations that help create a vision by which these individual efforts can collectively be organized.

Nichols and colleagues (2014) advise that a productive collaboration “will ultimately require the joint articulation of a process through which people’s distinct contributions can be maximized and collaborative products or outcomes mobilized” (p. 77). Their vision includes the need for a framework that facilitates meaningful participation by individuals who wish to contribute, even as both the terms of the partnership and the goals under which they operate evolve. The authors also argue that partnerships that “fail to actualize reciprocity as a central pillar of collaboration are not sustained” (p. 79). Nichols et al. begin to frame a pathway for the systematic ways in which individual contributions move into products and outcomes and ultimately social change. The partnership process is always dependent on individual-level operations, though “individual faculty and staff can leverage their interactions on the front line more effectively when they understand better the systematic impact of the interactions involved in partnerships” (Eddy, 2010, p. 15). This harkens back to the key process element of creating a shared vision (e.g. McNall et al., 2009; Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010).

Literature indicates that individual-level efforts are the first in a chain of levels of accountability, which arc toward a more comprehensive understanding of how individual processes accumulate and conceivably create community-level change. First, there are individual-level experiences, often captured through assessments of student learning or activity outputs. There are then program- or partnership-level assessments, directed toward the effectiveness of a single collaboration (Furco & Miller, 2009). This may move into a more coordinated series of programs and partnerships, and when embedded as part of the institution’s culture is considered institutionalization (Hartley & Harkavy, 2012). As institutionalization grows, the ability to track indicators has more structural

and institutional support, which can lead to benchmarking and capacity-building activities (Furco & Miller, 2009). These capacity-building activities lay groundwork to trace collaborative impacts further away from the original point of collaboration, or productive interaction, to ultimately track social or community-level change (Nichols et al., 2015). Though not a linear or step-by-step progression, these stages as observed in the literature are examined next.

Community engagement research predominantly provides insight on student- or individual-level outcomes to demonstrate impact from a partnership. Elder, Seligsohn, and Hofrenning (2007), for example, document the impact of an experiential learning course on civic engagement, tracking the experience of political involvement on college student engagement and political efficacy. Cook-Sather (2010) traced efforts to increase student capacity and accountability in the classroom, and report how students and teachers could collaborate to enhance learning outcomes and student autonomy. Steinberg, Hatcher, and Bringle (2011) focus on the development of “civic-mindedness” in civic engagement programs and teaching in higher education. These three examples illustrate how partnerships can positively impact individual learners, though examples are plenty (e.g. Miller, Deacon, & Fitzgerald, 2015; Pike, Bringle, & Hatcher, 2014; Sanders & Harvey, 2000).

Singular programs, such as a service-learning course, may be combined in program- or partnership-level efforts. Holland (2001) created a model for assessing service-learning and community-university partnerships, providing six examples of variables to be measured in a partnership and examples of indicators that can be used to do so. The framework for this model centers around the goal (what do we want to

know?), the variable (what will we look for?), the indicator (what will be measured?), and the method (how will it be measured?) (p. 55). Amey et al. (2007) present a similar model of assessing a partnership, and present questions to measure the success of the partnership: “What are the outcomes, benefits, and costs of the partnership? What kinds of assessment and benchmarking data about the partnership are gathered? Are goals and objectives revised appropriately? Do the data feed back into the partnership process?” (p. 9). These questions help create a link between what a partnership ultimately hopes to accomplish, and the specific ways in which they will assess those goals.

Holland (2001) also presents outcomes termed “variables of interest”. They include the capacity to fulfill the mission, economic impacts, perception of mutuality and reciprocity, awareness of potential, sustainability of partnership, and satisfaction. Holland suggests that this model is unique in its value placed on community partner perspectives, and it highlights the community partner as a point of direct attention in both process and assessment. However, the model does not convey how the community partner, as a nonprofit or other organizational entity, directly links to the community and/or community residents. Holland concedes that “given limitations of organizational time and resources, an investment in service-learning must be measured for its impact and effectiveness in serving the educational mission of the institution” (p. 53). She goes on to suggest that multiple actors should be considered in the evaluation, not just college student learners, yet other actors, such as community partners or residents, are not the primary focus. The evaluation design, therefore, is a relatively closed loop among organizational contributors within the partnership, and the question of how the success of

this loop of activity translates into outcomes within a local community is not fully addressed.

Officer et al.'s (2013) work on campus-community partnerships for community schools adds to conceptualizations of outputs to outcomes. Outputs include: (a) the development of a transformative relationship established between the university, the school, and the community, (b) the partnership's ability to sustain one of the nation's most comprehensive community schools for more than a decade, and (c) the assistance in creating a school climate that is welcoming to parents and families, community, and is conducive to learning. Outcomes cited by Officer et al. included a greater value for education now permeating the school neighborhoods, and second, the designation of Indianapolis near Westside being considered a great place to work and live due to contributions made by the partnership. These outcomes move toward characterizations of community-level impact that can be traced back to specific efforts made by a collaboration over time through highly integrated practice.

Highly integrated practice commonly stems from extensive institutional support. Vernon and Ward (1999) regard the "engaged campus" as a place that has relatively few boundaries or lines of distinction between campus and community, or between knowledge and practice. The interactions are so intertwined and the public purpose so evident that the distinctions are meaningless. "Institutionalization occurs," according to Harkavy and Hartley (2012), "when organizational structures are established to support local engagement, and when a critical mass of colleagues embrace the value of this work" (p. 17). Furco and Miller (2009) locate that critical mass as colleges and universities that have the following components: (a) A philosophy and mission that emphasizes

engagement, (b) genuine faculty involvement and support for engaged research or teaching, or both, (c) a broad range of opportunities for students to access and involve themselves in high-quality engagement experiences, (d) an institutional infrastructure that supports engagement practice, and (e) mutually beneficial, sustained partnerships with community partners (p. 47). Institutionalization is cited as a goal of engagement processes (e.g. McNall et al., 2009; Schulz et al., 2003), yet reviewing an institutionally engaged campus as put forth by Furco and Miller still leaves the question of how the five elements directly translate into improved outcomes within the community.

Another example of the anticipated but unarticulated link between community engagement activity and community-level outcomes is the Schulz et al. (2003) conceptual framework for measuring effectiveness. This framework delineates intermediate measures and outcome measures of partnership effectiveness. Intermediate measures of effectiveness are fivefold: (a) Perceived effectiveness of the group in achieving its goals, (b) perceived personal, organizational, and community benefits of participation, (c) extent of member involvement, (d) shared ownership and cohesiveness/commitment to collaborative efforts, and (e) group and community empowerment (as measured by) future expectations of effectiveness. Outcome measures are twofold: (a) achievement of program and policy objectives and (b) institutionalization of programs and/or partnerships. While this framework's specificity builds toward more empirical studies (e.g. McNall et al., 2009), it still does not connect the question of how the enhanced structural support and institutionalization of activities actually creates the intended change. Furthermore, identifying *perceived benefits* in collaboration is useful in

measuring partner views, but ultimately fails to sufficiently capture the elements of quality and impact Enos and Morton (2003) call for in future studies.

Institutionalization is important, however, as it increases the structure and capacity to assist in the collection and honing of specific indicators of improvement, which can be used toward benchmarking. Supovitz, Foley, and Mishook (2012) define indicators as “systematically collected data on an activity or condition that is related to a subsequent and valued outcome, as well as both the processes surrounding the investigation of those data and the associated responses” (p. 6). Leading indicators, according to Supovitz et al., are antecedents to important events, conditions or activities that can be changed by action, catalyzers of productive inquiry, and indicators that are able to lead to the identification of more relevant and precise indicators. The question of how data are intended to be used is essential to keep at the forefront of assessment. Furco and Miller (2009) distinguish benchmarking from the simple practice of tracking indicators, stating that benchmarking is “distinguished from the checklist and indicators approaches in that it calls for more formalized assessment procedures, typically requires presentation of more empirical data, and introduces the notion of performance expectations that can be established through internal or external comparisons” (p. 49). Benchmarking is a more systematic way to utilize the institutionalization of partnership processes by examining the production of outcomes on a consistent, ongoing basis. Benchmarking can also be used to inform practice and adjust partnership work.

The need to address how the loop of institutionalized partnership activity transforms into discernable change within a community setting remains. Nichols et al. (2015) address the question of the closed loop in their research on social change through

community-campus collaboration. They state that the “process–outcomes relation operates like a feedback loop: A productive collaborative process leads to and is sustained by the generation of collaborative outcomes” (p. 18). The authors suggest that assessing impact is even more difficult than assessing outcomes, as it is an amorphous concept both in theory and use. Yet, by tracing collaborative impacts as far away from the original interaction as possible, researchers can begin to capture social change occurring. Nichols et al. suggest that social change is stimulated by “processes of interaction that directly and indirectly connect people across space and time” (p. 30), best captured by following the collaboration temporally and spatially, or through system levels (i.e. among social, institutional, political, and economic levels). This type of data tracking is time-consuming and involves many evaluation components. Again, however, because partnerships are based on processes, or actions, “there is a powerful need to determine the extent to which they are productive vehicles for community capacity building and development and to allocate future resources accordingly” (Rubin, 2000, p. 228). The next section explores how institutions attempt to do so.

Summarizing outcomes. Literature on partnership outcomes spans multiple levels. Partnerships are commonly formed to benefit individuals (i.e. student learning or receiving health services), but characterizations of community engagement impact move out across multiple domains. Beyond benefit at the individual-level, engagement fuels programs and partnerships and can enable more complex initiatives. A culture of engagement, or institutionalization, is often cited as a desired outcome as activity grows. Institutionalization increases coordination and capacity across a campus, leading the use of indicators toward benchmarking and capacity-building, both within the institution and

the community. Yet, the ways in which this integrated structure and proliferation of activity translates into discernable change in a community must also be addressed.

Institutional Processes to Determine Impact of Community Engagement

In 2001, Holland maintained that “systematic assessment is key to quality and sustainability, but few campuses have yet developed comprehensive models” (p. 25). There are many studies that document the purpose, or goals, of partnerships and best practices for effectiveness, but few systematically or empirically evaluate the impacts of these interventions on outcomes (Caron, Ulrich-Schad, & Lafferty, 2015; Granner & Sharpe, 2004; McNall et al., 2009). The focus of research on university-community collaborations “has been on assessing learning and to a lesser degree institutional and organizational change...As difficult as these dimensions are to measure and evaluate, determining community impact and the quality of partnerships is even more elusive” (Enos & Morton, 2003, p. 38). Approaching two decades later, this is still a challenge for colleges and universities (Hart & Northmore, 2010; Rosing, 2015). Research is needed to better understand how a proliferation of community engagement activity is identified, tracked, and reported, the degree to which such reporting is collected systematically and/or used to coordinate engagement activity. Research is also needed regarding how such tracking captures outputs, outcomes, and ultimately impact in the local community.

Examining institutional assessment processes across the literature is a needed step toward this end. “There is some consensus that higher education institutions should have a positive impact on their neighboring communities, but the absence of emphasis on such impacts, as opposed to simply documenting community-engagement activities, is striking” (Stoecker et al., 2010, p. 179). Rosing (2015) suggests that the culture of

tracking community engagement is embedded in the larger context of higher education, including competition for enrollment, research funding, faculty hires, and fundraising, and as such, has been linked primarily to marketing strategies and building an institutional narrative. Rosing goes on to contend that institutions have only recently begun to take seriously the documenting and tracking process as they relate to community impact, but continue to lack a critical analysis of the historical and current behaviors that influence campus-community relationships. Instead, institutions err on the side of simply conveying the perceived positive impacts while ignoring intended or unintended negative consequences as well as the concerns of the community (Rosing, 2015; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

This perspective introduces the question as to what a genuine higher education community engagement tracking process looks like... (a question) that needs to be pursued rigorously if we are to be honest about the role of the academy in communities and especially if the former is making institutional claims of contributing to social justice or positive social change (Rosing, 2015, p. 151).

The next section explores available literature on university-wide institutional processes to determine the impact of community engagement in accordance with this call for transparency and integrity in assessment practice.

Current State of Institutional Assessment

Franklin and Franklin (2010) ask, “How might the human capital and innovation engines of universities be focused on the needs of economic regions in partnership with the citizens of those places to benefit communities and advance scholarship? What more

can be accomplished for both regions and academe through intentional, institutional engagement?” (p. 76). In focusing regionally, Fitzgerald et al. (2016) assert that attention must be paid to outcomes that involve “state priorities for workforce development, economic development, international business, environmental quality, health care, transportation infrastructure, and other needs” (p. 246). Opportunities for community engaged scholarship are identified by linking external and environmental needs with the advancement of scholarship in academe. In accordance with Rosing’s (2015) assertion that there must be intentionality, and consequently structure, behind a real focus on these needs, what institutional strategies exist to catalog, track, and assess campus-community progress toward these ends?

Getto and McCunney (2015) suggest that colleges and universities seeking to create an institution-wide, comprehensive strategy are grappling with a need for both short-term, more easily defined impacts, and longer-term, more in-depth assessments. Institutions must determine what data they will use in their community engagement assessment strategy, how they will collect and track that information, and what they will do with it (Rosing, 2015). Additionally, given the relational nature of engagement work, institutions must identify if and how to include community members, representatives, and/or community organizations throughout the process, though Hart and Northmore (2010) note that “rigorously and comprehensively incorporating community perspectives in audit and benchmarking is almost entirely absent across the sector” (p. 21). These questions are negotiated institution-by-institution without a clear, guiding framework, typology, or some other common assessment structure (Hart & Northmore, 2011; Nichols et al., 2015; UNC, 2015).

The University of North Carolina (UNC) Office of International, Community, and Economic Engagement's 2015 Engagement Report states that "there is no agreement on how to define, measure or improve university engagement" (p. 5). According to Watson-Thompson (2015), "there are often not departmental or more broad university models for how to evaluate community-engaged research activities to assess not only the scholarly, but as important, the public impact" (p. 15). Without a clear record of best-practice in community engagement assessment, institutions must tackle the challenge as UNC has, by pressing on while consensus on community engagement assessment develops. Rosing (2015) describes this struggle toward holistic, institution-wide assessment at DePaul University, Getto and McCunney (2015) at East Carolina University, Hart and Northmore (2010) at the University of Brighton in the United Kingdom, Franz, Childers, and Sanderlin (2012) at Virginia Tech, Holton, Early, Jettner, and Shaw (2015) at Virginia Commonwealth University. Harkavy and Hartley (2012) describe the process of garnering institution-wide commitments, or institutionalization of work toward the public good, at the University of Pennsylvania. These and many other additions to the literature collectively form an emerging narrative regarding institutional best-practices for an engaged campus, which Holland and Gelmon (1998) note has been largely built on a trial-and-error basis.

Strategies for Institutional Assessment

With no clear consensus on assessment processes or guidelines for holistic tracking, institutions must negotiate what information to collect, how to collect and monitor it, what they will do with it, and who they will involve in the process. Rosing (2015) simply states: "What to include? How and why to include it?" (p. 156). Young

(1998) poses three questions central to conducting good assessment: What do you want to assess? How will you assess it? What purpose will it serve? In addition to these central questions captured by Rosing and Young, *who* is determining what information to collect is also critical (Holland, 2001; Rosing, 2015; Watson-Thompson, 2015). Negotiations over what constitutes impact and how it will be evaluated must be shared among university and community stakeholders in order to manifest a reciprocal, transparent, and meaningful accountability practices (Vernon & Ward, 1999). “Campus members should commit to making transparent the impacts of their own research and of university practices more broadly. This calls for a blunt assessment of the ways in which academic institutions affect communities” (Dempsey, 2010, p. 383). Bringing these pieces of assessment together, Holland, Gelmon, Green, Greene-Morton, and Stanton (2003) suggest the following as key factors that contribute to successful evaluation of community-university partnerships:

1. Concrete frameworks to guide the evaluation (What do you want to know? What evidence do you need to know it? What will you measure/observe? What methods will you use to gather the evidence and from what sources?)
2. Frameworks that build upon accepted principles for partnerships
3. Use of valid and tested methodologies, with appropriate degree of rigor for community-based applications
4. Responsive to all constituents -- the community, the institution, the faculty, the students, and the partnership itself

5. Address key questions of impact of the university's work on the community organization, AND of the community's work on the university, students and faculty (p. 5).

In accordance with these areas of data collection, (a) what information institutions seek, (b) how that information is identified and tracked, (c) how it is used, and (d) who is involved in the decision-making processes are discussed next. These organize institutional assessment processes across the literature base and align with Holland et al.'s key factors.

Information institutions seek. Institutions involved in evaluating their community engagement, particularly those institutionalizing engagement across campus or campuses, customarily apply for the Carnegie Classification. The Carnegie Foundation awarded the Community Engagement Classification to 240 U.S. colleges and universities in 2015, 83 for the first time and 157 as reclassifications. In all, 361 institutions currently have the Community Classification (NERCHE, 2017). “The classification... affirms that an institution has institutionalized community engagement in its identity, culture, and commitments (and) affirms that the practices of CE are aligned with the institution’s identity and form an integral component of the institutional culture” (Driscoll, 2014, p. 3). The Carnegie Classification is a good starting point to identify what information institutions use to demonstrate community engagement impacts. The application is intended to create a coherent picture of an institution’s engagement culture, as well as stimulate data from institutions that affirms and documents the diversity and scope of approaches to community engagement. The application also encourages inquiry and learning in the process of documentation, provides utility to the institution through

tools and documentation, and promotes a documentation process “that is practical and makes use of existing data” (Driscoll, 2014, p. 4). The classification has helped solidify the importance of assessment and possible uses of data at the institutional level (Furco & Miller, 2009).

The application consists of two main sections. The Foundational Indicators, such as institutional identity, culture, commitment, and practice through a variety of activities and artifacts, and the second, Categories of Community Engagement, which may be centered on curricular engagement or outreach and partnerships, or both. This broad outline allows an institution to create its own narrative, review its commitment to engagement and actions to honor it, and to examine current processes to identify areas of improvement (Driscoll, 2014). Challenges that appear consistently across applications include assessing community perceptions of institutional engagement as well as assessment of engagement at the institutional level (Driscoll, 2009; 2014).

In terms of information campuses are providing, institutional identity asks for information related to mission, formal recognition through awards and celebrations, systemic assessment of community perceptions, and whether or not the institution aggregates community engagement data. It also solicits marketing materials, executive leadership, coordinating infrastructure, budgetary allocations, internal and external funding as well as fundraising efforts, and whether the institution invests its financial resources in the community for community engagement and development (Carnegie, 2017). The application also asks for systematic, campus-wide tracking or documentation mechanisms, if and how those data are used, as well as whether or not there are systematic efforts to measure impact. Impact is differentiated in the question by

stakeholder (i.e. students, faculty, community, institution) and it is up to the campus to include any relevant impact data or exclude any areas that are not addressed in their current strategy. Driscoll's (2014) findings reflect the discrepancy in accounts of impact, noting a high degree of student impact data and a much lower level of community impact data across applications. Other areas of data collection include whether or not community engagement is an explicit part of the institution's strategic plan, whether the community has a voice in institutional planning, if professional development is provided to faculty, if promotion and tenure reward community-engaged methods and approaches, and/or if hiring practices reflect intentionality in recruiting engaged scholars, as well as related questions and requests for examples and documentation (Carnegie, 2017).

In the Categories of Engagement section, Curricular Engagement has five main questions with opportunities to expound and provide examples and documentation. Questions ask whether the institution has a definition, standard components, and a process for identifying service-learning courses, if there are institutional learning outcomes for student's curricular engagement with community, and if there are departmental or disciplinary learning outcomes for students. It also asks if community engagement is integrated into student research, leadership, internships/co-ops, or study abroad, and seeks examples of faculty scholarship (Carnegie, 2017). The Outreach and Partnerships section seeks to identify what outreach programs are available for the community (i.e. learning centers, evaluation services, professional development), as well as what institutional resources are provided, such as co-curricular student service or work/study, cultural or athletic offerings, or access to the library, among others. The application then requests information on representative partnerships, an opportunity to

illustrate the institutional narrative regarding the depth and breadth of engagement. Institutions are also asked about reciprocity, sharing findings and other mechanisms for ensuring mutual benefit, as well as examples of faculty scholarship (Carnegie, 2017). Campuses can then provide additional information should they choose to. The Carnegie Classification provides a common coordinating point for engagement across institutions of all sizes, types, and community settings. The delineation of information collected serves as an anchor point for what information is currently valued in determinations of institutional community engagement.

Additional sources assist institutions in coordinating and tracking community engagement. These include Campus Compact, CUMU, the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, and accrediting bodies, such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Campus Compact and CUMU provide coordination, networking, resources, and other support toward institutional practice and assessment. Accrediting bodies represent another reporting system, similar to Carnegie in its facilitation of self-reporting, albeit with peer and agency review. Accreditation is unique, however, in its implications for institutional status to receive state and federal funding. In their research on how regional accreditation standards apply to community engagement in higher education across the U.S., Paton, Fitzgerald, Green, Raymond, and Borchardt (2014) state that "the federal government has tightened the nexus between regional accreditation, institutional performance, and public accountability" (p. 41). Each accrediting agency shares standards for systematic, continuous improvement processes, which include the following six elements: "establishment of mission and goals, planning, expected academic and

administrative outcomes, data collection, assessment of outcomes, evaluation of assessment findings, resource allocation in support of stated mission and goals, and continuous improvement in institutional performance” (p. 46). As part of the accreditation process, institutions must account for their community engagement strategies in accordance with continuous improvement. For example, within SACSCOC, institutions must describe responsiveness to the following within the Institutional Effectiveness domain, or question 3.3.1.5: “The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in community/public service within its mission, if appropriate” (SACSCOC, 2012, p. 27). The ability to address this question and demonstrate continuous improvement requires some institutional process, and Paton et al. suggest both accreditation and Carnegie classifications similarly help institutions define and operationalize goals.

Aside from more formal designations, institutions also track activities across possible stakeholders to determine various impacts and perceptions of the interactions across participating groups (e.g. how students feel about their community-based internship site). This may be aggregated in some way at the institutional level, but typically partnerships conduct their own evaluation practices using various methods depending on the type of partnership or activity (Rubin, 2000). Bringle, Clayton, and Price (2009) developed a framework to help differentiate partnership stakeholders and how they are affected by civic engagement, starting with the dyadic relationships they engage in and building more complex or nuanced relationships from there. These constituencies include Students, Organizations in the community, Faculty, Administrators

on campus, and Residents in the community (which may vary by client, site, population, etc.), termed the SOFAR Framework. In determining the impact community engagement may have, each of these constituencies is of interest to an institution to varying degrees at varying times, but the framework provides an organizing structure to track impact across relevant groups. Ultimately, the information institutions choose to collect generally ties back to their mission and institutional priorities (Furco & Miller, 2009).

How information is identified, tracked, and reported. How to identify, track, and report information must also be determined. There are numerous options in assessment processes for community engagement (Franz et al., 2012), which requires decision-making by the central coordinating office at the institution. There are many different types of assessments being done on individual projects, partnerships, courses, and initiatives, all conducted at the program-level and representative of the unique nature of that activity or effort. The institution must then identify if and how to track these individual efforts, monitor their progress, and examine how the individual engagement pieces translate into an institutional narrative at work in the local community.

Many different frameworks provide insight into assessment of individual-, program-, or course-level engagement activities. Assessments of these activities may include surveys, interviews, journaling, observations, focus groups, case studies, content analysis, syllabus analysis, course evaluations, checklists, rubrics, a combination of these, or still other strategies (Furco & Miller, 2009; Holland, 2001; Rubin, 2000). Zhang et al. (2011) suggest that there are 26 approaches employed to evaluate service-learning projects alone, with a combination of strategies beyond that, but the authors group approaches into five main evaluative areas: pseudo-evaluations, quasi-evaluation studies,

improvement- and accountability-oriented evaluation, social agenda and advocacy, and eclectic evaluation. With these methods as a foundation, frameworks have emerged in the literature to generate more comprehensive assessment models of individual efforts. For instance, Holland's (2001) comprehensive model of service-learning is based on a goal-variable-indicator-method design. This design encourages the tracking of service-learning courses by walking faculty through four central questions: what do we want to know, what will we look for, what will be measured, and how will we measure it? Zhang and colleagues (2011) build off the idea of comprehensive assessment of service-learning to suggest the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model as a guiding framework. This model is designed to "systematically guide both evaluators and stakeholders in posing relevant questions and conducting assessments at the beginning of a project (context and input evaluation), while it is in progress (input and process evaluation), and at its end (product evaluation)" (p. 59).

These models provide more in-depth understanding of what comprehensive evaluation means, while Watson-Thompson (2015) does so with an integrated model of Participatory Evaluation for Collaborative Action. This model has five stages of collaborative action, but couples collaborative action with six steps for supporting participatory evaluation efforts with community partners. These include: (a) Name and frame the problem and goal, (b) identify research questions and methods, (c) develop a logic model for success, (d) document the intervention and its effects, (e) collaboratively review, interpret, and use data, and finally (f) celebrate successes and make adjustments to enhance effectiveness (p. 13). Watson-Thompson's model is useful in its intended context, as well as in participatory and inclusive assessment more broadly. Because

variation in assessment across partnerships is evident (Furco & Miller, 2009), Holland (2001), Zhang et al. (2011), and Watson-Thompson each represent steps toward evaluative best-practice at a program- or individual unit-level.

Variation in assessment at the program- or unit-level has implications for assessment at the institutional level. For instance, one faculty member may utilize the CIPP model while another may not; another faculty member may utilize journaling paired with rubrics while another utilizes e-portfolios to make determinations about student learning. Should an institution mandate that all service-learning faculty follow the CIPP model and corresponding assessment methods to ensure consistent reporting? Large research institutions rarely operate in such a bureaucratic, directive fashion (Birnbaum, 1988). Institutions in their current structure rely more on faculty-driven, departmental-reported information housed in the individual disciplines, schools, and other unit structures (Hart & Northmore, 2010). This typically involves measuring activity first (e.g. how many participants; how many hours), starting with faculty, up through department chairs, to deans, through hierarchical structures to report these outputs. Though again, the aim is to measure impact and change and not just activity (Hart & Northmore, 2010). Institutions collect information through these channels and use aggregated data to understand community engagement as an organizational account. In order to navigate discrepancies in practice, possible inaccuracies or gaps in reporting, and variations in quality and rigor, institutions are increasingly using organizational structures, such as a community engagement office or other coordinating department (Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013), as well as a greater reliance on databases and institutional tracking connected to technological innovation and reporting platforms (Driscoll, 2014).

In collecting and monitoring information, and organizing and interpreting it, institutions must also grapple with two additional aspects of assessment: how to manage these processes over time, as well as how to categorize, organize, and group activities.

Managing processes over time. Eddy (2010) notes that outcomes are oriented toward the long-term, and therefore suggests short-term reciprocity should be deemphasized to focus on sustained efforts over time. “Time is required to change systems of operation and to obtain outcomes, but the tendency in partnerships is to look for the quick fix and immediate gains” (p. 72). In Welch and Saltmarsh’s (2013) survey of campus centers and institutional entities conducting engagement work, the authors found that the evolution of these centers is moving toward “better data gathering and reporting/communicating the work of the center and its outcomes...and greater community partner voice and student voice in center planning and operations” (p. 50). It takes time to build this capacity across an institution (Harkavy & Hartley, 2012), though learning from other partnership models who use data well and communicate outcomes effectively can help accelerate this transformation. Institutional capacity must be developed over time, with patience and a long-term view, alongside individual partnerships simultaneously in need of partnership management over time to build capacity and impact (Fogel & Cook, 2006; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). “After community research partnerships are established, a substantial investment of time is required to maintain the relationships, which often takes the form of community-engaged service (e.g., serve on community boards, develop community reports)” (Watson-Thompson, 2015, p. 15). Institutional approaches must therefore incorporate temporal considerations to ensure valid assessment strategy.

Managing categorization, organization, and grouping. Community engagement researchers have put forward ways of categorizing and connecting different partnerships to better assess and track variations across partnership type, which can help keep campuses organized given the high activity level at many institutions. Cox (2000) put forth a framework to group “like sets of activities to see patterns across partnerships and develop generalizations about their effects and contributions” (p. 10). Cox offers six dimensions of activities, which in turn influence the conceptualization of outcomes. These include human capital, social capital, physical infrastructure, economic infrastructure, institutional infrastructure, and political strength. This type of categorization is helpful in establishing a means of systematically grouping the central *purposes* of partnership efforts.

Grobe (1990), in a broader review, conducted a synthesis of education partnerships at an international scale, and produced three main typologies by which to think about central *characteristics* of partnership efforts. Those typologies include (1) level of involvement, (2) partnership structure, and (3) levels of impact. Level of involvement is determined by the partnership’s standing as it relates to the amount and type of resources involved and types of activities, participation in planning and decision-making, effectiveness of communication, commitment of leadership from top management levels, and the equality of partners and participation of staff. Partnership structure may be characterized as simple, moderately complex, or complex. The third typology, levels of impact, were classified into six distinct levels ranging from Level 1 (Partners in Policy) to Level 6 (Partners in Special Services). Institutions may look for ways to couple purpose- or characteristic-grouping mechanisms with *type* of activity

(such as service-learning, action research, community-based research, volunteerism, or professional development, among many others). Context-driven organizational strategies can facilitate coordination of ongoing activity to ensure adherence to core institutional priorities and mission.

How information is used. What purpose will the collected and monitored information serve? Why is it being collected? (Young, 1998). Rosing (2015) suggests that recognition, marketing, and budget legitimization are the traditional meanings associated with institutional tracking behaviors of community engagement data. Collins (2015) supports Rosing's connection of data sharing to resource acquisition, stating, "wider recognition of a narrative reflecting higher education's support of public good has the potential to increase retrenchment in public support with implications for financial, political, educational, and civic sectors of higher education and society" (p. 38). Watson-Thompson (2015) adds that communicating community engagement activity at a university, such as available service-learning courses, may assist in marketing efforts to students and support student retention, as well as help in communication and sharing of institutional engagement more broadly. These areas interest the institution internally (retention rates, resource and funding, positive perceptions, etc.), while others indirectly also serve institutional core interests. Engagement data are used for accreditation purposes, recognition purposes, such as the Carnegie Classification, as well as to demonstrate fulfillment of institutional mission to serve the public good.

Critics of these more traditional uses of community engagement data contend that the nature of public communication for self-interest is both short-sighted and incomplete, perpetuating inauthentic practices within campus-community relations (Morton, 1995;

Rubin, 2000; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). “An authentic tracking practice will require a different kind of data analytics; one where the conclusions drawn will allow for better decision-making, for verification of models or theories of engagement at the institutional level, and for comparative analysis across institutions about successful and challenging engagement practices” (Rosing, 2015, p. 157). Rosing questions historical practice, suggesting a renewed authenticity is needed that captures not only community engagement “successes,” but also seeks and reveals negative consequences of the work as well. Weerts and Sandmann (2008) explore institutional theory as a way to critically examine community engagement assessment practices. The authors note that “institutional theory suggests that engagement structures may exist simply to communicate a set of values about the importance of community and that the structures themselves may be more important than the outcomes” (p. 100), forcing a conversation about institutional branding. The authors question how institutional branding aligns with practice and what consequences exist in misalignments between practice and reality. Institutions seeking to align espoused values with values in practice must diligently examine their practice, to provide critical input and to ensure that candidness and authenticity is present throughout the engagement assessment strategy (Rosing, 2015).

Whether perceived as self-interested or altruistic, use of community engagement assessment data serves a multitude of purposes. Institutions may or may not confront this usage with deep criticality, but those that do can help other institutions to do so in turn. Additionally, as new research strategies and innovative community engagement practice emerge, unique data and data collection procedures will develop alongside. For instance, intentional data tracking can inform more complex, institution-wide efforts to address

complicated societal challenges, commonly called transdisciplinarity, wherein a more comprehensive and connected use of reporting is required to follow the work (McNall et al., 2015; Watson-Thompson, 2015). As complexity increases, the role assessment plays in informing practice is also likely to shift, which parallel models that utilize collective impact illustrate (e.g. Bathgate, Colvin, & Silva, 2011; Duffy, Brown, Hannan, & O'Day, 2011; Kania & Kramer, 2011; 2013). As community engagement strategies develop, so too will the use of data.

Who is involved in assessment processes. Individual or program-level partnerships must be cognizant of the involvement and perspective of community partners in the planning, implementation, and assessment of that activity, program or initiative (Bucher, 2012; Dempsey, 2010; Jacoby, 2003; Miron & Moely, 2006; Morton, 1995; Sandmann et al., 2009; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Likewise, institutional processes to determine impact across these activities must include community voice and input in an intentional way (Holland, 2001; Holland et al., 2003; Rosing, 2015; Watson-Thompson, 2015). Specifically, this could manifest as community stakeholders being “equitably engaged as participants in all phases of the research process, including in the assessment and identification of the community problem, (in the) development and implementation of the intervention, (the) review and interpretation of data, and in the communication and dissemination of information to key audiences” (Watson-Thompson, 2015, p. 12). Training for all partners in technology platforms that collect and organize data, which all partners, both campus and community, can access and use to guide decision-making and implementation may also be needed (Watson-Thompson, 2015). A systematic approach to garnering feedback from the community is

a challenge shared across community engaged institutions (Beere, 2009; Driscoll, 2014), but it is necessary to align espoused values with values in practice so that the communities with which work is being done have a hand in crafting and creating their own lived experience through partnership with their local institution.

Limitations in Current Literature

The preceding review of literature examines the facets of community engagement assessment, particularly as it relates to institutional processes. While the knowledge base is growing quickly (Rubin, 2000), the literature on institutional processes to address community engagement assessment challenges is limited in significant ways. Hart et al. (2009) cite a lack of focus on outcomes, lack of standardized instruments and tools, as well as a wide variety in strategies to handle the challenge. Building on Hart et al.'s insights and reflecting on the availability of research focused on community outcomes and impact, the following three limitations across the literature base are presented: (1) the focal point has been too narrow, concentrated on individual programs or projects, (2) has not centered on the community, and (3) has not fully addressed higher education's institutional complexity.

First, research has focused on assessment of the impacts of community engagement at the program or project level, rather than the institution's impact on community-level indicators (Driscoll, 2014, Rosing, 2015). Many studies and descriptive analyses have focused on assessment of the work within specific programs or service-learning programs (e.g. Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Zhang et al., 2011), which cannot translate outcomes or impact at levels beyond the individual or organization, partnership, or program to the institutional level (Hart & Northmore, 2010). Stoecker et al. (2010)

note that charity models, rather than community change models, have guided engagement efforts historically. As a result, the paradigm through which the work has been conducted is more focused on the institution as the ivory tower (Vernon & Ward, 1999) while the community is merely receiving the support. “If one is emphasizing service to individuals rather than action for change, then one’s documentation attempts will be necessarily limited and even assumed” (Stoecker et al., 2010, p. 182). Even among more participatory models, there have been tendencies to focus on specific program-level outcomes (e.g. improved teaching, student learning) without recognition of systems of power and systemic forces at work that affect community change (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009; Kemmis, 2006).

Second, institutional documentation, tracking, and assessment of community engagement has not centered on the community. Institutions appropriately are concerned with student learning outcomes for curricular engagement, faculty productivity, and hours of service that have been invested to demonstrate to external sources the proliferation of activity taking place. Driscoll (2014) analyzed 2006 and 2008 applications for the Carnegie Classification and found that 100% of respondents studied or assessed the impact of community engagement on their students, though when asked about impact on faculty, 29 were unable to respond, and when asked about impact on community, even fewer were able to respond. When institutions did provide data on community impact, it was typically a variety of anecdotes or recorded outputs, such as the number of participants attending a particular community engagement event. “These findings are not trivial but limited when describing the institutional impact on community” (p. 8). If higher education institutions are committed to relational and effective engagement, a

greater emphasis on community needs and concerns across institutional activity, including teaching, research, and administration, is necessary (Mayfield, 2001). Unless assessment processes employ a community-oriented, or community development framework (Stoecker et al., 2010), to determine outcomes and collaborative successes, the ability to convey impact at the community-level will be limited or absent altogether.

While there has been considerable progress in developing indicators and benchmarking systems, the rigorous and comprehensive incorporation of community perspectives in audit and benchmarking is almost entirely absent across the higher education sector... Some institutions have included consultation with community partners in developing their frameworks but there have been few attempts at producing evaluation tools that are useful in understanding the microdynamics of public engagement between individual university personnel, students, community groups and community members (Hart & Northmore, 2010, p. 6).

Third, larger sized higher education research institutions are complex, unwieldy organizations focused on knowledge production in departmental silos (Birnbaum, 1988; Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010). Revisiting Norris-Tirrell and colleagues (2010) structural components that influence community engagement processes toward social movement, the philosophical core demonstrates recurring tendencies to hinder the engagement process via a particular field's content-based knowledge and theory building, pedagogical theories, and discipline-based norms. "The result of these three core components is often a discipline-based, silo mentality that maintains status quo values, reinforced through (institutions of higher education) structures, such as departments and colleges" (p. 176).

These various departments and units need to work together to create a coherent community engagement strategy (Watson-Thompson, 2015), yet they are predisposed to remain somewhat disconnected from other disciplines, departments, and offices (Silka, 1999).

Community engagement efforts must contend with the unique characteristics of the higher education institution, which include its hierarchical, formal, and insular nature (Fisher et al., 2004; Strier, 2014). Tracking, documenting, and assessing the impact of community engagement is difficult as a result, subject to variability and fluidity among the siloed units. However, institution-wide tracking and assessment is expanding (Stoecker et al., 2010; Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013). Momentum is building toward more systematic accountability structures (Sandmann et al., 2009). Strategies currently being employed by institutions to overcome these structural challenges include the use of surveys, department-to-institutional reporting, and increasingly the use of institutional databases as well as the emergence of community engagement centers as a structural commitment to advance community engagement (Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013). However, the coordination of assessment across an institution, and subsequently the ability to convey impact, still has far to go (Driscoll, 2014; Rosing, 2015). These limitations provide an opportunity to examine current institutional practice as it relates to assessment of community engagement and inform a conceptual framework in which to do so.

Summary

Colleges and universities have a significant, longstanding commitment to work with and for their local community. Community engagement has emerged as a key institutional strategy to uphold this commitment, though the ways in which it manifests

across a particular campus is varied, as are the mechanisms by which engagement is assessed. Relational processes drive campus-community partnerships. Promoting equitable, reciprocal practices are a central component to realizing shared outcomes, which may occur at the individual-, program-, institutional-, or community-level. Literature often describes institutionalization as a long-term outcome for community engagement work, yet how a proliferation of activity at an institution translates into discernable change within a community must also be addressed in assessment work.

Institutional processes to do so are in a nascent stage, a patchwork of strategies developed at individual campuses, but increasingly undergoing collective refinement. While institutions are commonly assessing individual-outcomes, such as student learning or civic behaviors, much less is known regarding community impact. Cited limitations in the literature base regarding institutional processes to determine community engagement impact include too narrow a focal point on individual programs or projects, a lack of focus on community, and incomplete attention to higher education's institutional complexity. These limitations inform the conceptual framework and other aspects of study design described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

The following chapter describes the study's purpose, design, and methods to address the research question. The collective case, grounded theory design addresses the gap in research regarding the process of community engagement assessment at the institutional level. The chapter provides an overview of the context and purpose of the research, the research design and theoretical framework, sampling strategy, instrumentation, including the role of the researcher, data collection and data analysis procedures, as well as key questions associated with the research that may inform potential findings. Study assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are also discussed.

Introduction

Literature supports the idea that partnerships are a process-oriented enterprise (Amey et al., 2007). Yet, in order for those processes to generate tangible change within a community, activity must translate into specific benefits, outputs, and outcomes (Rosing, 2015; Stoecker et al., 2010). Currently, the body of knowledge in this area provides more information on how partnerships work well together than how to determine what impact that work has had (Holland et al., 2003; Nichols et al., 2015; Noonan et al., 2014). As integrated as community engagement processes are to resulting outcomes, the description of activity alone cannot convey what changes have occurred as

a result of the efforts. It is therefore necessary to focus on how community engagement activity translates into tangible outcomes within a community of interest. Examining the process by which individual universities address this challenge can help shed light on collective knowledge in the field of community engagement assessment at the institutional level (Holton et al., 2015; Ramaley, 2014).

Research Design

This qualitative study employs a collective case and grounded theory approach to understand how institutions assess the impacts of community engagement. The research focuses on the *process* of assessment, rather than the institutional results of assessment practices. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine the impact an institution has in its local community, particularly given the temporal, spatial, and contextual demands of the assessment of community engagement (Fogel & Cook, 2006; Peterson, 2009; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). Yet much can be learned from examining the process by which different institutions approach doing so (Rosing, 2015). By examining approaches across campus contexts, research can lead to institutional enhancement of internal practices, increasing incorporation of community partner voice into assessment, and more effective contributions to complex problems (Franz et al., 2012; Ramaley, 2014; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the process by which public, four-year, urban, metropolitan universities, with a dedicated mission to work with and positively impact their city, determine the impact their community engagement activity has within the local community. By exploring procedurally how different institutions tackle

evaluation and assessment challenges within their own context, this research will document effective practice, common challenges, and inherent deficits and disconnects throughout the accountability process across cases. This research centers on the following research question:

What is the process by which an urban, metropolitan institution determines the impact its community engagement activity has within the local community?

The institution is the unit of analysis and the question is purposefully broad to allow for the individuality and context of each case to be explored fully. By focusing on the process of assessment, this study allows for examination of institutional orientation to engagement and procedures to conduct, track, and report on engagement activity. It also explores the mechanisms by which engagement is differentiated, the degree to which it is coordinated, how community engagement data are used, as well as how community voice is incorporated into assessment processes.

Rationale for a Collective Case, Grounded Theory Study

This study is situated within the larger question many universities, colleges, and other organizations are asking of their work within a local community: “how do we know if our efforts are making a positive difference in the lives of our students, employees, and communities?” (Holton, 2015, p. 5). Universities must address the question of how their ongoing and diversified activities are impacting those with whom and for whom they are working, whether those impacts are perceived to be positive or negative. To address this larger question, much research and subsequent literature has been generated, as was discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two. Practitioners and researchers alike seek to

understand how the community changes and how the lives of individuals are affected because of these activities (Holland et al., 2003; Ramaley, 2014). Different research strategies can inform the question of difference-making from various perspectives. A phenomenological study is useful to help understand the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced a similar phenomenon and explore how each individual makes sense of or meaning from it (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Examples include the experiences of college students involved in service-learning (e.g. Dharamsi, Richards, Louie, Murray, Berland, Whitfield, & Scott, 2010; Hatcher, Bringle, & Hahn, 2016) or in giving voice to children involved in social science research to understand their subjective world (e.g. Gover, 2004). An ethnographic approach could help describe and interpret deeper understandings of a particular group or culture (Glesne, 2015), such as a school or a classroom working in close partnership with the university, and how that may evolve over time (e.g. Jennings & Mills, 2009). An ethnographic study could also help explore how various intervention methods, also considered community engagement activity, influence a particular community, neighborhood, or culture over time, such as Sandercock and Attili's (2010) work described as a digital ethnography. These researchers worked with, and attempted to understand, the integration of immigrants into their local community and the ethical and power dimensions at play. While these types of studies are crucial to understanding the lived experiences and cultures of those involved in and affected by community engagement, particularly as they evolve over time, this type of research tends to focus on one phenomenon, one group, or one program or initiative in order to explore it fully, deeply, and with rich description in its unique setting.

Collective case design. These forms of research add to the body of knowledge regarding the impact community engagement has in different manifestations, yet the question of what impacts these activities have collectively in a community remains. To examine collective assessment, the university becomes the unit of analysis as the organizational system of interest. An intrinsic case study then facilitates the examination of a university as a bounded system. Cases explore the organization's attempts to comprehensively track, report, and assess community engagement activity from the generation of outputs to outcomes in the local community. The intrinsic case is therefore the starting point for this research, aimed at understanding the organizational processes within the postsecondary institution. Yet, Yin (2003) suggests that multiple, or collective, case studies can provide more information toward a general phenomenon than a single case. Contextual elements shaping large, research universities are likely to influence the process to determine impact in distinct ways, and it is therefore necessary to capture such differences through a comparison of individual cases. This study examines multiple cases to provide that comparative data.

A collective case study is a useful research design for several other reasons. Case studies are advantageous when there is a desire to understand complex social phenomena, and in particular how something happens or why it happens (Yin, 2003; 2014). In this case both are of interest, but the central research question centers on *how* universities determine their impact. Furthermore, case studies are useful when multiple sources of information will be utilized, and the phenomenon of interest is a bounded system (Creswell, 2013; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Multiple sources of data need to be collected in this study due to the nature of how institutions collect, report, and implement

their community engagement strategy, including practices, policies, and structures (Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013). The nature of a single university, both complex in its internal processes but singular in its mission, geography, institutional characteristics and so forth, creates a bounded system. Case studies are also useful in context-dependent and place-based situations (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Lewis, 2003; Stake, 2006), which is a key feature of community engagement work (McNall et al., 2015; Maurrasse, 2010; Peterson, 2009).

Case studies can be an ambiguous term, referring to many different interpretations or uses, such as an individual, a group, a program, or issue (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2015). The common denominator is that each defined case is “a bounded integrated system with working parts” (Glesne, 2015, p. 289). A collective case study involves looking at several cases, allowing for the investigation of a phenomenon, population, or general condition (Glesne, 2015). The researcher identifies one issue or phenomenon of concern (in this case the process to determine impact) and selects multiple cases to illustrate and explore the issue (Creswell, 2013; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The bounded systems in this study will be a small collection of three institutions, discussed in the sampling section below.

Use of grounded theory. Current research is not clear on what the specific processes are by which institutions translate campus activity into demonstrated outcomes within the local community (Rosing, 2015; UNC, 2015; Watson-Thompson, 2015). Data from individual institutions is needed to drive a possible uniting theory or merely illustrate key elements that help link process, action, output, and outcomes toward impact. Reporting takes place at each institution regarding their community engagement

activity, particularly for those seeking the Carnegie Classification (Driscoll, 2009; 2014; Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013). Yet, how institutions connect that information back to community-level outcomes they have collaboratively stated they seek to address is unclear (Rosing, 2015; Watson-Thompson, 2015). Currently, institutions must assume increased activity is akin to increased productivity (Hart & Northmore, 2010). Focused research to demonstrate how this is done effectively, transparently, and with intentional community involvement is needed (Rosing, 2015). Research is needed to not only capture institutional processes but to examine and connect them to community engagement theory more broadly to advance practice.

Because this study explores process, a grounded theory approach is appropriate. Grounded theory is useful in developing a theory directly from data collected in the field, focused often on process and action from the viewpoint of the participant (Creswell, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The approach assists in delineating what progression, or theoretical method, drives community engagement assessment as guided by data. Continuing questions in the field of community engagement signal the need for grounded theory, such as those posed by Holland and colleagues (2003): How do you define a successful community-university partnership? What are the indicators of success? What are the factors that contribute to successful evaluation and what are the barriers? What ideas, recommendations, and strategies can build the capacity of communities to evaluate their community-university partnerships? How can institutions collaborate across disciplines and silos toward effective evaluation strategies? By gathering data across these elements of process, a unifying theory or key elements across cases can inform the central research question.

Corbin and Strauss (1990) note that grounded theory is based on the premise that phenomena (such as an organizational process) are not stagnant, but change in response to prevailing conditions, and that individual actors are constantly making choices within changing conditions. “Grounded theory seeks not only to uncover relevant conditions but also to determine how the actors under investigation actively respond to those conditions, and to the consequences of their actions. It is the researcher’s responsibility to catch this interplay” (p. 419). As assessment of community engagement is context-dependent and driven by multiple actors involved in multiple types of activities, using grounded theory within a collective case study is a particularly useful approach to examine both the actors and the system. Institutions also generate multiple types of data to communicate their community engagement narrative (e.g. annual reports, marketing materials, budget allocations, online communications). Case studies are designed to examine these data as a bounded system, and by combining institutional documentation and artifacts with multiple interviews in an iterative way, the phenomenon can be explored more fully. A collective case study facilitates better understanding of intrinsic cases and their relation to one another to inform the larger question of how impact can be determined from community engagement activity.

Operationalizing the Question

Components of the research question need to be clarified, particularly given its scope. Within the question, the terms *process*, *institution*, *impact*, *community engagement activity*, and *local community* are all defined differently within distinctive contexts as discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two. As a result, this study aims to narrow their interpretation to the current context prior to data collection, while still

allowing for constructivism among participating institutions and representatives. By using a social constructivist framework, each institution is allowed space to subjectively create meaning and define concepts, rather than having concepts or ideas predetermined by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Subjective meanings are often created within social or historical contexts and are interpreted differently by participants based on their unique viewpoint. It is then up to the researcher to examine the process of interaction among cases, focusing on specific contexts including historical and cultural settings, and make interpretations of the data as shaped by their own positionality (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2005). How this was operationalized within the research question is discussed next.

Determined by the researcher. Both the concept of *process* and *institution* were narrowed by the researcher in line with the research design, while the concepts of *impact*, *community engagement activity*, and *local community* were in large part defined and constructed by each university, due to the inherent variability of this work across geographies, missions, and institutional cultures (Maurrasse, 2010).

Process. As discussed in Chapter Two, there are four common areas of process described across the literature regarding assessment practices: (a) what information institutions seek, (b) how that information is identified, tracked, and reported, (c) how it is used, and (d) who is involved in the decision-making process (Holland, 2001; Holland et al., 2003; Rosing, 2015; Watson-Thompson, 2015; Young, 1998). For the purposes of this study, process spans from definitional use (i.e. “How does your university define community engagement?”), to identifying, tracking, and reporting (i.e. “How are your community engagement activities Identified? Reported?”), to benchmarking and data usage (i.e. “How do you use the data you collect?”), to relational aspects of evaluation

processes (i.e. “Are community members or representatives involved in the assessment of community engagement activity? If so, how?”). The detailed elements of process within the table below serve to inform the interview protocols developed for interviews with university and community stakeholders (see Table 1).

Table 1

Elements of Process to Determine Impact of Community Engagement Activity

Category	Process Element
Defining	How community engagement is defined at the university How is “local community” defined at the university How is impact defined at the university
Identifying, Tracking, and Reporting	How is community engagement identified at the university How does the university know what community engagement activity is taking place How does the university track community engagement activities How does the university report community engagement activities? Frequency of reporting If and how community engagement activities are differentiated by purpose or type
Using Data	If and how data are used to track progress over time, including benchmarking If and how data are used to inform community engagement practices For what purpose is data being used How does data influence your communication with different campus partners
Relational Aspects of Evaluation Processes	If and how community members or representatives are involved in planning community engagement activity If and how community members or representatives are involved in assessment of community engagement activity

What collaborative efforts exist to coordinate community engagement efforts toward community-level goals, within the institution and with community partners

Institution. “Each higher education institution uniquely presents its own cultural expression of community engagement relative to its geography, history, and, perhaps most importantly, its social and political agenda (or “mission”) at any given moment,” (Rosing, 2015, p. 148). As such, reducing variability of institutional characteristics is needed to assist in comparisons across cases. Institutions will therefore be considered for inclusion if they are an urban, metropolitan, four-year, public, higher or highest research university, with a clear mission for sustained and meaningful community engagement. Indications of sustained and meaningful community engagement will include membership in CUMU and the Carnegie Classification designation. Institutions must have a stated focus on the local community, either within the institutional mission or as part of an institutional initiative or strategic plan, and self-identify as an anchor institution. Given the focus on a community development framework, institutions must have at least the intention to generate positive change within their local community to ensure alignment between the research question and selected institutions.

Determined by the institution. *Community engagement activity, local community, and impact* will primarily be defined and constructed by each university, yet each term is clarified next as it relates to the research question to inform study design.

Community engagement activity. The term community engagement is used in this study due to its common usage across institutions in the United States, as well as its alignment with the Carnegie Classification terminology. The Carnegie Classification describes community engagement as a “collaboration between institutions of higher

education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (New England Resource Center for Higher Education, 2016, para 3). This definition provides context for how community engagement is conceptualized, although the focus of this research is specifically on the local community and not on regional, state, national or global settings. Following the social constructivist framework, participants were asked to define community engagement in their own context as well. Definitional variation is used as additional data across case comparisons to examine how campuses delineate and interpret the concept of community engagement activity within their institutional context.

Local community. Given the rarity of explicitly defining community, or of defining it broadly (Bowen et al., 2010; Beere, 2009), it is challenging for universities to accurately and clearly define the specific community with which they are working. Chapter Two includes many terms for community (i.e. local community; local, regional/state, national, global communities; community stakeholders; community partners). The chapter also describes the many characterizations of community (i.e. geography, interaction, identity; built environment, people, organizational networks, institutional networks, the neighborhood economy, and neighborhood proximities and access). These characterizations are rarely made explicit, though cultural, political, and other environmental distinctions within a community change how collaboration takes place (Peterson, 2009). Data for this question were derived from reports, strategic plans, and interviews and compared across data sources. Both the specificity of community as

well as the lack of specificity are important data, as is the adherence or lack thereof to definitions and characterizations of community in practice.

Impact. As was discussed in Chapter Two, impact from community engagement is characterized in many ways across contexts. Community engagement activities are intended to positively impact college students and faculty, the higher education institution and specific departments within it, community partner organizations and their constituents, such as K-12 students, adult learners, or other clients, as well as the communities at large (Driscoll, 2008; Ramaley, 2014). Recalling Bringle et al.'s (2009) SOFAR Framework, impact is directed to, and influenced by, Students, Organizations in the community, Faculty, Administrators on campus, and Residents in the community. The Carnegie Classification categorizes impact by four stakeholders, including students, faculty, community, and institution (Driscoll, 2014). Using these frameworks, impact in the local community is oriented toward organizations in the community and community residents using the SOFAR framework, and the domain of community within the Carnegie structure.

Beyond the orientation of impact (i.e. where it is directed), institutions must also determine what impact *is*. This is a central question each institution is responsible for in their bounded system. How impact is perceived by individuals and institutions varies widely, requiring space for construction of the concept by participants. For instance, this study employs the conceptual framework put forth by Stoecker et al. (2010), described in greater detail in the theoretical framework section. Stoecker and colleagues describe levels of impact within the community. The authors start with individual relationship impacts, moving to organization partnership impacts, to community impacts, and finally

to system impacts. The level of impact an institution is intending to stimulate cannot be determined by the etic (outsider) when it may have little meaning to the emic (insider) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It is therefore necessary to allow each participating institution to define impact as it exists in their own time, space, and context, which the social constructivist framework facilitates.

