Resource Development and the Community Engagement Professional: Building and Sustaining Engaged Institutions

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Abstract

Creating sustainable revenue streams to support community engagement is critical to building engaged colleges and universities. Drawing on social cognition theories within the organizational science literature, this article explores how community engagement professionals (CEPs) can promote sensemaking and organizational learning in ways that promote engagement as a pathway to institutional sustainability. Specifically, this article explores ways in which engagement can be positioned to differentiate institutions from their competitors, attract enrollment, and bolster public and private support for an institution. Toward these ends, this article makes connections among campus engagement identity, retention and completion, enrollment management, state relations, grant-writing strategy, advancement/alumni relations, and marketing and communications. Practical tools are provided to help CEPs lead strategic conversations about engagement as a means to promote institutional health and vitality. *Keywords:* community engagement, leadership, institutional advancement

Introduction

*C*reating sustainable revenue streams to support community engagement is critical to building engaged colleges and universities *(Beere, Votruba, & Wells, 2011; Dostilio, 2017; Furco, 2010; McReynolds & Shields, 2015; National Forum for Chief Engagement and Outreach Officers, 2017; Welch, 2016; Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013)*. In today's uncertain financial landscape, engagement centers and programs are not immune to institutional budget cuts that can impede the advancement of community engagement as a core institutional practice *(Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2012)*. In this challenging financial context, community engagement professionals (CEPs) must obtain a wide range of skills, knowledge, and competencies in order to keep engagement sustainable and thriving on their campuses.

The purpose of this article is to offer insights into the strategic role that CEPs can play in positioning engagement to support institutional sustainability. Toward this end, the article differs from other

works that focus on securing financial support for engagement-related centers, projects, or partnerships. For example, sourcebooks such as *The Service and Service-Learning Center Guide to Endowed Funding (Campus Compact, 2004)* provide an excellent overview of practical strategies to create endowments that support community-engaged learning centers or programs. Likewise, resources exist to help engagement leaders plan budgets, locate funding sources, and sharpen proposals to advance community engagement centers or programs (see *Lima, 2009*). Still other guides offer comprehensive training related to grant writing that is applicable for CEPs (see *The Foundation Center, 2004; Licklider, 2012; New & Quick, 2003*).

Complementing these resources, this article focuses on helping CEPs better map their engagement resource strategy with "the big-picture vision of the institution" *(McReynolds & Shields, 2015, p. 22)*. From this vantage point, engagement is not viewed solely as an institutional priority to support, but rather as a means to build diverse revenue streams in support of broader sustainability goals. Such a perspective is informed by Furco's *(2010)* analysis that today's leaders must view engagement "not only as something that primarily benefits the local community or society at large, but also as an essential component for the academy's survival" *(p. 380)*. Applied to the organizational science literature, Furco's *(2010)* view dovetails with that of open systems theorists who contend that reciprocal engagement with the environment is critical to the survival and functioning of organizations of all types. Scott *(1992)* explains:

> The open systems perspective stresses the reciprocal ties that bind and relate the organization with those elements that surround it. The environment is perceived to be the ultimate source of materials, energy, and information, all of which are vital to the continuation of the system. Indeed, the environment is seen to be the source of order itself. *(p. 93)*

Guided by the open systems view, this article contends that CEPs are uniquely positioned to help their institutions build reciprocal, sustainable partnerships with resource providers to ensure the long-term financial health of their campuses. In examining the role of CEPs through this broad lens, I begin by exploring the unique challenges they face in leading from the middle of their institutions. Then, I discuss how CEPs can help embed engagement within their institution's core identity in ways that contribute to organizational performance and revenue-generating functions

of the institution (e.g., enrollment management, state relations, fund raising, and alumni relations). Drawing on theories of social cognition within the organizational theory literature, I conclude with some tools and practical steps for advancing engagement as a broad-based revenue-generating strategy for colleges and universities.

Resource Development and Challenges of Leading From the Middle

In their book *Reframing Academic Leadership*, Bolman and Gallos *(2011)* explain that many higher education administrators face a common challenge of leading from the middle of their institutions. The authors describe the experience as "a life sandwiched among colliding norms and values, local and global domains and internal and external expectations" *(p. 143)*. Such a description of "leading from the middle" fits the experience of many CEPs who may hold a range of titles, including coordinator, director, or vice president *(Sandmann & Plater, 2009)*. Organizationally, these centers or offices typically serve as a central coordinating office reporting to academic affairs *(Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013)*. From this location, CEPs find themselves at the nexus of managing expectations of students, faculty, community, and administrators to whom they report.

