STARTING AND SUSTAINING EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS:
Two Case Studies of Intersegmental Innovation in California

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Introduction

Background and Goals

The development of partnerships that cross education segments is a strategy that extends resources and represents a promising avenue for improving student outcomes throughout the educational system. These initiatives are organized at the school district, city, county, or metropolitan level, and attempt to improve education by promoting collaboration among multiple sectors. Effective collaboration in practice can lead to enhanced student outcomes and more successful organizational strategies. Moreover, bringing together educators from different institutions that serve students from the same community offers the chance to identify common perspectives and commitments, rather than focus on differences (Henig, et al., 2015; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Moor et al., 2015).

Although public- and privately-funded programs have over the years encouraged intersegmental partnership in different ways, there are still open questions about what makes some partnerships work while others fail to take hold. There is no simple formula for what makes a partnership work. Yet case examples from the field are well worth exploring to learn what is possible in widely differing settings.

This report compares the experiences of two regional cross-sector partnerships in California—the Long Beach College Promise and the "Inland Empire" partnership comprising San Bernardino and Riverside Counties—that are building educational pathways to support student success in higher education. The initial catalyst for this study was the Governor's Incentive Awards (GIA), established in the California Governor's 2014 budget, which were designed to support educational partnerships comprising schools, community colleges, and universities. In this context, the College Futures Foundation commissioned the comparative case studies in order to gain insights into strategies for developing and sustaining multi-sector partnerships that are positioned to increasing student success across the educational pipeline from high school to bachelor's degree.

The main goals for the two case studies were the following:

- Learn why the case study institutions opted for a partnership strategy
- Understand how partnerships evolve and get to scale.
- Discover how the partnerships pursued their goals
- Explore the role of investment by external funders in promoting cross-sector partnerships

Five Key Themes

These studies were conducted by a team of researchers engaged by the College Futures Foundation who collectively brought decades of experience in multiple educational sectors to the project. After eight months of interviews, site visits, examination of student academic data, discussion, and more discussion, the researchers asked, "What did we learn about starting and sustaining partnerships?"

They began their analysis by identifying seven common themes from literature addressing educational partnerships (see the Appendix for more details). After conducting this foundational research and reexamining the literature, they found what Michael Fullan called "a remarkable convergence of theories, knowledge bases, ideas, and strategies." Building upon the literature and blending it with the researchers' findings, five key themes emerged—essential components to both initiating and sustaining an effective educational partnership that brings together the strengths of partnership members in an efficient, combined effort and enhances student success. These five themes comprise the following:

1. A partnership's **leadership** needs to be **informed by clear moral imperatives.**
2. Leaders must **understand how change processes work** within specific institutions and partnerships.
3. Leaders must be able to engage a variety of stakeholders and **build long-term relationships and coalitions** among them.
4. **Evidence and data** are vital components for both making the case for the partnership to stakeholders and informing the partnership's strategic directions.
5. Partnership leaders have to **understand how reforms and improvements fit together to enhance organizational coherence** for the stakeholders and the students who must navigate through multiple institutions.

Building upon the literature and blending it with the researchers' findings, this report summarizes what they learned from the two case studies.

Two Distinct Partnerships

These two particular regional partnerships in Long Beach and the Inland Empire were selected for investigation precisely because they differed dramatically in size, history, and other factors. In addition, they were both recently funded with $5 million Governor's Innovation Awards.

The Long Beach College Promise serves the relatively compact geographical area of a single city in the greater Los Angeles area with a very diverse population, and it involves three strong institutions: Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), Long Beach City College (LBCC), and California State University, Long Beach (CSU-LB). The partnership has a history of over 20 years, and it is well known regionally, statewide, and nationally for its student success efforts. Although the Long Beach partnership story has been told many times, this case study focused specifically on understanding the life cycle of a partnership and how it changes over time.

In contrast, the Inland Empire two-county partnership covers a landmass in southeastern California that is larger than some states in the U.S., encompassing 27,000 square miles, with a population of 4.4 million people. It is also one of the poorest regions in the country. The partnership is a new one in its current configuration, though it builds upon multiple prior sub-regional efforts. The partnership is organizationally complex—it features 58 school districts, 11 community colleges, two universities, and leaders from the private sector as well as county government. The partnership just concluded its first year of development in 2016.

There were three reasons for selecting the two particular partnerships of the Inland Empire and Long Beach for study. First, the partnerships reflect two very different regional contexts, in

terms of size, complexity, population, and local history. Second, the two partnerships offer examples that are at deeply contrasting stages of development—the Inland Empire partnership is at the beginning of its development, while the Long Beach effort is over 20 years old. Third, there is much to be learned from the well-documented successes that the Long Beach partnership has experienced, just as there are insights to be gained from the initial efforts being undertaken in the Inland Empire.

Who Should Read This Report?

This report has been crafted in order to help those who are engaged in intersegmental education partnerships throughout the country understand some of the essential elements for starting partnerships as well as activities that are critical to sustaining them. The study can be used to inform not only public and private funders interested in accelerating student success, but also institutional leaders, education practitioners, education researchers, and partner organizations at the regional level, including local government, employers, and civic organizations.

The case study method is a particularly useful tool for uncovering insights into the details and complexities of developing a partnership. In descriptions of a specific case, the narrative of time and events offers an understanding of how decisions were made and what influenced those decisions. Depicting processes in specific settings can help stakeholders in different locations reflect on similarities to and differences from their own settings. This in turn can raise questions about how the particulars of those settings can influence the ways in which general partnership strategies can be effectively implemented locally.

Given the substantial complexities involved in forming cross-sector educational partnerships, the level to which insights and findings can be generalized is somewhat limited. The process of shaping a partnership across different institutions, led by different individuals, cannot be condensed down to a single step-by-step recipe. Nonetheless, broad patterns of successful and sustainable partnerships can be determined, and the power of those patterns emerges in the ways they are adapted to local settings. Learning from another setting means understanding the principles beneath an action or structure, not trying to replicate the structure in the same way.

Organization of the Report

The first section of this report looks at the history and evolution of the Long Beach College Promise over a 20-year period. The second section examines the start-up partnership launched in the Inland Empire in 2015. Then, two appendices offer additional details on the research methodology used to investigate these partnerships and the members of the research team (Appendix A) as well as the seven key themes of effective partnerships that were derived from the research literature (Appendix B).

Finally, a cross-case analysis that further explores the key themes and lessons learned from the two case studies presented in this report can be found in its companion piece, *What Makes a Partnership Work?*

Long Beach: Partnership, Promise, and Pathways

The hard part is that there is no easy solution. People have to get comfortable with trying things, and failing, and having the ability to see things through over periods of years, not periods of weeks, or months, semesters. In between all that, there is a lot of messiness.

—Eloy Oakley, President of Long Beach City College

The story of the Long Beach College Promise and its successes have been documented in their program reports (Long Beach College Promise, 2014), sponsored research (BHEF, 2016 and Grady et. al, 2015), and national publications, including *The Atlantic Monthly* (Mongeau, 2016) and *The New York Times* (Kirp, 2015). This case study, however, focuses specifically factors that were key to initiating the partnership (termed "starters") as well as those factors that enable Long Beach to maintain an ongoing mature partnership (termed "sustainers"). For each section or stage of development, there is a description of the partnership work followed by an analysis of the contributing factors. The earlier partnership efforts in Long Beach of the Seamless Education Partnership and its evolution into the Long Beach College Promise are analyzed for starters. These starters then provide the context to understand for the current work of the Promise, which includes building academic and career-oriented pathways across the three institutions. The current pathways phase of the partnership illustrates the sustainers at work.

Overview of the Long Beach College Promise

The Long Beach College Promise is a partnership that brings together three local educational institutions—Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), Long Beach City College (LBCC) and California State University Long Beach (CSU-LB). Its mission is to provide a college education to every student in the Long Beach school district. The Promise is rooted in the belief that access to higher education will transform students' lives and strengthen the economic future of the city. The Long Beach College Promise has been nationally recognized in numerous ways, including by the White House, the Opportunity Summit, and the James Irvine Foundation in 2014 and by the U.S. Conference of Mayors in 2015.

Long Beach has a long history of educational collaboration and partnership. The Long Beach Seamless Education Partnership, established in 1994, was the first iteration of the partnership.

The Long Beach College Promise, established in 2008, built on and extended the initial collaboration. The current work of the Promise continues to extend college access to Long Beach residents and includes the development of academic and career pathways that span the three educational institutions; this work is supported by funds from the California Governor's Innovation Award (GIA).

The history in Long Beach provides insight into the lifecycle of an educational partnership. Since the partnership began in the early 1990s, there have been periods of intense collaborative activity as well as quieter times. The development of a partnership does not progress in a strictly linear fashion. The Long Beach partnership has been shaped over time by changes in the economic context, new leaders, and new opportunities. Although the central commitment to student success has never altered, the ways in which that commitment has been enacted have evolved over the years.

With more than two decades of experience, the Long Beach College Promise illustrates not only that powerful educational partnerships are possible, but also demonstrates what partnerships can accomplish that could not be done by one institution alone. Over the last 20 years, the executive leaders of the three Long Beach institutions have been strongly committed to student success and to the partnership; it is not hyperbole to describe them as "champions" of their partnership work. Moreover, the leaders stayed in their positions longer than the typical tenure of college presidents and superintendents. The average tenure of superintendents leading urban school districts across the country is now just over three years (Will, 2016), and a recent study of California community college presidents found the average tenure to be between four and five years (CCLC, 2016). In contrast, the Long Beach Unified School District has had only two superintendents in 25 years, and Long Beach City College and CSU Long Beach have both had just three presidents each in the last 20 years. This longevity of executive leadership has been a vital resource for the long-term development of the partnership.

Observing an established partnership can obscure the processes and struggles that helped the partnership reach its current successes. However, at every stage of the partnership—including the present—participating educators have acknowledged the challenges along the way. In talking with Long Beach educators about how partnership works in general and what works in their partnership, they acknowledge that the process has been "messy." However, they have been willing to invest the time and effort in developing the relationships of the partnership and in doing the work collaboratively (above and beyond existing full-time responsibilities as educators at their institutions) because they believe that this is "the right thing to do for their students."

Drivers of Partnership

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMIC BASE

The population of Long Beach changed dramatically during the second half of the 20th century. From the 1950s through the 1970s, the population of Long Beach was more than 90% non-Hispanic white. During the next two decades, the population of the city changed, with an increase in Asian and Latino immigration, as well as "white flight" from the urban center. By the 1990s, just over half of the population was non-Hispanic white. As a result of these demographic shifts, more children came to school as English language learners and more came from low-income backgrounds, presenting a significant challenge to the schools.

During that same timeframe, the city's economic base shifted as well. In post-World War II years, economic growth depended heavily on industrial development. The oil industry, the aerospace industry, shipbuilding, and the Navy were all large employers and major economic forces in the community. However, by the mid-1990s those industries decreased, downsized, or simply left. The local naval base, for example, was closed in 1997.

With a current population of 486,044 (Live Well Long Beach, 2016), Long Beach is now the seventh most populous city in California. The city is among the most diverse nationally. In the 2010 census, the population was identified as 43% Hispanic/Latino of any race, 30% non-Hispanic white, 13% African American, and 13% Asian. Long Beach has the second largest Cambodian population outside of Cambodia, as well as sizable Vietnamese and Filipino populations. About 1% of the population is Pacific Islander from Samoa and Tonga. Additionally, about 30% of the population is under the age of 18.

In Long Beach the median household income is $52,783, and per capita income is $27,149. This is lower than the California state median household income of $62,000 and per capita income of $30,000. Approximately 21% of the population lives in poverty; Long Beach has a higher poverty rate than the state of California overall, which is just 15% (census.gov, 2016).

With respect to the educational attainment of the Long Beach adult population in 2016, 21% have less than a high school degree, 19% have a high school degree or equivalency, 32% have some college or an associate's degree, and 29% have a bachelor's degree or higher (point2homes, 2106). This level of attainment in higher education is lower than the California state average of 34% (Public Policy Institute of California, 2016).

A visiting educator coming to learn more about the Long Beach College Promise might see the established educational partnership and think that the city has certain advantages. A former president of CSU Long Beach, however, anticipated this impression when he pointed out, "You can't *out-problem* Long Beach." The president of Long Beach City College noted that this is still the situation:

> *Long Beach has as many, if not more, of the urban problems that any other community has in the United States, and in some cases worse. We have some of the poorest census tracks in the state. We have problems with unemployment.*

However, recognizing the problems was the first step in their determination to address them.

COMMUNITY AND THE MORAL IMPERATIVE

From the beginning and through the ongoing development of the Long Beach College Promise, economic motivators were underscored by a deeply held moral imperative: to increase and support educational opportunities were the right things to do for the community, for families, and for students in the local schools.

In 1992, facing economic shifts, demographic changes, and increasing local unrest, the mayor of Long Beach brought people together to chart a new economic path. Civic, business, and education leaders were invited to create a community partnership that was conceived to foster economic development, education development, and public safety. The education partnership was seen as a vital component that would mirror and support the economic partnership. *A Call to*

Action, a report written at the request of the mayor at the time, explicitly highlighted education at a "pre-requisite to economic growth." (Business Higher Education Fund, 2009)

A less concrete characteristic of the community generated emotional investment in the partnership. Although Long Beach is a sizable city and the educational institutions are large-scale, people often describe the region in terms of a smaller, more connected community. This inclusive sense of community has been described in other research (Grady, et al, 2015) and surfaced frequently in interviews conducted for this study. A lot of people who grow up in Long Beach choose to stay or return after education and experiences in other places. Many of the educators in the schools—including the superintendent—and colleges went to local K-12 schools or attended college at LBCC or CSU-LB. As such, they know what the system looks like from multiple perspectives. Several of the educators who spoke about working in Long Beach schools and colleges said, "The kids you're teaching are your neighbor's kids. … The kids you're working with are your friends' kids.*"

Although there are people who come from outside the Long Beach area, the sense of community extends to include them. The long-time "insiders" who grew up in the area, attended a local college, and continue to work across the education system invite these newcomers in rather than exclude them.

