WHAT MAKES A PARTNERSHIP WORK?

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Executive Summary

An Exploration of Educational Partnerships

This report compares the experiences of two regional cross-sector educational partnerships in California—the Long Beach College Promise and the Inland Empire partnership in 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 Award (GIA), established in the California Governor's 2014 budget. The awards were aimed to support educational partnerships comprising schools, community colleges, and universities.

In this context, the College Futures Foundation commissioned a comparative case study in order to gain insights into strategies for developing and sustaining multi-sector partnerships that are positioned to increase student success along the educational pipeline from high school to degree achievement. The main goals for this study were the following:

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

In order to gather as broad an understanding as possible of the components of successful intersegmental educational partnerships, two very different partnerships were examined. The Long Beach College Promise—which comprises the Long Beach Unified School District, Long Beach City College, and California State University, Long Beach—has been in existence for approximately two decades. In contrast, the Inland Empire partnership—bringing together K-12 school districts, community colleges, universities, and other organizations across San Bernardino and Riverside Counties—was recently launched in 2015.

These two initiatives differ not only in their longevity, but in the strengths of the partnerships as well as the challenges they face. For example, the Long Beach College Promise operates within a single, relatively economically stable county that houses only one institution representing each educational sector. The Inland Empire partnership, however, unites two counties and numerous institutions in one of the poorest areas of the country.

Research Findings

Despite the historical, structural, and environmental differences characterizing these two educational partnerships, a number of factors common to each were discovered. Drawing from extensive investigation into these partnerships, as well as a thorough literature review, key themes were identified with respect to how effective partnerships are created and sustained over the long term. These themes address five particular components of launching and maintaining educational partnerships.

THEME 1: LEADERSHIP

A partnership's leadership needs to be informed first and foremost by clear moral imperatives that drive the partnership's mission to improve student success. Additionally, partnership leaders must be guided by an existential imperative propelled by the need to ensure the continued existence of its institutions and regional community. Leadership in successful partnerships also effectively engages both executive-level leaders, who can provide the overall vision for the partnership and have the authority to make institution-wide changes, as well as middle-level leaders, who offer an on-the-ground perspective and have the capacity to engage faculty and staff in actually implementing new policies and practices on a day-to-day basis.

Furthermore, in order for partnerships to thrive, they need the support of "backbone" organizations" that can facilitate the logistics of the partnership. Finally, meaningful succession planning is critical to a partnership's long-term success, ensuring that the goals, strategies, and practices of the partnership do not die out with the departure of any single individual from the initiative.

THEME 2: UNDERSTANDING CHANGE

Change is a complex and multi-faceted process, one that must at times take place in the context of both institutions' and individuals' tendency to favor the status quo and regard new ideas with skepticism or even resistance. As such, leaders must understand how change processes work in order to both develop and maintain intersegmental educational partnerships.

Research in this study has revealed that meaningful implementation of change often includes drawing from multiple disciplines to identify strategic frameworks that can introduce innovative ways of guiding and structuring partnerships, as well as learning from the successes and challenges of partnerships in other regions while still leveraging local assets. Additionally, change in educational systems frequently requires the difficult task of implementing curricular and instructional reform in order to both boost student outcomes at specific institutions and, ultimately, move students seamlessly through an educational pathway ending in the achievement of degrees and/or entry into desired careers. Finally, partnerships that benefit from a meaningful understanding of change are able to effectively cultivate the resources necessary to promote that change, such as external grant funding, as well as find ways to incentivize change at the institutional and practitioner level.

THEME 3: RELATIONSHIPS

In order to build and sustain a successful partnership, leaders must be able to engage a variety of stakeholders and build long-term relationships and coalitions among them. The most important aspects of these relationships include the establishment of a strong foundation of trust among all stakeholders, the development of a common language that facilitates productive communication, and the utilization of strategies that bridge communication gaps across institutions and sectors.

THEME 4: EFFECTIVE USE OF EVIDENCE AND DATA

Evidence and data are vital components for both making the case for partnerships to stakeholders and guiding partnerships' strategic directions. In particular, members of partnerships must first develop the capacity to generate and analyze internal data, enabling them to develop and share a

nuanced understanding of the key issues at hand, such as which students are thriving, which students are struggling, and where students are encountering obstacles to reaching their goals. Furthermore, it is critical that data be shared across the partnership, not only to identify the strengths and challenges of the initiative, but also to monitor progress toward the partnership's objectives and enact thoughtful course corrections when necessary.

THEME 5: ORGANIZATIONAL COHERENCE

Finally, partnership leaders have to understand how reforms and improvements fit together to enhance organizational coherence for the students who must navigate through multiple institutions as well as for other stakeholders. To accomplish this, partnerships must be guided by long-term strategies that take into account both the big picture and daily realities in order to craft a successful unified effort. Moreover, these strategies must be flexible and adaptable so that the partnership is fully equipped to adjust to changing times and conditions over the course of its implementation.

Research Methodology

To conduct this study, three researchers with deep backgrounds in K-12 and higher education, specifically in California, were engaged to undertake an extensive literature review and conduct site visits at the institutions involved in both the Long Beach and Inland Empire partnerships. 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?"

In order to process this wealth of data and begin to note themes across the partnerships, the researchers started with insights found in partnership research literature, through which they identified seven types of features correlated with successful partnerships (see Appendix B). After factoring in the results of the site visits and interviews, they then "reinvented" the seven categories, morphing them into five themes associated with successfully starting a partnership ("starters") and four associated with sustaining one ("sustainers"). By further considering existing research literature and comparing and contrasting the two regional cases, these nine starter and sustainer factors were ultimately collapsed into the five key findings that are explored in-depth in this report.

Utilizing This Report

This report provides a cross-case analysis of the two partnerships studied in order to help those who are engaged in intersegmental education partnerships throughout the country understand some of the essential elements of starting partnerships as well as activities that are critical to sustaining them. This 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.

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.

A detailed description of the two case studies, including an exploration of how the starter and sustainer factors have played out in each region, can be found in the companion to this cross-analysis, *Starting and Sustaining Educational Partnerships: Two Case Studies of Intersegmental Innovation in California.*

Introduction

Purpose of This Report

BACKGROUND AND GOALS

This report compares the experiences of two regional cross-sector partnerships in California—the Long Beach College Promise and the Inland Empire partnership in 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 Award (GIA), established in the California Governor's 2014 budget. The awards were aimed to support educational partnerships comprising schools, community colleges, and universities.

In this context, the College Futures Foundation commissioned these comparative case studies in order to gain insights into strategies for developing and sustaining multi-sector partnerships that are positioned to increase student success along the educational pipeline from high school to degree achievement.

The main goals for this study were the following:

- Learn about the reasons for which the case study institutions opted for a partnership strategy
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HOW CAN THIS REPORT BE UTILIZED?

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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.

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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.

What Are Cross-Sector Educational Partnerships?

The development of partnerships that cross education segments is a strategy that extends resources and represents a promising avenue for improving students' academic and career outcomes. These initiatives, some of which have adopted a "collective impact" label, are organized at the school district, city, county, or metropolitan level. They attempt to improve education by promoting collaboration across multiple segments of the education pathway that extends from kindergarten to bachelor's degree achievement.

Effective collaboration in practice can lead to not only enhanced student outcomes, but also more effective organizational strategies. 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 with respect to what makes some partnerships work while others fail to take hold and/or thrive over the long term. As noted earlier, there is no simple formula for what makes a partnership work. Yet case examples from the field are well worth exploring to learn about effective approaches to leveraging partnerships in order to enhance student success in widely differing settings.

A Study of Two Partnerships

Two regional partnerships were selected for investigation in this study precisely because they differ dramatically in size, history, and other factors. They were both recently funded with $5 million-dollar Governor's Innovation Awards.

The first partnership studied, California's Long Beach College Promise, covers the relatively compact geographical area of a single city in the greater Los Angeles area with a very diverse population. It brings together 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 impact on student success. Although the Long Beach partnership story has been told many times, this case study focused specifically on understanding the life cycle of the partnership and how it has changed over time.

The second case study focused on the San Bernardino-Riverside (or "Inland Empire") two-county partnership, which covers a landmass in southeastern California that is larger than some states in the U.S., encompassing 27,000 square miles and a population of 4.4 million people. It is also one of the poorest regions in the country. This 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 K-12 school districts, 11 community colleges, two

universities, and leaders from the private sector and county government. In 2015, the partnership concluded its first year of development.

