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TO WHAT END?

TEN YEARS OF COLLABORATORY

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INTRODUCTION

This white paper describes the theory of change that guided the development of Collaboratory, a software platform developed to support higher education institutions to accurately and comprehensively track their members' relationships with the broader community through engagement and service activities. This paper is one of several to support the use of Collaboratory for scholarly research and strategic administrative efforts. Comprehensive document systems for software include information to share both technical steps as well as theoretical frameworks used to develop the system. These documents support the study and use of the software and its data (Divio Technologies, 2017). In addition to this paper, other documents that are publicly accessible include:

- [Collaboratory's Help Center](#) (how-to guides for faculty, staff, and student end users),
- [Collaboratory's Resource Library](#) (tutorials, best practices for users, success guides for administrators), and
- [Collaboratory's Open Dataset](#) (codebook, lists of fields and items collected, limited dataset for academic researchers).

As authors of Collaboratory who designed its fields, features, and functions, we encourage the use of Collaboratory to advance scholarly and administrative purposes. This paper is largely retrospective, describing the developmental process the authors followed in designing and trialing various versions of Collaboratory as it grew from a single institutional repository to a database subscribed by more than fifty institutions of higher education across the United States. This document describes:

- the purposes for which Collaboratory was developed,
- the research and theories that guided the development of its fields, features, and functions,
- the institutional and national higher education context in which Collaboratory was initially created,
- the scholarly process through which it was designed,
- the current and future potential for Collaboratory to advance community and institutional priorities, as well as the field of community engagement scholarship and practice.

THE PURPOSE FOR COLLABORATORY

Collaboratory was originally developed by the Institute for Community and Economic Engagement (ICEE) as a tool to help the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG) achieve several purposes related to advancing excellence in community engagement. Enacting goals established by the university's 2009-2014 strategic plan to support community-engaged scholarship, these purposes included, to:

- enhance the reputation of the university as a proactive and responsive member of local communities and the State more broadly to gain public support and future resources,
- build institutional confidence around community engagement as a distinctive, valued, and valuable identity,
- demonstrate the value and legitimacy of community engagement as scholarly work through teaching and research/creative activity,
- attract, recruit, and retain excellent and diverse faculty, staff and students,
- connect underconnected faculty, staff, students and community members to each other to identify opportunities to advance community and university priorities,
- improve the university's capacity for engaged teaching, research, creative activity, and service, and
- evaluate contributions of community engagement activities on community and university priority areas.

While UNCG had made important strides towards institutionalizing community engagement, as evidenced by its receipt of the Carnegie Foundation's Community

Engagement Elective Classification in 2008, there was no common or comprehensive understanding of who was engaged, with whom, where, and to what ends. The inability to effectively or efficiently track and monitor the many connections and contributions was evolving from inconvenient to problematic. For example, many faculty, staff and students were engaged with communities for scholarship, teaching, and service, but often did not know about each other. Many felt isolated, not realizing how many others shared similar interests, scholarly agendas, or even partners. Research networks, which focused on shared topical areas, such as children and families, or refugees and immigrants, had each begun creating their own databases to help network members collectively map partnerships with community organizations. They wanted to be able to leverage, or at least, know of, existing relationships before they approached the same partners. Or, they wanted to identify gaps in where and with whom they were partnering.

University leadership had increased requests from legislators and the public about how it was addressing the needs of the region and state. What kinds of activities are occurring in which of the state's 100 counties? Can you provide a list of all those working in and with communities on issues of homelessness, reading readiness, or immigration? Responding to these requests required dozens of emails to collect information, that while useful for the single request, was not likely helpful in responding to the next ad hoc request or used again.

These requests required urgency as well as comprehensive responses. Further, The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) had recently established the requirement that institutions demonstrate "institutional effectiveness in the area of public/community service" (SACSCOC, 2012). To these ends, it was essential to understand the full range and scope of connections university faculty and staff have with various communities, as well as their contributions. Therefore, Collaboratory was designed as a single tool that could meet both urgent needs and long-term work, such as reporting, communicating, planning, and assessment.