While social constructivism aids in the facilitation of understanding the perspectives and interpretations of the phenomenon of impact by study participants, a critical lens is also a necessary paradigm by which to approach interpretations of impact. Neuman and Kreuger (2003) define the paradigm of critical social science as “a critical process of inquiry that goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world in order to help people change conditions and build a better world for themselves” (p. 83). The idea of generating impact within one’s community may have different interpretations, but the material world, the local community, is a tangible and physical reality that exists in a particular time and space. The history of the community, its current economic, social, and demographic makeup matter in community engagement activity, and the inquiry into accountability processes is explored in the context of the individual built and social environments.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) characterize the relationship between investigator and investigated as being *value mediated*, wherein the values of the researcher are assumed to be interactively linked with the values of the participants or phenomenon being investigated. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) note that qualitative researchers have a history of grappling with these tensions and multiparadigmatic foci, but suggest such complexity is inherent in qualitative research and should be recognized and utilized accordingly.

Social constructivism and critical social science represent differing paradigms, yet they both necessarily and collectively inform the research question. Impact, then, is understood to be directed to the community, captured within individual to systemic levels, and realized in physical, lived spaces.

Theoretical Framework

As the clarification of terms demonstrates, the central research question is designed to embrace the inherent ambiguity and differentiation within various institutional contexts and still be understood in a coherent and consistent manner. To guide this research, a framework is needed that addresses both the complexity of community impact and the nuances of higher education institutions as systems. Chapter Two presented the following limitations in the literature regarding community engagement assessment: (1) the focal point of assessment efforts has been too narrow, concentrated on individual programs or projects, (2) has not centered on the community, and (3) has not fully addressed higher education's institutional complexity. A theoretical framework that attends to these limitations is needed to situate the current study in a position to advance understanding and explore these recurring challenges with renewed perspective.

The theoretical framework driving this research incorporates two complementary yet distinct frameworks as a guide. The first is Stoecker et al.'s (2010) Model of Higher Education Civic Engagement Impacts, which employs a community development framework to conceptualize community impact. The model blends the higher education-institutional domain with the community domain, examining impact over time and across expanding levels of impact. The second is McNall et al.'s (2015) work regarding the

concept of *systemic engagement*, which ties principles gleaned from campus-community partnerships, collective impact, and cross-sector models to address the “messy” nature of engagement work within higher education institutions (Ramaley, 2014). McNall and colleagues introduce systemic engagement as a mechanism to examine engagement more holistically, accounting for institutional complexity and the dynamism across manifestations of community engagement. Taken together, these frameworks address limitations in prior research by broadening more narrow focal points, centering assessment on the community domain, and addressing higher education’s institutional complexity.

Stoecker et al. (2010) employ the Model of Higher Education Civic Engagement Impacts to orient community engagement toward community outcomes, central to community development processes (see Figure 2). The model is set up as a graph with an X and Y axis to visualize the relationship between activity over time and levels of impact. The X axis represents the higher education institution, moving from research to action to after effects, while the Y axis represents the community domain, moving from (a) individual relationship impacts, to (b) organization partnership impacts, to (c) community impacts, to (d) system impacts. The X axis captures the temporal element, signifying that actions take place over long periods of time, and impacts should broaden and move further out over time. Stoecker and colleagues emphasize that assessment of outcomes “requires long-term, labor-intensive commitment... (and is) time-intensive and expensive work” (p. 182-183). The authors argue that from the community development perspective “process and effects (or formative and summative evaluation) are part of a single holistic evaluation model that is concerned with the relation between the

community development strategy and its effects” (p. 188). The authors contend that an analysis of the process is imperative to understand the relationship between activity and outcomes within a unique context (or bounded system). This framework serves to both move beyond the partnership or project unit of analysis to community outcomes as well as place the community as the central focal point.

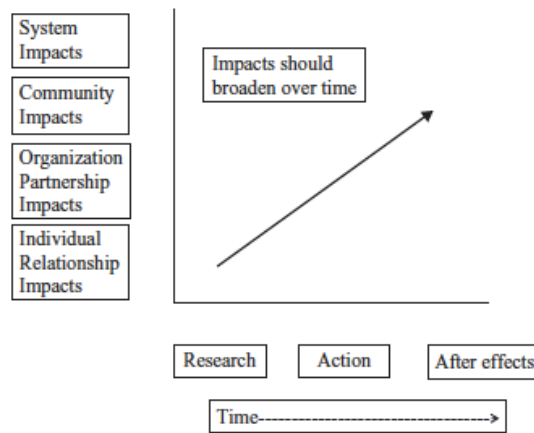


Figure 2. A model of higher education civic engagement impacts.

It is also necessary to address the complexity of higher education institutions and how this contextual element confounds current assessment practice (Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Holton et al., 2015). McNall et al.’s (2015) work on systemic engagement provides a framework to inform decentralized, multifaceted institutions as the unit of analysis. Systemic engagement, or what McNall and colleagues refer to as systemic approaches to community change, “involves universities as partners in systemic approaches to social problem solving” (p. 2). Systemic engagement has six key principles: (a) systems thinking, (b) collaborative inquiry, (c) support for ongoing learning, (d) emergent design, (e) multiple strands of inquiry and action, and (f) transdisciplinarity. These six key principles require brief explanation.

Systems thinking involves a deep understanding of boundaries, perspectives, and relationships. It involves attention to the whole, or a comprehensiveness in approach to widen the usual scope of inquiry (McNall et al., 2015). *Collaborative inquiry* refers to the joint undertaking of a shared interest or effort, and *support for ongoing learning* involves elements found in collective impact literature and practice, such as shared data systems that collect, use, share, and analyze data to inform decision-making and future processes (Bathgate et al., 2011). *Emergent design* requires inherent flexibility to be able to adapt to the inevitable winds of change that constantly influence partnership work. *Multiple strands of inquiry and action* means there are numerous and networked efforts at work on a particular problem, but the efforts are coordinated and understand what piece of the puzzle they are attempting to address. *Transdisciplinarity* is a term that McNall et al. (2015) suggest involves “the participation of multiple disciplines in addressing messes” (p. 6), which is distinguished from multidisciplinary work. Multidisciplinary collaboration involves different disciplines working within their own silos and from their own knowledge base but in sequence with one another, while *interdisciplinary* work involves researchers operating from their own discipline on a common problem. The transdisciplinarity approach asks researchers to go one step further, operating under a shared conceptual framework that draws from those different disciplines, creating a foundation with enough complexity to disentangle what Kania and Kramer (2011) call less “solvable” social challenges. McNall et al.’s (2015) work assists in linking different institutional units into a more holistic, comprehensive system, which can then be viewed as a single strategy.

To facilitate an institutional strategy, institutionalization of community engagement is necessary. Furco and Miller (2009) suggest that the potency of any one or combination of the five elements of institutionalization will be combined to varying degrees at different institutions depending on their primary purposes in employing engagement and collaborative strategies, or “engagement priorities” (p. 48). If engagement priorities reorient closer to the community domain, it is unclear how that may influence institutional strategies to fulfill mission. Engagement priorities could extend to specific community development indicators such as high school graduation rates or the number of residents within a geographical area who have obtained a bachelor’s degree. As those specific commitments are made, the implications for an institution’s engagement activities, institutional structure, support systems, and levels of collaborative inquiry and emergent design are unknown. Mapping an institution’s systemic engagement to an assessment strategy, particularly the extent to which they exhibit systems thinking, may allow for a deeper understanding within current research regarding how disparate institutional efforts could possibly procedurally link together to address community-level, co-created outcomes.

Each complementary yet distinct framework aids in addressing recurring limitations in studying community engagement assessment at the institutional level. Stoecker et al. (2010) provide a frame by which to keep community at the focus of the research and expand conceptualizations of impact beyond individual programs or projects. McNall and colleagues (2015) provide a linked set of criteria to examine complex institutional processes in a more holistic way. Taken together, these frameworks support a broad, multifaceted research question.

Sampling Strategy and Research Context

Given the research focus on impact within the community domain, institutions must have at least the intention to generate positive change within their local community to ensure alignment between the research question and selected cases. Systematic, non-probabilistic sampling was used for this study in an effort to provide as targeted a set of cases as possible to describe the phenomena of interest—processes to determine impact. As discussed above, institutions will be considered for inclusion if they are an urban, metropolitan, four-year, public, higher or highest research university, with a clear mission for sustained and meaningful community engagement. Indications of sustained and meaningful community engagement will include membership in CUMU and the Carnegie Classification designation. Institutions must have a stated focus on the local community, either within the institutional mission or as part of an institutional initiative or strategic plan, and self-identify as an anchor institution. Additionally, institutions were sought that have a stated mission or institution-wide initiative aimed at influencing community-level outcomes within the local geographical area. Institutions must have a proliferation of community engagement activity, high levels of contact with various community organizations and members, and a desire to know in what ways institutional actions do or do not benefit the proximate community. In the effort to make cases as similar as possible, the following characteristics within CUMU institutions were sought: (1) large, four-year, highly or primarily residential, (2) Public, four-year or above institution type, (3) enrollment above 20,000 students.

There are many reasons to target these institutional characteristics. Rosing (2015) contends that unique expressions of community engagement are relative to geography,

history, and mission, which remain in flux. Knowing each institution brings its unique set of characteristics to the research question, reducing variability is necessary to assist in comparisons across cases. Weerts and Sandmann (2008) identified a similar targeting strategy for their qualitative study, exploring “how institutional mission, history, setting, and role within a state system of higher education influence institutional approaches to engagement” (p. 74). The authors found that urban research universities were uniquely positioned to examine community engagement, even more so than their land-grant counterparts. The authors suggest that urban research universities use engagement as a competitive strategy to set themselves apart from land-grant and other institutions. “Hiring practices, structures, and rewards have emerged to enhance their brand identity. As a result, partnership language (constructivist language) is very intentional, deliberately employed to communicate the institution’s brand internally and externally” (p. 96). These anchor institutions are an “increasingly attractive framework to leverage large institutions in community development work in localities across the United States” (Luter, 2016, p. 156). Employing the criteria of urban, metropolitan, and closely linked to local and regional development adds a specificity to institutional characteristics that improves the ability to compare data across cases.

In seeking designations or memberships that demonstrate commitment to community engagement, an institution’s membership within CUMU is a practical centering point. CUMU is an organization dedicated to supporting those institutions that are demonstrably working to fulfill Boyer’s (1996) call to connect the resources of academe to pressing social, civic, and ethical problems. The Coalition identifies as an “international affiliate organization of universities in large metropolitan areas that share

common understandings of their institutional missions and values... (and) ensures sustained attention to the exchange of information and ideas among member institutions about higher education's role in urban and metropolitan settings..." (CUMU, 2017, para 1). Additionally, of the five stated objectives of the CUMU network, the following two objectives are particularly relevant to this study: First, the network provides "a forum for the presentation of ideas and opinions on the role of urban and metropolitan universities in addressing the challenges of our cities," and two, it assists "urban and metropolitan universities in shaping and adapting structures, policies, and practices to enhance their effectiveness as key institutions in the lives of metropolitan regions and their citizens" (CUMU, 2017, para 2).

Organizations such as CUMU can help connect research and effective practice across the United States and around the world regarding the institutional role in communities. This continued research advances consistent, transparent assessment and accountability processes toward community engagement that transforms institutions and society (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Given the unique nature of these institutions and their relationship to the local community, as well as the commitment to be good stewards of that relationship, CUMU institutions provide unique insight to the research question and align well with the theoretical framework.

The systematic, non-probabilistic sampling strategy targets cases that best describe the phenomena of interest. Mays and Pope (1995) describe this form of sampling as neither random nor representative, but a strategic determination of what groups, people, or cases will best be able to inform the research question. Cases were selected based on alignment with inclusion criteria and similarity of community

engagement objectives, an attempt to add additional boundaries to the case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003). This also ensures cases are as similar as possible and the logic of replication, where the researcher attempts to recreate the same procedures for each case (Yin, 2009), is feasible. Furthermore, “This approach to sampling allows the researcher deliberately to include a wide range of types of informants and also to select key informants with access to important sources of knowledge” (Mays & Pope, 1995, p. 110). This is important not only for identifying institutions that match inclusion criteria, but in providing a guide for how to identify individuals to interview, both within the university and within the community that participate in the evaluative process. Given the orientation of this research toward a community development framework, community perspective and community representative’s involvement in any determinations of community engagement impact is paramount. As such, the ability to strategically select key informants from within the university and from within the community is needed.

The target number of cases for this study was three institutions. Creswell (2013) recommends one to four cases for a collective case study, while Yin (2003) advises that multiple case studies require careful consideration of what constitutes relevant and similar cases, which may range in size, though more cases may help improve insight. Stake (2006) adds that fewer than four cases may not provide enough of the interactivity between programs or cases, while more than 15 may offer more than is useful to the researchers or readers, but that for good reasons many studies examine fewer than four cases. The desired collection for this study is three institutions for a number of reasons. First, there are constraints including time and available resources, which limits the ability to gather, transcribe, and analyze data, and conduct follow-up visits as needed to an

institution. Second, the exploratory nature of the research serves as an important step, but subsequent studies can build and improve on this design to then examine a greater number of cases. Finally, three cases align with Creswell's and Yin's recommendations for collective case studies and allows for greater comparative analysis than a one- or two-case design. As Weerts and Sandmann (2008) outline in their collective case study, the desired number of cases should be manageable yet also achieve the "goal of providing a robust set of data from which to formulate conclusions across institutions" (p. 83).

To begin the process of securing cases for participation, an individual or individuals were identified at each institution that appeared to coordinate community engagement. This was commonly the director of the central coordinating office for community engagement for the institution, though given different institutional structures to organize community engagement, roles were varied. Offices of government relations, public engagement, service-learning, and community affairs, or a combination therein, were searched for those who may be able to best discuss the possibility of participation. These individuals are identified as "gatekeepers" throughout the study. Upon initial response, a conversation by phone, email, and/or video conferencing occurred to discuss the details of data collection in greater detail. Because the institution is the unit of analysis, all individuals engaged in this initial contact wanted to check with others at the university to ensure it was an effort they could commit to. Once committed, subsequent conversations helped to identify individuals in the university and the community that would be invited to participate.

At each institution, university and community stakeholders were interviewed for added insight across data sources. The target number of interviewees was 2-4 university

stakeholders and 2-4 community stakeholders per institution. The final number of interviewees would depend on responsiveness, availability, and the saturation of an institutional narrative, but certain individuals were sought out specifically. Language was developed to help in such identification. Gatekeepers were provided with a description of the individuals that may be best suited to participate in a study on assessment of community engagement institution-wide. University stakeholders targeted for participation were described as follows: *"Individual from the university in charge of, or strongly connected to, the coordination of assessing community engagement impact within the local community at the institution." This individual may be the point person for the application process regarding the Carnegie Classification of Community Engagement, a leader in community engagement assessment, or an administrator with a broader institutional lens and so forth.* The characterization for community stakeholders targeted for participation was in turn: *"Individual from the community that is in a leadership role regarding, or who is connected to, assessment of the impact of community engagement activity occurring across the institution."* Gatekeepers were asked to help identify these individuals, who would then be contacted by the researcher. This process was also institutional and context dependent, in accordance with study design.

Institutional samples. At the end of data collection, three institutions participated. Within each institution, the sample of interviewees was secured through a process of initial conversations with a gatekeeper or gatekeepers, subsequent conversations with potential and confirmed participants, online searches, and recommendations by those aware of the study. At Institution A, eight individuals provided an interview. Five of these interviews were conducted with university

stakeholders, and three with community stakeholders. The areas of university stakeholders ranged from community engagement, institutional research, health, and diversity, and positions ranged from executive directors, vice presidents and deans, to coordinators. Community stakeholders were in areas of education, health, and ministry, and held positions such as vice president or leadership positions on a community advisory board at Institution A.

At Institution B, seven individuals provided an interview. Three of these interviews were conducted with university stakeholders and four with community stakeholders. The areas of university stakeholders ranged from community engagement, institutional research, and health, and positions such as assistant vice chancellor or associate dean or director were represented. Community stakeholders were in areas such as community leadership, CEOs and officers of local development organizations, and held positions such as executive director, chief officer, or president.

At Institution C, five individuals from the university provided an interview, however no community stakeholders were able to provide an interview. Though nine university stakeholders and gatekeepers were asked to provide names or contact information for possible community interviewees, ultimately no community stakeholders are included in data sources. The disciplines or areas of university stakeholders ranged from community engagement, engaged learning, community development, and health initiatives, and a range of positions from Senior Vice President to Graduate Student Researchers were represented.

Instrumentation

As a collective case study, this research employed several forms of data collection to ensure adequate contextual data were present, to assist in the triangulation of data, and to provide deeper, richer descriptions of each case (Merriam, 1998). This included the collection of documents, archival records, website information, direct observation, participant observation, interviews, and physical artifacts as available (Yin, 2014). Interviews played a key role in gathering data on the process by which institutions determine the impact their community engagement activity has within the local community. Interviews also informed how the process is understood and constructed from the perspective of community leaders involved.

The use of a semi-structured interview protocol was developed in order to investigate the process by which each university addresses the research question within their own context. A protocol was created for both university stakeholders and community stakeholders. Due to the exploratory nature of the study and subsequent lack of protocols available for research, a pilot phase was initiated to help refine the interview guides as well as the study's design and planned implementation. The pilot phase is described in greater detail in the section on data collection. This phase informed how the university and community interview protocols were revised as well as how the study was executed. The final set of interview guides were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Louisville (see Appendix A).

The interview protocols are centered on the guiding research question, the process by which institutions determine community engagement impact within the local community. It is divided into sections that address the various process elements described above. These process elements are reflected across the literature describing

institutional assessment processes (Holland et al., 2003; Holton et al., 2015; Rosing, 2015; Watson-Thompson, 2015; Young, 1998), yet how they would manifest in institutional cases was less clear. To ensure consistency in the way information was collected and interviews were conducted across cases, Yin's (2009; 2014) logic of replication guided data collection. The logic of replication requires precision across data collection procedures in order to ensure a reproduction of the study is feasible in successive studies. This is also delineated in the data collection section.

Both university and community stakeholders were asked a very similar set of questions. This was designed to be able to identify where large gaps in identification or understanding of process occur, and why that may be the case. If community stakeholders are largely unaware of institutional assessment processes, this could indicate disconnects in the planning and communication of what constitutes impact and how that is measured. Acknowledging community stakeholders are likely to have an incomplete conceptualization of a process housed within another organization, their familiarity with the process is deemed important. This aligns with both the interpretive and theoretical frameworks associated with the research.

Role of the researcher. Case studies are useful for systematic, thorough collection of data to address research questions that require context-dependent, place-based analysis (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Within this context, subjective meanings are created by participants given social, historical, economic or other influences. The researcher then must attempt to interpret data collected across participants and other sources, though this is shaped by their own positionality (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2005). Qualitative researchers use instruments, but these are often designed by the researcher

(Creswell, 2013), as was the case in this study. The researcher is also an instrument and must have skills and values that align with quality research, such as good listening skills and the ability to ask good questions (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). The researcher is tasked with managing the “continuous interaction between the theoretical issues being studied and the data being collected. Mediating this interaction will require delicate judgment calls” (Yin, 2014, p. 72). “Understanding,” Doyle (2007) writes, “requires a person to engage with his or her own biases and understandings. It is only by engaging with them reflectively that the researcher can then alter (her) own understanding so that it becomes closer to that of the actual experience of the participant” (p. 888-889). The background and experiences of the researcher are important in providing transparency regarding the researcher as a contributing instrument.

Within this study, the researcher has a background in community development and higher education, including service- and experiential-learning, volunteer coordination, and student affairs. In conducting assessment for these activities, questions of coordination, accuracy, and involvement of community members in matters of the local community arose, alongside an interest in how to develop more rigorous accountability processes. In studying this work, the researcher became particularly interested in the process of alignment, deliberate use of assets, and coordination of efforts to better direct resources toward community-identified goals. It is generally considered advantageous to have a researcher familiar with the topic of interest in case studies (Yin, 2014), as this allows their expertise to benefit the research as long as it does not cloud the process or analysis. The use of bracketing, peer review, and audit trails mitigate that possibility.

The researcher perspective guiding this study leans toward institutional approaches that employ more of a strategic assessment framework rather than a reactive one, and one in which the community is entrenched in decision-making regarding its own wellbeing, reflected in accountability practices. This lens runs the risk of coloring interpretations of the data and consequently what implications are drawn. However, it also serves as a connection point for the critical interpretive framework employed in the study. In this criticality, reality is embedded in the material world in which conditions for community members can be examined in real time and space (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003; Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007). Objectivity was sought through the recognition and stating of this partiality, as well as the employment of bracketing, triangulation, reflexivity through memoing, as well as the creation of an audit trail and peer debriefing and examination. The use of case analysis meeting forms as part of the audit trail are described in greater detail below within data analysis. In revealing this positionality, readers may gain a better sense of the perspective through which data analysis occurred.

Rigor of Research Design

A variety of design choices and techniques were employed to ensure a quality research design and subsequent analysis. To enhance credibility, eight months of data collection and analysis were invested. This included a two-month investment in a pilot phase to test the interview protocols and planned implementation and revise all materials. It also included repeated conversations in the full study with participants from both the university and community, who helped add context and insight to the initial design and served as a point of reference during data collection and analysis. Triangulation through multiple data sources was employed, as were member checks during data analysis.

Member checking involved what Doyle (2007) named “participative member checking” (p. 908), allowing participants to choose how member checking would take place. This could include electronic, audio, or hard copies of transcripts, or have them read by someone. Participants were offered the opportunity to review the full transcript to ensure accuracy in the depiction of the interview should they wish to do so. Select participants were also sent an outline of initial coding categorizations and asked to provide feedback to enhance accuracy from their viewpoint. Gatekeepers were also given the opportunity to read their case in full to check for accuracy and possible bias.

Transferability was addressed in large part by purposive sampling. Participants were selected that reflect institutional and community representatives most aligned with the research question, which informs subsequent discussion. Kitto, Chesters, and Grbich (2008) suggest transferability involves asking whether or not “a critical evaluation of the application of findings to other similar contexts (has) been made... (and whether) the relevance of these findings to current knowledge, policy, and practice or to current research (has) been discussed” (p. 244). Efforts to build rich, thick description (Franz et al., 2012; Tracy, 2010) throughout each case and to link study results to advance theoretical understandings that may be relevant in many contexts have also been employed to ensure transferability (Freeman, 2014; Kuper, Lingard, & Levinson, 2008). Dependability was pursued through the creation of an audit trail, as each step was cataloged in a research log from March through the conclusion of data collection in February 2018, as well as triangulation and fact-checking through the supplemental documents derived throughout the study. Finally, confirmability was sought through sustained reflexivity, attempted in large part through regular memoing during data

collection and analysis. Additionally, triangulation of documentation with interviews and observations added to the ongoing check of assumptions and possible bias, and both peer debriefing and peer examination helped ensure the systematic compilation of an audit trail and inform emerging analysis.

Yin (2014) offers four principles for good social science research, particularly as it relates to case studies. First, the analysis should attend to all of the evidence. This includes exploring all rival hypotheses and interpretations, using multiple forms of data and not ignoring possible outliers or data that may seem irrelevant or counterintuitive, but demonstrating an attendance to them. In this study, that included following up on process issues that highlighted one perspective to determine if other perspectives were present. An example of this included administrators suggesting that faculty were frequently non-compliant in reporting activity. When asked about noncompliance, faculty actually shared a similar perspective. Another example, of specific importance to this study, was the pursuit of multiple interpretations of community involvement and perspective in the assessment process, particularly from external community representatives.

Second, the analysis should address all plausible rival interpretations. Taking all available evidence into account to provide as accurate a representation as possible, Yin suggests a divergent interpretation can be characterized as a ‘rival’ interpretation and noted in the study to provide opportunities to explore the rival in future research. Data collection at each university produced a relatively consistent institutional narrative, yet rival interpretations emerged in all three cases. A common example within this study was a difference in understandings among stakeholders. In one case, several university participants articulated a clear process of community engagement assessment and one

interviewee suggested no such process really existed. In another case, several university and community stakeholders felt that there was a clear path toward an institutional strategy to determine impact, while one university stakeholder maintained that such a strategy was not evident and impact could not be determined. These rival interpretations were explored from many angles and data sources as they emerged. They were ultimately logged as rival interpretations when there was not sufficient data to support their inclusion in analysis in a more central way. The diverging perspectives were still included in data analysis within the context of the role and perspective of the interviewee and provided additional insight. Stake (2005) notes that qualitative researchers are interested in a diversity of perspectives and lived realities and suggests triangulation of data assists in uncovering these different realities. Analysis must negotiate interpretations from realities as they present in the data through a transparent and clear path of analysis (Creswell, 2013; Miles et al., 2013).

Third, Yin (2014) also suggests the analysis should focus on the most important or significant aspect of the cases. It may be tempting to explore the many facets of the question and avenues for accountability, yet by narrowing the research to its most significant aspects, the quality of the study may be enhanced. This study focuses primarily on institutional assessment processes and limits its attention to other aspects of community engagement to adhere to this principle. Many aspects of community engagement in practice emerged during data analysis, such as the benefits of engagement or how various programs operate. Yet, these various threads were kept as areas of interest and left out of the central focus of analysis.

Finally, expert or prior knowledge should be used as appropriate. Prior knowledge needs to be checked within the qualitative research process so as not to become an inherent bias or color the data collection and analysis processes, yet it can influence the study's connection to current thinking, practice, and discourse. Expert knowledge entered most directly during the pilot phase of data collection, wherein experts from institutions across the country provided insight and direction in creating more rigorous and clear data collection tools. A running theme across these aspects of ensuring a quality design is the employment of a systematic, researched, and transparent methodology, from design through analysis and discussion of findings. Various tools used in the systematic collection of data handling can be found in the appendices section (see Appendix A and B for tools included here).

Limitations, Assumptions, and Delimitations

The scope of this study involves certain opportunities and challenges. The broadness of the research question allows for an examination of the full range of the assessment process, as well as investigations into the various stages of determining impact as it relates to each case. The design also facilitates exploration of the question of outcomes and impact from an institutional level, rather than from the more limited purview of a single program, initiative, or course in isolation. Universities often have many exemplary programs, initiatives, faculty, students and other working parts, yet how they keep up with and evaluate simultaneous and isolated activities is of primary concern. Knowing similar research universities are dealing with the same challenges, but with different contextual elements, examining each case individually and then across cases allows for a more appropriate analysis given the stage of this research area. Stake (2005)

suggests that both case studies and multiple case studies are “usually studies of particularization more than generalization” (p. 8), noting that the advantage in case study design is an acute interest in the local situation, not how it generalizes to other situations. Yet, building cases using grounded theory can also serve as a step toward understanding a theory or unifying model.

Limitations. Recognizing the advantages of this research design, there are also limitations. First, in describing a set of practices from the perspective of multiple stakeholders, it is difficult to determine whether or not the full scope of the process was captured. It is challenging to ascertain what data were not provided that better capture the institutional case. This may be exacerbated with community representatives, as it was up to the institution to determine which community leaders best fit the criteria of a rich informant. Given that selected community stakeholders are likely to be well-regarded and in good relationship with university administrators, a positive bias toward the university is possible. Access to the community and community voice was also difficult, particularly for Case Three, though it is an integral component to the data collection process. Observational data were also challenging, as institutional processes take place over long stretches of time, beyond the ability to watch and track systematically. It was not possible within each case to attend meetings or forums in which evaluation of community engagement was the focus, given time and travel constraints.

Additionally, this study attempts to examine multiple cases to provide comparative data, though it is not large enough in scope to also provide comparisons across various institutional sizes, types, sectors, and other characteristics, which would contribute to further understanding of how process varies by context. It also cannot

address impact as it relates to students, faculty, and other stakeholders not included within the primary focus of the study. Finally, this study is focused on impact as it relates to the community. As partnerships increasingly demonstrate an ability to build capacity and create community-level changes (e.g. Collins, 2015; Officer et al., 2013), it is important to track and record what those community-level changes are. To assess the impact in a community through outputs that connect to measurable outcomes, it will be necessary to continuously define impact (Brewer, 2011). It is beyond the scope of this study to list or delineate impact that resulted from community engagement at a particular institution. This requires sustained, comprehensive assessment over time (Bosma et al., 2010; Nichols et al., 2015). The focus of this study instead is on the processes institutions employ to do so.

Assumptions. This research encompasses several assumptions that should also be noted. As reflected in the literature on community engagement in research and practice, there is an underlying assumption that this work is often piecemeal and anecdotal in nature. Institutions lean on certain programs or stories as evidence to reflect a larger narrative (Hart & Northmore, 2010). A consistent, coherent, and accurate accounting of not only engagement activity, but activity over time to uncover outcomes and impacts from the work, is likely to be a challenge in each setting. This challenge stems from the fact that research must account for what processes and procedures are at work, while simultaneously attending to what may *not* be present. To do so, professed processes, as well as beliefs about those processes, must be closely examined alongside how those processes and beliefs manifest in tangible ways. This extends to stated values and the examination of values in action.

In addition to the assumption that tracking community engagement outcomes is currently haphazard and fragmented, and that the work is anecdotal in nature, a third assumption stems from the literature on research and practice. This assumption is that there actually may be a coherent and inclusive process to measure outcomes and impact across the institutional domain. Though it may not be identified in its totality through this study, it is possible. This assumption influences the researcher's tone and approach to data collection. It suggests there may be no "perfect process" to examine, rather an exploration of what is currently being done, what processes appear to best address the ultimate goal of understanding community impact, and what challenges exist that inhibit the ability to do so. Through this process the ultimate goal is to provide enough detail to the reader to demonstrate any conclusions drawn make sense (Merriam, 1998).

A final assumption associated with the research relates to the institutional complexity prevailing in large, public, research universities. Knowing that it is currently difficult to collaborate and cooperate across varying departmental silos, this research questions what might be possible if greater coordination was introduced. Would the vast resources of the institution, including individual projects, human capital, time, and funding, make a more direct impact on community-identified goals if they were better coordinated? Is the individuality of different community engagement efforts facilitating a more isolated, limited set of outcomes than would be possible with more institutional intentionality? This line of questioning was present from study conception through data analysis to study conclusions, raising questions related to organizational strategy and deployment of available resources.

Delimitations. Given the complexity of the of the assessment process at an institution, with varying community engagement characterizations and activities, the difficulty in knowing how often, where, to what degree, and within what frameworks engagement takes place, it is difficult to delimit the idea of process. On a practical level, the research question explores the technical details of defining, identifying, tracking and reporting, benchmarking and using data, and involvement of the community, yet the concept of process may go much further. For example, certain service-learning courses at a university may focus on a critical interpretive framework, while others take no such perspective and simply require a number of hours spent doing community work of one's choice in conjunction with the curriculum. These service-learning courses will have very different outcomes, and possibly impact, on not only the college students participating but on others involved or affected by the process. Yet, for categorization purposes at the university, the courses hold no separate distinction. Additionally, it is beyond the scope of this research to get deeply involved with what outputs, outcomes, and inputs are resulting from the institutional efforts, which may help shed further light on the research question. The study is focused primarily on the *how* and not what demonstrations of impact have resulted. The exercise of examining process, however, may help institutions better understand the context and data supporting their demonstrations of impact.

Data Collection

Data collection took place over the course of eight months, from July of 2017 to February of 2018. Data were collected first in a pilot phase following approval by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Louisville in July, and all protocols were refined and submitted back to the IRB for amendment approval. Due to the exploratory

nature of the study and subsequent lack of protocols available for research, the pilot phase was initiated to help refine the interview guides as well as the study's design and planned implementation. Three different informed consents were created, including one for all pilot interviews, one for full study university stakeholder interviewees, and one for full study community stakeholders.

Pilot Phase Data Collection

Data collection began with a search of public universities within the CUMU network that fit inclusion criteria, which were then cross-referenced with the list of all institutions with the Carnegie Classification designation. The initial search produced 84 possible institutions, which were then narrowed according to accessibility, stated focus on the local community as a component of community engagement, and relative comparability. This refinement occurred through a search of publicly available information to identify which institutions appeared to be involved in community engagement work influencing community-level outcomes within a local geographical area. A list of 16 institutions was compiled, six universities for the pilot phase and ten for the full study. These were then divided into target and contingency universities, with the understanding that an institution may be unable or unwilling to participate and prioritized by the order in which they would be contacted.

One target and one contingency institution participated in the pilot phase of data collection. The first institution is a member of CUMU but does not currently have the Carnegie Classification designation, while the second does hold the Carnegie designation but is a land-grant, more rural institution. These characteristics proved useful in examining the inclusion criteria for the study. Individuals from each university provided

interviews, shared documents from their university, and gave feedback on the study. These five individuals occupied various spaces within their institution, such as the director of a community engagement center, associate dean, or the director of a program or initiative focused on work with and within the community. Each had a unique lens to provide feedback, contributing different insights regarding content, flow, and additional data that may be of use. These conversations produced approximately 4 hours and 55 minutes of recorded audio.

Pilot interviews are particularly useful for exploring a respondent's thought process while answering questions (Sampson, 2004). Given that the questions from each interview protocol had not been tested, it was important to better understand how each question would be heard and understood, as well as how questions would be interpreted when delivered in sequence. Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014) recommend cognitive interviews when this is the case and elements of cognitive interviewing were therefore incorporated into pilot interviews. The authors suggest cognitive interviewing may prove more useful than field tests in certain instances due to the focus not only on how someone responds, but why. Campanelli (2008) suggests a researcher practice beforehand, write notes immediately after, and analyze data collected from the process, which was done. Campanelli also recommends making use of experts to test questions, in addition to conducting behavior coding and respondent debriefing. Each pilot interview utilized a combination of these methods to varying degrees as well.

For example, earlier pilot interviews involved a higher degree of respondent debriefing, following each question with a pre-determined follow-up question (e.g. "Was that question difficult to answer, and if so, why?"). As clear deficits were identified and

adjusted, many of the initial debrief questions became a less valuable use of time. Each interview also utilized the expertise of the different respondents. An individual at one institution working closely with the day-to-day work of community engagement was able to articulate the specific processes of assessment required, while a high-level administrator at the other pilot institution was able to focus on the institutional stressors relevant to community engagement and corresponding assessment process. Faculty in charge of specific programs or initiatives could describe their work in great detail but were unable to express assessment processes institution-wide, as it was deemed out of their purview. These varying lenses highlighted both procedural and content opportunities available through a revised set of protocols and emphasized the importance of targeting very specific individuals for interviews in the full study.

Revising the protocols. Notes were taken throughout each interview as well as immediately after, which were transcribed in a Word document. The Word document was then coded for salient points, which were transferred into an Excel spreadsheet to see the full list of abbreviated notes side-by-side with subsequent recommendations. Each question of the original protocol was then put in the Excel and all notes that addressed the question were logged, followed by what changes would be made to it. Recommendations outside of the way a question was worded (i.e. flow or context given) were also included. This process ensured all feedback was incorporated and clear and any changes made were substantiated with data.

Data from the pilot phase proved very useful. Interviews revealed important differences in institutional characteristics, limitations in the original interview protocol, as well as possible themes connected to community engagement assessment at the

institutional level. The two universities involved in the pilot phase shared many institutional characteristics with those included in the full study, yet the differences they held emphasized the importance of the inclusion criteria. At the first institution, individuals stressed importance of their identity as an urban, metropolitan university, which influenced how they perceived and conducted community engagement. Yet, in lacking the Carnegie Classification designation, the institution also lost a comprehensive, institution-wide reporting tool. At the second institution, the university maintained its Carnegie designation and subsequent process for collecting and reporting required information. Yet, its identification as a land-grant institution in a more rural area created a distinctive institutional identity that did not share many of the characteristics found within urban, metropolitan universities. Weerts and Sandmann (2008) discuss these differences within their research, proposing urban institutions may have an even greater sense of being embedded in their communities. This was reflected in pilot conversations, where faculty research was emphasized to a greater degree in the land-grant institution than engagement or service as a core institutional identity. The pilot interviews involved a small sample of individuals, however, and are not generalizable.

Interviews also revealed limitations in the interview protocols and planned implementation. After the coding and review of all feedback discussed above, several changes were made. The design of the initial interview questions began with three definitional questions (i.e. How does your institution define community engagement activity? Local community? Impact?). These questions were intentionally broad, but all respondents expressed feelings of inadequacy in answering, particularly from an institution-wide lens, and expressed feelings of uncertainty and discomfort. This was

addressed by adding more context language to the introduction for interviewees (e.g. “In this next section, I want to explore how three terms are defined at (institution). You may or may not feel you can answer this question for the entire university, but the questions are worded to try and understand how these terms are defined or understood institution-wide.”). Additional context was also added to the entire interview protocol. This ranged from the introduction provided to participants, through the start of each section, to concluding remarks. Pilot interviewees suggested this would help give a needed framework for the research and ensure interviews followed the central research question as closely as possible.

Additionally, each question was updated to varying degree based on collective feedback. For example, one question asked, “How is data used to track progress over time, including benchmarking?” For many respondents, what constituted benchmarking was confusing. Some respondents cited benchmarking as an internal tracking mechanism while others answered using external peer comparisons. That question was revised to ask, “Is data used to track progress over time? If so, how?” It also included the probe, “In other words, does the data you collect in one year inform activities and/or data collection in the next year?” This and other probes were included in the protocol to be used as needed. The community stakeholder protocol was also modified to be more sensitive to questions that a respondent may have no direct knowledge of. The question was also added, “What would a good process for sharing responsibility for local outcomes look like, in your view?” This allowed community stakeholders to reflect on their relationship with the university and explore their own needs, as well as collaborative possibilities among the institution and the community. Collectively, these revisions were

substantive and created an enhanced interview experience while maintaining the original intent of the protocols.

Finally, the interviews informed possible themes connected to community engagement assessment at the institutional level. This affected data collection in two key ways. First, a question was added to both the university and community interview protocol regarding the centralization of university assessment processes. As questions unfolded during the pilot interviews, it became clear that by the time respondents got to the “Relational Aspects of Evaluation Processes” section, they had the impression that centralization of an institution was the goal in order to assess community impact well, and decentralization was a shortcoming. Knowing how decentralized institutions included in this study are (Birnbaum, 1988), it was important to create an interview environment where respondents would not feel as though their current process was somehow inherently flawed. Such an environment could affect a participant’s comfort level as well as possibly influence their responses. It is also not an underlying premise of the research. It was evident that the question of where centralization is needed, what processes should be centralized and what aspects were best left decentralized, should be added. The following question was added:

A related question is how decentralized or centralized an institution should be to support and adequately assess community engagement. Most institutions like (institution) would say they are decentralized, or siloed. Knowing that, I’m curious how you would describe the level of centralization or decentralization here at (institution), and how you feel about that. Follow-up: What should be

centralized, if anything, or what works well being decentralized? (Tell me more about that).

Second, the themes that emerged within the pilot interviews informed the approach to interviews in the full study. The theme of centralization/decentralization surfaced as a key question in the concept of process and was discussed in each interview conducted. In pilot interviews, the theme of moving from outputs to outcomes emerged in a variety of questions and was answered according to the flow of conversation as well as a participant's background or current role. Therefore, within full study interviews, participants were asked about how they conceptualize assessment progressing from outputs to outcomes according to what their role is and where it fit in the conversation. Rather than asking a stand-alone, standardized question about this idea, it was explored with each participant in context. Conversations also led to the question of what the core mission of a higher education institution is, particularly for large and public universities, when discussing the possibilities around structure and processes needed for authentic, accurate assessment. When a participant in the full study led the conversation in that direction, the theme was explored to better understand the varying perspectives on core mission. Following the pilot interviews and subsequent IRB amendment approval process, full study interviews began six weeks later.

Full Study Data Collection

Case studies commonly involve the collection of multiple types of data (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2005), as was the case here, to aid in triangulation and inform the research question. Ultimately, 16 institutions were invited to participate with the understanding that they would be asked to provide multiple sources of data, participate in a series of

semi-structured interviews, and help facilitate similar semi-structured interviews with community representatives also involved in the assessment process.

One target institution agreed to participate upon first request (Institution A) and a second target institution agreed to participate two months after the initial request (Institution B). The third target agreed to participate four months after the initial request (Institution C). The timing associated with data collection allowed for an opportunity to reflect, code, and analyze data in an iterative way over time. The first round of requested documentation included materials describing community engagement work in the local community, which may be in the form of an annual report, strategic plan, or other institutional documents. Following a cataloging and review of initial information, a second round of data collection occurred with a campus visit (Institutions A and B) or collection of phone calls over four months (Institution C). The second round of data collection included:

1. Interviews with the coordinating office or unit responsible for institution-wide reporting of community engagement
2. Interviews with community leaders assisting in the engagement work
3. Additional documentation of community engagement work
4. Archives or records available regarding the engagement work or initiative
5. Accreditation materials related to community engagement
6. Strategic plans or other documents that describe institution-wide efforts for community engagement in the local community
7. Institutional descriptive data, community demographics, and other contextual materials available

A systematic, structured approach is needed in data collection and subsequent analysis (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Yin, 2009). This approach facilitates the continuing and iterative movement between the original data and the conceptualization and interpretations that emerge from those data (Spencer, Ritchie, & O'Connor, 2003). In collecting the above data, a common set of criteria helped organize and catalog information in a consistent way. This structure ensures data are reliable across cases, as comprehensive as the research design intended, and replicable in successive studies (Yin, 2013). The following tables are presented to delineate the structured areas of data collection, data points, and sources of data across institutional characteristics, process elements, and community characteristics.

Delineation of data collection. Institutional characteristics assist in understanding the context a university resides within. Beere (2009), using data from the Carnegie Classification, suggests that a university's partnerships seem to be affected by factors such as campus size, mission, and nature of the university, such as distinctions as high research or comprehensive institutions. Additionally, Beere cites areas of expertise, such as the presence of professional schools, the demographics of the neighborhood, and the history of the institution all may factor in to manifestations of engagement. Weerts and Sandmann (2008) list mission, history, setting, and role within a state system of higher education as factors that may influence institutional approaches to engagement. There is no consensus on what institutional characteristics are of greatest importance to describing institutions as cases, and community engagement assessment varies widely at the institution-level (Furco & Miller, 2009). Institutions highlight engagement in different areas, beyond academic departments to divisions such as student affairs or

athletics (Janke & Medlin, 2015; Carnegie, 2017). Given this, a framework of common institutional characteristics offers a clear, consistent foundation to illustrate basic university descriptors to start rich, thick description of each case (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) was selected for this purpose (see Table 2). Examining multiple indicators across institutions aids in understanding initial descriptive data for both individual cases as well as in comparisons across cases.

Table 2

Institutional Characteristics

Area	Indicator	Source
General	Type	IPEDS
	Campus Setting	IPEDS
	Established	IPEDS
	Student Population	IPEDS
	Student to Faculty Ratio	IPEDS
	Carnegie Classification	IPEDS
Cost & Financial Descriptors	Estimated Tuition & Fees (In state & Out-of-state)	IPEDS
	Average Net Price	IPEDS
	Cohort Default Rates	IPEDS
Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	IPEDS
	Acceptance Rate	IPEDS
	Graduation Rate (4- and 6-yr)	IPEDS
Programs	Number/Type	IPEDS
Accreditation	Accrediting Body	IPEDS
Other Outstanding Features	Athletics	IPEDS, institution website, interviews
	Veteran Programming	IPEDS, institution website, interviews
	Other	Interviews & Follow-up research online

Note. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

As discussed in earlier chapters and sections, the elements of institutional processes to determine impact include four key sections: (a) what information institutions

seek, (b) how that information is identified, tracked, and reported, (c) how it is used, and (d) who is involved in the decision-making process (Holland, 2001; Holland et al., 2003; Rosing, 2015; Watson-Thompson, 2015; Young, 1998). For the purposes of this study, process spans from definitional use, to recording and tracking, to benchmarking and data usage, and finally to relational aspects of evaluation processes. To track this information in a systematic manner, a data collection plan was developed (see Table 3). Due to the extensive amount of information gathered in multiple forms, as is desired in a case study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006), the structure ensures consistency across cases in data sources and collection procedures, and in subsequent analyses (Yin, 2009; 2014).

Table 3

Data Collection Plan for Institutional Process

Process Element	Source	Recording Procedure	Plan of Analysis
Definitions	Websites	Word document	Code in NVivo
	Interviews	Transcription	Code in NVivo
	Annual Reports	Word or PDF document	Code in NVivo
Tracking & Reporting	Interviews	Transcription	Code in NVivo
	Database (Excel, Volunteer Management Software, etc.)	Researcher Notes	Catalog in Excel
	Online Platform (Campus Labs, etc.)	Researcher Notes	Catalog in Excel
Benchmarking	Interviews	Transcription	Code in NVivo
	Excel or other Database in use	Researcher Notes	
	Reports	Word or PDF document	Code in NVivo
Use of Data	Interviews	Transcription	Code in NVivo
	Observations (Meetings)	Researcher Notes	Code in NVivo & Memoing

	Committees	Meeting Minutes; Researcher Notes if present	Code in NVivo & Connect to Memoing
Relational Involvement	Interviews	Transcription	Code in NVivo
	Organizational Chart	Word or PDF document	Catalog in Excel & Save in NVivo

Note. NVivo software for qualitative data management.

In addition to institutional characteristics and process elements, community characteristics are important to contextualize the case and adhere to the place-based, context-dependent nature of both community engagement and case study research (Ghetto & McCunney, 2015; Peterson, 2009; Willis et al., 2007). Stake (2005) notes that cases are deeply embedded in their own situations, in their own contexts and backgrounds, and should be understood within these spaces. Contexts that are commonly important in case studies include the historical, cultural, physical, social, economic, political, ethical, and aesthetic contexts, though different contexts are emphasized in different case studies (Stake, 2005). For this study, the context of community is preeminent as it is the central domain of interest. Trying to understand and convey community, particularly as they are not monocultural entities (Checkoway, 2001; Sandy & Holland, 2006), involves exploring these elements to the extent a researcher is able to do so (Willis et al., 2007). The phenomenon, in this instance process, should be viewed as “multiply sequenced, multiply contextual, and functioning coincidentally” (Stake, 2005, p. 13). Events and data are interrelated and contextually bound, and the researcher examines issues and contexts as they emerge from the investigative process, carefully documenting where priorities may lie (Stake, 2005). Neglecting the conditions and context may lead to an incomplete or misleading understanding of cases (Yin, 2014).

In multiple, or collective case studies, each case is embedded in its context (Yin, 2014), and each institutional case in this study is embedded in, and tied to, its local community (Fitzgerald et al., 2016). In Chaskin’s (2001) cases studies on comprehensive community initiatives, he offers a relational framework with a set of conditions to consider influencers and characteristics of community capacity. Conditioning influences include safety, residential stability, density of acquaintance, structure of opportunity, patterns of migration, race and class dynamics, and distribution of poor and resources. Characteristics of community capacity include a sense of community, commitment, ability to solve problems, and access to resources (p. 296). Stanton-Nichols, Hatcher, and Cecil (2015), in their evaluation of engagement indicators, include economic, social, and physical quality of life indicators in the area of social return on investment in community work. With these conditions and contexts in mind, a structure for gathering community characteristics was also developed (see Table 4).

Table 4

Data Collection Plan for Community Characteristics

Context Area	Data Point	Source
Cultural	Population	CUMU/Census
	Race/Ethnicity	CUMU/Census
	Median Age	CUMU/Census
	% Population under 18	U.S. Census
Physical	Distance from “community” to institution	Observation/Internet search
	Built Environment in surrounding area	Observation
Social	Educational Attainment	U.S. Census
	Health Indicators	City Report
	SES by zip code (geographical spread)	
Political	Current Governor Party Affiliation	State government website
	Current Mayor Party Affiliation	Local government website
Economic	Employment	U.S. Census
	Top Business Sectors	U.S. Census
	Median Household Income	U.S. Census
	Individuals below poverty level	U.S. Census

Note. Coalition for Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU).

In addition to the above data points, individual level data were collected. Given that respondents may represent a range of backgrounds, experiences, and expertise in community engagement, it was appropriate to attempt to capture those differences to enrich context. Community engagement is also a relational exercise, and one's gender or race and ethnicity may influence how they perceive the work of the institution and the relationships present (Checkoway, 2001; Murry, Kotchick, Wallace, Ketchen, Eddings, Heller, & Collier, 2004). Data were therefore collected on each participant's role, years in their current role, gender, race/ethnicity, and the number of months or years involved in community engagement assessment. These data provided a better sense of who was interviewed, and context when issues of race, ethnicity, gender, or experience in community engagement were explored.

Data collection was guided by these structures, and pursued systematically within and across cases (Creswell, 2014; Miles et al., 2013; Yin, 2009). The collection of data was also done iteratively, guided in large part by inductive reasoning and led by data grounded within each context (Willis et al., 2007). Across cases, 20 individuals provided an interview for a total of 19 hours, 12 minutes, and 35 seconds of recorded audio. This includes eight individuals in Case One (07:23:27), seven individuals in Case Two (07:03:38) and five individuals in Case Three (04:45:30).

Ethical Considerations and Protection of Participants

Several ethical considerations were taken into account. First, with the amount and types of data needed to thoroughly explore each case, institutions run the risk of being identified. Discussions of this fact were explicit before each institution decided to

participate in the study. It was communicated to institutions that this examination of process could benefit them in their own institutional practice, yet the possible negative consequences (i.e. perceived shortcomings in practice and/or disconnect with community partner perspectives) were also made clear and discussed. During the interview process, two explicit requests were made by interviewees not to make the institution's name public and the request has been honored. Institutions are instead identified as Institution A, Institution B, and Institution C. Efforts not to identify institutions are reflected in the descriptions of each case and information provided by participants. Interviewees names are not used, nor their role, nor any specific wording that may lead to identification, which was discussed with them prior to signing the informed consent. Quotes provided by participants are masked by the use of "they" and the specific language of a geography, office, or other identifier were generalized. A recurring example of this is in the use of "central coordinating office" to describe each institution's office for community engagement. The general language should help avoid identification. Yet, individuals are free to share involvement of their own accord.

All data have been stored on a password-protected computer and were shared only among the researcher and dissertation committee. Electronic, document, and transcribed data were saved in NVivo software for coding, with pseudonyms created for each institution as well as each interview participant. Each participant was renamed according to their institutional case and interview (i.e. Case 1, Interview 3 was renamed C1 I3). Names and organizations are not used here and will not be used in any written reports or publications regarding the research. The exception for this is in the institutional report provided to each university following the study, which will be sent only to study

participants. This brief report will include a set of recommendations in order to provide direct feedback and benefit to those who gave of their time and insight. These reports will include the institution's name. The benefits of working with each institution to examine processes, improve practice, and better understand the mechanisms by which impact might be manifested more fully in the local community were deemed to outweigh potential risks.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved an iterative process as interviews were conducted, documents reviewed, and codes added and adjusted. This included the collection of institutional characteristics, process elements, community characteristics, and other contextual data, used in conjunction with document analysis and interviews. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and transferred to NVivo Software for data analysis. To begin analysis, interviews were read twice, and a preliminary set of codes developed to begin to organize the data. Saldana (2013) notes that a code in qualitative research is “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013) contend that coding is a form of analysis, albeit an initial and preliminary component, as it begins to capture early reflections from data. Coding is thus the transitional link between data collection and more extensive data analysis (Saldana, 2013). Data analysis in this study is primarily informed by both Saldana and Miles et al., as first-cycle, or initial coding, informs subsequent data collection, coding, and data analysis.

Data were first collected and analyzed as a single case, followed by cross-case comparisons (Creswell, 2013; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Stake, 2005). Constant comparative analysis (Merriam, 1998) guided the iterative process of analysis both within and across cases, leading to first-, second-, and third-cycle coding. First-cycle coding focused on in vivo coding, and employed descriptive, process, and evaluation coding as well. In vivo coding utilizes the participant's own words and characterizations. Descriptive coding allows for a broad understanding of what data reflect and the overarching content of the study (Saldana, 2013). Descriptive coding, according to Miles et al. (2013), are short summaries of a basic topic or passage, while process coding is more focused on "observable and conceptual action within the data" (p. 75). Process coding aids in identifying elements of action, addressing the key question of how activities move toward impact, as well as how assessment of impact progressed through a participant's recounting. Evaluation coding involves assigning judgments "about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy" (p. 76). Data analysis occurred alongside data collection to inform subsequent data collection and analysis. Data were analyzed through the lens of the theoretical framework to examine conceptualizations of impact through the community development orientation guiding the study.

Several tools were used in data analysis to assist in the systematic, structured handling of data. The first was a data accounting log, which Miles et al. (2013) describe as "a management method that simply documents on a single form when and what types of data have been collected from specific participants and sites" (p. 122). The accounting log assisted in cataloging the various types of data collected, when they were collected, and served as "evidential bricks on which an analysis can be built" (p. 124). Without the

log, the researcher runs the risk of missing or misplacing data. The log helps to confirm all data sources were pursued and allows for a visual representation of types of data, types of questions asked, and types of respondents in one document, in this case an excel spreadsheet.

A second tool used for the organization of data was the Case Analysis Meeting Form. “In any study that has multiple cases, the meaning of what is happening in each case tends to increasingly get lost in the welter of fieldwork, coding, and other preliminary analyses” (Miles et al., 2013, p. 128). The case analysis form provides a structure for the colleague- and peer-review meetings that capture emerging thoughts and impressions. This was useful in dissertation research, wherein the researcher had a committee of scholars to debrief and explore emerging data with, and it helped organize the conversations and central themes that were multiplying during data collection and analysis. The case analysis meeting form focuses on five main areas: (a) main themes, impressions, and summary statements, (b) explanations, speculations, hypotheses, propositions, and assertions, (c) alternative interpretations, explanations, and disagreements, (d) next steps for data collection, and (e) implications for revision and/or updating of the coding scheme (p. 128). This structure was particularly useful for identifying rival explanations and in critically assessing data to investigate pattern matching (Yin, 2014), as well as a way to inform and enrich memoing.

