

Catalyzing Change Through Engaged Department Cohorts: Overcoming the One-and-Done Model

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Abstract

This article examines the merits and challenges of catalyzing institution-wide community engagement through onboarding successive engaged department cohorts. Building upon previous findings, it tests the hypothesis that deep and integrated community engagement within departments can be leveraged into pervasive engagement across an institution, exploring critical challenges to fostering collaborative, scaffolded, and sustained community engagement and offering recommendations. Such initiatives have been designed and piloted across the United States as a possible starting point for shifting often temporary, fragmented, and isolated community engagement efforts to collaborative and sustainable engagement opportunities that span programs of study. This cross-institutional and multi-departmental case study analyzes these claims, documenting the lessons learned from two successive initiatives encompassing 10 engaged departments across three institutions of higher education in the Midwest. Research harnesses traditional surveys, faculty, community, and leadership interviews, initiative reporting documents, as well as systemic action research practices. Through a cross-departmental and institutional comparison analysis, the researchers highlight the most challenging barriers and promising interventions to overcome the one-and-done model of previous engagement efforts.

Introduction

While one can demarcate a starting point for the current community engagement and service-learning initiatives within higher education at different historical and geographical moments in time, an important shift began in the 1980s. In comparison to the prior two decades, there was widespread concern that U.S. college students lacked connection to social issues, resulting in an initial push to involve students in public service through volunteerism. Over the decade, service activities were slowly linked to particular courses and, by the 1990s, a move toward civic, democratic engagement was apparent. The larger movement's goal has been "to reclaim the core democratic purpose of higher education and to direct its core activities—teaching, learning, and knowledge generation—toward addressing the pressing issues that face society locally, nationally, and globally" (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2017, p. 112). Despite advances, long-standing concerns about the divide between the "ivory tower" and the community remain. Since the mid-1960s, an array of initiatives and several national organizations have sought to bridge this gap, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education's classification for colleges and universities, Campus Compact, and the American Democracy Project. While these organizations have experienced success, they have also

confronted consistent barriers. One particularly promising initiative is the emergence of engaged departments (Kecskes, 2004). Seen as a particularly valuable starting point for catalyzing change within individual departments, these initiatives attempt to foster a democratic ethos by incentivizing departmental engagement across programs of study (Battistoni, Gelmon, Saltmarsh, Wergin & Zlotkowski, 2003).

Review of previous research findings demonstrates that engaged departments, when combined with additional institutional support structures, can be effective catalysts for fostering more collaborative and integrated community engaged learning within a program of study or department (Lake, Mileva, Carpenter, Carr, Lancaster, & Yarborough, 2017; Driscoll, 2007; Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Zlotkowski & Saltmarsh, 2006). This article is inspired by these previous initiatives, the current effort in our own community, as well as the authors' lived experience of community-engaged learning endeavors. The research team for this initiative is comprised of a civically engaged undergraduate student, an instructor facilitating community engagement projects, and a coordinator of an academic program that utilizes scaffolded community-based learning. As engaged practitioners utilizing participatory action practices in our study, we see this as a work of scholarship *on*, but also *of* engagement (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011).

The article seeks to extend previous findings by exploring how such initiatives can be leveraged to catalyze engagement across a college or university. This case study identifies both critical challenges encountered and effective interventions tested, highlighting how such initiatives can spark structural, procedural, and cultural changes that can be leveraged across the university. Analysis yields a series of recommendations for pursuing deep, pervasive, and integrated community engagement across the institution (as articulated by Saltmarsh, Janke, & Clayton, 2015).

Review of Relevant Literature

While the movement toward service learning and community engagement programs has grown (Matthews, Karls, Doberneck, & Springer, 2015; Norris-Tirrell, Lambert-Pennington, & Hyland, 2010), efforts to foster institution-wide commitments to community engagement have been stymied. Research thus far has shown that institution-wide commitment requires sustained institutional support, committed staff, and supportive policies (Crookes, Else, & Smith, 2015; Mugabi, 2015). Further, this commitment also requires a shift in the institutional culture or “the common set of beliefs and values that creates a shared interpretation and understanding of events and actions” (Eckel, Hill, & Green, 1998, p. 3). Engaged department initiatives (EDIs) emerged in the early 2000s (Kecskes, 2015) in response to sustained resistance toward cultural change at the campus level (Battistoni et al., 2003; Furco, Muller, & Ammon, 1998). Piloted across the United States, these initiatives seek to design and implement engaged curriculum that better supports students and community partners, generating deeper, longer-term engagement opportunities likely to yield mutually beneficial outcomes. In effect, they attempt to catalyze programmatic and cultural change at the academic unit or departmental level by requiring faculty collaboration in the design, implementation, and assessment of community engagement.