INSTITUTIONAL & NATIONAL CONTEXT

Increasing Need and New Innovations to Report Engagement and Service

Collaboratory was developed in the early 2010s, a time in which community engagement—and the ability to report and demonstrate the contributions and impacts of engagement—emerged as an important priority of institutions of higher education in gaining public support and funding (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Like UNC, higher education institutions nationwide experienced rising pressure to demonstrate the return on investment of public tax dollars. During this time of public accounting and accountability, academic leaders and advocates turned to articulating and demonstrating the role of higher education as anchor institutions (e.g., Democracy Collaborative), stewards of place (e.g., American Association of State Colleges and Universities), and partners in economic development and recovery (e.g., Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities). As these efforts to tell a public impact story grew, the need to differentiate community engagement as a particular method and strategy for engaging in partnership with communities grew also.

The Carnegie Foundation, in concert with a number of higher education associations, including the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, to name a few, had begun to more precisely define, distinguish, and advocate for community engagement. They focused on the scholarly aspects of engagement in faculty work and institutional activity - as distinct from more traditional public service and outreach activities. In 2006, the Carnegie foundation established its Community Engagement Elective Classification, defining community engagement and describing its purpose:

Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.

Whereas community engagement required partners and reciprocal processes, public service and outreach could be given to, for, or on behalf of communities (Saltmarsh, Hartley, Clayton, 2009). By 2010, 389 colleges and universities (including UNCG) had applied for and 311 received the Community Engagement Elective Classification offered by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Saltmarsh, 2013).

In addition to the Carnegie classification, universities sought distinction for community engagement through national recognitions, such as the President's National Honor Roll for Community Service. The Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) created the Commission on Innovation, Competitiveness, and Economic Prosperity (CICEP) to establish standard measures to describe university contributions to the regional and national economic growth across the spectrum of talent, innovation, and place (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, 2014).

Directly informing the development of Collaboratory, Janke served as the co-chair of the University of North Carolina System's Community and Economic Engagement Task Force. The Task Force developed metrics and measures to, in the words of the system president, "recapture and rekindle the love" (Ross, 2012) of the citizens of the state. These metrics and measures were applied to all 17 campuses in the system and were brought together annually for several years in reports presented to the UNC General Assembly (UNC, 2015). For more about the trial process through which six criteria for selecting metrics and measures were established, as well as the challenges and opportunities of developing system-wide metrics on community engagement and economic development, see Janke (2014).

COLLABORATORY'S THEORY OF CHANGE

Designed by scholar-administrators to support institutional transformation towards excellence in community-engaged scholarship, Collaboratory is grounded in research and theories of organizational change.

Though Collaboratory was created to serve multiple ends, developing and deepening institutional confidence around community engagement as a distinctive, valued, and valuable identity, was paramount. Identity, whether it is individual or organizational, matters because perceptions and beliefs about identity subsequently shape behavior. Specific to institutional identity, members behave, to some extent, according to their beliefs about what matters to the organization, as determined by “who” they believe the organization to be. An important implication of organizational identity theory is that institutional members determine what constitutes legitimate work and what characteristics and contributions are valued, based on what they understand to be core to the identity of the institution, or *who we are as an organization* (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

Having just gone through a year-long, faculty-led, strategic planning process, including revisions to its vision and mission, UNCG faculty and staff were attuned to asking questions of institutional identity (Who do we think we are? Who do we think we should be?) and organizational image (Who do they think we are? Who do they think we should be?). UNCG’s new vision focused both internally on students and externally on communities: “The

University of North Carolina at Greensboro will redefine the public research university for the 21st century as an inclusive, collaborative, and responsive institution making a difference in the lives of students and the communities it serves” (UNCG, 2012). Efforts to alter external image, such as by projecting messages through marketing and media, can influence institutional members' perceptions of institutional identity (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

To advance efforts of organizational change, such as to support community engagement as a legitimate and valued aspect of faculty scholarship and institutional investment, leaders are challenged to help institutional members believe that their organization can move towards a future desired identity (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). To achieve its vision, strategic change leaders would need to show how the capacity for change, a new or enhanced identity, was within reach. One way to do this is to point to existing strengths and assets as a way of saying, “we have what it takes to claim the identity”. Effective leaders help organizational members believe in this new organizational identity, as a step towards achieving that future and claiming more fully that identity.