Role-ordered matrices were also used. A role-ordered matrix, as described by Miles et al. (2013), sorts data in rows and columns gathered from participants, or role occupants. “The display systematically permits comparisons across roles on issues of interest to a study and tests where people in the same role see issues in comparable ways”

(p. 162). This is useful in this study that examines both the university stakeholder perspective as well as the community partner perspective. The matrix assisted in organizing and assessing questions such as: When asked similar questions, did university and community stakeholders answer similarly or in distinctive ways? What were the commonalities in responses? The differences? What motivated differing responses? In what context did roles influence participant responses? Examining these questions in a methodical way allowed for deeper understanding of context and variations in individuals' perceptions of the questions they were asked to reflect on. It also allowed the researcher to examine properties and dimensions, conditions, action/interaction, and consequences of action in accordance with grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Summary

This collective case, grounded theory study was designed to explore institutional processes to determine impact in the local community. By aligning with the need to engage multiple sources of data, analyze each institution as a place-based, context-dependent phenomenon, and heed the exploratory stage of research in this field, this design is most advantageous. The use of grounded theory and a constant comparative method of data collection and analysis, along with a systematic, structured, and transparent account of these processes, facilitates deeper understanding of the research question. Led by a data-driven research process, subsequent findings are embedded in current institutional contexts and can provide advancement in both theory and practice regarding higher education institutional assessment practices. By incorporating community voice into the research design, the needed emphasis on how communities are affected alongside their university counterparts is also addressed.

CHAPTER IV

CASE ONE: INSTITUTION A

Institution A was established just before the 19th century began, 20 years after the city in which it is located was founded. The institution struggled as a small seminary school for many years, and then adopted different names and configurations over the next 100 years while it grew and evolved. It began to take shape as the university it is known as today in the early 20th century, adding schools, programs, and offices as the decades progressed. In the mid-20th century, a movement initiated the desegregation of Institution A university-wide and the subsequent closure of the local all-Black municipal college. Institution A had been municipally supported for many decades in the 20th century, yet twenty years after desegregating, the institution joined the state's postsecondary system. By participating in the state system, in which it still resides today, the institution is structurally linked to the financial and policy vacillations that occur across the state's higher education and political landscape.

The university has a long history with the city and regional area, though its tempered progress toward inclusion of all races and genders within its student, staff, and faculty populations parallels institutions across the United States in the last 200 years (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Thelin, 1985). Research has shown that early and intentional programming for students of color has an impact on their

success, yet historically American higher education institutions resisted desegregation and tailored programming for students of color (Peterson, Blackburn, Gamson, Arce, Davenport, & Mingle, 1978). Institution A shares in this history, which is reflected in areas of the case findings discussed below.

Outline of Case One

The case study on Institution A begins by describing the state and metro area in which the university is located, followed by a description of its institutional characteristics. A review of data sources then precedes the discussion of findings. The findings are organized first by contextual factors, including how respondents feel the relationship between Institution A and the city is unique. Next, the ways in which the three key terms of community engagement activity, local community, and impact are operationalized are outlined to add additional context. Within this institutional framework, the central research question is then explored regarding the processes Institution A uses to determine its impact in the local community. The chapter concludes with a discussion of emergent themes, including major, supporting, and institution-specific themes.

Description of the State and Metro Area

The city in which Institution A resides was established later in the 18th century with intersecting Southern and Midwestern influence. Situated along a major river, the city grew into what is now one of the top 30 largest cities and public school systems in the United States. The city is also the largest in the state. In the early 2000's, the city and the county in which it is located merged into one unified jurisdiction, now a metro area, and the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) includes 13 counties and over 1,300,000

people. According to the 2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the top five industries in the county for the civilian employed population over 16 years old are healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, retail trade, educational services, and accommodation and food services, respectively.

The state and the county differ slightly across cultural, social, economic, physical, and political characteristics. A table was created to more easily examine similarities and differences visually (see Table 5). State and county characteristics were informed by Chaskin’s (2001) relational framework, utilizing various sets of conditions to better understand elements that influence or describe community capacity. As the table shows, the county within which Institution A resides is more diverse than the state, with slightly higher educational attainment and median household income. Rates of poverty and unemployment are comparable. The county is considered the urban center in a largely rural, agricultural state. These data provide initial context for this characterization.

Table 5

Case One Comparison of State and County Community Characteristics

Community Characteristic	State	MSA
Total Population	4,400,000	1,300,000
Race	88% White	81% White
	8% Black or African American	14% Black or African American
	3% Hispanic or Latino	4% Hispanic or Latino
	2% Two or more races	3% Two or more races
	1% Asian	2% Asian
Median Age	38.6 years	38.8 years
Gender	51%	51%
Percentage of Population with a High School Diploma or Equivalent	85%	89%

Percentage of the Population Under Age 18	23%	23%
Percent Unemployment	5% in 2016, down from 6% in 2013	5% in 2016, down from 6% in 2013
Percent of Population 16 Years and Over in the Labor Force	59%	65%
Median Household Income	\$44,811	\$52,437
Percentage of All People whose Income in the Last 12 Months was Below the Poverty Level	19%	14%
Percentage of Children Under 18 whose Income in the Last 12 Months was Below the Poverty Level	26%	20%
Party Affiliation of the Current Governor and Mayor, respectively	Republican Party	Democratic Party

Note. Data are derived from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and are rounded to help reduce possible identification of the institution. Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) describes the larger geographical area surrounding Institution A.

Institutional Characteristics

Institution A is located within the center of the county, approximately three miles from the downtown area. It is a 4-year, public, urban, metropolitan university, holds the Carnegie Classification, and is a member of CUMU. The university is classified by Carnegie as a Doctoral University: Highest Research Activity and has over 1,800 faculty members and over 7,000 in total faculty and staff. Out of the approximately 22,000 students, 73.3% are undergraduates, 79% of whom are enrolled full-time. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 74% of those students are White, 11% are Black or African American, 5% are Hispanic/Latino, 5% are two or more races, and 4% are Asian. Of the undergraduate population, 82% are 24 years of age or younger, and 82% come to the university from within state. Just 1% of undergraduate students are

from foreign countries. Institution A has an admissions rate of 73% and an overall graduation rate of 53%.

The institution has 12 colleges and schools across three separate campuses. The operating budget for the university is over one billion dollars, only 10% of which currently comes directly from the state. The athletic programs associated with the university are highly active and have regularly produce award-winning teams and individual athletes. The university also hosts several institutional staples in the local community, including a Level One Trauma research and teaching hospital in the downtown area of the city and office spaces within various partner areas of the county. The institution is a large, decentralized university taking on many of Birnbaum's (1988) characteristics of an anarchical system. In this type of institutional setting, people, departments, committees, and other structures that coordinate campus activity change regularly, and evolve as temporal, spatial, and contextual factors influence participation. Activity is driven by individuals within mostly autonomous departments and schools, based in large part on meritocracy and faculty expertise (Birnbaum, 1988).

Review of Data Sources

Data collection for Institution A included a series of interviews with university and community stakeholders involved in engagement and assessment, as well as several other data sources. These included community engagement documents, archives and records available, accreditation materials, strategic plans, website data, and other institutional and community descriptive data, as well as other documentation available online or through participants. The sample of interviewees was secured through initial conversations with a gatekeeper, subsequent conversations with potential and confirmed

participants, online searches, and recommendations by those aware of the study. At Institution A, eight individuals provided an interview, five females and three males. Five of these interviews were conducted with university stakeholders, and three with community stakeholders. Five participants identified as White or Caucasian, two as African American, and one as multi-ethnic. When asked how many months or years they had been involved in assessment of community engagement, responses ranged from five years to 35 years, though the average estimated experience in assessment of community engagement work was 21.8 years. The disciplines or areas of university stakeholders ranged from community engagement, institutional research, health, and diversity, and positions ranged from executive directors, vice presidents and deans, to coordinators. Community stakeholders' disciplines or areas included education, health, and ministry, and participants held positions such as vice president or leadership positions on Institution A's university-community advisory board.

Findings

The findings that follow are derived from the data sources described above. The unique relationship between the institution and city, as described by interviewees, is discussed first. Next, the ways in which the three key terms of community engagement activity, local community, and impact are operationalized by the institution are outlined to add additional context. Within this institution-specific framework, the primary processes by which Institution A determines the impact its community engagement activity has in the local community is described. The chapter concludes with a discussion of major themes, followed by supporting and institutional themes. Findings focus on

university processes specifically, rather than all emergent themes, in accordance with Yin's (2014) guidelines for effective case study analysis.

Relationship between Institution and City

Participants responded differently to the question of how the relationship between the city and the institution is unique. Some participants chose to describe different ways partnering between the two takes place, some described ways of being, and others listed specific accomplishments or initiatives that they believe were either positive, negative, or unique. Out of these varying responses, several notable elements arose to further contextualize community engagement at Institution A.

All participants noted the university's involvement in a community proximate to the institution. The initiative attempts to organize and cultivate university activity in this neighboring community to enhance quality of life and economic opportunity for its residents. This initiative was characterized as a commitment by the university to galvanize the resources of the institution for the benefit of its community, and is a key feature of the work of Institution A. Respondents described the different ways in which this initiative represented, and led the way, for community engagement at the institution. For some respondents this meant specific outcomes that have resulted from launching the initiative (e.g. construction of building(s), increased physical presence in community). For others, the initiative represented ways of being with community (e.g. reciprocal, relational, community-led), and still for others the initiative represented an internal shift within the institution to value community engaged work more deeply and more broadly.

Participants also responded to what made the relationship unique by linking institutional characteristics to institutional identity. Because the institution is one of the

largest universities in the state and the largest urban institution, all participants suggested that meant that its resources, including a Level One Trauma university hospital, engendered a responsibility to serve the community. The institution's long history in the community, as well as its urban and metropolitan location, increased an identity that includes service and partnership with its community. One respondent described Institution A as "the go to for innovative programming and practices, and answers" in dealing with issues found in an urban environment. Another respondent reflected, "We have a very unique relationship where the university and the city have collaborated for a long, long time on joint views and interests that we see are necessary for the city." Many respondents tied this institutional identity to an active presence in the community. University and community stakeholders indicated that this presence compels the university to maintain an awareness of its capacity to serve a critical role in community services and community vitality. This responsibility, for many, extended beyond a presence in any capacity or form to an intentionally mutually beneficial presence: "You let the community take the lead on what's best for them...I think that's unique and it's growing."

Both university and community stakeholders indicated that a key component of sustaining this commitment included the creation of a central coordinating office for community engagement work at Institution A. As one community stakeholder recounted, "If there was no community engagement office it would be probably a major disconnect with the city." Further elements of what made the relationship unique included notable initiatives taking place, including financial investments in physical locations within the proximate community. This includes moving office buildings into the area and

collaboration on joint ventures in which various university departments play a role in community initiatives housed within multi-site locations. Additionally, structural linkages between local government, social services, and university positions, in which coordination or representation is explicit, also provided concrete manifestations of collaboration. Finally, external commitments were deemed important, such as incorporating community engagement into a Quality Enhancement Plan for accreditation or other documentation that makes the university visibly accountable to its community engagement.

Defining Key Terms

As discussed in Chapter Three, the central research question included five terms or phrases that require operationalization. What constitutes *institution* and *process* were determined primarily by the researcher, but the terms *community engagement activity*, *local community*, and *impact* were left to each institution to define or conceptualize within their own context. The following section outlines the ways in which the latter three terms are conceptualized at Institution A according to data sources.

Community engagement activity. When participants were asked what constitutes community engagement activity at Institution A, responses varied. The question was centered on how community engagement is defined, thus seeking a more commonly understood, organizational conceptualization if one was present. Respondents used the question to explore not only organizational language, but also defined community engagement in terms of how it is implemented and in terms of what the institutional priorities behind it are. When considering community engagement, participants generally seemed to wonder, “What are we *about* at Institution A?”

Definitions of community engagement therefore explore both structural and conceptual understandings of the term within the university.

Structurally, the Carnegie Classification definition, and its corresponding categories, are the centralizing definition at Institution A. The Carnegie categories used at Institution A include partnerships, outreach, curricular engagement, and engaged scholarship. By aligning with this definition of community engagement and its primary categories, the institution is able to collect information in an organized way to then use in the Carnegie application's iterative process. This practical approach assists the central coordinating office for community engagement in its organizational purposes. One respondent captures the different categories in the following way:

We have partnerships, which are ongoing, very directly, evidence of mutual collaboration there between the external partner and Institution A. We have outreach, which is more just like kind of direct service direct action more short term sort of like going out and painting a house... Thirdly, we have curricular engagement, which is where students work with community partners within coursework within an actual course, and then we have engaged scholarship, where our faculty are out there working with community members as it directly relates to a piece of research that they're doing, so it obviously could be overlap among several of those.

The Carnegie terminology and its nuances are not known by everyone at the university, however, nor by community partners. Community engagement, as well as terms associated with it such as engaged scholarship, are used inconsistently. As a result, the central coordinating office uses the Carnegie framework as the scaffold in its

understanding of community engagement and subsequent data collection but defines it for university stakeholders more broadly. By starting with a broad definition (i.e. “any work with an external partner”), the office can gather as much data as possible about everything happening at the university and narrow definitions and categories from available information. That subsequent categorization is also often a challenge, as a university stakeholder reflected:

I have learned that what one unit may call a practicum, another person may call a field experience and so on. So, there is a difference of how we use terminology across this university. So, when we define CBL (community-based learning) course, we have to be somewhat vague and very general, to make sure the criteria apply to everyone across the institution. And that can sometimes be a challenge. So, I wish that we would use the same terminology in all the units and make my job a whole lot easier.

Conceptually, definitions at Institution A centered on two distinctive components. First, community engagement means the work is reciprocal and mutually beneficial. Emphasized primarily by university stakeholder interviewees, if engagement does not involve the collaborative aspects of reciprocated gain, it is not community engagement. Relatedly, the majority of interviewees felt that there is a fundamental difference between community service and community engagement. This distinction was reiterated across interviews. Many participants sought to make the point that community service is more one-directional while community engagement is a two-directional, interdependent effort that includes applied work with the community rather than a sole academic focus or benefit. The university collects service hours and other forms of philanthropic work, yet

it distinguishes service from engagement in a definitional way when considering community engagement and community impact.

Local community. There is not a common consensus, even within institutional documents, as to what constitutes local community. Participants noted this lack of consistency is intentional in many ways, but there is not a single, uniform definition when considering what the university deems “local community.” As one respondent put it, “It depends on where you are and what the focus is at the moment. It changes.” The definition of local community is dependent on what different individuals are working on and who they are working with. Local community changes when it is defined by different disciplines or colleges, when it is defined by types of activities, and when it is defined by different areas of focus. As another respondent put it, “I think it depends on what's convenient, right?” The convenience in this case is not intended as flippancy, rather that local community means many things in many contexts. The definition needs to be invoked in different ways when and where appropriate. “It depends,” was a common response to the question. As the definition of local community was considered by participants, responses ranged from geographical entities to populations, to individuals and relationships, to shared experiences and identities. Most responses included some consideration of a physical space, including the city, the county, the metro region, the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), the county and its surrounding counties, the region, and the state.

Individuals and relationships were also mentioned. Individuals such as the mayor or other community leaders (e.g. director of public health or business executives), as well as institutional leaders such as the university president and deans serve an important role

in shaping a sense of local community. The relationships between those individuals was cited as a critical component of the local community, as well as the network formed by the strength and utilization of those relationships. These leaders help structure decision-making around what constitutes community and what communities of focus will take precedence in city planning. Shared experiences and identities within the city were also a way of defining the local community. As one respondent put it, “I think with my role, community can be with our students... it can be the community of health professions, it can be a community of...when I worked with a health organization, that community (a neighborhood).” These constituencies are found within the university and across the city and any combination therein could become the focus of community engagement work.

Several references to an urban mission were also made. Because the city is the largest in a primarily rural state, it is considered the urban core as Institution A is considered the urban, metropolitan university within the state. In that role, the university has chosen to launch its initiative focused on a proximate community comprised of four zip codes. According to the 2015 American Community Survey, the four zip codes of focus are primarily Black or African American. On average, residents across these four zip codes are approximately 80% Black or African American and 20% White, with as high 91.6% and as low as 53.5% Black or African American in a single zip code. These zip codes generally exhibit higher rates of poverty, health disparities, and economic vulnerabilities. When asked how the university defines local community, many respondents immediately mentioned this proximate community as a primary definition. This included its geography, its residents, and sub-populations across those domains such as an elementary school or a group of residents suffering from the same medical

condition. One community stakeholder described the university's dedication to this community as follows:

I mean there is that...clear idea that Institution A has an urban mission, I think in particular because of the intensity of the racial divide a literally almost a physical divide in this community and all of the things that go with that in terms of equity issues, I think that the university has specifically focused engagement efforts on the whole constellation of things that go with those kinds of tensions and equity issues.

Participants indicated that while activity occurs across geographic spaces, work in this proximate community has a direct tie to Institution A's mission and values, and therefore plays a key role in defining local community.

Impact. When asked how the institution defines impact, many respondents leaned back in their chair, breathed out, laughed, or said "that's a good question." The physical cues within observational data, as well as the variety of responses, indicate the difficulty respondents had answering the question. Though the institution does have stated goals within its initiative with the proximate community (i.e. impact is identified by goals such as increased graduation rates and increased employment opportunities for residents), these goals were not cited in interviews as a definition or characterization of impact. Instead, respondents generally felt that impact occurs when everyone involved in a community engagement activity benefits, and impact usually occurs at the project- or program-level and is project-specific. Leaders of individual courses, research studies, projects, and other efforts are responsible for determining impact within the context of their work. Accounts of impact can then be recorded and funneled up through reporting

channels, but from a definitional standpoint, impact is localized in this way. Many respondents felt that determining impact beyond individual projects was not possible due to design limitations in accordance with standards of research and project evaluation. In terms of what impact *is* specifically, many respondents described it as difference that can be observed or change that is being made. It is seen as what the institution can actually demonstrate they were involved in that had some level of observable change during or after its implementation.

Within responses regarding the definition of impact at Institution A, many participants discussed the context for impact. Context included factors such as a growing climate of accountability to which the university must be responsive and capacity to determine impact accurately. Acknowledging higher education institutions are increasingly being asked to demonstrate the return on all utilization of resources, one university stakeholder maintained the ability to convey the impact of community engagement across stakeholders is becoming more important. Another university respondent noted that any characterization of impact should be framed within realistic and accurate expectations. If Institution A is not ultimately responsible for high school graduation rates in the county, its expectations for realized impact should cite a more appropriate, precise goal. In determining whether these precise goals have been met, another university stakeholder suggested determinations of impact are only done well in pockets of the university, where individuals with the appropriate expertise are working. This respondent suggested assessment of impact is not universally found across such a large, fragmented institution. This was echoed in other interviews.

Finally, one university stakeholder noted that impact is at times clearly defined by the local community, but it does not directly overlap with the services the university can offer. For example, according to this respondent, residents in the community regularly define desired impact as better jobs and a stronger economy. Yet, the university's ability to influence that area of development may be limited, particularly if one's discipline falls further outside of the realms of business, economics, and related fields. This perceived disconnect makes both defining and realizing impact from community engagement difficult. Beyond this difficulty, one community stakeholder suggested that even in areas of direct service and potentially direct impact, the community may not associate that work with Institution A. One example provided for this included the idea that receiving care at the university hospital was seen more as "the hospital" than "at a university site," where care provided to patients is benefitted by the university's research and training. A second example provided by a community stakeholder described university work within other organizations in the community. Institution A may host a collaborative initiative within an organization such as the Boys and Girls Club, providing resources and programming. This stakeholder suggested the initiative is likely to be seen by community members as a Boys and Girls Club program, failing to associate the work with Institution A at all. These initial reflections on the definition of impact raised questions regarding realized impact versus perceived impact, which are explored in greater detail in the discussion of emergent themes.

Summary of institutional definitions. Definitions of community engagement activity, local community, and impact vary across Institution A. To define community engagement activity in an organizational sense, the central coordinating office utilizes the

Carnegie Classification definition for community engagement and its related categories. This helps structure annual data collection and provide anchoring terminology for reports and documentation to external entities. Beyond that, definitions, interpretations, and terminology vary widely in what activity is done and how it is understood. Definitions of local community also vary widely and are interpreted within individual circumstances. “It depends,” was a common response. Definitions include geographical domains, populations, individuals and relationships, and shared experiences and identities. There was no clear definition of impact. Impact was commonly described as “everyone benefitting,” and generally found at the project- or program-level. Impact can be found in observed differences or changes, though the ability of individuals to make such explicit, accurate observations is often limited or sporadic. Impact should also be defined and understood in the context within which it is generated.

Institutional Processes to Determine Impact

Within this institutional context, the following section describes the primary processes by which Institution A determines the impact its community engagement activity has in the local community. Process as determined by the researcher included the categories of defining (described in the previous section), identifying, tracking and reporting, using data, as well as relational aspects of evaluation processes. Participants were asked questions from these four categories, highlighting different aspects of process within each, yet a common institutional narrative emerged throughout data collection.

Identifying and tracking community engagement. Institution A centers its data collection on community engagement around an annual survey sent out electronically to all faculty, centers, and administrative units. The survey requests information on

community engagement, which is characterized very broadly at the outset (i.e. “any work with an external partner”), and faculty and staff then provide information they deem pertinent. In this way, information regarding community engagement comes directly from the sources that are doing the work. Yet one participant described faculty and staff obligation to report that work as “voluntary but encouraged.” The electronic form faculty and staff are asked to fill out has evolved over the years. It is now shorter and “less onerous” per many university interviewees, yet it is still difficult to obtain comprehensive reporting on all activity taking place. One participant described the struggle to obtain complete information on community engagement from the central coordinating office: “We work with representatives of every unit... We go through a series of announcements, cajolings [*sic*]. And basically, working with the leadership at every unit that community engagement sort of falls under their bailiwick to get them to get their people to report to us.”

In this effort to obtain data, the central coordinating office initiates an email to both faculty and the liaisons within each department and unit. By sending the email at once, the office hopes to obtain individual faculty responses, faculty responses following liaison encouragement, as well as liaison reporting on any other community engagement activity they know to be occurring. Historically, these emails were sent to faculty alongside three to four other requests to fill out similar or identical information for different areas of the university. Institutional efforts are now underway to reduce the number of emails sent and simplify required and requested reporting. As one respondent put it: “We're not there yet but it's at least on our radar trying to decrease the number of times. People will just delete the email that we send, because after a few...people

assume they have already done it. They don't recognize it's different, they don't want to repeat themselves. It takes time.” The individuals organizing community engagement assessment are therefore working on streamlining the amount of information sought from faculty and staff as well as the number of times faculty and staff are asked to provide such information. Study participants indicated that ensuring the process was as straightforward as possible for faculty and staff was a vital component to holistic identification and tracking of community engagement activity. As the process currently relies on reporting at the project- or program-level by those faculty and staff leads, ease of participation is critical to ensure greater amounts of data regarding all ongoing activities. Figure 3 illustrates the primary reporting structure currently in place at Institution A.

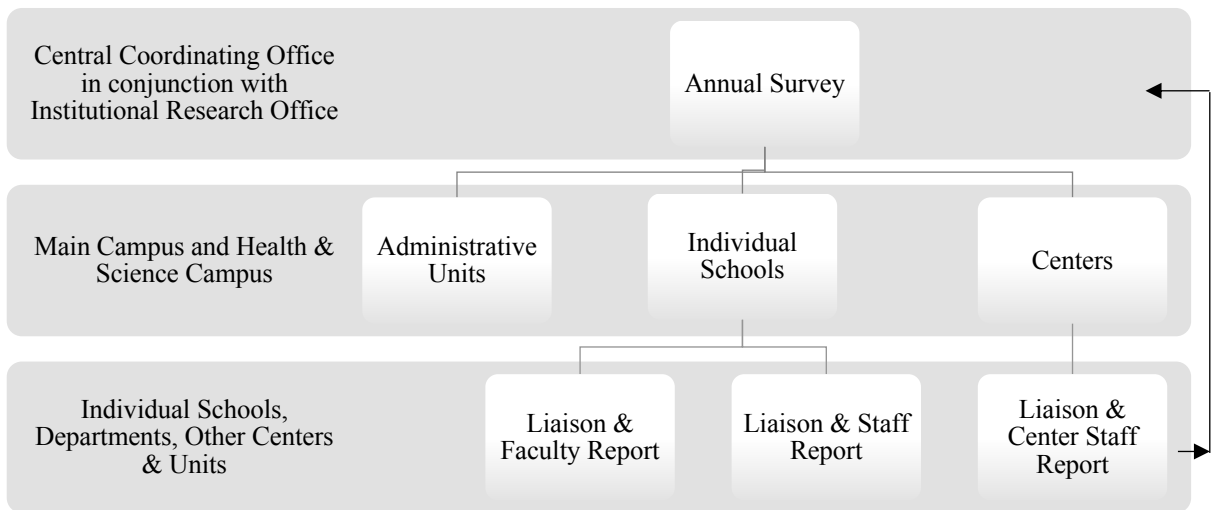


Figure 3. Primary reporting structure for Institution A.

Liaisons. Within each unit, a liaison is identified to assist in collecting data from faculty and staff. Liaisons range in their general knowledge of community engagement, the amount of activity within their unit, as well as in their reporting approaches.

University participants indicated that academic colleges or schools that had an explicit form of leadership for community engagement tended to generate better information and procedures leading to enhanced assessment. Those without coordinated leadership tended to select a liaison less familiar with comprehensive assessment needs, such as an internship placement coordinator. Participants indicated that these individuals often approach community engagement from a less comprehensive and informed lens. According to one respondent, “We may not be getting the same level of reporting that we may get out of other units that, where, you’ve got a single individual or two that can literally in their brain point to all of these various relationships that their faculty have.” The ability to garner accurate and complete information through the liaison-support strategy is routinely dependent on the liaison’s own knowledge and processes, effecting how they funnel information through the system. This includes the relationships liaisons build with faculty and the community to learn of ongoing community engagement efforts. Liaisons vary in this capacity. Additionally, if a liaison moves to another position, the knowledge and processes the individual possesses are likely to move with them. The void this absence leaves can affect information flow toward community engagement assessment in the immediate- and long-term.

Ongoing process refinement. Community engagement is identified centrally through the above reporting mechanisms. The central coordinating office may, however, use other channels that prove useful to discover activity. One respondent connected to the central coordinating office recounted learning of a robust partnership between criminal justice faculty and the local police department, among other contributors, by running across a story about it in the local newspaper. In instances such as this, the

central coordinating office then reaches out to the university point person and gathers additional information. That individual and their engagement work is then brought into the data collection process. The work is logged in the central database of known activity and included in communications moving forward.

All university stakeholders at Institution A acknowledged the process overall misses critical data. The dependence on voluntary reporting and the inability to connect with every facet of the institution, particularly in a complete and consistent way, causes information to fall through the cracks. Furthermore, the ability to track this activity in real-time is currently up to the project-, program-, or course-lead. These individuals may or may not be able to, or choose to, track the community engagement activity in a formative way. As one respondent put it, the tracking at the university level “happens through our annual data collection process.” If community engagement is tracked more often than once per year by a project-lead, that information is included in annual reporting to the central coordinating office alongside summative data. It may also be recorded differently depending on how individual staff and faculty describe the activity. Respondents across Institution A stated that the university is trying to focus on refining its engagement strategy, and community engagement identification and tracking is improving. Respondents also articulated a continued struggle to garner all relevant information amid these improvements:

The quality of the information that we are getting has improved... a great deal; it is always, though, dependent upon the cooperation of the faculty, that basically are leading any of these you know initiatives... Or the student affairs or... the

academic support offices... so we are dependent upon the quality and the accuracy of the data on those that are involved in it.

Institution A grapples with how to consistently and comprehensively capture the information coming in from various departments who conduct community engagement within their own contexts. As the institution looks to better organize its identification, tracking, and reporting processes, some participants suggested that an overly-structured process is also not desirable. One university stakeholder noted certain departments and subsequently their engagement activities are like apples and oranges. This participant recounted receiving requests from some administrators to characterize all community engagement in one, consistent way in order to track progress across all departments. In doing so, departments could refer to a central dashboard to “check” their community engagement against other areas and disciplines. In reflecting on that, the university stakeholder resisted such an institutional strategy:

I feel like putting up a chart and making it some kind of competitive thing like that, it's, it's just different, you know. It's like the work that engineering does is different from the work that music does, is different from the work that social work does, is different from the work that business does, and these are very different from the work that is happening in health and sciences and I feel like putting these things into some sort of equivalent comparison isn't helpful and maybe even a distortion.

At the same time, all respondents indicated that aspects of data identification and tracking need more consistency and regulation. For instance, some data that should be captured more systematically is currently in a self-report format. One participant described this

issue within health and science disciplines: “So, you couldn't even comprehensively search in the central database because some people enter school of medicine, some people enter medical school, some people enter medicine, it's all over.” They noted that allowing faculty and staff to self-describe items rather than select from pre-determined list leads to more confusion and time spent by staff in the central coordinating office tracking down accurate information or re-entering data. Several university stakeholders familiar with the assessment process suggested issues such as this are simple fixes that will be addressed next. This would include updates such as providing a drop-down menu for survey respondents to choose from a pre-determined list of all departments and units.

Attempting to accurately track community engagement raises other procedural questions at Institution A. Respondents cited issues such as whether or not all service-learning courses should be captured in the same way, whether research hours should be captured alongside volunteer hours as a single data point, and whether or not a framework should be developed that captures differences with more specificity and depth. One university stakeholder discussed differences in the ways hours are spent, providing the following example. In one area of the university, an eight-year scientific study on the effects of corporate activity on local environmental conditions for children may be taking place, which leads to changes in state regulation. In another area of the university, students may be volunteering to host a birthday party for seniors at a senior citizen's home, which leads to positive experiences for both students and seniors, among interpersonal and other benefits. The respondent suggested both of these engagement activities should be taking place, yet the question of whether or not they should be recorded similarly by the university is less clear. They articulated the issue as follows:

I think it's difficult to...you can't lump all, you can't lump the birthday party together with that community based study into just this one thing... the birthday party was eight hours of time and length, and the student work on this scientific study it was like all together a hundred twenty hours of time you know... so I don't know, I just feel like it's useful to look at the specifics.

Within this portion of the interview, the university stakeholder considered whether you count those hours together. Should the eight hours of the birthday party be grouped with the 120 hours of research, for an institutional reporting of 128 hours of impact?

Currently at Institution A, those hours are included in one sum total of community engagement activity, yet they may also be counted in separate pools of volunteer and research hours. The central coordinating office is continuing conversations regarding what strategies best address these nuances to inform reporting.

The above identification, tracking, and internal reporting processes capture large amounts of ongoing activity across Institution A. The strategy is also dependent on individual participation, buy-in, and expertise. As a result, the intensity, depth, and longevity of contributions vary, not only in their implementation but in their assessment. Figure 4 illustrates the variation across engagement activities and assessment capabilities given fluctuations in type of activity, level of assessment conducted, project lead experience, liaison experience, timing, and coordination, and additional factors cited by participants. The representative heat map illustrates limitations in assessment capability at the project and individual level (shown in red). As assessment capability improves, activities are shown in yellow, and those with rigorous, well-established assessment are represented by green. The figure is demonstrative of reporting up from the project-level,

and it displays only 12 activities from two departments. If shown in full, the figure would represent over 1,500 activities from over 200 degrees housed within 12 schools across Institution A.

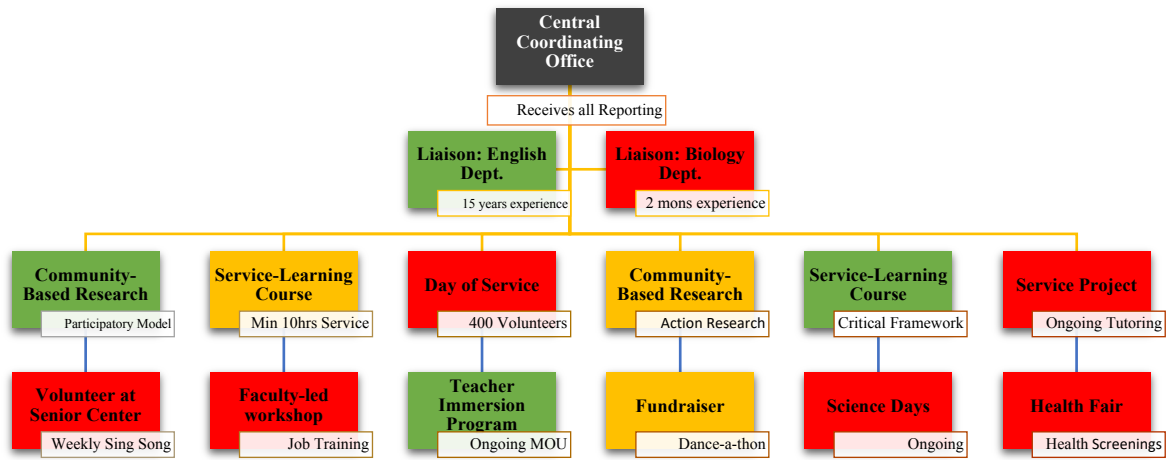


Figure 4. Representative heat map of reporting at the project-level.

Reporting. The processes described above guide the ways in which Institution A identifies and tracks community engagement, informing subsequent internal analysis and documentation. Reporting begins with individual faculty and staff. It then moves through the central coordinating office, is compiled, organized, and categorized, and is then disseminated in several ways. Primarily, this dissemination is centered on external entities, including the accrediting bodies for the university, the Carnegie Classification, and other state and federal requests for university activity. Often these state and federal requests are tied to grant funding that requires assessment and regular reporting, per respondents. There is also an annual report put together by the central coordinating office that goes out to the whole institution and is made available to the community. This is posted on the office website and is used to create smaller briefs and reports for individual schools or units. Briefs are also sought by the president’s or communications

office throughout the year at varying times, when community engagement data points are needed in conjunction with a particular speech or statement. According to respondents, characteristically these requests are for a snapshot of the number of activities and student hours having occurred within a topical area. Community engagement reports are therefore produced annually, as well as periodically as requests for information come in.

Community engagement plans. Each academic and administrative unit across Institution A was tasked with having a community engagement plan by the end of 2015, also called an accountability plan by some respondents. These plans are an effort to encourage individual units to develop and sustain a strategy for embedding community engagement within their own discipline and context. According to one university stakeholder, “Those are the big things, is what strategies are you using, what are you doing, how are you doing it, and we’d like for them to report on what the impact of each of those are.” Institution A hopes to embed community engagement throughout the work of the university by encouraging each unit to articulate engagement goals and the methods by which goals will be met. Another university stakeholder characterized the current state of the plans as helpful check-ins: “Now we have sort of, specific targets that they hope to achieve annually, and if they can't achieve those it's not like anybody's in trouble, it's just about well why couldn't you achieve them, where do you need to get to to achieve them? Does anything need to be changed into something that's more reasonable, if so why?” Another university stakeholder characterized the plans similarly, as a procedural tool to help units self-identify how engagement will interlock with their academic and other priorities: “So that that's the goal right now is to kind of help the schools think of strategies and then we'll re-measure it next year to see, okay, did you

make progress, are you staying the same? What do you want to do? What can you do to strengthen this area?" These plans are a part of the internal institutional reporting that takes place, whereas most other reporting is done with external requirements in mind.

Using assessment data. Following questions regarding how the institution identifies, tracks, and reports on community engagement, participants were asked how Institution A uses the data it collects to inform decision-making over time. Primarily, data from Institution A is used to ensure external entities have pertinent information to continue accreditation, a classification or designation, or funding. Beyond that, it is also used to inform internal processes, help refine community engagement work, and relay the work as part of the university's narrative, including marketing and communications. "It's kind of been smatterings of this and then trying to figure out what are we trying to report and to who, and how do we credit for it." One university stakeholder discussing the health and science disciplines described the external entities as providing the clearest vision for why data is needed and how it is used:

For the federally-funded program it is very well defined. We have to send a quarterly report to the state, and the annual report to the federal government. For the Carnegie Endowment again, it's an annual report to them for the State Higher Education Executive Office. As far as the university, there's been nothing to my knowledge that's been, aside from the annual reports that go up to the provost, that's addressed that.

Another university stakeholder echoed this evolving strategy, and added there are efforts to feed data back to the faculty, staff, and community partners who provide it: "We put together various sort of reports based on or documents or communication materials

depending on what's going on, so you know whenever we ask people for information we try to do better at getting back with them with, with things that we've asked them in the past.” This feedback of information when requesting data from faculty, staff, and community partners is part of the institutional effort to gain increasing levels of participation from those collaborators.

Participants generally felt that the institution uses the data it collects to take stock of what has occurred within a calendar year. Participants were reluctant, however, to suggest that data was used in an organized way year-by-year to build toward impact goals in the community. As one respondent put it:

I would personally like to see more sort of strategic thinking with the data, and I don't think enough of that happens. We do have these, I think, larger strategic goals, which we definitely can look at the outputs and see that activity is happening around these goals, it's going into the right place. But I don't see a lot of specific decision-making happening around the use of the data.

Per respondents, part of the issue with planning in the long-term, is that Institution A is more commonly incentivized to act in the short term. Results from engagement activity are expected regularly, and outcomes must be articulated, particularly as it relates to grant-funded work. Two university stakeholders articulated different issues with using data over long periods of time to more authentically track changes toward impact. The first described the challenge of tracking individuals who participate in engagement activities within the community. This respondent noted the difficulties in tracking outcomes for both university student mentors as well as the elementary and secondary students with which they work:

The further you go back the harder it is to track. Right, because, if you're doing a community engagement project for sixth graders, then you've got two years in middle school, four years of high school, four years of college, four years of professional school before you ever know the outcome of what that individual ends up doing. So, it's long, it's a 20-year project. But we're increasingly trying to track where people go and what the impact is on that.

The second university stakeholder identified the pressure felt at the institutional level to promote community engagement in the immediate-term, as well as deepen and sustain long-term projects and programs that are embedded in the community.

We have to make decisions for it now because the issues that we are facing are *now* issues... So, we don't really have the luxury of you know, making, even though we have a lot of long-term goals, we don't have the luxury of saying in 10 years, this is what we hope happens... We have to think how can we make a difference right now. Can we...serve a need that exists right now.

Community stakeholders added parallel perspectives to the question of data usage over time. Community participants tended to have a more positive interpretation of how data is used but couched those views with terminology such as “my sense is” or “I would imagine” before articulating how exactly they felt data was or was not used. One community stakeholder, for instance, articulated how Institution A uses data in this way: “I mean, I think there's, there's a sense in which the data is collected to demonstrate gains that are being made but I, but my sense is that it's always with an eye to how that fits into the long term economic and social rehabilitation that the community needs to do.” This perspective assumes the institution is cognizant of both its short- and long-term actions

and is coordinating in turn. Yet, this same participant was also aware that the actual measuring of impact by using data over time is a difficult task and is not necessarily feasible in the current state of assessment:

It's very easy to have the metrics that tell you how many people participated and how many workshops you offered and all of that, but how do you measure with students, with student achievement, how do you measure the actual impact and when do you measure the actual impact, particularly when you're talking about things where the impact cannot really be clear until years after the fact.

Community stakeholders suggested data is used to evaluate grant-funded projects and in Institution A's Quality Enhancement Plan for continued accreditation. Data is also used, according to both stakeholders, in reexamining Institution A's initiative in the proximate community to strengthen relationships and "to make a greater impact."

The question of whether or not data is used to build toward impact goals in the community was difficult for both university and community stakeholders to answer. Respondents generally seemed to feel that data was not coordinated in such a way that it could systematically provide information on movement toward impact goals. Most respondents indicated that data was used at the project- or program-level, but was not aggregated institutionally to examine data points regarding a particular anticipated outcome. One university stakeholder noted that within the initiative in the proximate community, data helped identify progress over the first ten years of their work. This included goals within the initiative such as reaching higher teacher retention and student attendance rates at the five partner schools. In this case, Institution A examines data from the programs working in schools, such as student-teaching initiatives. This information is

reviewed each year at the program-level, and after ten years, better outcomes have been reached on several indicators. Yet, as it pertains to other outcome areas and the larger community, data is not used to actively observe engagement outcomes over time. A university stakeholder summarized the current institutional assessment strategy: “So, you have people that do it very, very, well in pockets, and most of us that are just struggling to try to figure out how to do that.”

Relational aspects of assessment processes. Respondents were next asked a series of questions regarding relational aspects of assessment at Institution A. Elements of process such as communication, collaboration, and partnering were explored, first within the university and then with the community. Community stakeholders were asked about internal coordination within the university, yet the emphasis with these interviewees was on relational processes between the university and community.

Internal coordination. The central coordinating office at Institution A is the central hub for coordinating all community engagement and community engagement assessment. It is the “central repository” per one community stakeholder. This office collects all data, assesses data, and produces the majority of reports at the institutional-level. It also works with university school liaisons, deans and vice presidents across the university, faculty, students, and different groups on campus to promote community engagement. Building relationships with these different institutional stakeholders allows the office to develop and broaden community engagement and subsequently its assessment. The office works to do this in several ways, including providing small grants to various groups working within the community. For instance, a group of faculty recently began a transdisciplinary initiative around social justice, which the central

coordinating office is now supporting and contributing funding to. Those within the office note that there is not sufficient staff to coordinate these relationships in a systemic, consistent way. Yet, staff also suggested that by communicating and meeting with as many stakeholders as possible, community engagement will continue to grow and coordination of processes will deepen.

Other avenues support internal coordination of community engagement efforts. A community engagement steering committee has been formed, which brings together faculty, staff, administrators, and students from within the university to think through advancing community engagement across Institution A. One university stakeholder described the committee as follows: “They serve as a policy making body, they serve as a sounding board as we draft different policies and we also serve as an approval body so to speak.” The committee has helped see initiatives come to fruition such as the implementation of a faculty and staff leave day, where employees can take a day off work to participate in service of their choice. Respondents also cited the annual community engagement report and an increase of information on the central coordinating office’s website as mechanisms of consolidating and coordinating information regarding community engagement. As one university stakeholder noted, information sharing is not the natural tendency across departments, units, and schools at universities such as Institution A: “So, we we’re getting better, it's a learning process, and it's a comfort process. But the more that we know what it what the other is doing, the better we will be at doing collaborative things.”

External coordination. Community members are not directly involved in the institutional assessment process but provide feedback in other ways. Structurally,

external community representatives are “not directly” involved in institution-wide assessment, rather, “it’s on a program level.” Community members help coordinate individual project- and program-level activity, and as they are identified and included in the institutional database, are sent an annual community partner survey to enlist feedback. Any information community partners provide through this survey informs how the central coordinating office perceives partner satisfaction and needs. According to an office representative: “We look at things like our community partner survey, and we can hope that that drives strategic thinking around the direction that we go in terms of our work.” The effort to seek community feedback is primarily the work of the central coordinating office. When asked about external coordination of activity, a university stakeholder outside the office responded, “My understanding is that I think the central coordinating office, then send out the reports to, to our partners so that they have an idea. If they don't they should be, but I'm not one hundred percent sure if they're if they're doing that or not.” All respondents assumed community partner feedback was sought and coordinated through the office and was being used to inform processes.

Community representatives provide feedback in other ways. The initiative within the proximate community has designed two groups by which they seek recurring feedback from residents. First, a Resident Advisory Council exists for those living within the proximate community to “provide ongoing advice to ensure that the views and perspectives of the residents of the proximate community are adequately represented and addressed.” This group meets six times each year to discuss Institution A’s work with the community. One university stakeholder described the Council as providing grassroots knowledge, without being asked to help in assessment of the work: “They have ideas that

are incorporated in the work that we do. Many times, they are not involved in the evaluation process. They know about it. They give their parts on it but they are not involved in the planning of the evaluation if that makes sense.”

Second, a university-community partnership board has also been set up as a way of bringing together key community and university leaders to provide a sounding board for the work within the proximate community. This group includes heads of companies, nonprofits, foundations, local government, and university schools and colleges, and was termed “the movers and shakers in the community” by one community respondent. Members of this board are appointed by Institution A’s president and serve a three-year term. They are tasked with supporting the university's strategic objectives in building mutually beneficial partnerships and positive relationships with key community-based organizations and activities. “They...are not a decision-making, policy-making body, but they are more of an advisory body so that they provide advice on areas that should be pursued and direction that should be pursued.” The council and the board offer structured mechanisms for community involvement in the direction of community engagement at Institution A, yet they are largely focused on the proximate community and are not directly involved in assessment processes.

Respondents indicated that Institution A struggles with how to involve community members and representatives in the work of community engagement and its assessment. Issues including time demands, alignment of work, and structural efficiency commonly arose. Across interviews, participants reflected on the tension between wanting community feedback yet not knowing how that would work in a practical sense. One university stakeholder, for instance, highlighted the challenge of asking too much

time of community partners if committee discussions would regularly veer out of community-focused issues: “To what degree do we engage the community on that and how would that fit in, because a lot of that discussion...deals with university issues, and so where do you bring it in the community? Where is that appropriate and where would it simply be a waste of their time because we're talking about general education or whatever.” Another issue involves alignment between what community engagement can reasonably achieve and what community members actually want. A university stakeholder indicated they regularly hear requests that fall outside of what most community engagement activities can realistically do. “The community says we need help with education, so we can go in and do something about that. It's a little bit harder when the community says we need jobs. Our school of business can sort of help the community with that, but we're not in a position to just make jobs...We can work with the community to do it. But it's a little bit more of one step beyond what we do.”

Structural efficiency was another issue raised regarding the inclusion of community feedback into community engagement processes and assessment. Both university and community stakeholders noted inherent limitations in only receiving feedback from an electronic survey and anecdotal feedback that comes in through other communication channels or conversations. Yet, neither university nor community stakeholders presented a feasible structure for systematically and consistently integrating community perspective into assessment processes, and engagement processes more generally. Interviewees grappled with how to bring together community and university voices regularly toward commonly identified impact goals. With twelve separate schools at Institution A, “twelve functionally different organizations” per one respondent, their

interest in the needs of other schools and coordination across disciplines is limited.

Community stakeholders also share the characteristic of holding very different needs, interests, and perspectives.

As the central hub, the central coordinating office deals with questions regarding procedural efficiency. On one hand, the office could involve the leaders of Institution A's 12 schools in larger conversations with the community, incorporating more leaders and voices into the process. On the other hand, the office could meet with community stakeholders regularly, as a small group of dedicated individuals. The office would bring those conversations back to the leaders of twelve schools in internal or one-on-one meetings. As one university stakeholder reflected, "I don't know which one makes more sense, obviously the latter one would be easier, but maybe less effective, because those units weren't in, you know, that space." A respondent connected to the central coordinating office reflected on facilitating conversations with various stakeholders, representing different needs and different interpretations of engagement: "Overall for the entire university's community engagement mission, I don't think community members are involved and that I think it's a really important. I don't see how that would happen. I don't see in what venue that would happen. I would love for our office to be tasked with figuring that out." University respondents suggested that Institution A is working to refine its internal processes in order to better coordinate subsequent external processes where the community is more directly involved in community engagement.

Emergent Themes

In accordance with the variability associated with community engagement, each interviewee brought a unique perspective to the conversation given their background,

current role, area of work or discipline, and experience with engagement and assessment. Interviews followed respondents along their thought process in accordance with the constructivist framework, but certain questions were emphasized to understand the practical significance of responses in line with a critical process of inquiry tied to one's physical reality. Themes emerged in prominent, supporting, and institution-specific ways. The following section analyzes responses accordingly. Major themes include those themes from the data that occur across interviews, are prominent, recurring, and foundational, and address key research questions. Supporting themes address elements of the interview protocol that add further context to institutional processes to determine the impact community engagement activity has locally. Institution-specific themes highlight aspects of the data that are unique or prominent within Institution A in addressing the research question. Table 6 demonstrates how the themes emerged throughout cycles of coding and analysis.

Table 6

Progression of Emergent Themes across Coding Cycles: Institution A

First Cycle Coding	Second Cycle Coding	Third Cycle Coding
<i>Major Themes</i>		
Centralization / Decentralization	Centralization / Decentralization	Centralization / Decentralization
Outputs to Outcomes	Outputs to Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Coordination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting not assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting not assessment Appropriate metrics 	University's Core Mission
Integration with Community	Integration with Community	Relationship with the Community
Reporting mechanisms	Reporting mechanisms	Outputs to Outcomes
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data identification, reporting, tracking 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With Community 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting not assessment • Ability to determine impact • Appropriate metrics
<p>University's Core Mission</p> <p>Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With Community • Within Institution <p>University's Core Mission</p>	<p>Depictions of Impact</p>

Contributing Themes

Appropriate metrics	Structural Supports	Individually-driven
Benefits of community engagement	Benefits of community engagement	Consequences of bureaucratic processes
Individually-driven	Individually-driven	Structural Supports
Public perception	Public perception	Public Perception
Data identification, reporting, tracking	Community engagement existing in a positive space or as "value-added"	
Community engagement existing in a positive space or as "value-added"	Reporting comes from necessity – external entity and/or funding source	
Reporting comes from necessity – external entity and/or funding source	Importance of urban center, urban label, geographic centrality	
Importance of urban center, urban label, geographic centrality	Communication	
Communication	Funding	
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessity of • Difficulties with 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessity of • Difficulties with 	External entities	
External entities	Admissions / Entry	
Admissions / Entry	Lost & Diluted	

Lost & Diluted Structural Supports	University's purposes within local community / Role in local development
University's purposes within local community / Role in local development	

Institution-Specific Themes

Emphasis on Proximate Community	Emphasis on Proximate Community	Emphasis on Proximate Community
Public Trust	Public Trust	Public Trust
Athletics	Athletics	Development of New Projects
Current development projects	Current development projects	
Collaboration between urban, metropolitan and land-grant universities in the state	Collaboration between urban, metropolitan and land-grant universities in the state	

Note. Bullet points indicate contributing characteristics of emergent themes.

Major Themes

The major themes that emerged from the data span a range of challenges in institutional processes to determine impact locally. They include how to navigate centralization and decentralization across the institution, the university's core mission and how it relates to community engagement assessment, the ability to move from outputs to outcomes, the nature of the institution's relationship with the community, and finally depictions of impact. These are considered next, respectively.

Centralization versus decentralization. As discussed in Chapter Three, the pilot phase of the study informed the revision of protocols and introduction of new questions. That included the addition of a question regarding centralization within the "Relational Aspects of Evaluation Processes" section of the interview protocols. The question asked

interviewees to respond to the level of centralization or decentralization associated with their institution, as well as what aspects of community engagement assessment should be centralized or decentralized. All respondents characterized Institution A as a decentralized or highly decentralized institution. As one university stakeholder recounted, “People have been talking about you know siloization [sic] forever and it's still you know very much you know where we're at.” Respondents generally seemed to feel this was the inherent nature of the university rather than something that fluctuates or might change over time. Given that, respondents focused on the coordination of community engagement and subsequent assessment as managing disconnected units across the institution. One university stakeholder suggested the central coordinating office was established to conduct that management: “I do think that you need some kind of centralized way of coordinating and collecting... to report on or share some common you know information, so that we do have an overall view of the impact that the university as a whole is having in in the community.”

The central coordinating office identifies as this organizational connection point. University stakeholders both within and outside of the office describe its primary role as collecting and disseminating information regarding community engagement activity at Institution A. Accompanying roles include advocacy to increase community engagement and support to those pursuing community engagement activities, as well as producing engagement reports and materials and serving as a repository of community partner perspectives. The office supplies data to inform strategic planning at Institution A, yet it is not in charge of ensuring community-based outcomes or impact. Centralization in this environment is focused on refining the process of collecting information about the work

being done across the university, not in coordinating the work itself. As one university stakeholder recounted:

In terms of ... coming together for centralization of that actual work is gonna be a challenge without appropriate resourcing and appropriate staffing, but I think being centralized is about how you think about the work, how you talk about the work, how you report on the work, is just crucial if you're going to have the words engaged service in your mission or partnerships in your mission.

The initiative in the proximate community originated “trying to be sort of that more coordinated body of work that everybody comes together on for impact” per one university stakeholder. Yet, this effort has also been affected by the decentralization at Institution A over the decade since its initiation. The same stakeholder characterizes the evolution of its coordination for shared outcome goals as follows:

That idea was there at the very beginning, that this was going to be these partners coming together in these locations for these outcomes, but I think as sort of money went away, as staff or faculty turned over, it kind of became more of an effort to document and help get new things going in the proximate community versus trying to hang on to the things that maybe weren't properly resourced to begin with.

This sentiment was echoed in other interviews. Respondents focused on pursuing an increase in activity in the proximate community, not on the university's coordination of its efforts toward shared outcome goals.

Internal coordination. While Institution A does have stated ways in which it would like to influence the local community (e.g. economic development and financial

empowerment), it does not coordinate community engagement work in a systematic way. As one university stakeholder reflected, the day to day activities and their tracking are likely going to have to be decentralized, but “in some way it has to be then reported to in a centralized office, if we're really going to be able to see the impact on a university wide basis.” This position assumes that if all information is collected and reported, it will be possible to see university-wide impact. Alternatively, other stakeholders felt the ability to assess impact in a meaningful way is beyond the scope of collecting and reporting activity:

It's one thing to kind of coordinate gathering information, I think it is more difficult then, if what we're really trying to do is say okay this is the big picture, and this office or unit or department is working on it, so is this, but then we have a gap here, and nobody's doing that, then I think you really need almost a different type of office than what central coordinating office is, and they certainly cannot possibly do that with the staffing that that they're doing now.

Even with more staffing and resources to coordinate community engagement activities toward common goals, many respondents did not feel that approach would be suited to the work of Institution A. Faculty interests and expertise is often highly specialized and arranging and coordinating their work in ways that fall too far outside their areas of expertise may diminish the nature of the university's core operation. One university stakeholder described this tension as follows:

In theory centralization is a good idea, but what you risk is a loss of enthusiasm and creativity if you try to centralize people who are passionate about what they do and they go off and they do it and they do it well. How do you harness that

energy without stepping on toes, or getting in the way of the good work that they're doing, and trying to partner in a way that empowers them, gathers what they're doing without the university coming in and saying we're Institution A and we're going to do this and this.

Many respondents did feel that an increase in coordination and centralization of institutional processes would be beneficial. One university stakeholder noted that efforts could be made to strengthen the ways in which community engagement initiatives are initiated and sustained: “We really need to be able to come together and continue the work, not start off and build the logic models and then let it trail off and not go anywhere, but to actually be able to have different, disparate departments and units come together and stay together.” A university stakeholder summed up the capacity for centralization at Institution A as this: “So I think what it really comes down to you know is policy, planning, assessment, and support, especially as that relates to a unified, strategic vision for engagement across a university. And all the units sort of have their own way of looking at it, but I think it's important that we have a common language and a common way to measure it.” Institution A is currently working toward solidifying these foundations.

