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Toward authentic university-community engagement

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ABSTRACT

University-community engagement (UCE) tends to be unequal, yielding greater benefits to the university. This creates mistrust, particularly between the university and African American neighborhoods. We propose a model of authentic UCE that builds reciprocity and trust between members of the community and university and increases their capacity to collaboratively problem solve. Through experiential learning, participants confront implicit biases, and develop empathy and stamina to confront systemic racism. Through five training workshops and action circles, participants developed strategies for using their learning to address real-life issues. Lessons learned from this model might be instructive for other universities seeking more authentic UCE.

KEYWORDS

University-community engagement; racial equity; mutual trust; community capacity building; institutional change; collaborative problem-solving; training

Urban universities have a troubled history with their surrounding neighborhoods (Keith, 2015; White, 2008). Related research has traditionally focused on the agenda of the researcher, not on the needs and interests of the community (Nye & Schramm, 1999; White, 2008). The very nature of the university campus as a self-contained community further exacerbates alienation from the community-at-large. Over time, universities have heeded the criticism and sought to alter the nature of their research in communities from seeing residents as simply research subjects to engaging in research that serves the public good (Boyer, 1996).

Beyond research, the relationships between universities and the surrounding communities are multifaceted and complex. While universities contribute economically, and bring an influx of human capital, they also compete for land, create artificial barriers to inclusion, and use their resources in ways that result in harmful power imbalances (Clifford & Petrescu, 2012). In the 1990s, universities actively pursued mutually beneficial community engagement and the development of university-community partnerships (Bruning et al., 2006; Fitzgerald et al., 2021).

University-community engagement (UCE) has become a major focus in higher education. Commonly held goals are to exchange knowledge, foster mutuality, create reciprocity, and contribute to the public good (Mtawa &

Wangenge-Ouma, 2021). This study examines one model of UCE – Foundations of Community Building (FCB) – an innovative community building program, which we initiated at the Community Innovation Network, a community practice center within the School of Social Work at Case Western Reserve University (a private university in Cleveland, Ohio). We founded this 8-month, non-academic learning experience to build capacity, foster mutually trusting relationships, and serve as the foundation for transforming the relationship between the university and the predominantly Black neighborhoods that surround it. This paper examines the format and lessons from one model of UCE as a demonstration of how to narrow the social distance between a university and historically oppressed neighborhoods. What we learned can be instructive for others wanting to move toward more authentic UCE.

In this paper, we first examine the history, roles, and challenges of UCE for institutions and communities. Subsequently, we describe our case study, including FCB's context and structure. Following a brief discussion of our methods, we offer an in-depth perspective on FCB, including survey, network analysis, and post-program interview results to demonstrate how this program offers new insights into UCE.

Overview of university-community engagement

In response to criticism of the university as an ivory tower, Boyer's (1996) groundbreaking work introduced a lens for the scholarship of engagement. Boyer promoted the notion of higher education advancing the public good, specifically as a "partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems." (p. 18). A few years later, with a focus on land grant and public universities, the Kellogg Commission found in its 1999 report that universities had become unresponsive to the very communities they were intended to serve. The Commission advocated that an engaged institution must "put its critical resources (knowledge and expertise) to work on the problems the communities it serves face" (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999, p. 10). Beginning in 1970, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education established a framework for assessing institutions' relationships to the community and to public good. In 2005, they added the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, a self-assessment accreditation for which institutions voluntarily apply (Public Purpose Institute, n.d.). This process provides a rigorous framework for operationalizing UCE.

According to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, community engagement is defined as "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” (D. J. Weerts & Sandmann, 2008, p. 74). While there is broad consensus on this definition, the specific constructs of UCE can include many things. Olson and Brennan (2017) identified common engagement themes: embodying and promoting democracy; fostering partnerships of shared power, resources and knowledge among universities, communities, and the public/private sectors; and social impact.

Over time, the community engagement framework has replaced earlier conceptualizations of service, outreach, extension, community development and community-based education. The focus is increasingly on UCE and partnerships characterized by mutually beneficial processes that lead to knowledge creation and exchange between the university and community (Mtawa et al., 2016). According to D. Weerts and Sandmann (2010), engagement should emphasize a two-way approach of collaboration between institutions and communities that aims to (1) address/acknowledge specific, relevant needs; and (2) emphasize strengths and assets in the community.

