

# Evolving Dynamics of Higher Education Institutions and Their Cities (1980-2020)

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**Cite as:** Conteh, M. (2024). Evolving Dynamics of Higher Education Institutions and Their Cities (1980-2020). *Metropolitan Universities*, 35(2), 124-145. DOI: 10.18060/27714

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## Abstract

This research examines the significance of higher education institutions (HEIs) as anchors in their host cities and their community engagement strategies between 1980 and 2020. By examining four case studies of urban-based universities that are members of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) across diverse geographical and socio-economic contexts, this study analyzes the impact of anchor strategies on local communities, economic development, and urban revitalization. Two public institutions—Rutgers University-Newark (RU-N) and the University of Pretoria Mamelodi Campus (South Africa)—and two private institutions—Syracuse University (S.U.) and the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn)—comprise the four selected case studies of urban-based institutions. A comparative analysis of the case studies reveals that effective anchor strategies frequently involve multidimensional approaches that address the social, economic, and public safety challenges of their respective cities. In addition, the study identifies the key factors contributing to the efficacy of anchor strategies, such as strong leadership, stakeholder collaborations, and maximizing the role of mission and vision. The findings of the study highlight the interplay between universities and their environments rooted in their host cities. This can serve as a model for other universities interested in becoming anchor institutions or otherwise participating in the work of urban serving higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** higher education institutions, urban-based institutions, case study

## Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the relationship between universities and the cities in which they are situated. Due to the increasing importance of urban universities in driving economic, social, and cultural development in their surrounding areas, this case study analysis investigates the interconnection between urban universities and their respective host cities. The study presented here attempts to comprehend the principles that govern interactions between universities and their cities. Urban universities are widely acknowledged as crucial elements in the urban landscape, given their significant economic, social, and cultural impacts that often transcend their physical boundaries. Globally, universities are connected to urbanization through complex economic, political, and historic mechanisms (Bender, 1988; Wiewel & Perry, 2008). As universities and cities grew closer in the 20th century, most U.S. cities witnessed two societal trends: deindustrialization and globalization. Both trends moved physical and financial capital outside cities, shuttered factories, and reduced local investments.

The city has historically been a key location for exploring critical social issues. According to Sassen (2005), sociologists conducted extensive research on urban areas during the first half of the twentieth century. They documented significant phenomena such as industrialization, urbanization, alienation, and the emergence of a new cultural concept known as "urbanity" on a massive scale. The works of Simmel, Weber, Benjamin, Lefebvre, and especially Robert Park and Louis Wirth demonstrate the particular influence of German sociology. Savitch & Kantor (2002) assert that cities, as an urban form, play a significant role in the mixing of regional and international economies, and cities worldwide strive to be vital and relevant in the capitalist world economy in which they live.

Yet not all urban dwellers can take advantage of the affluence that the world's social, political, and economic metropolitan systems have created. Even though cities seek to be places of private sector-driven opportunity, capitalist processes produce winners and losers in terms of social and economic outcomes (Marx & Engels, 1908). The phenomenon of population growth over an extended period has led to a surge in the number of individuals seeking employment opportunities in the major commercial centers of cities (UN, 2015).

Due to deindustrialization and globalization, there has been a corresponding increase in inequality as wealth has been concentrated among some people and some geographical areas. In pursuing sustainable solutions to urban inequality, scholars and policymakers have suggested the implementation of "anchor institutions." Some scholars, such as Hakavy et al. (2009) and Porter (2016), have advocated for increased involvement of universities in local communities through anchor institution initiatives. This involvement fosters economic development, promotes local wealth creation, and enhances neighborhood development.

In discussing anchor institutions and community development, Hodges & Dubb coined the phrase "The Anchor Institution Mission," which is "to consciously and strategically apply their long-term, place-based economic power, in combination with their human and intellectual resources, to better the welfare of the communities in which they reside" (Hodges & Dubb, 2012, pp. xix–xxx). Admittedly, the concept of anchor institutions is fluid, and at the same time, it can spawn a helpful discourse for framing the strategic purpose and impact of institutions. The resulting innovation is that those anchor institutions are frequently more of a discursive framing than a meaningful material and social reality.

## Study Purpose and Scope

The motivation for this study is a desire to better understand the complex interactions between urban universities and the cities in which they are located. To accomplish its aim, the study investigates four higher education institutions that have earned attention for their metropolitan location and community participation efforts. By offering comparative case studies of the four universities located in central cities—three in the United States of America and one in South Africa—the study seeks to demonstrate the extent to which universities adjust their mission to their specific location and city.