Three Educational Institutions

The three educational partners in the Long Beach Promise—Long Beach Unified School District, Long Beach City College, and California State University, Long Beach—are strong institutions that continue to work to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of their students. Each institution has been recognized nationally and/or statewide. The strengths of the individual educational institutions contribute to the partnership, and participation in the partnership gives the schools and colleges the opportunity to enhance the success of their students. In this way, the work of the individual institutions and their participation in the partnership are mutually supportive. In addition, the three institutions are in close geographic proximity and have overlapping catchment areas.

LONG BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) is the third-largest school district in California and educates about 75,000 students, from preschool to high school, in 84 public schools with 12,000 full- and part-time employees. The student population reflects the diversity of the city and is about 56% Hispanic/Latino, 14% African American, 13% white, 7% Asian, 3% Filipino, fewer than 2% Pacific Islander, fewer than 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and about 4% other. Students come from families speaking over 45 languages, and approximately 20% of all students are English language learners. Sixty-nine percent of the students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds (LBUSD, 2016).

The graduation rate across the district in 2013-2014 was 81%, on a par with the national average, though six high schools had graduation rates above 90%. Students of color in Long Beach schools are outperforming their peers countywide and statewide (Ruhl, 2015). The school district's African American graduation rate is 74%, surpassing California's average of 68% for the same population. LBUSD's Latino students graduated at a rate of 79%, compared to the

state's 76% average for the Latino students. About 33% of Long Beach high school graduates complete the college preparatory A-G requirements that qualify them for CSU or University of California (UC) entry (Ed Data, 2016).

LBUSD has been named one of the world's top 20 school systems by the Battelle for Kids Global Education Study and one of the top three in the U.S. in terms of sustained and significant improvements. The school district has been a five-time finalist for the Broad Prize for Urban Education and was named the national winner in 2003. In 2004, LBUSD received a second grant from the Broad Foundation for $1.14 million to continue their efforts to improve the organization of the district's schools (LBUSD, 2016).

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

Long Beach City College enrollment is approximately 25, 000 students; the demographic profile of the student body mirrors the district K-12 schools and the broader community. Fifty-five percent of the student body is Hispanic/Latino; in the 2010-2011 academic year, the Latino population was approximately 40% of the student body; this has increased to 55% over the last five years. Of the remaining student population, 14% is white, 13% African American, 13% Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipino, 4% multi-ethnic, fewer than 1% Native American/Alaskan Native, and fewer than 1% unknown/Unreported (LBCC, 2016).

The retention rate for full-time students who started in fall 2012 and returned in fall 2013 was 73%; part-time retention rate was 51%. The overall graduation and transfer rate for the college is 27% after four years, and goes up to 42% after six years (LBCC, 2016 and Ruiz, 2015). During the 2013-2014 academic year LBCC produced over 900 CSU transfer-eligible students, with more than 450 qualified to transfer to CSU-LB. However, the college is not satisfied with these completion and transfer rates. In 2015, for example, only 4% of LBCC students were on track to receive an Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) in two years. In a State of the College speech that year, the President characterized this transfer rate as "unacceptable" (Ruiz, 2015).

Long Beach City College pioneered an alternate process for assessing and placing students upon initial enrollment. In 2011, the LBCC institutional research office examined correlates with academic success in college level courses. It became clear that the results of the standardized placement exam used by the college at that time were weak predictors of students' actual performance in LBCC courses. Student high school achievement—specifically grade point average (GPA) and last grade in the discipline courses (English and math)—proved to be a more accurate predictor. In light of this information, LBCC implemented an alternate placement process that replaced the standardized exam with multiple measures that included high school GPA. This innovation has decreased enrollment in developmental math and English classes, reducing the time required for students to achieve certificates/degrees or transfer to a four-year institution. The evidence-based multiple measures placement model developed by LBCC has recently become the basis for an initiative across the California Community College system (Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, 2106).

LBCC's work—including the Promise Pathway, an academic support program that is part of the Long Beach College Promise, and the alternate placement process—has been recognized via numerous awards, including the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) Excellence in College Research (2012), the Association of Community College Trustees Pacific Region Equity Award (2013), the James Irvine Foundation Leadership

Award (2014), and the Association of California Community College Administrators Mertes Award for Excellence in Community College Research (2014) (LBCC, Promise Pathways, 2016).

One more major contribution of Long Beach City College to California community colleges is that Eloy Ortiz Oakley, LBCC president from 2007-2016 and himself a community college graduate, became the Chancellor of the California Community College system in January 2017.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

In fall 2015, over 37,000 students enrolled in California State University, Long Beach, including over 5,000 post-baccalaureate graduate students. Of the undergraduate population, 39% are Latino, 23% Asian/Pacific Islander, 19 % white, and 4% African American. Additionally, close to 7% are international students, 5% identify as two or more races, and 4% are listed as unknown (CSU-LB, 2016).

Inspired by a 2005 study of graduation rates conducted by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the Education Trust, CSU-LB set local goals to increase college retention and completion rates for all ethnic, gender, and other major student subgroups. The Highly Valued Degree Initiative (HVDI) was a comprehensive, campus-wide approach informed by data that included planning, hiring, advising, student support, and reform to curriculum and pedagogy. The outcome of the HVDI was a 20% increase in baccalaureate graduation rates; CSU-LB's 1999 graduation rate of 26% increased to 46% in 2005 (CSU-LB, 2016). Furthermore, the gap in graduation rates between first-time college-goers and other typically underrepresented students and the rest of the university was reduced by nearly one-half, and achievement gaps among low-income students were reduced by a similar amount. An educator involved in the program noted in a recent article that the gains were not due to changing who was accepted to the college. Rather, "because of the [Long Beach] partnership, local access was protected, and CSU-LB has become even more diverse, enrolling even more Pell students while entering SAT scores remain nearly flat. Gains in completion made by CSU-LB have little to do with selectivity" (CSU-LB, 2016).

It is also noteworthy that these increases in graduation rates happened during a period of major cuts to public higher education budgets. Graduation rates at CSU-LB have continued to increase, and are now at 67%, which is 20 percentage points above the national average, with no gaps for low-income nor underrepresented students. CSU-LB is ranked eighth nationally in awarding bachelor's degrees to minority students and first nationally in awarding graduate mathematics and statistics degrees to minority students.

CSU-LB is repeatedly ranked as "One of the Top Five Public Comprehensive Universities in the Western United States" by *U.S. News & World Report's* America's Best Colleges Guide. In 2014-15, CSU-LB received the Excellence and Innovation Award for Student Success and College Completion from the AASCU. Moreover, in 2016, the Education Trust commended Long Beach for reducing the opportunity gap (CSU-LB, 2016).

Development of the Long Beach Educational Partnership

THE LONG BEACH SEAMLESS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

In 1994, the leaders of the Long Beach Unified School District, Long Beach City College, and the California State University, Long Beach established the Long Beach Seamless Education Partnership. These leaders came together to ensure that more local Long Beach students would graduate from high school prepared for college and that more LBUSD graduates would both attend and complete college.

The beginning of the partnership was not easy. A CSU-LB executive leader who has participated since the beginning of the partnership reflected on the initiative's history and described the a retreat of education leaders organized by the community partnership:

> [The conversation] started with finger-pointing. The university complained about the quality of students coming to the university, and the school district pointed out that the university prepares teachers. Finally—it took about a year of meeting for something substantive to happen—the logjam was broken when someone suggested a positive direction and specific steps.

Initially, there was a sense of general agreement among the leaders about the possibilities of establishing the educational partnership. However, in contrast to traditional planning procedures, they did not start by producing and signing a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU). Instead, they decided instead to establish relationships and let the partnership take shape as it evolved. As later described in a report by the Business-Higher Education Forum, "the group believed that continuous and open communication among the three institutions was essential and that it was not necessary to bind leaders to this commitment through paper" (2009).

One of the major developments of the Seamless Education Partnership was CSU-LB and LBUSD jointly focusing on teacher preparation and working together to equip teachers for the urban Long Beach schools. This focus was facilitated by some personal connections between individuals in the school district office and CSU-LB's College of Education. The schools and the university shared responsibility for expanded teacher training. The College of Education organized opportunities for K-12 teachers and administrators to be residents on campus and work collaboratively with college faculty. As a result of the collaborative work, teacher education students were provided early experiences in diverse urban classrooms. Instead of spending a single semester as a student-teacher, which is the common national practice, Long Beach elementary teachers conducted a whole year of student-teaching, with strengthened attention to science and math instruction. In addition, CSU-LB created graduate programs—a master's and education leadership doctorate (EDD)—for K-12 and community college educators.

One of the early areas of collaboration across the three institutions was the use of the Early Assessment Program (EAP). EAP measured college readiness of 11th graders to allow them time to improve their skills in their senior year if needed. District teachers and university faculty jointly designed EAP courses that were taught in high school. LBUSD was the first district in the state to mandate use of the Early Assessment Program, and LBCC was one of the first community colleges to accept EAP for placement.

TRANSITION TO THE LONG BEACH COLLEGE PROMISE

The anchor in Long Beach is the Long Beach College Promise, it's the mission of the Promise that permeates the region and holds the partnership's work together. After the initial

establishment of the Seamless Education Partnership, in the early 2000s, there was a period of time that a few educators described as "dormant" or "inactive." As one long term executive leader recalled:

> *For a period of years, the people who populated that committee were really just a committee of interested folks without much leverage to make things happen. ...[T]he good relationships continued and small projects continued, but there were not really major strategic activities.*

New leaders in the mid-2000s took the opportunity to reshape the partnership. In 2007, Eloy Ortiz Oakley became President and Superintendent of Long Beach City College; at that time, F. King Alexander was also relatively new to the presidency of CSU Long Beach. Chris Steinhauser, who had come up through various positions in the K-12 district, had been promoted to Superintendent of Long Beach Unified School District in 2002. The three leaders saw both the need and the opportunity to revitalize the educational partnership. One of them described:

> *When we got together, we immediately all agreed ... that we needed to do something at a different level, and something that really codified our partnership and articulated outcomes, what we wanted to achieve, and to hold ourselves accountable to those outcomes.*

Once again, economics was a driving factor. In 2008, the city of Long Beach, the state, and the country were in the middle of the worst recession since the great depression. LBUSD had been working to increase college preparedness among their high school graduates, and results of these efforts were becoming evident, with more students graduating college-ready. In addition, increasing numbers of Long Beach City College students who were ready to transfer wanted access to CSU-LB. However, CSU-LB was already becoming impacted. Seeking ideas for the next stage of the partnership, the Long Beach education leaders looked nationally for models. One of the executive leaders noted:

> *The Kalamazoo Promise had already popped up in Michigan, so that word had already bounced around higher ed[ucation]. That's what we latched onto.*

In shaping and defining the Long Beach College Promise, the leaders came together around a vision that supported college preparation, access, and success for all students in the community. In 2008, the leaders of the three educational institutions jointly codified the Long Beach College Promise. A memorandum of understanding committed the three institutions to providing local students with greater opportunities to complete their higher education (Long Beach College Promise, 2016).

Access to higher education for local Long Beach high school students was at the heart of the Promise at that time. As such, it offered a tuition-free first semester for all local high school graduates at LBCC and guaranteed admission to CSU-LB for students who completed minimum college preparation or community college transfer requirements. Minimum requirements for entry to CSU-LB after high school graduation included completion of the comprehensive pattern of college preparatory subject requirements (known as A-G) with a grade of C or better and meeting the minimum CSU-LB Index, a formula that includes college preparatory GPA plus SAT critical reading and math scores (CSU-LB, 2016).

Although guaranteed entry and a tuition-free semester is perhaps the most commonly known and visible characteristic of the Long Beach College Promise, the educators knew that there needed

to be an accompanying comprehensive program of increased college awareness and parent outreach in the community. The partners thus instituted early and continued efforts to inform students and families about college opportunities. Through this work, the vision of attending college starts in Long Beach elementary schools, when 4th and 5th grade students take campus tours of LBCC and CSU-LB. In middle school, students and their families can sign the College Promise Pledge, at which point they gain access to ongoing information about college readiness. High school students also receive access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses, which enable high school students to earn college credits, and reduced AP test fees (Ling Beach College Promise, 2016).

In addition, to truly realize the promise of full access to higher education, the partners needed to strengthen student support through counseling and academics. Work in this area included literacy development, early algebra readiness, completion of mathematics requirements, and expansion of existing academic programs such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Advanced Placement courses. LBUSD students who enroll at LBCC, have signed a contract, and taken rigorous college-prep coursework can participate in the Promise Pathways Program that offers academic support and guaranteed access to courses that lead students to their goals.

CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO ACCESS AND SUCCESS

All three executive leaders gave a clear, unified message that student success was their priority. The ideas of the Promise and student success were underscored in talks inside the institutions and outreach to the community. As one of the leaders said:

> *The intent is to ensure that we get the message out to everybody. I think the power of us being visible together is the power of communicating a succinct message to the community: that education is the number-one priority here.*

The school district and the community college have clear incentives for participation in a cross-institution partnership that supports their missions, as access to the local California State University is an obvious benefit for their students. CSUs, however, and particularly campuses like CSU-LB that are impacted, have fewer incentives to partner with local schools and community colleges. Four-year institutions may also face structural and cultural barriers that discourage partnering. CSU-LB receives more than 90,000 applications each year for an entering class of approximately 8,000 students. As such, maintaining access for Long Beach students requires a moral commitment from the institution. An executive leader at CSU-LB described what that commitment means to the college:

> *[Students] understand that if they complete the requirements, that they will have a seat. I mean, that's a big deal, because we protected local access far more than pretty much anybody, anywhere, and that's a big philosophical commitment.*

The CSU-LB provost reflected on his experience in another position on campus and described how as a single individual, he could still maintain the institutional commitment and moral imperative of the Promise:

> *[A]t that time, … I was in charge of admissions. It would've been the easiest thing in the world for me to move admissions in a much more selective direction, but that was philosophically not where I wanted to go. I played a pretty important role by not moving in that direction at that time.*

SUSTAINING THE WORK OF THE PROMISE

The engagement of the three institutions' presidents and superintendents was clear in the establishment of the Long College Beach Promise. The next level of executive leadership—vice presidents and assistant superintendents—in each institution are now responsible for maintaining the strategies and policies of the Promise across the institutions. An assistant superintendent reflected on what it has meant to make the Promise real for schools and students:

> [I]t changed a little bit, from "it's nice that we're collaborating" to "we've made a promise here." It was much more of a moral imperative than the Seamless Partnership was, ... because we have a promise about where we're going to send our students. If we don't send them prepared, it's a hollow promise, ... [and] preparing our students for a place that's not there for them is just as hollow.

Furthermore, a vice president at LBCC described how different it has been to work at an educational institution that makes the idea of partnership real, not just an add-on that gets written into grants. The vice president shared:

> [W]hen we sit in a room, I care as much about the needs of Long Beach Unified and Cal State Long Beach, as I do about what we have to—what we're trying to achieve at Long Beach City [College]. It's that level of, really, we own students across the three institutions. We have conversations about what meets the needs of all three. ... I think it's really ... believing that we're only successful if we are all successful.

The nature of the Long Beach partnership continues to grow and expand. The Long Beach College Promise MOU was renewed and expanded in 2014 to include the Mayor's Office and increase work-based learning opportunities in the community. Additionally, in 2015, the period of free tuition at LBCC increased from one semester to one year.

Taking the Promise to the Next Level

In looking back over more than 20 years of partnership history in Long Beach, it is possible to see the evolution and lifecycle of a partnership. The Long Beach Seamless Education Partnership was more a "coalition of the willing" than a full-fledged partnership, with only a number of small voluntary efforts within a shared curricular focus. In particular, the Seamless Education Partnership focused on preparing teachers for Long Beach K-12 schools. Much of those early efforts have now become standard practice in the CSU-LB College of Education.

As noted earlier, that work was followed by a quiet period without strategic focus. The partnership was reinvigorated with new leadership as the Long Beach College Promise in 2008, with a broader mandate to increase college preparation and access.

In the last three to four years, another wave of leaders have risen to take on the collaborative work of the Long Beach College Promise. A group of the next-level of executive leaders—vice presidents at LBCC, assistant superintendents at LBUSD, and associate vice presidents at CSU-LB— several of whom new to the institutions or to their positions, have taken on the responsibility of becoming the steering committee of the Long Beach College Promise. The current steering committee comprises two educators from each of the three institutions. This group meets regularly every three to four weeks, as well as maintains informal contact at various

times, as their work is closely interconnected. One member described the close working relationships on the committee:

> The group that we now have is fully committed and we work well together. We have a shared commitment to the work and a respect for each other that I think is accelerating the work.

Over the last several years, each of the three partner institutions has received numerous grants and initiated various projects related to increasing student success. In the past, one of the leaders noted, such grants "tended to be done in isolation." However, the steering committee is now conducting a concerted attempt to coordinate these separate efforts in a manner that underscores the common goals of the Long Beach College Promise. In particular, receiving the $5 million Governor's Innovation Award in 2015 gave Long Beach a major opportunity to advance work across the three institutions and directly engage a wide range of educators in the effort.

One steering committee member described these coordination efforts:

> We've made a real concerted effort over the last year and a half to coordinate everything. The pathways [and] the action plans are being created[and] are being built within a Linked Learning framework that is being aligned to the work that's happening in the Linked Learning regional hub that we're a part of. We have a new Bridging the Gap grant through the James Irvine Foundation. That's being overlaid on the work on the regional hub and the pathways, where we've connected everything together. Our council—the representatives up to the provost at Cal State Long Beach, our vice presidents, and then the assistant superintendents—are represented on these different bodies. We're having the same conversations across the three areas—the three or four different major programs. Then we're connecting all of the programs together. Everything that we do is really a coordinated effort, instead of being parallel activities. That's new for us.

Nevertheless, the steering committee recognizes that there are faculty who remain unaware of the work of the Promise, as well as others who resist the work of the partnership. They know that some higher education faculty members feel that the move to graduate more students undermines their autonomy and their perceptions of the role of education. A steering committee member noted:

> These [student success] efforts by the administration are often perceived by faculty as anti-education, … that we are just "speed graduating" our students…. But this is not about speed graduating anybody, because any student should be able to get a pretty good and comprehensive education in 120 units.

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

Effective implementation of the Promise requires broad faculty engagement across the institutions. Early efforts started small, such as the creation of events in which faculty could meet colleagues across the system. In 2011, the movement to increase faculty engagement in the Promise began with an annual faculty symposium for about 100 educators, including about 30 participants from each institution. The intent of this endeavor was to provide a general overview of what happening through the Promise, and, in the spirit of building relationships, give faculty from all three institutions a chance to interact with colleagues in their subject area. A topic

relevant to one institution that educators at other institutions might not know about provided a point of discussion. One of the organizers reviewed the topics discussed at the symposium and commented:

> *We've covered Common Core. We've had all the faculty be exposed to the Common Core model. We covered the multiple measures assessment. … We talked about the coalition agenda.*

MOVING THE PROMISE FORWARD VIA CROSS-SECTOR PATHWAYS

The first four years of faculty symposia focused on cultivating conversations and building relationships; they did not have common projects or products. In 2015, the Governor's Innovation Award provided the resources to advance the cross-institutional agenda and engage a wider range of educators. In particular, GIA funds have supported the creation of continuous—one could say seamless—pathways for different disciplinary areas or careers, tracing the courses and requirements from high school through higher education, with clearly marked paths through LBCC and CSU-LB. Development of such pathways has required the participation of educators from both the schools and colleges.

The Promise's steering committee was deliberate in choosing the first eight pathways in this endeavor: life and physical sciences, engineering, liberal arts, education, health, business administration, and English and mathematics remediation. Business and liberal arts are particularly popular majors for students transferring from LBCC to CSU-LB. The pathways also address growing workforce areas, including health, STEM, and engineering. The two remedial areas were included because of the shared perception (supported by data) that they present obstacles to students progressing through the system. An LBCC leader recalled:

> *[E]ither there was already something that existed, or there was opportunity at Cal State Long Beach for students. In other words, they had space for our transfer students, and they had very cool opportunities for students, like research opportunities and STEM and engineering. The School of Education has room for more transfers, so that was one of the pathways. … Of course, English and math remediation just is going be an ongoing issue for all three institutions to try to close those gaps, and close that disproportionate impact that we see for students*

For each pathway, nine educators comprise a team: a faculty member, an administrator, and a counselor or advisor from each institution. All three perspectives are needed. Faculty are needed to address content and the sequencing of learning outcomes through courses across the institutions. Counselors and advisors are needed to understand how to convey information to students, and they also often to bring in the students' perspective. Including counselors' participation in the planning conversations also means that student support can be built in to any interventions, as opposed to being added on later. Finally, administrators—deans, curriculum leads, and program directors—are needed to introduce the institutional perspective of how to implement changes at a broad, policy level.

Using this structure, two conceptual frameworks were integrated into pathways planning and development: Linked Learning and "design thinking." These frameworks came from external sources, when educational partners received grants and participated in professional learning activities supported by those grants. The grants provided not only funds, but also resources and the chance to see how these resources were implemented in other settings.

Linked Learning is a college and career-readiness approach that was developed and supported by the James Irvine Foundation (Linked Learning, 2016). The principles of Linked Learning include rigorous academics that meet college-ready standards with sequenced, high-quality career-technical education, work-based learning, and comprehensive supports to help students stay on track. The work-related theme provides a practical lens for students to learn academic content. One educator described the intent of Linked Learning:

> *It's the idea that all students will be prepared to meet CSU and UC standards within the lens of an industry theme, making the material more relevant to student.*

Long Beach Unified School District has been part of Linked Learning for many years, starting as one of the project's nine pilot districts in 2009. Today, the 10 Long Beach district high schools have created theme-based academies that focus on industry sectors such as hospitality, tourism, recreation, engineering and design, law and legal services, biotechnology research and development, architecture and construction, information technology, environmental studies, international trade, business, and communication.

As part of a Linked Learning grant, LBUSD educators had the opportunity to connect with the Stanford University School of Design and gain hands-on experience with the institution's unique brand of "design thinking." The design thinking process is adapted from engineering and innovative product development. It is a problem-solving methodology that engages both analytic thinking and wide-ranging imagination. The process begins with a clear definition of the problem to be addressed, accompanied by research to understand the problem. The middle stages of design thinking include open-ended brainstorming of possible solutions and repeated attempts at prototyping alternate approaches. This process repeats and is refined until a final product is created (dschool, 2016).

A key characteristic of design thinking is that it keeps the user (or student) in the center of the work. One of the LBUSD leaders who promoted the inclusion of design thinking observed that it helped teams think about the students, although students have not been directly engaged in designing pathways. The steering committee member describes the questions the team asked themselves:

> *"Is this what our students would need? We need to find out what their needs are. We need to look at what the data is telling us." I see a change in their approach. … They're not yet deploying the process as it is in its pure form, but the conversation has definitely shifted.*

The Unique Path of Each Pathway Team: Year 1

In the first year of the pathways project, academic year 2015-16, the pathways teams were directed to find common language, identify leaks in the pipeline, and begin to map out a course sequence for students moving through all three institutions. Directions to the teams tried to reach a balance between providing general guidelines and making space for authentic conversation. Pathway teams met as a large group five times during the academic year, and some teams met between those events.

The practicality and principles of Linked Learning provided a framework that guided the development of the pathways. Teams mapped out the four Linked Learning dimensions to be included in designing the cross-institutional course sequence: rigorous academics, technical skills, work-based learning, and student support.

At the faculty symposium in late spring 2016, the teams summed up what they had learned during the year and presented their action plans for the coming year. Each team highlighted their particular disciplinary characteristics, gaps, and challenges. The business administration team found out that the associate degree for transfer (ADT) has two math options, but only one of them matches requirements for the business major at CSU-LB. In addition, they suggested that students would be well advised to take statistics before coming to CSU-LB.

Another team found that although there are seven or eight engineering programs at CSU-LB, the pre-engineering courses at LBCC lead to only one of those programs, and the smallest one at that. Upon this realization, the team began to look at developing a pathway that instead leads to the largest CSU-LB engineering program.

The life and physical science team realized that although 70% of students may be calculus-ready, only 30% were prepared for college chemistry classes. Informed by what they had learned about multiple measures, they planned to seek alternate assessments of chemistry readiness.

Students across all of the institutions may be interested in teaching, particularly elementary school teaching, but there were few points in the system where students could identify as future teachers. Because teaching certification is a post-graduate program, rather than an undergraduate degree, the education team built up "future teacher" clubs at all three institutions. They organized events to connect students across different levels. The team envisions the continuity of clubs as becoming a tradition. Ideally, students will go through the pathway of clubs and courses, then into a teacher preparation program, and finally come back and teach in the Long Beach Schools.

At the same time, the health team realized that there were multiple healthcare careers options, and students often were not aware of the range of possibilities. The team began identifying foundational courses, such as medical terminology, that could be offered via concurrent enrollment, so high school students could take those courses early and apply them to any number of career pathways. In addition, when the team started to map out the overlapping internship/mentorship opportunities that different schools offered, they were often found to be located in the same community health resource without knowing it. The team plans to work toward developing cross-institutional internships.

With 67 majors, the liberal arts team decided to initially trail-blaze one major, history, and then use that as a model for other majors. As part of the development of the history pathway, they created two dual enrollment summer courses at the high school so that students who successfully completed one of those courses would start LBCC with three college credits. They plan to seek other opportunities for concurrent enrollment between the three institutions.

Mathematics and English remediation are considered an ongoing problem. As an area of overlapping academics, both teams are looking at ways to use concurrent enrollment to give students a greater chance to succeed, particularly between high school and LBCC. One LBCC executive leader described building more student support into concurrent enrollment courses so that students would be more aware and better prepared to meet expectations of what a college course entails:

> [W]e increased the number of concurrent enrollment courses that we're offering. We have built in tutoring for all of those courses. We've built in mandatory orientations up-front to help students understand the requirements, how college works, and we have

strengthened our communication model to notify students of important dates such as drop dates and midterms.