For authentic UCE, a university needs to establish reciprocity in learning and engagement that creates a flow between the institution and the residents. Saltmarsh and Zlotkowski (2011) write that reciprocity should be “inclusive, collaborative, and problem-oriented work, in which academics share knowledge-generating tasks with the public and involve community partners as participants in public problem solving” (p. 272). We propose, then, that for university-community engagement to be authentic, it requires two-way knowledge exchange; mutually beneficial relationships; reciprocity; and collaborative work on relevant problems or goals identified by the community itself. Given the historic unequal relationships and power dynamics, university-community engagement must also integrate a racial equity lens and a commitment to confront inherent power differentials.

University-community relationships are typically lopsided and yield greater benefits to the university. While the construct of UCE offers goals for a more equitable and inclusive approach, it does not provide methods for achieving these salient goals. We sought to create a capacity-building program that recognizes historic mistrust and intentionally seeks to build reciprocity, mutuality, and trust between members of the community and the university.

The outcomes of the program might serve as the foundation for a change in the narrative about the relationship and lead the institution to shift its commitments, policies and practices to align with equity and inclusion. This study addresses how to operationalize a commitment to UCE that achieves these key elements. This work is designed as a community building effort, defined as “the process of strengthening the ability of neighborhood residents, organizations, and institutions to foster and sustain neighborhood change, both individually and collectively” (Kubisch et al., 2002, p. 26).

This study seeks to answer two questions: *How effective was Foundations of Community Building in: (1) building reciprocity, mutuality, and trust between members of the community and the university, where mistrust has occurred in the past; and (2) increasing the capacity of individuals in the community and the university to be able to collaborate together on problems relevant to the community?*

A case study in university community engagement

In many urban settings, universities are resource-rich, racially whiter than the adjoining community, and often islanded physically and psychologically from the surrounding community. Urban universities historically tower over adjoining Black communities with visible and invisible doors that serve as checkpoints to keep out neighborhood members, and to keep in the university's students, faculty and staff. According to Harris (2015), exclusionary practices are not surprising as American universities have a long history with racism – including the slave trade, slavery itself, and the use of slave labor to build physical institutions.

Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), located on Cleveland, Ohio's historically Black east side, is no exception. In 2020, of CWRU's 11,500 undergraduate students, 52% identified as white and only 6% identified as Black or African American – in a city that is 49% Black. As in many cities, neighborhoods that identify as Black sit in the shadow of the university and find themselves replete with historical and current trauma in the form of severe economic challenges, poverty, deteriorating homes, crime, and university encroachment for expansion purposes (Baldwin, 2017; Ehlenz, 2015; Semuels, 2015). Structural and systemic anti-Black racism covertly drives ideologies that inform policies and practices that thwart business growth and development in these communities. This helps explain the largely missing amicable university engagement in neighborhoods that surround the university.

Confronting racism and disparities requires shifting power, reframing narratives and cultivating equitable partnerships. Building equitable partnerships is not possible without building trust between the partners, a process that begins with individual relationships. We are faculty and staff at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (social work) at CWRU. In general, schools of social work are well positioned to lead this change and our school has a history of community practice and community engaged scholarship. We are affiliated with the Community Innovation Network, a center that seeks to increase community trust and narrow the social distance between the university and community.

Foundations of Community Building (FCB) is a program we designed to purposefully build capacity, mutual trust, and collaborative within-cohort problem-solving via a comprehensive five-part strength-based curriculum and an experiential learning process. The FCB curriculum focuses on transformative approaches at the individual, interpersonal, community, and system levels. Five capacity-building training sessions over eight months are infused with a racial equity lens. The first training session, Change Agents Unite, focuses on empowerment of each person as a change agent (organizer, facilitator) in their community or organization. The next two training sessions focus on Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI), strength-based strategies for building community change by leveraging existing assets. The last two training sessions focus on inclusive facilitation skills and conflict transformation, providing participants the methods and skills for building bridges across differences and uniting people for a cause. All training sessions are co-led by a diverse training team. Case studies and exercises are drawn from communities encountering similar dynamics.

Recruitment methods are intentional. We considered the roles of historical trauma and racism on Black persons who reside within the adjoining, high-poverty neighborhoods. The program includes a cohort comprised of 50% neighborhood residents and representatives from community-based organizations (CBOs) and 50% representatives from the university.¹ Recruiting a diverse and representative cohort is essential. The university provost provided scholarships to cover fees for residents, along with a \$1,500 stipend (increased to \$2,000 for Cohort 2). Cohort 1 took place between October 2018 and June 2019 and included 11 residents from three adjoining neighborhoods, and 12 institutional members (9 from the university and 3 from other institutions in University Circle). In this cohort, 15 participants were Black or Latinx, and eight were white. The Chief of University Circle Police, the community relations director for the CWRU Police, a director of a medical school research center, and the director of the university's office of local government and community relations participated.

