

University Placed-Based Community Engagement and Adult Learners: A Field Report in Mutual Flourishing

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Abstract

Although higher education increasingly focuses on both community engagement and adult learners, community-engaged research rarely considers them together. This article bridges the gap in the literature between undergraduate adult learners and community engagement. Providing one example of a partnership that considers adult learners as necessary partners for community engagement, Calvin University's 49507 Initiative is a place-based community educational project in southeast Grand Rapids, Michigan, focusing on the goals and needs of adult learners in the 49507 zip code and adjacent neighborhoods. Through 12 focus groups in the community, adult residents discussed their interests in higher education, identified barriers to higher education, and presented solutions to those barriers. Findings from these groups played a key role in program development. This approach joining community-engaged research with program development has relevant implications for universities seeking to provide accessible and equitable learning opportunities in their local communities.

Institutions of higher education in the United States face numerous challenges, including decreasing state funding, the demographic cliff, and widespread skepticism about the worth of college degrees (Yamamura & Koth, 2018). In response, many colleges and universities have both expanded adult learning programs and increased efforts in community engagement (Donaldson, 2022; Mangan, 2022; Yamamura & Koth, 2018). Although universities use these two strategies to address similar issues, they are usually considered separately. Many universities have made efforts to be more present in their communities via satellite campuses, service-learning engagement programs, and community development efforts, but these programs often neglect the knowledge capital of local adults. We build on the current university community engagement literature by analyzing findings from Calvin's 49507 Initiative whose place-based work attends to and partners with community residents. Based on our findings, we argue that universities should listen to their adult neighbors first and then consider cocreating adult undergraduate learning experiences to meet their specific needs.

Place-Based Community Engagement in Higher Education

Over 40 years, university community engagement has evolved into a hyperlocal strategy to position "college as a public good" while also improving visibility, raising revenue, increasing

diversity, and facilitating valuable community partnerships (Fischer, 2023; Yamamura & Koth, 2018). Community engagement practitioners have long worried that universities' well-intentioned initiatives can cause harm to the very communities they seek to support. The service-learning movement of the 1990s and early 2000s critiqued unilateral, paternalist service and emphasized the importance of mutual benefit in university-community partnerships (Ray, 2016; Yamamura & Koth, 2018). Even so, benefits often accrue to the university, while the community carries undue burdens (Ray, 2016). According to activist Ira Harkavy, seemingly well-intentioned universities still "contribute more to privilege and to sustaining the current situation than they do to change it" (Baldwin, 2021, p. 39). Furthermore, Yamamura and Koth (2018) note that many "efforts in higher education focus more on student learning and faculty research over pursuing measurable change on larger societal issues" (p. 3). Universities' traditional hierarchical power structure, their tendency to view themselves as bastions of institutional knowledge, their preoccupation with traditional undergraduates, and their sometimes blindness to communities' cultural wealth and distinct expertise aggravate academic self-centeredness (Baldwin, 2021; Yosso, 2005). We see a missed opportunity to engage adult learners in communal decision-making informed by rich local knowledge.

Adult Learners in Higher Education

According to 2021 data, adult learners comprise 25% of U.S. undergraduate students (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.). Despite definitional disputes, this article uses “adult learner” to refer to an undergraduate whose primary identity resides outside of “student.” These learners, typically over the age of 24, are a diverse group, including career changers, veterans, parents, and caregivers, who often balance full- or part-time employment and bring more professional experience than traditional students (Arena, 2025). Although their reasons for (re)entering undergraduate education vary, economic motives predominate, such as increasing earnings, learning new technologies, or changing fields (Arena, 2025). Adult learners also identify personal goals, passions, and family benefits as motivators (Arena, 2025; Bellare et al., 2023; Bowers & Bergman, 2016; Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Lin, 2016; Sagna & Vacarro, 2023; Woods & Frogge, 2017).

Although adult learners can achieve higher GPAs and show more resiliency, self-efficacy, and self-direction than traditional students, they present universities with distinct programming challenges (Chen, 2017; Pearson, 2019; Woods & Frogge, 2017). Adult learners carry career, family, and financial responsibilities, as well as needs for childcare, transportation, and financial aid (Bellare et al., 2023; Bowers & Bergman, 2016; Deutsch & Schmertz, 2011; Donaldson, 2022; Mangan, 2022; Osam et al., 2017; Pearson, 2019; Woods & Frogge, 2017). The population also endures racial and gender discrimination along with academic self-doubt (Lin, 2016; Nagel et al., 2023; Osam et al., 2017; Schriener, 2024). Perhaps not surprisingly, “Many [institutions] have struggled to provide the right mix of assistance that ultimately enables these students to persist to a degree” (DePaul, 2023, p. 5).