The university’s core mission. In creating institution-wide definitions, language, and assessment strategies for community engagement, those managing the processes at Institution A must grapple with how engagement work fits within the university’s core mission. As interviews progressed, both university and community stakeholders raised questions regarding what the institution as a whole has control of and what it should be involved in. In examining assessment processes currently in place, participants reflected

on how much of the institution's time, energy, and resources, should be redirected to increase engagement and improve assessment capabilities. In several interviews the question was asked, "Is it even the university's role to do X?" Included in these parts of interviews were whether or not the university should be directing faculty activity to more holistically and effectively address community needs: "I think because of the nature of higher ed in general...I think it will always be driven by individual faculties as opposed to an office and then filling in those gaps necessarily."

Additionally, the question of how big and strategic the central coordinating office should be: "So we do the best we can. Unfortunately, one of our biggest challenges in this office is we lack the resources. For a university this size and for a community size [*sic*], we need a much larger staff which we don't have and so many times, we do the best we can to make sure we get something done. And what can't be done? Just don't do it." Participants also confronted the question of how to allocate funding in accordance with what best fulfills institutional mission. As one university stakeholder reflected, "It's been hard because we've often looked at the bottom line of programs and looking at where does most of the money go, and how can we cut that, versus looking at maybe there are smaller programs that don't cost money, but if they're ineffective should we pull those dollars and use them on something that is more effective but more expensive?" In deliberating these questions regarding the direction, scope, and funding of community engagement, participants varied in their stance on the degree to which engagement work is fully integrated into the institutional mission and should be supported as such.

All participants indicated that community engagement is a part of Institution A's strategic plan and is a component of the university's mission. Yet, the degree to which

community engagement should drive the work of the university fluctuated. One university stakeholder considered the benefits of time-intensive, deep engagement projects with quick, one-touch projects in contemplation of what activities the university should be pursuing. This stakeholder found the line between what the university should and should not be involved in unclear: “What is the benefit and what's our mission and are we fulfilling our mission? Is the mission to educate our students or is the mission to help the community, is it some combination of both? You are finding you're in this morass more than you thought you'd be.” Some respondents felt that certain engagement activities benefit university students but may have limited impact on community residents. A university stakeholder suggested some health fairs or other initiatives focused on student learning that do not track outcomes after the fact are at times examples of this. “I mean it's great that you've got this wonderful program, but does it really make a difference? Because a lot of times we really like our programs, but they're, it's doing nothing. So, I want each of our schools to start looking at... are we impacting or are we just doing programming because it feels good?”

The nature of community engagement to generate feelings of pride and goodwill was evident across interviews, yet respondents were mixed in the centrality of engagement work within perceptions of Institution A's core mission. Respondents often linked the question of how centralized or decentralized Institution A should be with how central community engagement is to the core mission. University and community stakeholders indicated that more centralization and structure would necessitate increased funding, which would only be possible if community engagement is more deeply understood as central to the work of the university. Without accountability frameworks

to ensure community engagement produces some set of outcomes, the work itself is characterized by some respondents as “value-added” and therefore inherently difficult to assess. One university stakeholder described the tension in the following way:

For example, I think it's that that idea of well maybe this is extra, you know it's like well what we're really here to do is educate students, but alongside of that I need to do my research, you know? A lot of this bumps up against the idea that we're going to do some kind of good in the community, so let's try to bring all of this together...it's like we kind of do what we can with what we have and that's a very difficult thing for assessment or demonstrating impact.

This same stakeholder went on to state that faculty participate in community engaged scholarship because they want to, yet merging their activity toward specific outcomes is not realistic in the current institutional environment. They maintained, “We can only do so much without the proper planning and the real resources and the real will to see it through. We can get a bunch of stuff started, but it's not necessarily going to cure cancer or alleviate poverty by the end of the day you know, so I'm not saying it's not worth doing, I'm just saying that it is very difficult to assess.”

The perception of community engagement as “value-added” was evident in all interviews. As one university stakeholder recounted, “We have not held our community engagement activities to a similar standard for a variety of reasons, and part of it is simply that these sorts of activities only recently had actually been valued by universities.” This respondent went on to contend that over the last 15 years, community engagement has been gaining momentum across the country and within Institution A. Yet, with this increase in engagement, it still may be seen as secondary to more “core”

activities, such traditional academic pursuits. “When you're looking at maybe the fact that most people involved have things that take up way more of their time...or this project is kind of like a secondary thing for what their core thing is, which might be getting this paper written for a faculty person, or it might be getting this grade...for a student, you know like the service work, that's kind of secondary.” Because of this secondary status, the organizers of community engagement at Institution A can only do so much in terms of required reporting, direction, and coordination:

At best what we're trying to do is just be as collaborative with all the different units so that we at least have an idea of what people are doing. At some point it would be wonderful if it could grow to the point where it is truly a collaboration and almost like a gap analysis... but I don't know that that will ever happen because again... it's, somebody telling a particular unit or office or department, “this is what you should be doing” and I'm not so sure that that we're sophisticated enough to be able to do that or that that's the role that the central coordinating office sees itself performing at.

The partnership board was also cited by two respondents as a useful entity, but one unlikely to push for greater accountability measures. As one respondent reflected, “It’s definitely constructive, it's just maybe not as detail oriented as it is it could and should be. And I think people are very unwilling to talk about maybe non-positive things... so I don't know that that's the right platform the way it currently happens to sort of be real or honest about impact.” The board, this respondent suggested, was more about information sharing and high-level conversations regarding activity generally. A reason for this cited in several interviews is how political and contentious decision-

making can be when risk is increased, including the availability of funding and how decisions will influence public perception. As one university stakeholder thought about ways in which community engagement remains value-added, they noted the difficulties underlying a lack of attention and assessment of the work. “I think all this very rapidly gets political and people may not want to be as open as we’d like all of us to be with each other around how we can work together... Ultimately, everybody’s got their own thing they need to be also working on and doing, so a lot of people think this is extra, you know? Like, which, it shouldn’t be extra if it’s in your mission statement.”

Relationship with the community. Every stakeholder mentioned the urban location of Institution A as a part of its mission and identity. The location of Institution A was cited as a driving force in faculty, staff, and students pursuing community engagement activities. The location also, according to several respondents, deepens Institution A’s relationship with the community and its role within it. As one community stakeholder articulated the connection, “I think there’s a huge reliance on Institution A to tackle issues that are particular to this community. The kinds of issues that exist for any urban community... the university has adopted or embraced that idea that its urban mission and its place in the primary urban center in the state, I think they’ve embraced that wholeheartedly.” Institution A’s location was also tied to internal efforts to put infrastructure and support systems in place to enhance its ability to pursue community-focused activities. University and community stakeholders articulated Institution A’s role in the community as a resource, as an influencer in focusing public attention, and as a key link in the educational pipeline for the area. One community stakeholder described intentional coordination between Institution A and the local community college to

provide the range of education and training needed to meet local workforce demand: “In educating our students, in in dealing with certain workforce issues... when the community needs engineers, they also need technicians. So, there’s that hand-in-glove, this understanding that there is a piece of the educational need that both of us own.”

As Institution A assumes these roles within the community, participants described public perception of the university’s work as ranging from very positive to negative. Both stakeholders generally felt that community engagement was a mechanism of building rapport and goodwill with the community, but aspects of that relationship-building are challenged by past or present difficulties. In the past, Institution A has conducted research that left community residents feeling exploited and removed from the benefits of the research. One university stakeholder recounted, “The community feels that acutely, that we come in and we look at our community and then we leave and there’s nothing left over. So, we’re trying to look at how do we leave a lasting impression, a lasting partnership and go from there, rather than just kind of a one off, where we go out and do something and leave.”

Respondents, particularly community stakeholders, discussed community disenchantment with Institution A as admission standards changed over the last decade. Fewer students from the local community are now able to enter the university. “I think that people at the community level might be... a little bit disconnected from the institution... particularly Black students who do not excel well academically, may not meet admissions standards, they’re not able to go directly in, so.” Many community representatives felt the changing admission standards damaged public confidence in Institution A’s ability to serve the community. As one stated, “Well, Institution A... did

anticipate and did get pushback, particularly from a lot of the African-American community, that students who would once have been admitted were not going to be admitted now.” The increased separation, as another community stakeholder recounted, has had long-term implications:

No two-year degrees, everything’s four-year degrees...that disconnected some folks... A lot of the minority population is diminished greatly because of it... Let me say it this way, serving people, and them not being able to benefit academically for their own uplift, is it really helping? ...So, I think the families are having a lot of problems and they’re using services that are some kind of way linked to Institution A but they themselves are not academically ascending from poverty, from joblessness, etc., skill-level attainment, and you have to wonder are... we coming full circle as an academic institution if they don’t have...

Other aspects of Institution A, such as the sports programs, do appear to generate positive community involvement and perceptions toward the university. As public perception, trust, and involvement in the university’s work has evolved, respondents indicated that athletics has continued to bring community involvement and support to Institution A. One community stakeholder joked, “Thank God for our star football player.” Another community stakeholder shared that the community is primarily connected to the sports program, more so than other engagement efforts intended to influence local development: “For the most part the urban core is mostly enamored with sports program.” Respondents suggested that this could be used to Institution A’s advantage, but when considering community engagement at large, plays a more tangential role.

One community stakeholder described the range of public perceptions toward Institution A as fluctuating with one's knowledge of the university's work, awareness of when one is interacting with Institution A, and the emotional connection that one may or may not feel toward the university:

I don't know that they understand that certain treatments at the university hospital ...is the result of research that the university has done through that. So, I just think there is always a need... how do I understand that when I touch this organization, Institution A or its research has something to do with that. And I think that is the part of maybe not being clear for the citizenry... Because maybe in their mind, it's the sports teams, and what are the teams doing that's more their emotional involvement... I just don't know if they as a community feel the engagement of Institution A.

Recent negative publicity involving some of Institution A's sports teams, as well as its financial management and leadership, have also impacted the relationship with the community. The community's emotional involvement and commitment to the university has been strained as these issues play out in the media. As another community stakeholder reflected, "I would say from a 10,000 feet perspective, we have to regain credibility for the university. I think we're on the right track to do that. I think there are a lot of gems within the university system... I guess just the overall look at the university from a statewide perspective, we just have to right this ship and then regain the credibility in order to really move forward."

Moving from outputs to outcomes. The idea of internal and external coordination within interviews was often linked to institutional capacity to track

information. Participants were asked about how Institution A moves from outputs (e.g. number of student participants; number of service-learning courses) to outcomes (e.g. increase in the number of jobs in an area; increase in graduation rates). Many respondents indicated they were unsure how to answer the question or that Institution A was working toward a better process for understanding outcomes in more meaningful ways. A few respondents indicated that they did not know if that was possible institution-wide, but that certain programs were able to track outcomes effectively. The ability to track movement of activity from outputs to outcomes was regularly linked to investments of time and funding.

For instance, when asked about how they feel about Institution A's attempts to go from trying to track the number of people involved in work with the community to the actual outcomes that they are trying to see together, one community stakeholder said, "I don't know that that is the end all. To me, we work with organizations in the community to do a little bit more of that work and I don't know how much of it funnels back up to Institution A and the data, but I do feel that more of that is done in the actual partnership realm as opposed to the institutional realm." Data, in this sense, has to travel back to an institutional source after the fact. This respondent, as well as several others, suggested that "outcomes" are less about procedural functions to demonstrate change and more about clear indications of relationships and initiatives that exist.

A university stakeholder echoed that outcomes are thought of more as an abundance of relationships and activities in motion, rather than demonstrated change through assessment models. Yet, this participant suggested that this is primarily the case

due to a lack of structure and resourcing toward assessment, causing a shift in mindset as to what constitutes “good outcomes.” They state:

You have efforts like the initiative in proximate community, which are trying to be sort of that more coordinated body of work that everybody comes together on for impact... I think that that idea was there at the very beginning, that this was going to be these partners coming together in these locations for these outcomes, but I think as sort of money went away, as staff or faculty turned over, it kind of became more of an effort to document and help get new things going in the proximate community versus trying to hang on to the things that maybe weren't properly resourced to begin with.

This description shows two mechanisms emerging to demonstrate outcomes associated with Institution A. The first is to document what activity is currently taking place, and the second is to demonstrate the initiation of new activity. The results of these activities are not included in descriptions of the process to determine outcomes and ultimately impact at the university.

Accounting not assessment. Within the notion of truly understanding impact institution-wide, many respondents stated that Institution A was in a current state of accounting, not assessment. Accounting was described as counting numbers (e.g. number of service-learning courses or number of faculty doing community-engaged scholarship). Assessment was described as a deeper understanding of the outcomes associated with an activity or number of activities, or the observed difference. A university stakeholder described that state:

It really is just accounting, it's not assessment. It is not what we what we do in terms of truly assessing because... it's easy to collect so then you can report out and say the this is how many partnerships we have, this is how many students serve, this is how many faculty, but what you really want to do is be able to get beyond that and talk about impact... if you develop some outcomes that you can then be able to...measure over time and see if it is making some difference – that I think is really what we are trying to do. And it's harder... we're starting to define it a little bit differently and define it more clearly so that not every instance counted, if it really is community engagement it's not like, again where we talk about, well one night you go and you have a brief meeting...that's not really community engagement over a period of time, even though you might have interacted with a particular organization. I think it's by defining it more clearly and perhaps more specifically and then going beyond just how many students and how many... the accounting piece of it.

Another university stakeholder echoed a similar current state of determining impact:

“We've been reasonably successful at doing headcount which is how many programs do we do, how many people attend, what are we doing, but not with the follow up of what's the impact of that.” All respondents suggested the university was working to improve the ability to comprehensively track outputs and subsequently better assess outcomes.

Ability to determine impact. In working to improve institutional capacity to determine impact, respondents reflected on the aspects of assessment that Institution A has control over and those it may not. Across university and community stakeholders, responses fell into three basic categorizations. These include assessment the institution

cannot do, assessment it could do but does not have funding and support for, and assessment it can reasonably do in the current environment. Most respondents indicated that institutional capacity for determining impact fell within either something the university could do but does not have funding and support for, or as something the university cannot do. As one university stakeholder reflected on the initiative in the proximate community, they described it evolving around what resources and individuals were available as time went on, rather than evolving around impact goals: “There was never a contract that said that we weren’t going to quit until we got services to 120 neglected young people or something...it's like we, we kind of do what we can with what we have, and that’s a very difficult thing for assessment or demonstrating impact.”

Aspects of determining impact that the university can work toward improving were focused on the project- or program-level. These projects or programs are long-term, typically funded in some way, and measure outputs and outcomes over time. These activities are not typically coordinated with one another nor are outcomes observed collectively. Yet, participants provided examples of where assessment is strong. As one university stakeholder stated, “It's not surprising...that the longitudinal programs are much more effective than the one-time presentation to sixth graders about medicine. They watch live heart surgery it's great, but if that's it and there's no follow up, it doesn't really go anywhere.”

Two other examples of the difficulty in determining impact illustrate common responses from participants. The first is from a university stakeholder describing community participation in free medical screenings for local residents. This stakeholder recounted how residents may be screened, but the university cannot systematically track

those individuals, particularly over long periods of time, unless they are enrolled in a study and provide contact information. “But again, it doesn't ask how many of those people who had high blood pressure screening actually go on to get treated for hypertension. We don't know that.” This example parallels many respondents describing the difficulty of tracking elementary and secondary students through school that have participated or benefited from university engagement. The second example is from a community stakeholder, who noted the logistical challenges of assessment are a substantial barrier to effective assessment. “There's often compliance issues and HIPPA issues. So, when we do get close to figure it out let's run this data, let's match it with school data around asthma, it just seems like there's also roadblocks of sharing information, and even if it might be none of the identified data. It's always a challenge to jump through... even share the data.” This example parallels many responses that focused on a lack of data or an inability to coordinate among activities.

Appropriate metrics. Another challenge at Institution A is identifying appropriate metrics to use in working toward impact goals. Respondents indicated that appropriate metrics were needed but difficult to get right, as one community stakeholder explained: “I think it's the same challenge that anybody has trying to assess anything, and that is just figuring out... what are the metrics that are actually going to tell you whether you've made any difference.” One challenge in pinpointing and using good metrics, according to several stakeholders, is the institutional history that influences current practice. A university stakeholder's description of the evolution of metrics for the initiative in the proximate community illustrates ways in which historical choices influence present decision-making regarding assessment:

We started the initiative in the proximate community 10 years ago and we have a set of metrics that were developed and I have to admit they were not the most perfect metrics. But looking back 10 years later, we have realized “Oh my God, those are horrible, you know?” But at the time, that’s what they were and many of us had no control over those metrics. There were others involved and so we simply had to work with what we were given. But part of those metrics that aren’t perfect, it still allowed us to see how much we have changed over time.

Another challenge cited by several respondents was in identifying what constitutes “good” work, or “quality” assessment, or “meaningful” differences. One university stakeholder recounted the difficulty in knowing whether or not they have “enough” faculty of color: “You could...say 30 percent is in surgery. That's huge, but is that enough? No. But what are the benchmarks and how do you go from there?” This respondent went on to tie this question of identifying thresholds with trying to benchmark effectiveness in other areas, including community engagement: “The same thing with community impact... what is the threshold for saying that something is effective or isn't effective and what is the timeline on that? And trying to measure that. So, the first thing is having assessments that work that tell you something meaningful.”

When respondents discussed metrics that work, they were tied to specific projects and programs with a quality assessment model. These projects or programs, including service-learning courses, were described as being independently led and were successful because of their unique design or assessment expert. Many respondents also noted that projects and programs tied to grant or other funding were often the best examples of rigorous assessment to determine impact. Because these individual activities are not

linked, the outcomes associated with them are not coordinated. Both university and community stakeholders suggested that more funding and structure would be needed in order to do so, and therefore the ability to conduct assessment and determine impact in the local community is hindered. Respondents often described the needed approach to better determining impact as replicating or broadening smaller scale projects that measure outcomes effectively. As one university stakeholder reasoned, “So... that's just one little program, and again it was driven by having to report to the granting agency what the results were. When asked to do it we've done it, but we haven't been able to ask to do it on a wider scale. So, trying to use some of those metrics that we've used for programs where we do have to report and bring that out wider.”

Depictions of impact. All respondents were asked to define impact as they understood it institution-wide. Beyond the initial definitional language, respondents also provided various depictions of impact throughout the interviews. Impact was used differently to cover a broad range of meanings, most commonly the notion of influencing or affecting an individual, organization, or issue in a positive way. Respondent characterizations suggest community engagement influences or affects the lives of local residents, the strength of local organizations, companies, and institutions, as well as individuals and units within Institution A. In determinations of whether or not impact has occurred, some respondents described impact as very specific and tied to an assessment process, while others described impact as the continuous presence of individuals and activities working together on reciprocal ideas.

Some university and community stakeholders focused on impact as a carefully measured outcome, particularly over time, as part of a process. Impact, in this sense,

follows the traditional logic model components of outputs to outcomes to impact, wherein impact is the long-term manifestation of continued work. As one community stakeholder posed, “How do you measure the actual impact, and when do you measure the actual impact, particularly when you're talking about things where the impact cannot really be clear until years after the fact? And how do you gather that information, particularly if the impact will primarily show up over the long haul?” A university stakeholder, also questioning how to maintain a clear and structured process for rigorous assessment over longer periods of time, noted the challenge of tracking relevant goals. Without that capability, this stakeholder suggested Institution A cannot actually determine its impact in the local community:

When it's so broad you don't know whether or not what you're doing is having that kind of impact, you know? I think what we have to do is really have more specific outcomes that is part of what we as an institution, or specific projects, are actually doing. And not, you know we're going to save the world and reduce hunger and all of that... because there's so many other variables that have contributed to it, or so many other variables that could have a negative impact.

From this lens, another university stakeholder suggested, “When we think about impact, I think we need to talk about particular efforts, and think about the context of those efforts and what the actual input from Institution A was for them.”

While many respondents discussed impact in this measured way, noting how difficult it would be to determine institution-wide, most use of the term was as a large-scale goal (i.e. health equity; graduation rates in partner schools). These characterizations involve an ideal, an aspiration not tied to specific actions. This lens

focused more on a continuous presence of activity with varying goals and increasingly strong relationships resulting from those activities. One community stakeholder noted, “We are currently trying to look... at how do we better strengthen our impact in, our role in the community engagement... relationship. This respondent focused on how Institution A plays a participatory role in ongoing work across the community, and data should be used to identify ways in which the university can build better relationships and a more positive institutional image. Impact in this sense is linked to perception (i.e. impact has occurred if it is known and perceived by intended recipients): “I will say as a community-based person, I don't know that the impact is totally felt as an Institutional A influence, if it's there at all. You know, I think people don't always see labels that they don't always understand, hey this is Institution A at work... I don't think it's understood in that way.” Both community and university stakeholders indicated that a “positive impact” by Institution A was linked to the community’s identification of community engagement work as welcome and beneficial. Respondents indicated that impact occurs as community understanding of Institution A’s work is enhanced, leading to more activity and ultimately stronger relationships. A university stakeholder described the current state of those relationships:

They understand the expertise that we have and all these knowledgeable faculty running around. They know we have expertise in research... in criminal justice... in social work and education and law... they see us as being in a position to contribute to... the needs of the community. They may not understand the intricacies of teaching and how teaching can impact the community, for instance.

They may not really know the details of how that is done and why we do it, but they know that we have the expertise that we can lend to the community.

Respondents suggested that the increased presence of community engagement in the community, across the campus, and within campus culture, as a mechanism for sustained practice, *is* impact. As these activities and relationships grow, respondents suggested impact will occur wherever good work is being done, though there is no clear structure or expected outcome at the outset. As one university stakeholder recounted, “It’s taken me awhile to get this, but it makes me feel better about it because a lot of impact is made, it’s just sometimes, maybe not what you thought it was going to be or doesn’t start the way you thought it was going to be.” Impact, through this lens, is a collection of fruitful, reciprocal activities.

Supporting Themes

The supporting themes that emerged from the data illuminate central and peripheral factors that concern institutional processes to determine impact locally. They include the individual-driven spirit of community engagement, consequences of bureaucratic processes, structural supports, external entities and procuring of resources, and public perception. These are considered next, respectively.

Community engagement is individually-driven. As discussed above, respondents suggested that centralization of community engagement assessment at Institution A would be difficult because the work itself is generated independently. Both stakeholders stressed faculty as the primary drivers of engagement activity, describing their involvement in community engagement as an individual choice based on their own context and expertise. One university stakeholder noted the reliance on faculty for

engagement work and subsequent assessment processes, stating, “It is always, though, dependent upon the cooperation of the faculty, that basically are leading any of these initiatives.” Another university stakeholder echoed, “The actual work is going to be driven by the interests of faculty, sometimes the interest of students or student organizations... or just related to centers or institutes.”

Respondents articulated the individuality of faculty work, suggesting that asking faculty to direct their research, teaching, or service toward a specific community outcome would violate the nature of their academic freedom. Further, because faculty typically bring a specific research agenda to their position, as they turnover or transition to other areas or roles within the university, faculty who step in to participate in ongoing efforts may have a very different set of knowledge and skills. A university stakeholder framed it as, “It's not like we're a lean, nimble business that collects very detailed data about the amount of money coming in and going out... setting aside this amount for a specific engagement or service mission, and then hire somebody to exact that.” Instead, the stakeholder suggested Institution A is “in this position of kind of evolving, shifting, morphing resources and timelines. And then how do very busy people connect with other very busy people outside the university to get these things firing on all cylinders.” Another university stakeholder suggested that “very busy people” find each other all the time, as individuals connect through their own individual experiences and efforts:

As a whole, we can work collaboratively on addressing mutual and beneficial areas. Sometimes it works perfectly. Other times, it requires some guidance to make sure it happens, but I must say, in the vast majority of times, it works perfectly without our intervention that a faculty member will find some partner in

the community who wants to work on a project with them and it serves the faculty well and it also serves the community well. It is variable, but most of the time it works well.

Consequences of bureaucratic processes. Given the individuality and decentralization at Institution A, the university utilizes processes to coordinate among different persons and units. Both university and community stakeholders described the often uncoordinated and patchwork nature of these processes, particularly for tracking community engagement. University stakeholders emphasized the challenges in navigating across schools, departments, and units to move community engagement forward. The central coordinating office is a key organizational unit to facilitate this forward movement, but respondents indicated that those within the office can only do so much in what feels to them a large bureaucracy. The staff is beholden to the larger, institutional norms including a lack of coordination within and across schools. One stakeholder described in detail the challenge of trying to form and sustain a university initiative focused on a common goal or set of goals:

I just think that given the nature of the university that these things get... lost and diluted... There have been efforts in the past where, oh, we're doing this big coordinated thing, here is the logic model, like here's how we're going to do it. It's going to be multidisciplinary, everybody's going to be on board, we're going for this specific outcome. Well you know, faculty move on that were part of this multidisciplinary team, money goes away from this original intentional effort. Maybe internal conflicts arise that make that interdisciplinary coming together this more difficult. I just see where these things start to fall apart relatively

quickly within the university setting. I think funding really is a huge piece of it too, you know, it's not like somebody came to the fore with like here's enough money to help underwrite a ten-year effort... so I think it will start off with these intentions of going towards specific long term impact as the institution but...that is a very difficult thing to do I think.

When asked to describe further how coordination breaks down, both in process and consequently in assessment processes, the stakeholder went on:

It's just like those logic models just (exploding noise) turn to dust and... it just morphs into, oh well we've got this new faculty member on, this is their focus and they're interested in doing this, so let's plug them in, but it has nothing to do with the original sort of thinking about what this was going to be, and then just that happens in like ten different areas over the course of ten years and you come out with something very different.

Another university stakeholder expounded on the difficulty in working toward a single community outcome, particularly if university actors are able to provide services or support to community members in the immediate term. Institution A may set goals for a particular population or groups of individuals and set criteria or parameters to ensure work aligns with those goals, but stakeholders recounted across interviews the struggle with practical application. Stakeholders cited funding, coordination, and the ability to match engagement work with community need and willingness to partner.

Structural supports. Embedded across interviews was the notion that the university is currently building structural support, including funding, staffing, and resourcing, to advance community engagement at Institution A. Yet, no respondent felt

that the university had “enough” support yet, or that it was possible to conduct assessment in such a way that Institution A could effectively or accurately determine its impact in the local community. As one university stakeholder argued, “I think in terms of being, coming together for centralization of that actual work, is gonna be a challenge without appropriate resourcing and appropriate staffing.”

Conversations regarding funding occurred across all interviews. “I’d like a lot more money” was stated by one university stakeholder and echoed by all other respondents in various ways. Financial support to conduct community engagement work including building funding into faculty pay, providing grants to support collaborative or multidisciplinary work, and to set up sustained projects and programs in the community. Yet, even with the funding currently supporting community engagement at Institution A, respondents suggested that it is difficult to depict and defend the benefits associated with most engagement activity. One university stakeholder described the environment as follows:

Especially in this era of...increasingly limited resources. Where do you put your money, where it's going to be most effective? And prove it – because nobody wants to cut programs everybody wants to do everything. But we can't afford to do everything, so how do we figure out what a return on investment is. And it's a real challenge. We've not done it in the past and we've not done it well.

Without funding, respondents indicated that such assessment would continue to not be done well. A university stakeholder suggested that funding is a harbinger for appropriate expectations. Without necessary resourcing, Institution A should not be expected to

answer the question of what impact its community engagement activity is having in the local community:

It's maybe a disservice to come to things that don't have ongoing resourcing and then try to pretend like that's going to have a major impact or that it's something more than it really is. And I'm not saying that there's not value in the way anything's been done, I'm just saying, you know, don't try to hold people accountable for impact when you're looking at volunteerism in some respects, when you're looking at shoestring budgets that don't exist.

Ongoing resourcing included additional staff within the central coordinating office, increased faculty conducting community engagement, and additional institutional funding efforts to enable new engagement efforts. The central coordinating office in charge of assessment has a staff of two, though the larger community engagement team has a staff of 14. Respondents indicated that the small staff effects ongoing support for community engagement, the ability to assess engagement activity, and the ability to include community members in the evaluation of activities. From within the office, one stakeholder stated, "There are hundreds of partnerships and it's one of me. I'll spend my entire day meeting with partners and I still can't do that all." The inability to maintain consistent communication channels constrains the office to the use of an electronic survey to communicate with community partners and university faculty and staff as a primary data collection tool. The small staff also prohibits internal coordination of community engagement activities across the community. It is largely up to community partners to coordinate different university units working with their organization, units

who may or may not be aware others from Institution A are working with the same community partner:

The reason why I think that is the easier approach is because we are a decentralized university... If faculty does social work maybe at Nonprofit X and so maybe a person with the college of business is at Nonprofit X. And these two faculty do not know each other, our office is small. It would be great if it could be the clearinghouse and any faculty who wants to work there comes to our office first, we tell them here are all the needs Nonprofit X has. Here are all the people working at Nonprofit X and we coordinate that. Unfortunately, we don't have the capacity to do so... so we cannot do it at all.

Public perception. Both sets of stakeholders indicated that community engagement is used to enhance and improve public perception of Institution A, yet engagement is also influenced by public perception. As discussed in the section on depictions of impact, respondents suggested that when individuals feel some benefit from engagement and are aware of ongoing activity, that *is* impact. Thus, some stakeholders indicated the goal of processes to determine impact should be primarily focused on practices that ensure a clear institutional presence in the community. This, according to respondents, generates positive feelings and perceptions of Institution A. As one community stakeholder stated, “Does Institution A make available in that part of town, or to those groups, particular programming, or medical services or social services or educational services, you know? So, I think it is partly a matter of presence – that one measure of impact is, are we actually there on the ground? Are we actually available to be engaged with residents in this part of the county?” A university stakeholder similarly

affirmed the need for assessment processes to facilitate greater public knowledge of Institution A's work to improve perceptions:

Something we are currently discussing, how can we have a bigger presence in the community? In terms of show people what is happening on our campus? And how can we just be more visible, so to speak, in the community. Our data is used to help us make decisions. We also use it to publicize the work of the university...we want to publicize the fact that we are doing something. I was surprised that many people have no idea of the universities work out in the community.

Several stakeholders suggested that current efforts to improve public perception and increase community awareness of Institution A's presence have not been sufficient. According these respondents, the relationship between Institution A and the community could be better. One university stakeholder reflected:

I don't know if that has to do with the current sort of state of public perception around Institution A given the situation and with political leaders, academic viability, university finances, and athletics... From my perspective Institution A's logo is not on some of these larger level community initiatives, whereas a lot of other folks' logos are on there... I don't know what's going on there, but I feel like at the fine-grain level there is a ton of amazing projects that Institution A connects on with the city. But at the higher levels I'd like to see sort of more involvement happening through the various leadership positions here.

One community stakeholder described a disconnect between Institution A's work and the community "feeling" that activity: "I just think that has something to do with perspective of community and I don't know if full appreciation or understanding is marketed or

promoted in that way. Not that it has to, but I just don't know if, if they as a community feel the engagement of Institution A.” Another community stakeholder offered a different viewpoint, stating, “The individual schools are well-regarded, and I think they're seen as a good resource for the business community and for government in terms of research.” These respondents were speaking about different constituencies within “the community”. As the community is not monolithic, nor were characterizations of public perception.

Perceptions of Institution A and of community engagement also vary within the university. Respondents indicated that some university members feel positively about the institution while others do not, and some university members feel positively about community engagement while others do not. One university stakeholder suggested the university create a position to manage Institution A’s public perception, as well as coordinate internal knowledge of engagement activity occurring across different units: “Someone that’s very good at communication so that everybody knows what you're doing. We do the best that we can with that, but if that's someone's job, then...not letting that ball drop in any area.” Currently, the central coordinating office is tasked with that work. However, respondents indicated that communication regarding the benefits of community engagement internally and externally of Institution A could be improved:

We... work closely with deans and vice presidents across the university. We try to build those kinds of relationships. We try to show how this work meets essential parts of the university’s mission and help to facilitate other areas of the university's work. For example, we try to show how community engagement helps students better understand academic content... research shows that students

who are engaged to the community, whether it's part of their course requirement or is an outreach, tend to feel more connected to institutions... People who get to know each other on a more personal level, it's not only to get to know the course content better but about that connection and which in turn helps with retention. So, we try to show how this work is helping the broader mission of the university to educate and to retain and graduate more students.

University respondents indicated that if perception of this alignment was greater, that may in turn influence the practice and assessment of community engagement.

Institution-Specific Themes

The institution-specific themes that emerged from the data highlight unique organizational characteristics of institutional processes to determine impact locally. They include the emphasis on a proximate community, public trust, athletics, current development projects, and the potential for collaboration among state universities. These are considered next, respectively.

Emphasis on proximate community. Embedded in all interviews was a focus on the initiative in the proximate community to Institution A. Across definitions, institutional processes, and within themes, respondents focused on the university's efforts to concentrate community engagement activities in this area of the county. When describing how Institution A approaches community engagement, where it has focused its efforts, and how assessment takes place to determine impact, the initiative was mentioned. As one university stakeholder recounted:

The proximate community is a major target. About ten years ago the university as a whole initiated the initiative targeting four of these zip codes that are all in the

proximate community, and then attempted to university-wide level be involved in community needs, and building our university-community relationships on all fronts, not just health care, but education, and commerce, and jobs.

When discussing the organization of community engagement activity, collective movement toward community-identified goals, and coordinated assessment, both university and community stakeholders were quick to share what one university stakeholder stated: “I think that the initiative probably is the best example of that.” A community stakeholder shared, “In particular, their initiative is a focus, and when I was asked to be on the board, what I have seen is our meetings take place in that part of town, our, the reports that we look at really primarily look at what are our initiatives with those groups etc.” Another community stakeholder suggested, “That is one of the highlights of what the university is doing to improve the community around them.”

Public trust. Respondents shared that Institution A has historically had issues with public trust and is currently experiencing a renewed challenge to maintain a positive public image. In terms of historical issues, the university in the past has used the community for research or other purposes without focusing on reciprocity. One university stakeholder described feedback they had received on several occasions as community members saying, “Well you're just going to send the professors down here, you use as guinea pigs, and then you write your paper and it's gone. It's a one off – there's nothing we ever see about it so why should we help you?” A university stakeholder suggested that in the current assessment era, even when data is credible and is conveying something meaningful, it may not be readily received by community partners: “Then again it's getting the buy in, for trust... just because we say it, doesn't necessarily mean

it's true, and there's a lot of distrust in that community. And so how do we convince them that this assessment tool is accurate, and you should look at these results and alter your practices according to that. A lot of it's been done poorly. So, we've got to build back that trust." A community stakeholder suggested that the institution needs to continue to try to embed its work locally, to change this skepticism: "How can this institution be more indigenous to the community's work, so that the people feel connected to Institution A."

As discussed above, the university has also recently suffered from internal challenges that have affected public perception of Institution A and its engagement with the community. One community stakeholder offered that, "The overall look at the university from a statewide perspective – we just have to ride this ship and then regain the credibility in order to really move forward." This stakeholder suggested that when the public is skeptical of the university's stewardship of finances, among other issues, it is difficult to right that ship: "It's like anything else you have to – building a reputation takes a long time, it doesn't take long to ruin a reputation, but it takes a long time to build one. So, there's a lot of rebuilding that has to be done." Community stakeholders suggested that trust could be won again, particularly if Institution A is able to generate a positive story or stories to change the conversation: "So, to get... maybe some big donors to show an investment in whatever that might be, if it's public health or whatever, to just kind of gain that momentum in fundraising and grants and all that."

Development of new projects. Several development projects are in motion in the metro area that Institution A has played a key role in. Particularly in the proximate community, Institution A has assisted in trying to bring activity, services, commerce, and renovation of the built environment to that geographical area. These projects help

Institution A demonstrate economic impact, per respondents, and allow the university to make a case to receive additional funding as an anchor institution in the city. Several respondents cited specific development projects that came about from community engagement and, for them, demonstrate an impact. One community stakeholder characterized university and community college involvement in city and government development in the following way:

Certainly, there's a lot of concern on the part of the business community for the ways in which the activity at the university level and...at the community college level, how that is enhancing the economic well-being, the enhancement of the workforce, the attracting of new business and all of that...those kinds of metrics are going to be important, and something that we're all capturing so that we can demonstrate to our legislators and to others, the importance of our having sufficient resources to make the kinds of differences in the community that lead to economic growth.

A few respondents suggested the interaction between the state's two largest public universities should deepen, including Institution A and the state's land-grant, more rural university. These respondents felt that an opportunity was present to create even greater impact in local communities across the state if new projects and initiatives were more intentionally pursued. Some efforts are already underway. One university stakeholder described the coordination of health education programming by the two institutions:

They (the other state institution) also do pipeline programs... everything from K-12 through high school, college and pre-professional students... a third is community education and continuing medical education so they do that, and we

house the statewide office here and work closely with the other institution. We subcontracted them and then they sort of run the daily business for the four centers on the other side of the state, and we run the day to day business for Institution A's side. So, the health education programming ...is really a key part of our community engagement on a statewide level.

A community stakeholder suggested more could be done: "We're fortunate that we have both of these great universities and I think there's a lot more opportunity...for a primarily more rural oriented university like the other large, public state institution, and a more urban oriented school like Institution A to collaborate. I don't think we do that well." The stakeholder suggested that Institution A has a unique opportunity to have a meaningful impact within the state if coordination across higher education was heightened:

Institution A's city is very different than another city in the state, and very different than yet another rural town. I know there's some type of arrangements that Institution A and a rural town have on one of their health programs. I don't know enough about it to speak to it, but I think there has been some. They have done the work to try to get out more into the rural areas, but to me it seems like there is a huge opportunity to collaborate with the other state institution.

Summary

As a public, urban, metropolitan university, Institution A is situated in one of the top 30 largest cities and public-school systems in the United States. In what is considered a primarily rural state, the metro area that houses Institution A helps shape its identity as a community partner, resource, and anchor institution. Those within the university vary in definitions of community engagement activity, local community, and impact.

Community engagement was considered anything external to the university at a baseline, and then data is categorized by the central coordinating office to facilitate reporting, including the Carnegie Classification and accrediting bodies. Local community was not defined consistently, although the initiative in the proximate community was cited by every stakeholder as a focal point of the university's engagement practice. Impact was also defined in multiple ways, commonly described as "everyone benefitting", reciprocal in nature, and generally found at the project- or program-level.

Processes to determine the impact engagement has in the local community are centered on data collection through an annual electronic survey sent out across the university. A community partner survey is also administered once each year to solicit feedback from partner organizations. These surveys are voluntary but encouraged. Data to determine impact are limited by the information, or lack thereof, provided by individuals and units across the institution. Though respondents feel the prevalence of community engagement is increasing across the university, they did not feel Institution A's ability to determine impact in the local community is necessarily possible.

As a decentralized institution, themes centered on the capacity to conduct rigorous assessment and the influencers that affected the ability to do so. The university is decentralized, and respondents identified more bureaucratic hindrances than centralizing strategies to facilitate more comprehensive and meaningful assessment. Institution A's work in the proximate community was commended by every stakeholder and described as a good example of an institution-wide effort to proliferate activity within a geographic area. As an urban institution in a primarily rural state, Institution A has an opportunity to create community engagement activities that reimagine local and state-wide impact.

CHAPTER V

CASE TWO: INSTITUTION B

Institution B first held classes in the city in which it is located in the late 1800s, yet it was not officially established as it is known today until the late 1960s. With the Midwestern city having been founded long before in the early-mid 1800s, it was local political officials, business and community leaders, and the higher education community that decided to locate a postsecondary institution in the downtown area of the city less than five decades ago. The campus was designed to be within walking distance of the downtown area. Negotiations were made as to how to create space, what had to be relocated in order to accommodate new buildings, and how city planning, including transportation routes, needed to be reconfigured. Other universities in the state played an integral role in supporting the implementation of Institution B, which now houses more than 350 undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs.

Outline of Case Two

The case study on Institution B begins by describing the state and county in which the university is located, followed by a description of its institutional characteristics. A review of data sources then precedes the discussion of findings. The findings are organized first by contextual factors, including how respondents feel the relationship between Institution B and the city is unique. Next, the ways in which the three key terms

of community engagement activity, local community, and impact are operationalized are outlined to add additional context. Within this institutional framework, the central research question is then explored regarding the processes Institution B uses to determine its impact in the local community. The chapter concludes with a discussion of emergent themes, including major, supporting, and institution-specific themes.

Description of the City-County Structure

When the city in which Institution B resides was established in the early-mid 1800s, the original design included a one-mile square around which the city would develop. The city is close to its bicentennial celebration, and at the time of its centennial celebration, more than half the population lived within five miles of the city's center. Since that time, it has grown into what is now one of the top 15 largest cities in the United States. The city is also the largest in the state. In the second half of the 20th century, the city and the county in which it is located merged into one unified jurisdiction, now a metro area, which includes 11 counties and just under 2,000,000 people. According to the 2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the top five industries in the county for the civilian employed population over 16 years old includes healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, manufacturing, accommodation and food services, and educational services, respectively. The city is also in the top 10 U.S. cities with high-tech job growth and houses the headquarters for many large corporations and organizations.

The state and the county differ slightly across cultural, social, economic, physical, and political characteristics. A table was created to more easily examine similarities and differences visually (see Table 7). State and county characteristics were informed by

Chaskin’s (2001) relational framework, utilizing various sets of conditions to better understand elements that influence or describe community capacity. As the table shows, the county within which Institution B resides is more diverse than the state, with slightly higher educational attainment and median household income. Rates of poverty and unemployment are comparable. The county is considered the urban center in a largely agricultural state. These data provide initial context for this characterization.

Table 7

Case Two Comparison of State and County Community Characteristics

Community Characteristic	State	MSA
Total Population	6,600,000	2,000,000
Race	84% White	77% White
	9% Black or African American	15% Black or African American
	7% Hispanic or Latino	6% Hispanic or Latino
	2% Two or more races	3% Asian
	2% Asian	2% Two or more races
Median Age	37 years	36 years
Gender	51%	51%
Percentage of Population with a High School Diploma or Equivalent	88%	89%
Percentage of the Population Under Age 18	24%	25%
Percent Unemployment	4% in 2016, down from 6% in 2013	5% in 2016, down from 6% in 2013
Percent of Population 16 Years and Over in the Labor Force	64%	68%
Median Household Income	\$50,433	\$52,147
Percentage of All People whose Income in the Last 12 Months was Below the Poverty Level	15%	14%
Percentage of Children Under 18 whose Income in the Last 12	21%	21%

Months was Below the Poverty Level

Party Affiliation of the Current

Governor and Mayor, respectively

Republican Party

Democratic Party

Note. Data are derived from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and are rounded to help reduce possible identification of the institution. Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) describes the larger geographical area surrounding Institution B.

Institutional Characteristics

Institution B is located within the center of the county and in the heart of the downtown area. It is a 4-year, public, urban, metropolitan university and holds the Carnegie Classification and is a member of CUMU. The university is classified by Carnegie as a Doctoral University: Higher Research Activity and has over 2,800 faculty members. Out of the near 30,000 students, 73% are undergraduates, 80% of whom are enrolled full-time. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 70% of those students are White, 10% are Black or African American, 7% are Hispanic/Latino, 4% are two or more races, and 4% are Asian. Of the undergraduate population, 77% are 24 years of age or younger, and 92% come to the university from within state. Just 4% are from out-of-state, while 3% of undergraduate students are from foreign countries. In 2015-2016, international students made up 7% of the overall student population.

Institution B has a 74% admission rate and an overall graduation rate of 46%.

The institution has 18 schools and two colleges within its campus and offers approximately 350 academic programs altogether. Institution B offers many opportunities for study abroad and international learning experiences and incorporates student community engagement starting in a student's first-year. Approximately 40% of students live on campus in their first year. The operating budget for the university is

close to 1.5 billion dollars, of which approximately 17% comes from state appropriation. The university hosts a nationally ranked hospital system, including one of only two Level One Trauma Centers in the state, and a renowned pediatric hospital. The institution is a large, decentralized university taking on many of Birnbaum's (1988) characteristics of an anarchical system described in Chapter Four.

Review of Data Sources

Data collection for Institution B included a series of interviews with university and community stakeholders involved in engagement and assessment, as well as several other data sources. These included institutional documentation, archives and records available, accreditation materials, strategic plans, website data, and institutional and community descriptive data, as well as other documentation available online or through participants. The sample of interviewees was secured through a process of initial conversations with a gatekeeper, subsequent conversations with potential and confirmed participants, online searches, and recommendations by those aware of the study. At Institution B, seven individuals provided an interview, six females and one male. Three of these interviews were conducted with university stakeholders and four with community stakeholders. Four participants identified as White or Caucasian, two as African American, and one as multi-ethnic. When asked how many months or years they had been involved in assessment of community engagement, responses ranged from six months to 20 years, though the average estimated experience in assessment of community engagement work was 11.4 years. The disciplines or areas of university stakeholders ranged from community engagement, institutional research, and health, and positions such as assistant vice chancellor or associate dean or director were represented.

Community stakeholders were in disciplines or areas such as community leadership, community development, and government and policy relations, and held positions such as executive director, chief officer, or president.

Findings

The findings that follow are derived from the data sources described above. The unique relationship between the institution and city, as captured primarily through interviews, is discussed first. The chapter then discusses the ways in which the three key terms of community engagement activity, local community, and impact are operationalized by the institution to add additional context. Within this framework, the primary processes by which the institution determines the impact its community engagement activity has in the local community is described. The chapter concludes with a discussion of major themes, followed by supporting and institutional themes. Findings focus on institutional processes specifically, rather than all emergent themes, in accordance with Yin's (2014) guidelines for effective case study analysis.

Relationship between Institution and City-County

According to university and community stakeholders, the founding of Institution B had a profound effect on its relationship with the city. The university was conceptualized and designed by leaders in city government, the business, community, and nonprofit sectors, as well as postsecondary education collaborators in the state. The agreement to place a large, urban, metropolitan institution right in the middle of the downtown area in the late 1960s was both a feat in cooperative planning and a deliberate displacement of individuals, homes, and businesses to make room for Institution B. One

community stakeholder described the founding as not being “organically developed,” recounting the initial founding in greater detail:

The leaders of this community, the mayor and the leaders of postsecondary education, decided we would build a transformative, a regional, a big urban university, and there were people living like on the parcel... there were institutions, and there were stores...restaurants...bars, and there were people whose, you know, whose neighborhood that was, right? And by the way those people were African-American...and that whole part of downtown was the Black neighborhood, and there were bars and restaurants and jazz clubs and...there's a really long and deep history with jazz and some other important cultural things about the African-American community. Well the city came in, it was like yeah, we're tearing all that down...and we're going to build a university. And as you might imagine that was a decision, while many people supported it, that had some ramifications for people.

Both university and community stakeholders described the negative feelings and emotions the founding of Institution B generated for many in the community. Several stakeholders suggested the negativity still manifests in different ways. One community stakeholder, who used to work at Institution B, recalled many conversations in the last decade with community members who were skeptical of the university's work in the community and its ability to address community needs. Yet, in reflecting on its purpose and role in the community, respondents also described how the founding served as a good example of how collaborative and connected city leadership is.

Respondents cited the location and design of Institution B as another unique feature. Because of the intentionality in planning, the university was conceived to be in the heart of downtown, creating access, walkability, and “seamlessness” between campus and community. One university stakeholder described how the city’s built environment is essentially indistinguishable from the campus buildings, without more isolating features such as high greenery or large gates to create a physical separation. Institution B is also one of the only postsecondary options within the county, as opposed to other cities that house high numbers of colleges and universities. Due to this distinct role Institution B plays, city planning to accommodate faculty, staff, and students extends to multiple physical features. Two examples provided by respondents include walkways and pathways to get across campus efficiently as well as the rerouting of street traffic from one-way, high-speed lanes to two-way traffic patterns that require cars to drive slower and drivers to be more aware of student pedestrians.

Within this theme of collaboration and integration of campus and community, respondents suggested connections between the university and the city were uniquely strong. One connection cited by community respondents was the integration of community leaders into adjunct roles at Institution B. “As a compliment to the traditional kind of this academic faculty there's quite a few practitioner faculty, and they come from city and state government, non-profit organizations, wherever they happen to be working, and that really connects the professional kind of city world to Institution B and that happens all across Institution B – journalism, law school, everywhere.” Another connection cited was the integration of students into the city and its culture. University and community stakeholders suggested students feel embedded in the community.

Students come primarily from the surrounding counties to study in the city, creating a distinct student population from other more rural universities in the state. According to one university stakeholder, when asking students in a class recently how they differed from students at another institution in the state, they responded, “We see ourselves as part of the city, as part of this town, and at Institution B we can do both, we can live in the city, we can be at the institution. We’re not just college students, we’re from the city.”

Defining Key Terms

As discussed in Chapter Three, the central research question included five terms or phrases that needed to be operationalized. What constitutes *institution* and *process* were determined primarily by the researcher, but the terms *community engagement activity*, *local community*, and *impact* were left to each institution to define or conceptualize within their own context. The following section outlines the ways in which the latter three terms are conceptualized at Institution B according to data sources.

Community engagement activity. Community engagement is defined by the central coordinating office as, “Mutually beneficial, reciprocal activities that address community identified needs.” Both university and community stakeholders suggested that a variety of activities were occurring across the university, and Institution B had adjusted its definition of community engagement to serve more as an umbrella term than as a specific, tailored definition. Stakeholders suggested prior definitions aligned more closely with service-learning activities, curriculum-based projects that focused on student learning, or civic engagement. Those more targeted areas of engagement now fall within the umbrella term community engagement. For institutional purposes, this definition serves as a foundational framework to organize engagement and subsequent assessment

activities, though respondents indicated definitions of community engagement were different depending on the discipline or activity in question.

One university stakeholder characterized the definition as not necessarily accurate or appropriate to apply institution-wide. Building from their own experience at Institution B, they stated, “It was usually between a school or department or faculty member and not the entire institution. So, I wouldn't say campus because it's usually people.” People, this respondent indicated, implement community engagement entirely differently and therefore should not be characterized with homogenized terminology. A new organizational structure at Institution B was created to bring together many former offices to serve as a central hub for these distinct forms and areas of engagement. The office is intended to “establish a structure and leadership to coordinate engagement activities more comprehensively and strategically; leverage significant community and economic engagement activities; support relationships with enterprises related to areas of university research, creative activity, and professional service; and help to build a culture of entrepreneurship.”

Local community. The central coordinating office provided a clear conceptualization of what constitutes community, stating, “Community is anyone external to the campus, period. ...That can be a population, that can be a neighborhood, that can be a county, that can be a state, that can be a country.” When asked if it was purposefully broad, a university stakeholder responded, “Very broad.” According to the respondent, this is an intentional strategy to ensure faculty feel the central coordinating office is interested in their work and that all projects, programs, courses, and other

activities are included in initial sweeps of data gathering. Distinctions of what constitutes “local” are therefore not explicit.

While the central coordinating office uses this conceptualization, other respondents provided alternative definitions. All respondents referenced the city as being the local community, while some suggested the city and the county are seen as one entity, in accordance with the local government demarcation. Community stakeholders in particular explored expanding geographical spheres as possible definitions for local community, from the immediate radius around campus, to the city, to the internal highway loop, to the region of the state, to the state itself. Many respondents suggested that the sphere of local community depended on where work is being done. “It would depend on who you ask” was a common response, or as one university stakeholder stated, “Some people would say when they think local they think a nearby community ... some people think it’s the Metropolitan Statistical Area... I think it just depends.” This discrepancy in perspective on local community was linked in multiple interviews to the focus of different disciplines at Institution B. As one community stakeholder articulated, “Depending on some certain disciplines, if you’re talking regional economics, if you’re talking biomed, any kind of thing like that that’s more global in its scope. I think local could mean the regional central part of the state, it could mean the state, it could be regional state or whatever.” One university stakeholder suggested the local community was the counties from which Institution B’s students come, and there was an important connection back to those surrounding counties and the region. The urban core of the city was referenced in some interviews, and only emphasized as defining the local community in one interview.

Impact. According to almost all respondents, and across stakeholders, the ability to determine impact is a precise concept that should be used narrowly. Many interviewees first responded to the question of how Institution B determines its impact in the local community by describing impact as something that results from a distinct set of steps within program evaluation, suggesting the capacity for an institution to assess its impact institution-wide is limited. Institution B, according to the primary assessment staff within the central coordinating office, therefore intentionally does not define impact as a university. A university stakeholder described that choice, stating, “I feel like you have a lot of academics who are highly educated and understand what the term impact means and that there's a rigor to that and a methodology that is very precise. And so we tend to perhaps in branding, say we're making a difference or we're causing change but rarely do we make statements of impact.” Once this distinction was clarified, many of those respondents then used “impact” as a term to describe the ways in which Institution B influences, affects, or makes some sort of difference in the community.

Across stakeholders, respondents indicated it was difficult to answer the question of how the institution defines impact. Reasons cited for that difficulty included how large and disparate individual activities are, how widely assessment processes vary for each activity, as well as the challenge in measuring activities over time. Responses often started with a variation on one community stakeholder’s initial reaction: “Yeeesh.” That respondent went on to explore the question further, stating, “I think that varies, because community engagement varies. I think depending on department, depending on your approach, depending on the type of relationship you have with the community, impact varies.” The respondent indicated that impact in this sense was something that occurs as

a result of action over time, but action is not independent of meaningful relationships. Other respondents echoed the question of what the university is capable of measuring over time, including the degree of influence it has in the development of that impact. One community stakeholder described the difference in impact as providing a service or making a difference, with impact as change on community-level indicators as follows:

We've done things like ...furnished thousands of thousands of school supplies and back packs to kids. I mean that definitely has an impact but the philosophy we had ... was like okay, supplies are great, kids need school supplies, but what's next? Who's there to make sure they're actually learning what they're supposed to learn, are we changing the achievement gap, are we making sure students are passing standardized testing they need to or graduating on time or ... reading on level, grade level you know, all of that. And so, I would say it's more than community level indicators of quote unquote "success" is what a particular office would value, but overall, in terms of the university, it's kind of like anything we did that was good in the neighborhood and in the community.

Impact was characterized in multiple interviews as Institution B doing any good in the community through an intentional effort.

Summary of institutional definitions. Institution B utilizes particular definitions or conceptualizations of community engagement and local community, but not so for impact. Community engagement is more recently defined broadly, with an emphasis on reciprocity, in order to become more inclusive in all "umbrella" areas of engagement activity. Local community is also defined broadly by the central coordinating office in order to include all projects, programs, courses, and other activities in initial sweeps of

data gathering. What constitutes “local” is therefore not made explicit. Other characterizations of local centered mostly on expanding geographical spheres, depending on one’s perspective. Several participants also suggested that definitions of local community vary across disciplines, and there may be 18 different definitions for 18 different schools within Institution B. Most respondents suggested that impact was a precise concept that should be used narrowly within program evaluation and was therefore not applicable institution-wide. The term was then used to describe the ways in which Institution B influences, affects, or makes some sort of difference in the community. Respondents characterized the ability to determine these influences or affects as very difficult and therefore difficult to preemptively define.

