

Collaboratory Design Think Tank : Community Scholars Program

Friday, November 16, 3:30 pm-5 pm, 79 5th Ave. Room 1618

Attendees: Danielle Goldman, Jane McNamara, Ujju Aggarwal, Cecilia Rubino, Gabriela Rendon, Lesley Painter-Farrell, Danielle Goldman, Jane McNamara, Kristin Morse, Evren Uzer, Gustav Peebles

Facilitators: Michele Kahane, Masoom Moitra

Meeting Objective:

The Collaboratory started in 2014 with a grant from Rockefeller foundation where a group of faculty, community partners and students were convened to do actual research focused on what are the institutional challenges of doing community engaged learning and research and understanding the pain points of this kind of work. For the Collaboratory's second phase we want to identify opportunities for addressing some of those challenges that were identified. And so the Collaboratory has begun to prototype, pilot and scale some of these interventions for addressing some of these institutional challenges. The Collaboratory is also trying to raise resources for this work, explore the next phase and raise money for it so the Collaboratory can continue to support people around the university and make institutional change happen so the social and educational impact of academic collaborations with communities can ultimately be optimized. The objective of this Think Tank session is to explore this notion of how can the Collaboratory centre, value and more deeply engage it's community partners.

Guiding Question:

What new approaches might better support the work of community partners, promote a culture of equity and accountability in higher education, and enhance excellence in socially engaged learning and public scholarship?

Discussion Notes:

ISSUES

- Academic-community partnerships at the university are not sufficiently benefiting under-resourced communities in fact they are further marginalizing already marginalized communities because of the resource strain and the work is not equitably or compensated.
- Academic-community partnerships at the university are not designed to ensure, prioritize and assess community benefits.
- When academic-community partnerships do exist, they are ad-hoc, informal and often inequitable.
- When academic-community relationships are maintained for a long period of time, it is difficult to sustain them due to lack of supportive infrastructure and resources.

CHALLENGES

- Space - It is very difficult for community partners to come to the New School to do meetings and workshops.
- Language. money and time as a barrier.
- Benefits that are identified tend to make more sense to us and it is much harder to think about benefits that would help communities unless you are really with them.
- Community partners taxed in terms of trainings, workshops, presenting knowledge, being trained in new knowledge as opposed to just being given resources.
- Different kinds of partners including small and large organizations who have diversity in terms of language, etc. which means we cannot see them as one entity.
- Understanding that different schools orient themselves in different ways towards community partners and the different ways in which faculty work with those community partners.
- Finding the intersection of interests between faculty and community partners
- Community partners want the platform that the university has to offer, they have their own expertise and they come here for events to have their expertise legitimized, they are interested in taking classes again because they are leaders and recognize that the college is a stamp of approval, that is the real value.
- Payment is a big burden - rules around payment make it difficult to compensate community partners
- Documentation - all new and ongoing initiatives should be documented. Media-sharing.
- Most of the faculty tap into the same group of partners

STRATEGIES/POSSIBILITIES

- Create a system of university partnership with long term partners where community partners could come and take classes, not just audit them. For example, 'I have a Dream' works on this motto that these individuals stay in a program for over a decade or more and some of them don't have Masters Degrees and they can't necessarily afford Masters Degrees on the pay that 'I have a Dream' offers them.
- Build a system of university memberships with long term partners, for eg. working with base-building organisations where they have limited staff but a very core leadership of members.
- Provide scholarships for activists - admit them for two years in the program and they can go back to the communities after two years with lot of knowledge.
- Events and workshops on both sides - the New School and the community to help with communication in terms of language and difference between generations.
- Opening the doors of the university to community partners by providing courses and giving credits or allowing them to work as fellows.
- Community partners who have a great deal of experience or expertise that isn't visible and legitimized get credits for their work.

- Create an affiliation with the visiting scholars to tackle issues of compensation faced by community partners who work as mentors and help co-educate.
- Create a community hub office of community partners who just want credentials, love coming here and teaching and keeping their jobs at the same time. Finding these kind of partners is key. Find different people from each borough to sit in on the community hub office.
- Credentialising community partners to be able to teach a class or give credits to students.
- Course on best practices in community engagement
- Credentialising as a driving outcome of unidirectional co-production of knowledge.
- Minimize the importance of co-creators sharing their knowledge into being credentialed and valued as it is useful to us, but they need to be resourced for them to be not just extractive and just beneficiary to our students those kind of examples are different and need to be structures differently.
- Alumni to come back and teach as peer groups.

PRIORITIES

- Financially supporting relationships between faculty and community however we define it, and that's the interesting part. Need to provide real deep support for ongoing iterative projects.
- Fund a board of trustees driving the collaboratory made of a group of community members which faculty can tap into it. Creating a network out of community partners and faculty.
- Brainstorm a structure that could work and protocols that could work together to create a resource.
- Possibility for 12 month support and engagement and have continuity beyond the end of semester.
- Repository of resources to learn from experiences of one another
- Build bridges for people to continue their relationships through years and semesters

CURRENT PRACTICES

- For each semester, faculty propose a course that is jointly developed with the community partner and faculty. There is a stipend for the visiting fellow who plays a part in the class and in this development. They are engaged with instructions of the course to varying degrees but they get a \$1000 per credit and a course has 4 credits so \$4000. And then there is also a stipend for the faculty who also get \$1000 per credit. There is one paid student fellow, students are paid \$500 per credit and their work is designed in conversation with both the visiting faculty and the faculty. The courses have repeated over years, which means the iterative process of development has lead to the partnerships being developed over the years. Courses have improved over the years. Running 18 courses across programs and departments. And is externally funded.