To better serve undergraduate adult learners, some programs have introduced community-informed supports. Texas’s Amarillo Community College serves a predominantly non-White and first-generation population and focuses on providing wrap-around support and financial assistance for part-time students who are working and/or are parents (Goldrick-Rab & Cady, 2023). The University of Winnipeg offers food support, affordable housing, low-cost childcare, and flexible admissions categories for adult learners (Baldwin, 2021). The Clemente Course in the Humanities inspired place-based adult programming nationwide (Shorris, 2013). Universities are increasingly recognizing the intricate complexity of adult learners in higher education.

Connecting Place-Based Community Engagement to Adult Learning in Higher Education

When traditional undergraduate students graduate every 3 or 4 years, they often depart with what they have learned from adjacent communities. Because adult learners tend to remain in their communities, helping to cultivate a wealth of local and academic knowledge, we believe formal research should give more attention to the connection between adult-serving and place-based programs. Staley and Endicott (2023) and Schwartz and Lipson (2023) offer many suggestions for how universities can creatively impact their local communities. But how might *adult learners* cocreate new approaches to community engagement? We propose that universities should explore how their education expertise benefits and is benefited by adult learners’ place-based expertise. We turn now to Calvin University’s 49507 initiative—a place-based adult education initiative that not only listens to community residents’ stories but uses their insights to create widespread involvement across the campus itself and partnership in the community.

Calvin University’s 49507 Initiative

Calvin University is a Christian liberal arts institution located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Inspired by Calvin’s vision to “promote the welfare of the city” and “engage new learning communities” as a “trusted partner” and driven by conversations with community-based organizations, a cross-disciplinary group of Calvin staff and faculty began the 49507 Initiative to respond to discussions about adult educational attainment in Michigan, where just half of adults have earned a college-level certificate or higher. At 50.5%, Michigan has the lowest postsecondary attainment rate of its neighboring states (Nagel et al., 2023).

Racial disparities have also affected adult postsecondary credential attainment. 42% of White adults in Michigan have a postsecondary credential, compared to 27% and 29% of Black and Hispanic adults, respectively (Nagel et al., 2023). Furthermore, Black students in Michigan who enter an educational program are half as likely as their White counterparts to exit that program having successfully learned a skill or gained a meaningful credential (Graber et al., 2023). These numbers reflect Grand Rapids’s history of racial segregation, expressed through systems like “managerial racism,” which along with redlining and gentrification have historically prevented Black upward mobility (Robinson, 2013, pp.

301–320). The current inequalities continue to be striking. The 49507 zip code is 72% non-White and has a median income of \$47,000. Only 24% of residents 25 and older have earned a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a). In contrast, the nearby 49546 zip code (where Calvin is located) is 21% non-White and has a median household income of \$92,000. 60% of adults 25 and older have earned a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022b).

Responding to these educational disparities just 2 miles west of Calvin's campus and seeking to achieve its vision, Calvin launched the 49507 Initiative with three goals:

- To convene with community partners and residents to understand the educational needs of adult residents in the area.
- To create unique learning experiences grounded in data received from focus groups.
- To reinhabit an accessible, equitable, and inclusive community space.

To meet these goals, initiative leaders examined past and present campus-community engagement work in the Grand Rapids area, promoted a university culture shift toward embracing diverse adult learners in the community, reengaged with community-based organizations and the city of Grand Rapids, and, finally, conducted community-based research to learn what local adults wanted from higher education. The initiative pursued these goals with the help of faculty and staff from 25 departments and divisions across the campus.

Calvin University's Director of Strategic Partnerships sought to revive community relationships that had withered due to changing leadership and pandemic apathy. Calvin connected with businesses, organizations, institutions, and community leaders. Calvin has since formed an advisory council of community leaders and organizers to meet with university decision-makers and hired a resident consultant to assist in the ongoing work.

Research Methodology

The 49507 Initiative research team conducted focus groups to gather and assess the educational aspirations and needs of adult community residents. The focus area included 10 neighborhoods, most within the 49507 zip code but some stretching into two adjacent zip codes 49503 and 49506. Four research team members live in this focus area and six identify as adult learners.