How could a database be a tool for such strategic change? Organizational change theory suggests that image and identity are interdependent: how others see us can affect how we see ourselves (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton et al., 1994; Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000; Gioia, Price, Hamilton & Thomas, 2010). Culturally, it was imperative that Collaboratory position community engagement as a legitimate and rigorous form of faculty scholarship. In this way, it had to reflect community engagement as a scholarly act that upheld standards of quality recognized in promotion, tenure and reappointment (Janke et al., 2014). How might Collaboratory be designed in such a way that it could make evident the cadre of scholars already present at UNCG and engaging with community partners through research and teaching? Could Collaboratory become a mirror that more accurately reflects the full portrait of the university's engagement? Could it describe that engagement in such a way that would visibly and plausibly demonstrate alignments to both university and community priorities and demonstrate mutually beneficial outcomes?

Key Features Needed in Systematic Mechanisms to Collect Data

Drawing on organizational identity and image management theories and research, we argue that systematic mechanisms for data collection, such as databases, surveys, and forms, have the potential to strongly influence identity formation, maintenance, and transformation. As such, these systems must adapt certain characteristics based on standard principles if institutions of higher education are to have precise, accurate, and comprehensive visions and strategies for the role of community engagement and public service activities in serving its mission. They must also be attentive to sensitivities around institutional culture and processes. We propose three core design features of a systematic data collection platform required to positively influence identity and image formation around community engagement.

Clarity

Clarity describes the extent to which community engagement and public service are understood to be and are articulated as activities along a spectrum that differ with regard to the type and level of involvement of non-academic community members:

- Community engagement is defined by reciprocal partnerships to build the capacity of university and community partners for mutually beneficial outcomes (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.),
- Public service employs a more unilateral and unidirectional approach whereby the university provides services to the public (e.g., access to library services, lectures and other special events, community service opportunities, or access to facilities) (Kellogg Commission, 2001).

Collaboratory was developed as a standardized platform that uses terms established as best practices in community engagement literature to create clarity around the data being collected. Each institution that uses Collaboratory implements the same standard dataset, which ensures that institutions track community engagement and public service data in similar ways not just within but also across institutions. Within this, we developed a

decision tree (based on Holland's TICE model) to help separate and classify activities as community engagement and public service. This positions Collaboratory as an educational tool that can help faculty and staff consider about the extent to which their activity reflects key principles of mutual benefit and reciprocity. Later in the inventory, faculty and staff are asked about the role their community partners play in the activity, which helps to further unpack and reinforce the activity's position along the spectrum of engagement.

Comprehensiveness

Comprehensiveness is the extent to which an institution has collected the full scope and depth of actors and activities, creating a complete portrait of the variety of activities valued by the institution. We suggest that its comprehensiveness is coupled with an institution's sense of clarity about what community engagement and public service activities and outcomes are, and how both are valued and are understood to be distinct from each other. Institutional members must understand that a distinction exists before they can gain a clear understanding of the full scope of university members' contributions to (public service) and with (community engagement) communities.

Through an identity framework, recognizing both community engagement and public service activities as legitimate and valued university activities allows faculty and staff to "see themselves" as belonging within and contributing to the institution's mission, and can prevent a perceived sense of exclusion by faculty and staff who do not identify as an engaged scholar when it is tightly defined. Comprehensive data requests and reporting suggest an inclusive approach to valuing both community engagement and public service. They exist on a spectrum of ways that contribute to the full scope of faculty, staff, and student contributions to the public. Inclusive efforts to collect both community engagement and public service activities and outcomes within the same tools for data collection may help to increase acceptance of community engagement and public service as members see their own work included, and hence, valued.