CEPs who lead from the middle face advantages and disadvantages in sustaining and growing funding for engagement as a core institutional practice. One advantage is that engagement centers or offices that are well aligned with the mission and budgetary framework of their institution are more likely to be sustained, even in times of leadership transition *(Jones, 2016)*. In particular, those institutions designated as Carnegie Classified Engaged Institutions commonly provide "hard money" institutional funds for engagement centers rather than relying on grant dollars or "soft funding" to sustain them *(Weerts & Hudson, 2009; Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013)*. It is well documented that reliable, internal financial support is critical to building a robust community engagement agenda *(Beere et al., 2011; Furco, 2010; Holland & Langseth, 2010; Welch, 2016)*.

However, overreliance on institutional funds can lead to some vulnerabilities for sustaining engagement as an institutionalized practice. Senior leaders are faced with increasingly difficult decisions about funding programs of all types. Differential allocation and cross-subsidization are common budget practices employed by senior administrators to fund engagement centers and offices.

Differential allocation refers to funds not directly earned by specific units (typically a combination of state funding and donor funding), whereas *cross-subsidization* involves applying excess earnings from one activity to offset deficits in another. As the state share of total revenues has declined, reliance on state funds and the cross-subsidization strategy is increasingly difficult to sustain *(Fitzgerald et al., 2012)*. One group of land-grant leaders summarized the current budget realities in relation to supporting engagement: "In financially stressful times, it is necessary and appropriate for senior university managers to critically examine funding allocations to all of the organization's functions. Scrutiny of the role of the engagement function clearly will be part of that agenda" *(Fitzgerald, et al., 2012, p. 19)*.

At a time when institutional budgets are likely to remain flat, CEPs continue to seek more staff, more space, and larger budgets as their programs evolve and mature *(Dostilio, 2017; Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013)*. In their review of over 100 successful applications from the 2010 cycle for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching elective Community Engagement Classification, Welch and Saltmarsh *(2013)* found that two thirds of respondents were building or had built a mechanism for fund raising for engagement. In addition, leaders were exploring ways in which alumni could be involved in supporting community engagement on their campuses *(Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013)*.

Although many CEPs have become more entrepreneurial in raising funds for engagement programs and partnerships *(Welch, 2016)*, they face unique challenges in their capacity to increase and diversify sources of revenue. One challenge is that these offices or centers typically do not function like auxiliary services offices that generate external sales or program revenue to sustain the enterprise (see *Jacobs & Pittman, 2005*). Instead, they are budgeted as part of the overhead of carrying out the academic mission. Another challenge is that CEPs may face a difficult road in collaborating with institutional advancement leaders to support this work. University advancement offices are often organized as constituency-based programs that focus on securing support from alumni and friends of a particular college or academic department. However, as centralized support units, engagement offices do not confer degrees and thus do not have "their own" alumni. CEPs may enter into thorny politics if they are pursuing relationships with alumni that are seen as "belonging" to degree-granting units. Given the pressure to raise money for their assigned constituencies, development

officers may limit access to donors and often steer gift prospects to their own collegiate priorities *(Hall, 2016)*.

Added to these challenges, CEPs have a vast array of expectations and responsibilities in leading engagement-related programs on their campuses. Fund raising is just one component of the position and demands a lot of time and commitment. Only a few elite institutions have the capacity to support a full-time development director who oversees resource development for engagement. For example, a development officer at the Hass Center for Public Service at Stanford University is charged with raising 85% of the Center's operating budget *(Welch, 2016)*. This level of fund-raising support for engagement is atypical for the majority of U.S. colleges and universities.

In sum, "leading from the middle" can be challenging for CEPs as they aim to keep engagement as a vibrant feature of academic life. If an overarching goal of the CEP's work is to transform their institution to become an engaged college or university, the CEP must create mutual understandings about the strategic value of engagement across a range of institutional decision makers and resource providers. Holland and Langseth *(2010)* refer to this process as pursuing the "four Rs": relevance, relationships, results, and resources. Campus Compact's president, Andrew Seligsohn *(2015)*, put it this way: "You are unlikely to achieve anything significant using only the resources directly under your control. . . . you will need other people's money, other people's expertise, and other people's relationships" *(p. 56)*.

CEPS as Educators and Ambassadors: Making Sense of Engagement as a Core Financial Strategy

With the larger goal of institutional transformation in mind, CEPs must begin to view their leadership roles in more expansive ways. Seligsohn *(2015)* described a shift from seeing himself as a department director toward adopting the perspective of an institutional catalyst and strategic leader. He explained, "As director of civic engagement, I decided I could make my university better by seeing myself not merely as the leader of a department, but as an institutional leader facilitating collaboration among campus units and between campus units and communities" *(p. 58)*. Seligsohn's shift in mind-set reflects a reorientation to embracing life in the middle. Bolman and Gallos *(2011)* explain:

> In this role, academic leaders embrace the work as an informal educator and diplomat—an emissary shuttling back and forth between different worlds to facilitate mutual learning and productive agreements. Leaders who see the possibilities and bring the necessary skills assist their institutions in developing creative partnerships. *(p.146)*

As educators and ambassadors, CEPs have a unique opportunity to connect engagement to revenue-generating functions of the campus such as enrollment management, state relations, advancement and alumni relations, and marketing and communications. Specifically, CEPs can employ social cognition strategies to help institutional decision makers make sense of engagement in the context of the institution's overall financial health. Found within the literature on sociology of organizations, social cognition strategies emphasize the role of learning and development in facilitating institutional change *(Kezar, 2001)*.