Following approval by the Calvin University Institutional Review Board, and adhering to

advice from community leaders, the research team conducted 12 focus groups at four community organizations in the focus area. Evening focus groups provided a locally catered shared meal and \$20 gift cards. One research location primarily served Spanish-speaking citizens and included interpreters and bilingual materials.

The researchers used flyers, social media, community partners, and word of mouth to recruit participants from 18 to 55 years of age in the initiative's focus area from 18 to 55 years of age, who desired to further their education. Seventy-one participants attended the focus groups. Of all attendees, 69% identified as Black or African American, 20% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 6% identified as White, and 4% identified as two or more races; 61% lived in the 49507 zip code, 24% lived in the adjacent 49503 zip code, and 7% lived in the adjacent 49506 zip code. The remainder lived in other zip codes in the Grand Rapids area. Participant educational attainment varied: 21% had a bachelor's degree or higher, 28% had some college credits or an associate's degree, 27% had a high school diploma or GED, and 24% had completed some high school.

The researchers asked the following semistructured interview questions:

- If you had an opportunity to advance your education, what do you hope it would set you up to do?
- What would you say is the single greatest obstacle to advancing your education?
- What kind of work is most interesting to you? What are the industries or sectors that are most attractive to you?
- When you think about your own educational goals, do you have short-term plans? Longer term?
- How much time per week could you commit to formal education? How much time per week would you like to commit to your education?
- What would having an accessible community center for education do for you?
- What resources would help you be successful in an educational program?
- What kind of mode would you find most appealing? Something in person? Online? A combination of the two?

A researcher and 15 undergraduate student researchers used heuristic thematic analysis to note and interpret organic patterns in the data. Then, they validated initial findings at each focus group location, inviting participants to respond, correct,

and append. The authors of this article, having reviewed and confirmed that coding, now share four main themes, cited below with parenthetical numbers indicating the focus groups in which various statements appeared.

Results

Theme 1: Attitudes Toward Higher Education

Participants often identified higher education as something that would help them achieve goals, increase job opportunities, provide financial gain, and advance careers. They talked about how a degree would “further me in the field I’m already in” (5) or help them find a job “con más beneficio, más salario” [with more benefits, a bigger salary] (11). Focus group participants also identified a longer-term benefit: to provide “a better life” (3). They hoped that college would allow them to retire (7), to be comfortable (9), and to “be able to live” (9). In short, “with the degree, you should be able to make a good living” (9). Participants viewed college as financially necessary because “you can’t do too much of nothing without education” (9). They also observed that college would bring additional social resources (4). One participant reflected that college would “give me a little bit more knowledge about the business world also and make it easier for me to get into the business world” (1). Another participant told us how they “want[ed] to get out there and network and . . . get with people that can help me” (6).

Beyond social and financial betterment, participants said that college expanded their understanding of the world, whether that was “learning some of the things that other people have learned” (12), “further[ing] my knowledge” (1), or “exposure to something else” (12). Knowing the world clearly mattered; so did knowing the self. One participant explained, “you got this gift, your brain, you got a genius. Once you figure out what your genius is, you got to go to school to develop it” (2). Higher education could, these participants suggested, develop innate skills.

However, some participants discussed higher education’s drawbacks: employment struggles post-graduation, student loan debts, real-world inapplicability, and inferiority to trades schooling. Participants feared that “to get a career of what [they] studied for” might be impossible (4). One person lamented that they would like to continue in “social work and therapy, which I have tons and tons and tons of experience in, but it doesn’t make any money” (8). Other participants feared debt, noting that “doctors [are] making money, but they

[are] in debt, right?” (10). Participants worried that high school and college education failed to prepare one for real-world work, noting that “a lot of things are changing when it comes to degrees” (5). Finally, participants discussed trades as another, less frequently considered option. Participants said that “if you push everybody toward college you do them a disservice” and that college should “depend on their field and what they’re trying to accomplish” (2, 9, 10).

In these discussions, participants prioritized personal autonomy. Participants’ ideal careers ranged from nonprofit to childcare to music to catering (3, 4, 6, 8) and business entrepreneurship, whether owning a carpet cleaning firm (1), a one-stop nonprofit (3), a jewelry business (6), or a food truck (6). Across these diverse ideas, participants shared wishes for autonomy. One participant said, “there’s nothing wrong with punching a clock, but I would like to do more” (6). Another wanted to “have my own work on my own time, be my own boss” (1) or “make more money doing it by myself” (9). Participants frequently prioritized personal autonomy by discussing self-motivated education routines, as with one person who was “always educating myself about what’s new because it changes all the time” (10) and another who was “learning to be self-educated and do my own research” (6).