The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) played a role in the selection process for these educational institution, which were chosen chiefly because of their central city locations and their membership in the coalition. As members of CUMU, all of the selected institutions, serve as anchor institutions for their regions, activate their mission through community engagement, have a diverse student body that reflects regional and national demographics, and generate new knowledge and creativity that benefits their communities.

Furthermore, by concentrating on a relatively homogenous subject, the comparativist improves the ability to conduct an in-depth analysis. This enables the researcher to better understand the problem by focusing the investigation on comparable groups. As a result, comparing somewhat similar groups aims to balance out specific differences, enabling a better analysis of the critical factors that account for the variation in each group's behavior. Although dissimilar in population size and mission and representing a range of higher education institutions in the global north and the global south, the four selected universities share several attributes:

1. They all subscribed to the mission of CUMU, whose members are committed to student success, community and economic development, and revitalization.
2. They are all located in urban centers.
3. They contend with similar characteristics in addressing their location and cities.
4. They are all transnational and global in their partnerships, collaborations, and research.
5. They all have comparable programs rooted in their communities.

6. Additionally, all four institutions are mission-driven and provide programs and services to improve the lives of the communities where they are located.

These shared characteristics render the four cases as comparable. Since each of the four universities was perceived differently by the cities where they are located, different resources were utilized to investigate the research questions posed for the case study analysis. The fundamental questions guiding this research are: 1) How can we account for urban universities becoming more engaged with their host cities? 2) How does engagement vary across public and private institutions and between cities? 3) How do universities affect the economy and demographics of their cities?

Participants in this study were purposefully selected from university administrators, librarians, archivists, and city officials, with consideration given to each participant's particular functions and responsibilities. Using a historical perspective and publicly available documents and tracing the community engagement of the four selected universities and their host cities for a forty-year timeframe from the 1980s to 2020., the study demonstrates how universities adapt their policies to account for their location,

Grounded theory was utilized to analyze the qualitative data collected. Grounded theory is a type of comparative explanation building or theory-building that was popularized by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory is an approach distinguished by constructing comparative explanations or theories. The emphasis is on the construction of theories based on field data that is based on the perspectives of participants. According to Charmaz (2006), a constructivist approach should be used in qualitative research, using an interpretative approach that is flexible, and focused on theory creation and learning from the data collected. Utilizing empirical data gathered from the field and incorporating the perspectives of participants are two essential components of the grounded theory methodology.

For the purposes of this research, a constructivist approach was used that placed an emphasis on the development of theoretical constructs and the extraction of knowledge from the gathered data. This approach also sought to avoid the introduction of biases or pre-existing theoretical frameworks. Table 1 summarizes key characteristics of the two countries represented in the four institutions selected for this case study, namely South Africa and the United States.

**TABLE 1.** South African and the United States: A social and economic snapshot

	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>Population</b>	51,770,560	327,167,434
<b>High school pass rate (2017)</b>	78.2%	83.2%
<b>Unemployment Rate (2018)</b>	27.5%	3.9%
<b>Poverty Rate</b>	55%	13.4%
<b>Gross Domestic Product</b>	\$348,871,650	\$19,390,604,000

<b>GINI Index</b>	.63 (2014)	.41 (2016)
College and university > Share of total education spending	11.88% Ranked 91st.	25.65% Ranked 26th. <b>2 times more than South Africa</b>

Sources: 2011 Statistics, South Africa; US Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; The World Bank.

## Historical Context

Universities are active members of the communities where they are located and typically play a significant role in the development and welfare of these communities. Growing attention has been given to the mutual contributions and learnings gained from the interaction between institutions of higher learning and local communities and regions (Bhagwan, 2017). Community engagement became therefore an obvious focus for urban universities, calling for collaborations and facilitation for the mutual benefit of both the universities and the local communities and regions where they are located (Sathorar & Geduld, 2021). A brief overview of the interactions between the four selected universities included in this case study and their respective communities follows.

### University of Pretoria — Mamelodi Campus

South Africa's Universities were exclusive academically focused prior to independence but they became inclusive, diverse, more engaged and progressive since 1994 (Birch et al., 2013; Hendricks & Flaherty, 2018; Ogude et al., 2020). Strydom (2016) argues that during the apartheid regime, South African universities were only partly or not engaged with their communities, but they became involved in their communities and cities as they became more cognizant of the socio-political and economic situation across South Africa.

According to the South African Department of Education (1997), following independence the government mandated that Universities address community challenges in a way that would promote social transformation. Frequently, university-community engagement in South Africa was characterized by universities and their communities collaborating on data extraction tasks and for purposes of advancing university research while forgetting to address the pressing needs of local communities (Sathorar & Geduld, 2021). This echoes the notion of the apartheid regime, where universities were exclusively academic and disengaged socio-economically and politically. Nortje (2018) concurs with this notion as her research indicates that the UP-Mamelodi Campus was largely operating in an isolated and inward-looking knowledge environment and still has high fences and walls with no sense of identity and circulation of knowledge between the university and the community (Nice, 2008; see also Hendricks &

Leibowitz, 2016)). High fences and buffer zones created physical boundaries between the Mamelodi Campus and the community, which in turn lead to an identity of exclusiveness within the university campus.

