

**Consortium for the Advancement of Higher Education  
Council of Independent Colleges**

*Engaging Communities and Campuses Initiative*

***Evaluation Goals and Procedures***

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The Engaging Communities and Campuses Initiative seeks to advance the use of community-based experiential learning experiences (service-learning, community-based learning, internships, and the like) at independent colleges and universities as a means to serve better the needs of the community and to enhance the learning experiences of students. Through three-year grants to 13 community/campus partnerships around the country, the initiative affirms the value of community voice in the development of strong partnerships and expects each partnership to advance its work through the implementation of four basic capacities within colleges and universities that promote the institutionalization of community-focused experiential learning: developing faculty knowledge and skills, establishing a strong institutional infrastructure, establishing a conducive academic culture, and developing strong partner relationships with community organizations. One of the primary goals of the initiative is to gain a deeper understanding of the enabling mechanisms that sustain community/campus partnerships and the ways that institutions can build these four capacities to enhance community-focused experiential learning opportunities in higher education that promote student learning and improve teaching effectiveness.

**Focus of the Study**

To achieve this understanding, an intensive two-year study is underway to investigate the ways in which the 13 partnerships funded under this initiative approach the institutionalization of their community/campus collaboration. The study, which is being led by Sally Liederman and Jen Zapf of CAPD and Andrew Furco and Megan Goss of UC Berkeley, seeks to accomplish the following five goals:

- (1) To describe the various approaches campuses employ to advance and institutionalize community engagement efforts that enhance student learning and serve the public good.
- (2) To describe the process by which community residents, and community organizations, value and engage with campuses to meet their own goals, each other's goals, and mutual goals to which they have agreed.
- (3) To develop a set of understandings regarding the ways in which campuses' academic cultures, faculty knowledge and skills, institutional infrastructure, and partnership relationships are shaped as the community/campus partnerships work towards (a) increasing the quality and quantity of experiential education opportunities, (b) expanding their capacity for community/campus engagement, and (c) meeting community partners' needs.

- (4) To further understanding of the ways in which communities (community residents<sup>1</sup>, partner organizations and their staff) benefit through their involvement in community/campus initiatives and to identify those benefits (versus costs) that foster sustained interest and participation.
- (5) To identify key leverage points, activities, and effective practices (in the areas of institutional infrastructure, academic culture, faculty knowledge and skills, and partner relationships) that successfully promote campus-community engagement.

Most prior studies of community/campus partnerships have focused on the issues most relevant to higher education and, for the most part, have given short shrift to issues that are relevant to the participation of community members. The Engaging Communities and Campuses Evaluation has been designed purposely to ensure that equal attention is paid to issues that are of most concern to both the campus and the community.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data are being collected from a variety of data sources that represent all 13 community/campus partnerships participating in the initiative. Through partnership documents (grant proposal, interim progress reports, year-end reports, and reflection notes), phone interviews (of project directors, campus administrators, community members, students, and faculty members from all 13 sites), and two-day site visits (of five of 13 partnerships), data are being collected over a 24-month period (August 2001–July 2003). To collect these data, a set of protocols, which address the five overarching goals of the study, have been developed and applied to the investigation. In addition, the protocols reflect elements of an emerging theory of change model for institutionalizing community/campus partnerships.

The phone interviews of key members of each of the 13 partnerships began in fall 2002 and concluded in spring 2003. In spring 2002, one partnership was selected to receive a two-day pilot site visit by two members of the research team. From this site visit, a set of data were collected that allowed for the refinement and further development of the research protocols. In spring 2003, four of the 13 partnerships were selected and received a two-day site visit from members of the evaluation team.<sup>2</sup> The review of documents and reports produced by the partnerships will be conducted on an ongoing basis for the duration of the initiative.

Using an inductive approach that searches for major themes and construct categories among the various data collected, a complete analysis of data will take place in the summer of 2003.

### **Reporting of Findings**

A monograph that includes findings from a summit of community partners, along with their recommendations for improving community/campus engagement activities, was published in June 2003. A brochure summarizing the monograph, which can be used as a training or orientation guide for faculty members, staff, students, and community residents, is available on CIC's website ([www.cic.edu](http://www.cic.edu)). The full monograph will be available for download from the website after July 1, 2003.

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<sup>1</sup> Community residents can include community leaders, intended beneficiaries of specific partnership activities, and people living within a particular geographic area(s) targeted for inclusion/impact.

<sup>2</sup> In spring 2002, a two-day pilot site visit was completed at one of the partnerships.

An evaluation report detailing the nature of the full study and the findings of the investigation will be completed in the fall of 2003. The purpose of the report is to address the five overarching goals of the study and to present a set of recommendations that can help advance the institutionalization of community/campus partnerships that are built around experiential learning and civic engagement activities. A broader goal of the monograph is to identify conditions and enabling mechanisms for institutionalizing community/campus partnerships.