There were several reasons for selecting these two particular partnerships for study. First, these partnerships reflect two very different regional contexts in terms of size, complexity, population, and local history. Second, the two partnerships are at deeply contrasting stages of development—the Inland Empire partnership is at the beginning of its formation, while the Long Beach effort is over 20 years old. As such, there is much to be learned from both the well-documented successes that the Long Beach partnership has experienced as well as the initial efforts being undertaken in the Inland Empire.

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.

Organization of This Report

This report offers a cross-case analysis of common themes that integrates data from the two case studies that investigated the partnerships of Long Beach and the Inland Empire. The report

begins with a brief summary of the two case studies.[1] Next, the report looks across these two studies and explores in depth the five themes that emerged from the extensive research process, describing how each of these themes was realized in the Long Beach and the Inland Empire partnerships. Following, a description of the research methodology used in this project as well as a description of the research team members is provided. Finally, the report's Appendix B provides more information about the literature that was reviewed during the research process.

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[1] A complete, detailed description of the individual case studies conducted is provided in a separate report entitled *Starting and Sustaining Educational Partnership: Two Case Studies of Intersegmental Innovation in California.*

Overview of the Two Case Studies

The Long Beach College Promise

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

EVOLUTION OF THE PARTNERSHIP

The Long Beach area's history, which includes more than 20 years of educational collaboration and partnership, provides significant insight into the lifecycle of an educational partnership. The development of a partnership does not take place along a linear progression. This cross-institutional collaboration began in 1994 with the launch of the Long Beach Seamless Education Partnership, which ultimately evolved into the Long Beach College Promise in 2008. The Promise built on the initial collaboration and focused on college access, providing guaranteed entry to CSU-LB or an initial tuition-free semester at LBCC. The current work of the Promise now includes building disciplinary and career pathways so that students can progress unhindered through the three educational systems in the region (Long Beach Unified School District, Long Beach City College, and CSU, Long Beach).

Although the story of this partnership's development can seem straightforward and logical in its retelling, the experience of creating it was not. The Long Beach partnership has been shaped by changes in the region's economic context, introduction of new leaders, and emergence of new opportunities. Although the central commitment to student success and the community at large has never altered, the ways in which that commitment has been enacted have developed and changed over time.

Today, collaboration has become part of the culture of the schools and colleges in Long Beach—it is the way that educators work together. A vice president at LBCC described how the partnership has blurred traditional boundaries and developed shared commitment:

> [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're trying to achieve at Long Beach City [College]. It's that level of really [believing that] we own students across the three institutions. We have conversations about what meets the needs of all three. … I think it's … [about] believing that we're only successful if we are all successful.

STARTING POINT: THE LONG BEACH SEAMLESS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

In 1992, facing economic shifts, demographic changes, and increasing local unrest, the mayor of the city of Long Beach brought people together. Leaders in the civic, business, and education arenas were invited to create a Community Partnership in order to foster economic development, education development, and public safety. The education partnership was seen as a vital

component to both mirroring and supporting the economic partnership. However, the initial conversation among educators was somewhat fraught. One participant described:

> [It] started with finger pointing. [CSU Long Beach] complained about the quality of students coming to the university, and the [K-12] 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.

This "positive direction" that was suggested involved CSU-LB and LBUSD taking on shared responsibility for teacher training and jointly focusing on preparing teachers for the urban Long Beach schools. Faculty from CSU-LB's College of Education went into the K-12 schools and organized opportunities for teachers and administrators to be residents on the university campus.

In addition, LBUSD became the first district in California to mandate use of the Early Assessment Program (EAP) in 11th grade. EAP courses were jointly designed by district teachers and university faculty and then taught in high school. Furthermore, LBCC was one of the first community colleges to accept EAP credits.

DEVELOPING THE LONG BEACH COLLEGE PROMISE

The Long Beach College Promise is anchored by a mission and vision that permeate all aspects of the partnership's goals, strategies, and activities. 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"—good relationships and small projects continued, but there were no strategic activities conducted.

The Role of Strong, Long-Term Leadership

However, new leaders in the mid-2000s took the opportunity to reshape the partnership. Eloy Ortiz Oakley became President and Superintendent of Long Beach City College in 2007; at that time, the president of CSU-LB, F. King Alexander, was also relatively new to his position. Chris Steinhauser, who had come up through various positions in LBUSD, had been promoted to Superintendent of Long Beach Unified School District in 2002. These three leaders saw both need and opportunity to revitalize the educational partnership. Economics were again a driver: in 2008, the city, state, and country were in the middle of the worst recession since the Great Depression.

Leadership has played a major role in the development and ultimately success of the Long Beach College Promise. Notably, the pattern of executive leadership in Long Beach runs counter to the volatility and turnover that is the national norm in education. The Long Beach Unified School District has had only two superintendents in 25 years, and both LBCC and CSU-LB have had just three presidents each over the last 20 years. This longevity of executive leadership has been a vital resource for long-term development and continuity of the partnership.

Educational Access

Access to higher education for local Long Beach students is at the heart of the Long Beach College Promise. Local high school graduates who complete minimum college preparation requirements are guaranteed admission to CSU-LB, and local LBCC students who complete

transfer requirements are guaranteed acceptance at CSU-LB. This access is invaluable because CSU-LB receives over 90,000 applications annually and is an impacted campus. In addition, all local high school graduates who enroll in LBCC receive one academic year (previously one semester) tuition-free.

One school district leader describes how the Promise illustrates what moral purpose means when it is enacted:

> *[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 [now] 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.*

BUILDING PATHWAYS IN THE LONG BEACH COLLEGE PROMISE

One district leader noted, "My superintendent has the simplest of sayings, but it really applies here: it's all about relationships."

Receiving the Governor's Innovation Award (GIA) in 2015 gave the Long Beach College Promise the resources it needed to advance work across the three educational institutions and engage a wide range of educators on the ground in this endeavor. GIA funds have supported the creation of continuous pathways for a variety of academic disciplines and career areas. A new group of executive leaders, vice presidents and assistant superintendents, has taken on collaborative leadership of this effort. The partnership's new focus on pathways has also created the opportunity to bring together existing grants and resources to support the cross-institutional developments.

Eight pathways were initially developed, including Business and Liberal Arts, which are popular majors for students transferring from LBCC to CSU-LB, as well as growing workforce fields such as Health and Engineering. Each pathway explicitly lays out the courses and requirements, from high school through higher education, that lead to the desired degree or career entry, including clearly marked options at LBCC and CSU-LB. Each pathway is run by a team comprising nine members, including a faculty member, an administrator, and a counselor or advisor from each institution. Later on, opportunities to participate in these teams were extended to "middle" leaders—deans and curriculum leads—in order to actively engage stakeholders across educational institutions. One participant described how the teams worked:

> *[I]t was really a matter of us understanding ... [that] we all wanted students to succeed. We all had had various backgrounds [through which] we had seen students either be successful or be not successful, and [we] had a desire to see more prevalence of success.*

In their first year of operation, pathway teams focused on finding common language among the members representing different institutions, identifying "leaks" in the pipeline from high school to completion, and beginning to map out a course sequence for students moving through the three institutions. In the upcoming second year, each pathway team will create a visual, virtual

map of course sequences that students who want to pursue a particular field could take, starting in high school and moving through Long Beach City College and/or CSU-LB.

Crossing "The Dime": The Inland Empire Partnership

People 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

California's Interstate 10, called the "the Dime" by local residents, bisects Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in southeastern California. For a long time, this physical divide also marked a deep division between leaders of the two counties. While in the past leaders simply did not "cross over the Dime," now they are willing to cross this physical and metaphorical boundary. In fact, today's Inland Empire partnership involves 175 leaders from multiple sectors, including 58 K-12 school districts, 11 community colleges, two public universities, and leaders from the private sector and county government.

What changed? Why did the education and economic leadership decide after decades of division and competition to unite in a two-county partnership?

THE INGREDIENTS OF THE TWO-COUNTY PARTNERSHIP'S DEVELOPMENT

Riverside and San Bernardino Counties cover an area of 27,000 square miles with a population of 4.4 million people. The region is called the Inland Empire, and it comprises two of the largest counties in the country. It is also one of the poorest areas in the country.