The University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus is situated in Mamelodi Town, 23km East of the City of Pretoria, South Africa. Mamelodi can be described as a vast, historically black township in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (CTMM) that has contributed immensely to the development of businesses and employment creation in Tshwane and South Africa overall (Ramafamba & Mears, 2012). Like other townships across South African cities, Mamelodi Township was planned by the apartheid authorities primarily as a collection of dormitory type structures for cheap black labor (Peeters & Osman, 2005; Ramafamba & Osman, 2012). Due to its location, Mamelodi Township proved challenging for community members to access job opportunities since the Township was isolated at a distance from the city itself. Most of the Township's inhabitants lived in shacks occupied either illegally or legally while awaiting government housing. Mamelodi Township was ranked among the top 20 townships prioritized for development in South Africa (Peeters & Osman, 2005).

The Township's name, Mamelodi or "Mother of Melodies" eludes to the fact that it harbors diverse population groups. Its living quarters were rather poor consisting largely of low-quality houses and shacks, whereby the shacks were observed to mushroom and expand rapidly particularly in Mamelodi East (Ramafamba & Osman, 2012). A study conducted by Ogude et al. (2020) indicated that Mamelodi Township has an official population estimated at 334,577 excluding the ever-expanding informal settlements in the East. Including these informal settlements, the population of Mamelodi is estimated to be closer to one million the majority of whom are Black. Of the total population, only 9.5% had access to higher education which is the reason why Mamelodi experiences a high rate of unemployment with 18% of its households having no source of income while 73.7% of the population are of working age ranging between 15-64 years (Census, 2011; Ogude et al., 2020).

The high unemployment rate has adverse effects on the socio-economic status of the Township overall. Community engagement between Mamelodi Township and local universities must therefore focus on combatting poverty, crime, addressing low educational levels, and reducing unemployment with the goals of building a smarter, safer, and more secure city. With all these pressing challenges facing Mamelodi Township, it was essential for the University of Pretoria to realize that it had an opportunity to build an anchor institution strategy that would allow the university access to the community's infrastructural, educational, cultural, social, and economic diversity (Cantor et al., 2013). Ogude et al. (2020) assert that the anchor strategy resulted from the reflections and consultations with both internal and external partners, and focused not only on addressing the community's needs but also on ensuring that the University of Pretoria's strategic goals were realized at the same time. Since universities are social institutions operating

as negotiating forces between local authorities and residents, they are also called upon to re-examine their own core mission and purpose. This suggests that universities recognize their critical role as incubators of knowledge where ideas are captured, researched, executed, confirmed, and improved in the service of local communities and regions. In the case of UP-Mamelodi this led to some value-added ideas contributing to economic development within Mamelodi Township and Pretoria through increased community engagement (Nortje, 2018; Ehlenz, 2018). When knowledge is developed with the intention of enhancing the well-being of society, scholars will not have to be coerced to engage in university-community activities; rather, they engage voluntarily, irrespective of their field of study (Checkoway, 2013).

The anchor university strategy led to the transition of the Vista Campus of UP to the UP-Mamelodi Campus by designating it as a university campus expressly focused on engaging the community and aiming at broadening educational pathways for residents access post-secondary education opportunities (Ogude et al., 2020). Due to the adoption of the anchor mission strategy, UP agreed to operate within the mandate of the university's engagement with the Mamelodi Township. Hendricks and Flaherty (2018) state that UP tailored its focus on enhancing the communities' infrastructure and the economy to eradicate poverty, unemployment, and other societal ills, thus, paving the way for academic access and success in attaining multiple community engagement objectives. Nortje (2018) argues that a responsive architectural manifestation is essential to promote transparency and accessibility within the institution by creating spaces where encounters between people can occur. This can be viewed as an expression of Boyer's scholarship of engagement (1996) as a means of playing a pivotal role in the knowledge exchange between students, university personnel, the Mamelodi Township and the city of Pretoria at large. The Mamelodi Campus thus established a platform focused on creating spaces of belonging physically and integrally, and promoting relationship-building among people both at the university and in the surrounding community (Nortje, 2018).