Theme 2: Community Strengths

Participants often told family, community, and personal stories to contextualize their responses to questions about their future ambitions and educational goals. Such stories revealed cultural assets such as family/community connectivity and determination/perseverance.

Discussions of family/community connectivity can be grouped into the following categories: working for community, advocating for community, inspiring community and family, and being inspired by community and family. When asked, “What would you hope higher education would set you up to do?” participants often referenced a desire to work in their communities. For some, this was a general desire to “bless somebody else with how the journey went” (10) or “do it all just for the community” (1). For others, the goal to work in and for their community shaped their career goals: founding nonprofits (3), working in childcare (9), becoming a teacher-mentor (7), or starting a nursing home (6). Often, such community-centered work did not involve any monetary gain. One participant explained how

they had been helping at their daughter's school simply because "me gusta estar allí en escuela. Me siento bien" [I like being there in the school. It makes me feel good] (4). Another observed that helping "somebody out for free, taking them somewhere for free, babysitting for free. That's nonprofit! We do nonprofit all day long" (10). Each of these responses revealed a hope that higher education would help the adult learner to further benefit their community.

Participants' advocacy for their communities made community networks visible, as when someone said to the researchers, "I'm gonna help you out, [to] hear what everybody needs. That's why I'm here" (5). Some participants expressed no interest in going to college at Calvin but thought others in their community might be interested (9, 10). Participants also spoke up for people not present in the focus groups (1, 2, 5, 9). One group noted that, while they represented one set of interests, other community members would have additional aspirations to share: "nosotros tenemos nuestro sueño verdad. Somos solamente nueve personas. Si [hablas] con todas las comunidades Latinas . . . creo que encontraría más de nueve." [We all have our dreams, but we are only nine people here. If you speak with all the Latino communities, I think you'd find more than nine {people with dreams}] (10)

Participants expressed desires to inspire their family members and neighbors. As parents and grandparents, they recognized that they were setting examples and "planting seeds for [their children's] education" (5). One interviewee brought their kids to class when they returned to college because "I like to keep my kids involved—if they can have something that's going to inspire them" (5). Participants emphasized future generations' importance. One participant observed how parents and community members needed to "motivar a los hijos; están como dormidos" [motivate the kids; it's like they're asleep] (11). Another participant discussed how they were "going to tell these kids, 'You have a gift. You got the juice. You got to go to school to figure it out. It may not be college. It might be skilled trades. But you have a gift'" (2).

Participants also reflected on how they were inspired by their family, often by seeing relatives run businesses or pursue education (3). One participant appreciated a grandmother who "owned her own house" and was "pretty crafty with her house" (1). Inspiration from their grandmother and support from a family with "a lot of will, a lot of determination, a lot of talent" inspired them to

pursue real estate and other passion projects (1).

Participants' storytelling gave evidence of determination and perseverance. One participant shared how they had moved to Grand Rapids to increase access to educational and career opportunities, saying, "so when I came up here, I said, no, ain't nothing gonna stop me. I'm going to get it. And I got it" (10). Another relayed how they had taught themselves and gotten managerial positions without having a GED (3). Still another participant had returned to school as an adult and reported that "we know what it means to be disciplined, dedicated" (2). Another participant observed that "la motivación ya tenemos" [we already have the motivation] (11).

These stories about local and personal cultural capital suggest that a university does not need to rescue its neighbors so much as make room for them to exercise already-thriving gifts.

Theme 3: Barriers to Higher Education

These focus groups also surfaced obstacles to pursuing higher education. Participants identified structural, logistical, and personal barriers in response to questions such as "What would you say is the single greatest obstacle to advancing your education?"

Structural Barriers. Residents reported that the costs of higher education (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11) and student loan debt (3, 9) could impede continuing education. One person noted that "people can't live and go to college. It's two things that's not going together" (6). Many participants described the (often processual) challenge of accessing financial aid (3, 6, 7, 9, 12). One participant said, "And then they just don't help you, though. Not with none of the information . . . So you're on your own and it's complicated . . . And no one corresponds with you or reach out or follow up" (6). Focus group members noted that rising living costs (3, 6) limited their access to higher education: "Because the cost of living and the food went up. How are you going to pay for college?" (7). People also expressed concerns that an increased university presence would speed up gentrification (1, 3, 4). Participants reported struggling to find and keep a job (5, 3), frustrations with their existing employment (3, 7), and the challenge of insufficient income (3, 7, 9). One participant explained, "Every time you try to take one step forward, three things come pull you back" (3).

