

## **Preliminary Concept Paper**

### **Linking Full Participation with Higher Education's Public Mission**

**Syracuse University, the Center for Institutional and Social Change at Columbia University, and Imagining America at Syracuse**

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#### ***Introduction***

The Center for Institutional and Social Change at Columbia Law School (the "Center") and Syracuse University ("SU") propose a project to advance three linked goals relating to full participation: (1) increasing educational access and success for underrepresented groups and communities, (2) building higher education's capacity to address urgent challenges facing these communities, and (3) prompting the institutional re-imagination needed to facilitate these goals. The proposal involves an action research collaboration designed to scale up innovation at Syracuse as it develops usable knowledge and strategic networks to propel change within a broader group of institutions and at the policy level. It will build out from SU's Scholarship in Action initiative, which has developed a series of ambitious educational and research collaborations involving community based organizations, schools, faculty and students designed to revitalize the schools and the surrounding community. As the host institution of Imagining America, SU is also situated to catalyze broader impact within a network of higher education institutions with shared goals. The Center will provide the frameworks, strategies, and collaborative inquiry needed to leverage the impact, influence, and national potential of these innovations. This work will build the capacity to increase full participation *in* higher education by underserved communities, in combination with increasing participation *of* higher education institutions in tackling the pressing challenges facing those communities, a dual agenda we refer to as "institutional citizenship".

This project comes at a critical moment. More than fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, many individuals and communities are not yet full participants in the institutions that define social and economic citizenship. Policy makers have made college completion a national imperative; they have invested substantial public resources toward increasing access and success particularly for underserved communities. At the same time, higher education faces increased accountability for producing knowledge to address intractable problems facing those communities, and future leaders who are prepared to tackle a complex and uncertain world. Higher education institutions and communities must figure out how to meet these demands at a time of economic retrenchment and legal uncertainty, when race- and gender-conscious approaches face serious legal and political challenges.

These public imperatives require broad-scale change activated by committed leadership operating at many levels. Most colleges and universities have undertaken pipeline initiatives and efforts to achieve greater diversity and participation among student, faculty, and staff populations, and many have undertaken various forms of community

engagement and service learning in order to inculcate citizenship values and connect the institution to the community. But these efforts are often pursued piecemeal, are not conceptualized or coordinated across systems in the integrated way necessary to have broad-scale impact, and operate at the periphery of core institutional strategies and practices. Too often, the strides to “diversify” higher education are insufficiently linked in concept and practice to the public mission of leveraging intellectual capital to address the most pressing problems facing underserved communities. As change leaders come to recognize that these goals demand institutional transformation, they also have articulated the need for frameworks and strategies to navigate the daunting challenges facing efforts to shift institutional priorities and bring small-scale innovative programs to scale. National and state policy aimed at scaling up small-scale programs fail in part because they lack adequate strategies for developing the cross-institutional capacity to advance full participation goals.

This project will produce concrete strategies and measures that change agents and policymakers can use to catalyze the systems change needed to sustain and scale progress towards full participation goals. It will do so by mapping, systematically documenting, learning from, building upon, and networking across innovations within and across a set of strategically placed higher education institutions and communities. It combines the capabilities of a comprehensive university-community initiative organized around institutional citizenship goals (SU’s Scholarship in Action), a national movement-building organization to create national momentum for this agenda, housed at Syracuse (*Imagining America*), and an action-research organization providing frameworks, systematic inquiry approaches, and networks to scale out from these initiatives (the Center for Institutional and Social Change).

Through a phased collaborative action-research and strategic network development effort, this project will:

1. generate prototypes, frameworks, strategies, roles, indicators, and networks for advancing institutional citizenship and increasing the sustainability, centrality, and scope of such initiatives;
2. strategically mobilize and build the collective capacity of cohorts of individual and institutional innovators so that they make long term commitments and demonstrable progress toward this goal, and
3. mobilize national momentum to build out towards cross-institutional shifts and policy change.