Keckes’ (2015) evaluation of several EDIs across the United States recommends that such initiatives shepherd departments through five core stages, beginning with the generation of a collective understanding of who they are, clear articulation of what they have to offer, and the creation of a shared vision for collaborative, scaffolded, and engaged learning (stages 1–3). After elucidating this initial vision, the hard work of enacting,

assessing, and revising this vision follows (stage 4). Finally, Kecskes (2015) recommends the celebration and dissemination of the department’s engagement practices (stage 5). Working through these processes does not just help to conceptualize engagement, it may also serve to build meaningful and purposeful relationships, shift culture, and enact change (Battistoni et al., 2003).

The focus on generating collaborative frameworks at the academic unit level is a direct response to failed efforts to generate such changes at the university and college level (Kecskes, 2006). EDIs are seen as a fruitful entry point because—as the organizational building block of higher education (Kecskes & Foster, 2013)—departments design and assess curriculum, allocate resources, shape tenure and promotion policies, and request faculty development to support community engagement across programs of study (Battistoni et al., 2003; Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Clayton, Bringle, & Hatcher, 2013; Driscoll, 2007; Kecskes, 2004). In addition, given that departments tend to be organized around common academic subject matter (Kecskes, 2008), efforts to foster and maintain a collaborative curriculum and culture are likely to present fewer challenges to generating deep, pervasive, and integrated (Saltmarsh et al., 2015) engagement than at other levels.

To the extent that such initiatives are an attempt to recognize and leverage the unique contexts of each academic unit, institution, and community, build relationships, incentivize flexible collaboration, and sustain partnerships, they appear to be a step in the right direction (Lake et al., 2017). EDIs have yielded clear gains. Previous initiatives have demonstrated that this strategy can strengthen student/community/faculty relationships (Cooks, Scharrer, & Morgan, 2006), increase the quality of student work (Agre-Kippenhan & Charman, 2006), and foster leadership (Silver, Poulin, & Wilhite, 2006). On the other hand, such initiatives have also been consistently stalled by departmental tensions and divides, unclear visioning (Kecskes, 2006), and unsupportive institutions (Saltmarsh & Gelmon, 2006).

Indeed, Zlotkowski and Saltmarsh (2006) concluded that “the future of service-learning will depend to a large extent on its ability to access and to win over” departments, characterizing them as “the power at the heart of contemporary education” (p. 278). Kecskes (2015) called this locus of change the ‘backbone’ for generating progress, noting that more progress on this front has been made in the

past “10 months than in the past 10 years” (p. 56). Additionally, Kecskes concluded that no amount of isolated faculty engagement work will amount to the collective work done within an engaged department. Community engagement that emerges from collective work includes a wider array of stakeholders and co-creates and enacts a shared vision designed to address a specific issue (Kania & Kramer, 2011). However, to the extent that such initiatives fail to shift departmental processes around engagement, align engagement with their mission, vision, and values, and integrate it into tenure and promotion guidelines (Clocksin & Greicar, 2017), they are likely to encounter setbacks.

EDI leaders suggest that the question is not whether intervening at this level is effective in the short-term and at the locus of application (the unit or departmental level), but rather if such initiatives can yield *sustained* curricular, community, and cultural change (Langseth, Plater, & Dillon, 2004). On this front, Kezar (2014) noted that failed college reform efforts often result from a lack of understanding about how change emerges (the process), a lack of awareness of institutional change research, copycat initiatives that fail to comprehend the nature of the situation, and the adoption of one strategy instead of multiple interventions.

Project Purpose, Description, and Methods of Study

The cross-institutional and multi-departmental case study (Yin, 2013) analyzed in these pages extends these previous research findings, examining how EDIs can be an effective response to change barriers and noting the conditions under which they operate as suitable starting points for catalyzing pervasive community engagement across college campuses. Given that the initiatives examined in this case study began in 2014, the long-term impact cannot yet be fully assessed. On the other hand, the cross-institutional and multi-departmental nature of the study has yielded findings valuable for exploring how varied conditions and approaches support initial success and sustained growth.