There are a number of factors cited by local leadership as leading to this multi-sector partnership. Many claim that the biggest and most significant element was the enormous recession of 2008, which wreaked 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. However, other individuals argue that the shift toward collaboration was actually a more gradual event. One individual described:

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 Federation for a Competitive Economy

The first concrete signs of the willingness of leaders to "cross the Dime" emerged in 2009. A new initiative, the Federation for a Competitive Economy (FACE), was launched by the (then) sitting presidents of the CSU-San Bernardino and the University of California-Riverside campuses. The founders of FACE recognized there were many local initiatives and partnerships throughout the region, all geared to the same goals: college readiness, college completion, and

higher quality of life. However, each of these endeavors was operating in isolation. One person commented:

> *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.*

Eventually, over 200 leaders of school districts, community colleges, universities, and community and private sector organizations were listed as members of FACE, all united in a mission that one individual 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.*

FACE's strategic priorities included building a "seamless learning system," facilitating communication across the region, introducing new initiatives to address unmet needs, serving as an "advocate for excellence in education," and encouraging a strong pipeline of qualified workers, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The activities of FACE from 2008 to 2013 focused on building community engagement and conversations across organizational boundaries. It demonstrated that an effective two-county partnership was possible despite a history of jealousies and competition.

When the Governor's Innovation Award availability was announced in 2014, the Inland Empire leaders seized the opportunity. Drawing from the goals of FACE, the region applied for the award. One leader from a postsecondary institution in the region observed at the time, "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 then added:

> *We have some attributes [in this area that] 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 … [to] push us over the threshold: alignment, coordination, and strategic positioning.*

Launching to a New Level

In the spring of 2015, the Inland Empire partnership was awarded $5 million by the U.S. Department of Finance. The partnership specified five initial goals:

1. Align educational policy and initiatives regionally via a bi-county cradle-to-career collective impact model.

2. Increase college preparedness, particularly in math, resulting in a 20% reduction within five years in the number of students requiring remediation at the time of matriculation from high school into college.

3. Increase baccalaureate attainment by 15% across the two counties within five years.

4. Increase the number of students completing a baccalaureate degree within six years by 10% across the two counties within five years.

5. Improve career preparedness through strengthened partnership with industry to better align education with workforce needs.

Leadership Compelled by a Moral Imperative

There are a number of reasons that leaders in the Inland Empire decided to construct this multi-sector two-county partnership. First, the role of leadership was a critical factor, as the initiative brought together leaders from K-12 schools, community colleges, universities, community organizations, and county government. The partnership's executive leadership group included a mix of individuals, some with deep roots in the region and others newly arrived, who collaboratively introduced ideas from their work in other places. A common thread among all members of the executive leadership team was commitment to a moral imperative: the needs of the poor and marginalized *had* to be addressed.

This moral imperative was largely driven by the economic and educational conditions of the region. While the Inland Empire is one of the fastest growing areas in California, it also remains one of the poorest, with economic sectors that generate low- to moderate-paying jobs and high rates of poverty. Moreover, college completion and degree attainment rates remain below the state average.

For many years, these conditions have inspired responses from local schools and colleges attempting to improve both educational and economic outcomes for local residents. An asset map created for FACE identified over 125 collaborations among K-12 schools, community colleges, universities, community organizations, and the private sector. When the new large-scale Inland Empire partnership was created, it was seen as the "spine" or "backbone" that coordinated and aligned these local collaborations.

The partnership is also viewed as a resource engine for the region: a single focal point for local, state, federal, and philanthropic investment which would support efforts to align existing programs, incubate new ones, and track and report the results.

From FACE to the 2015 Partnership

The foundation of the Inland Empire partnership largely involved the evolution of trusting relationships among many different leaders in the region. This was a gradual process that took years to establish, first manifesting in the creation of the Federation for a Competitive Economy in 2008 and emerging on a larger scale through the 2015 launch of the region's new partnership.

The core leaders of the partnership use a variety of metaphors to describe the collaborative nature of their endeavor. Some depict it as an "umbrella" that embraces all of the local partnerships within the two counties to provide resources, data, communication, and technical support. As noted above, 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 to these more localized efforts. Whatever the metaphor, the partnership'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 behind for a better and more prosperous life.

Key Findings: Lessons from the Field

The extensive research efforts involved in conducting case studies of the Long Beach College Promise and the Inland Empire partnership ultimately led to the identification of five key components to the successful launch and longevity of intersegmental educational partnership. Each of these themes—leadership, understanding change, relationships, effective use of evidence and data, and organizational coherence—are described in detail in this section of the report.

Leadership

Leadership consistently appears as a key factor in successful education partnerships, as found in multiple research literature sources (ARCHES, 2016; Eddy & Armey, 2011; EDI, 2016; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Kisker & Carducci, 2003). In particular, the strength of moral and professional commitments is foundational for leaders in partnerships. Partnership work is a "calling" defined by moral imperatives—the need to make things right for the community as a whole with attention to the poor and the marginalized. Furthermore, leaders must understand the strengths and limitations of their own institutions and the possibilities that partnerships present.

In this study, the key factor of leadership is broken out into the following six sub-components:

1. Moral imperative
2. Existential imperative
3. Leader engagement
4. Middle-level leaders
5. Backbone organization leaders
6. Succession planning

Each of these pieces of the leadership picture is detailed in the sections below.

MORAL IMPERATIVE

Many participants in both of the regions investigated in these case studies identified a moral, ethical commitment as a key driver of partnership engagement. One executive leader observed, "I'm giving [student success] as much attention as I can, because first of all, it's the right thing to do for our community."

Another leader from Long Beach stressed the importance of working for the common good rather than pursuing individual organizational or personal agendas. Though it is far easier said than done, achieving a sense of common purpose that supersedes the needs and demands of individual institutions and their politics is essential for effective, long-term partnerships. As this leader summarized, "Check your agendas at the door. Do it for the betterment of the community."

Multiple leaders in the Inland Empire partnership also pointed out that the region has exceptionally low college-going rates, with many students not graduating. Addressing this situation became a moral imperative. One leader stated, "For our county, it's been a moral

purpose to make sure that every kid has the opportunity [to attend college], and we sometimes have to force kids to take the opportunity."

In both regions studied, the primary incentive for local CSU campuses to participate in the partnerships was found to be moral dedication to student success; there are few policy incentives in place to promote engagement in this kind of work. Without dedication to a moral imperative, policy structures may reward an entirely different focus, which can lead to "creaming" rather than supporting the success of local, first-generation students (a population that typically includes underrepresented ethnic groups as well as low-income students). Ultimately, as one executive leader commented, it comes down to "doing what's right even if nobody's handing you a check."

However, another leader suggested that while a moral imperative is central, effective leadership also requires the right "timing" and "resources." This observation suggests that a moral imperative is *necessary* for the formation of successful partnerships, but it alone may not be *sufficient* without other key supporting factors in place.

EXISTENTIAL IMPERATIVE

While a moral imperative drives action, such as the formation of a partnership, due to a belief that such action is the right thing to do, an "existential imperative" drives action to help ensure the survival or continued existence of an educational institution and its community. Indeed, threats to quality of life for a region, its population, institutions, or individual programs can also propel leaders to act, guided by an existential imperative. Instances of this can be seen in both regions studied in this investigation. For example, the shifting economic base in Long Beach in the mid-1990s, when industrial plants and the military base were closed, plus changing demographics, were key drivers in establishing the partnership.

The existential imperative also looms large in the Inland Empire, where two forces in particular impact the future of the region: population expansion and technological growth. For instance, industrial automation could undermine economic growth and prosperity if the workforce is not equipped with enhanced job skills and education levels. However, it is also possible that collaboration across the region could produce a large, well-educated workforce that attracts new investment and industries that offer higher-paying jobs. The partnership clearly intends to pursue the second scenario.

One Inland Empire executive observed that the existential imperative links the economy with the educational system in his region:

> *We can't look at bettering the economy, the business climate of the Inland Empire, unless you're … looking at the quality of life issues. The number one quality of life issue that we define is the fact that of our 4.4 million people, only 20% of them have a bachelor's degree. Of that 80% that don't have a bachelor's degree, nearly 35% didn't graduate high school.*

In a program-level example, the physics department of an institution in the Long Beach region also found the existential imperative to be a driver for change. If the program did not grow, it faced being closed down, as had happened in other parts of the country. One stakeholder observed, "It wasn't a moral or ethical decision—it was, 'Are we going to survive?'"