In its quest to provide access to higher education, employment creation, workforce retention and job security, UP values diversity within its campuses, including Mamelodi, to ensure that socio-economic and racial diversity in the community is represented within the campus. This led to the adoption of university policies intended at eliminating barriers between the community and the university (Strydom, 2016; Hendricks & Flaherty, 2018; Ogude et al., 2020). UP's policies stress enrollment and support of students from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds; hence UP-Mamelodi Campus became a preferred community engagement hub to implement the university's anchor institution strategies. The Mamelodi Campus was carefully selected to improve access and successful student learning, strengthening social responsiveness and impacting society due to its socio-economic and academically challenging situation (Ogude et al., 2020).

Through programs such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pathways, the UP- Mamelodi Campus embraced its ambition to broaden educational pathways beyond high school education and admitting students to the university. Therefore, UP continues to move from a community-engaged approach focused on student learning, and faculty transformation to engaged scholarship to a partnership approach nurtured through teaching, learning, and research for symbiotic benefits and leveraging research, procurement, hiring practices and safety initiatives (Ogude et al., 2020). UP-Mamelodi engages in community-based activities such as the Itsoseng Psychological Clinic, Siyathemba Occupational Therapy Clinic, The Business Clinic, and The Law Clinic. These programs enable the university to address existing gaps by continuously engaging in research based on the Mamelodi context from socio-economics to equitable justice (Visser, 2017, Nortje, 2018). UP-Mamelodi students at different levels (depending on their course of study) are employed at these Clinics to acquire practical experience under the mentorship of experienced staff. The clinics collaborate with their respective communities to ensure that citizens within various age groups, including those in the neighborhood, access the services they need. UP- Mamelodi Campus launched an Alumni Club to motivate others to plow back into their community.

During the launch of its engagement initiative on 17 March 2017, Professor Ogude reiterated the vision and mission of the Mamelodi Campus and the alumni's role in supporting the campus and making it more accessible to the STEM-related fields offered at UP. Other activities to strengthen collaborations between Mamelodi schools and the university involved a focus beyond students obtaining good marks and instead about their contribution to life after university. Parents are encouraged and empowered to play a central role in their children's education through career expos held annually (Mamelodi Dipolelo, 2018).

## Rutgers University Newark (RU-N)

Queen's College, which was established in 1766 as a private institution in collaboration with the Dutch Reformed Church, was renamed Rutgers College in 1825. It takes its name from the philanthropist Colonel Henry Rutgers and is one of the ten oldest universities in the United States of America (Santana et al., 2022). The land grant of New Jersey City in 1856, led to the expansion of Rutgers University, which was recognized as the State University of New Jersey in 1956 (Santana et al., 2022). Rutgers University's four campuses are located in Newark, Camden, New Brunswick, and Piscataway, and the Rutgers Biomedical and Health Science School (RBHS) in Newark and New Brunswick.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Newark residents experienced poor socio-economic conditions, a horrific lack of medical care, and a succession of abhorrent racist incidents that led to significant social unrest, exemplified by the 1967 Newark riots (Mumford, 2007). During the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there have been numerous endeavors to



rejuvenate the city by allocating resources towards enhancing artistic endeavors, cultural preservation, educational initiatives, and the advancement of business enterprises (Price, 2009).

Especially noteworthy was the establishment of the New Jersey Medical School in Newark's Central Wards. While the aim may have been to improve medical care, the immediate result was the displacement of residents from their homes resulting in serious social disruptions (Franklin et al., 2021). The construction of a medical school therefore had both positive and negative implications for the community. Access to healthcare services has been improved. Medical school clinics and hospitals offer advanced medical care, cutting-edge treatments, and educational opportunities for aspiring medical professionals and, in some cases, for residents. However, the medical school also perpetuated the existing structural racism resulting in the displacement largely of residents of color. The construction of the medical school and its implications for interactions between the university and the community is therefore complex. The potential benefits of enhanced healthcare and economic development notwithstanding, it will be critically important to resolve the inherent conflicts with neighboring communities that ensued as a result of the medical school's construction.

During the 1980s, Rutgers University-Newark (RU-N) experienced a period of urban renewal and a significant expansion of its academic programs. It also fostered stronger connections with the City of Newark by aligning its mission with the urban development goals of the city (Rutgers University-Newark, 2019). The 1990s witnessed a solid dedication to both diversity and research and RU-N has been acknowledged as a model for its dedication to diversity and cultivating an inclusive atmosphere that caters to students from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (U.S. News & World Report, 2019). The university also placed a strong emphasis on research focused on novel approaches facilitated through research centers that support both faculty and student research opportunities.