More specifically, the current case study explores how combining EDI cohorts might be effective for creating deep, pervasive, and integrative change by contributing to a shift in the structures, processes, and climate of the host university. Building on the work of Eckel et al. (1998), Saltmarsh et al. (2015) articulate that deep engagement yields changes in behavior and

structures, pervasive engagement spans traditionally isolated and siloed work, and integrated engagement requires awareness of the larger whole, as well as a willingness to foster relationships, share resources, and collaborate on shared challenges. Given that EDIs require faculty collaboratively create a cohesive vision, generate mutually agreed-upon changes in curricular processes, and share ownership of projects, it is clear that they are intended to support deep, pervasive, and integrated engagement at the unit level. They are a clear attempt to shift siloed practices and encourage cultural change. Per Kezar’s (2014) findings on effective change strategies, they recognize that effective change must account for the unique context within which engagement is intended to emerge, flexibly altering curricular processes. We hypothesize that onboarding successive engagement through a combined cohort approach can open opportunities for faculty from across departments to collectively strategize around roadblocks and challenges, share innovative practices, and celebrate initiative outcomes, generating a community of reflective practice and a cadre of change agents.

Engaged Department Initiative 1.0: A Cross-Institutional Collaboration

The 2015 Grand Rapids Engaged Department Initiative was generated through a collaborative vision for place-based, cross-institutional engagement. This vision led the state’s campus compact: a large, public, liberal arts university of more than 25,000 students; a small, private, Catholic institution with about 2,000 students; and the first community college in the state with over 17,000 students to create across-institutional, place-based EDI. The original objectives were to increase faculty knowledge and skills in community-based teaching, expand students’ community-based learning opportunities, and enhance community partnerships at each of the institutions (Lake et al., 2017).

The first-round initiative included seven academic departments from across the institutions, a five-member multi-disciplinary research team, and a four-person cross-institutional leadership team comprised of campus engagement administrators (including the director of the Office for Community Engagement, the manager of the Academic Service Learning Center, and the dean of Curriculum). Given grant funding requirements and the research team’s disciplinary expertise, the original research plan focused on assessing: how the program

influenced student persistence rates and attitudes toward civic engagement, changes in curriculum and program learning outcomes, qualitative measurements of impact on community partners, and best practices for engaged department initiatives (Lake et al., 2017).

In order to advance previous findings on such initiatives and yield effective, real-time interventions for this initiative, the EDI 1.0 research team built upon research instruments for studying engaged department initiatives (e.g. Howe, DePasquale, Hamshaw, & Westdijk, 2010; Vogelgesang & Misa, 2002) and implemented systemic action research practices (e.g. Burns, 2014). Findings emerged from semi-structured ethnographic interviews designed to assess community partner, faculty, and leadership perspectives over the course of the 18-month initiative, student and faculty pre- and post-survey instruments, and analysis of initiative reporting documents. As findings were analyzed, report processes were put in place to encourage effective feedback loops and leverage lessons learned into a second-round EDI beginning in fall 2016. For further information on the research design and initial findings see Lake et al., 2017.

Engaged Department Initiative 2.0

Hoping to leverage the momentum behind this first-round initiative, the second round began the following academic year at only the large, public institution. Onboarding three new departments, this second-round initiative created a tiered model of engagement, leveraging EDI 1.0 faculty as mentors in a pipeline program for the second set of EDI faculty. It thus avoided the costs of external consultation and generated accountability mechanisms intended to keep EDI 1.0 faculty involved after the initial 18-month initiative was complete.

Using the momentum and initial findings from EDI 1.0, the research team hoped to identify barriers to and effective practices for shifting curriculum, departmental, and institutional processes. Researchers focused on tracking changes as they unfolded through semi-structured faculty, leadership, and community interviews. In addition, data was collected through the analysis of EDI reporting documents, including departmental semesterly reports, meeting agendas, and minutes.

Semi-structured interviews with faculty, community partners, and administrative leaders continued at one-year intervals and were broadly

designed to uncover perceptions of the process and its impact. Participants were asked approximately eight to ten questions designed through a review of similar instruments (e.g. Miron & Moely, 2006; Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006), lessons learned through the first-round initiative, and second-round goals. EDI 2.0 goals were to generate and sustain collaborative, community-based learning curriculum, foster departmental processes and climate supportive of engagement, and shift university policies and practices. Thus, questions covered topics focused on changing expectations, challenges, lessons learned, climate change, best practices, and collaborative engagement. In accordance with Berg and Lune's (2018) methodological suggestions, interviews were transcribed and triangulated with initiative reporting documents. In addition, reporting documents and interview transcriptions were analyzed independently using standard theming and content analyses (Neuendorf, 2016). Key points were first noted independently for relevant segments of text coded and grouped into themes. Discrepancies were then reconciled and insights triangulated through discussion. Aligning with Creswell's (2018) methods of increasing qualitative validity, researchers also invited EDI participants to review draft research reports and manuscripts for accuracy. Findings were compared between cohorts and to previous research describing the challenges of universities and community organizations working together.