Engagement as an Institutional Niche

A key concept within social cognition theories is "sensemaking," the process of managing meaning of events, processes, or innovations within an organization *(Kezar, 2001; Weick, 1995)*. Within higher education settings, sensemaking involves shaping mind-sets that, in turn, impact campus behaviors, priorities, and commitments *(Kezar, 2014)*. As sensemakers, CEPs can play a prominent role in constructing meaning about the value of engagement as it relates to the institution's overall value proposition and market niche.

To start this cognitive process, CEPs must begin by engaging campus decision makers in conversations about engagement, institutional identity, and competitive advantage. Colleges and universities increasingly compete with one another for students, faculty, research dollars, state appropriations, and philanthropic support *(Martinez & Wolverton, 2009)*. In this competitive landscape, astute campus leaders leverage their institution's core identity with its external image in ways that yield strategic benefits *(Toma, Dubrow, & Hartley, 2005)*. Likewise, an institution's core engagement identity can become a means to position itself among competitors, grow enrollment, and bolster public and private support for a campus *(Weerts & Freed, 2016)*. Creative leaders do this in a way that both affirms the institution's core identity and edits it for strategic advantage (see *Stensaker & Norgård, 2001)*. Stensaker *(2015)* refers to this as

leveraging the "essentialist" and "strategic" purposes of organizational identity. The paragraphs below illustrate how these concepts apply in various institutional contexts.

In the realm of state support for higher education, research suggests that a robust engagement identity can be leveraged to bolster levels of state appropriations for public colleges and universities. Specifically, a longitudinal study found that institutions that positioned community engagement within their core identity had "higher than expected" levels of state appropriations over a 20-year period compared to institutions that did not emphasize engagement as a core practice. Among these outlier institutions, leaders positioned engagement as a competitive strategy to differentiate themselves from other state universities. Innovative leaders capitalized on their campus locations in politically powerful, urban/ suburban areas to meet the unique needs of the region. These institutions, primarily regional research universities, were most likely to reward engaged scholarship and value two-way reciprocal engagement as an explicit part of their mission and culture. These institutions differed from institutions falling in the "lower than expected" support category—primarily land-grant and more elite research institutions—that were less likely to reward this work and less likely to view engagement as central to their core campus identity *(Weerts, 2014)*. Simply put, under certain conditions, an institution's engagement identity can be leveraged to improve an institution's competitive position within the complex ecology of state funding for higher education.

A robust, place-based engagement identity has also been shown to boost philanthropic support and broaden the pool of donors to an institution. In the 1980s, declining state support for higher education in Oregon prompted Portland State University (PSU) to distinguish itself from other state institutions. The university adopted engagement as a core leadership position and advancement strategy. This transition was best symbolized by the motto "Let knowledge serve the city," which was inscribed in large letters on a skyway bridge spanning campus to community. By the early 2000s, engagement became central to PSU's identity, and the institution became nationally known for this work. Its first comprehensive fund-raising campaign exceeded expectations, broadening its reach beyond the typical network of alumni donors. Instead, philanthropic dollars flowed from community members who became invested in the work of the institution as a vital community asset. As one major donor to PSU declared, "We didn't attend Portland

State, but we're enrolled in its vision" *(Langseth & McVeety, 2007, p. 125)*.

Similarly, some private institutions are leveraging their engagement identity to attract students and build a distinctive brand. In 2005, Tulane University was nearly decimated by Hurricane Katrina. Following the storm, Tulane made deliberate steps to move engagement to the core of its identity by prioritizing civic learning, creating new centers, and enhancing old centers focused on community engagement. The move resulted in record numbers of applications to Tulane, doubling the number of applications prior to the storm. Students flocked to Tulane since the university was viewed as a key partner in rebuilding New Orleans *(Pope, 2010)*. Today, Tulane continues to prioritize community engagement in its messaging to students. Clicking the "About Tulane" tab on the Tulane webpage *(tulane.edu)* reveals prominent messaging about the institution's core values as they relate to community engagement:

> So, you're looking for world-changing research. So, you're looking to make a difference through community engagement. So, you're looking for a really good po' boy. *You're in the right place. (Tulane University, 2018)*

Another example is Augsburg University, a Lutheran institution located in an immigrant neighborhood near downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota, which has successfully positioned its engagement agenda to compete within a crowded local market of small liberal arts colleges. Augsburg University president Paul Pribbenow has articulated Augsburg's engagement agenda through the theology of generosity, faithfulness, and "the saga of our life as an urban settlement" *(Pribbenow, 2015, p. 6)*. This unique positioning of Augsburg University in both word and practice has resulted in historic levels of giving from its board of trustees *(M. Entenza, personal communication, April 28, 2016)* and recognition of Augsburg as an innovative leader among private colleges in Minnesota *("Augsburg College Leads," 2016)*.