Between the early 2000s and 2020, there has also been a notable emergence of a central location that serves as a focal point for community involvement and the advancement of novel ideas and practices. RU-N has fostered these opportunities through robust relationships with the Newark community facilitated by diverse initiatives, partnerships, and programs focused on promoting economic development within the local community. And while the university expanded, the city of Newark encountered a series of economic challenges during the 1980s that prompted the implementation of various development initiatives. These initiatives sought to attract novel enterprises and investments, thereby facilitating the expansion of the downtown region. The 1990s witnessed a period of renaissance and revitalization characterized by significant allocations of resources toward the development of arts, culture, and infrastructure (Mumford, 2007). The New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), which commenced operations in 1997, emerged as an emblematic representation of Newark's cultural revitalization. The period from the early 2000s to 2020 witnessed significant growth and transformative change and Newark

underwent a substantial expansion across multiple industries with a special focus on technology, education, and healthcare. The establishment of programs such as the Newark Venture Partners has successfully drawn-in technology startups, leading to the emergence of Newark as a prominent center for innovation and entrepreneurial activities. The connection between the urban environment and institutions such as RU-N has become more profound as joint endeavors have concentrated on education, social equity, and community involvement.

In his book "The Newark Frontier: Community Action in the Great Society," Krasovic (2016) argues that community action was a crucial component in Newark's response to the challenges it faced. According to Krasovic, community action serves as a means for individuals and groups within a locality to assert agency over their trajectories and exert influence over the trajectory of their urban environment. Furthermore, he posits that community action served as a means through which the inhabitants of Newark could exercise their autonomy and contest the prevailing narratives. Krasovic's scholarly work delves into the multifaceted manifestations of community action within the context of Newark during the 1960s, elucidating its profound influence on the city's political and cultural milieu (2016).

As a city, Newark, has been severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 and 2021. Coupled with continued racial incidents "the twin pandemics" of structural racism and the COVID pandemic highlighted the need for changes in the healthcare workforce as well as healthcare access (Franklin et al., 2021). Structural racism involves overarching systemic, large-scale social forces, ideologies, organizations, and processes interacting, contributing to racial injustices, and reinforcing disparities (Franklin et al., 2021; Gee & Ford, 2011).

As an expression of a stronger commitment to community engagement, RU-N established the Honors Living-Learning Community (HLLC) to emphasize the importance of providing community-engaged scholarships as an integral part of students' academic success. Community-engaged scholarships promote student enrollment, labor retention through field placements in community-based organizations, and job security for graduate students. Community engagement initiatives work as a link between collaborating universities, community-based organizations, local cities, and neighboring communities while also connecting local stakeholders to global partners to operationalize experiential learning and socio-economic improvement of the local community. In addition, initiatives for community engagement were broadened beyond what was possible through the university's academic program.

Universities that use community engagement to implement their anchor strategy have taken similar approaches to those initiated by RU-N (Santana et al., 2022). Community engagement is essential for all stakeholders involved to ensure that discussions are conducted appropriately to attain common goals. Franklin et al. (2021) reiterated that the Newark Agreement to establish a medical school set an important standard for communities across the US; hence, extensive

community collaborations are essential to realize creative solutions to healthcare policies in Newark and elsewhere. The HLLC hopes to promote projects that alleviate social injustices through collaborative missions and synergies, working within the scope of academia and community-based organizations. Engaging with the community also benefits high school graduates by providing them access to community-engaged and local scholarships to pursue their postsecondary aspirations. Since the RU campuses are located in different cities throughout the state of New Jersey, students across the state benefit from these initiatives.

Since RU-N is located in the City of Newark which experienced rapid technological advancements, the community can attempt to address current pressing challenges related to the complexities of social problems, governance, and general improvements of the urban and peri-urban environment. Mersand et al. (2019) argue that due to technological innovation, smart strategies emerged in several cities across the United States to improve government services and the overall quality of life for citizens. After 2009, smart cities identified public libraries as hubs thus extending their connectivity and benefits of robust broadband beyond the libraries themselves (Goodman, 2014). Between 1980 and 2020, RU-N and the City of Newark experienced a number of profound transformations. In the process, the university has been transformed into a prominent educational establishment emphasizing inclusivity, scholarly inquiry, and active involvement with the local community. Concurrently, Newark underwent a process of revitalization, economic expansion, and cultural advancement, in which RU-N played a pivotal role. Table 2 summarizes the diversity of Newark which is also reflected in the RU-N campus.

**TABLE 2.** Demographic information of Newark

<b>Racial/Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Percentage of Population</b>
African American	49%
Hispanic or Latino	36%
White	12%
Asian	2%
Other	1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020.

### University of Pennsylvania (UPENN)

The University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) is a prestigious institution of higher education. In the 1980s and 1990s, it began a substantial endeavor to expand and modernize its campus. This initiative involved constructing new facilities and improving academic programs (Puckett & Lloyd, 2015). During this period, UPenn also expanded its involvement with the West Philadelphia community by allocating resources toward local development and education initiatives (Harkavy & Hartley, 2009). By the late 1990s, UPenn also initiated efforts to enhance

its international presence by establishing collaborative relationships with various academic institutions across the globe (Wagner, 2006).