In particular, the English remediation team began by identifying reading and writing skills students would need in any discipline, not just to pass college-level English classes. The team wants students to be able to see the continuity of learning experiences in English courses across the institutions. They plan to compare course outlines and work to align exit and entry skills across the sequence.

Because math remediation is a major concern at all three institutions, this team is focused on developing additional concurrent enrollment opportunities. In this way, high school students could, for example, take statistics or LBCC developmental math courses *before* enrolling at LBCC. The team is excited to create a math modeling class for juniors and seniors that carries high school and college credit. They are also working towards ensuring consistent learning outcomes in all algebra courses at the three institutions.

The pathway examples above illustrate what is possible when educators from different institutions understand what goes on in their partner institutions and work together to build a coherent educational experience for their students. The pathway teams are not only cross-institutional, they are cross-functional and include different perspectives on the student experience. Reflecting on the process of finding their way as a team and learning across boundaries, one participant said:

> *I think we still live in a certain number—a certain level of silos, at times. [In the pathways project],… we are learning so much about what each other is doing that we didn't know we were doing before.*

A member of the health pathway amplified this perspective, describing the common commitment to supporting student success:

> *I think the first couple of meetings, it was really a matter of us understanding … what we each do and just even the connections that we have. … [It was] really underpinned by [the fact that] we all wanted students to succeed. We all had had various backgrounds that we had seen students either be successful or be not unsuccessful, and [we all] had a desire to seeing more prevalence of success.*

Another leader further described challenges in the cross-institutional work and the vital role that faculty play in working on academic issues across institutions:

> *[C]hange conversations have to be integrated into the instructional areas. … If you look at trying to move students across institutions, what you find is that the hard work is aligning what they've learned and the learning outcomes across institutions.*

Next Steps for Pathways

At the end of the first year, each team mapped their progress on an implementation matrix that cross-walked elements from the stages of the design thinking process with the Linked Learning principles. The matrix gave each team feedback on the good work they had done and the areas in which they could grow. As the pathways move into their second year, one educator anticipated the challenges of the next stage, commenting, "The biggest challenges are maybe to move from conversations to implementation."

In addition to the pathways under development and the roles that counselors and advisors play in that process, there is a parallel cross-institutional bridge called the "vertical counseling group." Over the last few years, counselors and advisors have met to align counseling across the institutions. They addressed similar issues of common language and common goals. An administrator who has been involved in this effort described:

> *The first thing we did is we sat down and created a terminology handbook, working through just how we talk to each other... A high school counselor is very different from a community college counselor. What we've built from that is we have regular meetings each year where we bring counselors and advisors together from the three institutions.*

Initially, Promise leaders planned for the first eight pathways to develop over the course of one year and then expand into to other disciplinary areas. However, as the steering committee observed and responded to the progress made thus far, they decided to have the first pathways continue in development for a second year.

In this second year, all of the teams will create products—each pathway team will create a visual, virtual map of course sequences that students who want to pursue that field could take, starting in high school and moving through Long Beach City College and/or CSU-LB. The maps will have links to information about pursuing a field or career and will be available online to students and families as well as to counselors and faculty. Furthermore, in the second year, the steering committee will continue to provide teams with data, resources, and scheduled working group events. The collaborative team experiences and the concrete products will be models to onboard future pathways.

Analysis of Starter Factors in Long Beach

The literature on educational partnership, as summarized in this report's Appendix B, typically includes a list of essential "components," "factors," or "ingredients," depending on the metaphor applied. Too often these essentials—leadership, common goals, relationships, communication, data, levels of collaboration, and more—are reduced or simplified down to a check list that does not do justice to the complexity or the hands-on messiness that these processes entail.

For example, a summary of the beginnings of the Long Beach College Promise can make the process of partnership sound easy or obvious. It wasn't, and the people who lived through it are the first ones to say so. There were obstacles first to establishing the relationships between the partners and then to doing the work of the partnership that would support student success. There were structural obstacles in working across the three institutions; each one has its own policy context, data management system, job descriptions, and accountability system. There were cultural differences to address as well. In higher education, for example, the faculty has a

tradition of autonomy and there are few incentives for collaboration with colleagues around curriculum or pedagogy.

By delving into the nuances of the partnership experiences in both Long Beach and the Inland Empire, the researchers were able to identify five factors common to successfully launching a partnership. The five factors identified as starters include the following:

1. Leadership—role of leaders, particularly executive leaders
2. Drivers and incentives—motivations for initiating the partnership
3. Resources—use of both internal and external resources
4. Relationships—personal connections and building trust
5. Looking inward, looking outward—understanding the local context as well as looking outward for ideas, models, and possibilities that could fit the local setting.

Each of these starter factors are analyzed in the sections that follow.

LEADERSHIP

In research literature and in practice, effective leadership is always noted as essential to partnerships, and, in fact, to any change initiatives in education. In Long Beach, the executive leaders of the three institutions were central movers in creating the educational partnership. They jointly created a working partnership of their institutions. Additionally, in the early stages of the Seamless Education Partnership, the Long Beach Foundation served as a "backbone organization" and convener, with a joint position in the schools that was funded by all three institutions. However, it was the institutional leaders that made the partnership work. They took time to develop relationships and build trust as the partnership took shape. The vision and commitment of the three initial presidents/superintendents committed institutional resources and made student success—the ultimate goal of the partnership—visible on their campuses and in the community.

The founding story of the Long Beach Seamless Education Partnership, and ultimately the Long Beach College Promise, highlights the central role that executive leaders played. However, the strong executive leadership also had costs. At the LBCC, for example, some faculty and staff perceived the Promise initiatives as a mandate from the administration. One person described:

> [I]t seemed like [the Promise] came completely from the top down. There was this perception that … faculty were not as involved, [that the Promise] was something that the administration wanted to do, and it was done, and that was sort of it. … It's almost like a cautionary tale.

As noted previously, more than 10 years after the initial stages of the Seamless Education Partnership, new leaders took the opportunity to reinvigorate and refocus the partnership. Their shared vision in creating the Long Beach College Promise shaped the actions of educators across the institutions. The executive leaders are exemplary individuals on their campuses, directing attention and resources and as a group collaborating to shape their common agenda.

Two key characteristics of the executive leadership in Long Beach institutions are continuity and stability. This pattern of longevity in leadership contrasts starkly with the volatility and short-lived tenure of most college presidents and school superintendents—not only in California, but across the country. The president of Long Beach City College described the vital importance of continuity in leadership in making sustainable changes:

> *I served under the last president, so that kind of stability helps to allow programs, initiatives to roll out and to stick. I think without that longevity, and without that commitment on the part of the college president, the superintendent, the community members, the members of the governing boards, without that commitment, things tend to snap back after a personality comes in and gets something going.*

This kind of longevity requires both individuals and the governing boards that hire leaders to choose those with a long time-frame and to make clear that their work is to continue what is in place, not to disrupt it. Many, although not all, executive-level leaders in the Long Beach Unified School District and at LBCC have worked in the local system and are hired from within. The superintendent of Long Beach Unified School District, as noted above, had not only been a student in Long Beach schools, but he had also worked up the ladder from teacher's aide to teacher, from principal to area superintendent, to central office director and deputy superintendent. He was also a parent of a school child in Long Beach. As such, in his role as superintendent, he understands what the local system looks like at all levels.

DRIVERS AND INCENTIVES

As described above, the main drivers motivating the Long Beach partnership were the community's need to respond to changes in demographics and economics. Community leaders were organizing and saw education as an important partner in the process. Underlining the economic need was a sense of moral imperative—it was not only pragmatic to support increased educational opportunity, it was the right thing to do.

RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

Relationships and trust among Long Beach's executive leaders—presidents, superintendents, vice presidents, and assistant superintendents—developed as part of the evolution of the partnership. In various interviews, people pointed out that the educators who worked with colleagues at other schools or colleges needed time to get to know each other and develop relationships. As colleagues talked, made decisions together, and followed up on agreements, relationships deepened and trust grew.

A LBUSD leader noted, "My superintendent has the simplest of sayings, but it really applies here: it's all about relationships." In interviews, several educators at different levels of the institutions described relationships with colleagues across institutions in practical terms, saying, "If I need something/ if I have a question/ if something isn't working, … I can pick up the phone and call my colleague at the partner institution. They'll answer." They feel confident, based on past experiences, that colleagues at their partner institutions will respond and work with them.

Relationships make up the connective tissue of the Long Beach College Promise. The very premise of a partnership is that one does not do the work alone. Relationships and trust across institutions grow over time. When the Seamless Education Partnership started, the leaders allowed time to develop mutual trust before signing a formal memorandum of understanding. Trust grows as educators work together, get to know each other, establish communication, and follow through on commitments.

A telling description points out that the Promise participants were not naïve about what collaboration entails. Trust means that they can share things that are hard and be open about their needs and agendas. One leader said of working with colleagues across institutions:

> *There's a level of acceptance of honesty that we all have agendas we have to deal with, and there's politics. We can put those on the table and work through them.*

RESOURCES

When the presidents and superintendents committed their institutions to the collaborative work of the Promise, they allocated internal resources to the project. They were also well positioned to bring in external resources. Long Beach's innovation and successes attracted national attention and support, including grants from national/state agencies and private foundations. Grants can be used to support and expand local work already under way. However, one participant summed up in cautionary terms the tension between the benefits of external funding and the dangers of being too tempted by those dollars:

> *Sometimes monies can come in that have nothing to do with what you're doing. Then, if you start to chase dollars, then you get away from your vision and your goal. For instance, since Linked Learning, that support that we had from [the] Irvine[Foundation] was very, very, very important, but, during the recession, … we lost almost 1,000 teachers during the budget crunch, but we didn't drop Linked Learning. We stayed the course on that. It slowed it down. It certainly had an effect on what we're doing, but it didn't change. We still stayed committed to the Linked Learning goal.*

External grants have been valuable to partnerships not only for the funding itself, but as much for the chance to engage with resources, gain new ideas, and see how theories are enacted in different settings. Models, strategies, and frameworks gained from external sources strengthen the work of the partnership and connect it to other work regionally and nationally. This kind of continued interaction with external work gives members of the Long Beach College Promise the opportunity to continue to introduce new ideas as well as share what they have learned from applying models in practice.

LOOKING INWARD, LOOKING OUTWARD

The partnership in Long Beach began by looking inward at local needs and resources. Stakeholders identified local resources on which to build, drawing on the benefits of the proximity of the schools and colleges and on existing relationships among educators at the different institutions, many of whom had grown up locally and attended local schools. The closeness of the community was another resource that they engaged in their commitment to supporting student success.

At the same time, the leaders were willing to look outward for ideas and models, which is how they learned about the Promise model that they then shaped to their local setting.

Analysis of Sustaining Factors in Long Beach

In the case of the Long Beach College Promise, most of the commonly identified factors of a long-term partnership from the research literature are present. The factors that are part of starting

a partnership continue to play a role as the partnership matures and are part of sustaining the ongoing collaboration. The factors that sustain a partnership are connective tissue—they grow over time and bind the partners together. These factors become an expected part of practice and are vehicles for shared decision-making and problem-solving. The four factors that play a role in sustaining a partnership comprise:

1. Strategies;
2. Communication;
3. Data; and
4. Ongoing investment in and support for the partnership.

Each of these factors are explored in the following sections.

STRATEGIES

The Long Beach educators were thoughtful in choosing areas on which and then finding strategies to address them. Based on observation, data, and research, Long Beach educators jointly identified areas of need—common gaps or obstacles, such as remedial math or students taking classes that would not count towards a degree/transfer in their chosen field. Then, in turn, also collaboratively, they chose strategies that directly addressed the needs and implemented those strategies at the broadest scale possible.

Linked Learning, for example, rather than being an isolated program, provided a framework that shaped development of the pathways. One of the educators from LBUSD described:

> *Linked Learning would be and could be that vehicle to ensure the strategic goals of college and career readiness that … not only the career initiative had, but also our strategic plan. …. We really decided that that would be our way, our vehicle, to help students reach the common goals that actually the Promise has with the Long Beach City [College], the Long Beach [California] State [University], and ourselves. Our goals are secondary completion, postsecondary completion, [and] having a good job when you graduate. Those are the common goals.*

The three-way collaboration plays out in practice when the hands-on leaders, in this case the steering committee, find ways to problem-solve together using the resources available to them. One example of this can be found in examining foreign language classes. High school graduates who completed the foreign language sequence, including the Advanced Placement (AP) exam, may find there are no LBCC classes available at the next level. CSU-LB is an impacted campus and can't add more courses. However, LBCC, which is funded based on enrollment numbers, can offer language classes in its catalogue and have them taught by CSU faculty at the CSU campus. The language classes are then available to both high school and LBCC students.

Another example of joint problem-solving was implemented with respect to remedial math classes. Both the schools and the community college recognize (and the research literature verifies, see for example Bailey & Jaggars, 2016) that if students start below college-level math, they more likely to get derailed and fail to complete their postsecondary goals. To avoid this, LBUSD and LBCC leaders are working together. For instance, LBCC faculty are working with LBUSD faculty to teach the LBCC remedial math class in high school to seniors, so that when these students come to LBCC, they are ready to start in college-level math. An LBUSD leader noted:

I am leveraging the partnership in the math remediation because I want to have our teachers teach a course that [Long Beach] City College teaches, that is the last course before students move out of remediation into credit-bearing courses. My thinking is, my students who are most likely not going to leave ready to do college-level work, that if they take that course here, and [Long Beach] City College acknowledges that course for placement purposes only, and places them immediately into credit-bearing courses when they enter [Long Beach] City College, that's a win for me.