Institutional Processes to Determine Impact

Within this institutional context, the following section describes the primary processes by which Institution B determines the impact its community engagement activity has in the local community. Process as determined by the researcher included the categories of defining (described in the previous section), identifying, tracking and reporting, using data, and relational aspects of evaluation processes. Participants were asked questions from these four categories and highlighted different aspects of process within each, yet a common institutional narrative emerged throughout data collection.

Identifying and tracking community engagement. Institution B is in the process of revising its community engagement assessment processes. Historically, the university did not employ a systematic method for identifying engagement activities, nor tracking them over time. Assessment of engagement activities, particularly for service-learning, were being done rigorously in pockets across the university, but individual

efforts were not identified and tracked institution-wide. One community stakeholder, having worked at Institution B for many years, described initial assessment processes as follows:

For a long time, there was no comprehensive list. The university is really decentralized, and so units were doing things all over the place, not even just the community... engagement ones, but like different departments, different schools on campus were all doing something different and it was, there was no comprehensive list of everything that's going on in the... community. In recent years we've attempted... to start to catalog what happens more broadly... but before then... it was a combination of who do you know, people like me, that were liaisons and like listing out what I knew versus different departments, faculties, doing their faculty annual reports, and if they happen to have a community partner or whatever then we'd know that way.

A university stakeholder echoed this strategy, recounting an online Excel spreadsheet that was used to store all available information. "We used to count courses and then we put it into this Excel file and then we posted that Excel file on the web and then sent an email to the deans and administration and said, 'Hey here's your courses and go check it out and, you can sort and filter by your school.'" An assessment staff member within the central coordinating office then decided to take that information and start creating specialized reports for each dean of the 18 schools, including graphs and charts. These materials included the number of service-learning courses, the participating faculty, number of student hours, and estimated economic impact. "So I made 18 of them as well as one big one that was sort of comprehensive so they could compare themselves... The

deans tended to like to see where they stood in comparison to others more, so that was very helpful. But we were asking the same questions every year or so.”

In addition to tracking service-learning courses, Institution B would gather additional data institution-wide as needed. This was done when an external entity required information, and multiple sources across the university would chip in to provide data upon request. One respondent described that process as follows:

For things like Carnegie classification, things like that, when folks had to pull together and put our university’s best foot forward, it was lots of committees, and people kind of like, who do you know, what do you know, dig in, contact these ten people, find everything you know, and us...condensing all of these lists and resources together... There was no centralized like database or anything like that.

In reflecting on their knowledge of the process from the community side, another stakeholder stated, “I think that that is hit or miss, is my assessment... I think it's too much for one vice chancellor and small team to do and I think that it's, Institution B is a large institution just like any other and I think that communication among the schools and the divisions... it’s hard.” Several stakeholders also noted the difficulty in holistically capturing the activity of so many distinct units across the institution.

In order to better capture that data, the central coordinating office began utilizing identification and tracking systems already in place. Questions were added regarding community engagement to the institution’s faculty survey and within the Institutional Review Board application process to flag faculty activity that could be considered community engagement. The assessment staff within the office continue to look for ways to capitalize on processes already in motion across the institution to identify engagement

activity. A university stakeholder called this “identifying and leveraging existing systems and processes.” Alongside these identification strategies, the staff also communicates with each school regularly to learn of new and ongoing engagement activity. The assessment lead now meets twice a year with a “data liaison” in each school to discuss what activity is occurring within that unit. Staff in the central coordinating office are also invited at various times to faculty or department chair meetings, where they describe and encourage community engagement reporting, and recently, share a new tool by which Institution B is organizing its assessment processes.

New strategy. As the assessment staff continued to think through better strategies to collect information needed for external entities such as the Carnegie Classification and Institution B’s accrediting agency, they were also working with community engagement scholars on developing better technology to facilitate assessment. In recent years, “in order to get at the deeper, more meaningful things, like what the university is doing to address specific issues”, Institution B began implementing a new data tool. A university stakeholder described its key features:

It is a live, publicly searchable, publicly accessible repository of activities. I could literally search it right now, without having logged in as a university administrator, and search for the word *homelessness* and it would tell you every activity that's been passed or ongoing related to it. If it was connected to a course or not, who that faculty member is, and... every community partner based on their affiliation with an activity, or with their mission statement, that works to address homelessness.

This stakeholder suggested that new faculty members who join Institution B can search this repository and find colleagues that they may be able to partner with on research, projects, and studies as well.

Developing a more comprehensive list of all activity occurring across the university was cited as a current goal for Institution B, yet that is not the main purpose of the new data tool. The purpose of this tool is to shift the assessment process away from better identification of activity and subsequently counting the number of activities, to understanding the meaningful contributions activities are making to the “health and vibrancy of communities”. The tool is intended to make clear the importance of community engagement as an integral piece of fulfilling the mission of higher education. A university stakeholder working with the tool described the shift as follows:

If I start...with tracking data and all I care about is the course, I can barely get, I can't get very far... I could never go back and get to the issue or the populations that they were working with. So I am fundamentally changing the unit of analysis away from a student ID...a faculty member's ID...an IRB protocol number or a course section number. Those...tend to be the most common key identifiers in any kind of engaged activity we are talking about. Now that I'm saying it's a unit of analysis as the activity... I'm pulling in those other key identifiers and connecting it to the thing that we care about, which is the activity itself.

The tool collects multiple data points on each activity, including different ways in which university faculty, staff, and students are sharing the outcomes of different projects.

Rather than solely tracking if an activity leads to a journal publication, the tool also tracks variations in written communication of findings, conference or workshop presentations,

forums, and other opportunities to share what was learned from the engagement activity. As one university stakeholder shared, “The (data tool) therefore allows and captures information in ways that we don't currently capture at the institution that acknowledges and values the various ways in which we disseminate findings in order to influence change.” The shift from counting activities to understanding the dynamic aspects of each activity was described as changing the foundational thought process behind assessment: “So it has fundamentally shifted how we think about data collection. It has fundamentally shifted the scope of things that we care about.”

The data tool allows Institution B to capture many more data points for each activity than it was previously collecting. Depending on what the activity involves, one university stakeholder recounted all the information that could be captured:

I know what social issue you are addressing... what population you're serving, if it's connected to a course... the number of students. I know the nature of the service that the students did if it's part of a high impact practice... learning outcomes too for those courses both civic and personal growth. Versus (just) academic outcomes. If it's connected to other faculty and staff... it acknowledges that staff on campus play a significant role in supporting and maintaining relationships in the community, so you can identify as a faculty member... the staff person who's also involved on your project... from that I can tell you what schools or units that they are a part of... what other units on campus... centers, offices, divisions, student organizations that might be involved in it. Time, when did it take place or is it ongoing? I can tell you funding both internal and external as well as the source of the funding... outcomes that are intended or achieved.

The tool tags each course by faculty and high impact practices involved, demonstrating ways in which Institution B is fulfilling its core academic mission of providing a quality education. High impact practices cited by respondents included theme-learning communities, summer bridge programming, service-learning and capstone courses, as well as internships, though the tool tracks all high-impact practices.

Populating this data tool with current activities requires a time-intensive effort to enter each data point. Assessment staff in the central coordinating office have taken the lead in entering information to generate activities within the online platform. The staff created profiles for activities they were already aware of, including those flagged from the faculty survey, incoming IRB submissions, and the twice-annual meetings with each school's data liaison. The staff then enter information for activities, describing each activity using any information they have acquired. They then send the proposed activity to the faculty or staff member for approval. "Nothing is live and publicly searchable until that faculty member, because of intellectual property copyright laws and academic freedom, nothing is live until that staff person or faculty member is the owner of it, verifies, and says yes." Faculty and staff are invited to input their own activities, yet the process is voluntary, and most activities are not yet captured. As one university stakeholder noted, "The data tool – in which faculty input information – that's limited because faculty, you have to rely on faculty to input the information." Currently, 175 activities are loaded into the online platform but only 30 to 40 are live.¹ Students cannot "own" an activity under their own name but are also encouraged to input information into the system and have an advising faculty or staff member verify the activity under the

¹ Current numbers at the time of data collection in the Fall of 2017.

faculty or staff member's name. A university stakeholder stated this was due in large part to the more transient nature of student matriculation, and activities are meant to be updated continually over time. Only individuals from Institution B can input information.

Reporting. Staff within the central coordinating office are working to link reporting at all stages to the identification and tracking of initial information on community engagement activities. The impetus behind this shift parallels the movement away from what several stakeholders at Institution B coined “bean counting” to more applicable and meaningful information regarding community engagement. The central coordinating office is now more focused on making sure reporting back to individual schools, deans, and those outside the university conveys information that is relevant to their needs. The expectation is that as information comes back to each unit that is relevant and meaningful, the identification and tracking of those activities will also improve. Several stakeholders mentioned that if faculty feel as though the detailing of their activities is not reported out any further or just falls into a “black hole”, they are not inclined to provide information unless explicitly required. One university stakeholder working on community engagement assessment stated:

I want to tell your story and I want to make sure your Dean knows what you're doing, and I want to make sure that your work is represented to the institution. So, the fact that the new online data tool is publicly available and people can find them, they're motivated by that. That is very different than...faculty have to enter information that goes into a big black hole. I can tell you right now every faculty

member I know says 'I'd love to know who's looking at my faculty annual report and how it's being used.' Like, they see very little value to that.

Reporting is now also being reconfigured to align with the need for applicability to faculty, dean, institution, and community needs.

Reporting occurs institution-wide on a regular basis. Per one university stakeholder, "All of our reporting guidelines at the institutional level are aligned to our strategic plan. And every dean, twice a year has to report to the institution. We have a strategic plan report that is due July 31st and a budgeting report that's due in the spring." Knowing that these reporting deadlines cyclically recur, the central coordinating office is working to align their communication with each school. The team is attempting to emphasize or tailor what gets reported about community engagement within that school based on their specific needs. One assessment lead noted, "I didn't create the reporting guidelines, but it was definitely a good partnership and I'm very attentive to where they are due, what they have due. And I make sure that if it's a priority for them, that I provide them information." In this way, community engagement reporting is increasingly being driven by a repository of information aimed at assisting units in communicating their own narratives about community engagement taking place within their school. Assessment staff within the central coordinating office suggested this is an institution-wide strategy for reporting without requiring some predetermined standardization.

I can write an accreditation report that states that we have one mission for community engagement, but the reality is that in decentralization is that you have 18 different missions and 18 different interpretations but for whatever audience

we always have to say that there's one. It is okay that there's one, it's just can we acknowledge that that has an interpretation based on fields and disciplines.

One assessment lead articulated the strategy as a mechanism of partnering to ensure community engagement embeds more deeply within different schools. In working with schools to identify their activity and encourage more engagement with the community as a mechanism of fulfilling Institution B's mission, there will be different approaches: "I have 18 different bosses who have 18 different priorities and see this work little bit differently."

Reporting also occurs to Carnegie, to Institution B's accrediting body and other accrediting agencies, and in fulfillment of grants and other external funders and entities. This includes an annual "report to the community". The process is a mix of previous data collection efforts and reporting strategies and use of the new data tool. The central coordinating office still has a listing of all known activity previously, and is engaging with faculty, departments, and schools, as well as different offices and centers across campus. With this knowledge, the office creates reports for the institution and external partners as needed. Without a more comprehensive listing of activity within the new data tool, Institution B is unable to capitalize on its full functionality in reporting with each activity as the unit of analysis.

Using assessment data. Much of the shift in identification, tracking, and reporting strategies at Institution B was attributed to how the university intends to use data. Part of the effort of the central coordinating office, per several university and community stakeholders, is to deepen and broaden community engagement activity across the university. Referring back to their overall mission with community

engagement as a “strategy through which we achieve our institutional mission and goals,” the collection and subsequent use of data on community engagement activity should facilitate such achievement. Yet, the use of data is also intended to show more nuanced, comprehensive ways in which Institution B and its faculty, staff, and students interact with the community. One example provided by respondents focused on faculty. Historically, faculty have needed to be responsive to traditional models of promotion and tenure at Institution B, including a focus on publishing in top journals over other activities. The central coordinating office is working to help expand this historical criterion for promotion and tenure to incorporate community engagement. The new data tool is designed to help tell more inclusive stories of faculty activity, yet it too was cited as having limitations. As one university stakeholder recounted, “I still think we're going to say, well, they gave expert testimony, or they wrote a policy brief or...they were asked to do a presentation in these spaces and testified at the national level to a committee, right? I think the data tool captures that but I still can't sit there and tell a P & T (promotion and tenure) committee how to evaluate the rigor of that outcome.”

While there remains a challenge in using new data to assist in the broadening and deepening of community engagement activity across Institution B, respondents indicated the shift will help better fulfill the university’s mission. Data is not meant to be used solely for “bean counting” purposes, rather it is now being used to fuel relationships across the university and inform programming that increasingly supports the mission. In terms of relationship building, data housed within the central coordinating office and its new data tool will help focus discussions between the assessment staff and the schools and their faculty on campus. An example for this was provided by a university

stakeholder who described the Nursing school preparing for an upcoming site visit by their accrediting body. The school wanted to be sure they were prepared for the visit, particularly as it pertained to partnerships, and requested support from the central coordinating office. Reflecting on this exchange, an assessment lead recounted how the office approaches these requests stating, “I don’t have all the answers, but I sure as heck can narrow down where you need to go digging for additional information... So the nursing school is more like supplementing based on what I have, as opposed to starting from scratch every single time an accreditation visit comes up.” The staff works to take all of its historical and current information to help create the most accurate and useful narrative for the department or school as needed. University stakeholders indicated that this requires ongoing communication, which is why staff meet regularly with school liaisons, faculty, deans, and other administrative staff.

In terms of using data to increasingly fulfill the mission of the institution, respondents suggested data is also being employed to identify needs within the university and the community that Institution B can capitalize on. One example provided involved a campus center that was doing “awesome stuff, amazing visual communication design,” but was having a difficult time securing a director and sustained support for their work. The central coordinating office began working with the center on using data and intentional communication of that data to tell a compelling story about the work being done within the center. A second example centered on an institutional need connected to students entering the state’s workforce. One university stakeholder described the initial issue as follows:

The state... is really struggling to keep underrepresented or attract underrepresented students or even anybody to go in to fill jobs in computer where informatics degrees are possible. And when the state comes to our school and says, "What the heck? You have this entire amazing program. Why can't we fill these jobs?" And the dean says, it's because my students graduate and they go and they write a check for twice as much money they could make in our state to New York, Texas and California... but they found students from underrepresented minority populations tend to stay.

The stakeholder went on to recount that after identifying this as an issue for the Institution B school, a community engagement strategy was initiated. The strategy involves a partnership with local high schools to both educate high school students in this discipline while simultaneously creating a possible pipeline of future Institution B students, that may also be more inclined to stay and participate in the state workforce upon graduation.

The dean has identified three local high schools that meet certain socioeconomic determinate factors, they teach informatics for four years in those high schools and they've become pipeline programs and they had their first graduating cohort of 34 students who have gone through, all 34 applied for and were accepted into an institution of higher education... There's literally a faculty member at Institution B who never once teaches an Institution B student. He teaches high school students informatics... Now not all of them are going into STEM fields, right? But the dean wants to track and make sure that thing is touted and identify whether or not there are other high schools... other opportunities. So it's about

what the deans are interested in and he's interested in enrollment management pipeline programs for underrepresented students.

This example demonstrates the shift Institution B hopes to make toward identifying institutional needs that can be addressed through community engagement as a strategy to fulfill the core university mission. As one university stakeholder stated, “If they're doing a project involving those (high) schools and it happens to enroll students who decide to become informatics majors... then there is value to that. It's just that we haven't been able to track that, there's no system on campus or anyone who's ever paid attention to that until now.”

Data are also used to support routine institutional processes such as accounting for activity to external entities and funders. Many respondents noted that data were used in reporting on grants, recruiting grant and other funding, as well as in promotional materials, public relations, alumni management, and in the media. A community stakeholder suggested, “Most data are collected to be reported to someone asking us for it... typically the ‘have-tos’ are what gets done the most.” A university stakeholder suggested the primary use of data is to write papers and apply for grants, but also suggested data is used for programs and initiatives within their school: “I'm trying to make a health impact. So, I'm measuring health and fitness outcomes of participants and reporting on those. Maybe looking at differences based on geographic location, or age, or gender, or race, to see how programs need to be tailored to a certain population.” Respondents suggested data are collected and used, as this example demonstrates, at the project or program level. As data and outcomes are compiled across disciplines, most

respondents suggested a picture of the larger institutional narrative is possible from that compilation of programmatic outcomes and activities.

Relational aspects of assessment processes. The majority of respondents suggested relationships were the most critical part of community engagement processes, including assessment. Many also described the maintaining and building of relationships, as well as communicating effectively through those relationships, as the most vital aspects of assessment. One community stakeholder articulated that it is often assumed funding is the biggest driver to ensure strong assessment processes, but it is actually relationships that keep partnerships strong and able to function, including for assessment purposes: “I don't think that money is the only thing in which you have traction. In fact, ... relationship, it's the most important one.” As another community stakeholder offered, having metrics and extensive data points may be useful to some individuals, particularly within the university, but metrics do not play a primary role in community engagement work. This stakeholder suggested that rather than scrutinize every detail – details the university may or may not have control over – Institution B needs to increasingly “make it all about the relationship.” “Yes. Like, we're Institution B and we're here to help.” A university stakeholder provided a similar perspective, noting possible differences in what information matters most to different stakeholders:

We can show metrics to each other all we want, because we care about that stuff, but the community cares about being a thriving community. It's more of what they feel and what they see and not so much metrics. And so how do we get them to pay attention to the metrics, I don't know... We can spew out as many reports as we want, but is that going to influence behavior? No, I don't think so.

The perception of a strong relationship was described as the most important component of assessing Institution B's work within the community. A community stakeholder emphasized that public knowledge of community development organizations' engagement work is critical to their vitality: "I think that awareness shouldn't be underestimated as impact. Awareness is a powerful, powerful, thing... we do have a fundraising department, we do have a marketing department that does engagement. Our organization is not just about community impact. If people don't know what we do, we will not fundraise." Respondents also indicated that *how* organizations communicate what they do is critical. A university stakeholder suggested that even if individuals are told that there was movement from A to B on a particular quality of life metric, it may not matter, "Because if they're not feeling it, it doesn't matter." The idea of feeling and perceiving Institution B's presence within the community was referenced in all interviews and underscored in most.

Internal coordination. As discussed in the description of internal identification, tracking, and reporting, Institution B uses multiple processes to facilitate community engagement and its assessment. Respondents indicated that these processes vary depending on their area or purpose, but all reporting at the institutional level aligns with the university's strategic plan. "All of our reporting guidelines at the institutional level are aligned to our strategic plan. And every dean, twice a year has to report to the institution. We have a strategic plan report that is due July 31st, and a budgeting report that's due in the spring." In addition to these reports, institution-wide the university coordinates on the National Survey of Student Engagement, a campus climate survey, the IRB process, as well as faculty surveys that are sent out every two to three years. The

central coordinating office then leverages these ongoing processes to garner information regarding community engagement. Office staff indicated that they are not attempting to coordinate the work of others, rather, they want to identify and use that information to better understand university practice, help improve and expand practice, and to demonstrate the ways in which community engagement can be used as a strategy to fulfill the core mission. In discussing internal coordination at Institution B, one university stakeholder described the current process as focused on obtaining more information, and more in-depth information regarding activity across campus, rather than on coordinating or directing that activity. They describe part of that process:

My point is I'm not going to be able to read an IRB protocol through and tell you what we're doing to address opioid abuse in a certain county, but at least I know someone is doing something with the community partner. It is more like a breadcrumb trail than it is to say 'this is the answer' ... We all know a handful of who tends to be our most engaged faculty, but that doesn't mean we're getting everybody that is working with a community. We just know the certain entities who are highly engaged, which is probably most campuses, like is 3% of our faculty. And I'm just trying to figure out what does the broad spectrum of all that look like and how do we capture that more systematically.

A key strategy referenced by university stakeholders to capture information more systematically is to build and leverage relationships. Building strong relationships within Institution B to fuel community engagement and its assessment was emphasized by stakeholders. As individual units prepare to report at the designated times described above, the central coordinating office's assessment staff works with all 18 schools on

information they might include. The university stakeholder most closely associated with the cultivation of these relationships to support schools described the process:

I meet with my data liaisons twice a year. I intentionally meet with them in preparation for their report and I turn back to them in time for their dean's report, a summary, a two page 'here's what things look like.' It's not necessarily everything, but the deans love the fact that there is at least one person...that is literally giving them something, a fodder for their annual reports, so they are not recreating the wheel.

As new and existing activities are added and/or revised in these conversations, they are entered into the new online data tool and sent to the overseeing faculty or staff point-person for approval. This was described as a follow-up protocol intended to help faculty and administrative staff know that the central coordinating office is invested in their work and took the time to capture it in the new platform, which they can then use to share their work more broadly.

While these are the current processes cited by respondents, one university stakeholder suggested it may make the most sense to house the central coordinating office, or at least its assessment arm, within the institutional research umbrella. This stakeholder suggested institutional research has a large staff and the "infrastructure of data", professional development opportunities, as well as a honed assessment mindset. Alternatively, according to this stakeholder, across the central coordinating office's umbrella structure, individuals have varying familiarity with assessment and evaluation because they have other areas of expertise. This structure may provide increased internal coordination of community engagement assessment processes, but would consequently

introduce new structural questions regarding the strategy Institution B wants to employ to determine its impact in the local community.

External coordination. Respondents were also asked about external coordination with the community on community engagement assessment. These questions asked about working with the community on shared goals, the sharing of information, and incorporating community partners in planning and assessment processes. Responses across stakeholders may be best summed up by one university stakeholder's response: "Oh there's not a process, I don't think there is." While most respondents echoed this sentiment, many stakeholders suggested the community was commonly involved, but at the project- or program-level in accordance with whatever strategies the faculty or staff lead employ.

Another university stakeholder provided context for the difficulty in integrating individuals from the community in planning and assessment of community engagement, stating, "There's a rubric...for what your campus culture is for assessment. And...a campus did a self-case study where they...identified and rated the things that they're not doing as pretty easy we could tackle, medium difficulty, or extremely difficult. And the thing that they said that would be extremely difficult was to engage stakeholders in our assessment processes." As faculty receive training from the center focused on service-learning and faculty development, ideas around reciprocity, mutual benefit, and co-creation are encouraged by scholars and staff. Several respondents noted a historical propensity of faculty to devalue those components of practice but proposed that the trend was a national one and was changing. A community stakeholder mentioned the historical

trend, stating, “You know, universities are really important, but they also have a tendency to think other people should listen to them.”

Respondents were asked about processes that are currently employed, or could be, to facilitate the sharing of responsibility for outcomes by the campus and the community. A university stakeholder noted, “I wish I had an answer, I don't. That's really a great question. I don't know how to solve that. Yeah, it gets back down to that busyness and people will say ‘yes I'll do it.’ But if their livelihood doesn't depend on it, if it's not affecting their ability to have a roof over their head, or food on the table, I don't know.” The lack of participation was associated with individuals from both the university and the community in interviews. Respondents advised that if individuals are not incentivized to participate or if participation does not feel integral to their daily needs, neither stakeholder may remain at the table.

At the institutional level, one community stakeholder emphasized organizing community engagement around problems that are relevant to both the university and the community. This stakeholder stated, “I'd say...a good decision for any institution or any business that wants to do community impact is to get as close as you can to your business metrics. So, if the institution lives and breathes enrollment and retention, persistence, all these things that they actually measure, then one could argue, that you could start community impact where it hurts.” This stakeholder suggested coordination with the community should be aligned with overlapping self-interest, things that matter to individual citizens as well as the university's bottom line:

What are the pain points for you? That's going to help you justify community impact and rationalize community impact. The idealistic approach to this is, ‘well

I'm in the middle of the community, I should take care of the community.' I fully agree, but that's not how the world moves. So, if the university has very good – and that is... arguable right now, not every business or institution has really good metrics of what they need to accomplish – then looking at pain points that are associated with the community where you are.

The example provided earlier, of Institution B's community engagement strategy to work with high schools in the local area on informatics to mutually benefit the state's workforce needs and the university's core mission to graduate workforce-ready students, illustrates this idea of overlapping self-interest. Some university stakeholders suggested this was the direction Institution B plans to move going forward.

Emergent Themes

In accordance with the variability associated with community engagement, each interviewee brought a unique perspective to the conversation given their background, current role, area of work or discipline, and experience with engagement and assessment. Interviews followed respondents along their thought process in accordance with the constructivist framework, but certain questions were emphasized to understand the practical significance of responses in line with a critical process of inquiry tied to one's physical reality. Themes emerged in prominent, supporting, and institution-specific ways. The following section analyzes responses accordingly. Major themes include those themes from the data that occur across interviews, are prominent, recurring, and foundational, and address key research questions. Supporting themes address elements of the interview protocol that add further context to institutional processes to determine the impact community engagement activity has locally. Institution-specific themes highlight

aspects of the data that are unique or prominent within Institution B in addressing the research question. Table 8 demonstrates how the themes emerged throughout cycles of coding and analysis.

Table 8

Progression of Emergent Themes across Coding Cycles: Institution B

First Cycle Coding	Second Cycle Coding	Third Cycle Coding
<i>Major Themes</i>		
Central coordinating office as a convener, facilitator, actor, <i>or</i> coordinator	Role of community engagement assessment	Centralization / Decentralization
Is Institution B an organization or a network	Organizational structure of Institution B	Multiple Missions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business of postsecondary education
Community engagement as a strategy by which to achieve its mission	Purpose of community engagement in relation to mission	Domains of Assessment
Core university mission vs. mission of CE vs. mission of individual units	Mission(s) at Institution B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do different units interpret the same mission? 	
Centralization / Decentralization	Centralization / Decentralization	
Interpretations of impact vary	Depictions of Impact	
Moving from outputs to outcomes	Spheres of Assessment	
Project-level vs. Collective evaluation		
<i>Contributing Themes</i>		
Community engagement as a mechanism to diversify funding	Employing community engagement	Role of Institution B in the Community

Activity as the unit of analysis	Changing the unit of analysis of assessment	Importance of Perception
		Emphasis on Relationships
Institution B's role within the community – positioning of the university as a resource and leader	Institution B's role in local community development	
	Continuum of mission	
Continuum of mission, approach, and expectation	Community engagement data to support individual school missions	
Data collection and usage for reciprocal benefit	Project-specific vs. Collective evaluation	
Evaluation of project-specific vs. collective evaluation	Perception of engagement	
	Data hubs	
How the community knows if “you give a shit”	Importance of relationships	
• Feelings as a driver		
Where data should reside	The nonprofit problem	
Relationships supersede money	City-wide collaboration	
The “business” of postsecondary education	Where does the locus of control for improvements (target outcomes) reside	
Leveraging		
Collecting data to feed it back		
Microcosm of the “nonprofit problem”		
City-wide planning		
Do you focus “improvement” on internal processes or external results		

Institution-Specific Themes

History of founding <ul style="list-style-type: none">• History of displacement	Community engagement as a strategy to fulfill mission	Community engagement as a strategy to fulfill mission
Online data tool	Online data tool	History of service-learning at Institution B
Relationships over assessment	Relationships are critical	Institutional growth opportunities
Community Engagement as an institutional strategy	Relationships among units	
Relationship between institutional research and central coordinating office	History of service-learning scholars at Institution B	
History of scholars at Institution B leading service-learning movement	Community feedback for Institution B	
Neighborhood liaisons		
Purpose and structure of central coordinating office		
Institution B needs to listen more closely		
Collaborative and open rather than protective		
Being strategic as an interconnected community resource		

Note. Bullet points indicate contributing characteristics of emergent themes.

Major Themes

The major themes that emerged from the data span a range of challenges in institutional processes to determine impact locally. They include how to navigate centralization and decentralization across the institution, the university's multiple

missions and how they relate to community engagement assessment, and the domains of assessment capability. These are considered next, respectively.

Centralization versus decentralization. Respondents all characterized Institution B as a decentralized or highly decentralized institution. Across stakeholders, decentralization was discussed as a natural structure for universities similar to Institution B and was unlikely to change. Given such a structure, respondents cited the advantages of discipline-specific research and training, as well as the autonomy faculty and individual units utilize to pursue specificity. Respondents also cited challenges with decentralization, including work being in silos, a lack of coordination and openness, and difficulties in sharing information. A community stakeholder described the benefits of decentralization in the following way:

Institution B is decentralized, and I don't necessarily think that's always bad because I think an awful lot of what goes on over there is very technical and specific. Like, I want the med school to have a very different governing structure than public affairs and I want public health to have a different governing structure than the school of technology, right, because they need different things and they have a different approach to it to talent...retention and attraction and those things are all different, right... and so I think that that's a function kind of a complicated urban university with those many disciplines.

This stakeholder continued, "I think because that's true I don't know what assessment means." In continuing to reflect on the question, the stakeholder noted the challenge in defining clear assessment processes given the decentralized organizational structure.

Respondents across stakeholders also cited the difficulty in identifying a holistic assessment strategy given disparate and detached units.

Within the framework of decentralization, respondents were also asked what processes are, or should be, centralized at Institution B and what is best left decentralized. One university stakeholder suggested Institution B likely has institutional definitions for many organizational purposes, but these definitions may be more of a utility for various audiences rather than a clear, unifying definition interpreted consistently. This includes a unifying definition for community engagement. They stated:

Our person who oversees our office of institutional effectiveness and handles all of our accreditation reports would say, 'I can write an accreditation report that states that we have one mission for community engagement,' but the reality is that in decentralization you have 18 different missions and 18 different interpretations. But for whatever audience we always have to say that there's one. It is okay that there's one, it's just can we acknowledge that that has an interpretation based on fields and disciplines.

Across stakeholders, respondents noted the culture of academia when discussing centralization, suggesting autonomy was an expected and protected feature, particularly among faculty. The following quote from a community stakeholder characterizes the most common sentiment from respondents: "To what extent it's very academic culturally, one wouldn't accept centralization of any kind... If we create some constraints, like the large functions or functional capabilities of an organization, should be centralized. And then the actual specifics should be run autonomously." A university stakeholder suggested for community engagement assessment, functional capabilities should include

very basic data points, also called the “fab (fabulous) five.” According to this stakeholder, “The metric for the institution to measure whether or not we're quote unquote an ‘engaged campus’ has been the number of courses, the number of students enrolled in those courses, the number of hours of service, the number of faculty, and the number of their community partners.” The stakeholder suggested these five numbers are commonly the metrics institutions use to determine their overall engagement. However, the numbers are still hard to accurately track, and even when obtained, are unable to convey what “we're doing to address these things” (such as confronting opioid abuse). Even so, the stakeholder suggested these standard metrics should be included in routine institution-wide data collection to observe trends over time and should then be supplemented with more rigorous assessment strategies. “I think that the standardized bean counting pieces, things that we know can and routinely should happen once every five years, or should be collected on a regular basis. They should be the things that demonstrate trends and should be used to inform initiatives and programs and resources to support something.”

Community stakeholders added additional perspective. One community respondent suggested that something centralized that “hits students, faculty, staff at more of a broad level” in terms of what they are doing for their community would make sense, but not all activity should be run through one center or unit. The respondent cautioned, “We don’t want to stifle engagement, right?” Another community stakeholder offered a more theoretical vision for centralizing across units and departments at universities:

If you have common services then say IT, HR, finance all those things that is ammunition for centralization, even purchasing sourcing when you're buying

energy from the grid. You're not going to let school A do different than school B or school C. So, that is probably good centralization. The other one is maybe having that at the same time the idea of letting each one of these pods capture their data... you have to be able to somehow create some data integration internally...if you are highly decentralized. What will be wrong is to try to run every school the same way.

One community stakeholder reflected on their time working at Institution B, when they would arrive at a community organization and another faculty, staff, or student would already be there working with the organization: "I would bump into somebody and that's like, 'Oh you're here? You are Institution B?' I work on this other side of the campus, you know. There is really no way to know."

Centralizing processes, to help those different stakeholders from Institution B avoid the "surprise" of meeting someone else from the university at their community partner site for instance, may ultimately not be desirable for university or community collaborators, per respondents. One university stakeholder gave an internal, faculty point of view on coordinating activities and subsequent data collection:

I don't deal with it on a day to day basis. It's not my responsibility. So, I haven't. I'm not concerned very much with anything that's going on outside of my discipline... I don't really need to care very much about the big picture because I'm getting what I need. As a higher administrator it gets a little bit higher level that I need to know what my other faculty members are doing so that I can identify funding mechanisms that might be helpful to them, and also so that I can

make sure it gets in the report and make sure it gets into the alumni newsletter.

But for the university, I'm not tracking it because it's not my responsibility to.

A community stakeholder added perspective from the community collaborator lens:

“Fluidity is decentralized and it should be, and that is that community partners don't want to wait on the bureaucracy. And so, faculty and staff should be given the leverage to develop relationships without waiting on the bureaucracy. However, once the relationship starts, there needs to be some incentive for reporting that the relationship exists.”

Finally, respondents weighed in on the structures that could best support a more refined process for tracking and assessing community engagement at Institution B. One primary issue included the ability to track activity consistently and ensure different university and community representatives were talking and meeting regularly. To that end, one community stakeholder suggested, “If there was all of a sudden, a policy that a community engagement person had to be in every meeting with an external person or something, you know, the world would stop, and no one would ever help anyone again.” This respondent was suggesting a specific university representative need not be at every meeting or event that occurs, but some person, unit, or area should eventually know about events deemed important to report. The second issue was the structure of the assessment process itself. One university stakeholder offered a federated matrix design as a strategy that may prove most useful to link community engagement assessment staff to the work of the individual schools and departments. They characterize it as follows:

Our undergraduate education dean feels like he has his own data team within our office. Sometimes they feel like they report to him and not to me and that's absolutely fine. We try to be decentralized so we can meet with those who need

the data and understand it so we can be better decentralized. Now, having all one unit, especially when you're talking about data infrastructure and expertise and professional development, can be enormously helpful but they should operate in a decentralized fashion so that they can better meet the needs of decision-makers... If we are centralized and... develop evaluation and data literacy and capacity throughout the institution.

Ultimately, many respondents suggested organizational strategies Institution B might employ to refine their assessment processes would depend on the mission of the university. This includes the corresponding purpose of the central coordinating office and its assessment staff.

Multiple missions, competing priorities. According to respondents, across Institution B the exact “core mission” of the university manifests differently. The mission of providing a quality education to students was a recurring focus, yet respondents gave examples of ways in which different expressions of mission yield different priorities, affecting practice. As discussed in the previous section, certain institution-wide definitions exist to serve university purposes. As one university stakeholder described, “I can write an accreditation report that states that we have one mission for community engagement, but the reality is that in decentralization is that you have 18 different missions and 18 different interpretations.” The institution-wide language is interpreted in different ways and leads to individual school, department, and unit applications. Respondents also indicated that these internal differences parallel differences in university and community interpretation of what constitutes community

engagement by Institution B. As definitions vary internally and externally, it effects how determinations of impact are understood.

Across stakeholders, participants described a spectrum of emphasis on the community. On one end, faculty are primarily focused on their unique and specific research agenda, generally preferring to conduct work in accordance with how that research is positioned nationally or globally rather than locally. Institution B, then, must balance its support for faculty while acknowledging its role in the community. The community engagement staff pull the institution toward a stronger role in the work and needs of the community by coordinating university activity in reciprocal engagement with community members and organizations. The community's residents and leaders, at the other end of the spectrum, are primarily concerned with the direct needs and growth of the local area. These entities navigate different central priorities as they work together.

Across stakeholders, respondents described faculty in a similar way. A community stakeholder stated, "You hire a professor to do research in a very independent way... you want autonomy. You go to your lab and you have your parking spot and that's why you want to be faculty and research in this place because you have that autonomy." One component of that autonomy is the freedom to account for one's own time and activity. As another community stakeholder noted, "I would think that they (community engagement staff) would love to track the time the professors spend on community initiatives, then maybe you know, I was never a professor so maybe they have some kind of mechanism where they report that, but professors don't report much."

Within this institutional structure, leaders at Institution B, including those trying to coordinate and assess community engagement, must balance these needs and

expectations of faculty with a responsiveness to community goals. Another community stakeholder described the tension Institution B faces as a desire to make the city better, while ultimately focusing primarily on the student and faculty experiences. They state:

That's why this is hard, right? That's why I think that starting...speaking the same language and understanding the goals...understanding what each entity is trying to accomplish. I mean, clearly, we're all trying to make our city better, that's like basic. But what the university is trying to accomplish it seems to me, is figuring out how to enhance or make more robust their student experience, and also...I would say the faculty experience.

One community stakeholder suggested that the mission of the institution to be in the community educating students may also be considered “enough” of an emphasis on community development: “For an institution, the fact that you are in the community, and with a mission that has to do with education, I can guarantee you that's perceived by the leadership of the institution as impact enough.” Another respondent described Institution B’s role in the community slightly differently, as a facilitator of activity rather than the central hub:

I feel like more Institution B is there to improve the capacity and the outcomes and the ability of city government, state government, nonprofits, to do better work, through whatever resources that we have to do that. But...it feels like a more of an intermediary role and not the direct actor but as a support or enhancer, you know. ‘We’ll provide data, we’ll provide expertise, we’ll provide you know.’ But I don't get to say that Institution B consider themselves the doer, as much as they consider themselves the enabler or supporter or facilitator.

The community engagement staff is focused on these roles being both high quality for students and mutually beneficial for community collaborators. The central coordinating office at Institution B is working to pull faculty, and consequently the institution, toward a greater emphasis on addressing community need while fulfilling the core mission. The office identifies its own charge as utilizing community engagement “as a strategy through which we achieve our institutional mission and goals.”

Respondents describe how, in practice, this leads the office to focus more intently on being community-led.

Community engagement really puts the community at the forefront of why they are getting engaged and what they want to do. Whereas the professors really have to put at the forefront, what their tenure is based on, or, there are just different sorts of academic requirements of them. So that was probably just the instance when I can think of where the university reaching out may not truly align with community goals every time.

Another respondent reflected similarly on the office’s priority to ensure engagement activity is aligned with community needs and initiatives already underway:

Community engagement really would follow the lead of the city... I do think there are more conflicts when they have academic practitioners who have research studies... and it doesn't matter what the community’s goals are. But in terms of community engagement specifically, I can’t imagine them not following the goals and needs of the community because I really feel like that's pretty central to the community engagement staff’s mission.

While who and what constitutes “community” is fluid, the residents and leaders of the city have the greatest emphasis on community needs. As one university stakeholder described, “The community cares about being a thriving community.” Respondents also indicated that there needs to be direct benefits to those within the community who choose to collaborate with Institution B, otherwise it may not be worth the time or effort. “If their livelihood doesn't depend on it, if it's not affecting their ability to have a roof over their head, or food on the table,” a community member’s involvement in community engagement, particularly in sharing the assessment process, may not be worth their time, according to both sets of stakeholders. “Generally, they (community members) don’t speak university speak and things take too long and too many committees and too much of a time commitment while people pontificate about whether they really want to, or a certain question, or like whatever. Versus just like on the ground, we’ve got needs right now and families that need help.”

In trying to find alignment among faculty, institutional, and community needs, the central coordinating office is repositioning engagement as a strategy to enhance the outcomes of each contributor. Rather than stress one priority over another, the office is looking for ways to encourage, and subsequently assess, engagement that facilitates all priorities. This includes faculty promotion and tenure, student learning, and community development goals. As one university stakeholder connected to the office articulated, “Community engagement is thereby inherently connected to enrollment management strategies, how we recruit and attract and retain faculty and staff. How does it contribute to student learning and success, by all means. But it expands it beyond service-learning courses, it is all forms of engagement.” As part of this strategy, the office is also working

to more deeply and broadly embed engaged scholars across the institution to generate activity and cultivate a culture focused on mutually beneficial practice:

What are the barriers and what are the reasons why...the (faculty) who do this inherently, is it based on their fundamental, philosophical values, beliefs, passions and interests? I can't change someone's values beliefs, passions and interests. That comes at a hiring stage, literally do you hire the right people at your institution who have the similar values, passions and whatever. So, in the faculty hiring process, if we find that that's a key piece of us then, how do we help them attract other faculty who do this work right? ...When you have a position open how do we partner with them to promote it in the job market stuff? So, it should just fundamentally change the way we think about it.

A community stakeholder suggested the office itself may not know exactly how it wants to, or is able to, facilitate community engagement and its assessment at Institution B:

It might vary a little bit depending on how they (the central coordinating office) think about their mission...Whether...they're strengthening the capacity of the organizations in their city and then, you know, it's up to them to achieve all those outcomes. Or if they see themselves as more of an actor.... do they just consider themselves more intermediary or more direct, you know what I mean?

The business of postsecondary education. Per respondents, community engagement has historically been thought of as a somewhat unregulated, value-add to other more central activities. This has affected not only how much or little engagement occurs, but how it is identified, tracked, reported, and improved. Respondents indicated

that the perceived lack of centrality of community engagement has influenced assessment capacity. As one community stakeholder described:

And the truth is, I think many times community impact is not... taken seriously...it doesn't necessarily require for many people a very evidence-based, data-driven approach. Now we (community organization) decided to go with data integration because our business is community impact. We are not in the business of postsecondary education, and so we have to go one step beyond that and be able to really measure progress in what we do.

Both stakeholders indicated that the “business” of postsecondary education is under threat. Respondents noted the need for Institution B to account for its return on investment and its relevance, as all colleges and universities must. One community stakeholder suggested, “Higher education is facing a major challenge of survival. And so, to what extent that threat is impacting their ability to see community engagement with a different lens, I don't know. But it's an existential threat for Higher Ed.”

As the central coordinating office works to demonstrate the centrality of engagement work to the university’s core mission and bottom line, the staff describe needing to make a business-like case for engagement. “As we continue to advocate for the work that faculty are doing...if we continue to ask faculty to write in journal articles that no one else can read, besides those who have privilege and...can access them, we will continue to perpetuate and devalue what higher education is doing and can't tell that story.” The staff go on to articulate the multifaceted nature of engagement and how it connects to the value of postsecondary institutions: “It's about economic development, community development, capacity building, internationalization.”

Another community stakeholder echoed that assessment at Institution B may be more rigorous if the demand for accountability were higher, as it is for businesses and their stakeholders or any organization's consumers, clients, or funders. This respondent suggested that as Institution B has a responsibility to its community, the community also has a responsibility to demand accountability in turn. They describe the community as needing to create more urgency in Institution B's assessment processes: "So I feel like this community thing, if there was more advocacy from the community side like, 'Come do service...come do research with us, come do all these volunteer hours, like, what's really happening?' That then maybe the university would take more of a concerted effort to do some more proactive reporting." In the meantime, respondents indicated that community engagement and determinations of its impact are limited without more individuals pursuing the work and demonstrating its value.

Domains of assessment capability. As respondents reflected on the current practice of determining impact in the local community, as well as the capacity to do so, expanding domains of assessment capability emerged across conversations. Over half of respondents associated the capacity to determine impact with program evaluation. This process is specific, more clearly defined, and more narrow in scope. When one respondent was asked about how Institution B attempts to move from determining outputs to outcomes institution-wide, they responded, "That is program evaluation. It is very specific to program evaluation." Another university stakeholder recounted the difficulty in stating any community engagement work is "impact" if not done within the traditional understanding of rigorous evaluation research: "Sometimes there's a measurement of something, but it's not connected to how they're impacting that... With

program evaluation you can't measure community impact like that, the word impact has a very strong meaning in our world (of assessment). It means you can make a causal inference to something you did that actually changed the community indicator.”

Across stakeholders, respondents discussed assessment as concentric circles expanding out in line with a corresponding locus of control (see Figure 5). Most respondents felt that program evaluation was the most common, direct, and accurate form of assessment, describing its progression from tracking activity, to counting outputs, to measuring outcomes, to system-level impact observed over time regarding a particular project or program and its intended impact. How these individual program evaluations collectively tell an institutional narrative around a department, unit, or community issue was less clear to respondents and was not evident in supporting institutional documentation. One university stakeholder addressed this specifically: “That's what offices of community engagement, I think have to be very careful, because, unless they're just an accounting data office, they have to indicate exactly what's going on or what they're doing as an office to impact those indicators.”

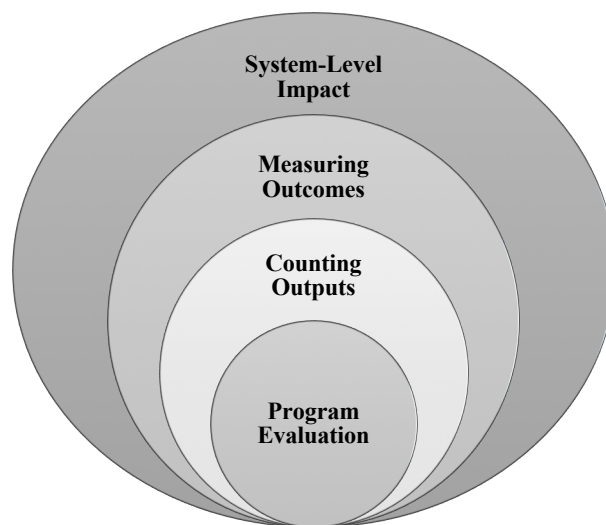


Figure 5. Expanding domains of assessment capability.

One respondent proposed that determining impact was possible, but it required a significant investment of time and resources. “You can do that (identify system-level impacts) if you capture the right things at the right time, and we're missing that. As you can imagine one of the biggest challenges in data projects is who is going to capture that. We have the resources to do it, are we paying enough attention to capturing that data? Do we really value the system-level impact?” If the value of determining impact is not high enough, this community stakeholder suggested, then the piecemeal efforts will not be able to convey broader, more meaningful contributions. They went on to reflect, “I don't know to what extent we have system outcomes. I don't think we spend enough time thinking that way, probably because it's very difficult to assess.”

Even though it is difficult to assess, university stakeholders noted that Institution B is regularly still asked for information regarding impact. One university stakeholder involved in community engagement assessment described the difficulty in even measuring outputs: “When somebody literally says, ‘What are you doing to address opioid abuse in X county,’ we cannot really answer that question based on data collection of those fabulous five numbers. And even if I knew student outcomes for a course, I still wouldn't know what we're doing to address these things.” In order to determine outcomes in a more meaningful way, the assessment staff and colleagues have initiated what they call “deep dives”:

We try to do outcomes reporting and I would call...in the Five Year Plan, those are deep dives. So if you can get within the campus-wide systems and processes, the bean counting piece (outputs) is somewhat accomplished over a five-year cycle. So it may not be every year, perhaps some things are counted every year,

but perhaps they're not. If you can get some of the bean counting systematized, so they don't require significant additional time and extra effort, what we then do in order to change it to start on outcomes, is that allows me to then do a deep dive into a specific topic or subject.

While this outcomes-reporting is developing, university stakeholders suggested it is done on specific topics of interest, particularly to improve practice and better understand the culture of community engagement at Institution B. The ability to determine what the university is doing on a community issue or within a discipline is not yet possible.

Supporting Themes

The supporting themes that emerged from data illuminate factors that further influence institutional processes to determine impact locally. They include the role of Institution B in the community, the importance of perception, and emphasizing relationships. These are considered next, respectively.

Role of Institution B in the community. As one community stakeholder put it, “The city is really collaborative.” This feeling surfaced across interviews, as respondents noted the various ways in which Institution B and its city work together toward mutual advancement, including Institution B’s founding. Another community stakeholder recounted ways in which the city was trying, in conjunction with Institution B, to determine what changes may or may not be happening from community-based initiatives:

The...initiative (by the city) ...is doing multi-generational work in specific and targeted neighborhoods, and they're trying to move the needle, which is kind of a term we use for...quality of life outcomes, in an inter-generational approach in specific places. They have evaluation methodologies that they're using in order to

figure that out... taking census tracks and trying to figure out whether people are better educated and better, you know, economically positioned and they have better health outcomes and those sorts of things.

Respondents described the university as trying to get involved in city-wide initiatives, highlighting certain areas within Institution B that serve key functions. The school of public policy, for example, was described as one of the entities that manage the city's data and take a lead in assessments and evaluations as needed. The city is working on several quality of life and economic development projects as it nears its bicentennial, and both stakeholders noted Institution B's involvement in those efforts.

The extent to which Institution B maximizes its role in the community was also questioned, however. Respondents, particularly community stakeholders, suggested university leadership and individual units should more intentionally communicate with relevant organizations in the community and align their work accordingly. One community stakeholder described how certain units see their work as a central resource to the community, while other units are more protective and insular. This extended to the type of research they conduct, how they share that information, and how they collaborate on projects, programs, or classes. Part of that description is as follows:

The school of philanthropy exists to train people how to raise money primarily for the not-for-profit community, right? And they are probably doing some research that is useful and helpful, so maybe they ought to engage with the not-for-profit community. Now maybe they do, although...I have no connection, I've no relationship with the school of philanthropy. I don't hear from them; I don't know anything about them. I don't get the sense...that they see themselves as a resource

to the community in the same way that the hospitals and the dental school and the V.A. hospital and children's hospital see themselves as a resource for the community. And I think that's a real missed opportunity.

Respondents were also asked how Institution B and the community might deepen and improve their work together, particularly on determinations of impact. All respondents indicated that improvements could and should be made. The extent to which respondents felt that collaboration is possible, however, was varied. University stakeholders discussed being mindful of the time and commitment they might ask of community collaborators, and what made sense conceptually and logistically. Community stakeholders emphasized that Institution B could be opening itself up more and become more efficient in order to better leverage work already in motion. "They need to turn outward more." When asked if a board, committee, or some other organizational entity should be introduced to facilitate this process, one community stakeholder offered the following:

My point is that Institution B has a seat on my board and they also have a seat on a whole bunch of other organizations within the community, so utilize those relationships to do this kind of work, right? You don't have to create a board to have a place where you can understand what's going on in your community. That's like back-asswards [sic]. What you're doing instead is just creating another layer. The people in your university are members of organizations out there...who already have a sense and...there are people in all the different departments and schools whose job it is to know that.

Another community stakeholder discussed collective impact models as a possible mechanism to organize deeper and more meaningful collaboration, yet how Institution B would position its role within that network was not clear. They stated, “The adoption of a philosophy or a concept or a model like collective impact would help. I don't know when the institution should be the hub or when it should just be part of another hub. That's their call. But a process like that would help.” The initiation of such a model might be started or supported by the university, but it would require leadership and involvement from local government, nonprofits, businesses, and education sectors. Across stakeholders, respondents indicated that the city was the type of community that could pursue a collective impact-type strategy, but none suggested the city intended to do so.

The importance of perception. All stakeholders noted that Institution B is doing an immense amount of work in the local community. Yet, in making determinations of impact, respondents suggested that the *perception* of impact was either an important or a central component. Impact, in this sense, is less about measured outcome(s) over time and more about how the university makes the community feel about its presence within it. A university and community stakeholder provided very similar takes. The community stakeholder offered, “I think that part of...how you measure impact has to do with the way people feel like your impact is happening, right?” The university stakeholder described, “It's more of what they (the community) feel and what they see and not so much metrics...Because if they're not feeling it, it doesn't matter.”

The importance of perception influences institutional processes to determine local impact. The same university stakeholder went on to emphasize relationship- and trust-building as mechanisms for accountability. They stated, “Building relationships is super

important...I just try to establish really excellent relationships, and I don't depend so much on metrics. So, if I say this is going to be good for the community and they really believe that I want what's best for the community, I don't really have to prove it.”

Respondents across stakeholders agreed that data was important, but all save one university and one community stakeholder suggested that relationships matter more than metrics or data. One community stakeholder described multiple points of contact and a clear integration into the community as making a key difference, as opposed to focusing on numbers and statistics and “nit-picking things you may or may not have control over”. The relationship is the important part: “Yes. Like, we’re Institution B and we’re here to help.” One community stakeholder articulated that even in conducting assessment, Institution B should be focused on how doing that assessment makes the community feel: “I’m not sure...that the evaluation will mean they're having a greater impact, but it's going to... create an opportunity, create a platform, right? And I also think, and this will sound cynical and I don't mean for it to, but part of the way that the community feels about an institution has to do with how they interact with that institution, right?” When pressed on what integration with the community really means, particularly on assessment processes, one community stakeholder described it as the following: “Maybe we help, maybe we don't, I don't know. But...it does give people the sense, ‘Oh yeah, that's Institution B and...they're not just over on that campus, they're out here, and they're trying to make a difference, and they’re trying to be a part.”

Perception extended to how people feel regardless of the actual engagement activity being conducted, tracked, and measured. Several respondents from both stakeholders suggested it may actually be more cumbersome and grating to focus on

meticulous assessment at the expense of relationship-building and activity that makes individuals feel positively. Per one community stakeholder:

I will tell you if they pave your street and clean up your park, people feel like the mayor gives a shit about them, right? I know that is true. When you measure impact in a community, people are like, ‘Well I don’t know about that mayor, but he paved my street and he cleaned up my park and I like my park and I like my tires.’ And so, whether or not there's a way to quantify that in dollars or health outcomes, there *is* a way to quantify that in the way people feel about it.

Emphasizing relationships. Closely tied to Institution B’s role in the community and individuals’ perceptions of that work, is the emphasis placed on relationships. Respondents indicated that relationships are important both within the university, communicating across different units, as well as with external collaborators. In terms of processes to determine impact specifically, the internal communication was highlighted as extremely important by university stakeholders. As discussed within the section on institutional processes to determine impact, building mutually beneficial relationships to advance community engagement is a key internal strategy for the central coordinating office. This strategy is evolving as new individuals, technology, and opportunities surface. Because of the constantly changing nature of relationship-building, respondents indicated there was both good and bad practices and customs at play.

On the positive end, assessment staff within the central coordinating office describe a relationship-centered, conversational approach to working with faculty on their engagement and subsequent data collection. This approach was cited as yielding both more and better information. One stakeholder described it as follows:

I have a small cohort of...at least one person from every single school. They tend to be the person who's putting together their reports, does communications, or is responsible for accreditation within their school. I meet with them twice a year, that data liaison, and I say, 'Here's what's in the data tool, tell me what's missing.'... I have some activities in here, these faculty members, can you help me schedule a meeting if I don't have a good in? Or could you send a message to these six people and just give them a heads up that they're going to get a meeting request from me asking them to schedule 45 minutes? So instead of asking faculty like, complete this... I have a meeting with them and we talk and we just ask, "So I hear you do some really cool stuff in the community, what does that that look like? I'd like to learn more."