In addition to three rounds of interviews, pre-initiative and mid-initiative check-ins with the leadership and assessment team were analyzed for key findings. Through independent analysis, open coding, and triangulation our team committed to identify systemic barriers and challenges, effective interventions and to document additional resources or process changes that may be needed.

Across all 10 departments and throughout both initiatives, researchers uncovered persistent and pervasive challenges as well as a number of potentially effective interventions. These insights have been articulated into recommendations highlighted in the following section. Findings provide additional evidence that engaged department initiatives—when structured to ensure long-term support, consistent and flexible oversight, and access to a range of resources—can be a particularly promising locus for catalyzing deep, pervasive, and integrated community-based learning.¹

Findings: Critical Challenges and Emergent Recommendations

Across the 10 participating departments, four consistent and critical challenges were noted in interviews, reporting documents, initiative meetings, and workshops. These included challenges surrounding the additional workload, departmental diversity, disconnects and discord, attrition and change, and inadequate infrastructural support. In general, these consistent challenges, documented below, are noted across the service-learning and community engagement literature (Butin, 2007; Crookes et al., 2015; Jay, 2010; Kecskes & Foster, 2013; O'Meara, Eatman, & Petersen, 2015; Stoecker, 2008). While the encounter with such challenges is nothing new, case study findings highlight effective response strategies. Recommendations not only emerge from feedback provided by EDI participants and a review of best practices within the literature, they have also been tested through interventions implemented between the first- and second-round initiatives and vetted by EDI participants across the initiative (including faculty, community partners, and the leadership team). As situation-sensitive and emergent responses to this case study, recommendations should not be overly generalized.

Critical Challenge One: EDIs as an Addition to, Not a Part of

Despite the legitimacy afforded through training and preparation, grant funding, resources and accountability, the EDI still often felt like an add-on to other faculty and staff workload requirements. One faculty member expressed her concern: "I am stretched so thin, to put more meetings into the schedule will cause an anxiety attack. How are we going to manage it all?" Funding and training do not in themselves create the time and space, nor the needed facilitative leadership for this work within already strenuous faculty workloads. For instance, scaffolding collaborative community engagement curricula throughout the major proved to be far more time consuming than most departments originally anticipated, a finding consistent with previous initiatives (Adamuti-Trache & Hyle, 2015). Leadership, faculty, and community partner interviews indicated that an initial lack of understanding about the full scope of program curriculum contributed to this issue.

In addition, a lack of consensus around community-based learning, an inability to merge current projects efficiently and the slow process of curriculum redesign and approval processes were identified as contributors to this additional workload. Given the consistency of this challenge across departments, we conclude along with Kecskes (2015) that EDIs implemented within institutional structures and cultures that do not provide the time and the facilitative leadership needed will continue to experience this barrier.

The first-round initiative did not require departments to engage with community partners through regular, recurring meetings and this lack of consistent interaction showed. As one EDI faculty member in our own case study noted, "In order to commit to this work, we needed to sit in a room together every other week for two hours in order to continue to move forward." Researchers speculate this lack of consistent engagement was a major contributing factor to a lack of collaborative engagement within three departmental teams and two failed community partnerships. Reporting documents noted these partnerships ultimately ended prematurely due to lack of understanding and "fit". The second-round initiative, however, required departments proactively and intentionally engage with potential community partners to more clearly define opportunities for mutually beneficial engagement prior to making a formal commitment. Sustaining dedicated meetings with community partners on a regular basis aligns with best practices in the service-learning and community engagement research (Kelly, 2005). Moreover, genuinely democratic engagement must be "inclusive, collaborative, and problem-oriented;" it requires "academics share knowledge generating tasks with the public and involve community partners as participants" (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009, p. 9).