The second cohort took place from January to September 2020, interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic with a three-month hiatus and included seven residents from five adjoining neighborhoods, six from community-based organizations, 10 participants from the university and one from the nearby Cleveland Clinic. In this cohort, 13 participants were Black, nine were white, two were other. Strong university representation continued in Cohort 2, which included a social work faculty member and the university's new associate provost for interprofessional education, research and collaborative practice.

FCB is an experiential learning process. In the first retreat-like session, participants interact around their passions and values without disclosing their professional status, titles, or levels of education. Getting to know the person for who they are precedes knowing about their affiliations. Another

Leveling the Engagement Field
1. Name tags with first names without formal position designation.
2. The breaking of bread at each event with catering from local, minority-owned businesses
3. Land Acknowledgement: This Indigenous practice acknowledges historic harm
4. The Wall Activity: Participants place sticky-notes My Time/My Self Care and Group Norms
5. Paired Conversations (Participants sit knee-to-knee and share a memory of their community).
6. Movement Moments: Short choreographed activities allow participants to bring their entire selves into the space by way of rhythmical active movement).
7. Knee-to-Knee Conversations in Threes: Participants respond to the following questions: (1) What is a commitment you hold that brought you into this room today? (2) How valuable an experience do you plan to have in this space? (3) What is a gift that you are afraid of using? (Block, 2009).
8. The Looking Glass Self Exercise: Participants share with one other person who they believe the other person thinks them to be and why, revealing hidden biases (Crawford Fletcher, 2019).

Figure 1. Leveling the engagement field.

important experience which takes place during the first FCB session is The Looking Glass Self, which raises awareness of one's own implicit or unconscious bias. According to Marsh (2009) implicit biases, either positive or negative function outside of our awareness. The components of implicit bias – prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping – are part and parcel of every human (Marsh, 2009). Unless these factors are brought into one's awareness, they will bring damage to themselves and others. Mitigating the deleterious influence of race, racism, and anti-Black racism within FCB occurs during the first two days by intentionally breaking down barriers, leveling the playing field, and establishing caring personal relationships that promote trust across differences. See Figure 1.

Throughout the 8-month process, participants actively engage in *Learning and Action Circles*. Facilitators led a process to surface issues of relevance that the cohort wanted to work on. Affinity groups were then formed, with a deliberate mix of neighborhood residents, representatives from CBOs, and the university/institutions.

Study aims and methods

To answer our research questions, we evaluated FCB as an experiential learning program, measuring changes in trust building, capacity building, networking, and the collective power of participants to create change. The evaluation of Cohort 1 consisted of satisfaction surveys at the end of each workshop and a final program evaluation after the fifth workshop. These surveys were developed utilizing the FCB logic model. There were 18 participants in the evaluation: six residents, five from CBOs, and seven from University Circle institutions.

Cohort 2’s evaluation included the same session evaluations as Cohort 1 plus a pre- and post-survey in four key areas based on the FCB model: program organization; capacity building; community engagement/collaboration; and relationship/ trust-building. These surveys were also developed using the program logic model, and were informed by existing research (Frey et al., 2006; Leppin et al., 2018; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). Given the small sample size, we completed a descriptive analysis of the survey data.

Cohort 2 participants also completed a pre- and post-network analysis. Each participant was asked to rate on a four-point scale their level of connection, and level of trust at the beginning and end of the program (refer to Table 1 below). The item about connection is from Ehrlichman and Spence (2018); the items about trust were adapted from the work of Sampson et al. (1997). Network analysis measured the change in ratings at an individual level, person to person for each cohort member. These changes were then aggregated to draw conclusions about connection and trust within and across sectors (resident, CBOs, institution).

In total, 17 of the 24 participants in Cohort 2 responded to the post program evaluation and post network analysis: eight from the university (all white), four from CBOs in the neighborhoods (two Black, one white, one chose not to identify), and five neighborhood residents (four Black, one Multi-Racial). The pre-survey and pre-network analysis were conducted on paper immediately after the training, with 100% participation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, post-surveys were conducted electronically, reducing the participation rate.