The decade of the 2000s witnessed a notable expansion in research funding and innovation, as evidenced by the establishment of several research centers (University of Pennsylvania, 2019). Furthermore, UPenn undertook initiatives to enhance the diversity of its student body and faculty (Fry, 2013). In addition, the university implemented a Climate Action Plan in 2009 to promote long-term environmental sustainability (University of Pennsylvania, 2009).

The city of Philadelphia was established in 1682 by William Penn, and it played a significant role as a central hub during America’s colonial period. According to Weigley et al. (1982), the city held significant importance during the American Revolution and served as the provisional capital of the United States from 1790 to 1800. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Philadelphia experienced significant growth as an industrial and cultural hub. Like many U.S. cities Philadelphia experienced a period of decline along with economic challenges. More recently, there has been a surge in revitalization efforts, with a particular focus on education, the arts, and technology (Adams, 2016).

According to the 2020 Census, Philadelphia’s population was estimated to be around 1.6 million. This figure indicates a consistent pattern of population growth in the city in recent years. Philadelphia hosts many esteemed higher education institutions in addition to the University of Pennsylvania, including Temple University, for example. According to Puckett and Lloyd (2015), the city's school district is among the largest in the nation. The urban center is renowned for its abundant cultural programming encompassing notable music venues, the arts, and a well-regarded gastronomy scene. Prominent cultural destinations, such as Independence Hall and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, have garnered significant attention (Adams, 2016). Philadelphia also has a significant historical legacy as well as a diverse demographic makeup. This renders the city a crucial and dynamic urban hub known for its significant involvement in and contributions to education, the arts, and economic innovations all of which contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of Philadelphia’s urban core. Table 3 summarizes the diversity of the city’s population. Throughout, UPenn has contributed significantly to the city’s success through diverse academic program offerings, community focused research and targeted collaborations.

**TABLE 3.** Demographic information of Philadelphia

<b>Racial/Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Percentage of Population</b>
African American	41.2%
White	34.8%
Hispanic or Latino	15.2%
Asian	7.5%
Other	1.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020.

## Syracuse University

During the 1980s, Syracuse University experienced a notable phase of growth and expansion. The 1990s also saw notable growth in Syracuse University's academic programs and infrastructure, exemplified by the launch of its School of Public Communications. Simultaneously, the University also began to promote diversity within its campus community, implementing various initiatives to foster a more inclusive environment. The decade also witnessed a surge in scholarly attention for the university's research especially in the areas of information studies and communication. The establishment of supplementary facilities in the university's Newhouse School further consolidated this strong standing and reputation (Newhouse School, n.d.).

The first decade of the 21st century witnessed a notable phase of deliberate strategizing and a heightened focus on internationalization. The university established strategic alliances and cooperative ventures with various international institutions. New facilities, such as the Life Sciences Complex, received significant investments and were inaugurated in 2008 (Syracuse University, 2021).

In recent years, Syracuse University has further evolved by introducing several novel programs and establishing interdisciplinary research centers. There are also various initiatives to foster student success, driven by a strong commitment to accessibility and affordability (2021). Nancy Cantor assumed the position of Chancellor at Syracuse University in 2004 and held the position until 2013. Under her guidance, the university undertook numerous noteworthy initiatives which reflected Cantor's dedication to fostering a strong relationship between the university and the city of Syracuse (Cantor, 2008). Some of the most noteworthy initiatives include:

1. The Warehouse: This urban academic building underwent renovations to accommodate various university programs and foster intentional collaborations with the community.
2. The Connective Corridor initiative sought to improve the physical connection between the university and the city, fostering increased opportunities for interactive engagement between the two parties. According to Cantor and Englot (2014), the Corridor facilitated the establishment of cultural ties, transportation networks, and economic development collaborations.
3. The Syracuse Center of Excellence served as a focal point for research and development endeavors, primarily generating novel advancements in environmental and energy related fields. The Center also contributed to economic development by facilitating collaborations among academia, the public sector, and private enterprises (Bomey, 2016).

Additional notable advancements include technology-based advancements. Within this framework, the university experienced significant progress following a prevailing global pattern of technology-focused collaborations between institutions of higher education and technology focused private and public sector partners (Smith, 2009). The university's heightened commitment to community engagement was also characterized by development programs that establishing partnerships with various local institutions (Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999). At the same time, Syracuse University experienced academic growth and established several new schools and programs that all demonstrated a commitment to interdisciplinary research and education (Turner, 2015).