COMMUNICATION

Communication has been both a strength and challenge to the Long Beach partnership. At the executive level, there has been a commitment to communication across institutions and to putting out a common message to the community. This level of communication and collaboration is continued in practice by the steering committee in development of the pathways.

However, as strong as the communication has been among the leaders, they acknowledge that it is a challenge to get information and engagement "all the way to the ground." They realize that "lots of faculty on campus don't know what's going on." A steering committee member described this challenge in terms of academic culture:

I think that's where we really still need to do a lot more work. … There's a level of awareness there, but … not necessarily awareness towards the very focused activities that are taking place. … You know how it is on campuses and [in] the academic senate. You have faculty on one side and administrators on the other pointing fingers.

The pathways project has engaged a broader range of educators and been intentional about including faculty, administrators, and staff. One of the first tasks for the pathways teams in crossing institutional borders is to create common language. Even things as obvious as job title are different at different institutions. For example, high school "counselors" advise students on their academic choices; however, in college, "advisors" work with students on their education plans, and "counselors" may have different roles in addressing personal problems. Furthermore, disciplinary areas are configured differently at different levels of the educational system. A LBCC leader noted:

It's "language arts" at Long Beach Unified and "English" at Cal State Long Beach. At LBCC [the same subject includes three departments]: English, reading, and English as a Second Language.

The leaders of the pathways efforts, including the steering committee, faculty, counselors, and administrators, recognize that reaching and engaging large numbers of educators across all of the institutions is a communication challenge. One steering committee member said, "I think that's where we really still need to do a lot more work, because faculty aren't aware of the Long Beach [College] Promise."

DATA

From the beginning of the partnership, all three of the Long Beach educational institutions have used data to describe common needs, plan, and track impact. Over time, all three institutions have also increased their data capacity. For example, LBUSD now includes non-cognitive data in its information system, and LBCC can measure the numbers of hours of developmental

mathematics and English that students did *not* have to take because of multiple measures in placement.

Additionally, CSU-LB has established a campus-wide Data Fellows program that gives educators the opportunity to analyze and interpret campus data. One participant described the experience and how it brought together colleagues around issues of student success:

> *[T]here were groups of us from each of the different colleges at Cal State Long Beach, and we would … talk about really just student success ideas, like time to graduation, gaps in success rates between underrepresented students and not underrepresented students, and the whole purpose of that meeting was to look at what is our data —what data do we have?*

However, each institution is part of a different state system with different data collection and management. Although shared data has been central in the partnership's decisions and activities, the institutions have had to create work-arounds (and personal hand-offs) to share data across the institutions. They are still looking for systemic ways to share data seamlessly; difficulties in data-sharing across systems is a widespread problem that goes well beyond Long Beach.

ONGOING INVESTMENT IN AND SUPPORT FOR THE PARTNERSHIP

Sustaining a partnership is the ongoing work of maintaining relationships, realigning and negotiating strategic focus, and continuing collaborative work. Although long-term partnerships may go through ups and downs of activity, as the case of Long Beach illustrates, the commitment continues. Sustaining a partnership is the balance of what continues and what changes.

Finding the ways to work together, across all levels of institutions, requires attention. Over time, the Long Beach partnership has become embedded in the institutions and part of the culture. For those educators most involved, they describe participation in partnership as "the greatest satisfaction." Although this work is layered on top of and within their full-time responsibilities at the institution, one vice president said:

> *[I]t is time-intensive, but it is incredibly rewarding work. To be honest with you, it's one of the extra things that I do that I enjoy the most.*

Leadership in an Ongoing Partnership

Factors that were identified as starters also continue to be important as sustainers. Leadership, for example, is as essential to continuation of a mature partnership as it is to initiating the partnership, though players may change and the context may be changed as a result of the partnership activities.

In Long Beach, the initial Seamless Education Partnership was created by three executive leaders. A decade later, new executive leaders reinvigorated the partnership and created the Long Beach College Promise. Commitment from the executive leadership takes time—months, years—to translate into action on the ground. Time is one of the essential ingredients to a successful collaboration, and the Long Beach leaders have all undertaken the work of the partnership for the long haul. What one leader began is continued by the next. Moreover, the governing boards, in hiring decisions, make clear their expectation that the work will continue.

While the presidents and superintendents make the institutional commitment clear, it is the next level of executive leaders—the vice presidents and assistant superintendents—who have taken

on responsibility for the ongoing actions and operations. Actively working in partnership is part of their job. One assistant superintendent described this charge:

> [The] executives have said, "We're going to partner." There's direction that says, "We are in a partnership. We work together. Our executives have made this." I think that without that, this partnership wouldn't be as strong.

New leaders—from within and outside—are developed and mentored to continue the active collaboration. In fact, some people seek out positions in the Long Beach schools and colleges because of the reputation of the Promise. When individuals who are from outside the system take on key positions in any of the three institutions, someone is there to orient them to the Promise. A CSU-LB leader talked about the way a senior executive leader engaged her in the work and established continuity and leadership succession:

> I think that's why [the provost] was so interested in having me serve on all of these different committees, because he wanted to be sure that before he leaves, that there was somebody who really knew how to comprehensively talk about the Promise and understand the level of commitment. The learning curve was quite steep, so he wanted to be sure that this knowledge doesn't get lost.

Developing new leaders across the institution is not left to happenstance. CSU-LB, for example, has instituted two college-wide leadership development programs, the President's and Provost's Leadership Fellows and Data Fellows. The Leadership Fellows targets middle-level leaders on campus—department chairs, associate deans, program directors—and gives them a two-year experience that broadens their understanding of big issues in education.

The pathways teams also extended opportunities to middle leaders, such as deans and curriculum leads. The collaborative leadership tasks involve facilitating the conversation and making sure different perspectives are included. The teams were to some extent self-organizing. As one participant noted, "I've noticed that in each group, at least one person rises to the top and corrals and coordinates the group." However, in case no one else did, the LBCC vice president prompted her administrators to take on that role. She commented, "we're not going to take this over, but if people don't step up, we should."

As the literature notes, and the experience at Long Beach illustrates, leadership is absolutely key at all levels of the partnership, from the executive leaders setting the priorities to the on-the-ground collaboration among colleagues working across institutions. Partnerships also offer educators the opportunity to develop skills of collaborative leadership.

The Role of a Collaborative Culture

Collaboration has become part of culture across the Long Beach educational institutions. It's more than a convenience or something they do on the side or as part of a specific project. One of the strong lessons from the current work of the partnership, the development of pathways, is the importance of bringing in different perspectives and providing a structure in which educators have the time to reconstruct the experience of the educational trajectory as students experience it. Two Long Beach participants described:

> Partnership is now the way Long Beach works. The network of relationships and of trust has been in place long enough that it is now part of the culture and shapes the way new people are welcomed into the extended educational system.

I heard somebody who came in and started to work in Long Beach, and … they were amazed at how much initial trust people in Long Beach give, right. Even to new people, there's a certain amount of trust that's given straight up, because that's the world we live in.

The leaders critically look at the work they have done and the work still to be done. As one noted, "The Promise has delivered on college access 150%." However, making the access real, to support student success overall, is still and will continue to be work in progress. Committing to the partnership means being in for the long haul.

Conclusion

The Long Beach College Promise is an educational partnership with a long history, national recognition, and many visible successes. The partnership began with a commitment to educate the children of the community that was driven by economic and civic conditions and rooted in a moral imperative. Strong local educational institutions and a series of committed leaders, who have been champions of the collaborative work, bolstered the partnership as it developed and was sustained. The time-frame of more than 20 years provides the opportunity to see the lifecycle of a partnership. The actions and the main players may change over time, but the commitment and the collaboration maintain.

The case of Long Beach illustrates many things about educational partnerships. Long Beach shows that it is possible to build a resilient partnership, but also that doing so requires a lot of work. Being part of an educational partnership doesn't solve the problems that each institution faces, but it does provide a broader shared context to address those problems. Despite the widespread recognition that the Long Beach College Promise has received, the educators most involved and invested in the partnership do not think they have solved the big problems; however, they feel they have created a flexible, responsive structure with an infrastructure of relationships to keep working on their common problems.

Crossing "The Dime": The Inland Empire Partnership

[P]eople have a really hard time crossing the 10, and so there are people from Riverside County on one side of the freeway and then there's things that happen in San Bernardino on the other side...and it's just the weirdest thing I've ever experienced.

— Education Leader, Inland Empire

Interstate 10, called the "the Dime" by local residents, bisects Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, and for a long time it marked a deep division between leaders of the two counties. In the past, leaders just did not "cross over the Dime," but today they do. Why? Why did the education and economic leadership decide after decades of division and competition, to unite in a two-county partnership?

Partnership Background and Context

FIRST SEEDS OF COLLABORATION

There are a number of factors cited by local leadership as key to this change. The biggest and most significant factor was the Great Recession of 2008, which created economic and emotional havoc throughout the region. Unemployment rates were some of the highest in the country, and the city of San Bernardino went bankrupt. At the same time, however, other leaders argue the shift toward collaboration was a gradual event:

I think of it more as a trend line than a particular date. It's one of those things that you see coming. Now that we're at this place, I can look back and I can see some of those stepping stones in that journey.... I don't know that it was the collective intention or the collective vision way back then.

The first concrete signs of the willingness of leaders to "cross the Dime" appeared in 2009, when the Federation for a Competitive Economy (FACE) was launched by the sitting presidents at the time of the CSU-San Bernardino and the University of California-Riverside campuses. The founders of FACE recognized there were many small initiatives and partnerships already in existence throughout the region, all geared to the same goals of college readiness, college completion, and higher quality of life. However, they were operating in isolation. One FACE founder described:

We decided if we were going to have an impact, we needed to bring together all the different stakeholders in the region that cared about the issue of developing a qualified workforce who would stay in the community and give back to the community.

Over 200 leaders of school districts, community colleges, universities, community and private sector organizations were listed as members of FACE united in a single mission that one participant described as follows:

> *[C]reating an intellectual climate … that promotes and improves educational opportunities for ALL students, significantly benefiting the economy whose prosperity depends on a well-trained workforce.*

Strategic priorities for FACE included building a "seamless learning system," facilitating communication within the region, introducing new initiatives to address unmet needs, serving as an "advocate for excellence in education and foster collaboration," and encouraging a strong pipeline of qualified workers, especially in the STEM fields. The activities of FACE, which operated for five years (2008 to 2013), focused on building community engagement and conversations across organizational boundaries. It demonstrated that an effective two-county organization was possible despite a history of jealousies and competition in the region.

PARTNERSHIP AT A NEW LEVEL

When the GIA funding awards opportunity were announced in 2014, leaders from the two counties met and agreed to apply for the funding using the same overall goals as FACE. The CSU-San Bernardino leadership, including the president, dean of education, and director of research, organized the stakeholder meeting in July 2014. When the group met to discuss a new form of the partnership, there was general agreement regarding the importance of collaboration in order to maximize collective impact throughout the region's educational and economic systems. A leader from one postsecondary institution observed that "everyone is on the same page, not competing but more focused on an amazing sense of aspirational alignment with a great set of relationships in the room." He added:

> *We have some attributes few others in the country enjoy. We have the pieces and everyone is a part of the fabric in supporting the Inland Empire. … The next step is to maximize and build on our expertise, our relationships and our existing programs. We need to use these three strengths and build on three key elements which may be the key elements we are lacking that push us over the threshold: alignment, coordination and strategic positioning.*

Agreements from the July meeting became the basis for the application for the Governor's Incentive Award, and in the spring of 2015, the Inland Empire was awarded $5 million by California Department of Finance.

Inland Empire Partnership Overview

The Inland Empire partnership, recently renamed the Growing Inland Achievement initiative ("Initiative"), embraces 175 leaders from multiple sectors, including 58 school districts, 11 community colleges, two public universities, and leaders from the private sector and county government.

The core leaders of the Initiative use a variety of metaphors to describe the collaboration. Some see it as an "umbrella" embracing all the local partnerships within the two counties to provide resources, data, communication and technical support. Others describe it as a "spinal cord" or "backbone" connecting diverse institutions, while still others refer to it as a "federation" of smaller organizations and institutions with the goal of providing overall direction and support. Whatever the metaphor, the Initiative's leadership is united in the belief that a broad coalition of

education and economic leaders is necessary if the people of the Inland Empire are to leave poverty for a better and more prosperous life.

The Initiative is headed by a Governing Board comprising leaders from education and economic development organizations, and it is co-chaired by two leaders of non-profit economic development organizations. They have created a set of guiding principles, goals, and objectives, and they have a start-up fund of $5 million from the Governor's Incentive Award.

The strategic priorities of the Initiative are very similar to those of FACE: creation of a seamless education system, a robust communications system for the region, introduction of new education initiatives, and development of a pipeline that moves an educated workforce into the regional economy.

The research team identified five components to the establishment of this broad, complex, multi-sector partnership:

1. Leadership;
2. Economic and educational conditions;
3. Local and national assets;
4. Resources and incentives; and
5. Relationships.

The story of the Inland Empire partnership is told in the following sections through the lens of these five factors, illuminating both the potential for success and the challenges that lie ahead.

Leadership

Leadership has been one of the critical factors in establishing the Initiative. Some of its leaders have deep roots in the Inland Empire, born and raised and committed to the region; they have a depth of knowledge of many of the nuances of life in the area. Others come from outside, bringing their experience and insights about how change and improvements happened in other states and regions. All agree about the importance of collective effort to make a collective impact.