This stakeholder recounted faculty's positive reception to being asked about their work from the position of wanting to promote, celebrate, and advance the scholarship.

Detailed information is then included in the new data tool as part of the renewed institutional strategy. Faculty also feel more connected to the assessment process through its mutual benefit for them and the institution, and expectantly, the community.

Respondents also described more negative aspects of how units interact and relate at Institution B. In large part, these challenges cited across stakeholders stem from traditional university structure, culture, and siloed expertise. A lack of relationship, as described by respondents, is equally effective in obstructing progress as strong relationships are at advancing progress in community engagement and its assessment. One community stakeholder described the structural issue of institutional silos, a parallel to challenges in government and the nonprofit community. This stakeholder describes

how each siloed unit prefers to act independently and autonomously, hindering the larger organization in decision-making, efficiency, and ultimately effectiveness:

We're moving in the wrong direction, right, like we are in the microcosm... this notion that it's real siloed, and in governing... we still have 11 fire departments in our county, but that meant 11 fire chiefs, 11 deputy chiefs of administration, 11 deputies chiefs of training... they get to open their own fire stations and buy their own apparatus and all the rest of it... I mean, so that's what happens at the university, right? We have how many deans and how many associate deans and how many vice deans and how many, you know, whatever whatever, right? How many academic committees, which get to decide about their curriculum, and it's not as efficient or effective as it could be.

These silos also house distinct areas of expertise among faculty and staff, which causes the ability to relate, share common paradigms, and work in unison to be limited. For assessment of community engagement, both the areas of institutional research and community engagement describe a lack of fluidity between their approaches.

Institutional research has a much more concrete, specific set of criteria on which it centers its work. A respondent connected to institutional research reflected on the challenge in a (relatively) small community engagement office having the capability to *facilitate* activity and subsequently direct assessment processes. On the other hand, those connected to community engagement struggle to convey the differences of engagement's democratic, often more ethereal, approach:

We don't even speak the same language half the time... If it's not about measuring student learning, institutional research doesn't quite get it. And those of us in

community engagement bring these different values, we care about the nuanced pieces of this, which are very difficult to measure and that's hard for IR people because there is not a data point that lives somewhere that they can get their hands on, right? And so we get stuck. Then we just back away and don't do anything. Respondents across stakeholders suggested that relationships are the crucial lynchpin in advancing community engagement and in the ability to determine its impact locally. Data suggest these relationships must develop internally as well as across university-community stakeholders.

Institutional Themes

The institution-specific themes that emerged from the data highlight unique organizational characteristics of institutional processes to determine impact locally. They include community engagement as a strategy to fulfill the mission, the historical legacy of service-learning at Institution B, and institutional growth opportunities. These are considered next, respectively.

Community engagement as a strategy to fulfill mission. As has been discussed throughout the chapter, Institution B is working to reimagine community engagement's role in fulfilling the university's mission. Assessment staff within the central coordinating office articulated multiple reasons community engagement should be employed as a strategy. The first is that it should attract students to the institution: "I want students to come here because they see that there are opportunities for them to work on really wicked problems in society and it is literally should be how you attract students." The second reason is that engagement can create a sense of belonging, pride, and commitment that cannot be replicated through other means: "Community engagement when done

well...helps students identify a passion and purpose in life...Engagement should create a sense of belonging and loyalty and a purpose that students...they wouldn't find if they were in a serious classroom. I can't replicate the feelings and emotions that come from that.” A third reason is that community engagement can help in both increased donations and funding, as well as in acquiring grants and other resources: “At the end of the day if you don't say you want to be an engaged institution because it's not about bringing in money into the institution, any of us doing this work would be idiots to not recognize my job is to literally to help the institution diversify funding, literally.”

University stakeholders and some community stakeholders cited the need for structural supports, including leadership, funding, and staffing, in order to advance community engagement as this comprehensive strategy. One university stakeholder likened the need for leadership in community engagement to leadership in athletics. They explain:

The trend in athletics right now is that the person who oversees all of athletics is a vice president or vice chancellor position who...sits at your vice chancellor's cabinet meetings...We know we aren't going to make money out of it, but it's got to be inherently connected to how you engage your students and all these fundamental components. The same thing, if community engagement is a strategy, the person who is leading that needs to sit at your president or chancellor's cabinet meeting, has to understand the issues that your academic affairs...student affairs, your research offices are dealing with, your grants and contracts are dealing with, and if it's a strategy, it's inherently connected to those things and you should be working in partnership on advancing that at your

campus. If you have these centers in offices, one-man-shops and a director with no staff and no resources...it will never achieve that huge potential, right?

Another university stakeholder echoed a similar sentiment, contending that leadership was needed within each individual unit as well. This stakeholder was careful about the possibility of overly invasive leadership, however, and suggested faculty remain autonomous and able to launch their own partnerships organically:

If we (faculty) want to have a civic engagement partnership, we just have to go talk to the person and get started. I'm not a huge fan of the bureaucracy, but I do think the stuff should be tracked and facilitated. And so, this is like my second part of the answer for the big picture: We have associate deans of research for every school and it's necessary. We should also have an associate dean of community engagement for every school. We have one for the campus, but we don't have one for each school. There's an executive dean of research at the campus level and an associate dean of research at every school, and I don't understand if civic engagement is just as important as research, why isn't there an administrator side of that too? That's expenses. And what's the return on investment? I'm not sure.

Another university stakeholder contributed to this question of how to further develop community engagement as a strategy, emphasizing that design guides assessment, meaning the operationalization of community engagement is key. If the design of what constitutes engagement activity is not clear, assessment in turn is not clear. They stated, "If they're talking about getting students more engaged in the community, okay, what does that mean? Does that mean volunteering? Does that mean

voting? Does that mean doing a community service day? And if that's the case, then what can the office do to facilitate that?" This perspective highlights the fact that the central coordinating office is working to increase community engagement activity and deepen its assessment capability, but the strategy will be hindered to the extent it is unable to clearly articulate its purpose and definitional parameters.

Historical legacy of service-learning at Institution B. Institution B has employed many leading scholars in service-learning research and practice over the last several decades. These scholars helped refine the definition, depth, and assessment of service-learning, including student development and relationship-building with community partners. The current office was described by participants as leading the way in impact assessment and evaluation. As one university stakeholder reflected, "That office...has got a phenomenal data infrastructure as well as understanding the facts and the direct impacts of some things they're doing." They went on to say, "They do faculty learning communities...they do professional development for faculty, they help faculty to better understand and assess service-learning. So, we're doing a great job there and I can tell you the impacts of service-learning on a student."

This parallels what some university and community stakeholders described as a historical emphasis on student learning and the student experience at the expense of the community experience and assessment of community impact. One community stakeholder recounted the evolution roughly two decades ago as Institution B worked to shift its focus back toward mending relationships with the community. The institution began more intentionally integrating its engagement work with community need.

Because the way the university in its physical location now, had displaced residents and primarily-predominately a large African-American and immigrant population, and so...effects were felt by communities surrounding the downtown area and surrounding campus. So, you know, people don't want to talk about that, but that definitely was part of the history and that's the reason jobs exist to address that... is because the goal for the university was to mend those relationships. But at the same time...the neighborhood had some really strong neighborhood organizing leaders that said, 'Hey, we want you to partner with us. We want to figure out how our residents can get jobs. We are struggling with education. We're effectively an education desert. All of our public schools are closed...You're an institution of higher learning, you should care about this. Help us get schools opened in our neighborhood. So the university kind of said...we'll do it...That really was the impetus for the type of partnership work we did... That kind of happened while these other kind of community engagement initiatives were starting to bubble nationally, you know. People were starting to talk about service-learning, they're talking more about volunteerism. As years went on, they started talking more about community-based participatory research...and all those kind of came along at the same time we were trying to really just focus on partnerships and being a good neighbor.

The stakeholder described the history of Institution B's struggle to conduct its work and still operate as a "good neighbor". "Most of the resident perspective like early on...when Institution B created the office focused on neighborhoods ... it was to help mend relationships with the neighborhood."

The historical focus on excellence in student learning is now coupled with a desire to embed community engagement in multiple forms across all institutional units. University stakeholders describe a challenge in changing the perspective of what constitutes community engagement from primarily service-learning to the more comprehensive, umbrella terminology. In practice, university stakeholders suggested this challenge includes changing the way faculty understand engaged scholarship as well as the institutional culture to support it. In assessment, it has meant moving institutional processes away from a relatively narrow focus of designating courses as service-learning or not, to more holistically capturing meaningful engagement.

Institutional growth opportunities. Areas of growth also emerged for Institution B to consider, particularly by community stakeholders. Respondents indicated that the university could and should become more transparent and open about its work within the city. In so doing, respondents suggested the institution could become more informed, nimble, and relevant. University stakeholders shared similar sentiments in most interviews, but emphasized refined institutional processes over open, shared processes with community members and organizations. One community stakeholder suggested that the university looks inward on how to identify and address community development issues before it looks externally to expertise that is already present in the city:

I think that Institution B could start by asking. And then listening. Like, if Institution B wants to know the ten people they ought to go talk to about community impact, I could tell ‘em, because there are people I know or people on my board. If they want to talk to the mayor then I can facilitate that, right. I think they ought to start by listening, and not try to figure it out themselves.

In reflecting on Institution B's role within the community described in the supporting themes above, respondents also indicated that as disciplines fail to see their work as a direct resource to the community, and the community as an invaluable resource to their work, it was "a real missed opportunity".

This lack of transparency was also attributed to a difficulty in sharing and communicating failures. Transparent assessment processes in particular will highlight the occasions when outcomes are not achieved and/or when collaborators are not satisfied with the experience. A few university and community stakeholders admitted this challenge, and as one community stakeholder shared, "I believe that we should be able to share successes and failures more openly. I don't know how to do it...I've been in many organizations in my life and it's very difficult to share failures." Respondents indicated that it is much more appealing to share successes and positive anecdotes than failures. When asked about the creation of a committee or board structure to guide community engagement assessment, one community stakeholder noted that convening leadership needs to have more clear direction and intent than just to meet and share ongoing activity. "If the president wants to convene a board or a council, you know... he wants to make it splashy then he'll want his deans, but deans have other things to do, you know? They have actual work to do. I don't know why they would want to meet quarterly with the president to be like, 'Yeah, we love the community. Oh yeah, us too!'" Another community stakeholder suggested sharing data could facilitate institutional goals: "There's a huge element of, in my opinion, value-add when you actually take those walls down, and you start sharing data in a more transparent way." Institution B must grapple

with how to integrate greater transparency into institutional processes to determine impact locally, should it desire to, as it continues to advance its assessment practice.

Summary

Institution B has a distinct role to play within its community. As a large, public, urban institution in a city without many other postsecondary options, the university serves as an educational hub while also providing critical medical, dental, social, and technological services, among many other contributions. The city was cited by all stakeholders as being very collaborative, including in the founding of Institution B in the late 1960s. While the founding was a collaborative feat, it also displaced the residents of the area and created lasting tension among the university and community. Institution B is now working to mend that relationship and more fully integrate its work within the local community for mutual benefit.

The processes by which Institution B determine its impact in the local community are built primarily on other processes already in place. Historically, the university did not systematically track engagement institution-wide but did have a large database of known activity. The current strategy is built upon the utilization of other assessment already in place, such as the faculty survey, the National Survey of Student Engagement, and the IRB application process. By adding questions to these assessments, the engagement staff can flag community engagement activity and enter it into the new online data tool it has begun to utilize. The purpose of this tool is to shift the assessment process away from better identification of activity and subsequently counting the number of activities, to understanding the meaningful contributions activities are making to the “health and vibrancy of communities”. Internal relationship-building and using community

engagement as a tool in strengthening the work of faculty and their units were also cited as key institutional strategies.

Major themes centered on the role of community in engagement in Institution B's pursuit to fulfill its core mission. Community engagement staff are working to utilize community engagement as a strategy through which the university achieves its mission and goals. This includes supporting individual units in a decentralized environment by providing tailored data on engagement, working alongside initiatives already underway, and better communicating about the work and the outcomes of community engagement activity. Institution B and the scholars it has housed over the last several decades have been a leader in service-learning practice and assessment, and the university is now working to broaden the scope of excellence across the field of community engagement.

CHAPTER VI
CASE THREE: INSTITUTION C

Institution C was founded as a preparatory school in the mid-19th century, seven years before the territory in which it was located became a U.S. state. The state is located in the northern Midwest region and much of its geography has historically been considered agricultural and rural. Facing financial challenges, the school had to close during the Civil War, though it reopened shortly after the war's end with the help of a local businessman. His influence helped the school acquire funding from the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862, which designated the school as the state's land-grant institution. The institution grew over time, adding three additional campus locations throughout the mid-20th century and a fifth location in the early 21st century. The institution now has over 52,000 students in more than 350 fields of study across the campuses within 19 colleges. The primary focus of this case is the largest of the five campuses, located in a large, urban area of the state.

Outline of Case Three

The case study on Institution C begins by describing the state and metro area in which the university is located, followed by a description of its institutional characteristics. A review of data sources then precedes the discussion of findings. The findings are organized first by contextual factors, including how respondents feel the

relationship between Institution C and the city is unique. Next, the ways in which the three key terms of community engagement activity, local community, and impact are operationalized are outlined to add additional context. Within this institutional framework, the central research question is then explored regarding the processes Institution C uses to determine its impact in the local community. The chapter concludes with a discussion of emergent themes, including major, supporting, and institution-specific themes.

Description of the State and Metropolitan Statistical Area

Institution C is located within a large, seven-county urban area, and within a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) comprised of 16 surrounding counties. According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the population of the MSA is nearly 3.5 million people, which is within the top 20 largest MSAs in the country. The city in which Institution C is primarily located attracted a U.S. military presence in the early 19th century and became a hub for several industries in the nation, including milling and lumber. The area became a city in the mid-19th century, alongside the founding of Institution C. With three rivers and several more lakes, creeks, and other water-rich areas, it also developed through utilization of water transportation and trade. According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the current top five industries include educational services and health care and social assistance, manufacturing, professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services, retail trade, and finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing, respectively.

The state and the county differ slightly across cultural, social, economic, physical, and political characteristics. A table was created to more easily examine similarities and differences visually (see Table 9). State and county characteristics were informed by Chaskin’s (2001) relational framework, utilizing various sets of conditions to better understand elements that influence or describe community capacity. As the table shows, the MSA within which Institution C resides is more diverse than the state, and though educational attainment is comparable, the median household income within the MSA is over \$10,000 higher. The poverty indicators are slightly higher for the state. The county is considered the urban center in a largely rural, agricultural state. These data provide initial context for this characterization.

Table 9

Case Three Comparison of State and County Community Characteristics

Community Characteristic	State	MSA
Total Population	5,500,000	3,500,000
Race	84% White	80% White
	6% Black or African American	8% Black or African American
	5% Asian	6% Asian
	5% Hispanic or Latino	6% Hispanic or Latino
	3% Two or more races	3% Two or more races
	1% American Indian and Alaska Native	1% American Indian and Alaska Native
	Median Age	37.8 years
Gender	50%	51%
Percentage of Population with a High School Diploma or Equivalent	93%	93%
Percentage of the Population Under Age 18	24%	24%
Percent Unemployment	3% in 2016, down from 5% in 2013	4% in 2016, down from 5% in 2013

Percent of Population 16 Years and Over in the Labor Force	70%	72%
Median Household Income	\$59,836	\$70,915
Percentage of All People whose Income in the Last 12 Months was Below the Poverty Level	12%	10%
Percentage of Children Under 18 whose Income in the Last 12 Months was Below the Poverty Level	15%	13%
Party Affiliation of the Current Governor and Mayor, respectively	Democratic Party	Democratic Party

Note. Data are derived from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and are rounded to help reduce possible identification of the institution. Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) describes the larger geographical area surrounding Institution C.

Institutional Characteristics

Institution C is located within the largest city in the state and sprawls across the central downtown area. It is a 4-year, public, urban, metropolitan university and holds the Carnegie Classification and is a member of CUMU. The university is classified by Carnegie as a Doctoral University: Highest Research Activity and has over 6,500 faculty members and over 13,000 staff. Out of the nearly 52,000 students, 68% are undergraduates, 85% of whom are enrolled full-time. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 67% of those students are White, 9% are Non-resident alien, 9% are Asian, 4% are Black or African American, 4% are Hispanic/Latino, and 3% are two or more races. Of the undergraduate population, 90% are 24 years of age or younger, and 64% come to the university from within state. Approximately 29% of students come from out-of-state, while 6% of undergraduate students are from foreign countries. The university has a 44% admission rate and an overall graduation rate of 78%.

Institution C has 19 colleges and schools and more than 350 fields of study, with four additional campuses throughout the state and over 15 extension offices. Approximately 88% of students live on campus in their first year, and 9% of students participate in a study abroad. Over 125 countries are represented on campus. The operating budget for the university is nearly \$4 billion dollars, of which approximately 17% comes from state appropriation. The institution estimates its economic impact within the state at over \$8 billion dollars and is one of the top-10 largest employers in the state. Institution C trains around 80% of the state's new physicians and according to the 2018 U.S. News and World Report, is one of the top 10 Medical Schools for Primary Care. It also has a large agricultural presence and conducts leading research in agricultural and farming disciplines in both rural and urban areas. The institution is a large, decentralized university taking on many of Birnbaum's (1988) characteristics of an anarchical system described in Chapter Four.

Review of Data Sources

Data collection for Institution C included a series of interviews with university stakeholders involved in engagement and assessment, as well as analysis of several other data sources. These included institutional documentation, archives and records available, accreditation materials, strategic plans, website data, and institutional and community descriptive data, as well as other documentation available online or through participants. The sample of interviewees was secured through initial conversations with a gatekeeper, subsequent conversations with potential and confirmed participants, online searches, and recommendations by those aware of the study. Beginning in July of 2017, Institution C was invited to participate and in October of 2017 an initial conversation with a

gatekeeper occurred. Data collection began in late October of 2017 and concluded in February of 2018. Though multiple university stakeholders were asked to provide contact information for possible community interviewees, ultimately no community stakeholders provided an interview.

At Institution C, five individuals from the university were interviewed. This included three females and two males. Four participants identified as White or Caucasian, and one as Latinx.² When asked how many months or years they had been involved in assessment of community engagement, responses ranged from three years to 27 years, though the average estimated experience in assessment of community engagement work was 14.4 years. The disciplines or areas of university stakeholders ranged from community engagement, engaged learning, community development, and health initiatives, and a range of positions from Senior Vice President to Graduate Student Researchers were represented.

Findings

The findings that follow are derived from the data sources described above. The unique relationship between the institution and city, as captured primarily through interviews, is discussed first. The chapter then outlines the ways in which the three key terms of community engagement activity, local community, and impact are operationalized by the institution to add additional context. Within this framework, the primary processes by which the institution determines the impact its community engagement activity has in the local community is described. The chapter concludes with a discussion of major themes, followed by supporting and institutional themes. Findings

² 'Latinx' is a gender-neutral word for people of Latin American descent (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

focus on institutional processes specifically, rather than all emergent themes, in accordance with Yin's (2014) guidelines for effective case study analysis.

Relationship between Institution and City

The size of Institution C was one of its defining features according to participants. The size carries positive and negative characteristics. On the positive side, respondents noted the sizeable amount of activity occurring, including a multitude of opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and the community to pursue collaboratively across disciplines. As one stakeholder recounted:

We're kind of all over the place with a lot of different partnerships, different kinds of stakeholders, from local residents to nonprofits to educational situations, governmental agencies, business and industry. We have a lot of different kinds of partnerships with a lot of different kinds of engagement. So, I would say unique in terms of just you know, a lot of the other universities and colleges are very localized...But we tend to have tentacles more broadly.

The positive economic impact Institution C has in the state was also cited. That vast presence, however, was described as a challenge: "We're one of about 25 colleges and universities in the area. But because of our size we tend to be the big bully on the block, you know?" Another stakeholder echoed, "We're really all over the place, both geographically and in terms of discipline...In some ways that's a real positive, we have a lot of different ways we're engaged with the community, but certainly in terms of figuring out...what our impacts are, our engagement is very diffuse. So that does make it challenging."

The university is also both a land-grant and urban, metropolitan institution, using its size and “tentacles” across the state to conduct useful research in rural and urban settings. Its historical emphasis on agriculture has provided a foundation to lead innovative work in urban farming practice as well. Housing multiple perspectives and areas of focus within one organization was cited as a unique strength. One stakeholder described the work in greater detail:

It's rare really to have those kinds of agricultural research programs right in the heart of a metro area. I think that has contributed in very positive ways to a pretty strong and growing urban farming community... and then the relationships that those city government staff, whether the city council or we have policy councils... They have relationships with a variety of different researchers within the university system so there's a lot of sort of quote unquote ‘civic engagement’ by our research community in these spaces. We also have a really strong extension presence in urban agriculture as well, both from a public health perspective as well as from a production perspective.

A final notable feature of the relationship between the institution and the city involves a long history of what stakeholders described as Institution C conducting community engagement in problematic ways. All respondents cited this history to varying degrees, but with a consistent narrative. One stakeholder discussed the history in a general sense:

We also have the same traditional problematic relationships with our urban communities that a lot of universities have had over the years, which is a paradigm of researchers going into the community, gathering and collecting data,

coming back to university and never sharing it back. There have been a number of initiatives that have taken place at Institution C to try to mend those relationships and not continue to engage the community in that same way going forward.

Another stakeholder described the history in greater detail. This stakeholder recounted the circumstances approximately 15 years ago in which the “number of initiatives” mentioned in the above quote began to come about:

Our center really came about because of a huge mistake that was made on the university’s part... Institution C wanted to come together and do some work around children's mental health and out-of-home placement of children predominately in the north of the city... and more or less the university kind of stepped in it, because they didn't work with the community and instead they decided to bring in a superstar researcher from outside the university, who had fantastic success in other locations and actually does some really great work. But the way they rolled it out, the way they actually, well, neglected to do any kind of engagement both internally or externally, led to protests and pickets and people incredibly upset about. ‘So, you're going to come into our community and experiment on our children? What kind of research are you doing?’ It was a big huge misstep. Thankfully though, the university decided to stay committed and work with those partners and said well if this doesn't work, what will work? And so, over the course of several years and numerous public meetings and facilitated gatherings they came up with the idea of our center and having a place-based center that would then be hopefully as transparent as possible and work with the

community in these identified areas to try and find some breakthrough solutions to common problems that we would find ourselves facing here in the urban core. Institution C now has several centers, initiatives, and programs designed to cultivate more authentic, reciprocal relationships with community residents and organizations to ensure high levels of responsiveness in research and practice. One such center that was highlighted across interviews was put in place by the board of regents in the late 1960s, and is now supplemented with a variety of other institutional efforts.

Defining Key Terms

As discussed in Chapter Three, the central research question included five terms or phrases that needed to be operationalized. What constitutes *institution* and *process* were determined primarily by the researcher, but the terms *community engagement activity*, *local community*, and *impact* were left to each institution to define or conceptualize within their own context. The following section outlines the ways in which the latter three terms are conceptualized at Institution C according to data sources.

Community engagement activity. One centralized statement does exist to define community engagement at Institution C, which guides its strategic plan for engagement. This definition can be found on the central coordinating office's website as well as related institutional documents. One stakeholder described how in a recent examination of individual unit interpretation of that definition, 38 different proxy terms for public engagement were found. This respondent indicated that the single definition was useful, but the sheer number of variations in definitional language was telling of its fluidity. Instead, the stakeholder suggested the university actually organizes its interpretation of community engagement along a spectrum of working for, in, or with communities.

How it's defined...Community engagement activity oftentimes it's on a spectrum...what we call the levels of engagement, where we're doing things for communities, where we might do things where we don't actually go into the community, but we may be doing policy briefs or other kinds of things that are benefiting community. But it's not done necessarily through a high engagement level. It's doing it for communities. Then we go another step further up the spectrum, continuum where we go in communities. We're actually getting ourselves into communities and we're doing more work that is contextualized within community settings. Then the third level is working with communities where we're actually working in partnership with community members as co-investigators or co-producers, co-discoverers, co-educators, and that's more of a collaborative, reciprocal, participatory kind of engagement.

This same spectrum was also articulated by two other respondents.

Two stakeholders varied slightly in how they framed their response. Included in the centralized statement is a description of public engagement as partnership between the university, public, and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity. Two respondents focused on this description, with one stating that community engagement is, “work that cuts across the three pillars of the institution – so research, teaching, and service that's done with community.” The other included a bit more on how the definition has evolved:

People will talk about, as a land grant we have a threefold mission of teaching, research, and outreach. For a long time, I think there was an idea that engagement was synonymous with the outreach part...There's been a real focus within the

institution to say there is an engaged way to do teaching, research, and outreach, so engagement is actually something that cuts across all of those.

As stakeholders answered this question, their responses varied in approach, but very similar language was used. Participants used the language of “for, in, and with” consistently as well as “cutting across” pillars of institutional work.

Local community. Defining local community may be best summed up by the stakeholder that offered, “There's no straightforward answer to what is our local community here.” Digging in deeper to why that is the case, the central coordinating office articulated a rationale for why the definition of local is “anything external to the university”:

It's anything that's external to the university. So, the external community can be anything it could be business, industry, governmental agencies, it could be neighborhoods, it could be issue communities, environmental communities, the health community cetera. It's very, it's not a place-based kind of notion. It's very much about affinity groups and sectors. So those two terms community and engagement really are multifaceted in their own right. And then when put together it again depends on which aspects of each one's talking about.

Other respondents did indicate a place-based element to defining local community. In particular, the centers that are intended to be the place-based, integrated touch points for Institution C do very much care about certain geographical areas. As one university stakeholder connected to one such center described it:

We think of local community in many different aspects. So, not only university community, a student community, a faculty community, a staff community. But

when we think about the north area, it's certainly the geographic boundaries of certain neighborhoods...but it's also the communities within that geographic boundary that are so important... Whether that's African-American community, Somali community, Hmong community, on down the line. Depending on how you want to define it, either by socio-economics or by religious affiliation, we consider those all to be viable communities that should be engaged with in a manner that's respectful.

These place-based efforts were emphasized as important in order to ensure the university is making intentional efforts to listen and collaborate with the community on needs that are localized. Returning to the size of Institution C, one respondent described how the local community could easily be considered the entire state: "If you pick your radius you pretty much hit every community in the state in one way or another with a university campus." Given such size and activity, another stakeholder noted a tension in definitions. On one hand, university-wide the institution has historically strived to "play a role in how social issues are addressed that will benefit the community." On the other hand, meaningful, reciprocal engagement work at the local level utilizes a more concrete interpretation: "In the context of the north area, listen. This is about a very particular community, not necessarily all communities."

Impact. All respondents indicated that there was just no "good" definition of impact. Responses began with a collection of the following introductory murmurs from all respondents: "Oooh, and that's the challenge." "That's a fantastic question." "I have absolutely no idea." "I think it varies by unit, honestly." "Yeah, that's great. I don't think we have a very good definition of that." Collective responses included reflections

such as, “I don’t know if Institution C can” define impact, as well as, “I don’t know if they know.” One stakeholder offered that “it’s extremely hard to clarify or pin down” and therefore the only characterization of impact relevant institution-wide was “stock language”. For Institution C, the language this stakeholder was referring to includes goals such as “contribute to the public good” and “address critical societal issues”. A stakeholder connected to the central coordinating office described impact as ideals, which more practical, program-based work uses as guideposts or frameworks by which to orient one’s work: “We have proposals for example...where we're going to reduce poverty and we're going to reduce homelessness and we're going to, you know, slow down global warming. We're going to do all the amazing things but we never get there. But I think impact is very kind of ephemeral in that it's about the ideal of what we want to achieve.” Impact in this sense was explained as the lofty ideals that efforts collectively intend to contribute to.

Responses to the question of how Institution C defines impact again involved very similar language. Two stakeholders did mention the importance of documentation as a critical component to any determination or understanding of impact. These respondents noted the importance of accurate tracking and understanding of activity being done, which over time, would lead to a better understanding of what outcomes may have resulted from community engagement activity.

Summary of institutional definitions. A central statement does exist regarding how Institution C defines community engagement activity, though respondents suggested the interpretation of that varies widely (i.e. 38 different proxy terms for the actual, institution-wide terminology the central coordinating office employs). Respondents

emphasized both engagement as a spectrum of working for, in, and with communities, as well as engagement as work that cuts across the three institutional pillars of research, teaching, and outreach. The definition of local community was deemed “anything external to the university” or not particularly able to be identified in a singular sense. Respondents instead identified populations, issues, and geographies as fluid parameters that may be used in a particular engagement activity. “Local” may also constitute the entire state. No clear definition of impact was identified. The most common response paralleled “I don’t know” or “that’s a challenge”. Impact was described as an ideal that individual projects orient their work around, and documentation was highlighted as necessary in any possible determinations of impact.

Institutional Processes to Determine Impact

Within this institutional context, the following section describes the primary processes by which Institution C determines the impact its community engagement activity has in the local community. Process as determined by the researcher included the categories of defining (described in the previous section), identifying, tracking and reporting, using data, as well as relational aspects of evaluation processes. Participants were asked questions from these four categories, highlighting different aspects of process within each, yet a common institutional narrative emerged throughout data collection.

Identifying and tracking community engagement. All respondents offered a variety of interpretations of how Institution C identifies and tracks community engagement. Yet when the highest level administrator interviewed was asked, *how does the university know what community engagement is taking place, how do they know what is occurring*, they replied, “They don’t.” The respondent went on to clarify that, in their

estimation, it doesn't make sense to attempt to have a single point of entry for a university as decentralized as Institution C. Though some units have attempted to serve that role, no single entity is able to identify all activity institution-wide. They explain:

So...it's very interesting. We have we have about 200 units here. We have a unit that...calls itself the 'front door to the university'. We have extension, which is another program that says it sort of has a place to go for connecting with the university. We have our office of government and university relations, that says you know, here's where you can find out what the university is doing. We have an expert database that the library has right, you know? Part of it is, there is no one place to go. And even what we've done here at the central coordinating office, we've just built this directory of community engaged scholars who have said, 'I want to identify myself as a community engaged scholar who works with communities.' And so we're now just starting to filter it by issue areas and those kinds of things. But you know what I mean? It's 200 and 300 faculty members out of you know 1600 and we know there's a lot more out there. I'm not making excuses for just that, but, the fact is we're very decentralized. Everybody wants to own their own information and data.

Other respondents confirmed the idea that at the university level there is not a specific, systematic way to gather information institution-wide, yet individual units are responsible for accurate and complete data. Per one stakeholder, "I don't think there really is a central repository or unit charged with collecting this data in any kind of truly meaningful way." Units instead implement identification and tracking strategies that align with their work. The office focused on service-learning tracks community

engagement activity by number of service-learning courses, student outcomes, and community partner satisfaction. A state-wide health initiative housed within Institution C tracks activity through its grant funding and subsequent reporting updates from grantees. A place-based center tracks activity first by point of entry and then annual updates. This center utilizes an electronic questionnaire that captures a project's initial partners, purpose, and design, and if it aligns with the work of the center, is included in their database and system of support. Individual projects are tracked throughout the year and updated annually through Campus Labs software. These three examples illustrate how identification and tracking occurs differently at the unit level, including what data are solicited and the mechanisms by which those data are gathered. The ability to examine data as a collective, institutional narrative was described as more difficult.

There's been talk over the years about, would everybody be asked to, sort of, roll up their individual data into something bigger that was more of a unified system. And I think right away it just becomes really challenging because terms are defined differently and...different types of engagement are so different, you know. Kind of like, what's the unit of measure and how can you compare. To the best of my knowledge, there is no one way that we do this institutionally. It comes through individual channels.

In order to tackle institutional identification and tracking given the multitude of channels through which information flows, the institution employed four key strategies. These include starting to use existing data collection systems, flagging research proposals that include community engagement, utilizing course attribution to flag community-engaged learning courses, and utilizing the thesis and dissertation filing system to flag the

engaged scholarship of graduate students. A stakeholder described the process the university embarked on that led to an institutional strategy to employ existing data collection systems:

We've actually had two task forces that looked at this issue and one of the things the task force recommended was that we not come up with a separate system for collecting public engagement data, where we send out these requests for data and information, because there is survey fatigue. Not everybody responds. The data then are provided in very different manners. And so for us to be able to make sense of it, it's not comprehensive and it's not going to be complete. The strategy that was recommended, which we've implemented, is to look at existing data collection systems and embedding public engagement related items. So we've done that with our faculty activity reports. Every faculty member needs to fill out a...report. And in those reports now, we ask, 'Did this have a community engagement component?' And we define that. 'In your teaching, was it done in partnership with community members? And if so, describe that.' Now we have those embedded into those data systems and we can look at those data.

The institution now also flags community engagement within all research proposals routed through the Sponsored Projects office:

Another thing we did was in submitting a research proposal, you have to fill what's called a proposal routing form, where you submit your proposal to get approved by our sponsored projects office. And on that form, now we have a question, 'Does this include an external partner? If so in, what way? Who is your

external partner or partners? Describe their role.’ Now we're able to capture all those in every single proposal that goes through the university.

The university also flags each course designated as community-engaged learning, which must incorporate at least 25% engaged learning within the course. The final strategy cited was to flag information from doctoral dissertations and master’s theses. “You have to fill out the advisor form and it has to go to the graduate school and now we're adding a line that says, ‘Was this a community engagement project?’”

The central coordinating office suggested that the institution has shifted away from employing another bureaucratic layer, via electronic survey or some other collection technology. Such a strategy was deemed not even likely to be able to capture institution-wide data in a detailed and holistic way. The central coordinating office is instead focused on identifying where community engagement is occurring and creating a community of support around those individuals. As one stakeholder connected to the office said, “We have more projects than we can support. It's about transforming the institutional culture that embraces this work.” Another stakeholder outside the office conveyed a similar perspective: “They (central coordinating office) have a number of, like, workshops and events and things over the course of the year. I mean, so they have those types of things that people come to, and I think that's how they build that community to figure out who's there. But nothing systematic.”

Reporting. External interests, such as the Board of Regents, Institution C’s accrediting body, the Carnegie Classification, and the President’s Honor Roll, all require institution-wide data. The central coordinating office, as a result, has needed to create internal and external reporting processes to provide as much comprehensive information

as possible. The information, however, is identified and tracked differently within each unit, as described in the previous section. Institution C recognized this as a challenge within the last 10 years, implementing the two task forces invited to propose strategies to improve practice. Those task forces helped design the current process for identification, tracking, and subsequent reporting in which the university utilizes data collection systems already in place. The 200 units also share information with the central coordinating office as needed or in conjunction with reporting to external entities. The reported information is tailored to the individual unit's own processes and relevant data. As information is received by the central coordinating office, they categorize the data to then report it externally. Information is categorized as needed (e.g. what data are important to the Board of Regents; what data are important for the Carnegie Classification). Data are also reviewed to assess internal alignment (i.e. does the description of the activity align with institutional terminology and interpretation of that activity) and to improve practice and support for community engagement work:

Faculty report whatever they want, or courses can be designated...community engaged, those kinds of things. But then we do that (differentiate and analyze activities) at the back end. We're doing that now, for example, with the...course attribute. We have a faculty committee that's taking courses at random and taking a look at them, seeing...how faculty and departments are interpreting it. And then to determine whether we need more education on the part of helping department chairs understand it. Maybe we need better descriptors... Similarly, with the proposal routing data, we're looking at which were funded, which were not funded, and then we're taking a look at specific research proposals to say how did

this group interpret this and was this really community engaged? We do a lot of that work on the back end when we are analyzing those data.

Institution C also launched an engagement network to help in sharing community engagement practice and assessment. This network serves as a sounding board and collection of individuals helping refine institutional processes:

We have a...network. These are representatives, directors, managers, coordinators of units, collegiate and non-collegiate units, that do community engaged work. And that group meets monthly and it's a way to learn about each other's work. It's also about trying to systematize some of the issues around data collection, working in particular communities, working around particular issues.

In trying to become more systematized on data collection in a way that works for Institution C, the network is currently collaborating to identify a common set of indicators that the university can track over time. Rather than change the assessment processes of the more than 200 units working with the central coordinating office, the focus has shifted to collecting a small amount of information from units that can be aggregated. A stakeholder described that process as follows:

One of the things that we've done is asked them to come up with a template of three or four or five key questions that are universal, that they can provide data in a way that we could actually aggregate. The thing we have is that each of these units, almost all of them collect some kind of data for their unit. The issue we have on the institution-wide basis is we can't aggregate those data. We can't put it together into, we can't add up the numbers...for a lot of reasons...They are collected at different times. They're collected in different ways. They're about

different levels of analysis, units of analysis. We don't know if we duplicate counting the same students 100 times. You know? We don't know. We don't have that specificity. So, we're asking them to help us put together three or four or five items that we could actually pull that out. So that's one way we're doing it.

The network's final suggestion of items to include are forthcoming.

Using assessment data. Respondents cited both common uses for community engagement assessment data, as well as localized examples within their own context. Recurring common examples included using data in fundraising, grant-writing, in accreditation, to Carnegie, the Honor Roll, as well as reporting back out to the community or “internally and externally to the university”. The Board of Regents was the most cited external entity respondents noted. Stakeholders shared comments like, “We use it (data) to justify our existence within the university system,” and in documenting “worth and viability” to central administration. “We, just as a university as a whole, has to be accountable to the public. We have to be accountable to the university, so that just as a base.” Another stakeholder noted that “The board was very pleased that we submitted \$1.4 billion dollars in grants and we've received over \$500 million in the last four years for community engaged work.” One stakeholder also suggested that accrediting bodies and grant funders are increasingly asking about “how we're working with...external entities and the broader impacts of our work.”

Data is also used in more localized ways depending on the nature of the office or center and its work. In one place-based center, data is used throughout the year to inform presentations and monthly meetings aimed at highlighting ongoing work, building rapport, and purposefully convening in order to create space to strengthen relationships.

“I feel like that's been a great way to help us stay connected. But it's also been a great way to help us highlight projects that aren't necessarily highlighted all the time.” Another office focused on engaged student learning uses data primarily for program improvement. Data helps inform the office’s approach to supporting students and community partners and has also helped inform revisions to a “it’s not quite the right word but I almost want to say...community partner satisfaction survey.” This survey provides data that allows the office to know how community partners feel about working with Institution C, and helps the office identify if and how partners are helping students reflect throughout the process. Another initiative at Institution C uses data to inform conversations that lead to building and strengthening the initiative’s network:

We typically use it (data) to engage in conversation to further statewide partnerships, because our unit partners on statewide initiatives are with the Department of Health and Department of Agriculture and Human Services and other funders across the state. We use that data to improve those relationships that we're leveraging and aligning our work to reduce the burden that might fall onto our community organization for accessing funds, for example. And then we oftentimes will share it with community organizations as well.

Few examples were provided for intentional use of data over time. The above respondent described tracking projects associated with the initiative over time, looking for data in project reports that demonstrate a “ripple effect”:

That report...it's going to be project-related specifically, and then we do follow up. So we track, after that first final report, every six months...we basically do surveys and we track again...whether or not that community organization has

received additional funds... is still in partnership with the people that were brought together, and if they started to do new work... We look to see how many students have been engaged in the work... We look to see whether there are publications... or... presentations on the work... We look for ripples on partnerships. We... look for continued spreading of information afterwards.

Relational aspects of assessment processes. Respondents consistently described Institution C as highly internally coordinated. The university is actively creating systems, structures, and policies that support community engagement practice across the institution. Respondents also describe an internal focus, wherein Institution C and its central coordinating office are attempting to refine the processes and culture in the internal areas over which they have more direct control. As a result of this institutionalization, stakeholders also described a lack of representation and coordination with the local community. These relational processes are discussed next.

Internal coordination. While all stakeholders described Institution C as highly decentralized, respondents were also in agreement that when it comes to community engagement, the central coordinating office is doing a great deal of innovative work around institutionalization and support of collaboration with external communities. One stakeholder described internal coordination as follows:

I think we're very fortunate to have the central coordinating office. Their shop really does a fantastic job especially on the 'in-reach' part to the university, working with different departments, offering planning grants and engagement grants within departments to start to cultivate those faculty and staff that are interested in doing engaged work. A big part of what their office has done in the

past is working with the campus community liaisons. So actual staff at Institution C, whose passion and interest and expertise really do lie in the realm of engagement, utilizing them and their networks to really try and bring best practices forward here.

The in-reach described in this quote illustrates some of the efforts underway to build that community of support for engaged scholars and community engagement broadly.

Another stakeholder described a similar community of support, but suggested it is more of a core group and should not be representative of what constitutes “institution-wide”.

They explain:

The best way I can describe this is I think that there are a core set of people who our central coordinating office really works with and that group of people, you'll see the same group of people over and over, right? And I think that within that group they communicate very well, and they know what's going on an institutional level and not just their own individual stuff. I think outside of that very core group, it's not well coordinated at all. For example, there's stuff that happens at our center that is not communicated on a university-level. We have a communications director who works...in the central coordinating office and she is amazing. She's one person and past her, it doesn't get disseminated or it doesn't get shared. I'm not quite sure why that happens but that, to me, spells there's a communication coordination breakdown, when people don't know.

Other respondents described coordination similarly to a “core set” of individuals but emphasized the nature of the group as a series of “personal networks and personal connections”. The informal relationships at Institution C were described as foundational

to strategies to coordinate on community engagement. The network described in the previous section, that serves as a sounding board and team to help refine processes, was cited in interviews as a key institutional strategy. Respondents also felt that ensuring individuals across the institution had clear opportunities to gather and share is an important part of coordination at Institution C.

There are also a series of formal systems, structures, and policies in place. Clear documentation is one component that Institution C has addressed. There is a central definition of community engagement posted on the central coordinating office's website. There is a set of guidelines and policies that facilitate community engagement at Institution C, including clarifications on academic credit, co-branding university work with an external entity, working with the IRB, indirect cost recovery funding, and liability policies the university helps make accessible and clear. There is a 10-point plan for community engagement that all respondents referenced to varying degrees. This plan "articulates a set of action steps designed to secure the full institutionalization of public engagement across the five campuses" of Institution C. All respondents cited the 10-point plan, indicating it has been discussed or disseminated enough institution-wide for these individuals from different units and centers to reference it as a guiding document.

Institution C also convenes many different university stakeholders. There is a community engagement council, which serves as a consultative body to the university, whose "recommendations and initiatives focus on improving the university structures, policies, procedures, and programs" that further institutionalization and align the priorities of community engagement with the university's strategic agenda. The council is "a high level administrative council, senior level, all the vice provosts sit on that...and

some deans and some others.” There are also five task forces at Institution C that tackle different challenges in advancing and supporting community engagement. They address assessment and tracking, faculty experiences, graduate student experiences, university-wide metrics, and innovation in public service and fulfilling the institution’s mission. Respondents indicated that additional committees, task forces, and groups may form and disband as needed as well.

Institution C has also hired staff to serve as liaisons to the community. There are around 75 – 80 individuals doing this work across the university: “These are professional staff whose primary role is to do campus – community partnership building.” These staff members also meet regularly. One stakeholder describes their work in greater detail: “They might work in a unit in the college of agriculture and their job is to do some connections with farmers. ...There job is to do external relations and partnership work around community engaged research, teaching, and learning and outreach...So they get together every month and share their opportunities, their challenges, their barriers.” These individuals are considered boundary spanners between the university and community, across sectors, and their positions are funded by Institution C.

External coordination. When asked if community members or representatives are involved in the planning or assessment of community engagement, stakeholders generally responded either, “Not that I know of” or yes, “At the individual unit-level to some extent, not so much at the university-wide level.” There is currently no community representation on the community engagement council, which two respondents noted was in part because it is difficult to select individuals to represent “community”. One asked, “Who’s going to represent community?” Another stakeholder expounded, “So if we're

saying it's anybody outside the university, again in my mind I'm thinking local level community representative organizations, but you know, the university's gonna have relationships with state agencies, ... with corporations that fund research, and technically those are external community organizations." Stakeholders suggested that more coordination does exist within each unit, and the unit and their partners drive the processes by which coordination occurs. One stakeholder also described the challenge across units to be seen as the "the" place to go to connect with community. In such a decentralized environment, this respondent discussed the ways in which each unit attempts to be an invaluable element within the larger organizational structure. Units must generate enough financial resources, be sustainable, thrive, and demonstrate their unique contribution to Institution C.

Everybody wants to own their own information and data. There are a lot of units protective of their community partners. They want to be seen as the go to place. And so they build their own mechanisms to connect with communities. One partnership has a database where people in the county can go in and find student workers or faculty researchers and they have their own database... a lot of units are like that. So, to answer your question where do community members go, it depends on who they have a relationship with, what issues they care about...and what kind of work they want done.

Based on stakeholder depictions and available data, Institution C may be highly coordinated with the community in certain pockets and much less so in other areas. From the institution-wide perspective, there is not a high degree of coordination with the community.

Emergent Themes

In accordance with the variability associated with community engagement, each interviewee brought a unique perspective to the conversation given their background, current role, area of work or discipline, and experience with engagement and assessment. Interviews followed respondents along their thought process in accordance with the constructivist framework, but certain questions were emphasized to understand the practical significance of responses in line with a critical process of inquiry tied to one’s physical reality. Themes emerged in prominent, supporting, and institution-specific ways. The following section analyzes responses accordingly. Major themes include those themes from the data that occur across interviews, are prominent, recurring, and foundational, and address key research questions. Supporting themes address elements of the interview protocol that add further context to institutional processes to determine the impact community engagement activity has locally. Institution-specific themes highlight aspects of the data that are unique or prominent within Institution C in addressing the research question. Table 10 demonstrates how the themes emerged throughout cycles of coding and analysis.

Table 10

Progression of Emergent Themes across Coding Cycles: Institution C

First Cycle Coding	Second Cycle Coding	Third Cycle Coding
<i>Major Themes</i>		
Centralization within a Decentralized Environment	Centralization within a Decentralized Environment	Centralization within a Decentralized Environment
Internal Focus	Internal Focus	Internal Focus
Unit-Driven	Unit-Driven	

Alignment		
<i>Contributing Themes</i>		
38 Proxy Terms	How Much Can We Ask of a Collaborator	Expectations Across Relationship Type
Ability to Aggregate Data	Getting to Impact – Closed Loop	Who Authentically Represents Community
At Least a Layer Removed	Using Data Differently	What is Data Holding Accountable
Organization Goals versus Student Impact	Making Specific Commitments	
What to Ask of Community Members	Authentic Relationships	
What do Community Members Really Want	Who Authentically Represents Community	
How Intrusive Can We Be	Legislative Pressure	
Community Organization’s Own Data and Accountability		
Specific Commitments		
Process or Outcomes		
Legislative Pressure or Influence		
Institutional Relationships		
Quality of Relationships		
The University is Not Always the Bad Guy		
Who Authentically Represents Community		
<i>Institution-Specific Themes</i>		
Alignment	Alignment	Alignment
Place-based Center		

Square Two Instead of Square One	Place-based Center's Role at a University like Institution C	Place-based Center's Role at a University like Institution C
Understanding the Relationship	Institutionalization	Land-grant <i>and</i> Urban
Blind Spots	Land-grant and Urban	
Importance of Staying on the Academic Side		
Admitting Failures		
Boards, Committees, Task Forces		
History in Community		
Unit-driven		
Institutional Culture		
Land-grant and Urban		

Note. Bullet points indicate contributing characteristics of emergent themes.

Major Themes

The major themes that emerged from the data span a range of challenges in institutional processes to determine impact locally. They include centralization in a highly decentralized environment and internal focus as an institution. These are considered next, respectively.

Centralization in a highly decentralized environment. All respondents indicated that Institution C is a highly decentralized environment, yet they also indicated that the university was making concerted efforts to institutionalize community engagement. Participants were asked what elements of community engagement assessment should be centralized and what aspects were best left decentralized. Though

the approach to each response varied, each stakeholder was consistent in their response. Respondents seemed to agree that the work should be decentralized, though some central repository of data is necessary. What data and what repository should be used varied somewhat across stakeholders. Additionally, the coordination of a shared community of practice was also cited as a needed centralizing strategy at Institution C.

Respondents noted several advantages to being a decentralized organization. Primarily, the autonomy, freedom, and localization the structure provides were cited as important in ensuring individual units are able to thrive within their own milieu. As one stakeholder described, “One of the ways that we've been successful at Institution C has been the fact that so many of our different centers and institutions, especially when it comes to engagement, are so decentralized and we're allowed to be so... We're really allowed to kind of chart our own course in many respects as long as we can find a way to be in alignment.” This freedom was described as allowing these individual centers to build relationships, projects, and programming that had a better connection and relevance to the community partners with which they work. Each stakeholder shared a similar appreciation for the ability to tailor engagement work and subsequent assessment processes to these varying and unique settings.

Most respondents did acknowledge some inherent tradeoff in a highly decentralized structure as well. One stakeholder described the localization of work as extremely useful in this type of academic engagement, but without any common indicators or the ability and timing to collect them, there can be a “cluster” when trying to wrangle information institution-wide:

I don't think being decentralized is a bad thing, because I think that it gives the people who are doing community engagement kind of the freedom, if you will, to do community engagement work the way that they see fit. And I think that for community engagement that matters so much. Because how our center is working in one city isn't going to be the same as you know public health working in a nearby city. It's not going to look the same. I think that having that decentralized way of functioning is important for community engagement, I think it makes it more doable. I don't want to say easier, because that's not true either. Now, of course, if you flip all of that and you're like, ok, well, we want to measure what's happening. Now we have kind of a cluster.

Another stakeholder described the tradeoff as “breadth versus depth.” This respondent indicated that focusing on some particular set of impact goals would focus university activity (i.e. depth), however that would come at the expense of the multitude of other projects and issues that currently get addressed because of the wide array of interests, expertise, and programming happening across Institution C (i.e. breadth):

There is some real benefit...that people can work on whatever they're passionate about and try to make the mark that they want to make. And then, I think the flip side is just, of necessity, that sort of blunts our impact because we're not focused on one thing. So, I think that those are the tradeoffs. It's breadth versus depth and I think that's kind of always the challenge. So, if there were more centralization it maybe would lead to more depth, but we'd have to focus that in some way. And so, we'd be paying less attention to other areas.

Respondents noted two areas in particular in which centralization has a role to play. The first is in centralizing data in some way, and the second is in centralizing or coordinating a community of practice. In terms of centralizing data, several respondents indicated that Campus Labs or some other online platform should eventually collect information from every unit to create a central repository. As one stated, the “collecting of data in a centralized way is a good thing”. Respondents explored either the idea that all data from each unit be stored within one institutional repository or some data. Ideally, these respondents indicated, each unit wants to be able to give an accurate account of their work, particularly to the Board of Regents, as does the university. All stakeholders suggested that only with more refined data collection processes would that be possible. One stakeholder emphasized the strategy of identifying just three to five indicators that could be commonly collected across units and aggregated to the institutional level, as described above in the section on reporting.

Building a community of practice was also cited as a way to coordinate community engagement across a decentralized organization. Institution C has been focusing on this centralization strategy for the last 10 years. One stakeholder proposed this was the critical component to generating support, infrastructure, and ultimately strong assessment for engagement work. This stakeholder emphasized the core component to such a strategy was “removing barriers”:

I think the work itself...should be decentralized. What needs to be centralized is a place where those who want to do this work have a place to go to bring voice and legitimacy and validity and value to the work that they want to do, because there are barriers. There are cultural barriers...academic barriers. In terms of rewards

for faculty... For these faculty who do this work, the time frame to build these relationships and to produce something is much more extended. They're on the clock to advance. A central office can help put some guidelines, expectations, requirements, even policies that allow those faculty and that work to thrive.

Internal focus. Throughout all interviews, respondents cited in different ways the internal focus Institution C has in refining its engagement work. This was described as a concentration on internal processes, policies, structures, and relationships as it relates to community engagement. Institution C, in its efforts to institutionalize a culture of engagement, has built within the organization an infrastructure intended to facilitate and sustain community engaged practice among faculty, staff, and students. All respondents cited this as innovative, important, and useful practice. Respondents commended the central coordinating office for its intentionality in championing community engagement of all kinds and generating funding, awareness, and support across the university. Yet, when asked, in what ways if any does Institution C coordinate community engagement efforts toward common goals with the community, responses were more in line with this stakeholder's answer: "I don't think they do."

As discussed in the section on external coordination, respondents cited the unit level as the connection points to the local community. Participants described many university staff and faculty with an excellent read on the needs and perspective of the community, but it is those university actors that represent the community's voice rather than the individuals themselves. As one stakeholder shared, "I don't see a whole lot of community voice in the communication that comes out from our central coordinating office. Most of it's about institutional-level change, not necessarily about community

issues.” This stakeholder went on to recount that the work of the central coordinating office “is amazing and I think that the focus internally, it matters so much. It's just that there's something missing, right? There's some kind of connection that isn't there. Definitely not discrediting...institutional work.” When exploring the tension between “operational excellence” and the resulting potential to deemphasize community involvement, voice, and participation, another stakeholder reflected:

I think that's the problem. ...Again, I fully support the central coordinating office...I think they're doing the work the right way...The downside is that, yeah, they look internally and they, you know, they ask the questions of folks internally that have a really good sense of and good relationship with community. So, they're the best representative within the university of those interests. But, it's at the expense of actually having community folks at the table, having these conversations. We had an example of that come up when we were involved in the most recent sort of revamping of the 10-Point Plan... the community looked at some of the language of the proposal and just really pushed back and said it was really internally focused. So yeah, we need to do more.

Another stakeholder echoed, “I don't think that that community voice is at the table the way it maybe could be. Because they're so internally focused.”

Two key issues were raised by participants regarding the lack of community voice at the table. They include the need for direct representation and consequent perspective, as well as the need for community members to decide for themselves what is relevant to them. The lack of direct representation was cited as a generally important principle, though more direct examples were provided, such as the 10-Point Plan not reflecting

community input. To the second issue, one stakeholder described how a lack of community voice perpetuates an imbalance in community engagement's inherent purpose, to generate reciprocity, mutual benefit, and co-creation. By not allowing community stakeholders to have a voice in determining what may or may not be relevant to them, Institution C is effectively maintaining an imbalance of power that should be, to some degree, more equally apparent:

As far as the university goes, oh man, I know that they talk about community voice being at the table, but they talk about it in, I'm trying to say this nicely... They talk about it in particular ways. Like, okay, 'well we want to make sure the community has access to university resources.' Okay. 'We want to make sure that community has a voice in relevant policy at the university.' So, it's that kind of language that they're still using. And who gets to determine what's relevant and what's not?