As the departmental faculty responded to this existential imperative by changing curriculum, pedagogy, and advising in order to make courses more accessible and build enrollment, the success of traditionally underserved, first-generation students suddenly ballooned. This increase in student achievement emerged despite the fact that the faculty's original intention was neither to embrace diversity nor to support the success of underrepresented students. One faculty member explained:

> *We weren't doing anything explicitly with ethnicity. We're just making a good program that people are going to be successful in. … But things are going so well … now [that] the faculty really own this diversity.*

EXECUTIVE LEADER ENGAGEMENT

Multiple study participants in both regions cited the importance of engaging executive leaders for partnerships to be successful. The term "executive leaders" here refers to presidents and superintendents as well as vice presidents and associate superintendents.

Executive leaders can set the tone for the partnership, make the partnership's priority visible, allocate resources, and give staff members permission and encouragement to partner. Leaders who participate in partnerships, one executive leader argued, need to "have sufficient leverage, be at a sufficiently high administrative level, to make things happen."

A CSU Long Beach executive leader described how the shared commitment across institutions worked in practice:

> *[It's essential to have a] level of commitment to the partnership on the highest executive level, where … the superintendent … can call my provost or the president of the community college and really discuss things right away as they emerge. … They're open to each other, and … they know each other.*

As one Inland Empire executive further noted, the initiative in his region is a sweeping undertaking, but it benefits from "very, very clear goals" articulated at the executive leadership level.

Due to both the requirements of their position and their level of authority at an institution, executive leaders also bring to a partnership the capacity to think systematically in a way that middle-level leaders alone cannot. Middle-level leaders (such as deans, department chairs, or program directors) do not have regular access to big-picture issues facing educational institutions, and they have to struggle to find time above and beyond their day-to-day responsibilities if they wish to reflect on those issues. In contrast, the role of executive leaders incorporates a mandate to continually focus on such big-pictures issues. Moreover, executive leaders have the authority to take action on an institution-wide (or system-wide) level, which middle-level leaders also cannot do on their own.

Without the engagement of executive leaders, it is difficult for partnerships to be initiated and/or sustained with clear focus, appropriate support, and continuing strategic guidance. One leader cautioned that without high-level, systemic thinking, institutional practices could easily "snap back" to the way they were before the partnership was introduced. Another cautioned, "There could be the tendency to focus on smaller, disconnected initiatives." Similarly, a state-level

policymaker observed that the Governor's Innovation Award requires executive leadership support for the grants in order to avoid isolated "islands of innovation."

Yet commitment from executive leaders is not in and of itself a recipe for success. One middle-level leader in Long Beach argued that while visionary executive leadership is important, so too is structure, follow-up, and a sense of the practicalities of implementation:

> [S]omeone at the executive leadership level has to have a vision and the ability to not be deterred by "shiny objects" [that distract one's focus.] ... [But] you just can't have vision without the structure that allows it to flow down from the top.... Someone at the top [needs to say], "This is important,"... setting the frame of discussion ... but then also implementing the structures to put the vision in place.

MIDDLE-LEVEL LEADERS

How Partnerships Benefit from Middle-Level Leaders

The engagement of middle-level leaders is also critical to sustaining effective partnerships; they bring a perspective to the work that differs substantially from that of executive leaders. Whether deans, department chairs, administrators of particular units, or faculty leaders, the participation of these kinds of middle-level leaders is necessary for a partnership to succeed.

In contrast to executive leaders, middle-level leaders bring to partnerships a focus on the specifics of implementing initiatives that is just as essential as a high-level vision for the work. Middle-level leaders are frequently responsible for translating the vision of executive leaders into daily action.

If a new initiative or reform is to take hold in an institution and be sustained over time, it has to become a part of the institutional culture and regular practice of faculty and staff. Middle-level leaders are able to facilitate this kind of cultural acceptance of new ideas due to their close connection to on-the-ground practices, faculty and staff attitudes, and student behavior. Furthermore, middle-level leaders can create the infrastructure and ongoing support for faculty and staff to successfully realize the new ideas envisioned at the executive level. As such, for initiatives such as cross-sector partnerships to thrive, middle-level leaders must be part of both the development and implementation processes.

How Middle-Level Leaders Benefit from Partnerships

Partnership work can also serve to broaden the perspectives of middle-level leaders, enabling them to think more systematically on a meta-level about institutional and regional issues. One Long Beach executive emphasized the importance of learning to think systemically for all levels of leaders engaged in partnership work:

> [I]t's so difficult for people to think beyond the particularistic and to really think in terms of the systemic. That does not come naturally to most human beings, and it doesn't come naturally to most educators. To me, though, that's pretty important when you're dealing with entities as large and complex.

Middle-level leaders can benefit from exposure to conceptual and programmatic resources provided via partnership work and grant-funded activities. Involvement in multiple grant-funded

activities can also help to build cross-sector bridges and sharing of resources, as one middle-level university leader in Long Beach observed:

> *[My community college counterpart] sits on the Bridging the Gap committee, and I do as well, which is from the Irvine Foundation. The grant looks at enhancing internship experiences for students and making those pathways from high school to Cal State Long Beach and City College more transparent, with a big connection to linked learning. And so we … realized that we have a lot of overlapping resources in those areas.*

To compare the two regions, middle-level leaders in Long Beach seem to have taken a greater role in the operations of the partnership than have those in the Inland Empire. One reason for this difference is the longevity of the two regional partnerships—20 years for Long Beach versus one year for the Inland Empire. Another factor is the contrast in size and complexity of the two regions. Yet in the Inland Empire, there have been numerous sub-regional initiatives featuring strong engagement of middle-level leaders.

"BACKBONE ORGANIZATION" LEADERS

Backbone support is a key function in partnerships that can involve leading, convening, facilitating, and offering logistical assistance and connections in a variety of ways. Backbone support may be provided by an organization that is separate from the partnering institutions, or it may be done by the partners themselves. The research literature describes backbone support organizations as critical to maintaining and prolonging the work of partnerships (ARCHES, 2016; Cevallos, 2013; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Moore et al., 2015).

The type of leadership needed to provide backbone support may differ from the leadership required in the partnership itself. In the two partnerships studied, backbone support was seen as primarily as logistical and administrative in its character, rather than visionary. The latter sort of leadership appeared to be more characteristic of executive leaders in the partner organizations. The researchers also observed that the backbone support function seemed particularly important in the startup phase of a partnership.

Two stakeholders from the Inland Empire partnership described the need for the backbone function:

> *A key piece [of the partnership] is having an intermediary in place that is not within an existing bureaucratic or institutional structure but outside it, and is a neutral convener and facilitator.*

> *I think the role of … backbone organizations [is to be] an entity that is a neutral convener and integrator that can help the region identify [and] set the strategy and the common objectives [for the partnership] and then support [the partners] in moving toward it.*

This type of "backbone" work, though, can be performed either by organizations external to the partnership or partnership members themselves. For example, in the early days of the Long Beach Seamless Education Partnership, the Long Beach Foundation served as a "backbone" organization, with the primary role of convening the partnership stakeholders. However, a coordinating leadership position was created in the K-12 school district office, mutually

supported by the school district, the community college, and the university. These coordinating and convening roles have subsequently been internalized in the partnership's educational institutions.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

As posited above, as well as in the research literature, leaders at multiple levels are vital to the success of partnerships. However, this study has also identified some potential pitfalls that can undercut effective leadership (Honig, 2001), such as staff turnover, excessive association of an innovation with one individual leader, and the lack of succession planning.

For example, while new leaders can often infuse partnerships with increased energy and purpose, persistent turnover in executive leadership also presents a challenge. Those who disagree with the proposed direction of a new leader, for instance, may simply decide to wait until the next leader comes, knowing that the current leader is unlikely to remain in place for long. Innovation can also become the domain of one particular executive leader, which may limit the participation of others. Moreover, when that person leaves the partnership for another position, the associated innovation may wither. As such, planning for leadership transition and succession in a way that maintains innovation must be a central concern for any partnership seeking to thrive over the long term.