INITIATIVE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Co-Chairs Linking Education and the Economy

The broad consensus among these stakeholders is that education must lead and economic development will follow, as well as that new investment will come to the region if there is evidence of an educated workforce. One person elaborated:

> [W]e have to get the education thing right before we get the economic thing right. We don't have a workforce that can do the high wage, high paying jobs that we want them to do, so we don't have a way to draw those big industries and those folks here in large numbers until we fix the education.

To emphasize the strategic relationship between education and the economy, the Initiative has selected two co-chairs, both leaders of non-profit member economic development organizations in the region, and both major advocates for educational transformation. Paul Granillo, the CEO

of the Inland Empire Economic Partnership (IEEP), was born and raised in the Inland Empire. His family came to the region 115 years ago. He described:

> *My first real career was as a priest of the Diocese of San Bernardino, and the Diocese of San Bernardino covers both Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Of 195 Catholic Diocese in the United States, it's the fifth largest. That's important to remember, because whatever we talk about dealing with [the Inland] Empire, it's 4.4 million people. If it were state by population, right now we'd be the 25th largest state, so any of the issues that we deal with are really being dealt with or need to be dealt with at the magnitude of a state.*

Granillo worked in the Bishop's office, first as Development Director and then Director of Communications, focusing on external relations with politicians and business leaders. In 2002, responding to the sex abuse cases took up most of his time. Granillo found himself explaining why the "really bad apples were sent to our Diocese from the Archdiocese in Boston." After about five years, Granillo decided to leave the church, but he credits his time with Diocese for enabling him to gain skills in communications and development. He commented:

> *I had the opportunity to travel all over Inland Empire, all [over] San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. I had, I think, a unique understanding of the individual cities, the desert areas that most people never really have that context, unless you've actually been there.*

When he left the Diocese, business leaders asked him to lead the IEEP, which covered both counties. Granillo noted that the position enabled him to "work with a lot of the same people that I've worked with before." He began an advocacy campaign to change the quality of life in the Inland Empire through educational and economic development. His organization has been at the forefront of promoting educational partnerships and investment in school reform since he become the CEO in 2007.

Granillo's co-chair of the Initiative, Sheila Thornton, is the Vice President of the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership (CVEP), and since 2005 she has been one of the major leaders for education reform in this sub-region. Part of the Inland Empire, Coachella Valley is where Palm Springs and Palm Desert are located. The area is home to a significant amount of wealth as well as a Latino community whose workers staff the food, tourist, and retail sectors in the Valley. Like Granillo, Thornton is a strong advocate for linking education reform and economic growth. She has been able to build common ground between key economic sectors and the Latino community around a common education agenda, a strategic breakthrough that is regarded as an exemplar for other areas in the Inland Empire to study.

The CVEP initiative began in the early 2000s. Thornton described:

> *[T]his work started because we were working backwards from [the] economic development needs of the community. The Coachella Valley needed to grow and diversify the economy and wanted to attract and grow industry sectors that could provide higher wage jobs and economic prosperity.*

CVEP leaders, along with the district school leaders, sought to build a seamless connection from elementary school through middle/high school and into college, and then ultimately into a well-paying job. They started with a labor market study surveying three sectors: healthcare, advanced technology, and arts-media-entertainment. With support from the Irvine Foundation via its

Linked Learning initiative and the College Futures Foundation, CVEP leaders brought together the three school districts in the Valley, and together they planned and implemented an extensive academy system in all high schools that ultimately comprised 22 academies with 41 pathways. CVEP is also working on college readiness and access in partnership with school districts by providing free financial aid training to all high school students as well as scholarships funded by the College Futures Foundation. CVEP's work has enabled hundreds of Latino youth to attend postsecondary education programs in the Inland Empire and has become a model of what can be achieved in this arena.

Thornton's leadership strategy in the Coachella Valley was to build CVEP as an intermediary and enabler for the local education sector. There are four important components to this strategy:

1. Uniting people around the linkage between economic development and local educational development;

2. Creating Linked Learning academies in all of the high schools that include internships in the private sector, enabling students to prepare for college while also focusing on a potential career;

3. Organizing a common agenda of increasing the numbers of students using federal financial aid to enable them to attend college and providing scholarships for as many students as possible; and

4. Building trust among both public education and private sector leaders to create an infrastructure that continually supports a common agenda among both sectors.

A unique dimension of the Coachella Valley initiative is the degree of private sector support for public education. Through private funding alone, an entire new campus was built in Palm Desert for CSU-San Bernardino. One of Thornton's colleagues noted:

> *We have seen hearts and minds change in a really positive way. As Sheila said, nothing is better than being in a room and hearing colleagues and partners say it themselves, versus, in the early days, we were the ones telling the story. Now it really has become part and parcel of the partners.*

There are elements of the CVEP story that may apply to the broader regional effort of the Initiative, but there are also substantial differences between the Coachella Valley and the rest of the Inland Empire. One university leader observed:

> *I would hope, down the road, [the Initiative] could be more like CVEP than we are now, but I think the reality is [that] if you look at the Coachella Valley, and you look at the people who are behind the economic driver, you are talking about some of the most phenomenal wealth in the country. The big players in the Coachella Valley are really big players, while the fastest-growing economies in this part of the Inland Empire are small women-owned businesses.*

As co-chairs of the Governing Board, Granillo and Thornton represent a wide array of education and community leaders, including the superintendents of both county offices of education, presidents of two of the 11 community colleges in the region, and presidents of the two major public universities.

Locals and Newcomers on the Governing Board

The Initiative's Governing Board mostly comprises individuals who have recently arrived in the region. Their knowledge and skills were developed in other parts of the country, specifically as leaders promoting K-12/postsecondary partnerships and efforts to scale up effective schools. They bring additional perspectives to the partnership, especially regarding the challenges of change management and building collaborative efforts. One CSU-San Bernardino leader who arrived from outside the region stated:

> [T]here's a number of us … who have experienced some of these K-16 efforts and some of the collective impact work elsewhere in the country, … and as a result, we are able to look at a situation … [and] see some of the nuances that are not so clearly perceived locally.

Two of the "outside" leaders playing critical roles in the evolution of the collaborative culture were the presidents of University of California-Riverside (UC-R) and California State University-San Bernardino (CSU-SB). UC-R was the key force in the development of the FACE initiative in 2008 and 2009, and CSU-SB played the role of both the convener and grant writer for the GIA award for the current Initiative in 2014 and 2015.

Interestingly, the "insider" versus "outsider" conflicts sometimes seen in other partnership efforts have not appeared in the Inland Empire. The goals and strategies of the partnership reflect a mix of local, regional, and national experiences that undergird the thinking of the executive-level leadership in the Initiative.

GUIDED BY A MORAL IMPERATIVE

When talking to leaders in the Inland Empire, they invariably return to a key reason for the construction of this ambitious partnership: the moral imperative "to make things right," the condition of the region's economy and its education systems, and the future quality of life for the residents. When asked the question, "Why did you decide to include both counties in the partnership?" one member of the Governing Board responded:

> [F]rom reading [about] the actions, hearing the words [of others], [and] knowing my own personal belief system, our service region is both counties, and I don't know how I would ethically look at folks in some school districts and say "Well, I just didn't decide to start with you. I just didn't decide that your kids of are as important as somebody's else's." … The need is so incredibly great here … [that] it was just the ethical and moral imperative to either be all in or not.

There is also a shared consciousness of the fact that over half the population in the region, and a significant percentage of the poor, are Latino residents who have suffered decades of marginalization. One education leader from Riverside County recalled when he taught first grade:

> It's sad that some of my kids were … going to be incarcerated or die early or have other kind of health problems. The only reason they were going to have

those things is because they were poor. I think for our country, it's been a
moral purpose to make sure that every kid has the [same level of] opportunity.

This service ethic and sense of moral imperative to address conditions of inequality are significant animating drivers for both education and economic development leaders in the Initiative. What makes these leaders stand out from their peers in other regions is their commitment to collective action, emphasizing an inclusive strategic orientation informed by local needs and local talent across the entire region.

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

Many of the education partnerships that emerged in the 1990s in California have since faded away, and in many cases it was over-dependence on singular leaders and key personalities that contributed to this demise. When the transformational leaders of these partnerships departed, many of the collaborative efforts dissolved.

To avoid repeating this cycle in the Inland Empire, the Initiative will need to address three major tasks. First, the current leadership of the Initiative must prepare a new generation of leaders to take charge, especially Latino leadership, which is currently underrepresented at the executive level of the partnership. One leader noted:

There has been discussion of bringing up young leaders who are currently in
respective organizations, but nothing formal has been put in place, other than
a recognition of the need for an onboarding and off-boarding process.

Second, the Initiative needs "middle-level leaders" to coordinate programs across the region and act as site directors to ensure implementation of partnership strategies at the local level. In the initial phase of the Initiative, plans called for a coordinating network of middle-level leaders from collaborating institutions. Yet the role of coordination has not yet been defined, nor have there been any estimates of the amount of time it would take full-time employees of an educational institution to fulfill their coordination responsibilities. The Initiative must ask whether these responsibilities can be integrated into the institutional commitment of the collaborating organizations. If not, the Initiative must then identify where the appropriate coordinating leadership will come from.

Third, the partnership requires a staff comprising the core of the "backbone" or "spine" of the Initiative. The Governing Board has defined the "backbone" as an executive director, a chief institutional researcher, and a communications specialist—all of whom need to have the skills and knowledge to work with a diverse set of local and regional players in both counties. Establishing the "backbone" for the Initiative has not been easy, primarily because there are a limited number of people who have both knowledge of the region and the skills necessary for the positions. The Governing Board has spent hours discussing the type of executive director they want. One member shared:

We crafted a job description that really talks about somebody who is well-
connected to the region, understands a variety of aspects from the standpoint
of leadership. [We need someone] to be able to be adaptive, and to be able to
coach team members on the various action teams that would come to fore, to
be able to liaison between the executive level and the coordinating network

> *that is closer to the boots on the ground, and also to work with the teams that*
> *are actually out there.*

In addition, the Governing Board wanted someone good at planning, running meetings, and resource acquisition. One member noted that as the Initiative matures, the Governing Board has a particular vision for the executive director:

> *[The executive director] will be able to have conversations with districts down*
> *the road as we develop strategies that show ability to reduce developmental*
> *ed[ucation] or to move the students forward in college and career readiness*
> *that, potentially, districts might think about putting some funding toward*
> *summer bridge programs or things like that.*

After a year-long search, a new executive director was recently hired, and it is expected that the executive director will hire the chief institutional researcher and the communications specialist. According to a member of the Governing Board, the institutional researcher will lead a committee of researchers from a variety of educational institutions in the partnership in order to develop an infrastructure that is able "to track every single high school graduate of every single district and … the percentage of students that are leaving the community colleges and going to four year institutions." The communications specialist will have the task of establishing a mechanism to keep everyone in the partner institutions informed about the work of the partnership.

Staff members will need to bring patience, empathy, and a good understanding of what the "long haul" will look like in the context of the Initiative's work with all the local and regional institutions.

Economic and Educational Conditions of the Inland Empire

Two of the main drivers for the Inland Empire Initiative are economic and educational conditions within the region. While there has been a significant growth of population in the region during the past 20 years, neither the economic opportunities nor the quality of educational services has been able to address the needs of the new residents.

TWO DISTINCT POPULATIONS

The Inland Empire lies to the east of the great metropolis of Los Angeles. The Los Angeles basin is divided between poor and working class black and Latino communities in the flatlands and the lush foothills where the wealthy live. For the past generation, as housing costs skyrocketed throughout the LA area, there has been a migration eastward to find land at a reasonable cost. Land is one item that is plentiful in the Inland Empire; as such, that is where LA residents have been headed for the past two decades.

Two distinct streams of migrants within Los Angeles County have driven the population increase in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. The first group comprises the white-collar and public-sector commuters who moved east to find homes with reasonable mortgages. The trade-off for these families was the investment in commute time, a penalty of up to three hours per day, as

well as the costs associated with daily commutes. Currently, as many as one-third of the working adults in the Inland Empire commute to work outside the region, one of the highest commuting populations in the country. Almost 80% of the commuters drive alone (Tornatzky, & Barreto, 2004.)

The second group is poor and working-class Latino and black families who left Los Angeles because their communities became increasingly dysfunctional due to violence, drugs, and poverty. This second wave arrived in the Inland Empire with fewer skills and less access to well-paying jobs, resulting in a sharp increase in the levels of poverty in both counties. For example, in the 1990s, poverty in San Bernardino County increased by 51% and in Riverside County by 63%. The current poverty rate in the Inland Empire is estimated at 20%, making it one of the poorest regions in the country (Horseman, 2012 and Cox, 2015).

On the positive side of this in-migration, the Inland Empire has some of the most racially-mixed neighborhoods in the state. If you blended the 2000 California census in a Cuisinart, the result would resemble the multi-ethnic student bodies of some Inland Empire high schools. Unlike much of Los Angeles, where diversity is often transitional and lasts only a few years, the student populations of Inland Empire schools represent a true "rainbow" (Davis, 2003).

The Inland Empire continues to have one of the highest population growth rates in the state. San Bernardino's population grew by 19% between 2000 and 2010 and by 1% between 2015 and 2016. Riverside County saw an even larger population expansion, increasing by 42% between 2000 and 2010 and by 1% between 2015 and 2016 (Inland Empire Economic Partnership (IEEP), 2013). The region is projected to become the second-largest metropolitan area in California by 2060, trailing only Los Angeles County (State of California Department of Finance, 2014).