Research participants also noted deficient social services (3, 5, 7). One participant observed,

"If you make too much, you don't qualify. It could be a dime over . . . So it's kind of like they want you to stay stuck" (5). Participants also expressed their concerns about the inequities in the public schools (1, 2, 7, 11) and that their children were receiving substandard education that would not equip them for college because, "Not all schools in the 49507 give a college prep college class" (2). Another participant shared that "those kids are not ready to go to college . . . We know of your substandard educational system, Grand Rapids Public Schools" (2).

Several participants felt concern about immigration status and language and English proficiency (1, 4, 10, 11). One participant shared that "un obstáculo es no tener mi seguro . . . no saber mucho ingles. Yo quiero saber mas pero me frustra mucho" [An obstacle is not having my social security . . . not knowing much English. I want to know more but it frustrates me a lot] (4).

Criminal records concerned other participants (3, 7), while other community members worried about violence in their communities (3) or even the threat of school shootings (4). These challenges reflect significant structural barriers to accessing higher education.

Logistical Barriers. Residents also shared various logistical barriers to higher education, including access to transportation, (3, 4, 6, 9, 10), caregiving responsibilities and lack of access to childcare (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11), access to technology and the internet (4, 5, 7), and discretionary time (1, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11). Those relying on public transportation are limited by where the bus routes go and the times they run (6), even needing to organize their lives around what is accessible by public transportation. When discussing locations of programs, one participant noted: "So to me it depends on where it is. And all the time, like me, everything I do is I try to stay next to the bus line. Yeah. If it's off the bus line, then probably not" (3). One resident even talked about educational programs that they wanted to participate in but were unable to due to their location (6).

For parents, childcare scarcities diminish access to education and make completion difficult. One participant shared that "no tuvimos la oportunidad por tener que trabajar o cuidar a los niños" [We didn't have the opportunity because we had to work and take care of the kids] (11). Access to childcare can make the difference between graduating and dropping out. One participant reported that "it took me to get my son in their

daycare for me to graduate. Yeah, two years there lollygagging before I actually graduated. And because the one day I showed up, my son got in daycare. I was so blessed" (6).

Universities often schedule their courses at times inconvenient for adult learners (1, 5, 7). One participant explained that "it's so hard when you're trying to still work and go to school when people don't work with your schedules" (5). Another participant said that "there's no night classes," even though "more people are going back to school and it's just not the kids fresh out of high school" (5). Also, many people are unable to make time to study due to complex lives (8, 10, 11).

Personal Barriers. Participants discussed how disabilities (3, 9), health issues (6, 9), and mental health challenges (3, 9) may prevent access to higher education. One participant said that "colleges are not aimed for people with mental illness, period" (9). Participants also talked about a lack of self-confidence as a significant barrier (2, 5, 9, 10). Participants discussed that adults returning to education might struggle with questions such as, "Am I smart enough? Can I do this? Yes. Okay. Do I need a tutor? If I need a tutor, can they help me on my educational level?" They went on to say that it would be helpful to have someone to support them and "give them that confidence" (10).

Theme 4: Desired Program Features and Supports

Focus group participants identified desirable wrap-around services such as childcare (the most important item) (1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 12), diverse representation among staff members, technology access and training, and transportation (9, 4, 11). Participants also identified pedagogical and curricular preferences, such as a desire for instructors capable of engaging diverse learners, including people with disabilities, mental health issues, and educational traumas (12). They also discussed the "need to have tutors from different backgrounds" equipped with mental health training (9, 12). Community members rarely agreed on an ideal learning mode (online, hybrid, and/or in-person). Some emphasized work study and hands-on opportunities because conventional assignments (such as readings) were "probably the least conducive way to get an education" (9). Others preferred short-term, certificate-focused programs (4, 5, 8, 9, 11). Still others wanted to start or finish their bachelor's degree (10).

Participants requested a supportive educational environment. One person said that "a lot of people struggle with mental health

while trying to get their education” (10). Others requested a case worker or “somebody just to talk to” and “somebody who understands me and who connects with me on my education” (10, 12). Community members also suggested support groups for students in similar fields with whom they could discuss questions, build community, and cultivate camaraderie (8). Others suggested financial support, options to receive credit for prior learning, ESL programs, books, health care support, mentorships, and professional clothes (1, 4, 9, 8, 11).