In making sense of the strategic value of a campus engagement identity, CEPs must be attuned to the way that institutional scale and complexity shape understandings of engagement across the campus. Some small private institutions like Augsburg University are distinctively mission-centered and coherent in their identity, but others are sprawling and may hold multiple competing identities. In particular, research universities are characterized by scholars as "organized anarchies" *(Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972; Birnbaum,*

1991) in which multiple, sometimes conflicting agendas are being carried out simultaneously. In this context, various interpretations of engagement vie for meaning and are occasionally in conflict. For example, many research university leaders are likely to tell the story of engagement through the lens of economic development or technology transfer *(Weerts & Freed, 2016)*. Alternatively, faculty are most likely to articulate this work through the lens of their field or discipline. Across the curriculum, engagement is expressed through a range of intellectual traditions such as civic professionalism, social justice, social responsibility, an "ethic of care," and public work *(Battistoni, 2001)*.

Further complicating these dimensions, large, sprawling research universities often hold multiple organizational identities, some of which are salient to some stakeholders, but not to others. For example, my home institution, the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities, is among the largest and most comprehensive institutions in the United States and is simultaneously understood as a land-grant university, urban university, and member of the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU). Campus actors give meaning to engagement based in part on which of these identities is most salient to them. Illustrating the complexity of this landscape, a recent study conducted by the University of Minnesota Office for Public Engagement found that members of Twin Cities campus community use 38 proxy terms to describe engagement *(Furco & Ropers, 2016)*.

CEP as Sensemaker: Creating Vehicles for Understanding the Strategic Value of Engagement

The aforementioned examples illustrate how institutions can leverage engagement to affirm their core identities (essentialist perspective) in ways that position them for success in the broader environment (strategic perspective; *Stensaker, 2015*). To successfully position engagement within the milieu of the institution, CEPs must have deep understanding of campus context related to institutional complexity, scale, and formal/informal decision-making structures. Recognizing their unique place within the campus culture and power structure, CEPs can create vehicles to illuminate the connection between engagement and revenue generation at the appropriate levels. At complex research universities, these efforts are likely best directed at the collegiate level where academic deans and their staff are charged with the financial health of their schools

or colleges. In some cases, such efforts might even be directed at the departmental level. At smaller institutions, CEPs might target

Table 1. Facilitating Sensemaking Conversations: Engagement as a Competitive Strategy

Institutional/Academic Unit Identity	Who are we as an institution or academic unit? What are our values and what are we known for? Do we have a narrative from which we derive meaning in relation to our community engagement agenda? What kind of engagement identity should be nurtured given our distinctive mission, history, and culture? What unique assets or strengths does our campus/unit possess to anchor an engagement agenda within this broader identity?
Place	How does our unique location influence the way we view ourselves and stakeholder expectations of us as an engaged campus/academic unit? How do we best leverage our location to provide mutual benefit to our campus and the various communities we serve? What unique community assets are available to advance our engagement agenda?
Resources and Advocacy	In what ways might engagement be employed as a strategy to attract and sustain support (e.g., grants, contracts, awards, donors, foundations, industry/political leaders)? What role could engagement play in a fund-raising campaign for our institution/academic unit? How might engagement be leveraged to bolster advocacy, volunteerism, and giving from our alumni and friends?
Image and Value Proposition	What is our institution's/academic unit's "public good" value proposition and how do we leverage it for strategic benefit? In what ways does our engagement agenda differentiate us from other institutions/competing units and strengthen our market position? How do we tell this story to prospective students, alumni, and other key stakeholders?

Note: Adapted from "Engagement Champions: How Trustees Connect Campus and Community, Boost Institutional Engagement, and Serve the Public Good," by D. J. Weerts, 2016, *Trusteeship, 24*(4), pp. 18–23.

a team of cabinet-level leaders charged with developing and executing long-term financial strategies for the institution. CEPs can rely on a number of common strategies to facilitate sensemaking, such as convening campus conversations, drafting concept papers, hosting professional development events, creating cross-depart-

mental teams, and importing external ideas that introduce new ways of thinking *(Kezar, 2014; Weick, 1995)*. These vehicles can help campus actors envision new scenarios or patterns of behavior that help the campus achieve its goals for sustainability and revenue growth.

One concrete example of this sensemaking strategy is to convene dialogues about how engagement might enhance an institution or academic unit's competitive position. Table 1 provides a list of questions that could guide these strategic conversations with key campus decision makers. These prompts place engagement within the center of larger questions about campus/academic unit identity, resource opportunities, and overall value proposition. In doing so, they provide campus decision makers with a cognitive pathway to consider how engagement might be leveraged as a central strategy to advance overall institutional or academic unit goals.