However, it is important to note that expansion can create complications or confusion in how these activities get categorized, as the majority of faculty and staff are unaware of the specific characteristics of or differences between community engagement and public service (see clarity, above). While creating standard definitions is an important first step, helping faculty, staff, and students understand and apply these definitions to their unique contexts and activities is critical to maintaining an accurate portrait of activities across the institution.

We suggest that to successfully collect comprehensive data on community engagement and public service, the full spectrum of activities institutions conduct in and with communities should be recognized in some way, from pure outreach and mutually beneficial service to reciprocal partnership processes and outcomes (Ellison & Eatman, 2008). Databases need to be broad enough to include all types of activities, but sophisticated enough to help differentiate by providing consistent standards for classification.

Publicly viewable

Once an institution collects information on community engagement and public service activities, where does it go? In our experiences, data is used to respond to an immediate purpose or request for which it was collected. A few exemplary stories may be shared publicly on university websites, reports, or magazines. While some data is for internal use only, much of this data could be useful to external-facing offices in telling the institution's story about the range of ways the institution is actively serving communities. An online mechanism, however, with publically viewable community engagement and public service activities and profiles, can provide stories and information about widespread engagement. These stories provide an indication of the institution's transforming identity; "is shorthand for saying that we are moving, that we are changing. It gives us a notion of who we will be in the future" (Gioia & Thomas, 1996, p. 381).

Therefore, systematic mechanisms to collect data should allow for members both within and outside of the institution to browse through or search the variety of activities completed in and with the community. By seeing what other institutional members are doing, institutions, collectively, can begin to

believe in an identity as a community-engaged campus. Similarly, individual faculty discover that they no longer represent a marginalized group of scholars but that they are, in fact, one of many faculty conducting engaged work that is valued by their institution. This public display of activities also communicates a strong image to those external to the institution who are now able to explore the myriad of community interactions for themselves, rather than having to contact an institutional representative who might not respond in a timely manner, if at all.

To get a sense of what data was collected to date, Janke and Medlin reviewed various surveys that were available in 2010-2011 and which were used to collect some aspect of community engagement. For the most part, community engagement items tended to be embedded into or offered as a separate module within a larger survey measuring students' perceptions, experiences, and/or satisfaction in higher education institutions. In one case, we found a survey developed by a university for the administrative purpose of measuring faculty and staff outreach and engagement efforts and calculating estimates of economic value of such services.

Examples of such surveys included:

- The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE®), developed and administered out of Indiana University Bloomington, collected information from first-year and senior students on high impact practices such as service-learning, and internships, and in 2014, began offering a civic engagement module (NSSE®, 2014).
- The Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California Berkeley developed and administers the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Survey to undergraduate students, which includes a civic and community engagement module (UC Berkeley, n.d.).
- The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Freshman Survey, developed and administered by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California Los Angeles, asks questions of first-time, full-time college students related to social agency (Eagan et al., 2016).
- The University Outreach and Engagement Office at Michigan State

University developed the Outreach and Engagement Measurement Instrument (OEMI) and administers it internally as well as to other institutions nationally to collect data on faculty and staff members' outreach and engagement efforts (Church et al., 2003).

While these surveys were useful as one time snapshots to understand student experiences or to capture faculty and staff activity and effort, they did not meet UNCG's ongoing tracking and reporting needs for reasons further explicated in a later section of this paper.

Exploring other commercially available service-tracking software, ICEE staff found that they focused on tracking student service hours and opportunity matching, and were often adapted from other sectors, such as k-12 education or healthcare systems. The result was that the data captured tended to focus on student learning and engagement opportunities, or were set up in the style of internally-focused customer relationship management software.

A few institutions had begun creating self-designed, custom, database systems hosted on institutional servers. For example, Barbara Holland, serving as Pro Vice-Chancellor of Engagement at The University of Western Sydney (Australia) developed TICE (Tracking and Improving Community Engagement), an online database to track academic partnerships and community contributions across the Greater Western Sydney region (University of Western Sydney, 2004). Towson University built "TU in the Community," which is known today as the BTU Database, a community projects database that publicly shares the work of Towson faculty, staff, and students with external partners (BTU Partnerships for Greater Baltimore, n.d.).

