**Assessing and Enhancing the Collective Impact of Scholarship in Action**

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We are looking forward to meeting with you on Friday, to kick off a set of sessions on the collective impact of Scholarship in Action. These workshops are intended to produce concrete outcomes and products toward collective impact in three of SU's significant action arenas: inclusive urban education, public humanities, art & design, technology, entrepreneurship, and sustainable communities. The sessions aim to identify and explore synergies among these projects, to facilitate collaboration and integration that enables greater collective impact across departments and schools, and to build the capacity and sustainability of university-community partnerships towards these goals. This brief memo is intended to provide background for our conversation.

**Project Background**

SU has entered into a collaborative action research project with the Center for Institutional and Social Change (www.changecenter.org) and Imagining America that proceeds from a shared vision: to build higher education institutions that enable people from all communities, backgrounds, and identities to participate fully, and in the process, to build collective knowledge and capacity needed to solve sticky public problems; a dual agenda we refer to as “institutional citizenship” (Sturm 2006). Consistent with this vision, the project uses collaborative inquiry to advance three linked goals: (1) increasing access, success and full participation in higher education 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 the achievement of these goals. This work aims to build the capacity to increase full participation in higher education by underserved and diverse groups and communities, in combination with increasing participation of higher education institutions in tackling the pressing challenges facing our communities.

Center research suggests that Scholarship in Action has energized a set of initiatives that share these institutional citizenship goals and this vision is enacted through ideas, practices, relationships, spaces, and strategies that are interconnected. Many of these engagements strive to increase institutional citizenship--full participation *in* higher education by underserved communities, in combination with increasing participation *of* higher education institutions in tackling the pressing challenges facing their multiple communities.

This vantage point also suggests that much of this activity now occurs without the benefit of understanding and making use of considerable commonalities and overlap across many domains. Much of the impact of these activities goes unnoticed or unreported. Many of the possibilities for synergy and sustainability have not yet been realized. Documenting and assessing collective impact is crucial to communicate the multi-level value of the work, to identify collective opportunities and barriers, and to use this knowledge to influence institutional and public policy and practice. This project aims to identify, explore, and energize these synergies, to facilitate collaboration and integration that enables greater collective impact, and to track collective impact so that it can be observed, valued, and pursued.

**Overview of the Proposed Collective Impact Workshops**

The inclusive urban education workshop is the first of a series of collective impact workshops that will bring together key stakeholders that are engaged in Scholarship in Action projects or activities with shared goals relating to institutional citizenship. We focus these workshops on inquiry about the collective impact of Scholarship in Action-related work, more specifically, on exploring the linked goals, outcomes, opportunities, barriers, capacities, and strategies. Each workshop includes people, projects, and organizations that could benefit from connecting their work through the identification and pursuit of collective impact. Achieving this goal requires identifying the appropriate action arenas to focus on—the constellation of participants (individual, project and organization) and social spaces that constitute the appropriate unit of analysis and engagement relevant to addressing a shared goal.

The workshops will have the potential to build a more intentional community of practice among the relevant stakeholders – those who are doing work that converges around shared aims and has the potential to benefit from more intentional and sustained linkage or collaboration. It will also have the potential to enlist key leadership in the project of understanding, documenting, and enhancing collective impact. Goals of the workshops include:

(1) Documenting the collective impact of Scholarship in Action-related activities and initiatives so that their full value can be understood and communicated;

(2) Identifying the value to be gained from connecting to each other and to the institution;

(3) Enabling and supporting collaboration, synergies and integration of activities that will enhance collective impact;

(4) Building the capacity to track collective impact, and to use this information to sustain and build out from current work.

Through conversations with many of you, we have identified overlapping goals, strategies, and relationships among: (1) the major platforms developed through Scholarship in Action, (2) initiatives that are substantively and strategically connected to those platforms, and (3) organizational settings in which much of that work takes place. Three initiatives provide a starting point for identifying the potential for collective impact: (1) inclusive urban education, (2) arts, technology and design, and (3) neighborhood and cultural entrepreneurship. Each collective impact session will “connect the dots” of people doing the focused work in each arena (starting with inclusive urban education) and the broad platforms, and pull in people focused in other specialty areas who have the expertise to lend, areas of overlap in their work, and common policy issues to discuss.

Our facilitated workshop will explore questions such as:

1. Is there (or could there be) a shared vision, goal or set of aspirations that cut across a variety of activities and stakeholders within these “action arenas” (both inside and outside the university)?
2. What are categories of collective outcomes that people in the community would care enough about to track?
3. What are the actual and potential synergies, both realized and unrealized, among people, projects, and sites? What are the points of desired connection and shared benefit in the issues, strategies, practices, relationships, challenges, strategies, and locations? How would the work and its impact be enhanced by greater intentionality around the work related to these projects?
4. What are the capacities that are necessary to enable these synergies and outcomes to develop? What are the barriers that need to be overcome to make this possible?
5. What are the opportunities and strategies that link the work and that would maximize the collective impact?
6. How could the cumulative and potential collective value of this work be identified and assessed?
   1. What kinds of information are currently gathered and synthesized?
   2. What kinds of information would be used to enhance sustainability, resources, and practice?
   3. How could information gathering improve collaboration and integration?
   4. What kinds of information gathering could be integrated into ongoing work?
   5. What kinds of information would you like to have? Network survey?

In terms of concrete outcomes from these workshops, a preliminary set of outcomes might include producing:

1. Commitments to pursuing collective impact that increases institutional citizenship
2. Identification of dashboard indicators of collective impact and available information on outcomes
3. Identification of achievable actions and opportunities for building and documenting collective impact, including possible working groups for strategic planning, ongoing sharing and collective problem solving
4. Enlistment of commitments necessary to proceed
5. A menu of next steps