Emerging opportunities to align, integrate, and leverage. Departments that made the most progress toward their initiative goals either leveraged external pressures to do so, aligned the initiative with other departmental tasks, or created ways to shift engagement practices from low-priority, additional workload obligations to essential tasks by incorporating them into their infrastructure. For example, departments facing external pressure to increase and incorporate engagement at the unit level in order to align with college or university level strategic plans or fulfill obligations associated with program accreditation,

¹In order to pursue this case study, institutional review board approval was gained from all three institutions. The study was categorized as exempt under category 2, 45 CFR 46.101.

experienced increased motivation to shift their curriculum and complete initiative tasks. Another department has built community-based learning into their articulated mission, vision, and values, while another ensured faculty were a part of the organization by serving on advisory boards to more fully understand the mission, vision, and values of the community partner. Other departments were able to incorporate this work into their departmental agenda, meeting bi-weekly to discuss their community engagement work. These strategies instantiate Keisa's (2013) general recommendation that it is valuable to uncover ways to incorporate engagement into departmental or unit initiatives already underway.

Findings in the current case study also demonstrated that integrating students as part of the project team provided critical support, reducing the workload and increasing faculty accountability. Departments that involved students into planning aspects of the project progressed farther and fostered opportunities for student leadership. Students participated in project management, curricular revision, program reviews, literature reviews, and as community liaisons. Through these experiences, they were able to mentor peers and further engage in high-impact practices such as employment, internships, research opportunities, and conference presentations. Departments that collaborated with students were enthusiastic about the value they brought to the work, suggesting they provided a wealth of expertise and acted as catalysts for moving the work forward. EDI teams with student representation not only made more progress and fostered relationships between departments and the community, they also leveraged additional support and reduced the workload associated with developing and maintaining engagement initiatives.

Critical Challenge Two: Departmental Diversity, Disconnects, and Discord

The breadth of disciplinary diversity within a department as well as histories of discord appear to stymie initial collaborative engagement efforts. Smaller and more homogeneous departments in the current case study progressed more quickly with curricular revisions. More heterogeneous departments (i.e., those housing multiple theoretical and methodological frameworks) struggled to bridge the gap between their disparate subfields, identify common partners, and agree on

curricular scaffolding plans. In fact, three participating departments have been unable to integrate community-based learning efforts between disparate subfields. For example, one team was unable to bridge the cultural, linguistic, archaeological, and biological subfields within its discipline and across its program. Separately, a large and long-standing department with a history of division and discord struggled to bridge conflicts in order to make progress on curricular revisions. In contrast, a new and burgeoning program with only a few faculty and external pressures engaged swiftly and achieved initiative goals. In general, the EDI fostered collaborative projects from more closely aligned subfields (cultural and linguistic studies). Several departments in this case study struggled to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships because of a failure to carefully consider how various partnerships might best support a wide range of programmatic learning objectives. In general, departments that progressed more slowly at the outset of these initiatives did not have a clear and shared understanding of the breadth and depth of their curriculum. As indicated in the previous section, thoughtfully and thoroughly engaging in this type of visioning and planning work—while essential—is often viewed as an arduous infringement upon faculty autonomy and expertise.

Emerging opportunities to understand ourselves before we engage. Despite this barrier, initial struggles and tensions often proved fruitful for creating the department-wide buy-in needed to shift engagement efforts from isolated silos to a shared initiative within the department, thus sparking immediate practical changes within the unit and the potential for long-term cultural shifts. In response to various examples of departmental discord in the first-round initiative, the assessment and leadership team required the second cohort to complete a curricular mapping process for their program, collaboratively brainstorm how curriculum could be transformed, and only then engage with potential community partners around mutually reciprocal relationships, following Kecskes' (2015) recommendation to begin in the "taking stock" phase. All teams in the second cohort found it beneficial to gather baseline data on current engagement efforts, accounting for their impact and generating a joint mission that better prepared them to seek out a community partner that would best fit their needs.

In addition to conversing about the objectives and projects within the unit (a look inward at departmental assets and objectives), additional metrics designed to press outward may be helpful for expanding potentially narrow disciplinary frameworks and assumptions. For some departments, a literature review of engagement within their disciplinary fields can be used to shape discussion around the challenges and merits of various approaches to community engagement. This process helped a number of teams develop a shared understanding of community engagement in the context of their department and disciplines, generating a shared vision for how they want to progress. In the current case study, this process also resulted in the production of internal reporting documents that served as a catalyst for department-wide buy-in. In general, such a process can reframe essential dialogues around best practices, challenges, and strategies for moving forward (Kecskes, 2015). We echo Kecskes' (2004) recommendations and further specify that EDIs begin by requiring departments initially engage in dialogue on program mission, vision, and values, complete a literature review of engagement within their own discipline and subfields, conduct curricular mapping, and review place-based engagement opportunities.