The city of Syracuse was established in the early 19th century with the growing industrialization of the United States. The city quickly grew with the construction of the Erie Canal that connected the established east of the country with the expanding west. This significant infrastructure project connected the city to various new markets and stimulated the growth of various industries in the region (Erie Canal Museum, n.d.). This established Syracuse as a prominent manufacturing hub during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The city quickly gained recognition for its various manufacturing sectors as well as its significant salt production, which also earned it the moniker "Salt City." The city also experienced significant growth in the transportation equipment sector, electronics, and chemicals (Connery, 2010).

The latter part of the 20th century presented significant economic challenges for the city chiefly due to the decline of the manufacturing sector. Attempts to enhance the economic diversity of Syracuse were at least partially successful and resulted in the current state of the city's economy with a broader range of economic sectors, encompassing education, healthcare, and technology providing a higher degree of economic diversity for the city (Glaeser & Gyourko, 2005).

The city's demographic composition is diverse and characterized by economic inequalities. The economic difficulties of the 1980s resulted in high unemployment rates and overall economic decline and it took decades of initiatives to reverse the trend chiefly by seeking to diversify the economy and rejuvenate the city's urban center (Glaeser & Gyourko, 2005) Several of the city's urban renewal initiatives also prioritized the advancement of cultural programming and entertainment. Other efforts focused on attracting novel enterprises and industries, specifically focusing on the technology sector (Syracuse City, n.d.).

During the early 2000s, Syracuse attempted to address its fiscal difficulties while at the same time allocating resources toward the development of infrastructure and enhanced public services. Between 2010s and 2020, Syracuse University also placed a strong emphasis on sustainability, innovation, and inclusiveness across its collaborations with the city. The Syracuse Surge initiative established the city as a central hub for technological advancements and innovation. The city's development strategy also underscored the importance of community engagement and

collaboration as integral components of its strategic direction. Table 4 provides a summary of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the city.

**TABLE 4.** Demographic information of Syracuse

Category	Information
Population	Approximately 142,327
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>	
- African American	29.5%
- White	52.4%
- Hispanic or Latino	8.3%
- Asian	5.5%
- Other	4.3%
Median Household Income	\$34,716
Poverty Rate	32.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020

### **Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Anchor Institutions**

The four public and private anchor institutions included in this study, namely the University of Pretoria Mamelodi campus and Rutgers Newark representing public institutions of higher education, and the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) and Syracuse University representing private institutions. Examining public and private anchor institutions, like the four selected universities offers insights into the diverse frameworks of community engagement. As stated earlier, the four institutions have common characteristics in addressing their commitment to their urban locations, yet their initiative also illustrate the variations in their approach. All have local engagement initiatives and international partnerships; all have programs rooted in their communities; all four are mission-driven and seek to provide programs to improve the lives of the communities where they are located. Their funding mechanisms, alignment of university and community objectives, and their accessibility, however, differ. These factors also point to the intricate nature of the higher education environment and the context-specific differences reflected in the community engagement and development strategies of anchor universities like the four selected for this study.

The Mamelodi campus of the University of Pretoria plays a significant role in community engagement and local development as a public institution of higher learning (University of Pretoria, 2021). In implementing its community engagement initiatives, the task at hand is to achieve a delicate balance between academic excellence and fulfilling important social responsibilities while simultaneously addressing the needs of the local community without compromising the university's global standing.

Rutgers University Newark has a longstanding dedication to engaging with its community by providing programs that directly contribute to the welfare of the local population (Rutgers University, 2021). By prioritizing collaborative partnerships with the local community and its different stakeholders, the university serves as an exemplar of a democratic and inclusive approach to higher education.

The two private university examples, the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) and Syracuse University both emphasize urban development and innovation. Especially the strategic initiatives of the University of Pennsylvania also emphasize global engagement aligning with the prevailing pattern of private intuitions of higher education to harness their resources to achieve wider social impacts beyond their region (University of Pennsylvania, 2021). The engagement models employed by UPenn also involve extensive partnerships with private industry, pioneering startups, and international networks.

Similarly, Syracuse University (2021) highlights an approach to community engagement that emphasizes innovation and adaptability. Private sector funding allows Syracuse University to allocate resources towards advanced research endeavors and outreach initiatives emphasizing private sector partnerships and innovation.

Despite these similarities, there are significant differences. A notable one are the funding mechanisms and resources of public and private universities. Public institutions frequently depend on financial support from the government sector and may face greater limitations regarding the use of appropriated funds due to political and regulatory influences. On the other hand, private institutions like UPenn and Syracuse University have a higher capacity to attract a broader range of funding sources in part due to their greater flexibility in allocating the use of funds.