### ***Syracuse Context and Potential***

In December 2009, the Center began a collaborative research pilot with SU and Chancellor Nancy Cantor, funded by a Ford Foundation Grant on Building the Architecture of Inclusion. This pilot undertook to understand core dimensions of the Scholarship in Action approach and to identify opportunities both to strengthen the impact of the effort in Syracuse and to examine how it might be analyzed, built out, and mobilized as a national prototype. This pilot research shows that these collaborative efforts have begun to produce outcomes at the systems level, and include the development of institutional and community capacity to undertake and sustain innovation

and systems change. These impacts, which have yet to be systematically documented, mapped, and analyzed, include key elements of an “Architecture of Inclusion”:

- **a shared vision for institutional citizenship at SU**, articulated centrally and infused and elaborated in a diverse range of collaborative projects across the SU ecosystem
- **the development of multiple and linked physical spaces** that bring community members together with SU innovators to engage in collective problem solving and community revitalization, such as the Warehouse and the Connective Corridor
- **the multiplication of strategically placed hub organizations** that combine the resources of SU and the community to serve as “incubators for innovation”—ongoing initiatives bringing together diverse stakeholders in projects aimed at solving community problems and building community capacity, such as the Near West Side Initiative, the Syracuse Center of Excellence, and the South Side Innovation Center
- **the cultivation of coalitions of multi-faceted transformative leaders** poised to connect their efforts, such as Say Yes to Education, Partnership for a Better Education and the Campus-Community Entrepreneurship Initiative
- **an emerging set of strategies, tools and curricula** for combining the efforts of students, faculty, community members and change leaders to produce concrete impact in schools and communities while generating significant learning and research that can be applied broadly

Syracuse also offers a strategic position by virtue of its role as the host institution of *Imagining America*. *Imagining America* is a national consortium of over 80 colleges and universities committed to public scholarship and practice. Building out from initiatives in the arts, humanities and design, *Imagining America* develops projects, research, communication and convenings focused on how campus-community partnerships contribute to local and national civic life while furthering recognition of the value of public scholarship and practice in higher education itself. *Imagining America* has explicitly embraced its role in building a movement, with an explicit focus on linking its vision with the institutional and structural change needed to make that vision meaningful in practice. It has produced important research on critical dimensions of making engaged scholarship sustainable, including tenure and promotion, curriculum development, and university-community partnerships. It actively collaborates with other networks focused on public and engaged scholarship, including the Campus Compact.

Through *Imagining America*, SU is thus linked to a national communications and knowledge-building network of institutions with shared goals. This network offers a concrete vehicle for connecting deep knowledge about effective strategies and frameworks with the work being done in other innovation arenas around the country, and for enabling collaboration, both to generate knowledge about common challenges and to pool resources and integrate initiatives to have maximum impact. These linkages across institutions provide an opportunity to influence the public policy arena by combining the influence and credibility of innovative leaders in many different locations.

SU’s Scholarship in Action initiative is now at a crucial point in its development, when systemic inquiry and self-conscious experimentation, in collaboration with the Center, can anchor and multiply its impact. It is at a pivotal stage in its evolution and growth; it is

actively grappling with the challenge of how to imbed what can be learned from the program sustainably into the fabric of SU, school systems, and community-based institutions, and how to build out from programmatic innovation to advance critical shifts in the broader systems in which these institutions operate. It is facing the challenges that frequently overwhelm and limit ambitious and leader-driven efforts at systemic change, and brings an unusual willingness to identify the gaps between its goals and practices, examine the barriers to realizing its goals, and collaborate with researchers and practitioners to develop usable strategies for sustaining these initiatives, and others like them, over the long term.