Critical Challenge Three: Attrition and Change

While the transitory nature of personnel within the nonprofit and higher education systems is, in fact, one of the reasons to pursue EDIs, it has also been a consistent challenge. Even though EDI's aim to sustain deep, pervasive, and integrated engagement practices by requiring collaborative ownership of the partnership (Kecskes, 2015), personnel attrition still halts progress and causes tensions. Adamuti-Trache and Hyle (2015) argued that long-term partnerships between faculty and community require "adequate communication, a culture of sharing and recognition of partners' strengths" (p. 75), but even such practices cannot entirely redress the challenges of attrition and rapidly changing needs. The impact of personnel losses in the current case study ranged from minor and temporary roadblocks to the complete reimagining of the engaged projects. In general, participating EDI teams that were unable to identify community partners with strong organizational leaders made less progress enacting their project plans. While identifying committed organizational leaders is essential for long-term, reciprocal

partnerships (Adamuti-Trache & Hyle, 2015), it can take quite a bit of time to find and support committed organizational change agents. Indeed, some community organizations may have no committed change agents. In one EDI partnership, each member of the community agency left the organization before the first year of the partnership was complete. Noting this challenge, Clocksin and Greicar (2017) concluded that community partnerships are ephemeral in nature, "as key stakeholders leave, so too does the partnership" (p. 366).

In addition to the loss of personnel, evolving organizational desires and changing community conditions also challenged efforts to sustain and launch projects and maintain momentum toward relational, high-quality engagement across participating EDI teams in the current case study. Faculty found the combination of these conditions to be a major concern. One interviewee noted that these issues resulted in the need for a "continuous infusion of energy" that was not acknowledged by the short-term initiative or the institution in any substantial way. For example, while this partnership produced clearly valuable products to the partner agency (a refugee resettlement organization) in its first year—including program assessment reports, translation services, and the creation of training videos for the agency's clients as well as guest lectures and student internships—changes in the political, legal, and economic landscape meant that vastly different work was needed in the second year of the partnership. In particular, efforts to assess the needs of a different population of clients and to understand the long-term needs of refugees was requested. Despite shifting needs, additional support for reassessing and recalibrating the partnership was not available. For instance, there was no funding, course release time, assigned faculty, student assistance, or administrative support.

Emerging opportunities for adaptability and flexibility. Collaborative, community-based initiatives require flexibility in order to foster reciprocity under changing conditions over the long term. Engaged department initiatives must support the messy and emergent evolution of such work, opening opportunities and offering incentives for departments to adapt plans in order to best meet the needs of their students and community members (Kecskes, 2015). Hoffman (2015) referred to the need for flexibility by describing collaborative engagement, at its best, as an organic and generative process that requires

improvisation and creativity. The two departments with the most significant, thriving partnerships have done just this: continued to evolve in their approach by reimagining course projects with community partner needs in mind, pursuing new grant opportunities, conducting additional research, advocating for changes on campus, and recruiting new students to the project.

Internally, departments can better adapt to unexpected changes resulting from loss of key personnel, changing community conditions, or altered partner needs when they prioritize and legitimize the ongoing work required to sustain partnerships through formally legitimizing the partner's involvement (i.e., the provisions of a stipend, memorandum of understanding, a contract letter, etc.). By inviting partners into the curricular visioning process, new course plans can be vetted with the partner in mind and feedback can be elicited prior to sending revisions through the curriculum system. Additional logistical support—whether funding or personnel—can help dampen the barriers and obstacles of this work.

In addition to assigning liaisons to this work, they can also ensure such changes are filtered across the program through multiple touch points (departmental meetings, student presentations, monthly partner updates, semesterly reporting documents, etc.). For instance, one department's outreach to a host of potential partner organizations yielded little interest in (or preparation for) long-term student engagement opportunities. Encountering this challenge, they adjusted their approach and by the end of the 18-month initiative, concluded that their program and students could be effectively supported by an association of partnerships, not one.

Externally, administrators of EDIs can further support the need for adaptive and flexible engagement by ensuring the initiative provides peer-to-peer support and requires consistent assessment feedback loops (Rabourn, Lake, Mileva, & Scobey, 2018). For instance, the requirement that departments engage in semesterly assessment in the second-round initiative encouraged faculty to stay more in tune with the collaboration as it unfolded, encouraging effective and timely adjustments. Findings also verified the value of cross-departmental peer-to-peer support. This strategy allowed for real-time cross-team brainstorming on challenges as they emerged.