Community engagement is a demonstrated commitment on part of both private and public universities, although the approaches and extent of the engagement may vary. Public institutions such as Rutgers and UPenn seem to emphasize local matters more clearly, whereas private institutions like UPenn and Syracuse may place greater emphasis on private sector and global endeavors. The mission and governance structure of public universities gives priority to providing services to the local community and aligning community engagement efforts with broader community-oriented objective. Private universities in turn exhibit varying governance structures, which facilitate the establishment of a broader spectrum of partnerships and initiatives including international ones that define community engagement more broadly.

Educational access, which encompasses the disparities in accessibility and affordability of higher education, varies considerably between public and private institutions of higher education. Public universities are characterized by their accessibility to a wider range of students that encompass a



broader demographic and socio-economic spectrum. Conversely, private institutions typically exhibit distinct tuition and financial aid frameworks that may limit their accessibility.

The UP Mamelodi campus and Rutgers Newark both prioritize the need to address their respective local communities and promote civic engagement and public welfare. These institutions strongly emphasize ensuring accessibility and affordability for their local constituents. In contrast, private institutions like UPenn and Syracuse, exhibit a greater diversity of partnership and are more inclined towards engaging in broader initiatives, such as innovation partnerships, global engagements, and specialized research collaborations. The distinct characteristics of each type of institution thus play a role in fostering their respective community initiatives, promoting economic development, and facilitating social advancement. Collectively the identified community engagement roles of the four different universities paint a picture of the distinct difference between public and private anchor institutions. While all may emphasize the importance of community engagement, the level and type of engagement appear to vary.

## **Conclusion**

The comparative case study analysis undertaken based on four urban universities yields interesting insights about the intricate dynamics between universities and the cities in which they are located. The findings of this study indicate the overall significance of Higher Education Institutions as pivotal agents that advance urban development, and seek to foster sustainable and inclusive engagements with their local communities. The empirical results derived from this study emphasize the importance of efficacious leadership, collaborative endeavors, policy congruity, and a holistic understanding of the myriad opportunities and challenges inherently embedded in urban settings. The findings also elucidate the multifaceted and intricate strategies that higher education institutions employ in adapting their mission to effectively align with the distinctive characteristics and exigencies inherent in their specific urban environments. The importance of community engagement resides in its pivotal role as an intermediary between academic institutions and their urban environments.

The four examples presented in this study showcase a range of circumstances that encompass both obstacles and opportunities. These include conflicts between the local community and the academic institution, commonly called town-gown conflicts, and at the same time the potential for fruitful collaboration between town and gown. The findings suggest the importance of advocating for enhanced collaborations between Higher Education Institutions and urban planners, to align university initiatives with city development priorities, especially in light of the range of current challenges facing urban communities. The call for enhanced collaboration between urban universities and urban planners stems from the recognition that the intricate interplay between universities and urban environments necessitates a cohesive and synergistic approach that can effectively address the multifaceted needs of both entities. By fostering a more

integrated and cooperative relationship, universities and urban planners can effectively leverage their expertise and resources to achieve sustainable urban development outcomes and optimize the social impact of higher education institutions. The rationale behind advocating for increased collaboration between universities and urban planners lies in recognizing the mutually reinforcing nature of their objectives. Universities, as centers of knowledge production, innovation, and human capital development, possess a wealth of intellectual and academic resources that can be harnessed to address urban challenges.

The study also identifies the needs for advanced leadership development as a priority. To be effective, universities must have a profound understanding of the symbiotic relationship between universities and the cities in which they are embedded. This requires institutional policies that prioritize cultivating and promoting community engagement as an indispensable part of the university's mission across the institution. When community engagement is accorded the significance it deserves, it can catalyze transformative change, foster reciprocal relationships between the university and its surrounding communities, and ultimately contribute to the holistic development of both parties involved.

While providing valuable insights, the present study has its limitations. Firstly, the study's sample size was small, which limits its findings. It is also important to acknowledge the constraints arising from the exclusively urban focus of the selected institutions. Further explorations may include a broader spectrum of institutions. Challenges also arise from the fact that the study was based on a comparative analysis of self-reported data, as well as the disruptions caused by the global Covid pandemic which fell within the study period. As a result of the pandemic, limitations arose with respect to accessing archives, libraries, and city officials relevant to the study, notwithstanding the ability to communicate via zoom and similar platforms.

Despite these limitations, the current investigation identifies the complex dynamics of public and private universities within their shared focus on urban communities. The study illuminates the significance of universities as agents of urban development. The findings provide valuable insights that can contribute to more sustainable, inclusive, and productive linkages between academic institutions and the urban environments in which they are located with the goal of advancing both urban development goals and their larger social objectives.

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