The process of reviewing the many ways that various data about community engagement had been collected led to the decision to build a custom database that could meet UNCG's multiple purposes. . With funds from the Office of Research and Engagement, a local vendor was hired to develop the system on UNCG's server. Several key features and functions designed into the system included:

- data that was collected about activities, including who, what, where, when and to what ends;

- information that was publicly viewable - not a “dark” and inaccessible administrative repository;
- fields that could be updated each year and linked year-over-year, rather than redundant entries of previously existing data annually;
- a proxy could begin a record which could then be approved by the record owner; and
- faculty could sign in with their university credentials so they would not need to create a new password.

Design Input and Considerations

In 2011, Janke established and led the Excellence in Community Engagement Visioning and Planning Advisory Committee, which included 34 individuals representing undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff members, and community members (UNCG, 2011). This committee provided feedback on Collaboratory’s initial data inventory and original prototypes, which deeply influenced ongoing design and implementation.

Janke and Medlin also lead conversations with individuals from 42 departments across UNCG to align unit- and department-level policies with institutional policies around rewarding community-engaged scholarship (Janke et al., 2016). These conversations led us to include questions in Collaboratory about how community engagement was connected to learning (pedagogies, student learning objectives) and research and creative activities (outputs and outcomes related to community and academic priorities).

We also conducted surveys with 362 members of the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce and Guilford Nonprofit Consortium, to hear the perspectives and potential benefits of Collaboratory to our greater community (UNCG, n.d.). Overwhelmingly, we heard that the biggest hurdles to effectively collaborating with higher education were finding the right person and bureaucracy, and that the way they find resources and partners within academia are by word of mouth and referrals. We also heard that community organizations overwhelmingly did not want to log-in to a system like Collaboratory, as it was an academic reporting tool and had no direct

benefit to their organization. When we designed Collaboratory, we did so in a way that did not ask partners to log-in and directly contribute, and instead provided notification, public recognition, and attribution for their involvement.

Collaboratory 2.0

After two years of research and development, ICEE publicly launched Collaboratory 1.0 in the summer of 2012. At launch, it contained approximately 40 interdisciplinary activities, each selected to showcase faculty and staff excellence in community engagement through teaching, research, and creative activities. The ensuing year was focused on raising awareness of university leadership in how Collaboratory can serve their strategic and reporting needs (Janke & Holland, 2013), and increasing participation of faculty and staff (Janke, & Medlin, 2015). Janke and Medlin met with academic departments and leadership, as well as university advancement and communications offices.

As Collaboratory gained users and recognition, its authors identified further areas of development and modification. For example, Collaboratory 1.0 collected community engagement activities only, those done in partnership with communities; however, it became evident that tracking all forms of faculty and staff contributions to the public and communities more specifically was important to track and showcase as well.

In this context, Janke invited Barbara Holland to become a co-author in developing the next version of Collaboratory. In spring 2012, Holland visited UNCG to advise academic and institutional leadership at UNCG on academic culture change and the changing nature of the academy, facilitated workshops on documenting and evaluating non-traditional forms of scholarship for promotion and tenure, and assisted UNCG in building its strategy to measure and monitor community engagement.

She had recently returned to the US after having served as the Director of Academic Initiatives in Social Inclusion for the University of Sydney in Australia. In this role she led the University in the development of community partnerships and teaching/research strategies to enhance social

inclusion in the context of Australia's oldest research university. Previously, she served three years as Pro Vice-Chancellor Engagement at University of Western Sydney where she created and implemented the University's first strategic plan for engaged learning and research activities. There, she developed and administered TICE (Tracking and Improving Community Engagement), a database to track academic partnership activities and community contribution activities. Before 2007, Holland held national leadership roles for community engagement in the United States including the directorship of the federally-funded National Service Learning Clearinghouse (2002-09), and an appointment to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development where she managed large grant programs for university-community partnerships (2000-2002).