Critical Challenge Four:

Lack of Infrastructural Support

While this EDI acted as a catalyst for outreach efforts, it did not acknowledge the need for adaptive flexibility over the long term by offering resources to support the ongoing work needed. A lack of university infrastructural support was noted across most participating teams, and was especially true for the two four-year institutions involved. Indeed, the participating departments located at the college offering the least amount of infrastructural support and administrative backing encountered more roadblocks and made the least progress. And despite a burgeoning network and procedures for supporting this work at the large public university, the actual work involved caused participating faculty to consistently ask for additional resources and time.

For example, as faculty began to implement engagement in their courses they voiced consistent concerns about a lack of training for students and a desire for more professional development opportunities for faculty. In particular, faculty in this case study expressed a desire for support in preparing students on three fronts: cultural sensitivity, awareness of organizational culture, and professionalism. In truth, the need to prepare faculty and students for engaged learning has long been acknowledged (Bruckardt, Holland, Percy, & Zimpher, 2004; Kecskes, 2006, 2008, 2015). Kecskes (2015) has also made the need for sustained and adaptive engagement clear, sharing that such initiatives require “time, patience, generosity, and inclination toward reflective practice and creativity, ideally guided by a facilitative leader” (p. 62).

Emerging opportunities for creating support through boundary-spanning advocacy.

At one of the three institutions with greater commitment to intentional administrative support, these challenges were ameliorated through boundary-spanning advocacy that led to the design and implementation of interactive training modules, optional in-class workshops, an additional community engagement colloquia series, and a second round of EDIs. These opportunities deepened faculty and student readiness for engagement through a focus on cultural sensitivity, organizational culture, and professionalism. They were intended to not only increase student and faculty readiness for the experience, but also to reduce the stress they often experience, and increase the likelihood of generating mutually beneficial outcomes for all participants.

In general, these findings further support the conclusion that such initiatives must be surrounded by additional infrastructural support. Indeed, we have argued that layers of support across the university are needed in order to sustain long-term and mutually beneficial partnerships with the community. In addition to the two critical layers of support mentioned previously (peer-to-peer support and assessment feedback loops), we have previously identified the value of leveraging on-campus expertise generated through such initiatives and advocating for the creation of support structures that legitimize and incentivize this work (Rabourn et al., 2018). Such an approach is especially valuable when EDIs are implemented by mid-level engagement administrators operating outside of faculty governance and lacking the power or resources to ensure long-term and infrastructural support. Previous research has shown that the integration of engaged curriculum is still largely undervalued across most institutions of higher education (Saltmarsh & Gelman, 2006). It is rarely accounted for within standard tenure and promotion processes (Crookes et al., 2015; O'Meara et al., 2015). In the current case study, we found that recognizing faculty member dedication to community-based learning within tenure and promotion processes, for example, were more likely to feel that this time-intensive work was valued by the institution.

With commitment from unit, college, and university leadership, we recommend that transacademic managers be assigned to leverage initiative findings into the creation of infrastructural support at the university. A transacademic manager can serve as a boundary spanner, navigating between worlds in order to build and sustain relationships and networks. They seek to work outside of hierarchies and foster democratic decision-making and interdependency on complex local problems (Williams, 2002). When possible, opening opportunities for such a role to participating faculty and staff as an essential part of their workload is also likely to yield deep, pervasive, and integrated engagement since it would assign time to fostering relationships, redesigning curriculum, and assessing projects. Truly collaborative plans and genuine alignment between the department and community partner require relational, organic, generative work (Hoffman, 2015).

Implications and Discussion

Context and Approach

Our cross-institutional research findings further confirm that the critical challenges experienced by faculty across three institutions and 10 participating departments are exacerbated or ameliorated by the *institutional context* surrounding the work, a fact scholars have long known (Kezar, 2014; Sturm, 2006, 2010; Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh, & Bush, 2011). For instance, upon encountering lackluster administrative support, heavy turnover, and a lack of sustained funding, departments at the small, private institution completed the basic requirements for the first-round 18-month initiative and never expanded from there. Without institutional support or backing for intensive curricular redesign, departments at the local community college used the initiative to simply enhance days of service projects already underway, failing to consider opportunities for long-term curricular reform. In contrast, with a strong commitment from the university president, the signing of a civic action plan, the designation of community-based learning courses, and the implementation of distinguished community-engagement awards, the EDI teams at the large, public institution have all persevered past the initiative's official end date. To the extent that such initiatives are siloed and isolated additions to unsupportive university-wide structures, they are not likely to yield sustained change.