Respondents also provided rationale for why this approach may be necessary. One stakeholder offered that it's not that the central coordinating office and its staff doesn't understand the community side of things, "they do", but the work is focused on institutionalization, an internal development process. Another stakeholder described that internal development process:

It has been focused more on... getting ourselves organized internally... I think my personal reaction to that, from where I sit on this campus... my first reaction is frustration, of like, come on let's take advantage of this opportunity to really push ourselves to think about how we could impact the community! But I think from where they sit, it's probably much more apparent that we are probably not in a

position to be effective, in the sense of actually...making those...specific commitments to community impact that would be measurable, that we could hold ourselves accountable to...So I think it makes sense to say well, first let's build our own capacity to even talk to each other and work together on campus, and that would be a necessary first step before we could, I think, in any authentic way say we as an institution are committed to X, Y, or Z in the community. So, as much as I sometimes get impatient for that phase of the work, I can see why it's necessary.

Another stakeholder echoed the need to build internal capacity. This respondent emphasized the need to create a culture of engagement and corresponding education on reciprocal, meaningful engagement, and let the results of that flourish: "It's about transforming the institutional culture that embraces this work. So when we hire new faculty we look for faculty who want to do community engaged work. When we bring in students, we expect them to do some kind of community engaged work. That's an institutional cultural issue."

Respondents generally felt that the internal focus of Institution C toward engagement work is both innovative and useful, as well as potentially problematic. As respondents noted the history of Institution C's missteps working "for" not "with" its community, they voiced not wanting to repeat any previous lack of respect and responsiveness that may have occurred. In conveying appreciation for Institution C's community engagement leadership, one stakeholder also cautioned, "I know that it's going to be an issue if we keep internally focusing exclusively." Stakeholders seemed to feel that more could be done but were unsure of exactly how to shift the focus slightly outward. As one stakeholder shared, "I don't think the university has figured that out yet.

And I think that's because we've been so internally focused that we have almost forgotten, like, who we're supposed to be working with to do all of this work.”

Supporting Themes

The supporting themes that emerged from data illuminate factors that further influence institutional processes to determine impact locally. They include who authentically represents community, expectations across relationship type, and what data is holding accountable. These are considered next, respectively.

Who authentically represents community? In confronting issues around coordinating and collaborating with the community, some stakeholders noted that it was difficult to pinpoint who authentically represents “community”.

One of the challenges also is when you think about community, who authentically represents whatever community you're trying to identify with. So, our city has some very strong neighborhood associations. Do they really speak for the community? To which part of the community do they speak for? And in the business associations...I mean they speak for *a* community, but again, which segment of the community, and can you find ways to impact citizens, residents, if we're working with, that maybe isn't through some of the traditional channels? Stakeholders voiced the desire to have meaningful community involvement and wrestled with what that means and how it could be applied in a practical manner. “I think to the extent that the central coordinating office or any of our units are able to have real input opportunities for community members to actually, to really influence decisions, we should do that. And we all struggle with that, as units, to make it authentic.”

This tension was illustrated by an example one stakeholder connected to the central coordinating office provided. The respondent described a relatively recent conversation regarding community representation on the engagement council described in previous sections: “For example, on the...engagement council, we don't have any community members and that was brought up by a couple of the council members. They said, “Well how can we be a public engagement house - we don't have any public?” The office responded by saying that it was not averse to that and would support it, yet how to do so in authentic, representative ways was less clear: “Who would represent the community? ... Which individual or individuals would come to the council and represent the community? We work locally, we work internationally. We work with business... faith-based institutions... schools... governmental agencies, neighborhood associations. Who's going to come and represent our community voice? This was also a challenge to answer depending on how one determines what constitutes “Institution C”, as another stakeholder identified: “At a presidential office level, their idea of the public is the legislature, being accountable to them, and to corporations. Because we are an economic engine for the state... But what definition are we talking about... as you go up the administrative ladder... the university people have a different idea of what it means to be accountable to the community.”

The engagement council is now looking to address the challenge by utilizing its unit-level network to draw representation from across disciplines and institutional areas. The central coordinating office noted that, “we have a lot of communities and community voices. If we bring certain stakeholders to the table we're only going to hear those voices. I'm not sure to what extent they are going to be representative?” In order to secure

greater representation, the office proposed a representative body comprised of different community advisory groups that exist within Institution C's different units.

Representative from those advisory groups would then convene and "at least, can cover more, different areas of...community engagement". The office then suggested that maybe that group serve as "a representative board that then could have a liaison that comes to the (engagement) council". Creating such structure aligns with the strategies Institution C employs internally yet will also add layers of work and layers of representation. Respondents who discussed these strategies were also mindful of the time and effort it may require for community members within these representative bodies.

Expectations across relationship type. As "community" is outlined in particular contexts, respondents also grappled with what sort of expectations were appropriate for different contexts or relationships. Respondents considered the various ways in which Institution C collaborates and coordinates with its community and different characterizations of partnership emerged. Stakeholders described both formal and informal partnerships with a variety of sectors, on a variety of projects, in a variety of activity types. The spectrum of working for a community, in a community, or with a community was raised as both conceptual ways of being as well as specific manifestations at Institution C. Informal, relational partnerships were described as well as more formal, structured partnerships.

The dynamics across these collaborative configurations vary so widely, respondents seemed to struggle with the question, how much can we ask of our community? How much can we ask of our community partners? Returning to the example of the engagement council, respondents wondered aloud what was a reasonable

request for soliciting such involvement in institutional processes: “The sensitivity around that is, you know, what's in it for a community member? You know, to come and talk about IRB issues? Well maybe IRB issues may actually be of interest to them, but some of the things we talk about are so... I'm very sensitive to people's time to work and they have full time jobs.” Because of this, it has been difficult to decide what the “ask” is to recruit participation on committees or councils. Similarly, respondents struggled with the degree to which administrative oversight should be requested of ongoing engagement projects. One stakeholder articulated the challenge of asking for data from university and community collaborators on projects they were running essentially autonomously:

We don't actually manage or really track their project, per se...One of the things that we're trying to figure out is how intrusive can we be into their individual projects to try and collect data that we can use to report out the overall impact of what we're trying to do here. And at the same time...respect those boundaries and privacy issues and other things that go on with each of these projects.

Stakeholders all described different relationships that were difficult to know the right “ask” in that situation. One involved working with community partners on service- and engaged-learning courses. A stakeholder recounted a primary focus on wanting to know whether or not the community partner was satisfied in their work with Institution C students, yet they were also interested in whether or not that partner provided reflection opportunities for the students as well as other development opportunities. When asked about the ultimate impact students might be having at those partner sites, the stakeholder ruminated on what it might look like to utilize community partner data to see how partnering organizations are holding themselves accountable for community outcomes. “I

mean, we've never even talked to him (one partner) about that, you know, what kind of assessment do you do and how does that fit in (to determining community impact).”

Stakeholders also noted the differences in direct, authentic relationships and those that may be considered more formal or centralized. Respondents indicated that the more decentralized, or the more local the relationship forms, the more meaningful it can become:

There's no obvious way to enter into a relationship with the university if you're a new community group, which is problematic and burdensome. But I think that the more that became central, the more institutional that relationship might feel to the community partner. Because the university is made up of people, right, and the potential for relationships is there if it is decentralized.

Another stakeholder agreed, but noted the challenge for community members to even initiate a relationship with Institution C. They may not know where or how to connect, which was echoed in other interviews:

I think that from the community perspective it's sort of a double-edged sword like you want them to be able to enter into a relationship with universities in any way that they can. You want to decentralize because there is more input, there is more opportunity to come into the system and then it is built on a relationship rather than an institution. But the flip to that is that it's hard on the community member because they don't know where to enter it necessarily.

A final point on expectations involves the communication of data. Most respondents noted a difference in the expected amount of information, and type of information, university and community partners expected. “I think the biggest challenge

is finding out how much information is too much.” Stakeholders described community members as often wanting more direct, applicable information without as much connection to prevailing research and conceptual framing. Some noted, however, that community members are different and should not be grouped into one homogenous population that will have one set of expectations. A stakeholder described this in greater detail as it relates to their work:

It's trying to find...different ways to take some of that really difficult or complex data that we have and putting it into a digestible form and realizing that the internal university audience expects publications and... journals. The community, maybe they want a graph, or they want to be able to sit down for 15 minutes over coffee and talk about how the project went. Keeping all of that in mind, at the same time being willing to switch modes and finding some community members, no they really do want the 150-page report and they want to go through it and then they want to question you about methodology and the results and are going to challenge you on everything. Which is fantastic.

What data is holding accountable. Throughout interviews, respondents fluctuated between the use of data to generate accountability for outcomes and the use of data to generate accountability for processes. Institution C is currently using data for both purposes. Respondents emphasized, however, the use of data for institutional and relational processes over the use of data to account for specific community outcomes. A respondent connected to the office working with faculty and community partners on service-learning, for instance, wasn't sure how to answer questions regarding processes to determine impact within the community. This office focuses primarily on their

relationships, making them strong and sustained: “You know what we're asking is from our community partner organizations, how did we do at meeting your goals for working with students. And that's really a whole different question from how did our students impact the community.” This respondent went on to note that part of the issue with determinations of impact is that community engagement is often layered by access. In other words, students are often working with community partner organizations, who then have more direct access to serve and work with community residents:

Our partner organizations are a layer between us and the community. We are not working with the community in any direct way. In terms of what does the community think about our students, that's going to be filtered through our partner organizations. And so, we do we ask our partner organizations, did our students contribute to your ability to fulfill your mission?...But that's because in most cases these organizations are set up to utilize volunteers to deliver services... So that is you know it's a very different question ...or it's at least a layer removed... I'd say that's probably a pretty common challenge...and in most cases people aren't partnering with a community, they're partnering with an organization or an individual or a group of individuals. And so then...one of the challenges is that it's being filtered.

By that filtering or layering of access, the office is collecting data that is more useful to their own mission. Of primary concern to this office, is the student experience, faculty experience, and community partner experience, or a closed loop of mutually beneficial activity. Of secondary concern, or one layer out, would be the community outcomes associated with the activity generated through those experiences. Community outcomes

are anticipated or linked to the work of these partners. Respondents across interviews highlighted assessment mechanisms focused on ensuring positive, strong relationships were present over mechanisms that are linked to track a community indicator.

One respondent described a pilot initiative that was meant to focus specifically on outcomes within a particular geographical area. Funding was provided by the central coordinating office, and collaborators were invited to bring their engaged scholarship into the initiative and see what outcomes may result. “To learn about each other's work and find points of synergy and potential connections so that we can build more collective impact. So...what does it all add up to in terms of impact?” The stakeholder suggested the initiative has been modestly successful, but even when concentrating activity within a particular area, collaborators still struggled to work in unison to achieve a particular outcome or outcomes: “One of the things, when these folks get together, is they're working on very different issues. And so, it's like, ‘I don't really care about what you're working on because that doesn't resonate with me. We work in the same community, but you're working on youth and I'm working on something else, like transgenerational issues.’ So, it is very different.” Even in these pilot efforts, the ability to utilize data to generate accountability for outcomes was hindered. Respondents suggested instead that program evaluation within specific contexts were better suited to using data to determine outcomes and subsequent impact.

Institution-Specific Themes

The institution-specific themes that emerged from the data highlight unique organizational characteristics of institutional processes to determine impact locally. They include alignment, a place-based center's role at Institution C, and the unique

opportunities at a land-grant and urban, metropolitan university. These are considered next, respectively.

Alignment. The emphasis on alignment was prevalent throughout conversations on institutionalization of community engagement, centralization processes, and a focus on internal processes, policies, structures, and relationships. Respondents indicated that alignment was necessary between unit activity and the central coordinating office, as well as with the central coordinating office's alignment with the university's strategic agenda. Stakeholders described autonomous ways of being were possible and encouraged as long as the unit evidenced how their work contributed to the community engagement and ultimately university missions (i.e. "We're really allowed to...chart our own course in many respects as long as we can find a way to be in alignment"). One stakeholder did describe the alignment process as not only organizing activity around similar goals and ways of being, but as organizational centralizing, with the possibility of corresponding restructure and budget cuts:

I know the goal of the central administration is to bring things more in alignment and more under their control...I think we're calling it operational excellence, has been the term...for the last five years or so. Which is really all about budget cuts. So, if we cut these positions and this funding, and bring more things in-house underneath say, a centralized H.R. or I.T. system, we'll be able to actually reap the benefits. Of course, that's not the way it's necessarily played out but at least that's the messaging that's around it.

Alignment did not rest solely at an institutional level across interviews, however. Stakeholders within different units and centers described their own work as requiring

alignment, revealing alignment throughout hierarchical layers. Respondents cited less positions of directing and instructing community engagement activity, and instead emphasized that collaboration occurred where natural alignment was present. One stakeholder described this from the perspective of student engaged learning:

It's actually an interesting question, because I don't necessarily think of it as we sit down, and we identify a common goal. It's more we see if our goals match up with their (community partner) goals. ...It's more complicated than this, but primarily our focus is on the student experience. So, what kind of experience can our students have in the community? And then we look for where that matches up with what experiences our organization's bringing to the table, where...we see that matching up with the kind of experience that we want students to have.

Another stakeholder in a different area of the university echoed the position of looking for alignment among collaborators:

They have an idea for a project and they fill out our affiliation form, then they meet with our director's team, and using the data that they submitted through the form we figure out more or less what the project is, who their partners are, where the funding is coming from, some of the goals of the project, and talk about whether or not there is a match between what they're trying to do and the way we do our work here. At that point, we either decide to affiliate or not to affiliate. And it's not a judgment necessarily on their project, but certain things fit here, and certain things don't.

The respondent went on to note that, "There are definite goals. So, the three areas that our center has agreed to the community to work towards is health and wellness, education

and... learning, and community and economic development. And so everything that our center does has to align to those things. And if it doesn't then it doesn't belong at our center, pretty much.” In large part the center is focused on these goals because they were co-created with the local community and the unit made a commitment to continuously listen to, value, and adhere to community counsel. This unit in particular would not create new estimations of alignment without an involved series of conversations with the community over time.

The role of a place-based center at Institution C. All respondents cited the benefit to having decentralized units that were closer, or more connected, to community partners. Four stakeholders went on to highlight the unique contribution that place-based centers within Institution C served in community engagement work. With the university’s large size, decentralized nature, large geographic spread, and emphasis on research and scholarship, respondents illustrated a set of conditions in which the misstep with the community earlier in the chapter was able to occur. University stakeholders were unaware the introduction of new research on children’s health would be received so poorly because “they neglected to do any kind of engagement both internally or externally”. After much reflection and listening that took place within that area of the local community following the initial incident, a place-based center was introduced to “build thriving, innovative, and respectful collaborations, create new models of urban and community development, and strengthen the university as a vitally engaged 21st-century university serving the public good”.

With the launch of this center, Institution C made a concerted effort, through funding, time, and staff, to create a space for dialogue and engagement activity that is

“co-created areas of interest and intersection”. As one stakeholder connected to the center described, “So many of our staff, and even faculty, have an outsider mentality. I mean, it really feels like a small nonprofit that we’re running here in many ways, only with the backing and the support of Institution C. Which has been fantastic, it’s allowed us to do some really interesting things.”

Stakeholders connected to the center indicated that it took a great deal of time and effort to articulate the nature of their work and presence to both university and community stakeholders. “It took a lot of work to really make people understand that no, engagement is a valid form of research and it's part and parcel to a lot of community engaged work, and just because it looks different than bench science that doesn't make it any less legitimate.” Part of the challenge cited was in describing how the center *is* different in certain respects. A stakeholder describes the difference:

A lot of the impact has been looked at just in raw data, and counting numbers, which certainly are valuable, but at the same time I think when you talk about engagement that's only such a small section of what we do and that the real benefit, the real impact is really in that messy gray space where relationships exist and being in that interdisciplinary space where you are the convener, where you hold the space to hopefully make it safe for those to come in and contribute.

The convening role was emphasized by those who discussed the center. Allowing different community residents, scholars, artists, and students join in conversation and discuss the needs of the local geographic area was described as a core component of their work. The center is also a place to think critically about how community engagement work is conducted: “We're not a direct service, we're not a community of practice. We

know that people would be doing their work with or without us. But it doesn't mean that our center doesn't have an impact on the way you're doing your work, or what kind of work you're doing, or how you're thinking through your work. What does that look like?"

A key component of the nature of the work and the rebuilding of trust the center intends to do relies on transparency and openness. One stakeholder describes the unique characteristic of the center to pursue the acknowledgement of failures. This was also described as being willing to stand in front of the community and "take your lumps":

So sometimes it's standing in front of a community council for a neighborhood and taking your lumps as a university employee and explaining what worked and what didn't. Sometimes it's facing those really awkward questions when someone has come in to an event and they've heard what you had to say, and they call you out on it. And they say, 'Is that really what happened? Or where's the data to back that up? Or, did you think of this consequence to your actions? And those are really difficult conversations to have.

Respondents described this as not being institutionally intuitive. They related a tendency at Institution C to put their best foot forward, which the center is intended to counter whenever necessary.

I think one of the key things is admitting when we're wrong. And that's one of the things that the university I think really pushed back hard on us initially, around, where you can't say that this project didn't meet all of your outcomes. That's going to play poorly. And I'm like well that's not authentic or being transparent and it's certainly not helping us build relationships and trust. So, I think our executive director...did an amazing job giving us all permission to start earning trust again

by being honest with our community partners and talking about things that haven't worked and really trying to ask them for their input on, well, this process didn't work...And I think that's been really key to how we've grown.

Stakeholders indicated that centers with this type of mission and ways of being could help the larger organization maintain a greater sense of responsiveness to the communities with which they work.

Land-grant *and* urban. Institution C also contends with dual identities in its particular location. In a very large, urban area, the institution is an urban-serving, metropolitan university, yet it is also the largest in a collective of five campuses identified as the state's land-grant institution. Stakeholders suggested that the history as a land-grant institution still resonates with the state legislature and is a driving component to the university's mission. Yet, as one stakeholder mentioned, "When you think about so many of the larger state institutions, aren't necessarily located in an urban core and that really changes the discussion I think quite a bit." Another stakeholder described the unique position of Institution C to generate pioneering research on urban farming by utilizing the expertise and extensive network of its other campuses throughout the state. The respondents that reflected on this positionality seemed to indicate that the potential for Institution C to do more innovation was significant given its dual identities. Yet, as one stakeholder noted, their land-grant status has at times taken precedence in terms of a central institutional identity:

We were talking about anchor institutions within the urban cores across the nation...and the fact that they could state in their mission statement basically that they were urban serving, like that was something that they could put out there.

You take a look at Institution C and that's not something that we can say because it has to represent the entire state...and...are you really as a land grant institution focusing more on say the urban core as opposed to the rural communities or vice versa? So, it makes it a real challenge. And how do you talk about that? How do you talk about an urban mission when you've got a lot of external pressure saying well, why should you even have an urban mission?

This challenge feeds back in to the alignment strategy prevalent throughout Institution C. As the focus on urban innovation comes into conflict with the state-wide mission, the university must confront how individual units, the central coordinating office for community engagement, as well as the institution as a whole will address that tension. Institution C may be uniquely qualified to tackle the question.

Summary

Institution C is the largest campus in its state and located in the largest city within the state. Though one of many postsecondary institutions within the city, Institution C was described as often getting labeled the “big bully on the block” due to its size and presence throughout the regional area and the state. The university has worked to institutionalize community engagement, initiating structures, policies, procedures, and programs to align activity and create a community of support. Over the last ten years, Institution C has utilized its central coordinating office to spearhead this work. As respondents attempted to define community engagement activity, local community, and impact within their institutional context, responses were similar in terminology used and in characterization. Community engagement activity is considered any external work that cuts across the pillars of teaching, research, and serve or outreach. There is no clear

definition for local community nor for impact, though rationale was provided for why no one definition felt appropriate in Institution C's context.

Institutional processes to determine impact locally were based on assessment at the unit-level. Each of over 200 units across the university were responsible for both identifying data most pertinent to their purpose as well as the mechanisms for collecting and using such data. Data are reported up through the central coordinating office as needed for external purposes such as presenting to the Board of Regents or for submitting information to accrediting bodies and the Carnegie Classification. The central coordinating office went through institutional committees and taskforces to develop a revised strategy for data collection moving forward, which is now being implemented. This strategy relies on the utilization of data collection systems already in use, such as the annual faculty activity report and the online portal to submit research proposals. Community representation is largely absent from these institutional processes.

Themes centered on centralizing processes within a decentralized university system. Institution C has implemented extensive strategies to centralize support for community engagement and a community of practice, employing a focus on internal processes and practice. Respondents indicated that these strategies are innovative, important, and useful, but may have come at the expense of limiting community representation, which could carry negative consequences if it does not evolve into some form of greater inclusion. As both a land-grant and urban university, Institution C has a unique tension in its prioritization of mission(s). It also has an opportunity to develop a community engagement strategy that exploits its size, geographical presence, and human capital to transform research and practice for public benefit.

CHAPTER VII
CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Institutions A, B, and C present a rich set of cases to explore institutional processes guiding community engagement and its assessment. The use of systematic, non-probabilistic sampling to generate as targeted a set of cases as possible resulted in the three universities sharing many unifying characteristics. They also differ in telling ways given their cultural, physical, social, political, economic, and institutional contexts. By examining findings across elements of the central research question (i.e. *What is the process by which an urban, metropolitan institution determines the impact its community engagement activity has within the local community?*), much can be learned regarding institutional assessment processes. This chapter will discuss findings first across institutional contexts, followed by a comparison of the primary institutional processes each university employs to determine impact locally. The chapter concludes with a cross-case theme analysis of select major and supporting themes.

Cross-Case Comparison of Institutional Contexts

Each case is embedded within its unique institutional context, yet similarities among the institutions were prominent. Across cases, universities shared institutional identities tied to being large, public, urban, and research-driven. Each university also exhibits leadership in advancing community engagement and subsequent

institutionalization through research and practice. Cases shared a decentralized, faculty-driven environment that influenced community engaged scholarship, as well as the identification, tracking, and reporting of ongoing engagement activity. Institutions also exhibited differences given varying contextual factors, such as differences in size, budgets, student populations, and characterizations of the university's relationship with its local community. To facilitate a cross-case comparison of some of these similarities and differences, a table of select institutional characteristics was created (see Table 11).

Table 11

Cross-Case Comparison of Select Institutional Characteristics

Institutional Characteristic	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C
CUMU Member	Yes	Yes	Yes
Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement	Yes	Yes	Yes
Carnegie Classification	Doctoral University: Highest Research Activity	Doctoral University: Higher Research Activity	Doctoral University: Highest Research Activity
Student Population	~22,000	~30,000	~52,000
Number of Faculty	~1,800	~2,800	~6,500
Percent of Student Population Undergraduate	73%	73%	68%
Percent of Student Population 24 Years or Younger	82%	77%	90%
Percent of Student Population from In-State	82%	92%	64%
Admission Rate	73%	74%	44%
Overall Graduation Rate	53%	46%	78%
Number of Schools and/or Colleges	12	18	19
Number of Academic Programs	200+	350	350+
Percent of Students Living on Campus in the First Year	72%	40%	88%
Percent of Budget from State Appropriation	10%	17%	17%

Note. Data are derived from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), retrieved in February 2018, as well as the university websites for Institutions A, B, and C. The Coalition for Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU).

In addition to these institutional characteristics, similarities and differences across cultural, physical, social, political, economic, and institutional contexts were observed. Community characteristics shared many features. The counties housing Institutions A, B, and C were generally more diverse with higher levels of educational attainment than the states in which they are located. The counties all have mayors affiliated with the Democratic Party, yet leadership at the state-wide level varied. Approximately 10% of Institution A's budget comes directly from state appropriation, while that number is higher at 17% for Institutions B and C. Economic indicators were also generally better within each county than its state, including higher median household incomes and slightly lower rates of individuals with an income below the poverty level in a given year.

The universities also share a mixed history with the communities in which they are located. Respondents across all institutions conveyed different stories of how their university participated in the historical positivist, exclusionary stance Fisher et al. (2004) characterized as “an ivory tower removed from local parochialism” (p. 17). Scholars describe this historical shift from more removed, protected knowledge-generating activities to more integrated, co-created activities as picking up momentum in the late 20th century (Sandmann, 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Institutions A, B, and C all share in this national history, as respondents recounted their communities lacking trust and harboring longstanding frustration with the universities for coming in, conducting research, and leaving without sustained or reciprocal benefit to the community. To address such issues, each university has renewed its commitment to deepen and broaden

community engagement and has employed different strategies in their own context. Institution A launched its now 10-year old initiative in the proximate community, expanding university investment and activity in the area. Institution B created an office focused on local neighborhoods and hired four university staff members to serve as liaisons working side-by-side with the local community. Institution C has hired 75-80 liaisons whose chief role is university-community relationship-building, as well as creating place-based centers intended to repair and rebuild community trust and deepen relationships in the surrounding area.

Differences across institutional contexts were also observed. Respondents described the built environment and their university's presence in the area differently. Institution A was cited as not being "in" the proximate community, but nearby, and stakeholders described having to travel over to the area, indicating both physical and perceived space between the university and community. Respondents at Institution A also mentioned growing efforts to place offices and initiatives within the community to deepen their shared stewardship of the area. Institution B was described as having an almost "seamless" integration with the built environment, allowing students to feel more at home and embedded in the city. Having been founded in the latter half of the 20th century, government and community collaborators had the opportunity to be more proactive than reactive in city planning and even adjusted traffic patterns to accommodate university foot traffic. Institution C was described as permeating the entire state. Within the metropolitan area of focus in this case, Institution C was cited as often being labeled the "big bully on the block." Respondents at the university indicated this allows for a

high degree of activity within the community, though it also limits the institution's real-time knowledge of what activity is occurring and how it is being conducted.

Another factor respondents cited that influences perception of a university is the presence of other postsecondary options within the community. Both Institutions A and C are "one of many" postsecondary options in their cities. Respondents identified as being one of many, but the largest institution, which stakeholders felt compels additional responsibility. Institution B is one of very few options, which was often linked in conversation to their unique and integral role in community health and vitality. Stakeholders described a strong connection between city and university leadership dating back to Institution B's founding, which still influences their collaborative potential today.

Cross-Case Comparison of Institutional Processes to Determine Impact

Turning from elements of context to the specific processes institutions employ to determine impact, similarities across cases are evident, yet the differences are notable. To explore the primary processes each university currently uses across cases, content-analytic summary tables (Miles et al. 2014) have been created to examine select process components within each researcher-identified process element. These include defining (see Table 12), identification, tracking, and reporting (see Table 13), using data (see Table 14), and relational aspects of process (see Table 15). These are discussed next.

Defining

Defining terms was a challenge for respondents from all institutions. Stakeholders noted how broad or multifaceted community engagement activity, local community, and impact are, and tended to describe how each term *could* be interpreted rather than *how* it was interpreted at their university. Institution C had more consistent

responses from university stakeholders than Institutions A and B regarding definitional language. Across institutions, however, respondents shared many common characterizations of the three terms.

Table 12

Cross-Case Comparison of Select Institutional Processes: Defining

Process Component	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C
Community engagement activity	<p>“Any work with an external partner”</p> <p>Carnegie definition</p> <p>Any reciprocal, mutually beneficial work</p> <p>Not community service</p>	<p>“Mutually beneficial, reciprocal activities that address community identified needs.”</p> <p>Use CE terminology to shift to an umbrella definition</p>	<p>One definition exists, but 38+ proxy terms & interpretations are also in use</p> <p>For, in, or with spectrum</p> <p>Work that cuts across the three pillars</p>
Local community	<p>“It depends on where you are and what the focus is at the moment. It changes.”</p> <p>Geographic spheres</p> <p>Populations</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Networks</p> <p>Shared experiences</p> <p>Shared identities</p> <p>Urban area(s)</p>	<p>“Anyone external to the campus, period.”</p> <p>“It would depend on who you ask.”</p> <p>Population</p> <p>Neighborhood</p> <p>Geographic spheres</p> <p>Counties from which students come</p> <p>Urban core</p>	<p>“There’s no straightforward answer.”</p> <p>“Anything external to the university,” including:</p> <p>Business, industry</p> <p>Governmental agencies</p> <p>Neighborhoods</p> <p>Issue communities</p> <p>Discipline-specific communities</p> <p>Affinity groups and sectors</p> <p>Populations</p> <p>University community</p> <p>Staff and/or faculty community</p> <p>Student community</p> <p>The state</p> <p>At place-based units, geography matters and is more specific</p>
Impact	<p>“That’s a good question.”</p>	<p>“Yeeesh.”</p>	<p>No “good” definition.</p>

Assessed at the project-level	Impact is program evaluation (therefore very narrow, specific)	Not necessarily feasible
Everyone benefitting	Intentionally not defined	Stock language
Observed difference	Varies by department, approach, and relationship(s)	An ideal to which one can orient their work
Realized impact	Ranges from providing a service to changing community-level indicators	
Perceived impact	Any good in the community through intentional effort	

Note. Community engagement is listed as “CE” above.

Community engagement activity was defined broadly, which individuals at each institution noted was intentional. Respondents highlighted that these activities involve reciprocal, mutually beneficial practice, as well as practice that connects research, teaching, and service to work outside of the university. Each institution has a definition for community engagement available, but respondents at Institutions A and B provided eight and seven different characterizations, respectively. Respondents at Institution C shared responses that fell into two primary characterizations; these stakeholders defined community engagement activity as either work on the spectrum of for, with, or in communities or as work with the community that cuts across the three pillars of research, teaching and outreach.

Local community was defined differently across all respondents. Some stakeholders chose to focus on a particular facet of community, including geographic spheres (i.e. city, county, or state), populations, or relationship networks. Other stakeholders described these different facets, noting the complexity within the term and suggesting that they are all “local community” and therefore would all be included in a

single definition. Respondents at Institution C provided the most consistent characterizations, wherein stakeholders began by noting local community is “anything external to the university” and then described different groupings within that overarching term. One stakeholder at Institution B noted that their definition shifted to “anyone external to the campus” in large part to ensure that all faculty work with the community was considered valid and worth reporting. Respondents at Institution A emphasized the proximate community as a key piece of the university’s strategy to engage locally but suggested any overarching definition would include other geographical areas. Across cases, the most common phrasing was “it depends” or “it changes” in accordance with the nature of the individual activity.

Impact was not defined or consistently characterized at any institution. The term was deemed most appropriate to discuss with any real merit at the project- or program-level, and no institutional definition, goals, or direction was predetermined. Some stakeholders at Institution A indicated that impact was an observed difference being made, which varies by type and strength. Stakeholders at Institution B offered similar conceptualizations, suggesting impact could be any good happening in the community through intentional effort. “Any good” implied a wide range of both small and large difference making, but responses were not tied to Stoecker et al.’s (2010) model capturing system-level impact. A stakeholder at Institution C described impact as an ideal, suggesting community engagement activities are oriented toward system-level impacts, but are not structurally designed, linked, and tracked to ensure movement toward those impacts. All 20 respondents began their answer to how Institution A, B, or

C defined impact with some pause, stutter, or perplexed introduction (e.g. “Yeesh” and “That’s a good question”).

Identifying, Tracking, and Reporting

The institution-wide identification, tracking, and reporting of community engagement activity was cited as a key challenge by all respondents in a university’s capacity to determine impact. Stakeholders noted the difficulty in obtaining “good data” and comprehensive data. Because community engagement is initiated at the individual-level, faculty, staff, and students are responsible for communicating their own activities, which respondents noted they may or may not communicate. In addition, these activities span such a broad spectrum of purpose, type, and degree of involvement that individuals may disclose activities through different organizational channels depending on how they are structured or perceived. Institutions A, B, and C tackle these challenges through different processes, though the institutions share many strategies.

Table 13

Cross-Case Comparison of Select Institutional Processes: Identifying, Tracking, Reporting

Process Component	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C
Primary identification strategy	Annual electronic survey	Utilization of data collection systems already in place	Utilization of data collection systems already in place
Primary tracking strategy	Annual electronic survey and liaison information updates	Online data tool	Directory of community-engaged scholars
Primary reporting strategy	Annual CE report	Individualized reports across 18 schools	Individualized unit reporting, shared as needed
Structural link between	Unit liaisons	Unit liaisons and scheduled meetings at least twice per year	University engagement network

Note. Community engagement is listed as “CE” above.

Institution A distributes an annual electronic survey to attempt to gather as much information as possible regarding community engagement activity. University stakeholders at Institutions B and C, however, described this strategy as both limited in its ability to obtain comprehensive data, as well as burdensome as an added reporting request. Stakeholders at Institution A acknowledged these limitations, though the survey has also allowed the central coordinating office to have a consistent set of data each year, as well as a central repository to direct all information to. The office staff and each school liaison have a clear link to share with faculty and staff as they work with them to promote reporting. That link, however, is often ignored or individuals assume they have already provided information. The central coordinating office is relying on building relationships with community engaged faculty and staff, as well as their liaisons, to increase participation. Institution A also has the ability to designate classes as community-based learning courses.

Institutions B and C decided to forego the use of a survey request for information and instead utilize data collection systems already in place. The universities added questions to their faculty surveys/activity reports, their Institutional Review Board application process, course designations, and in the paperwork for graduate students as they submit a thesis or dissertation. Information from these systems are collected and analyzed by the central coordinating office. At Institution B, the central coordinating office is working with individual schools to provide customized reports that help each school fulfill its current needs (e.g. accreditation report or marketing). Institution B also

launched the new online data tool to more meaningfully convey engagement work and demonstrate its relevance to the community. At Institution C, individual units decide what information they need, how they will collect it, and how it will be disseminated, which the central coordinating office may request and use as needed.

Stakeholders across all institutions described the use of liaisons in helping to identify, track, and report community engagement activity. At Institution A, the school or department selects a liaison. University stakeholders described liaisons as having a range of knowledge and familiarity with community engagement as a result. Subsequently, the amount of time they may spend communicating with the central coordinating office also varies. At Institution B, liaisons meet with central coordinating office staff at least twice each year. In these meetings, office staff and liaisons discuss activity occurring within the school as well as strategize on upcoming reports or other needs in which community engagement data can be useful. At Institution C, there are more structured opportunities for internal communication. The university engagement network brings together representatives from units to discuss ongoing activity and strategies to institutionalize community engagement across the university. The focus of this and many other convening committees at Institution C is less about tracking specific activity. Instead, these groups utilize information from the unit levels to inform plans, policies, and approaches to support, broaden, and deepen community engagement activity institution-wide.

Using Data

Across institutions, respondents cited accrediting bodies, the Carnegie Classification, and grant and other funding as the primary entities necessitating the

collection of institution-wide data. Data are also used in support of each university's strategic agenda, for the President's Honor Roll designation, and in fundraising. Data are also increasingly used to position community engagement as a core institutional practice. Across all institutions, university stakeholders described the desire to build a community of engaged scholars and promote engagement work through institutional practice and policy. In order to do so, community engagement champions at each university are working to demonstrate the value, utility, and relevance of engagement. This manifests in a variety of ways.

Table 14

Cross-Case Comparison of Select Institutional Processes: Using Data

Process Component	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C
Primary use of data	Pertinent information to select entities; annual report	Tailored, pragmatic reports to deans and units aligned with annual university reporting guidelines	Documenting "worth and viability" as an institution and within units
Top entities cited as necessitating institution-wide data	Accreditation Carnegie Classification Grant & other funding Honor Roll Quality Enhancement Plan	Accreditation Carnegie Classification Grant & other funding Annual report to the community	Board of Regents Accreditation Carnegie Classification Grant & other funding Honor Roll Fundraising
Primary strategy to embed engagement	CE plans	Align CE practice and assessment with individual unit priorities for success	Create a community of support for CE and engaged scholars
Data use over time	Take stock of calendar year's events	Tracked within the online data tool	May be done at the unit level

Note. Community engagement is listed as "CE" above.

In order to embed community engagement at each university, institutions employ different primary strategies. Institution A emphasized their community engagement

plans, which ask each department to put together a vision for community engagement for the year ahead and how they will realize that vision. This facilitates conversations around what activity makes sense for that unit and what is needed to continue expanding the work. Institution B works to embed engagement by aligning community engagement activity with the priorities of individual units and their deans. Institution C is focused on creating a community of support for engaged scholars and those working with different communities. Respondents indicated that cultivating a strong internal core at Institution C will make it easier for individuals to pursue engagement work, leading to more activity and ultimately increased mutual benefit. Stakeholders across institutions discussed using data as a strategy to convey community engagement's value, yet it was emphasized at Institution B.

At Institution B, stakeholders described community engagement as “a strategy through which we achieve our mission and goals”. Staff in the central coordinating office work to position community engagement as a strategy rather than as a set of practices that faculty need to be convinced to try. They are working to transform engagement into an individual and institutional advantage. Because community engagement, and engaged scholarship in particular, have not traditionally been viewed as favorably in promotion and tenure (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006), staff are working to change the conversation around community engagement. Stakeholders contended that community engagement data should be helping individual units recruit students and acquire funding, instill pride in association with the university, as well as help deepen student learning and development and better prepare them for the workforce. The data

tool Institution B now uses is intended to help communicate the meaningfulness and relevance of the range of community engagement activities.

Institutions A and C emphasized different priorities for data usage. Institution A prepares an annual report on community engagement in order to share around the university and on their website. Stakeholders noted internal and external entities that require or request select information, which the annual data collection and reporting effort is intended to source. Stakeholders at Institution C cited more frequently the need to document and convey “worth and viability” internally and externally. The Board of Regents was consistently mentioned as an important external entity interested in data regarding the university’s activities.

Stakeholders across institutions were reluctant to suggest that data were used over time, particularly in tracking common goals with the community. Data are used more often as annual snapshots and/or in comparison to prior year’s numbers. Respondents from Institution A did describe the intention of using data from the initiative in the proximate community to observe changes over time. Data are not conclusive in terms of what changes Institution A is or is not responsible for, yet both university and community stakeholders noted the university observes trends in community engagement activity and in select indicators of interest in the community. Institution B is planning to use the online data tool to look at projects and programs over time, though activities are not coordinated toward specific impact goals. Respondents from Institution C noted that data might be used over time in certain units, or on certain projects or programs, but not at the university-wide level. No institution is currently using data to track shared goals with its community through an intentional effort.

Relational Aspects of Process

Within Institution A, B, and C, the central coordinating office plays an integral role in promoting, supporting, and assessing community engagement activity. The office was commended by stakeholders at every institution for the difference it makes in deepening and broadening the scope of community engagement. At Institution A, the primary mechanisms for internal coordination include the office, the unit liaisons, and a steering committee that meets multiple times throughout the year to advance institutionalization. Respondents at Institution B cited the strategic relationship building among the central coordinating office and individual units and their liaisons as a key component to internal coordination. Institution C had multiple mechanisms for internal coordination, including the central coordinating office, centralizing language and guidelines for engagement, as well as a 10-point strategic plan for engagement aligned with the university's strategic plan. Institution C also has an engagement council, an engagement network, a series of task forces, and a network of liaisons hired by Institution C to work with community partners.

Table 15

Cross-Case Comparison of Select Institutional Processes: Relational Aspects

Process Component	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C
Primary mechanism(s) for internal coordination	CCO, unit liaisons, CE steering committee	Relationship between CCO assessment staff and unit liaisons; strategic relationship-building	CCO Centralizing language from CCO Set of guidelines 10-point CE strategic plan CE council CE network Series of Task Forces Liaison network

Primary mechanism(s) for external coordination	A resident advisory council and university-community partnership board	Determined at the project- or program-level	75-80 staff members serving as liaisons
Community representatives involved in CE assessment	Not directly	No examples cited	No examples cited
Board(s) or committee(s) to bring university and community together	Two	None currently	Internally, yes; with community representation, no

Note. Community engagement is listed as “CE” above. The central coordinating office for community engagement at each institution is listed as “CCO”.

Across stakeholders and institutions, coordination externally was deemed more difficult. Institution A set up a resident advisory council to solicit feedback directly from residents within the proximate community, as well as a university and community partnership board to bring together university and city leaders to discuss community engagement initiatives. These were described by respondents as being important and useful, but less so in terms of ensuring accountability for progress toward community impact. Stakeholders at Institution B suggested coordination with community partners occurs primarily at the project- or program-level. Some projects will therefore work in a very integrated fashion with the community, while others will not.

At Institution C, respondents described the 75-80 liaison staff as playing a key role in linking community to the work of the university. Liaisons also meet with one another throughout the year to discuss ongoing work, which then informs other internal stakeholders. No community members at any university are directly involved in the assessment of community engagement at the institutional-level. At Institution A, however, the resident advisory council and university and community partnership board

have an avenue to provide feedback indirectly. These two groups at Institution A exhibit structure in bringing university and community together. No such groups were cited at Institution B as being currently convened. At least eight groups were cited at institution C, though none include direct community representation.

Summary of Institutional Processes to Determine Impact

Across institutions, respondents cited processes of assessment as integrally linked to processes of practice. Assessment was oriented more toward deepening, broadening, and strengthening practice than ensuring movement toward specific outcome or impact goals. By improving practice, respondents indicated more meaningful assessment could be conducted. As this develops, respondents cited challenges throughout process components, which correspond to challenges identified throughout the literature base. This includes defining terms, which is difficult because practice is so individualized and varied. Identification, tracking, and reporting are difficult because definitions are not always clear, interpretations differ, and engaged practice is growing but not widespread or commonly understood. Using data is difficult because the data is not comprehensive, leading to more anecdotal usage or communication of impact exclusively at the project- or program-level. Attending to the relational aspects of process can be difficult because of organizational hurdles, such as unit silos and faculty autonomy, as well as differences in perspectives, incentives, needs, and logistics. Taken together, data indicate that institutional processes are not yet able to determine impact at the university-wide level.

Each university is confronting these challenges through different institutional strategies. Institution A has made a university-wide commitment to its local, proximate community, supported by the institution's strategic agenda. It created two committees to

support the initiative and is working to increase engagement activities being conducted and tracked in the area. Institution B has restructured its central coordinating office and staff to facilitate a more strategic, relationship-based employment of community engagement to fulfill the mission of each of its 18 schools. The university is looking to transform the way community engagement activity is communicated and understood through the use of a new online data tool. The tool tracks more information than has ever been gathered before on activities and may help faculty and staff convey their work in more meaningful ways.

Institution C is institutionalizing community engagement across a very large university, guided by policies, guidelines, structures, and supports that facilitate the work. Data are more localized within units, but university-wide supports are being refined to grow the community of practice. Direct community representation is low throughout all process components at the university-wide level, yet Institution C is a leading example of institutionalizing community engagement. Across cases, there was no consensus among participants regarding how processes might be coordinated, nor how an institution might best focus engagement work toward common goals with the community. The preceding cross-case comparison of processes is not exhaustive. It is intended to represent the primary strategies and procedures at each institution as recounted by their stakeholders to explore similarities and differences. Greater detail regarding each case is found in Chapters Four, Five, and Six.

Cross-Case Theme Analysis

The following section explores major and supporting themes across cases. In examining the emergent themes within and across each case, three prominent areas, or

theoretical codes, surfaced. These include centralization in decentralized institutions, the capacity to determine impact, as well as what institutions should be holding themselves accountable to. They are discussed next.

Centralization in Decentralized Institutions

Across stakeholders at all universities, the institutional environment was described as decentralized. In such an environment, faculty work is largely autonomous, individually driven, and specialized. Even as faculty pursue engaged scholarship, the nature of the partnership, the specific goals of collaboration, and the resulting outcomes are structured at the project- or program-level at all institutions. The ability of a university to direct or coordinate faculty work is described as very limited. As a result, the capacity of the institution to mobilize around different issue areas is limited by its organizational structure and culture.

Cited mobilization challenges at Institution A included funding, transitions and turnover, and a shifting landscape of priorities within the institution and the community. At Institution B, respondents noted the frustrations of bureaucracy, the differences in mission across schools, and the differences in school organizational structure given differences in mission and practice. At Institution C, respondents recounted that even when funding was put toward interdisciplinary teams within a concentrated geographical area, they did not coordinate well. Not only did faculty vary in disciplines of interest, the research areas of interest were even more targeted and narrow. As a result, the convening of different actors was described as being of modest interest.

Respondents described more pertinent centralizing processes in the areas of reporting and support. In terms of reporting, stakeholders at each institution mentioned

some central repository for activity. How information for that repository would be obtained and how it would be used differed slightly, although the concept of collecting some elements of data systematically over time is a goal shared by all institutions. For example, Institution A is focusing on gathering information regarding its initiative in the proximate community. Stakeholders there are working to refine the electronic survey process and continue to build relationships across units in order to see increased reporting. At Institution C, the current emphasis is on the identification of a handful of four to six metrics that can be collected in individual units and aggregated on a shared timeline. Though universities are averse to organizing and coordinating activities within their units on the front end, respondents at all universities did feel the institution should have processes in place to collect and use information during or following activities.

In terms of support, each of these institutions is cultivating a community of scholars and staff that champion community engagement. Students, staff, and faculty are all encouraged, and in many cases trained, to participate in mutually beneficial activities within the community. The centralizing capacity in this approach is focused on institutional processes over institutional outcome measures. At Institution A, stakeholders hope to focus community engagement work within the proximate community while simultaneously cultivating activity in other geographic spheres. At Institution B, stakeholders hope to demonstrate how community engagement can play an integral role in the mission and vitality of every unit. In doing so, the central coordinating office can help facilitate increased levels of activity and mutually beneficial practice. As these activities are included in the online data tool, an institutional narrative will build. At Institution C, stakeholders hope to generate a multitude of internal

processes, policies, guidelines, and structures that support community engagement activity. The language and policies are centralized at the university, so stakeholders from any role or discipline can access a shared institution-wide structure for practice.

Capacity to Determine Impact

Findings across cases indicate that the capacity for a university to determine the impact its community engagement activity has in the local community at an institution-wide level is low. Respondents at each institution noted the challenges in identifying and tracking all activity that may be occurring, particularly over time. Without intensive tracking, including corresponding staff and appropriate funding, respondents indicated that each institution would continue to retain incomplete data. Lacking such data, institutions are unable to determine contributions toward community development goals. University stakeholders described refinements to identification and tracking strategies that will produce increasingly better information regarding outputs, and ultimately outcomes toward impact. Stakeholders described this as an imperfect science, however, noting limitations in current data collection procedures concerning both the amount of activity and the details of activity outcomes.

Though this challenge is shared, Institution A, B, and C approach it differently. Stakeholders at Institution A focused primarily on improving data collection procedures in order to better identify and track activity. This follows Janke and Medlin's (2015) directive to create a system that only requires a single "ask" in a given year. Alongside this focus, staff in the central coordinating office are working across campus to increase the amount of activity occurring in the proximate community and in general. There is an assumption that greater levels of activity will engender better outcomes. Respondents

emphasized limited staff and funding to effectively execute these strategies. In Case One, university and community stakeholder responses fell into three main categories regarding capacity. These include assessment the institution cannot do, assessment it could do but does not have funding and support for, and assessment it can reasonably do in the current environment. Most respondents indicated that institutional capacity for determining impact fell within either something the university could do but does not have funding and support for, or as something the university cannot do.

At Institution B, the focus was less on the need for better resourcing and more on the need to better convey the role community engagement can play in achieving the university's mission(s). Respondents focused on making a case for engagement as a strategy to enhance the needs within each unit as well as their bottom line, while simultaneously deepening student learning, development, and preparedness for the workforce. As activity increases within and across units, by capturing them in the online data tool Institution B can demonstrate more meaningful contributions being made within projects, programs, and courses. Activities are not coordinated by the university but can be tracked by issue area within the tool, thereby displaying all available data on a community development issue of interest. The tool must be populated appropriately in order to realize this capacity.

University stakeholders at Institution C described capacity in terms of internal accountability rather than external accountability. Stakeholders cited challenges in coordinating toward community development goals and tracking any such effort across a large institution. Instead, stakeholders focused on Institution C's policies, guidelines, committees, taskforces, and central coordinating office as a series of directives, actions,

and entities that can be more aptly evaluated and managed. By tracking internal efforts to support and promote community engagement, the growing community of scholars will be able to utilize the internal network to further advance and embed the work. Respondents anticipate that this will ultimately fuel quality partnerships with communities, leading to mutual benefit.

The Aims of Accountability

Where institutional accountability should be directed, or the aims of accountability, was the third theme to emerge across cases. Throughout interviews across stakeholders and institutions, respondents articulated elements their university had some control over and those it did not. Respondents described their institution as having less control over processes leading to community development outcomes and more control over processes leading to internal actions and structures to support engagement. Most respondents did not go so far as to say they were not accountable to community outcomes. Yet, both sets of stakeholders described those outcomes as beyond the current capacity of the institution, and perhaps not a university's direct responsibility. The terminology "processes to determine impact in the local community" may therefore not be the phrase stakeholders would choose in a question targeting current accountability measures. There are three areas of accountability to consider.

The first area of accountability is impact within the local community, as the research question was posed. As institutions are increasingly expected to exhibit a "culture of evidence" for actions in the local community (Getto & McCunney, 2015), accountability for the difference being made, good or bad, is critical (Rosing, 2015). As respondents described this form of accountability, it was most often linked to program

evaluation or similar assessments. This is done at the project- or program-level, and is difficult to collect, track, and aggregate. Respondents described a range of assessments being done within different community engagement activities yet contended that a central coordinating office would not be the point of oversight on *how* engagement occurs and the outcomes it produces over time. These offices can help train and teach meaningful practice as well as strong assessment, but there is not a capacity at any of three institutions to oversee collective movement toward impact in the local community through the process of measuring activity, to outputs, to outcomes and ultimately impact. Some respondents at each institution suggested accountability on outcomes was possible but would require higher levels of coordination and administration.

The second area of accountability is to influence internal actions. Instead of impact on a community development goal (i.e. health equity), many respondents across cases identified impact as the continuous presence of individuals and activities working together in reciprocal, mutually beneficial ways. The presence of each institution within their city, and the proliferation of activity, was an end to itself. Respondents described the importance of the perception of the university as a good neighbor, the significance of university and community being seen by one another, and the value in generating goodwill, positive feelings, and trust. By ensuring high levels of activity in the community across departments and units, the university would be holding itself accountable to impact through action.

The third area of accountability is in internal structures to support community engagement. University stakeholders in particular stressed the need for systems of support, including policies, guidelines, common language, funding and resourcing,

training, and opportunities to both convene and collaborate. Processes of support extended to collecting data on community engagement. All respondents noted the importance of a central coordinating office capable of acquiring and using data well. If the office is smaller, similar to Institution A's office, university stakeholders there suggested it will be limited in its capacity to collect such data and may be considered value-added and ancillary. If it is slightly larger though still lean, as Institution B's office is, it can serve in a more targeted way to support units in what could be considered a consultative role. If it's larger still, as Institution C's office is, it can help infiltrate community engagement in more intentional ways. Respondents described the sharing of language, training, best practice, opportunities for research, and funding as primary ways the central coordinating staff provides that structure.

Stakeholders across institutions depicted their current assessment processes as intended to gather information to demonstrate ongoing activity within the university. These processes were described as fluid though becoming more robust, and largely voluntary but encouraged. The electronic survey distributed at Institution A is a prime example of a voluntary but encouraged process. Institution B and C also employ those strategies in some cases, but by embedding questions into data collection systems that are not voluntary, they are beginning to acquire more consistent and holistic information over time. All three institutions already utilize this through course attribution (i.e. faculty have their class designated a community-based learning course). By refining and communicating these guidelines, procedures, and opportunities, a university is holding itself accountable to impact through process management.

Processes to determine impact locally could be led by a university's accountability priorities in outcomes, actions, or processes, or some combination therein. Respondents indicated that their institution has more control over actions and structures. As activity increases through the management of these institutional processes, does it in turn lead to impact in the form of outcomes as well? The answer to this question is still unclear, requiring the inferential leap described in Chapter Two.

Summary

Institution A, B, and C share many institutional characteristics, process components and strategies, as well as themes within community engagement and its assessment. Each university shares a common history of prior missteps with the community that they are now working to repair and rebuild. The institutions share a leadership role in promoting community engagement across academe through this work. They are also all beholden to the organizational structure and culture of a large, decentralized postsecondary institution.

Each institution prioritizes different areas of community engagement assessment processes. Institution A is seeking more holistic, rich information by increasing participation in their electronic survey data collection process. Institution B is trying to leverage strategic partnerships with each unit to increase the relevance of community engagement, as well as how it can be communicated through the new online data tool. Institution C is utilizing its extensive internal networks and burgeoning community of practice to identify key indicators that can be collected and aggregated on a shared timeline. Across stakeholders and institutions, respondents emphasized the importance of relationships in navigating any process component.

The institutions are deliberating what centralizing processes they will employ within the decentralized environment. Respondents generally agreed that some data must be collected in a centralized place for institution-wide purposes, though how much data differed. Respondents questioned the capacity to know institution-wide impact, citing various limitations in process. As a result, respondents grappled with what assessment processes should be accountable to – outcomes, actions, structures, or some combination therein.

CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE
RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

A theoretical framework was developed to position this research toward exploring recurring assessment challenges with renewed perspective. The framework was informed by three limitations identified across the literature base. These include a focal point that has been too narrow, concentrated on individual projects and programs, a lack of community-centered research, and the need to more fully address higher education's institutional complexity. This final chapter will examine findings within the context of the theoretical framework to present conclusions from the collective case study. Recommendations for future research and practice are also discussed.

Conclusions within the Theoretical Framework

Demands for accountability across all areas of an institution, including community engagement, are likely to increase moving forward (Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010). In the current era of accountability and austerity (Getto & McCunney, 2015), creating an institutional narrative for engagement is an increasingly compelling strategy for central coordinating offices and other community and government relation offices (Weerts & Hudson, 2009). Engagement accountability is also critical due to an institution's responsibility to its local community (Fitzgerald et al., 2016). In these

conditions, institutional processes to determine impact serve a direct role in creating an authentic, accurate narrative. To explore these processes in the context of community impact, the framework driving this research incorporates two complementary yet distinct frameworks as a guide. Stoecker et al.'s (2010) Model of Higher Education Civic Engagement Impacts employs a community development framework to conceptualize community impact. This challenges scholars to broaden the focal point of research and reorient it within the community domain. McNall et al.'s (2015) framework for systemic engagement informs how organizational structures and campus culture influence institution-wide practice and assessment (Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Holton et al., 2015). McNall and colleagues' work helps in exploring decentralized, multifaceted institutions as the unit of analysis.