Indeed, participants in both regional partnerships repeatedly stressed the importance of transition and succession planning, particularly since short tenure and high turnover often characterize executive leadership positions in the education field. According to *Education Week*, the average tenure of superintendents leading urban school districts is slightly over three years (Will, 2014). For community college presidents or chancellors, average tenure is just over four years (Community College League of California, 2012). One Long Beach executive expressed the desire to promote "leadership longevity." Another Long Beach executive described how he had proactively addressed the issue of succession as he prepared to retire:

> *I've made a fair effort to deeply socialize two of my staff into this work. I basically am letting them do everything for the last year so that they really are steeped in it. I'm hoping that they will bring a depth of knowledge that they can then share with my successor that will be a little bit helpful in that regard.*

In fact, Long Beach's school district, community college, and university have all had executive leaders that stayed in their roles well beyond national averages. This leadership longevity played an important role in allowing time for the partnership to take root.

Understanding Change

The process of change is neither simple nor linear, and it is always accompanied by messiness of some kind. Effective partnership leaders understand that planning for change is an iterative process, and making corrections or pivoting is part of that process. They also recognize that the change process requires focusing both inward and outward—for example, organizing the talents and creativity of individuals inside partnership organizations while at the same time learning lessons from other parts of the state and nation. Furthermore, a successful change process requires that leaders recognize the resource needs of their partners and work collaboratively to

find the funding and the personnel necessary to support the development of strategies and innovative practices among the partners that will animate and promote improvements.

In this study, the researchers found that there were six key components to understanding change in intersegmental education partnerships:

1. Utilizing strategic frameworks from multiple disciplines
2. Learning from other regions
3. Leveraging local assets
4. Implementing curricular and instructional reform
5. Cultivating resources to promote change
6. Incentivizing change

Each of these aspects of understanding change is described in the following sections.

UTILIZING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS FROM MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES

In both regional partnerships, participants repeatedly stressed the usefulness of drawing from overarching strategic frameworks from multiple disciplines to guide their work. In the Inland Empire, frequent references were made, for instance, to the "collective impact" research as a guiding theory for regional partnership work (Kania & Kramer, 2001). One participant observed, "There's just a number of us who have experienced some of these K-16 works and some of the collective impact work elsewhere in the country."

Inland Empire leaders also mentioned the influence of Alignment USA and Alignment Nashville on their thinking (Nation et al., 2010). This model of a coordinated support framework promotes youth empowerment and success by using a regional strategic plan, engaging a wide range of stakeholders, establishing collaborative cross-sector teams, and more. One executive leader in the region also mentioned work on the "metropolitan revolution," which describes creativity and innovation in metropolitan areas across the world (Katz & Bradley, 2013).

Numerous participants from Long Beach further cited the influence of "design thinking" concepts that were developed at the Stanford University Institute of Design (Faste, 2001; Kelley & Kelley, 2013) and had been introduced to the school district through grant development activities. The design thinking process is adapted from the fields of engineering and product development. It is a problem-solving methodology that engages both analytic thinking and wide-ranging imagination. Through design thinking activities, a series of prototypes are tested and revised based on user/student data and feedback. One middle-level leader elaborated on the impact of design thinking on her planning group:

> *The [Long Beach] College Promise team had a design thinking presentation ... where we made a leap forward in terms of the concepts that we had been talking about. ... It forced us to look at a bigger picture and to step back and think about not just the data that we had from an institutional standpoint about success and graduation rates, but to revisit student-infused information and ask, what kinds of information would they want in a pathway? What kinds of information would they want to know to help them make guided decisions?*

Long Beach also applied the Linked Learning framework in the development of its cross-institutional pathways. The principles of Linked Learning include rigorous academics that meet

college-ready standards paired with sequenced, high-quality career technical education, work-based learning, and comprehensive supports to help students stay on track. The work-related theme in Linked Learning provides a practical lens for students to learn academic content. Additionally, use of a common framework lets the partners coordinate and align multiple grants and projects. One Long Beach partnership stakeholder explained:

> *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.*

LEARNING FROM OTHER REGIONS

Participants in both regional partnerships described early efforts to learn from work underway in other parts of the country in order to build their capacity for partnering. This reflects a willingness to look widely for ideas and inspiration, a critical asset to partnerships.

In Long Beach, early influences from other locations included visits to other colleges conducted by CSU administrators and faculty as part of an American Association of State College and Universities (AASCU) and Education Trust effort to increase retention and completion rates among all student ethnic and gender groups. They visited 13-15 institutions, including Elizabeth City State College North Carolina in order to observe how an historically Black institution promoted student success. Furthermore, when new executive leaders wanted to reinvigorate the Long Beach partnership in 2007/2008, they looked to learn from related efforts in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Leaders in the Inland Empire partnership also cited influences from around the country, including northern Kentucky, Cincinnati, and Nashville. The regional Catholic archdiocese structure in the Inland Empire was also mentioned as a useful example of a functioning two-county regional organization. In addition, they looked to Long Beach to learn about the Promise and consider how they might adapt that model to their setting. A Long Beach executive leader described how many lessons can be learned from the Promise despite its individual characteristics:

> *There are a lot of things that can be extracted from Long Beach that can be done in other communities. The bottom line is that it really just comes down to finding a set of willing partners in any community and just working on common issues and doing the best you can to leverage the assets that you have in any community.*

LEVERAGING LOCAL ASSETS

Partnership participants in both regions emphasized the importance of analyzing and leveraging locally available resources, such as existing educational programs, leadership, curriculum, community supporters, businesses, and nonprofits, in order to support their efforts. An executive leader in Long Beach argued that assessing local strengths and challenges is a key to innovation.

The FACE initiative in the Inland Empire offered a strong example of an effort to assess and knit together local assets. As described earlier, FACE preceded the Inland Empire's current regional partnership. The former executive director of FACE commented:

> *[FACE] involved people far beyond the university. It involved education, K through college, everything in our region plus the business sector plus the nonprofit sector and plus the government sector. … We wanted to bring them together and figure out how we could leverage human and fiscal resources and truly come up with some measurable things that could make a difference to the strength economically as well as educationally [of] our region.*

One particularly promising outcome of FACE was a regional asset map that detailed all known student success activities underway across educational sectors in the Inland Empire. One partnership participant described the development of this map:

> *We took a look at everything that was out there, and then we [identified] a subset of those things that had excellent data that we could use in some capacity, … doing an assessment of existing programs and what specifically they did. I did an asset map on STEM because that was of high interest to everyone in our region. I [focused] it on college-going efforts, asking, "What are the college-going, college completion efforts that take place, and what are the STEM activities?"*

IMPLEMENTING CURRICULAR AND INSTRUCTIONAL REFORM

According to multiple participants in both regions, curriculum and instruction are two of the toughest things to change in educational institutions. Adjusting curriculum and instruction to create a more seamless pathway for students moving from high school to college completion requires the collaboration of faculty in different institutions who face different levels of accountability and have differing amounts of autonomy and decision-making power.

In the Inland Empire, for example, one of the major initial goals of the partnership was the development and implementation of a "Fourth Year Math" curriculum. The creation of this new curriculum involved faculty from multiple institutions, across all sectors, and from many parts of the region. The project was piloted in over 20 classes in different parts of the Inland Empire in order to establish its validity across a diverse set of institutions and students. The faculty member leading the work explained the need for this project:

> *What the schools were lacking was a course that was post-Algebra II, but not necessarily a Calc[ulus]-track course. There needed to be something for the vast majority of students who finished Algebra II and could benefit from another year of math, a fourth year of math, but [who] didn't want to go into the sort of rigorous STEM track.*

Since curriculum in higher education is traditionally the province of the faculty, administrators' action to influence curricular innovation requires a thoughtful and strategic approach. As one Long Beach executive leader observed:

> *What we found was [that] … change 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.*

As described earlier, in an effort requiring substantial amounts of change to curriculum and instruction, Long Beach has invested its GIA resources in developing educational pathways that connect continuously across the regional high schools, community college, and California State University. Teams representing eight educational fields, including business administration, physical sciences, STEM, health care, and engineering, were directed to find a common language, identify leaks in the educational pipeline, and begin to map out course sequences for students moving through all three institutions. A science faculty member at CSU Long Beach noted the particular challenges of changing curriculum:

> *There's three broad sorts of things that we've done: … advising, pedagogy, and the curriculum itself. We have over about a 10-year span taken a look at each one of those things systematically and done something with it, and … the curriculum is the hardest one of all to think about, because that's changing what it means to be a physics major. That's one that … most student success initiatives don't touch.*

CULTIVATING RESOURCES TO PROMOTE CHANGE

Both partnerships have received multiple awards of external funds from a variety of sources, both private and public. For Long Beach in particular, the range of external support over the years has been considerable, and multiple participants commented on the usefulness of these resources. One university executive leader noted that external funding can add impetus to local initiatives already under way:

> *You don't need big foundation grants to start that work or to do the work, but of course the grants are helping to kick that work into higher gear.*

A university middle manager also observed that grants allowed for valuable professional development opportunities, helping participants gain new ideas and see how those ideas could take shape. She further commented that she and her colleagues benefited from collective discussions among faculty addressing a variety of change initiatives, helping them understand how to develop, promote, and implement change.