CHALLENGING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The region's economy is divided into low- and moderate-pay sectors, primarily in food service/accommodations, education, health, social services, retail, distribution, and transportation. The higher-paying construction and manufacturing sectors in the region have been losing jobs since Great Recession of 2008. The average annual wage in 2016 is around $45,000, well below the average in neighboring counties or the state average. The median household income is $54,100, as compared to the California average of $61,489 (IEEP, 2016).

Unemployment rates in the Inland Empire have been some of the highest in the state due to the cyclical nature of the economy. Unemployment reached an all-time high of 15% in 2010, second in the nation only to Detroit among metropolitan areas with populations over one million. The unemployment rate in the Inland Empire has been consistently above the national average since 2007, but the most recently, the rate has dropped significantly to 5.8% (Horseman, 2012 and Murphy, 2016). This figure does not include a growing number of employable people who do not show up in the statistics.

The 2008 recession hit the Inland Empire especially hard for those with low-paying jobs. Initiative leaders expressed concern about the growing homeless populations in the cities as one long-term results of the Great Recession. Another major concern was the potential impact of automation and robotics on the local workforce. One leader noted:

> *Logistics is our number one job-creator [in the Inland Empire], but you are going to see automation and robotics replacing people. These again are*

> *marginally educated people, … [and] automation will put many of them out of work.*

The 2008 recession was a turning point in the region: educational and economic leaders began thinking about and discussing region-wide partnerships instead of local initiatives to address what everyone agreed was a major economic and social crisis.

LOW LEVELS OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Education and the improvement of the education system are the centerpiece of the Initiative's strategy for addressing automation, technology, and the prospect of major economic changes in the region. However, current low levels of educational attainment in the Inland Empire starts early. Only 37% of three- and four-year-olds in the region are enrolled in pre-school, with only one school in the region for every 343 children. While the high school graduation rates in both counties are now in the 80% range, with Riverside County at 87.4% compared to the state average of 82.3%, the percentage of graduates meeting the CSU/UC A-G requirements, an important indicator of college readiness, is below the statewide average. For Riverside County, only 40% of the high school graduates have met the A-G requirements for admission to CSU or UC, while in San Bernardino County, the average county-wide is 33.8% as of 2014-15. In contrast, the statewide average for A-G completion is 43.4% (Ed Data, 2016). Additionally, 35% of the region's ninth-graders do not graduate from high school.

As a result, only 20% of the region's adult residents have attained a college degree or higher, and 25% do not possess a high school diploma (Tornatzky & Barreto, 2004). Twenty-one inland area high schools rank among the worst in California for producing dropouts (Parsavand, 2008).

 The education statistics were understood by the leadership: if there was to be economic growth benefitting the region's populations, the education systems had to be transformed and only an extensive collective effort could make that happen.

THE EXISTENTIAL IMPERATIVE

Two major forces are impacting the future of the Inland Empire—population expansion and technological growth. At this time, it is unclear whether these trends will negatively or positively affect the quality of life in the region.

In one scenario, increased automation driven by advances in technology could undermine the region's capacity for economic growth and prosperity due to the nature of the job skills and education levels of the workforce. The Inland Empire could become a region divided between the well-paid white-collar commuter population and the permanently poor, mostly Latino and black residents who lack the education and skills to thrive in the emerging economic conditions.

In another scenario, the collective efforts of the education and economic development leadership will produce a large, more educated workforce. Since the region's population is projected to continue to grow, employment in the education, health, and social services sectors will also grow. An educated workforce will also attract new economic investment and promote the incubation of new economic sectors that offer residents moderate- to high-paying jobs.

Currently, there are growing differences among the region's leadership about how to embrace technology and change. One group led by leaders in the City of Riverside and UC-R envision the

region becoming another Silicon Valley, with high-paying technology positions like those in the San Francisco Bay Area. Another group led by the IEEP, however, advocates instead for building upon the current logistics and warehouse sectors in the region. Given its proximity to the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the Inland Empire could take advantage of its geography and promote an advanced manufacturing sector which would enable large numbers of local residents, especially in the Latino community, to access well-paying jobs.

The question of the direction of new economic investment will be a central issue for the Initiative in the coming years.

Local and National Assets

One of the reasons that the Initiative's leadership is willing to pursue its ambitious agenda is the confidence they derive from the scope and depth of current local collaborations that are already in place throughout both counties. These assets form the foundation for the Initiative's vision of a region-wide effort to transform the delivery of education.

LOCAL ASSETS

Local collaborations in the Inland Empire have been evolving since the early 2000s and include school-to-college programs, county-wide networks, and district-to-district projects. An "asset map" was produced in 2014 by FACE that looked at college and career success, STEM education, and communication networks throughout both counties. It came to 26 pages and included over 125 programs in colleges, county offices of education, individual K-12 schools, school districts, and community organizations. Included in this map were numerous college readiness partnerships between K-12 and postsecondary institutions as well as transitional high school to college programs, supplemental instruction programs, and many communication networks that linked educational institutions, local chambers of commerce, and community and civic organizations.

Among the most extensive and complex local partnerships are the ones involved in the Linked Learning initiative (locally called the "Alliance for Education") and Completion Counts. The Alliance for Education is sponsored by the Irvine Foundation and seeks to integrate academics with career-based learning, real-world workplace experience, and individual student support services. Students choose among industry-themed pathways in fields such as engineering, healthcare, business, and public services. Alliance for Education and Linked Learning academies are offered in all 33 school districts in San Bernardino County and include over 1,500 education, business, labor, government, community, and faith-based organizations in the Inland Empire. Linked Learning academies are also in place in Riverside County's Coachella Valley through the work of the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership. CVEP helps the three local school districts partner with businesses to deliver K-12 career pathways programs, including high school career academies, which are three- to four-year curricula built around healthcare, digital arts, culinary arts, and renewable energy.

The Completion Counts initiative was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and its action plan calls for raising high school graduation rates as well as giving Riverside students a two-year college completion guarantee to earn an associate's degree or transfer to a four-year college. The goal is to increase high school and college completion rates by 2020. The initiative

is led by the City of Riverside, and partnering institutions include Riverside City College, two K-12 school districts, the Riverside County Office of Education; UC-Riverside, and the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce.

Other examples in which the region has been a leading education innovator include the Fourth Year Math Initiative and the extensive integration of the AVID program in schools in the region. The Fourth Year Math Initiative grew out of a shared effort by CSU and community college faculty alongside K-12 teachers, principals, and counselors. The Inland Empire is one of the first regions to develop a curriculum for a fourth year high school mathematics course for students who need quantitative reasoning skills for non-STEM college programs. The fourth year math idea was first proposed in 2008. One of the originators of the project reflected on the difficulty of generating initial interest:

> *I had started suggesting to the CSU that what we needed, what the schools were lacking, was a course that would be a post-Algebra II but not necessarily a Calculus track course—… something for the vast majority of students who finished Algebra II, could benefit from another year of math, a fourth year of math, but didn't want to go into the sort of rigorous STEM track. I started arguing that in 2008 but got nowhere.*

In 2014, the fourth year math advocates found traction from leaders of the Initiative, and they formed a curriculum group with some CSU math faculty and local teachers, administrators, and counselors. In fall 2016, 26 teachers from a variety of schools in the region began using the curriculum in their math classes, a first step toward the completion of the course by June 2017. Leaders from the Initiative point to the Fourth Year Math project as an example of how the region can take the lead in incubating new education initiatives for both the region and the state.

The AVID middle and high school programs have also found fertile ground in the Inland Empire. AVID is a national college readiness program for high school students that started in San Diego in the 1980s and has become a national model for college preparation, especially for "kids in the middle with academic potential" and student populations underrepresented in four-year colleges. One of the leaders of AVID in the Inland Empire recalled the origins of the program:

> *In Riverside-San Bernardino, I'd love to be able to tell you why, but it just took off. Riverside-San Bernardino was hungry for something like this. All of our schools and all of our administrators, … they just came on board, and the districts jumped on board. It's just grown … to the point now where we have about 230 secondary schools and we have about, this year—for the last three years, we've done elementary support and now we have about 130 elementary schools on board, so we have quite a large presence in the Riverside-San Bernardino region.*

In 2012, both county offices of education agreed to house the AVID staff and provide financial support for AVID programs in the schools, an important factor accelerating the growth of AVID in the region. In addition, the CSU-San Bernardino College of Education has integrated the AVID methodologies into its teacher preparation program, ensuring that the AVID programs will continually be refreshed with new, fully equipped teachers. The Inland Empire has become a national example of how AVID can be successfully integrated into both K-12 and postsecondary education.

Other types of collaborations that could become part of the Initiative's infrastructure include school-to-college programs and college community engagement programs. For example, Chaffey College, one of the finalists for the national Aspen Prize for Excellence, offers an extensive set of programs for high school students and students transitioning to college, including preparation for assessment testing in advance of matriculation, a special math program for African American boys in middle schools, and counseling/advising sessions for incoming students using CSU-SB students in graduate counseling programs.

Additionally, Norco College and the Corona Unified School District have developed a summer transition program for graduating high school students called Summer Advantage, which recently won the national Bellwether Award. Both UC-Riverside and CSU-San Bernardino are very active in building programs with K-12 schools; UC-R has over 25 active programs, and CSU-SB a similar number.

NATIONAL ASSETS

While there is a deep recognition of the talent and creativity within the Inland Empire, the leaders of the Initiative also recognize the need to draw lessons from other metropolitan areas in the country.

The Initiative's leaders envision the construction of "connective tissue "and alignments among and between all of these programs." The "alignment" strategy is derived from the work of Alignment USA in the Coachella Valley with CVEP. Launched in 2003 in Nashville, Alignment USA addresses what the founders called "wicked problems" in which education and community organizations find that all of their issues are related, but none can be solved by only one individual or organization in isolation. The Alignment founders developed a set of tools for organizations to use to work on resolving a problem together through cross-sector alignment teams. The program now operates in 14 communities throughout the country. The Inland Empire Initiative plans to send a delegation team to visit Alignment USA cities in order to find out first-hand how the program works and bring home any relevant strategies and/or activities.

Other members of the Initiative are examining "collective impact" innovations as well as the Long Beach College Promise in order to learn about promising practices that could be utilized by the Initiative. There are also some regional collaboratives among smaller cities and regions like Jacksonville, Florida and San Antonio, Texas, as well as in Kansas City, Cincinnati, and Nashville. The Kentucky K-16 councils are also of interest.

Many of the leaders of the Initiative are aware that these regional models were sparked by small local groups that constructed alliances bringing together local companies, politicians, and community and education leaders. They see the Inland Empire Initiative as part of this approach to economic development.

Resources and Incentives

The problem of securing long-term resources to support innovation and reform in education is particularly acute in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Institutional needs are great, and funding sources are limited. One major challenge is how to address this dilemma of being treated as one region despite the fact that there are 58 school districts and 11 community colleges in it.

How does a regional partnership demonstrate that it can do better marshalling resources than local or county-wide partnerships? One education leader summarized the problem:

> *I continue to have concerns about being characterized as this larger Inland Empire region when it comes to resource allocation. For example, if you talk about the Inland Empire as one region, and there are grants being given out [in that way], Orange County, San Diego County, Contra Costa County, any other county can stand on its own. But sometimes funders, when they come here, want us to all be one region. [They think,] "Oh, well, you're the Inland Empire." The historical lack of investment from philanthropists and funders will continue to be less than [in] other regions who are actually counties.*

Currently, funding for local partnerships comes from four major sources:

1. Local philanthropic organizations supporting specific schools;
2. National philanthropic organizations providing funding for county and regional projects;
3. Local companies supporting specific education projects; and
4. State and federal funding.

For example, the 2015 state funding of $5 million from the Governor's Innovation Award to the Initiative was a one-of-a-kind resource with no requirements attached to the award—the partnership has maximum flexibility to meet its goals and objectives. Such funding will allow the Initiative to demonstrate how it can leverage those funds for projects at the local level. One idea is to use some of the GIA funds to link to Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) funds in order to incentivize innovation. One leader gave an example:

> *For example, … if a school district comes to us, writes a proposal to us, and says to us, "We want to increase college preparedness of our graduating seniors so that we can achieve mass college readiness, and we're ready to fund this initiative [which] will cost $100,000," then we've agreed that if the district threw in $50,000, we would throw in $50,000 [too]. At some point, we have to incentivize innovation and get districts to partner with us as funders for this innovation.*

GIA funds could also impact the region through a "domino effect," because students will benefit from such a large investment, if not immediately, then downstream when they reach high school or college. The funds act as a stimulus to action throughout the region. Additionally, some leaders are talking about using some GIA funding to start incubation projects that will attract additional support from the philanthropic and private sector. The theory of action in this instance is "priming the pump," presuming that once started with a series of outstanding programs and projects, additional funding will flow.

The Initiative also has a long-standing set of relationships with specific philanthropic foundations, especially the Irvine Foundation and the College Futures Foundation. Both foundations invested heavily in the region via Linked Learning programs, planning grants, and student scholarships. They have built personal long-term relationships with the leadership of the Initiative, in many instances playing enabling roles to get projects going. Julia Lopez, CEO of the College Futures Foundation, calls herself a "cheerleader" for the region. However, Initiative insiders say she is more than that—she is a moving force who brings various leaders together.