On the other hand, findings also indicate that effective intervention is dependent upon the initiative's *approach* to engagement. When such initiatives are not progressively built over a longer period of time, resourced only for the initial groundwork, and disconnected from other strategic, infrastructural, and procedural work, they are not likely to generate pervasive and sustained change. Indeed, short-term engaged department initiatives can perpetuate, instead of alleviate, the challenges associated with community engagement. We conclude that one-and-done or one-off approaches are not just ineffective, but also unjust: while they may quickly generate quantifiable, short-term gains for the institution, they also generate unrealistic expectations and unsustainable workload commitments for faculty, increase the chances of short-term, surface-level engagement for students and disjointed, ineffective

community partnerships. When 1) the infrastructure and culture of the institution are not conducive to such work, and 2) the initiative is structured as a short-term, fast-paced, one-off attempt to foster change, it is unlikely to yield sustained impact (even if or when it yields short-term, quantifiable gains).

Recommendation: Tier Engaged Department Cohorts

We suggest future initiatives require longer-term, tiered investment from participating departments, merged funding over time, and provide recommendations on a range of effective ways to spend funds. In addition, we suggest initiatives are implemented in multiple cohorts. A tiered cohort approach not only fosters longer-term commitment and accountability for participating departments, it also allows new teams to learn from the challenges experienced by earlier engaged departments, creating layers of support, fostering cross-departmental collaboration, and generating networks for cross-institutional advocacy. Aligned with previous research findings, this model acknowledges that sustained change requires a long-term, flexible, context-sensitive approach, the fostering of relationships across networks, and multiple intervention strategies (Kezar, 2014). Such an approach also enacts Sturm et al.'s (2011) recommendations that sustained institutional change requires that we consider both "the institutional conditions that enable people in different roles to flourish, and how we can catalyze change through a range of initiatives and at multiple entry points" (p. 3). Juxtaposing the progress experienced at the large, public university with the other two participating institutions illustrates the value of the tiered cohort model. For example, after the start of the first-round EDI, evidence of a shifting departmental climate is clear: two participating departments are pursuing ways to partner with other departments, one department has asked to use their grant funds to provide a financial donation to their community partner, and an additional department has decided to reserve funds moving forward to support a graduate assistant position entirely devoted to engagement efforts. These outcomes indicate a significant climate change within participating departments, highlighting diverse ways that the EDI has created deeper and more integrated and pervasive engagement practices. With community engagement infused into the mission, vision, and value of each department, the momentum to push forward can further catalyze institutional change. While EDIs can be seen as an effective strategy for

looking inward and fostering unit level change, tiering engaged department *cohorts* can be seen as a way to leverage those internal changes outward.

Conclusion

Our analysis leads us to reaffirm the merit of EDIs as one potentially effective entry point when they are supported by both the steps outlined by previous researchers of engaged departments, the enhanced recommendations noted within this article, and additional, long-term support structures. Interviews demonstrated the particular value of deepening faculty awareness of the breadth and depth of their program, investing in student involvement and leadership, as well as boundary-spanning oversight (like that of a transacademic manager) designed to yield flexible, responsive, real-time intervention strategies that leverage shifts toward processes, structures, and cultures of engagement across the university.

For these reasons, we recommend both the intentional creation and implementation of long-term and flexible structures and processes designed to support engaged work and a boundary-spanning administrative position. We also recommend future efforts commit to an engaged department cohort model. The support and accountability fostered by the cohort model tended to yield more progress toward generating deep, pervasive, and integrated engagement than did the one-off initiatives. It also opened opportunities to move beyond identifying challenges involved in such initiatives, providing time, space, and resources to leverage lessons learned into successive initiatives. In effect, the cohort model generates what Kaplan (2015) has labeled "in-reach," making it a powerful opportunity for gathering "useful intelligence" likely to "facilitate partnerships" (p. 219). It also mobilizes interconnections, contributing to a shift in what Sturm et al. (2011) deem the university's architecture. Such an approach "invites consideration of these initiatives in relation to the systems within which they operate, the structures that shape their actions, the design that creates the structures, and the spaces within which they work" (p. 5). Thus, we conclude that fostering deep, pervasive, and integrated engagement opportunities at the individual department/unit level can be an effective strategy when such an approach is designed in and through collaboration across the university and for the long haul.

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