Multiple participants also reflected favorably on the flexible nature of the GIA funding and how it let them pursue their own interests. A state policymaker described the intent of this adaptable funding mechanism:

> *It was intentional. The theory of this all was, if you put out an incentive that is attractive enough, in both the size of the dollars that an institution could get and the fact that they can spend it without significant restrictions, then you can get institutions to be willing to play this game.*

Furthermore, local resources can be leveraged to support one another in a dialogical fashion, as the researchers observed in both regional partnerships. For example, one Inland Empire school

district executive leader described how external innovation funds can generate a "domino effect" that builds upon local resources:

> *The state's going to pour a lot of money into our area for GIA. They don't realize that there's a domino effect of that money. GIA's not funding AP Readiness, but yet there's a domino effect because … we're going to do whatever we can to get kids college-ready…. We're not going to wait for GIA to set up a program. If we think it's important, we're going to move along.*

According to another executive leader in the Inland Empire, the partnership in his region expects to leverage local funds via cost-sharing match requirements:

> *If a school district comes and says to us, "We want to increase college preparedness [among] our graduating seniors so that we can achieve mass college readiness. This initiative will cost $100,000." We've agreed that if the district threw in $50,000, we would throw in [the other] $50,000. At some point, we have to incentivize innovation and get districts to partner with us as funders for this innovation.*

However, one middle-level school district leader in Long Beach cautioned against over-reliance on external funds:

> *The external support needs to be real[ly] focused and in line with what you're doing. Sometimes monies can come in that have nothing to do with what you're doing. Then, if you start to chase dollars, you can get away from your vision and your goal.*

Moreover, one CSU science department faculty member in Long Beach clearly preferred relying on more stable local resources instead of short-term external funding. He described:

> *We've been pretty conscious about not relying on something that is an initiative or something that is not going to be permanent. Sustainability in anything that we're going to do is real important. … We basically decided as a department that we were going to do this on our own. We weren't going to wait for extra resources.*

Ultimately, external funding is most effective when it aligns with and is applied to work that is central to the mission of the institution. Without that connection to an institution's core mission and moral purpose, external finding can become a distraction or provide support for a short-term project that is never scaled up or institutionalized. However, when external resources support the core work of the institution, the benefits are wide-ranging, including not only funding, but also a chance for education practitioners to generate innovative ideas, try out alternate models, and develop new perspectives. Finally, external grants also provide the opportunity for administrators, faculty, and staff to connect with their peers at other institutions and learn from the experiences of their colleagues.

INCENTIVIZING CHANGE

Multiple leaders in both regions remarked that there are few policy or practical incentives in place at any institutional level to support partnering. This is one reason that the GIA initiative

has been particularly valuable in facilitating partnership initiatives in California. One Long Beach executive leader commented:

> *There really are so few incentives for partnering. It takes a strong vision and strong leader to be willing to swim upstream against the, not so much the disincentives, but the fact that there are demands from 18 other directions [that] can easily distract you.*

Several leaders argued that structural incentive policies ought to be put in place to promote innovation designed to increase student success. School districts and community colleges were seen as having the greatest incentives for partnering, including financial, legislative, and accountability incentives to improve student success and move students along the education pathway. However, to date neither the California legislature nor the CSU President's Office has developed a long-term plan to incentivize CSU participation in regional partnerships. Instead, these four-year institutions often prioritize reputation, competitive admissions policies, research, and publishing. Furthermore, partnerships provide K-12 schools and community colleges with direct access to and resources for their students, while four-year institutions could accept students from other regions and not be compelled to serve local students.

To build incentives for endeavors that enhance student success, one Inland Empire university executive suggested "making student success a part of administrator evaluations." A state policymaker also discussed the use of incentives, noting growing state interest in providing educational institutions with financial incentives for eliminating organizational barriers to student success. A Long Beach university executive added:

> *If the state were paying attention to this sort of thing, I do think it would make a lot of sense for them to create goals and incentives for this kind of work, as is done elsewhere in the country.*

He went on to advocate for the state to offer CSUs financial incentives that would:

- Streamline the curriculum to move more students to completion;
- Expand support programs such as tutoring and learning communities;
- Make the curriculum more relevant to the job market;
- Improve early selection of majors to help students make best choices of field and career;
- Dramatically raise graduation rates; and
- Increase collaboration with K-12 districts and/or community colleges.

Multiple participants further stated that two key areas were particularly challenging when it came to efforts aimed at increasing student success: engaging faculty and changing curriculum. Tagg (2012) argues that tenured faculty resist change because of three key factors: loss aversion, the endowment effect, and fear of change. Loss aversion is generally understood as a psychological term: once a person has something of great value, that person will be averse to giving it up under most circumstances. The endowment effect refers to the value of tenure for college faculty and the frequent lack of willingness to jeopardize that tenure by straying too far from the home department or program and/or challenging its rules and norms.

An executive leader in Long Beach stated that the only way to engage his science faculty in student success work had been to invest significant resources ($100,000) to secure a large federal grant—in effect, incentivizing faculty participation in change. He described:

I'd been working for years to get my science college to pay attention to student success. ... It just seemed like they just couldn't figure it out. Then along comes the BUILD Grant. This big $24 million [grant from]... NIH, NSF, and Department of [Education]. It's three federal entities. It's a big, giant thing. ... There's money on offer, and that's what the scientists respond to. I spent $100,000 to get the BUILD proposal written. They were happy as clams. Now they're all over student success.

This executive argued that ultimately, with appropriate state-level policy incentives in place, "Four-year leaders will cooperate because it will be in their interest." Yet he admitted that performance-based funding in higher education has shown mixed results, citing research in the area (Dougherty et al., 2012; Rutherford & Rabovsky, 2014). Therefore, while performance-based funding may have some attraction as an incentive for partnering, there is only limited evidence of its success in U.S. higher education in recent years.

Relationships

Participants in both regional partnerships consistently identified the importance of establishing and maintaining productive relationships among collaborators. Prior research reiterates the centrality of both communication and relationships (Austin, 2000; ARCHES, 2016; Eddy & Armey, 2011; EDI, 2016; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Kisker & Carducci, 2003; Moore, et al., 2015).

One critical factor in the durability of partnerships is trust, along with the recognition that trusting relationships are not built overnight. Leaders must understand that building long-term, trusting relationships is a complex, continuing, and crucial process. Additionally, relationships that facilitate strong partnerships must include strong communication systems and the ability to maintain and sustain those relationships over the long haul.

In this study, the factor of relationships was found to comprise the following three aspects:

1. Establishing trust among participants
2. Developing a common language
3. Bridging communication gaps

These three aspects of effective relationships are explored individually in the sections below.

ESTABLISHING TRUST AMONG PARTICIPANTS

One of the primary reasons that trust is such an important component of relationships between partners is that it leads to shared decision-making. Trust grows in relationships over time, resting on repeated experiences of partners showing up, listening, responding, and working together. The existence of trust among partners does not mean that everyone will agree all of the time, but it creates an underlying shared commitment and a willingness to learn together.

One middle-level school district manager in Long Beach recalled that when she became an administrator, she realized she would need to partner with the local community college and CSU campus to maximize the impact of district policies and programs on students. She elaborated:

People always ask us, "How do you make this College Promise [initiative] work?" It's really about the development of relationships. … I could call any of the people at either of the organizations. We know each other, so they're willing to help me. That's what most people don't understand.

A Long Beach executive leader further observed that the "chemistry" of the people on the partnership steering committee was particularly exciting. She described:

The energy around these discussions from our institutional partners… is really infectious. It's wonderful to see where we are looking for ways to really collaboratively solve problems that we might think are problems just for us, but then with a different perspective or different outlook or even different policies. We're able to help each other out.