In Cohort 2, 11 participants – five from institutions (three white, one Black, one Asian), three CBOs (two Black, one white), and three residents (all Black) also shared their insights in qualitative interviews conducted five months after the program ended. We asked 12 questions about their FCB experience and mutual trusting relationships; race and racism; access to institutions; perception of neighborhoods; power sharing; and collaboration. Interviews were

Table 1. Change in connections and trust between pre- and post-network analyses.

Average change in response from pre to post (max change of 3):	1. Rate your level of connection with this Person	2. Would you feel comfortable enough to have this person over to your home for a meal?	3. Would you feel comfortable enough to have a dialogue with this person about what might be a difficult topic (conflict, race relations, etc.)	4. Would you feel comfortable enough to turn to this person if you need help with a personal problem?	Average of the 3 preceding questions to approximate average change in trust
U→U	1.54	0.73	0.58	0.97	0.76
U→CBO	1.21	0.58	0.17	0.73	0.49
U→R	1.34	0.78	0.40	0.79	0.66
CBO→U	1.60	0.83	0.57	1.60	1.00
CBO→CBO	1.33	0.93	0.60	1.47	1.00
CBO→R	1.52	0.95	0.76	1.60	1.10
R→U	1.23	1.43	1.33	0.93	1.23
R→CBO	0.83	1.58	1.42	0.92	1.31
R→R	1.46	1.75	1.63	1.04	1.47

conducted via Zoom by graduate field interns and lasted between 30 and 50 minutes in length. Participants' responses were recorded, transcribed, and then categorized to identify common themes. The themes were then rated by prevalence and the intensity with which participants spoke about the theme. These scores were aggregated to determine the most salient themes.

Findings

The findings focus on the effectiveness of FCB in building the knowledge and capacity of university and neighborhood participants; developing mutually beneficial trusting relationships; and establishing a collaborative process for addressing problems or concerns relevant to the community. We will discuss the key takeaways for each focus area, based on the general findings of each instrument: (1), the Cohort 1 post-training and post-cohort survey; (2) the Cohort 2 pre- and post-session surveys; Cohort 2 final survey; and Cohort 2 pre- and post-program network analysis. Evaluations show that FCB was successful in its goals of developing relationships of mutual trust, and building knowledge and capacity among cohort members.

FCB increased all participants' knowledge and skills. In Cohort 1, 100% of participants reported that they gained new skills and resources; used and shared the materials and resources; and became knowledgeable and gained exposure to the foundational aspects of community building. In Cohort 2, 100% rated gaining knowledge of the foundational aspects of community building as good or excellent (82%). 94% rated their ability to identify challenges and create solutions with residents, CBOs and institutions as good or excellent (70%). This finding is also supported by the qualitative interviews, specifically Themes 2 and 4, as seen in [Table 2](#) below. One resident participant reported: "(FCB) gives me a perspective to know that I live in an environment where changes can be made, and we can start something bigger than just me ... Here it shows me that we can do something big and do something different."

All groups – participants from University Circle Institutions (U), those who work for Community Based Organizations (CBO), and Residents (R) of area neighborhoods residents – increased their level of connection with each other. This increase was largest for participants who work in community-based organizations, and their relationships increased the most with all three participant groups. The chart in [Table 1](#) shows the pre- and post-network analysis average change in response to each question in aggregate for each identity group.

This chart was created by taking each participant's post-network rating of every other participant and subtracting their pre-network rating. These scores were then grouped by identity (U, CBO, R) and then the ratings were averaged. So, Question 1, Row **CBO→U** indicates a score of 1.60. This means, on

Table 2. Top themes from the cohort 2 qualitative interviews.