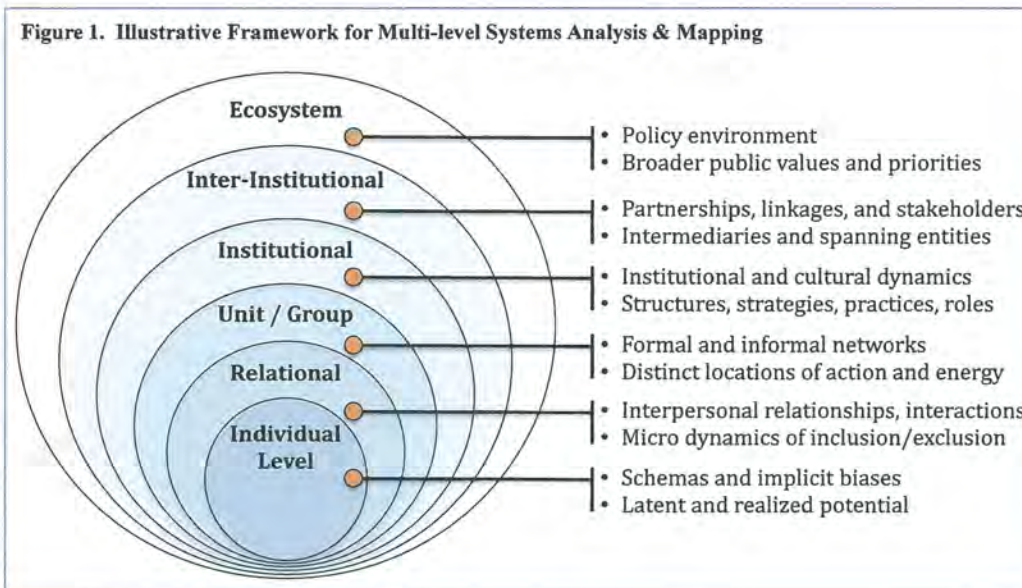
### ***How the Center Will Build Capacity for Sustainable and Scalable Change***

The Center's pilot qualitative research of Scholarship in Action has begun to map key elements of SU's core strategies for change and to explore its potential as a prime site for knowledge development and scalable models of progress towards institutional citizenship goals. The Center brings a rigorous and collaborative action-research capability to the work of understanding, framing, and connecting across the multi-level mechanics of innovation towards full participation. In close collaboration with leaders and change agents at multiple levels in the Syracuse system—from the Chancellor's office to SU faculty and staff, and from the national *Imagining America* network to Syracuse community-based change agents—the next phase of the Center's research would focus on conducting collaborative inquiry with key participants in the effort to analyze and enable its potential for large-scale impact.

The Center's Architecture of Inclusion framework offers a rigorous approach to documenting, analyzing, and enabling institutional change towards institutional citizenship. Key elements of that framework include:

- A multi-level, systems approach to mapping and understanding the dynamics of inequality and potential for positive change;
- A conceptual framework of institutional citizenship, which enables change agents to advance concrete positive goals and visions of inclusive institutions while identifying and reducing the structural barriers to full participation,
- Strategies for mapping change mechanisms and “action arenas” in which change at the appropriate scale can occur;
- A focus on cultivating transformative leaders located at strategic leverage points to activate change and act as hubs linking knowledge, people, and systems, illustrated by roles such as “organizational catalysts” and “institutional intermediaries.”

This approach emphasizes the importance of mapping, analyzing, and mobilizing change across multiple levels within a given ecosystem—from individual-level capacity building to cross-institutional networking, and from program strategies to state- and national-level policy—in order to make tangible progress towards the vision of full participation within and of the engaged university (see Figure 1).



### ***Proposed Project***

We propose a project that would proceed in three phases, mapped broadly to the goals of: (1) Analyzing, assessing and mapping current practice and emerging potential (which will include identifying barriers and strategic opportunities for linkage, leverage and institutionalization); (2) Building up from innovations to effect broader and deeper institutional change at Syracuse and within other collaborating institutions in the *Imagining America* and Center network; and (3) Creating capacity and momentum to build out towards broader systems, cross-institutional, and policy change.

We propose to begin by analyzing SU’s Scholarship in Action effort as prototype and by addressing a broader set of questions about the role of university-community partnerships in advancing the goal of full participation in higher education. We will build networking into this action research, by linking it with the Center’s portfolio of collaborative research relationships among innovators in a position to learn from and build on each other’s efforts. We will also build on SU’s position as the host institution for *Imagining America*.