Using Data to Facilitate Sensemaking

The aforementioned sensemaking strategy focuses on helping campus decision makers construct new meanings about the strategic value of engagement. A common companion to this normative approach of sensemaking is the data-driven, rational approach referred to as organizational learning *(Kezar, 2014)*. Organizational learning emphasizes the use of data in helping organizational actors detect errors and see better approaches to achieving institutional goals *(Kezar, 2014; Morgan, 2006)*. Since a universal measurement of an academic leader's success is the ability to secure revenue *(Bolman & Gallos, 2011)*, CEPs are wise to use data in ways that illuminate how engagement can improve the institution's core financial position. This strategy can be employed in a range of areas, including retention and completion, enrollment management, grant writing, and advancement and alumni relations.

Retention and completion. A key component of institutional financial health is the ability of the campus to retain its students through graduation. Creating revenue is tied to decreasing student attrition since the cost of recruiting students is higher than the cost of keeping them *(Modo Labs Team, 2018)*. At tuition-dependent private institutions, retention and completion are of paramount importance to the financial health of the enterprise *(Hunter, 2012)*. At public institutions, graduation rates are often tied to performance funding, a policy that is being adopted across states at a rapid pace *(Hillman, 2016)*. For these reasons, institutions must pri-

oritize retention and completion as a core strategy for financial sustainability.

Various leaders have pointed out the importance of creating reports or developing tools to show how engagement contributes to retention and student success *(Holland & Langseth, 2010; Mathias & Banks, 2015)*. These recommendations are founded on a body of work pointing to community-engaged learning as a high-impact practice that contributes to student learning and success in college *(Kuh, 2008)*. Recent studies suggest that community-engaged learning is an especially compelling strategy to retain students of Color *(Maruyama, Furco, & Song, 2018; Song, Furco, Lopez, & Maruyama, 2017)*. Collectively, this body of work illustrates that engagement is well aligned with strategies to improve institutional performance and promote institutional sustainability.

This knowledge places CEPs in a unique position to link the institution's engagement agenda to its broader agenda related to student success and overall institutional performance. In leading from the middle, CEPs can develop creative partnerships and facilitate data use to support these broader goals. As a concrete example, engagement can be linked with the Equity Scorecard developed by Estella Bensimon at the University of Southern California (USC). Institutions involved with this work assemble evidence teams that collect and use data to create equity measures and benchmarks, as well as strategies for improving equity *(Bensimon, 2005)*. Awareness of the positive association between engagement and retaining underrepresented students could enable CEPs to play a significant role in positioning engagement to meet campus equity goals. CEPs can use this connection to make a case for investment in community-engaged learning and help the institution leverage its resources in a way that supports student success and campus financial health.

Student recruitment and enrollment management. As discussed earlier in this article, some colleges and universities are leveraging their engagement identity to position themselves in a crowded market for students. Engagement as a recruitment strategy is founded on the knowledge that the next generation of students seeks greater connection between their academic disciplines and their broader contributions to society. These students are drawn to institutions that offer these opportunities as an essential component of campus life *(Furco, 2010)*. They seek to participate in activities that make contributions to society *(Howe & Strauss, 2000; Furco, 2010)* and " expect their formal education experiences to connect

and have relevance to their lived experiences outside of school" *(Furco, 2010, p. 380)*.

CEPs can use this knowledge to help enrollment management professionals make clear linkages between engagement, student experiences, and college recruiting. These connections are emerging in formal plans for student recruitment across the country. For example, the strategic enrollment plan at the University of Hawaii Maui College explicitly links community engagement to the college's mission, vision, and branding strategy. This brand strategy is the basis for recruiting, enrolling, and retaining students at the institution *(University of Hawaii, Maui College, 2017)*.

Data that illuminates student expectations about engagement can be particularly informative for academic planning.. For example, the University of Minnesota Office for Public Engagement relies on institutional data from the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey to help academic deans understand the value of engagement through the eyes of their undergraduate students. Using a six-point scale, the SERU survey poses questions such as "Opportunities to connect my academic work with community-based experiences are important to me." Disaggregating these data by college has been valuable in helping collegiate deans place engagement in the broader context of retention and recruitment. For example, 93% of survey respondents within the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) agree that opportunities to connect their academic work with community-based experiences are important. Data such as this make a strong case for prioritizing engagement as a core part of the CEHD curricular planning, retention efforts, and enrollment management strategy moving forward.

Grants and sponsored programs. Another key area where engagement can position an institution for financial success is grant writing. Among research universities, grant acquisition/expenditures is one of the most common indicators of institutional performance and prestige *(Altbach & Salmi, 2011)*. Over the past two decades, societal impact has become an important consideration in the acquisition of grant funding, especially in the sciences. A particularly important development was the creation of the "broader impacts" requirement initiative by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 1997. This provision required that proposals be evaluated, in part, by assessing their potential to benefit the nation. Since then, scientists have found value in partnering with museums, after-school programs, and other nonprofits with

deep community connections to maximize their grant funds *(Sacco, 2015)*.