Leaders from the Irvine Foundation have worked for years with school leaders in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, and the Gates Foundation has recently joined the ranks of philanthropic support for the region.

Finally, federal and state funding for specific programs related to STEM and health fields is also possible. Some of this kind of funding already goes to UC-Riverside and CSU-SB, and more could be leveraged through partnership work.

Relationships

Trusting relationships are a cornerstone of the strategic vision of the Inland Empire partnership, though building them has not been easy. One of the founders of FACE reflected on trying to organize local groups:

> It's almost like three or four little states all stuck together to make the Inland Empire. The competition between the areas is amazing. Everybody fusses and fumes about who gets credit for what. Even though they're all similar in what they hope to accomplish, the petty jealousies really, really get in the way. How to bring all these battling forces together has been the nightmare of my life.

After the Great Recession of 2008 when the City of San Bernardino went bankrupt and many people lost their jobs, attitudes began to shift. A UC-Riverside leader who was one of the founders of FACE described:

> That [time] was very challenging, because collaboration really is not a natural act. It begins with trusting relationships, but everybody who's part of the relationship needs to get what they need to get, politically perhaps, out of the arrangement. Herding all these butterflies and getting them focused and moving in the right direction took time. It really took some serious commitment from all the stakeholders.

The impact of the Great Recession also forged an understanding that, as one person articulated:

> [W]e can either decide to change and invest and do things differently, or we can permanently lock this region into a subservient servant service to the logistics economy.

A major insight resulting from the early efforts "to herd these butterflies" was to clearly define collaboration not as a controller of local organizations but a coordinator. Thus, as noted earlier, some speak of the partnership as a "spinal cord to the nervous system, something that links a variety of activities but allows hands to move differently than feet." A CSU-San Bernardino leader observed:

> Today, there is an abundance of optimism that trusting relationships are becoming stronger and more sustainable and a shared insight of need for collective action. … I think it's just one of those things that has evolved as people committed to equity, people committed to humanity, people committed to the region have just persisted and tried to come to [asking], "How do we get to a better place? How do we get to a better way?" I think it's just been that

> *journeying through a series of steps, and I can't say that it's any one moment. I think it's just been because there's a number of people in this region that are really, really committed to trying to change what has been the trajectory for our kids.*

The leaders of the Initiative recognize the journey has started, and that many other organizations and individuals will need to be convinced to join the collaboration. Right now, it is a partnership of the "willing" and the numbers of the "willing" are a growing and significant majority.

Conclusion

This case study sought to identify the reasons that the leaders in the Inland Empire decided to construct a multi-sector, two-county partnership. Riverside and San Bernardino Counties had maintained separate educational and economic strategies for many decades, but a number of key factors enabled the development of the two-county partnership.

First, the role of leadership was a critical factor, bringing together leaders from the schools, colleges, universities, community organizations, and county government. The executive leadership group included a mix of leaders with deep roots in the region and newly arrived leaders who introduced ideas from their work in other regions. A common thread among all was a commitment to a moral imperative: that the needs of the poor and marginalized had to be addressed.

Second, the economic and educational conditions of the region have been the key drivers of poverty and marginalization. While the Inland Empire is one of the fastest-growing areas of California, it remains one of the poorest as well, with economic sectors that generate low- to moderate-paying jobs and high rates of poverty. College completion rates and degree attainment remain below the state average.

The conditions in the region have animated a response from local schools and colleges. Well before the creation of the first Inland Empire multi-sector partnership in 2009, there were many local assets in the form of collaborations among schools, community organizations, and community colleges. An asset map created for the FACE organization identified over 125 such smaller-scale partnerships. Today, the Initiative is seen as the "spine" or "backbone" helping to coordinate and align these local collaborations.

The Initiative is also viewed as a resource engine, a single focal point for local, state, federal, and philanthropic investment which can support local and regional efforts to align existing programs, incubate new ones, and track and report the results. The GIA award of $5 million will be the first test of how the new Initiative will address the needs of local schools and colleges.

Furthermore, at the foundation of the Initiative was the evolution of trusting relationships among many different leaders in the region, a gradual process that took years and resulted in the establishment of the Federation for a Competitive Economy (FACE) in 2009 and then the Southern California Initiative for Education and Prosperity in 2015.

One sign that "the Dime" is no longer a barrier and that trusting relationships are growing is the one-day summit in May 2016 that brought together education, community, and economic leaders in the Inland Empire to discuss the partnership, including its origins, principles, and strategies. Over 125 people listened to briefings from members of the Initiative's Governing Board and then

were asked to participate in table discussions about the partnership. Participants spoke enthusiastically about the possibilities for the future and their commitment to the goals of the Initiative.

QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

As the Initiative begins to implement its strategies, a set of challenging questions remain for the partnership to address.

The region is marked by a wide variation of local assets and resources, and education institutions, especially K-12 schools, are not all at the same level of achievement and collaboration. Some collaborations are well-funded and supported, while others are struggling. These uneven developments raise some long-term strategic questions for the partnership, such as:

- How does a partnership enable the most vulnerable districts to improve while continuing to support districts that are already making substantial progress?

- Can the commitment to collaboration across district lines become part of the culture of the region?

- How does the partnership create a sustainable system of collaboration in the Inland Empire?

The Initiative is committed to supporting transformation of the delivery of education services for the institutions in the region. Alignment of programs is one of the main starting points, but there are other issues critical to student success, including:

- How does the partnership support the recruitment, development, and retention of quality teachers for the schools?

- Where do teachers learn new classroom pedagogies for rigorous curricula?

- How do new ideas and educational breakthroughs take root in neighboring institutions?

Finally, there are many unanswered questions about the collective impact strategy of the partnership. Collective impact is dependent upon all the partners contributing to the effort, but recent research on collective impact suggests that many of the smaller, more limited organizations within the collective initiatives have had difficulties maintaining their focus due to finite resources and constraints on their mission. As such, it is unclear how the partnership will maintain a collective effort among a diverse set of partners with limited resources.

Appendix A: Research Methodology

Research Methods and Activities

Over the course of 2016, research was undertaken using a variety of methods to develop an understanding of how intersegmental educational partnerships are developed, launched, and sustained. First, a literature review was initially conducted to develop a foundational knowledge of existing research on cross-sector regional partnerships in education and other related fields. Based on a synthesis of this literature, seven key characteristics were identified as the starting point for the case studies (see the Appendix for a comparison table of partnership frameworks and a description of the seven key characteristics).

Protocols were then developed and tested for interviewing a wide range of partnership stakeholders, after which potential interview subjects were identified. As interviews progressed, the researchers employed a "snowball" sampling method, through which individuals were asked during site visits to suggest other people for the researchers to interview. Ultimately, a total of 41 interviews were conducted with participants who worked at differing levels in the two partnerships. In reporting individual interview responses, the researchers have chosen for the most part to avoid naming the participants. Instead, they are identified by their roles and levels in their organizations. The 41 interviews were transcribed and coded employing an open coding procedure. Codes were then clustered, and emergent themes were identified.

Site visits to institutions participating in both partnerships were also conducted in order to observe partnership activities on multiple occasions. The researchers also visited two Long Beach Pathways events as well as one leadership summit in the Inland Empire. Furthermore, they participated in two convenings of projects that were funded through the Governor's Innovation Award, which provided additional opportunities to talk to teams from the two regions. In addition, numerous documents, demographic data, outcome data, and other information sources were collected and reviewed from both partnerships.

In order to process this wealth of data and begin to determine themes, the researchers started with the insights from the partnership research literature, through which they identified seven categories of factors correlated with successful partnerships (see Appendix). After research activities were concluded, they then "reinvented" the seven categories, morphing them into nine themes: five factors associated with successfully starting a partnership ("starters") and four associated with sustaining one ("sustainers"). More specifically, starters are factors that can influence the initiation of partnerships, while sustainers are elements that can affect continuing partnership operation and growth. The starters and sustainers identified comprise the following:

Starters	Sustainers
1. Leadership	1. Strategies
2. Drivers and incentives	2. Communication
3. Resources	3. Data
4. Relationships	4. Ongoing investment in and support for partnerships
5. Looking inward, looking outward	

By considering existing research literature and further comparing and contrasting the two regional cases, these nine starter and sustainer factors were ultimately collapsed into five key findings:

1. Leadership
2. Understanding change
3. Relationships
4. Effective use of data and evidence
5. Organizational coherence

Research Team

Three researchers carried out this study, employing primarily qualitative methodologies. The researchers brought varied perspectives to the task, ranging from lengthy experience with the California Community College (CCC) system to deep knowledge of the California State University (CSU) system.

Rose Asera, Ph.D., is an applied qualitative researcher and evaluator who currently works with the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges. From 2000-2010, she was a Senior Scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and directed the Strengthening Pre-Collegiate Education in Community Colleges Project. Previously, she worked with Professor Uri Treisman as Director of Research and Evaluation at the Charles A. Dana Center for Mathematics and Science Education at the University of California, Berkeley, and later at University of Texas, Austin. Dr. Asera was Fulbright Scholar at the Institute of Teacher Education Kyambogo and worked with UNICEF in Kampala, Uganda.

Dr. Robert Gabriner, the lead researcher for this study, is the Co-Director of the Leading from the Middle program of the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges. He is a professor of educational leadership at San Francisco State University (SFSU), where he directed the university's doctoral program in Educational Leadership for Community Colleges and Schools from 2009 to 2016. Dr. Gabriner has worked with California Community Colleges for 39 years as a faculty member, administrator, and statewide leader. Prior to his work at SFSU, Dr. Gabriner was Dean of Research, Planning and Grants and then the Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement at City College of San Francisco. Dr. Gabriner' s most recent publications include a book-length study conducted in collaboration with Dr. Norton Grubb, *Basic Skills in Community Colleges—Inside and Outside of Classrooms* (New York: Routledge, 2013)*,* and *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges* (San Francisco: Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, 2007).

Dr. David Hemphill has been a professor and administrator for over 33 years in the Graduate College of Education at San Francisco State University. He focuses on cultural studies, multicultural and international education, critical theory, adult education, literacy, second language acquisition, and qualitative research methods. He has pioneered multiple doctoral and international program initiatives. He is the author of five books on language, literacy, technology, globalization, and popular culture, as well as numerous articles and monographs. Prior to his work at SFSU, Dr. Hemphill was a language teacher and program director in organizations serving Asian immigrants.

Appendix B: Key Elements of Partnership Frameworks

The researchers conducted an analysis of multiple conceptual frameworks found in literature that described successful partnerships and networks. In particular, the following literature sources were found to be most relevant and useful to the study (see References for full citations):

- *Innovation Leadership Diagnostic Rubric* (U.S. Education Delivery Institute, 2016)
- *Collective Impact (*Kania & Kramer, 2011)
- *Education Collaborative Assessment Rubric (EdCAR)* (Alliance for Regional Collaboratives to Heighten Educational Success, 2016)
- *Strategic Collaboration between Nonprofits and Business* (Austin, 2000)
- *The Collaborative Map* (La Piana Consulting, 2015)
- *5 Essential Partnership Elements* (Kisker & Carducci, 2003)
- *Best Practices of P-20 Partnerships for Increasing College Access and Persistence for Under-Represented Students* (Cevallos, 2003)

Out of an analysis of these sources, the researchers identified seven key components of effective partnership frameworks that were described in most, if not all, of the literature studied. These partnership elements are summarized below.

1. COMMON AGENDA—FOCUS ON STUDENT NEEDS

A clearly stated and agreed-upon common focus on student needs is characteristic shared among most successful partnerships. Plainly verbalizing the motivation and context for partnering, based upon the recognition of a community need that calls for joint action, is extremely important. Establishing shared missions and goals that frame specific outcomes is also essential.

2. COMMITTED LEADERSHIP AND THE PRESENCE OF CHAMPIONS

The importance of strong leadership at multiple levels, in particular executive- and middle-level leadership, is consistently highlighted in literature that analyzes effective partnerships. So too is the importance of "champions"—individuals who consistently and conscientiously take on the long-term, hard work of partnering and act as strong advocates.

3. USE OF APPROPRIATE ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

The particular configuration of partnerships is also quite important to their success. Organizational structures that promote shared governance and mutual accountability among partners are key, as are backbone support organizations that facilitate the logistics of partnership work.

4. PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ALONG A CONTINUUM OF COLLABORATION

Some researchers see increasingly integrative states of partnerships that develop along a three-level continuum:

1. Philanthropic/collaborative—limited collaboration and isolated joint actions;
2. Transactional/alliance—joint programming, consolidation of shared activities; and
3. Integrative/strategic—restructuring: missions, people, and activities merge into a kind of joint venture.

Many successful partnerships are able to progress along this continuum and in doing so, strengthen both their efforts and outcomes by cultivating increasingly deeper and broader modes of collaboration.

5. ACTION IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

Implementation of coordinated, joint actions characterizes successful partnerships, such as the execution of sustained activities that focus on priority areas in order to enhance student outcomes across the multiple sectors comprising the P-20 education system.

6. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Effective framing and communication of partnership purposes and activities to both internal and external audiences is essential. These audiences may include education leadership, faculty, staff, students, and their families, as well as policymakers and regional businesses, public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and/or funders.

7. DATA AND EVALUATION

The effective use of timely, accurate, actionable information positively impacts decision-making and helps solve problems. As such, the collection, analysis, and subsequent action upon formative and summative evaluation data should take place regularly on an institutional and cross-partnership level.

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