Theme	Representative Quotes
1. The environment allowed authentic selves to show up, and created space for trust (Relationships)	<p>"I think that especially the vibe set up by [the team], really established that it was a safe space that was welcoming." – <i>CBO</i></p> <p>"People were genuine, they were listening, they were open and curious, and it was just overwhelming for me and it gave me, I guess, a feeling of safety. That I can be authentic like I could just share and I knew it would be received." – <i>University/Institution</i></p>
2. Increased capacity for reckoning with the legacy of systemic racism (Capacity)	<p>"The first session really just blew me away and it got me thinking about race and the dynamics of race [...] and how much those dynamics impact community building and community development." – <i>CBO</i></p> <p>"I'm not around white people all the time, [...] and to see how people feel, and what they want to do to change this or the overwhelming guilt they feel, it allowed me to see their perspective." – <i>Resident</i></p>
3. Most respondents have maintained connection with other participants despite the pandemic (Relationships)	<p>"I have been emailing with a few of the community members [...] and have met by zoom, but [...] with the pandemic we're not able to do quite as much in the community." – <i>University/Institution</i></p> <p>"Towards the end of the session I was starting a book club that was Community based and inspired out of the unrest of 2020. [...] One person has joined and become a regular participant." – <i>Resident</i></p>
4. Increased knowledge and skills for community building (Capacity)	<p>"FCB brought [...] cohesive information and assistance in regards to the bigger picture. It gave me more and better insight, better tools, and everything else." – <i>Resident</i></p> <p>"Because of these connections and learning about the makeup of the community and working with the CDCs and everything. I think it showed me what was possible." – <i>University/Institution</i></p>
5. Switching to virtual negatively impacted the action circle projects (Collaborative Process)	<p>"[Doing things via Zoom] had a pretty significant impact on our project, but it didn't have an impact, I don't think as much on the actual cohesion of our group of people." – <i>University/Institution</i></p> <p>"Had it been in person, some of us would have met for coffee. I'm more of a person-to-person person. I think the virtual nature of it was great in some ways, while in other ways, it prevented intimacy because, you just don't want to be on Zoom that much." – <i>CBO</i></p>
6. FCB connected participants, and broke down barriers between groups (Relationships)	<p>"One thing that I liked was not differentiating who is a resident, who is an institutional person, etc. I think that allows for everyone to be in the space and not perform their titles, and allows them to bring their full self to this work that we're doing together." – <i>CBO</i></p> <p>"I think everybody was pretty open to learning and open to new ideas." – <i>Resident</i></p>
7. Improved mutuality of relationships (Relationships)	<p>"I made the connections with people from these institutions, so if I wanted to do something or get us to all work together on a project, I know the people that I need to contact in order to make stuff happen." – <i>Resident</i></p> <p>"I think that it's recognizing that people in the community, if you're doing something for them, they should have a voice at the table." – <i>University/Institution</i></p>

average, CBO members rated their level of connectedness with U members, 1.60 points higher on the post-survey than on the pre-survey. A rating less than 0 would indicate a decrease in connection or trust. Any rating between 0

and 0.75 means that on average, there was a small increase, between 0.75 and 1.5 would be a significant increase, and anything above 1.5 is a large increase from pre- to post-survey.

All participants reported a growth in their trusting relationships through the program. In Cohort 1, 100% of respondents reported that they built trusting relationships with participants who were residents and from community-based organizations through the program. Almost all (95%) reported that they built trusting relationships with institution representatives. Two-thirds of all participants reported increased participation in community events. In Cohort 2, 94% responded with good or excellent (88%) to the item, “Participants of diverse cultures and backgrounds are respected, heard, and valued in this cohort.”

For the second cohort, we added measures on how trust increased. In the Cohort 2 network analysis, many participants gave high ratings in the pre-network analysis for sharing a meal at home and for engaging in dialogue on a difficult topic. The average response for the meal question was 2.18 and 2.55 for the dialogue question. This is compared to average responses of 1.32 for the personal problem question and an average of 1.18 for the connection ratings. These pre-program findings indicate that the cohort consisted of people who are naturally more trusting than the general population. This is important to consider when interpreting [Table 1](#), because a higher baseline lowers the possible average increase that we can observe from pre- to post-measurement, and increases the possibility of a negative result.

Despite the high baselines for the questions on trust, we still observed a significant increase in trust between the three groups as seen in [Table 1](#). On average, residents’ trust of participants from the University, CBOs, and each other, rose the most out of the three groups. One contributing factor is that residents’ ratings on the first two items were lower on average than the other two groups on the pre-network analysis, so they had the most room for change from baseline. By the post-network analysis, residents’ responses were in line with the average responses of other groups, indicating that residents had started the program with lower levels of trust, but that trust had risen to comparable levels through the program. In short, through this eight-month program, residents built trusting relationships with others. These findings are also supported by Themes 1, 3, 6, and 7 from the qualitative interviews, shown in [Table 2](#).