Data can be used by CEPs in ways that illuminate the connection between engagement and grant success on their campuses *(Holland & Langseth, 2010)*. For example, the University of Minnesota Office for Public Engagement has worked with the Office of Sponsored Research to track funding proposals that incorporate engagement as a key component. Current institutional data reveal that engagement is incorporated in grant activity totaling $500 million. During fiscal years 2014–2018, 1,525 funding proposals from across the University of Minnesota five-campus system indicated an activity with the community or other outside entity. The requested amount of these proposals totaled more than $1.4 billion. Nearly half (46%) of these publicly engaged research proposals were funded *(Office for Public Engagement, 2017)*.

Elevating engagement as a means to acquire research funding also supports the work of other revenue-focused units that seek to raise the institution's value proposition. This is particularly true in the realm of state relations. A challenge for research university leaders is the growing belief among state officials that faculty are conducting research at the expense of teaching *(Sommerhauser, 2017)*. Studies suggest that few legislators use research emanating from colleges and universities and that many view scholarship as having limited public value. For example, a recent study found that almost three quarters of state legislators choose not to use university research to aid their behavioral health policy decision-making. In interpreting these findings, researchers explained that scholars typically pursue questions of interest to them that differ from those of policymakers and the general public *(Drexel University, 2018)*. Engaged scholarship offers a remedy to counter these disconnections. Departing from traditional research methodologies, engaged scholarship incorporates stakeholder perspectives in formulating research questions, analyzing data, interpreting data, and formulating policies or new practices. High-quality engaged scholarship makes the research more relevant and usable for multiple audiences, including policymakers *(Fitzgerald, Burack, & Seifer, 2010a, 2010b)*. Simply put, engaged scholarship is a strategy for making research more applicable to the interests of legislators and the broader public.

Equipped with this knowledge, CEPs can play a key role in spanning boundaries among research, state relations, and communications divisions to make engaged scholarship visible to legislators and other state decision makers. These partners can work

together to develop messages communicating the innovative nature of engaged scholarship, thereby reshaping understandings about the value of research and research universities more broadly. CEPs who make these connections validate the institution's core research identity while advancing engaged scholarship as a legitimate means of knowledge generation and discovery. These dual purposes reflect both the essentialist and strategic uses of organizational identity *(Stensaker, 2015)* discussed earlier in this article.

Institutional advancement: Fund raising and alumni relations. Sensemaking and organizational learning show particular promise for the broad area of institutional advancement. The field of institutional advancement is largely built on assumptions related to social exchange theory, which suggests that relationships are conceived in economic terms. From this perspective, costs and benefits are weighed to determine whether the relationship should continue *(Chadwick-Jones, 1976)*. Applied to fund raising and alumni relations, it suggests that alums weigh the cost of their philanthropic and service commitments against current or past benefits (e.g., quality of education, career gains, satisfaction with their alma mater). In advancement practice, social exchange theory is largely expressed through relationship marketing *(Drezner, 2011)*, which focuses on creating a positive balance of institutional exchanges with alumni. Class reunions, advisory board membership, special events, and one-on-one cultivation of alumni are practices that aim to tip the balance in a positive direction and gain philanthropic support *(Weerts & Cabrera, 2018)*.

However, emerging evidence disrupts the notion of social exchange theory, or "giving back," as the primary basis for alumni relationships with their alma mater. Over the past decade, studies have found connections among alumni giving, volunteerism, and advocacy and the formation of civic, prosocial behaviors in college. Specifically, these studies indicate that alumni who were active in nonpolitical, volunteer activities in college are those most likely to volunteer on behalf of their alma mater years after graduation (recruit students, host events, etc.). Conversely, alumni who were active in political, nonvolunteer activities in college are those most likely to engage in advocacy behaviors on behalf of their alma mater (e.g., writing to the governor or legislators on behalf of the institution; *Weerts & Cabrera, 2017, 2018*). In the realm of charitable giving, alumni that were most engaged in these prosocial, civic behaviors during college were also the ones most likely to make gifts to their alma mater years after graduation. Meanwhile, alumni who were civically disengaged as college students were the least likely to give,

volunteer, or advocate on behalf of their alma mater after college *(Weerts & Cabrera, 2017, 2018)*. Overall, this body of work suggests that supportive alumni are those who have formed strong civic, philanthropic commitments and express them in unique ways on behalf of their alma mater. These habits and civic commitments are formed even prior to college and are predictive of postgraduation support for higher education.

An implication of this research is that the field of institutional advancement may be too reliant on social exchange theory or "giving back" as a default explanation for alumni engagement. Practices anchored in this perspective may inadvertently mask the passion of alumni who are motivated to give to their alma mater as a means to express their long-standing civic interests. As Strickland *(2007)* explains, new generations of donors to higher education are largely motivated by their desire to improve society. This position was illustrated in the Portland State and Augsburg University examples discussed earlier in this article.