Narrow Focal Point

Research has focused on assessment of impact at the program or project level, rather than the institution's impact on community-level indicators (Driscoll, 2014; Rosing, 2015). Studies have identified outcomes associated with specific programs, courses, or projects, which do not convey impact beyond an individual, organization, or partnership to an institution- or community-wide level (Hart & Northmore, 2010). When respondents were asked about how their university determines institution-wide impact, those that addressed impact as outcomes suggested impact was known only up to the project- or program-level (i.e. "That is program evaluation"). Respondents also acknowledged that only some programs, courses, or projects had "good" data on community impact, which the university may or may not be aware of.

This raises the question of whether or not a university intends to identify and track “good” data from individual evaluation efforts. If an institution would rather not direct its programs, courses, or projects, it can still collect information after the fact. The institution can also link the collection of data to resourcing on the front end. Institutions can incentivize faculty to participate in certain types of activities (e.g. community-based participatory research), issue areas (e.g. high school to college and career transitions), or geographies (e.g. four zip codes near campus) through funding pools. Findings suggest these activities *could* be coordinated or concentrated, though only so far as they align with faculty autonomy. If the faculty at an institution are increasingly interested in transdisciplinary work, coordination is more likely. Respondents suggested the increase in interest regarding engagement comes from training current faculty or integrating the recruitment of engaged scholars into university-wide hiring practices. This suggests an institution is only ultimately able to obtain and link individual activities if a large portion of its faculty base is interested in community engagement and is supported by the university to pursue it. This has been substantiated in other literature. Fitzgerald et al. (2016) write: “Transdisciplinarity will not work without institutional support and encouragement, and authentic community partnerships will not work unless institutional policies and practices not only encourage engagement scholarship, but also include rigorous evaluative criteria as part of the reward process” (p. 248).

Findings also suggest the narrow focal point in research articles is appropriate. Literature currently reflects how individual programs, courses, and projects are conducted and what the outcomes for those activities are. As the assessment capability within individual activities deepens, the capacity to determine impact will only benefit.

Individual projects can also broaden the focal point of interest, such as Morton and Bergbauer's (2015) research that reorients critical service-learning to community through the use of space and reflection to better understand "the other". It is in the collection and tracking of these assessments across an institution that requires greater intentionality and corresponding research. Findings from each case indicate that research on individual programs, courses, and projects should continue to inform the literature base across community engagement (e.g. Peterson, 2018; Seider & Novick, 2012). Complementary research and commentary on the collection, tracking, and reporting of these activities, as well as the results of efforts to coordinate them across type, issue area, geography, or other grouping mechanisms, is needed now (e.g. Franz et al., 2012; Hart & Northmore, 2010; Holton et al., 2015; Janke & Medlin, 2015). The focal point should broaden by incorporating this newer, distinct area of research.

Orientation toward Community

Findings were mixed regarding the degree to which an institution could or should orient its work toward the community. Some community engagement scholars argue the orientation is not nearly focused enough on community representation and leadership in shaping community engagement at an institution (e.g. Rosing, 2015; Stoecker et al., 2010). Respondents in the study, however, provided different interpretations of that involvement. Institution A has created committees to intentionally gather community and university representatives on a regular basis to discuss ongoing work. Respondents at Institution C, however, suggested their university does not currently have such committees because the true representativeness of those individuals is limited. Community member involvement at the unit-level may create more precise or at least

discipline-specific representation, but for that involvement to inform institution-wide decision-making, those unit representatives may need to convene as a group. A representative for those representatives could then meet with university internal committees for community engagement. The time, effort, and coordination that would require of individuals is worth considering. Yet, without making some effort, institutions are susceptible to repeating academia's historical harm and neglect within communities. Institutions also open themselves up to missteps in research, outreach, and communications.

What then, is an appropriate orientation to the community? Findings suggest the community need only minimal control in institutional-level processes, including assessment, providing feedback and insight to ensure mutual benefit to institution and community. Within individual projects, however, community leadership and involvement should be much higher. Involvement will depend on many factors, including the nature and intent of an activity, but community participation in engagement should be increasing. This finding parallels calls for a greater democratic orientation, including democratization of knowledge and co-creation of reciprocal action (Fitzgerald et al., 2016; Saltmarsh et al., 2015). Community representation in assessment processes should also be stronger within individual activities. Findings further suggest that an institution would benefit from seeking community involvement in planning and interpretation of research initiatives that involve coordination or administrative oversight (i.e. occur beyond the individual program, course, or project level).

Orientation to the community extended to strategically integrating community development projects within the city to the institution's activities. The university

leadership should be working with government, business, nonprofit, and community leaders to identify opportunities to link the priorities of each to collaborative actions. Respondents across institutions emphasized the power of aligning community development initiatives across a city, which recent literature has also encouraged (Fear, 2015; Fitzgerald et al., 2016). Stakeholders suggested the university should be opening up and embedding its work as a critical asset to development efforts. It was also suggested that a positive perception of the university is needed in order to do so, as money and goodwill flow where feelings of trust and enthusiasm are high. This indicates that institutions should seek new and innovative ways to link research, teaching, and outreach to opportunities in the community and ensure a clear communication of those partnerships. Given the historical tendency to keep research objective and detached (Nelson, London, & Strobel, 2015; Peterson, 2009), findings from this study indicate community engagement can serve as a strategy for increased institutional relevance, productivity, and mission attainment.

Addressing Institutional Complexity

This leads to the question of how institutions should pursue institutionalization to generate increased relevance, productivity, and mission attainment. As large, complex, decentralized systems, how is it possible to link together the multitude of activity into a coherent strategy? Fitzgerald et al. (2016) suggest the process of institutionalization must be viewed differently. The authors note that historically, institutionalization has been viewed as the process of putting in place components to embed community engagement into academic culture and practice. A more contemporary approach, they argue, is to deemphasize community as the focus and instead emphasize higher education reform.

“This approach suggests that institutionalization is not about finding ways to fit community engagement into the existing higher education system; rather, it is about transforming the culture of higher education so that it embraces the epistemologies and forms of scholarship that allow community engagement to thrive” (p. 247). Fitzgerald et al. note that this shift must also align with existing structures and functions for higher education. Institutions need to balance transformation in perception and practice while keeping intact the organizational elements that make higher education possible.

The tension of cultivating change and maintaining balance illustrates a key piece of institutional complexity within colleges and universities. Competing priorities, understanding, and activities generate an organizational system with multiple personalities, or what stakeholders called multiple missions. Participants in this study had a difficult time navigating across process elements for the entire university. Defining terms for the institution, for example, was a challenge for most stakeholders, as was how the institution might more intentionally include community representation in assessment processes. Respondents primarily dealt with institutional complexity by identifying an anchoring point around which corresponding processes and structures would align. For Institution A, the central coordinating office was identified as the central hub around which all reporting processes develop. At Institution B, the relationships formed through strategic partnerships help support subsequent action, led by the central coordinating office. Institution C relies primarily on its individual units to create assessment processes, while the central coordinating office decides where and how it will request unit information alongside information acquired through data collection systems already in place. These central coordinating offices were cited as a critical link in creating

institution-wide processes for community engagement assessment. Each office is only one actor within the organizational system, however, and findings suggest in order to achieve institutional processes to determine impact, institutionalization is necessary.

McNall et al. (2015) present six elements encompassing systemic engagement, which is intended for place-based initiatives and involves “universities as partners in systemic approaches to social problem solving” (p. 2). Systemic engagement employs systems thinking, collaborative inquiry, support for ongoing learning, emergent design, multiple strands of inquiry and action, and transdisciplinarity. Systems thinking broadens the scope of inquiry beyond a narrow set of factors to the larger contextual factors that influence more complex social issues. As universities broaden the focal point to include institution-wide activities that are directed to community development initiatives, systems thinking takes into account relevant boundaries, perspectives, and relationships. Findings from this study suggest institution-wide assessment requires attention to these elements of systems thinking. Without consideration of how these elements influence practice simultaneously, a disjointed, incomplete process will persist.

Systemic engagement also employs collaborative inquiry, which “intentionally solicits multiple perspectives on problems and relevant systems by drawing on both local and indigenous knowledge as well as generalized university-based knowledge” (p. 4). Findings further suggest that without the intentional recruitment of feedback from within the university and from multiple sources within the community, meaningful institution-wide efforts to participate in community engagement will be limited in their effectiveness. Findings also support the strategies suggested in systemic engagement’s other four principles. Rather than midpoint and summative evaluations, assessment is

likely to require more fluid, adaptable approaches in real-time to fuel ongoing learning (i.e. emergent design). Findings from this study also suggest that the central coordinating office may be limited in its capacity to manage assessment institution-wide, requiring complementary strategies working in tandem to generate more holistic data.

Furthermore, within emergent design, outcomes can be sketched out at the outset but movement toward those goals will shift in accordance with what is learned as the work progresses. This aligns with the findings in Case Three suggesting impact serve as an “ideal” around which work is oriented. Finally, findings further promote multiple strands of inquiry working on different aspects of issues within the community, buoyed by transdisciplinary work. Stakeholders within each case echoed what McNall and colleagues argue: “Complex problems do not respect disciplinary boundaries” (p. 7).

There are, however, many disciplinary-based barriers to movement toward institutionalization and systemic engagement at Institutions like A, B, and C. McNall and colleagues cite barriers to faculty engagement as existing across personal, professional, communal, institutional, and logistical domains. The authors also cite, “Challenges related to the first four principles—systems thinking, collaborative inquiry, support for ongoing learning, and emergent design—stem from the lack of knowledge, interest, and skill among faculty, staff, and students in using what may be unfamiliar approaches to research and evaluation (p. 17).” Participants cited these barriers across cases.

Respondents suggested these areas center more on training or cultivating internal awareness and skill in community engagement practice and assessment. “Challenges related to the last two principles of SE—multiple strands of inquiry and action and transdisciplinarity—are in part logistical, requiring coordination, communication, and

research/ evaluation support across multiple strands as well as various disciplines and sectors (McNall et al., 2015, p. 17).” Participants further cited these barriers, and suggested their institution needed to work on internal coordination and resourcing to address them.

To work toward these ends, Fitzgerald and colleagues (2016) suggest the emphasis should be on the transformation of higher education. Saltmarsh et al. (2015) advise that transformation toward this type of engaged institution requires actions and structures that are deep, pervasive, and integrated. As institutionalization progresses, accountability toward actions and processes (as described in Chapter Seven) becomes more feasible. The process of how that translates into accountability for outcomes is less clear. This research suggests outcomes may be identifiable when pervasive systems are in place to track them. These systems are being built within each institutional case but have not yet been achieved. Without such infrastructure, assessment efforts are incomplete. As infrastructure develops, community representation can serve as a proxy for outcomes. Community representatives can assist in reflecting on emerging goals while also providing insight into community perception of an institution’s engagement in the community. Findings suggest perception may be even more important than compiled data (e.g. numbers, charts) regarding community interpretation of outcomes.

Distilling Key Conclusions

Findings from this study illustrate the ongoing tension in higher education institutions to generate community engagement activity within historical, cultural, and structural norms while simultaneously attempting to change those norms. Community engagement scholars and practitioners are seeking to challenge traditional notions of how

knowledge is derived and how it is legitimized (Saltmarsh et al., 2009), which is closely aligned with transforming higher education (Fitzgerald et al., 2016). These data show the range of challenges in this process, both conceptually and practically. For example, participants recounted the importance of institutional support for coordinating engagement activity toward benefits in the community but provided specific examples of how coordination has been relatively unsuccessful (i.e. Cases One and Three). Findings also suggest community need only minimal control in institutional-level processes, yet this was largely tied to representation and logistical challenges that respondents were unsure how to overcome (i.e. “I just don’t see how that would happen”). Without a clear conceptual understanding of how to embed and orient community within the work of the institution, practical application is stalled.

Stakeholders across cases cited the principles of systemic engagement as necessary in building capacity for practice and subsequently determinations of impact. A key component of systemic engagement is the centrality of community change. Yet data in this study highlighted internal capacity-building over external integration with community toward outcomes, which limits the ability to determine impact locally. Stoecker and colleagues (2010) articulate this limitation: “Even those institutions that attempt to study impact, if their civic engagement is informed by theories of teaching and learning and research methodology rather than by community development, will of necessity produce inward-looking and partial analyses (p. 182).” Data from this study support this assertion.

Stoecker and colleague’s (2010) model orients the work of higher education toward the community, and McNall and colleagues (2015) provide principles to guide

institutional approaches to community change efforts. Yet, data from this research suggests there is still not a clear conceptual understanding of how to embed and orient community within the work of the institution. Future research, particularly theory generation, dealing with these areas of study must confront this deficit and link practice to theory in more evident ways.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

This exploratory study was designed as an early step in an area ripe for future research. Universities conduct institution-wide assessment without a clear, guiding framework, typology, or some other common assessment structure (Hart & Northmore, 2011; Nichols et al., 2015; UNC, 2015). There is no agreement on what an exemplary process is, nor literature available to describe it (UNC, 2015). Watson-Thompson (2015) also notes the lack of departmental and university models to assess community-engaged research activities and their scholarly and public impact. Additional case studies that dive deeper into institutional assessment processes would help cultivate such models (e.g. Getto & McCunney, 2015; Janke & Medlin, 2015). Universities may consider employing time-ordered matrices to track their sequencing of assessment and its stability over time (Miles et al., 2014). Future case studies should also examine different types of institutions in different contexts. Comparative case studies could help elucidate differences associated with institutional and community characteristics.

Research and descriptive articles are needed that move beyond the narrow focal point of a single activity to larger initiatives and institution-wide data management strategies. In exploring community engagement assessment across units, more could be learned about unit and faculty interpretation of institution-wide data collection. Research

targeting faculty perceptions of institution-wide commitments to the community could also shed light on motivations, opportunities, and roadblocks to faculty participation. Research on the role of central coordinating offices and their approaches to institution-wide capacity-building could also inform a typology or taxonomy to help universities employ organizational strategies suited to their context. A critical framework throughout these areas of research would help ensure the physical reality in a particular time and space is addressed. Without such criticality, research may overlook the ways in which institutional processes facilitate the failure to address conditions that allow structural inequality and social injustice to persist.

Research in these areas will only be possible through corresponding practice. Janke and Medlin (2015) propose that a scholarly approach is needed in developing an institution-wide strategy to collect and manage data to ensure greater participation and minimize frustration and pushback. The following table is presented as a set of recommendations for practice resulting from the key findings of the study (see Table 16).

Table 16

Recommendations for Practice across Process Elements

Process Element	Recommendations for Practice
Defining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop common institutional language and share broadly and repeatedly ○ Develop guidelines and policies around practice ○ Use common training materials in conjunction with language, guidelines, and policies to cultivate a shared institution-wide structure for practice
Identifying, Tracking, Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For some institutions, organize a data collection process with only “one ask” ○ For more research-intensive, institutionalized institutions, seek to increasingly utilize data collection systems already in place that are not voluntary

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Build and leverage relationships across all units, departments, and faculty to advance understanding of engagement and the benefits of its assessment ○ Communicate community engagement’s potential to ensure relevance, productivity, and mission attainment
Using Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Orient data usage more strategically around individual unit success ○ Demonstrate community engagement’s realization of mission attainment and communicate across units ○ Review communications strategy to further embed community awareness of institution’s work in the community ○ Connect individual units in strategic partnership with community organizations and highlight these collaborations
Relational Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create spaces and structures to convene university and community representation ○ Make it worth the time and effort (i.e. goal-centered) ○ Increase community representation and voice, particularly at the project- and program-level ○ Utilize either hired liaison staff or adept university stakeholders to actively listen to community voices ○ Provide training opportunities in multiple formats, venues, and times to facilitate learning to inform practice – involve community voice and insight into trainings

This table describes opportunities for practice that emerged through data collection, analysis, and connections to the literature base. Table 16 provides a synthesized set of elements emergent from all data sources.

In defining terms, institutions can work through a process of generating common language, guidelines, and policies to promote a shared institution-wide structure for practice. This will be carried out differently across disciplines and individuals but promotes an institutional mindset toward the engaged campus (Saltmarsh et al. 2015). Stakeholders at Institution C described benefits to sharing this language and community engagement updates on a recurring basis. In the identification, tracking, and reporting of activity, two main strategies emerged. For most institutions, particularly those who rely on a survey to collect information as Institution A does, there should be only “one ask” to

the extent possible. For institutions with increasingly high levels of institutionalization of research and practice, utilizing data collection systems already in place that are not voluntary should provide more consistent and holistic data over time. Institutions must decide first what they need in their context. Building relationships and communicating community engagement's potential should be occurring simultaneously.

Data can also be used to more strategically align with the mission of individual units. The results of employing community engagement in this way should be shared across all units and departments. Data can also be used to identify opportunities to link unit activity with community organizations, which should also be communicated strategically (e.g. to solicit new funding streams) and ubiquitously (i.e. community members all over the local area should know how much the institution is doing in shared stewardship of space). In terms of relational aspects of process, community voice and leadership should be higher, particularly within individual activities. Spaces should also be created to bring university and community together, though it needs to be a valuable use of time. A stakeholder at Institution B cautioned against convening for the sake of convening: "I don't know why they would want to meet quarterly...to be like, 'Yeah, we love the community!' 'Oh yeah, us too!'" Place-based centers and liaisons, either paid staff or representatives, can play an integral role in serving as listening ears to community members. These boundary spanners can help translate and strategize for all collaborators. The time-intensiveness of community engagement does not have to be everyone's burden, all of the time, and can be thoughtfully exercised.

On a final note, both research and practice would benefit from a closer inspection of impact as it relates to institutional processes. This research centered on the concept of

impact, though perceptions of impact varied significantly across respondents. Future qualitative studies that explore perceptions of impact in greater detail would be useful in understanding how to structure institutional processes that facilitate progressively greater mission fulfillment. Ultimately, in “determinations of impact”, universities and the individuals that drive them need to know what kind of impact matters most to ensure the strength and vitality of both institutions and their communities.

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APPENDIX A. INSTRUMENTS

Interview Protocol University Stakeholders

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This interview should last approximately 45-90 minutes as we talk through community engagement at your institution. The purpose of this study is to explore the process by which (institution) determines the impact its community engagement activity has had in the local community. I will ask you a series of questions about that process and invite you to answer as thoroughly as you are able.

This study is focused on the *process* (institution) uses to assess impact in the local community. During this conversation, I want to focus as much as we can on how you would answer each question for the institution as a whole. If and when you feel you cannot answer for the entire university, that's no problem, just let me know what you feel like you can answer and we will work through the question starting there.

The study is also focused on impact as it relates to the local community. Community engagement will have benefits and impacts for students, faculty, and many other individuals and areas, but as we go through these questions I want to focus on how impact is assessed in and with the local community.

I will mention these areas of focus again as we work our way through the conversation.

If a question doesn't make sense or you would like clarification, please don't hesitate to let me know. Feel free to answer these questions in whatever way makes the most sense for you and (institution). Again, if you're not sure how to answer a question, that is perfectly fine and is likely to occur. We will work from your perspective and go from there.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Okay, let's get started.

Questions

Introduction

To start us off, can you tell me a little bit more about your role at the university and how you are connected to community engagement here?

How long have you been in your current role? Have you served in other roles here?

What do you think makes the relationship between (city) and (institution) unique? What are some things that stand out about community engagement here? They can be positive or negative, whatever comes to mind.

Defining

Great, thank you. In this next section, I want to explore how three terms are defined at (institution). You may or may not feel you can answer this question for the entire university, but the questions are worded to try and understand how these terms are defined or understood institution-wide.

1. How is *community engagement activity* defined at your university?
2. How is *local community* defined at your university?
3. How does (institution) define *impact* in the local community?
 - a. Probe if needed: In other words, how does (institution) describe its intended impact here locally in the community?

Tracking and Recording

In this next set of questions, I want to better understand how you identify, track, and report community engagement activity across the university.

4. How does the university know what community engagement activity is taking place, how do they identify what is occurring?
5. How does the university track and report community engagement activities?
 - a. Probe if needed: How does the university then report community engagement activities?
 - b. Probe: What is the frequency of reporting (Every semester? Annually? Every 2 years?)
6. How are community engagement activities differentiated? Are they categorized by purpose of activity, type of activity, by department, or some other sorting? There may be no formal way of categorizing or there may be multiple ways, I'm just curious how you would answer that for (institution).

Benchmarking and Data Usage

Now that we've discussed how you collect and organize data on community engagement, I'd like to talk about how you use that data you collect.

7. First, can you talk about what you do with the data you collect? In what ways is it used?
 - a. Probe if needed: This may include annual reports, institutional reporting, accreditation, or used to inform engagement activities moving forward, etc.

8. Are data used to track progress over time? If so, how?
 - a. Probe if needed: In other words, does data you collect in one year inform activities and/or data collection in the next year?
9. Are data used year-by-year to build toward impact goals in the local community? Impact goals may be considered the long-term outcomes the university and community are working towards.
 - a. Probe: If not, how do you think the university determines its contribution to those outcomes in the community?

Relational Aspects of Evaluation Processes

Knowing how important relationships are to community engagement work, in this section I'd like to switch gears a bit and explore your assessment process in terms of communication, collaboration, and partnering, both within the university and with the community.

First, within the university:

10. In what ways, if any, does (institution) coordinate or collaborate on its community engagement efforts?
 - a. Is there a process for sharing data on community engagement? If so, what does that process look like?
11. In what ways, if any, does (institution) coordinate community engagement efforts toward common goals with the community?
 - a. Probe: What about this process works well?
 - b. Probe: What challenges exist?
12. A related question is how decentralized or centralized an institution should be to support and adequately assess community engagement. Most institutions like (institution) would say they are decentralized, or siloed. Knowing that, I'm curious how you would describe the level of centralization or decentralization here at (institution), and how you feel about that.
 - a. Probe: What should be centralized, if anything, or what works well being decentralized? (Tell me more about that).

Now I want to ask a few more questions about sharing community engagement and assessment processes with the community:

13. Are community members or representatives involved in the planning and/or assessment of community engagement activity? If so, how?

14. Is there a process for communicating about data you collect with community partners and/or other community stakeholders? If so, what does that process look like?
15. What challenges do you think exist to effectively share assessment processes with community partners and stakeholders?

Structural Supports

(If time; perhaps pursued in follow-up communication)

Finally, in this last section I have two questions about your institutional structure and how it might influence community engagement assessment practices.

16. First, briefly, is there a university-community advisory board, university taskforce, or some other leadership group that helps drive and support community engagement?
17. Second, can you describe what funding opportunities or structural supports you are aware of that support community engagement?
 - a. Probe as needed: Funding opportunities could be any funds available to support community engagement at (institution), and structural supports pertains more to campus culture, supporting faculty through promotion, tenure, or training, and other incentives that encourage community engagement activity.

Interview Protocol

Community Stakeholders

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This interview should last approximately 45-90 minutes as we talk through community engagement at the institution with which you partner, (institution). The purpose of this study is to explore the process by which (institution) determines the impact its community engagement activity has had in the local community. I will ask you a series of questions about that process and invite you to answer as thoroughly as you are able.

This study is focused on the *process* (institution) uses to assess impact in the local community. During this conversation, I want to focus as much as we can on how you would answer each question for the institution as a whole. If and when you feel you cannot answer for the entire university, that's no problem, just let me know what you feel like you can answer and we will work through the question starting there.

The study is also focused on impact as it relates to the local community. Community engagement will have benefits and impacts for students, faculty, and many others, but as we go through these questions I want to focus on how impact is assessed in and with the local community.

As a community partner or community representative, you provide an important perspective on community impact and how it is assessed.

I will mention these areas of focus again as we work our way through the conversation.

If a question doesn't make sense or you would like clarification, please don't hesitate to let me know. Feel free to answer these questions in whatever way makes the most sense for you and (institution). Again, if you're not sure how to answer a question, that is perfectly fine and is likely to occur. We will work from your perspective and go from there.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Okay, let's get started.

Questions

Introduction

To start us off, can you tell me a little bit more about your role working with (institution) and how you are connected to its work with the local community?

How long have you been in this role? Have you worked with the university in other ways?

What do you think makes the relationship between (city) and (institution) unique? What are some things that stand out about community engagement here? They can be positive or negative, whatever comes to mind.

On hand if needed:

I can provide a definition of community engagement if it would be helpful: The Carnegie Foundation defines community engagement as a “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities... (including local community) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.”

Defining

Great, thank you. In this next section, I want to explore how three terms are defined at (institution). You may or may not feel you can answer these questions for the university, but the questions are worded to try and understand how these terms are defined or understood by the institution as a whole.

1. How would you say (institution) defines *community engagement activity*?
2. How do you think (institution) is defining *local community*?
3. How does (institution) define *impact* in the local community?
 - a. Probe if needed: In other words, how does (institution) describe its intended impact here locally in the community?

Tracking and Recording

In this next set of questions, I want to better understand how the (institution) identifies, tracks, and reports community engagement activity.

4. How does the university know what community engagement activity is taking place, how do they identify what is occurring?
5. Do you have a sense of how the university tracks and reports community engagement activities, or how do you track and report your work with the university?
 - a. Probe: What is the frequency of reporting (Every semester? Annually? Never?)

Benchmarking and Data Usage

Now that we've discussed how the (institution) collects and organizes data on community engagement, I'd like to talk about how they use the data they collect, from your perspective.

6. First, from your perspective, can you talk about what (institution) does with data it collects? In what ways is it used?
 - a. Probe if needed: This may include annual reports, institutional reporting, accreditation, or used to inform its community partners, etc.
7. Are data used to track progress over time? If so, how?
 - a. Probe if needed: In other words, does data collected in one year inform activities and/or data collection in the next year?
8. Are data used year-by-year to build toward impact goals in the local community? Impact goals may be considered the long-term outcomes the university and community are working towards.
 - a. Probe: If not, how do you think the university determines its contribution to outcomes in the community?

Relational Aspects of Evaluation Processes

Knowing how important relationships are to community engagement work, in this section I'd like to switch gears a bit and explore the assessment process in terms of communication, collaboration, and partnering, both within the university and with the community.

First, within the university:

9. In what ways, if any, does (institution) coordinate community engagement efforts toward common goals with the community?
 - a. Probe if needed: Or with your organization?
 - b. Probe: What about this process works well?
 - c. Probe: What challenges exist?
10. A related question is how decentralized or centralized an institution should be to support and adequately assess community engagement, and support its community partners. Most institutions like (institution) would say they are decentralized, or siloed. Knowing that, I'm curious how you would describe the level of centralization or decentralization at (institution), and how you feel about that as a community partner (or representative).
 - a. Probe: What should be centralized, if anything, or what works well being decentralized? (Tell me more about that).
 - b. What challenges exist for you as a community member in working with such a large, decentralized institution?

Now I want to ask a few more questions about how the university and community share community engagement work:

11. Are community members or representatives involved in the planning and/or assessment of community engagement activity? If so, how?
12. Is there a process for how the institution communicates about the data it collects with community partners and/or other community stakeholders? If so, what does that process look like?
13. What challenges do you think exist for (institution) and community partners such as yourself to effectively share assessment processes?
14. What would a good process for sharing responsibility for local outcomes look like, in your view?

Structural Supports

(If time; perhaps pursued in follow-up communication)

Finally, in this last section I have two questions about structure and how it might influence community engagement assessment practices.

15. First, briefly, is there a university-community advisory board, university taskforce, or some other leadership group that helps drive and support community engagement?
16. Second, can you describe what funding opportunities you are aware of that support community engagement?
Probe as needed: Funding opportunities could be any funds available to support community engagement at (institution), from within the university or from the other sources in (city).

Interview Protocol – Cognitive Interviews

University Stakeholders

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this pilot interview to explore questions related to how an institution determines the impact its community engagement activity has within the local community. This interview should last approximately 45-90 minutes as we talk through community engagement at your institution. The purpose of the larger study is to explore the process by which urban, metropolitan institutions determine the impact their community engagement activity has within the local community. I will ask you a series of questions about that process and invite you to answer as thoroughly as you are able.

The purpose of this interview is to test the questions I plan to ask university stakeholders involved in the assessment process.

If a question doesn't make sense or you would like clarification, please don't hesitate to let me know. Feel free to answer these questions in whatever way makes the most sense for you and for (institution).

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Okay, let's get started.

Questions

Defining

1. How is *community engagement activity* defined at your university?
2. How is *local community* defined at your university?
3. How is *impact* defined at your university?

Tracking and Recording

4. How is community engagement identified at your university?
 - a. In other words, how does the university know what community engagement activity is taking place?
5. How does the university track community engagement activities?
6. How does the university report community engagement activities?
 - a. What is the frequency of reporting (Every semester? Annually? Every 2 years?)
7. Are community engagement activities differentiated by purpose or type?
 - a. If so, how are community engagement activities differentiated by purpose or type?

Benchmarking and Data Usage

8. Are data used to track progress over time, such as benchmarking?
 - b. If so, how are data used to track progress over time, including benchmarking?
9. Are data used to inform community engagement practices? In other words, for what purpose are data being used?
 - c. If so, how are data used to inform community engagement practices?
 - a. How does the data you gather influence your communication with different campus partners?

Relational Aspects of Evaluation Processes

10. Are community members or representatives are involved in planning community engagement activity? If so, how?
11. Are community members or representatives are involved in assessment of community engagement activity? If so, how?
12. What collaborative efforts exist to coordinate community engagement efforts toward community-level goals within and across the institution?

APPENDIX B. INFORMED CONSENTS

Subject Informed Consent Document UNIVERSITY STAKEHOLDER INFORMED CONSENT

INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES TO DETERMINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPACT: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Investigator(s) name & address: Jacob P.K. Gross, Ph.D. & Amanda M. Bowers, M.Ed.
College of Education & Human Development | 1905 S. 1st St., Louisville, KY 40292

Site(s) where study is to be conducted:

University of Cincinnati	Portland State University
University of Minnesota	Florida International University
University of Arizona	University of Denver
Arizona State University	The Ohio State University
Wright State University	University of Tennessee - Chattanooga
University of Kentucky	Wayne State University
University of Louisville	California State University - San Marcos
Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)	California State University - San Bernardino

Other institutions may be selected during requests for participation:

- Institutions will be selected that are both current members of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities: http://www.cumuonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/cumu_membership.pdf
- AND institutions with the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement designation: http://nerche.org/images/stories/projects/Carnegie/2015/2010_and_2015_CE_Classified_Institutions_revised_8_10_16.pdf

Phone number for subjects to call for questions: Amanda Bowers (615) 838-6805

Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted by Jacob Gross, Ph.D. and Amanda Bowers, M.Ed. The study is sponsored by the University of Louisville, Department of Leadership, Foundations and Human Resources. The study will take place at various institutions involved in sustained community engagement work across the United States. The study will involve a collection of three (3) institutional cases and approximately 12-25 interviewees across those cases.

Purpose

This study is designed to examine the processes by which institutions determine the impact community engagement has within the local community. The qualitative study focuses on the *process* of assessment, rather than the institutional results of assessment practices. The study seeks to understand:

What is the process by which an urban, metropolitan institution determines the impact its community engagement activity has within the local community?

We plan to interview university and community stakeholders involved in institutional assessment. In addition to interviews, we plan to collect documentation of community engagement work, available archives or records, accreditation materials related to community engagement, strategic plans or other documents that describe institution-wide efforts for community engagement in the local community, observations, institutional descriptive data, community demographics, and other contextual materials available. We will use this data to inform your institution and the community engagement field more broadly regarding assessment practices. This will include what assessment processes look like across cases and what assessment challenges exist within this work at the institutional level.

Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to participate in a 45 to 90-minute interview, in-person at a location most convenient for you, such as the office where you work, or by phone. Each interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness of the conversation. You may also be asked for a follow-up interview to ensure the information you provide is being reviewed and analyzed in a way that accurately represents your thoughts. Follow up interviews will be in-person or over the phone, and should last 30 – 60 minutes. Both in-person and phone interviews will be audio recorded. You will be asked to provide additional documents regarding institutional assessment of community engagement's impact in the local community, particularly if it is referenced in an interview. You may provide whatever you feel comfortable sharing, and may decline to share any documents that you wish and this will not impact you or the interview negatively in any way. At the end of this interview, you may also be asked to reflect on how useful you found the interview and whether or not you think any questions could be adjusted and improved. We value your input and want to make sure this study is as useful as possible for everyone who participates.

The study should last approximately six-eight months. You may decline to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and can choose to stop participating at any time.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks, although there may be unforeseen risks.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study. We do plan to produce an institutional report at the conclusion of the study regarding what was found at the institution you are representing, as well as a brief cross-case analysis, which we hope will directly inform assessment practices. The information collected will be coded and analyzed to identify what processes are used to determine impact. Therefore, while you may not benefit directly, we hope this study benefits all partners, programs, and initiatives associated with community engagement, to encourage more authentic, transparent, and comprehensive community engagement assessment practice.

Compensation

You will not be compensated for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

Confidentiality

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed, though your privacy will be protected to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name and organization will not be made public, unless your institution wishes for it to be made public. Your name and organization will be seen only by the research team. In the report presented to your institution, your name will not be made public. All data collected will be kept in a password-protected computer.

While unlikely, the following may look at the study records:

The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects
Protection Program Office
Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)

Conflict of Interest

This study does not involve conflicts of interest, as the researcher will not receive any financial compensation for your involvement.

Security

Your information will be kept private in several ways. Your name and organization will be removed from the data when it is transcribed for analysis, and will not be used in any of the analysis or subsequent written documentation of the study. Your communication with the investigator will be seen only by the research team and will be stored on a password protected computer. The audio from your interview(s) will be kept on a password protected computer, and should you participate in a phone interview, the iPhone used to record the audio is password-protected. All data will be shared only by the research team and will be stored in password-protected university platforms.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you are free to do so. If you do not wish to share any additional documentation you may have regarding community engagement at your institution, you do not have to share anything you do not wish to.

Contact Persons, Research Subject's Rights, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have three options.

You may contact the principal investigator at: (502) 852-8795

If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject, questions, concerns or complaints, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO) (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a subject, in secret, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the HSPPO staff. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this study.

If you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. You will be given the chance to talk about any questions, concerns or complaints in secret. This is a 24-hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

Acknowledgment and Signatures

This informed consent document is not a contract. This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Subject Name (Please Print)	Signature of Subject	Date Signed
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Printed Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)	Signature of Legal Representative	Date Signed
------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	-------------

Relationship of Legal Representative to Subject

Printed Name of Person Explaining Consent Form Signature of Person Explaining Date Signed
Consent Form (if other than the Investigator)

Printed Name of Investigator Signature of Investigator Date Signed

List of Investigators:

Phone Numbers:

Jacob P.K. Gross, Ph.D.
Amanda Bowers, M.Ed.

(502) 852-8795
(615) 838-6805

Subject Informed Consent Document
COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER INFORMED CONSENT

INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES TO DETERMINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
IMPACT:
A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Investigator(s) name & address: Jacob P.K. Gross, Ph.D. & Amanda M. Bowers, M.Ed.
College of Education & Human Development | 1905 S. 1st St., Louisville, KY 40292

Site(s) where study is to be conducted:

University of Cincinnati	Portland State University
University of Minnesota	Florida International University
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University of Kentucky	Wayne State University
University of Louisville	California State University - San Marcos
Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)	California State University - San Bernardino

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- AND institutions with the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement designation: http://nerche.org/images/stories/projects/Carnegie/2015/2010_and_2015_CE_Classified_Institutions_revised_8_10_16.pdf

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Purpose

This study is designed to examine the processes by which institutions determine the impact community engagement has within the local community. The qualitative study

focuses on the *process* of assessment, rather than the institutional results of assessment practices. The study seeks to understand:

What is the process by which an urban, metropolitan institution determines the impact its community engagement activity has within the local community?

We plan to interview university and community stakeholders involved in institutional assessment. In addition to interviews, we plan to collect documentation of community engagement work, available archives or records, accreditation materials related to community engagement, strategic plans or other documents that describe institution-wide efforts for community engagement in the local community, observations, institutional descriptive data, community demographics, and other contextual materials available. We will use this data to inform the institution with which you work and the community engagement field more broadly regarding assessment practices. This will include what assessment processes look like across cases and what assessment challenges exist within this work at the institutional level.

Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to participate in a 45 to 90-minute interview, in-person at a location most convenient for you, such as the office where you work, or by phone. Each interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness of the conversation. You may also be asked for a follow-up interview to ensure the information you provide is being reviewed and analyzed in a way that accurately represents your thoughts. Follow up interviews will be in-person or over the phone, and should last 30 – 60 minutes. Both in-person and phone interviews will be audio recorded. You will be asked to provide additional documents regarding institutional assessment of community engagement's impact in the local community, particularly if it is referenced in an interview. You may provide whatever you feel comfortable sharing, and may decline to share any documents that you wish. This will not impact you or the interview negatively in any way. At the end of this interview, you may also be asked to reflect on how useful you found the interview and whether or not you think any questions could be adjusted and improved. We value your input and want to make sure this study is as useful as possible for everyone who participates.

The study should last approximately six-eight months. You may decline to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and can choose to stop participating at any time.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks, although there may be unforeseen risks.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study. We do plan to produce an institutional report at the conclusion of the study regarding what was found at the institution with which you are working, as well as a brief cross-case analysis, which we

hope will directly inform assessment practices. The information collected will be coded and analyzed to identify what processes are used to determine impact. Therefore, while you may not benefit directly, we hope this study benefits all partners, programs, and initiatives associated with community engagement, to encourage more authentic, transparent, and comprehensive community engagement assessment practice.

Compensation

You will not be compensated for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

Confidentiality

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Protection Program Office
Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)

Conflict of Interest

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Relationship of Legal Representative to Subject

Printed Name of Person Explaining Consent Form	Signature of Person Explaining	Date Signed
	Consent Form (if other than the Investigator)	

Printed Name of Investigator

Signature of Investigator

Date Signed

List of Investigators:

Jacob P.K. Gross, Ph.D.
Amanda Bowers, M.Ed.

Phone Numbers:

(502) 852-8795
(615) 838-6805

Subject Informed Consent Document
COGNITIVE INTERVIEWS INFORMED CONSENT

INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES TO DETERMINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
IMPACT:
A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Investigator(s) name & address: Jacob P.K. Gross, Ph.D. & Amanda M. Bowers, M.Ed.
College of Education & Human Development | 1905 S. 1st St., Louisville, KY 40292

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- Institutions will be selected that are both current members of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities: http://www.cumuonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/cumu_membership.pdf
- AND institutions with the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement designation: http://nerche.org/images/stories/projects/Carnegie/2015/2010_and_2015_CE_Classified_Institutions_revised_8_10_16.pdf

Phone number for subjects to call for questions: Amanda Bowers (615) 838-6805

Introduction and Background Information

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Purpose

This study is designed to examine the processes by which institutions determine the impact community engagement has within the local community. The qualitative study

INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES TO DETERMINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPACT:
A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

focuses on the *process* of assessment, rather than the institutional results of assessment practices. The study seeks to understand:

What is the process by which an urban, metropolitan institution determines the impact its community engagement activity has within the local community?

We plan to interview university and community stakeholders involved in institutional assessment and collect documentation on assessment processes. We will use this data to inform each institution and the community engagement field more broadly regarding assessment practices. This will include what assessment processes look like across cases and what assessment challenges exist within this work at the institutional level.

Procedures

You will be asked to participate in an interview over the phone. The interview should last approximately 45 – 75 minutes and will be audio recorded. Each interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy, but it will not be written down and your words will not be used in the study. Both throughout, and at the end of this interview, you will be asked to reflect on how useful you found each question and whether or not you think any interview questions could be adjusted and improved, and what questions you might add or remove from the interview guide. Cognitive interviews are a way to go through a set of questions and see what the questions sound like, how you interpret them, and how we can make them better and most relevant.

You may decline to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and can choose to stop participating at any time. This opportunity is entirely voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks, although there may be unforeseen risks.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you individually for participating, though we expect your feedback to improve the study design. The full study will begin in the summer of 2017.

While you may not benefit directly, we hope this study benefits all partners, programs, and initiatives associated with community engagement, to encourage more authentic, transparent, and comprehensive community engagement assessment practice.

Compensation

You will not be compensated for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES TO DETERMINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPACT:
A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Confidentiality

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The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects
Protection Program Office
Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)

Conflict of Interest

This study does not involve conflicts of interest, as the researcher will not receive any financial compensation for your involvement.

Security

Your information will be kept private in several ways. Your name and organization will be removed from the data when it is stored, and will not be used in any of the analysis or subsequent written documentation of the study. Your communication with the investigator will only be accessible to the research team and will be stored on a password protected computer. The audio from your interview(s) will be kept on a password protected computer, and should you participate in a phone interview, the iPhone used to record the audio is password-protected. All data will be shared only by the research team and will be stored in password-protected university platforms.

Voluntary Participation

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If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have three options.

You may contact the principal investigator at: (502) 852-8795

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INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES TO DETERMINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPACT:
A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

HSPPO staff. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this study.

If you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. You will be given the chance to talk about any questions, concerns or complaints in secret. This is a 24-hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

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Subject Name (Please Print)	Signature of Subject	Date Signed
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Printed Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)	Signature of Legal Representative	Date Signed
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Relationship of Legal Representative to Subject

Printed Name of Person Explaining Consent Form	Signature of Person Explaining Consent Form (if other than the Investigator)	Date Signed
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Printed Name of Investigator	Signature of Investigator	Date Signed
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List of Investigators:

Jacob P.K. Gross, Ph.D.
Amanda Bowers, M.Ed.

Phone Numbers:

(502) 852-8795
(615) 838-6805

CURRICULUM VITAE

Amanda M. Bowers
College of Education & Human Development
University of Louisville
amanda.bowers.1@louisville.edu
(615) 838-6805

EDUCATION

- 2014 – Present Doctor of Philosophy, Educational Leadership, Evaluation,
and Organizational Development: Higher Education
Specialization
University of Louisville
Anticipated graduation date: Spring 2018
- 2011 Master of Education, with Distinction
Community Development & Action: Organizational
Evaluation & Analysis Concentration
Vanderbilt University, Peabody College
- 2008 Bachelor of Science, Magna Cum Laude
Human and Organizational Development: Community
Leadership and Development & Political Science Majors
Vanderbilt University

EMPLOYMENT

- 2016 – July 2017 *Associate, Academic Affairs, Kentucky Council on
Postsecondary Education*
Research postsecondary education topics, trends, and
policy; Connect and disseminate best practice related to
college readiness and student success; Manage pass-
through funds for the state including the Equine Trust;
Conduct program approvals and program reviews; Generate
state-wide reports for colleges and universities (e.g.
Transfer Feedback Report); participate in state
collaborative committees.
- 2014 – 2017 *Graduate Research Assistant, University of Louisville*

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A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY

Researcher on the *Developing an Equity Responsive Climate: Enhancing Instructional Capacity to Increase Student Learning* study, sponsored by Jefferson County Public Schools. The mixed-methods study examines cultural competence, climate and culture, instructional capacity, learning conditions and other perceptions from principals, assistant principals, teachers, students, parents and caregivers. Data helps guide professional development within the Jefferson County Public Schools district and informs site-level priority setting, as well as the development of an Equity Responsive Climate measure.

Investigator on qualitative and quantitative research studies including study design, data gathering & analysis, academic writing, and data synthesis, employing NVivo and SPSS software. Topics include public – private partnerships; community – university partnerships and impact analysis; community development and local education outcomes; competency-based education; youth and criminalization; underrepresented student support and diversity initiatives; persistence in STEM-H fields; healthcare leadership; and participated in city initiatives to link research and practice for local development.

2015

55,000 Degrees, Graduate Fellow

Designed and implemented a grant-funded study to examine an online resource tool to aid in college awareness, readiness, and completion, including user interface and mechanisms for promotion. Conducted a literature review on college affordability and access, including workforce alignment and opportunities to support nontraditional students.

2011 – 2014

Senior Program Coordinator, Office of Active Citizenship & Service (OACS) at Vanderbilt University

2013 – 2014

Assessment Manager: Created and implemented a comprehensive assessment strategy for the office's wide array of domestic and international programs and initiatives; Developed an original model in the fall of 2013 to begin a five-year investment in impact assessment for service and experiential learning.

2010 – 2014

Vanderbilt Internship Experience in Washington (VIEW): Program Director, Washington, DC: Managed a summer internship experience for undergraduates including a spring

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credit course; Coordinated all programming, recruitment, professional development and career-readiness training, and mentoring; Designed and implemented new curriculum for both spring course and summer experience; Oversaw the \$90,000 budget.

2011 – 2014 *The Ecuador Project: Program Director, Quito, Ecuador:* Directed an international month-long experiential learning service project, including student recruitment, preparatory seminar series, and led the on-site cultural & language immersion service work; Administered the \$34,000 budget.

2012 – 2013 *The PREP Program: Program Co-Director, Nashville, TN:* Coordinated a Leadership Development, Diversity, and Social Justice program for 47 undergraduate students, pairing a fall seminar series with practical application through a spring service internship and accompanying mentor program.

Additional OACS Responsibilities:

Graduate Student & Americorp VISTA Supervisor

Student Organizations Advisor

Community Partner Liaison

Leadership Development Initiatives & Programming Projects & Special Events Coordinator

2009 – 2011 *Project Facilitator & Intern, Mayor's Office of Children & Youth*
Led research and technical support for the Mayor's Advisory Council on Early Childhood Development and Education; Provided data and staffing support in the development of a Child & Youth Master Plan for the city of Nashville, completed in 2010.

2008 – 2009 *Professional Athlete, Women's Tennis Association*
Competed in international professional events on the International Tennis Federation (ITF) and Women's Tennis Association (WTA) Circuit, top 800 in the world.

PUBLICATIONS

Published Papers

Bowers, A. M. (2017). University-community partnership models: Employing organizational management theories of paradox and strategic contradiction. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 21(2), 37-64.

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Bowers, A., & Bergman, M. (2016). Affordability and the return on investment of college completion: Unique challenges and opportunities for adult learners. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 64(3), 144-151. doi: 10.1080/07377363.2016.1229102

Carpenter, B. W., Young, M. D., Bowers, A., & Sanders, K. (2016). Family involvement at the secondary level: Learning from Texas borderland schools. *NASSP Bulletin*, 100(1), 1-24. doi: 10.1177/0192636516648208

Conference Papers

Bowers, A. (2017). Reexamining campus-community partnerships: Toward liberating praxis. Scholarly paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Spikes, D. D., Jean-Marie, G., Carpenter, B. W., Bowers, A., Johnson, D. D., & Hooper, L. M. (2017). Exploring principals' understanding of cultural competence: A case study of an urban school district. American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Bowers, A. (2016). Exploring impact in university-community partnerships: Community partner definitions, perspectives, and implementation strategies. Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Annual Conference, Columbus, OH.

Jean-Marie, G., Carpenter, B., Spikes, D. D., Hooper, L. M., & Bowers, A. (2016). Re-Envisioning culturally competent school leadership in an urban school district: A case study. University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) Annual Conference, Detroit, MI.

Herd, A., Adams-Pope, B. L., & Bowers, A. (2016). In their own voices: Critical leadership competencies needed in today's healthcare environment. International Leadership Association (ILA) Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA.

Working Papers

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Jean-Marie, G., Johnson, D., Pinkston, C., Carpenter, B., Bowers, A., Spikes, D., & Hooper, L. M. (in progress). The relations among teacher, student, and parent constructs and academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Administration*.

Spikes, D., Jean-Marie, G., Carpenter, B., Bowers, A., Johnson, D., & Hooper, L. M. (in progress). Re-Envisioning culturally competent school leadership in an urban school district: A case study. *Journal of School Leadership*.

Spikes, D. D., Jean-Marie, G., Carpenter, B. W., Bowers, A., Johnson, D. D., & Hooper, L. M. (in progress). Exploring principals' understanding of cultural competence: A case study of an urban school district. *Equity and Excellence in Education*.

Berry, M. E., Inge, B. A., Gross, J. P. K., Colston, J., & Bowers, A. (submitted). Planning for diversity: The inclusion of diversity goals in postsecondary statewide strategic plans. *Academic Perspectives in Higher Education*.

Reports and Special Projects

Hooper, L. M., Jean-Marie, G., Pinkston, C., Carpenter, B. W., Johnson, D. D., Spikes, D. D., & Bowers, A. (2017). *Equity responsive climate research study: Perspectives from Jefferson County public schools' teachers, students, and parents/guardians: Year 1 quantitative findings* [Yearly Report]. Funded by the Jefferson County Public Schools: Diversity, Equality, and Poverty Programs Division.

Jean-Marie, G., Hooper, L. M., Carpenter, B. W., Spikes, D. D., Bowers, A., McCray, C. R., Dumas, T. N., & Immekus, J. (2016, September). *Equity responsive climate research report—Qualitative findings* [Yearly Report]. Funded by the Jefferson County Public Schools: Diversity, Equality, and Poverty Programs Division.

Bowers, A. (2015). *Destination: Degree: Initial Report to 55,000 Degrees*. Louisville, KY: 55,000 Degrees.

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Bowers, A. (2015). *Higher Education: Affordability and the Return on Investment: A National and Local Review*. Louisville, KY: 55,000 Degrees.

PRESENTATIONS

Conference Presentations

Bowers, A. (2017). *Reexamining campus-community partnerships: Toward liberating praxis*. Scholarly paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Spikes, D. D., Jean-Marie, G., Carpenter, B. W., Bowers, A., Johnson, D. D., & Hooper, L. M. (2017). *Exploring principals' understanding of cultural competence: A case study of an urban school district*. Research presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Bowers, A. (2016). *Exploring impact in campus-community partnerships: Community partner definitions, perspectives, and implementation strategies: Implications for the Public Good*. Research presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Annual Conference, Columbus, OH.

Bowers, A. (2016). *Exploring impact in campus-community partnerships: Implications for Institutional Assessment of Impact*. Research presented at the Assessment Institute, Indianapolis, IN.

Bowers, A. (2016). *Exploring impact in campus-community partnerships: A focus on indicators*. Research presented at the National Benchmarking Conference, Overland Park, KS.

Bowers, A. (2016). *Exploring impact in campus-community partnerships: Community partner definitions, perspectives, and implementation strategies: Examination of Methods*. Research presented at the Spring Research Conference, Lexington, KY.

Bowers, A., Herd, A., & Sun, J. (2016). *Critical competencies most needed in today's healthcare*

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environment according to exemplary healthcare leaders.
Research presented at the Spring Research Conference,
Lexington, KY.

Herd, A., Bowers, A. (2016). *Exploring components of
coach philosophy as a key ingredient in the executive
coaching relationship.* Research presented at the Spring
Research Conference, Lexington, KY.

Bowers, A. (2015). *Exploring impact in university-
community partnerships: Examining the conceptual design
of research on impact and exploring implications for IR.*
Presented at the Kentucky Association for Institutional
Research, Lexington, KY.

Gonzalez, J. C., Immekus, J.C., Portillos, E., Peguero, A.,
Bowers, A. (2015). *Authority, policy, and criminalization:
A qualitative study of Latino/a youth perceptions.* Research
presented at the Graduate Research Symposium, Louisville,
KY.

*Faculty Award for Best Presentation Winner

Gonzalez, J. C., Immekus, J.C., Portillos, E., Peguero, A.,
Bowers, A. (2015). *Authority, policy, and criminalization:
A qualitative study of Latino/a youth perceptions.* Research
presented at the Spring Research Conference, University of
Louisville, Louisville, KY.

Invited Presentations

Bowers, A. (2015). *Effective Academic Writing: Exploring
Differences Between Informal, Military, and Academic
Writing.* Presentation given to two cohorts in the Cadet
Command Cadre & Faculty Development Course: Fort
Knox Collaboration with the University of Louisville.

GRANT ACTIVITY

External Grants

Bowers, A. (2015). *The Destination: Degree Website:
Perspectives on Purpose, Design, and Usability.*
Community Foundation of Louisville. (\$3,000 – funded).

Professional Development

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Grant Writing Academy Participant
University of Louisville, Spring 2016

COLLABORATION & SERVICE

- 2015 *Graduate Fellow, 55,000 Degrees*
Assisted in various community initiatives, including the College Transition Action Network (CTAN) and College Signing Day to support 55,000 initiatives in the advancement of college attainment in the Louisville Metro Area.
- 2014 *Research Team, Zones of Hope Initiative*
Collaborated with researchers at the University of Louisville to develop a logic model for the Zones of Hope Initiative guided by the Mayor's Office of Safe & Healthy Neighborhoods, to assist in organizing steps forward and attaining additional grant funding.
- 2009-2010 *Support Staff, Children & Youth Master Plan Initiative*
Coordinated efforts across task force committees in the development of a Nashville Children and Youth Master Plan, completed in 2010.
- 2009-2011 *Member, Nashville Youth Coalition*

AWARDS AND HONORS

- 2015 *Academic Conference Fellowship Award, Higher Education Administration Program at the University of Louisville*
- 2015 *ASHE Graduate Student Policy Seminar Fellow*
- 2015 *Graduate Student Scholarship, Connecting Campuses with Communities 2015 Conference*
- 2015 *Graduate Student Council Travel Scholarship, University of Louisville*
- 2015 *Faculty Award for Best Presentation, Graduate Research Symposium, University of Louisville*
- 2012 – 2013 *Outstanding Student Affairs Professional Award Winner*
Chosen from across the Dean of Students Division at Vanderbilt University

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PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- 2014 – Present: American Educational Research Association
- 2015 – Present: Association for the Study of Higher Education
Graduate-to-Graduate Mentoring Program Coordinating
Team Member: Matching Team

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2016 *Teaching Assistant, University of Louisville*
ELFH 694: Diversity in Higher Education
Assist in administrative duties, managing the online platform, grading, and class discussion. Fall 2016.
- ELFH 605: Leadership in Human Resources and Organization Development.
ELFH 611: Strategic Human Resource Management
Primarily assisted with course set-up, administrative duties, and grading, as well as facilitation in class discussions. Spring 2016.
- 2015 *Writing Consultant, Cadet Command Cadre & Faculty Development Course: Fort Knox Collaboration with the University of Louisville*
Served as a writing consultant for each student cohort block, working with students on concept, design, formatting, and strategic thinking in academic writing.
- 2012-2014 *Teaching Assistant, Vanderbilt University*
Vanderbilt Internship Experience in Washington (VIEW):
Program Director, Washington, DC: Managed a summer internship experience for undergraduates including the spring course for academic credit; Coordinated all programming, recruitment, professional development and career-readiness training, and mentoring; Designed and implemented new curriculum for both spring course and summer experience.