This theme makes clear that, for community members in this focus area, wrap-around support is essential to academic flourishing: As participants explained, a “full spectrum” of supports would “give you everything you need. All you must do is show up” (1, 2).

Discussion

Our data analysis should make clear that place-based educators have much to learn from undergraduate adult learners, especially that education matters not only for participants’ goals but also for those of their families and communities. This finding was surprising because even though the focus group questions did not explicitly address family or community, the interviewees spontaneously brought up these relationships. This family-and-community focus has important implications for program development. In keeping with this, Calvin University and community members cocreated the 49507 Initiative’s first educational program, Wayfinder, around the theme of community leadership, addressing barriers such as cost, childcare, class time, technology, transportation, and food insecurity. Looking forward, we expect that this focus group research will inform the design of place-based degree-completion programs for adult learners at Calvin University.

Despite these illuminating findings, the research process suffered some limitations. The researchers sometimes struggled to recruit participants. Despite a goal of 10–12 participants per session, attendance varied, with some sessions hosting upwards of 15 people (split into smaller groups) and others hosting only one or two participants. Occasionally, the researchers outnumbered the participants. Weather may have influenced attendance, as did the community members’ complex and busy schedules, for whom a gift card and a meal might be small compensation.

Another limitation of our research was

language equity. The research team prepared for research in a multilingual community (mainly Spanish and English) by creating bilingual advertising and survey materials and by hiring interpreters. However, even though one quarter of the focus groups were held in a community center that served the Spanish-speaking community in Grand Rapids, only one member of the research team spoke conversational Spanish. Researchers relied on interpreters and transcription software, which compelled the researchers to check the transcriptions against the original words in the audio recordings. Listening well to a multilingual community, we suggest, may require holding focus groups in Spanish rather than translating through an interpreter, using software that can accurately transcribe multiple languages, and ensuring that research teams include fluent Spanish speakers.

A third limitation emerged in the research and in the 49507 Initiative more broadly: underrepresentation from the Hispanic community. Calvin University had closer preexisting networks in the focus area’s Black community but was less connected to the Hispanic community. Other initiatives might improve their research by expanding their access to participant networks.

A final challenge relates to the pacing of research and program development. Calvin University’s team sought to dedicate enough time to listen to community members but also wanted to cocreate program offerings quickly. Although the initiative may have benefited from more analysis and interpretation of research data, the community’s expressed needs, as well as the university’s promised timeline, accelerated the work. Future researchers would benefit from clear deliberation about community/university timelines.

Conclusion

Through research in the 49507 Initiative, we heard community residents demonstrate their knowledge capital by advocating for family and community, identifying barriers to higher education, and proposing ways to surmount these barriers. Impressed by this collective wisdom, this article has sought to contribute to community engagement literature by identifying adult learners as unique and necessary partners for campuses and communities. Colleges and universities tend to conceive of “the college student” as an untethered individual somewhere between the ages of 18 and 22. But the residents we interviewed consistently

complicated this conception of the learner by helping us envision place-based education for adult learners. Our analysis suggests that university strategic agendas should integrate adult learning with community engagement for their mutual benefit. Adult learners bring the university's gifts to their neighbors by staying in the community longer than traditional undergraduates typically do. They also provide an example to younger generations who may then go on to pursue postsecondary education. In turn, these adult learners invigorate the university's learning community by bringing rich life experience to the classroom and infusing curricula with practical and not just theoretical concerns.

Future research should examine the dynamics of linguistic equity in undergraduate adult education. Multilingual research would help cultivate more linguistic equity and guide the development of Hispanic-serving undergraduate programs, some of which might be Spanish-speaking-exclusive. As Hispanic populations grow in communities adjacent to English-speaking universities, linguistic equity will become even more important for similar community projects.

Regarding programs like Calvin's Wayfinder program, future research should analyze and evaluate whether cocreated programming has created true mutual benefits by asking, "Have program participants benefited? Have they become more active in the university?" and "Does the wider community feel an increased sense of benefit from and connection to the university? Has the university also benefited? How connected do university members feel to their place and community? Have the university members begun to broaden their conception of who education is for?" It seems likely that a multimethod approach—with both quantitative and qualitative instruments—would provide the necessary scale for addressing such questions.

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