Evidence from studies such as these could provide CEPs with new sensegiving *(Kezar, 2014)* frames that challenge widely held assumptions about alumni engagement and philanthropy. In particular, this work suggests that advancement leaders may increase commitments of alumni by engaging them as partners in addressing key societal issues that mirror their own civic and philanthropic interests. By reorienting advancement practices in this way, CEPs and advancement professionals could form fruitful collaborations that cultivate alumni to support their alma mater in ways that deeply connect them to societal challenges. Similarly, alumni advocacy and volunteer programs could be redesigned to yield mutual benefits to their alma mater and communities that they serve *(Weerts & Cabrera, 2018)*. An informal network of advancement officers and academic leaders called Citizen Alum has emerged to facilitate creative thinking that connects the civic and philanthropic roles of alumni *(Ellison, 2015)*. This network is an example of a sensemaking vehicle for shifting mind-sets about the value of community engagement as it relates to building successful alumni relations programs.

Assessment Tool: Engagement for Institutional Sustainability

As illustrated throughout this article, institutional revenue generation has several interconnected dimensions that can be strategically connected to engagement. A rubric or institutional assess-

ment tool can be used to illuminate their relationships. Over the past several years, many engagement leaders, scholars, and

Table 2. Assessment Rubric—Engagement for Institutional Sustainability

Use the rubric below to gauge the degree to which engagement is positioned as a core financial strategy for your institution/college/academic unit.

Directions: For each of the six categories (rows), place a circle around the number in the continuum that best represents the *current* status of engagement in positioning your institution/college/unit for financial sustainability.

	Negligible consideration 1 2 3	*Emerging consideration* 4 5 6	*Sustained/robust presence* 7 8 9
Retention and completion *(circle one)*	Community-engaged learning is disconnected from broader institutional/academic unit goals related to retention and completion. Internal dollars supporting these connections are minimal, scarce, and applied inconsistently across the institution/college/unit.	Community-engaged learning is emerging as a key strategy to support retention and completion in this academic unit/institution. Service-learning and other engagement initiatives have modest to adequate levels of funding for these efforts. Engagement remains on the periphery of budget allocation decisions for these purposes.	Community-engaged learning is fully integrated with broader institutional/academic unit strategies to support retention and completion. Support for engagement is aligned with these efforts and applied consistently across the institution/college/unit. Engagement is a budget priority aligned with these purposes.
Grants and sponsored programs *(circle one)*	Community engagement is rarely or infrequently considered in the context of unit/institutional external grant proposals. Funds emanating from grants rarely apply to advancing community engagement efforts, and may only support a narrow set of traditional outreach activities (e.g., disseminating findings of research). Internal funds are not available to leverage external funds.	Community engagement is occasionally considered in the context of grant proposals within this unit/institution. Grant dollars may support a narrow set of traditional outreach activities, and, in some cases, engaged approaches to teaching, research, and service (e.g., service-learning). Some internal funds are available to leverage external funds.	Community engagement is an integral part of unit/institutional efforts to obtain grants for engaged research, teaching, and student programs. Grants are written to support an innovative set of engagement activities relative to the purposes of the grant (community partnerships, etc.). A robust set of internal funding is used to leverage external funding.
Institutional advancement (fund raising) *(circle one)*	Community engagement is not a priority in securing gifts from alumni, friends, corporations, or foundations within this institution/unit. Donors are rarely exposed to giving opportunities for engaged work (e.g., not referenced in fund-raising materials/donor conversations).	Community engagement is an emerging priority in advancement for this unit/institution. Engagement receives cursory mention in advancement materials and donor discussions. Support for this work is uneven among advancement staff, and is only discussed within the context of a few projects.	Community engagement is a core component of the institution/unit's advancement strategy. It is a signature feature of fund-raising campaigns and central to case statements regarding gift support for the institution/unit. Major donors are targeted to make large endowment gifts to support engaged research, teaching, and service.