Participants also pointed out that productive partnerships must begin with an openness to collaboration. Moore et al. (2015) call this a "coalition of the willing." One Inland Empire leader observed, "Not everybody wants to play," suggesting the need to vet potential new partners and focus on engaging those who would be eager collaborators.

However, she noted that despite considerable willingness to partner, in her sub-region, there remained real issues of territoriality. Therefore, trust and openness, while a key component of a successful partnership, may sometimes be elusive, requiring substantial effort to achieve.

DEVELOPING A COMMON LANGUAGE

Participants in both regions cited the need to develop a "common language" to be used across institutional boundaries. Even basic terms, such as "counseling" and "advising" or "units" or "credits" can have different meanings in different settings and often need clarification among institutions. A higher education executive leader in Long Beach put it this way:

For example, when we say" advisor," they say "counselor," right? A counselor on our campus is someone who deals with mental health issues. A counselor for them is someone who plans the next year of study with the student.

A school district middle-level leader in Long Beach added:

When we talk about high school credits, colleges talk in terms of units. So what does that mean? We really started to talk about terminology in refining some of our processes.

To build a shared vocabulary, counselors and advisors across educational institutions in Long Beach created a "terminology handbook," a critical step in facilitating effective communication. Within the Inland Empire partnership, communicating with faculty members in particular about innovation and change efforts was found to be challenging (Tagg, 2012).-An Inland Empire executive leader observed:

In any community, you will find mistrust between the educational partners, and especially between the faculty. We have developed ways to get around that trust issue. … Just getting around that issue requires years of pushing and

overcoming the naysayers that typically have the loudest voices on our campuses.

BRIDGING COMMUNICATION GAPS

The development of effective communication processes—within institutions, between partnership members, and among external stakeholders and members of surrounding communities—often faces numerous barriers. The two partnership regions have responded to these barriers in a variety of ways. For example, a CSU-LB executive leader discussed the need to do a better job of engaging faculty:

> *These [student success] efforts by the administration are often perceived by faculty as anti-education. … [Faculty think] 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.*

Both partnerships have engaged in substantive work to bridge these kinds of communication gaps. One aspect of this work has involved a summer process called "vertical counseling," which was initiated by Long Beach Unified School District. The vertical counseling process establishes collegial connections at multiple levels of the three educational sectors (K-12, community college, and university). It enables counselors and advisors in the different institutions to clarify key points of contact, develop shared language and strategies, and lay the foundation for solving problems during the school year. The process also enables high school counselors in specific pathways to be able to "hand off" their students to counselors in the same pathway at the next educational level, whether community college or CSU.

The pathways work in Long Beach also reflects a conscious effort to overcome communication barriers. Earlier initiatives in prior years were hampered by the perception that they were top-down efforts. One middle-level manager recalls:

> *It left a bad taste in people's mouths because it seemed like it came completely from the top down. … [Faculty said,] we don't want this to … feel very administration-heavy, and [we're] being told what to do by [the] administration.*

The structure of Long Beach's current pathways endeavor reflects a vastly different approach. Each of the initiative's eight pathways is run by a team that comprises an administrator, counselor/advisor, and faculty member from each of the three partner institutions, totaling nine individuals. In this way, Long Beach's efforts are designed to build collaboration, engage faculty, and enhance communication at all levels. The pathways groups meet monthly, have multiple whole-group convenings, and conduct all-faculty campus-wide briefings at the end of the year to summarize and celebrate progress.

Yet one high school teacher working in the Long Beach pathways project commented that time limitations and participants' other full-time jobs can still pose a barrier to communication and ultimately implementation of pathways goals, particularly for faculty members. This teacher observed:

> *[T]hey're asking people who have full-time jobs to do a lot of work that they probably really don't have a lot of time for…. It's very difficult to do stuff outside of your own job that already takes up 40 or 50 hours of your week.*

This issue of time limitations speaks to the difficulty of getting information to faculty as well as the challenges of providing substantive support for partnership work. As such, often faculty remain unaware of many partnership accomplishments.

Effective Use of Evidence and Data

The utilization of data is a powerful tool that can be employed at different times in the development of partnerships. Research on partnerships emphasizes the importance of accessing and analyzing valid data across programs in order to assess progress and shape decisions (ARCHES, 2016; Eddy & Armey, 2011; EDI, 2016; Kania & Kramer, 2011). When a partnership is initiated, leaders can use data to identify student and institutional needs as well as build a sense of urgency. As partnerships develop, data can be critical to monitoring progress toward the partnership's goals and measuring the outcomes of its efforts. As such, leaders must establish reliable internal data systems for all partner institutions and commit to building data-sharing processes among all partnership members.

In this study, the effective use of evidence and data was determined to have the following two primary components:

1. Generating and analyzing internal data
2. Sharing data across the partnership

Each of these components are described further below.

GENERATING AND ANALYZING INTERNAL DATA

Many of the individual institutions in the two regional partnerships have strong capacities to generate and analyze data within their own organizations. Long Beach Unified School District has a powerful data "dashboard" that aggregates information about student outcomes by identifying all student "momentum points." For example, research shows that students who pass certain milestones, such as completion of 15 or 30 units of college coursework, are more likely to continue toward their goals than those who do not reach those targets.

Teachers can use these kinds of data not only to conduct an initial assessment of the obstacles students encounter and then build academic or career pathways that address those obstacles, but also to determine the degree to which students are reaching key milestones, thus assessing the overall quality and effectiveness of the pathways. Additionally, data findings are increasingly used to generate professional development topics for the academic year. However, obstacles to accessing data remain, such as the difficulty of collecting information about students' work-based learning experiences and their impact.

One of the ways that Long Beach City College has leveraged data collection and analysis has been by identifying indicators that correlated with and predicted student success. The college's research office found that existing standardized placement exams were weak predictors of student achievement. In response, LBCC has implemented an alternate placement process that uses multiple measures, including high school grade point averages. Doing so has decreased

enrollment in developmental math and English classes, thus saving time for students and institutions. Today, this evidence-based, multiple measures placement model developed by LBCC has become the basis for an initiative to implement a similar multifaceted assessment system across the California Community College system.

CSU Long Beach is not only developing institutional data capacity, but also investing in increasing educators' capacity to engage with data in order to better guide decisions that will enhance student success. The university has created a stipend-funded, two-year professional development program called "Data Fellows," which develops the skills of faculty, administrators, and staff with respect to the usage of student success data. In this program, three-person teams from each of CSU-LB's "colleges" (such as the College of Science) work on college-specific projects to remove barriers to student success. Drawing from data, they plan the projects in the first year of the program and implement them in the second. A middle-level leader who participates in the initiative described the process:

> *[S]o myself as an associate dean level, advisors, [and] people in Student Affairs started that program [at] the start of this year. … [W]e would meet and talk about student success ideas, like time to graduation, gaps in success rates between underrepresented and not underrepresented students, and the whole purpose of that meeting was [to ask,] … what data do we have?*

A Long Beach executive who has seen some preliminary results from the Data Fellows work adds that hearing about projects from other units in the university has broadened knowledge of what is going on across the campus. The executive commented:

> *It's actually quite exciting. … We're doing major switching analyses. … What's interesting about that is that … [participants in the program] are now mapping what majors their students start with and then what majors their students are graduating with if they remain in the same college. … Then the issue of curriculum development could become something that is really going beyond the department.*

SHARING DATA ACROSS THE PARTNERSHIP

Participants in both regional partnerships reported that while currently there is not much systematic inter-institutional data-sharing, there are plans to build that capacity. Initially, such systems may take the form of "workarounds," because each educational system has a different data management system. Over time, though, these workarounds could evolve into seamless "data warehouses." Other data-sharing efforts to date have often taken the form of individual hand-offs of data files.