Through qualitative interviews, we learned what specifically contributed to the increase in knowledge and skills and to more trusting relationships. Five months after the conclusion of Cohort 2, we conducted qualitative interviews. The key themes that emerged are listed in rank order in [Table 2](#), along with quotes from participants that speak to each theme. Almost all participants reported that the program strengthened their ability to address problems. In Cohort 1, 100% of participants reported that they identified challenges and

concrete solutions toward increased community engagement. 87% reported good or higher on the helpfulness of learning circles in applying content. In Cohort 2, participants identified their Top 3 community building challenges in the pre-survey. In the post, more than 94% reported their ability to respond to these challenges as good or excellent. One resident said: “We plan to continue meeting as a group virtually because we feel strongly about saving our community.”

One Action Circle from Cohort 1 continued to meet and developed a proposal for the establishment of a permanent university-affiliated Neighborhood Advisory Council. CWRU approved the charter, which makes racial equity an explicit goal and stipulates that residents – who receive compensation for their participation – make up the majority of the Council.

While we set out to strengthen the role of the Action Circles in cohort 2, one challenge was the interruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged halfway through the program. Cohort 2 participants spoke about this in the qualitative interviews, particularly in Theme 5 (see [Table 2](#)). We did not realize the anticipated highly engaged, self-organizing Action Circles to address the major challenges they had identified at the start of the program.

Conclusions and lessons learned

The findings suggest that FCB is effective at cultivating trusting relationships across diverse participants from the community and university. Participants gained knowledge and skills in approaches for promoting change, although this did not generally result in concrete outcomes. While results were positive for Cohort 2, the pandemic hampered the ability to foster deeper relationships and work collaboratively together. In future cohorts, we will include more robust pre- and post-surveys to fully measure self- and collective efficacy (Ohmer, 2007). This, and more rigorous and relevant Learning and Action Circles, will provide clearer measurable short-term outcomes of the program.

Overall, there are several lessons learned that others considering initiating programs like FCB as a means to more authentic UCE might benefit from:

- (1) To ensure that UCE leads to authentic collaborative problem solving, a more intentional development of the action teams is needed. Trusting relationships provide a good basis for identifying and working on relevant issues and change goals. Recruiting participants into the cohort based on a commitment to work on specific issues might be helpful.
- (2) Building equity between neighborhoods and the university requires greater participation over time and integration into institutional change efforts. FCB used our resources to level the playing field versus furthering the historic power imbalance (Clifford & Petrescu, 2012) by assuring that 50% of FCB’s recruits were community members. Minority-owned

businesses and vendors from the neighborhoods were also hired to support the FCB trainings. Institutionalizing FCB and integrating it into a university's strategic plan is one way to promote change. Uniting previous cohorts around a shared agenda would also affect positive change.

- (3) The process of intentional participant narrative sharing within small group settings elevates the common humanity of diverse participants. This process brings to the forefront the collective participant experience and leads to a refreshing, bi-directional dissemination of expertise and knowledge, exemplifying the public good as proposed by Mtawa and Wangenge-Ouma (2021). The bi-directional dissemination of expertise and knowledge raises awareness of the creative and entrepreneurial strengths and assets of the community and specific community members, which were then magnified by the skills, talents and abilities of university scholars. This activity supports Weerts and Sandmann (2010) notion of two-way collaboration.
- (4) Building capacity and trusting relationships will not alone shift power. However, a program like FCB can provide the foundation of trusting relationships for building more equitable partnerships. We also recommend linking FCB to larger investments in structural change, such as the Community Engagement Centers and long-term commitment to neighborhoods at the University of Pittsburgh (University of Pittsburgh, 2019).
- (5) Programs like FCB should be linked to the strengthening or development of longer-term partnerships. FCB worked toward building partnerships by way of the creation of action teams. Intentionally organizing these into partnership provides a framework for effective community engagement as defined by the Carnegie Foundation (Public Purpose Institute, n.d.).
- (6) Move away from conceptualizing the university and the community as monolithic entities. Dempsey (2010) argues that treating the community as one inappropriately assumes residents are representative or can speak on behalf of the community. Likewise, by treating the university as a self-contained unit, it minimizes the reality that some, if not many people claim their identity in both the university and community. Focusing on UCE itself reinforces these differences rather than cultivating a shared identity and common set of interests and goals.

In conclusion, there is no guarantee that the good will and capacity created in programs like FCB will lead to larger changes. White (2008) warns that "The scales of power are tilted too much in favor of the university to presume that

respectful relationships with community leaders are enough to lure them into productive partnerships” (p. 133). This work is the first step; uniting together to confront power dynamics and take action to change systems must follow.

Note

1. The university subgroup included some representatives from other institutions in University Circle, a compact area comprised of CWRU and other educational, medical and cultural institutions.

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