	Negligible consideration			Emerging consideration			Sustained/robust presence		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Institutional advancement (alumni relations) *(circle one)*	Community engagement is rarely considered in alumni relations programming within this institution/academic unit. Alumni volunteer and advocacy opportunities have limited connection to broader community or societal goals. Few connections are made between alumni volunteerism, advocacy, and fund-raising efforts to support engagement as a core institutional practice.			Community engagement as an alumni relations strategy is emerging. Programs such as "alumni service day" provide occasional opportunities for alumni to connect their civic interests to the civic missions of the institution/academic unit. Engagement remains on the periphery of alumni volunteer and advocacy opportunities. The connection between these programs and fund-raising efforts to promote engagement as a core practice is emerging.			Community engagement is fully integrated into alumni programming within this institution/academic unit. Alumni are given opportunities to connect their civic interests in ways that benefit their alma mater and the broader society. Clear connections are made between alumni volunteerism, advocacy, and fund-raising efforts to support engagement as a core institutional practice.		
Recruitment and enrollment management *(circle one)*	Community engagement is rarely considered in recruitment or enrollment management strategy for this institution/unit. Materials, tours, and other recruitment methods rarely highlight engaged work among students, faculty, and staff within this institution/unit. Future students are unaware of this institution/unit's commitment to engagement.			Community engagement is emerging as a recruitment and enrollment management strategy for this institution/unit. Materials, tours, and other recruitment methods occasionally feature engagement work among students, faculty, and staff within this institution/unit. Future students may or may not be aware of this institution/academic unit's commitment to engagement.			Community engagement is an integral part of the institution/unit's recruitment and enrollment management strategy. Materials, tours, and other recruitment methods prominently highlight engaged work among students, faculty, and staff within this institution/unit. Future students are fully aware of this institution/academic unit's commitment to engagement.		
Marketing and communications *(circle one)*	Community engagement is rarely considered in the context of marketing and communications for this institution/academic unit. There is limited consideration about how engagement contributes to the institutional/unit brand. Social media, marketing materials, and general communications infrequently highlight engagement as part of the institution/unit's core identity.			Community engagement is beginning to be considered in relation to marketing and communications within this college/unit. Staff increasingly strategize how engagement contributes to the institutional/collegiate brand. Social media, marketing materials, and other communications are beginning to highlight engagement as part of the institution/unit's core identity.			Community engagement is an integral part of the institution/academic unit's marketing, communications, and branding strategy. Engagement is prominently featured in social media, marketing materials, and general communications. Engagement is embedded in messages to internal and external audiences about the values and core identity of the unit/institution.		

professional associations have created assessment tools to support institutionalization of engagement across colleges and universities. These rubrics can serve both to benchmark progress toward engagement and help leaders envision a sequence of steps in the transformation into an engaged institution (see *Campus Compact, 2008; Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 2005; Furco, 2003; Furco, Weerts, Burton, & Kent, 2009; Holland, 1997*). Although some of these tools include financial support as one measure of progress, no tool exclusively assesses the extent to which engagement is positioned to support larger goals of institutional sustainability. A contribution of this article is to provide such a tool for CEPs as they facilitate sensemaking and organizational learning within their institutions.

Modeled from a similar assessment tool in the field (see *Furco et al., 2009*), Table 2 provides a rubric for campus leaders to assess the status of engagement in positioning an institution/academic unit for financial sustainability. The key dimensions of sustainability and resource generation relate to the primary areas of this article: retention and college completion, grants and sponsored programs, institutional advancement (fund raising/alumni relations), recruitment/enrollment management, and marketing and communications. The goal of this rubric is to stimulate discussion about an institution/academic unit's strategic use of engagement as it relates to financial sustainability. As with other scorecards or tools, it aims to help campus actors see new opportunities and consider innovative means for achieving institutional goals (see *Bensimon, 2005*). Toward these ends, the rubric could serve as a companion piece with other sensemaking vehicles to facilitate learning and institutional change.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this article is to provide CEPs with a conceptual map and set of tools to position engagement within broader campus discussions related to institutional sustainability and revenue generation. The intended contribution of this piece is to place engagement with "the big-picture vision of the institution" *(McReynolds & Shields, 2015, p. 22)* rather than focusing on financial support for center-directed engagement programs and partnerships. This broader focus stems from research illustrating that innovations (engagement in this case) become part of an organization's core identity when they are diffused throughout an organization rather than enclaved into a standalone unit such as an office or center *(Levine, 1980; Sandmann & Weerts, 2008)*. Thus, if a primary goal among CEPs is to institutionalize or diffuse engagement prac-

tice throughout their institutions, revenue-generation strategies must be connected to the viability of academic units across the campus and for the institution as a whole. This approach prioritizes the creation of engaged institutions rather than maintaining institutions that house engagement programs (engagement as an institutionalized practice rather than an enclaved practice).

This article has articulated some unique challenges and opportunities for CEPs as they lead from the middle of their organizations. In particular, CEPs face difficult challenges in leading engagement in periods of financial uncertainty. As state support for higher education declines as a proportion of revenue and scrutiny of college costs increases, engagement-related programs will remain under pressure in budgetary discussions. As discussed in this article, CEPs can use social cognition strategies to help campus decisionmakers make sense of engagement as a means to address ongoing financial challenges. In undertaking these important roles, CEPs can begin to see the "joys and opportunities of life in the middle" *(Bolman & Gallos, 2011, p. 143)*. In particular, these professionals can gain satisfaction from facilitating win–win agreements, contributing to institutional sustainability, and transforming their institutions to become engaged colleges and universities. CEPs can have a profound impact in meeting the needs of their students and institutions, advancing the field of higher education, and serving the interests of their communities and the broader society.

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