In the Inland Empire, one of the key working groups funded under the GIA award is focusing on data. An executive leader noted:

> *We literally have to be able to track every single high school graduate of every single district … by creating a data warehouse that will be able to capture the progress that's being made. … We have to track the percentage of students that are leaving the community colleges and going to four-year institutions.*

Although inter-institutional data-sharing in Long Beach is a work in progress, an executive leader highlighted one instance of success in data-sharing that led to action:

> *Through the data that we do have, we've learned … that we have very few students from Long Beach City College who apply to the [CSU-LB] College of Education. In fact, they were [in] single digits last year. By looking at that data, … we have strengthened the presence of future teacher's clubs on each of the three [LBCC] campuses. … Already this year, we have more than tripled the [number of] students who apply.*

Organizational Coherence

Partnerships are complex and often messy, and they can lead to high levels of stress among the leadership. Yet, living on edge of chaos can also generate extraordinary creativity among those who are willing to face the challenge. Therefore, partnership leaders must be able to manage a certain amount of uncertainty in order to "keep the creative juices flowing" while at the same time guiding partnerships to the other side of chaos: coherence. Fullan (2001) says that coherence-making is a constant pursuit among partner institutions, where complexity and chaos are always knocking on the door. To maintain this equilibrium, leaders must use powerful strategic frameworks while always focusing on the long-term strategies.

The primary components of organizational coherence identified in this study are:

1. Use of long-term strategies
2. Understanding changes over the course of a partnership
3. Flexibility and adaptability

Each of these elements of organizational coherence is described further below.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

Long-term strategies are being pursued and implemented in both partnership regions via a range of focused and thoughtful approaches, with a clear focus on local needs. These strategies address evolving regional conditions and are supported by data and observation over time.

One area that has been addressed widely in both regions is work-based learning, implemented via Linked Learning and high school career academies. A Long Beach Community College executive described:

> *Linked Learning is really a college- and career-readiness approach. It's the idea that all students will be prepared to meet CSU and [University of California] standards within the lens of an industry theme, making the material more relevant to student[s]. … The components of Linked Learning are rigorous academics built in with specific technical skills, integrated student supports, and work-based learning opportunities. These [work-based learning experiences] can be from class lectures, guest speakers, class projects, job shadowing, site visits, up to internships. … The basic benefit of a Linked Learning model is that due to [the increased] relevancy [of course*

> *content to "real life,"] students are more engaged. You see high school graduation rates increase.*

Another long-term issue that receives attention in both regions is remediation in mathematics and English. To address this issue, concurrent enrollment has become a shared focus across institutions. One LBCC executive leader described a recent concurrent enrollment effort designed to strengthen the academic experience of high school students:

> *As we moved into this summer in offering our courses, we 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 [and] how college works, and we have strengthened our communication model to notify students of important dates such as drop dates [and] midterms.*

Yet another long-term strategy being implemented at LBCC is the "multiple measures" assessment procedure described earlier, which has enabled placement of students without the barrier of standardized tests. As a result, many students are no longer required to take unnecessary remedial courses, and their path to transfer is shortened.

At CSU Long Beach, a set of multiple innovation strategies called the Highly Valued Degrees Initiative was put in place over several years to increase college retention and completion rates. This initiative involved work across a range of areas: communication, organization, data collection/analysis, budget, advising, enrollment, curriculum and pedagogy, hiring, and partnerships. Strategies included establishing college advising centers, requiring a commitment to student success in tenure-track hiring, enhancing the use of data through the Data Fellows program, and building local leadership capacity through a Leadership Fellows program. The results of these efforts included an initial gain of over 20% in baccalaureate graduation rates. Moreover, CSU-LB saw further increases in graduation rates over time, with ultimately more than 3,000 additional students on track to graduate. Due to the effective implementation of an innovative long-term strategy, these gains occurred without increasing selectivity in admissions, and they even took place during a time of recession and slashed higher education budgets.

Participants in both regions agreed that partnering is hard, long-term work. It requires a substantial commitment over time, the willingness to put aside individual institutional agendas, and patience while facing periodic challenges and shifts in goals, strategies, and resources. Partnering can also involve a great deal of initial activity that may not produce immediate action or outcomes. It can take time to build relationships as well as to transition from a mindset of planning to one of action. Because of this, for a partnership to succeed, its leaders and participants must take "the long view" rather than focusing on short-term initiatives and immediate rewards.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGES OVER THE COURSE OF A PARTNERSHIP

Partnerships have histories and they change over time, like any living organism. In Long Beach, the researchers observed a "life cycle" that was repeated over the partnership's 20-year history. There have been periodic ups and downs, early wins, strong publicity, subsequent lulls, and restructuring over time. The partnership is currently experiencing a high rate of activity—almost too high a rate, according to one Long Beach executive leader:

> *I think that's been a bit of a challenge, … because the level of activity is so high, yet the interconnection between the groups working—that's where we're still struggling sometimes.*

In the Inland Empire, although the current two-county partnership is still in its early stages, there is a complex prior history of partnering at sub-regional levels, accompanied by previous barriers to collaboration across the region. An executive leader in the region observed:

> *Collaboration really is not a natural act. It begins with trusting relationships, but everybody who is part of the relationship needs to get what they need to get, politically, 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.*

One Long Beach leader described the centrality of honesty to the partnership's success, paired with acceptance of institutional politics in all three Long Beach education systems. This was accompanied by a willingness and commitment to put sometimes-conflicting agendas on the table and work through them. This leader noted:

> *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.*

To some extent, the current executive leaders in Long Beach have reached the point at which they care equally about all three educational institutions and experience a "sense of ownership" of all the students across the region. In some areas of their decision-making and mutual assistance activities, they may be approaching what is hypothesized in partnership research as the third and deepest level of partnerships: "integrative" or "strategic restructuring" (Austin, 2000; La Piana, 2015). As one individual stated, "We are only successful if we are all successful."

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

While classic institutional program planners rely on the linear development of strategic plans, formalized MOUs, and clear timelines, findings from this study tell a somewhat different story. The researchers found that partnership planning is often an organic, iterative, and shifting process that responds to needs as they emerge and change over time. One Long Beach leader played down the utility of strategic plans that specify operational details. Instead, he emphasized the value of a flexible plan that articulates overarching goals and values while accommodating changing needs. He described:

> *This partnership between the institutions had been present for 25 years before it was ever really formalized [in its current form]. … [The current MOU] does not talk about articulation; it does not talk about career pathways. It talks about overall agreement and what it is that we're trying to accomplish. The nitty gritty … isn't included in the current MOU, [which reflects the fact that] the needs of this community and the needs of this state and the nation change.*

An Inland Empire executive leader concurred, stressing the importance of letting a plan evolve over time without imposing a single specific strategic direction. He noted:

I think my point of view would be if you try to over-codify it, you run the danger of snuffing out—you don't want to hold it too tightly. [And] … you've got to be willing to keep at it a while, because, like anything, you're working in the trenches, and there'll be good days, and there'll be some really bad days. When you get out a year or so, and you look back and where you've come, it's pretty remarkable.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on the key factors in starting and sustaining cross-sector partnerships in education. Drawing from research literature and the research team's studies of two Southern California partnerships, five themes were identified as central to building long-term, resilient partnerships that will substantially improve student outcomes in K-12 schools, community colleges, and universities.

The researchers' investigations revealed that the construction and maintenance of partnerships are neither easy nor simple, but when they are effective, they can bring substantial rewards to students, educators, institutions, and communities. Many of these rewards have already been reaped over the course of the 20-year history of the Long Beach College Promise. Meanwhile, recent efforts in the Inland Empire to build a long-term partnership are addressing not just educational attainment but also economic development and quality of life.

In both regions, cross-sector partnerships offer the potential to advance educational and economic outcomes. However, the development of such partnerships requires all stakeholders to cultivate a "long view"—a perspective that emphasizes a "slow and steady" approach to building relationships, cultivating trust, and facilitating collaboration. Ultimately, partnership initiatives like ones in Long Beach and the Inland Empire may very well demonstrate to leaders, practitioners, government agencies, and private-sector supporters in the field of education and beyond how effective regional collaborations can meet both the educational and economic needs of communities across the nation.

Appendix A: Methodology

Research Methods and Activities

Over an eight-month period in 2016, research for this study 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 Appendix B for a description of these 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. The 41 interviews were transcribed and coded employing an open coding procedure. Codes were then clustered, and emergent themes were identified.

Additionally, site visits to institutions participating in both partnerships were 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. Finally, numerous documents, demographic data, academic outcome data, and other information sources were collected and reviewed from both partnerships.

After research activities were concluded, the researchers "reinvented" the seven categories initially identified from the literature, 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. Sustaining partnerships
5. Looking inward, looking outward	

By further considering existing research literature as well as 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

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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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