### **1. Analyzing and Mapping Syracuse as Prototype**

The Center’s preliminary research suggests that the effort at Syracuse is producing innovative institutional transformation, informed by a robust change theory and set of strategies that have applicability in other higher education settings. The Scholarship in Action initiative is already producing discernible impact in multiple locations and at multiple levels within the Syracuse ecosystem, with intention and potential to strengthen the level of connection and integration across these levels and locations over time. The effort now faces the challenge of linking and leveraging these diffuse activities. Crucial learning for the field will come from tracking and assessing its efforts to move the work into the core practices and priorities, while sustaining ongoing accountability to the

community and its ambitious aims. The proposed research collaboration, informed by the Center's analytical frameworks and systematic inquiry, will enable SU to map and build out from this effort. This work will take shape in consultation with an advisory group of change agents and researchers who are part of the *Imagining America* and Center networks and involved in comparable efforts. It will probe a core set of questions:

- How does the goal of increasing institutional diversity and full participation interact with developing the capacity and commitment to address tough problems facing multiple communities?
  - o What are the strategies and frameworks that enable these linkages to form and last?
  - o What are the investments, mechanisms, practices, roles, and indicators that place inclusion and engaged scholarship at the center of institutional values?
  - o How do leaders in different positions create the conditions to spark and sustain this engagement, integration and impact?
- Taking a systems view, how do activities, relationships and resources aimed at advancing institutional citizenship cluster to become arenas for promoting broader sustainable change?
  - o What are the strategies that simultaneously are mobilizing multiple levels of change, and how can they be activated more broadly?
  - o Where are there hubs, "hot spots" and arenas of action where programs, resources, new models, and/or energy are coming together?
  - o How do change and policy leaders build out systematically from hubs and hot spots? What can one initiative learn from another about that building out process?

## **2. Building Out to Effect Broader and Deeper Institutional Change**

This second phase of the work will link to a set of additional institutional change leaders who are grappling with similar challenges and pursuing a range of strategies in their own contexts, building on the strategies and networks of *Imagining America* and the Center's research partners engaged in comparable work. It is important to note that SU's positioning vis-à-vis its constituent communities is not unique. For example, there are numerous relatively well-resourced universities situated in U.S. cities facing significant economic and social challenges that have pursued various strategies towards mutuality and full participation goals, with varying levels of success. In order to expand perspective on this research and to produce a broader range of knowledge and prototypes from which to learn and build out, it is critical to more rigorously interrogate community-university partnership as a strategy, across a set of institutional contexts.

This cross-institutional inquiry will examine:

- What aspects of knowledge and capacity generated in Syracuse are applicable in other settings, and how is that knowledge effectively mobilized?
- What kinds of learning, leverage and mobilization accrue from structured collaborations across cohorts of universities facing similar challenges, linked by a national intermediary such as *Imagining America*?

- How does policy promote and hold accountable effective institution-level change toward full participation?

### **3. Creating Capacity and Momentum for Systems and Policy Change**

This project will culminate in a third phase that will bring its learning and action networks into the policy arena, attentive to the risks associated with attempting to replicate strategies that depend on context-specific factors. Building on the knowledge, prototypes, and networks generated in the first two phases of the action research, this final phase will focus on linking out to the strategic locations and forums that shape broader policy and practice. Through collaborative problem solving, planning, and execution—with the Center as a “hub” and facilitator of the writing, convening and coordination—this effort will culminate in a set of strategies, materials and tools that can be used within broader influential networks and policy forums. After two years developing and vetting strategies and frameworks across different contexts, the collaboration will have developed and activated a network of thought leaders in a position to connect their learning to the design of effective public policy aimed at scalable change. We will then have a capstone event that brings major policy-makers and national association leadership to the table to engage what we have learned, connect to national networks, and develop strategies to more effectively build systems change into public policy aimed at increasing access and success of underserved communities.

#### **Proposed Outcomes:**

1. Development of strategies, frameworks, and case studies in the form of indicators, tools, and publications in a variety of forms and venues
2. Demonstrable progress in integrating Scholarship in Action into the core of SU’s and Syracuse’s activities and increasing the level, scope, and sustainability of participation
3. Sustainable networks of innovators collaborating to advance institutional citizenship both locally and in the national policy arena