<p style="text-align:center">**Imagining America - Collaboratory - SPE Think Tank**</p>
<p style="text-align:center">**"Building Equity in Community Partnerships"**</p>
<p style="text-align:center">Tuesday, March 26th, 2019 at The New School</p>

Overview:
The New School Collaboratory and Imagining America (IA) partnered to host a think tank designed to explore two critical questions for strengthening academic-community partnerships: how to create systems for accountability in higher education; and how to ensure equity and inclusivity in external collaborations.

Introduction:
Faculty Director Erica Kohl-Arenas of Imagining America shared insights on trends in community and cultural organizing collaborations within higher education, and the importance of this work in the current socio-political landscape.

Breakout Groups Discussion notes:

I. *Building equity and inclusivity into collaborations between higher education institutions and external, community partners – the challenges and opportunities.*

Challenges:
- Semester time period difficult. Risk of no deliverable at conclusion, putting onus on professors to follow through regardless of student commitment.
- Also important to be realistic about how much staff time is taken of partner organization. The cost can be too great on community to bring student projects into a classroom setting.
- No means to make it equitable unless there are resources and a long-term MOU. Haven't found structure within teaching for that work.
- Not a meta center or staff member dedicated to carrying projects across semesters by passing them along from faculty to students. Need to also have community partner be paid and treated as part-time faculty member. Very resource intensive to build these programs. Need money to pay community partner, staff member (at The New School) plus student research assistant. Also, consider structuring course collaborations to be year-long. To get there, Deans and university leadership need to be supportive. And it starts with articulating clear proof to concepts to fundraise. The Lang Civic Liberal Arts program provides an example at the undergrad level.
- Actors within higher education have disparaged community activists, not recognizing their work as public scholarship. Many scholar activists believe higher education institutions are imperialist. This differing analysis about whether institutions can change leads to tension about whether to reform higher education from within or go outside to secure own funding for our community based work (example give of James Baldwin). Some scholar activists can be most impactful with community support and will refuse to join institutions.

- At The New School, adjuncts excluded from many aspects of the institution can replicate structures of insider - outsider with community partners.

Opportunities
- University validation can be very powerful for community work. For example, universities can support by with impact evaluation reports. For government agencies, leaning on third party studies can help validate need to build out program work.
- Wait for invitations from community partners. Rather than create or initiate projects, build structure for collaborations and then lean on partners to define and initiate projects. Community organizations need to approach and frame the issue. Then think structurally through how to address it over year-long period or beyond.
- At Groundswell - coach partnerships in how to maximize resources by laying out specific deliverables for varying time frames (i.e. you can do this in a semester, or this in a year). Examples could include draft articles on issues or designing civic engagement activities.
- Media students help with simple documentation. Organizations don't have time or resources to document their own work, especially in multi-media formats.
- Anti-eviction mapping project an example where doctoral students committed over time to support local organizing/actions with data regarding evictions (identifying bad actors as landlords or fake LLCs).
- Create a community leader in residence program. UCLA has an activist in residence: https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/activist-in-residence/.
- Design "Collaborative Sabbatical" - community partner receive stipend to work with Academic of their choice. Both have overlapping sabbatical to produce something together.

II. *How to create systems for accountability in higher education collaborations with external, community partners.*

How do you define Community Partners?
- Individuals or organizations who are actively engaged with faculty, partners and student that come from marginalized communities.
- Faculty should come out and talk about who they were partnering with, and they should invite the partners they have relations with and recognize people who others are partnering with.
- Community Outreach program - create a map of who the organizations are, the different services they provide and realize the value that students and faculty could feed into these engaged partners.
- Feedback from the partners - bring stakeholders from the community to evaluate.
- National Coalition to International Organizations for Figure of Speech as an example
  - they meet from trustees to staff to students
  - they go to the community partners offices to make it more convenient to them
  - they give the community partners visibility
  - haven't built an evaluation system yet

- ○ so far they have only tried to merge different cultures and bring people together
- The concept of "knowing who the community is" is very important
- Every project one does should be in the name of the school - how else does the community hold the university accountable.
- No one asks how the community holds the university accountable - The projects only last a semester or 12 months - students get their grades and that's the end of it. If you can't give enough time to the community how can they hold us accountable?
  - ○ We gave reports back to the community. We gave the same presentations to the community (200 people) that we gave to the faculty. That's the way to be accountable.
- We need to build individual relations. As a part time faculty, we often have no responsibility towards the school or community.

How can we model this accountability of the universities towards the community?
- Culturally it needs to be inbuilt in the school's values
  - ○ We have to adopt the idea that we are accountable - own the accountability.
  - ○ We have to see and notice the kind of people we are engaging
  - ○ We have to create a database of the partners and what are the needs they have and match them to the school's capabilities and resources
- Communities are separating and defining their issues individually. Example: BLACK community vs People of Color. There is need to be very intentional.
- Power of intergenerational learning. Build on Each Other.
- Faculty Development
  - ○ Faculty has problem with being proficient and people are self-motivated about only their own projects.
  - ○ It's a growth necessity for inter-faculty learning.
  - ○ The work is highly relational.
- We need to raise funds for community scholar programs and pay the community to come in.
- We need to create cohorts for partnerships.
- Columbia has an incredible program for community scholars. There was a meeting and 400 people from the community were present along with students from the business school. They link the communities necessities to work opportunities for these students. They have successfully created a space which is accessible to the community.
- TNS used to allow communities to use our space for events. But now its not as freely available to the community which is a loss. Community partners find it as a rejection or a barrier for acceptance.
- Bring all kinds of people in - students, faculty, community - expand the diversity. You don't want to be too elitist by raising the tuition (like the Green Mountain College). We have to find the balance - we have to mark a line, and ensure we don't cross it.
- As an ongoing job - make an inventory of the organizations you work with. This is something you can share with everyone. It is a way of archiving the breadth of work one has done and what one can do.

- "One has to be extraordinarily and purposefully deliberate about what one does."
- One could question diversity at this university. We give students credit to go out and work with these communities and not vice versa. We should create experiences and give academic credit to these community partners to come into our universities to work in this environment.