Holland brought to ICEE and Collaboratory her scholar-administrator experience and expertise to support the transformation of Collaboratory into its next design phase. A key contribution was the work she had done with TICE to track community engagement and public service separately. The tool she had designed contained a decision tree, which allowed the database to ask different types of questions depending on whether the activity was done in reciprocal and mutually beneficial partnership (community engagement) or as a service contributed by the university to, for, or on behalf of communities (public service). This was important for the ability to educate faculty during the data collection process about the value of both community engagement and public service while also distinguishing between them.

Modifications to the fields and functions, in addition to the customary and usual technical aspects of maintaining a database, such as updating security, providing technical support to users, and ensuring user success placed an administrative and financial burden on ICEE. Janke and Medlin also heard interest expressed from other institutions to gain access to the database. Discussions of tracking, monitoring and measuring community engagement had become more prominent in community engagement conferences and meetings, as momentum was gaining in the field for institutional tracking and sharing community engagement activities and contributions. Hence, Janke and Medlin initiated conversations with LaunchUNCG, UNCG's technology transfer office, to determine if commercialization was a viable

option for sustainability. Holland introduced UNCG to TreeTop Commons LLC, a startup software company based in Lakeland, Florida, that was interested in adding Collaboratory to their portfolio as a way of rounding out their efforts in tracking community engagement data.

In January of 2014, UNCG signed a licensing and beta testing agreement with TreeTop Commons, LLC, acknowledging Janke, Medlin, and Holland's authorship, and giving TreeTop Commons the rights to develop a commercial version of Collaboratory that was grounded in the original idea and theory of change developed by the authors. The beta agreement included the development of, with direction provided by the three authors, innovations to update language, metrics, and measures, and develop a more sophisticated and robust platform, as well as reporting functionality and the ability for multiple institutions to track activities. Collaboratory 1.0 had been pushing UNCG's goals forward; however, the authors knew that Collaboratory 2.0 could transform the field of community engagement more broadly.

In 2015, Medlin transitioned out of academia and joined the full-time staff at TreeTop Commons to ensure fidelity of implementation and continued development in the best interests of higher education institutions. From 2014-2016, Janke, Medlin, and Holland worked with TreeTop Commons on the development of a commercial prototype and helped lead an alpha testing process. Collaboratory invited Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and Wagner College to join UNCG as early adopters of the platform, and worked together to test both technical and cultural processes related to data entry and reporting. Campuses provided feedback on key business processes, including Single Sign On authentication, business intelligence and reporting features, and institutional onboarding and rollout processes.

When the beta testing agreement ended in 2015, UNCG's relationship to Collaboratory turned to licensor, member and user of Collaboratory, and the research administration home to support academic research for noncommercial purposes. At the time of this publication, Collaboratory is owned by HandsOn Connect Cloud Solutions.

In fall 2017, after three years of commercial development, Collaboratory

became available for other institutions to use. In 2020, HandsOn Connect Cloud Solutions acquired the Collaboratory product, and this brought new resources and opportunities for Collaboratory to grow. For example, Collaboratory developed a partnership with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, to establish cohorts to deepen institutions' understanding of civic engagement in a time of pandemic. Today, Collaboratory continues to collect data nationally across more than 50 institutions of higher education.

TO WHAT END?

Advancing Institutional Identity, Strategy, and Research

To what end? This is the question Barbara Holland raised as we gathered around a white board in 2013 as we tried to make sense of all the data we had collected on community engagement activity at UNC Greensboro over the last year. While our purposes and theory of change had guided our work, it was important to step back from the day-to-day work and think strategically. Our minds were busy with the logistical and tactical aspects of collecting and sharing UNCG's community engagement activities. How could we motivate and incentivize faculty and staff to work together with us to ensure comprehensiveness? What were the logistics of gathering and storing it? But in that conference room that day, our focus shifted. It is not enough to show community engagement, to be community engaged, but one must demonstrate WHY higher education ought to engage with communities. To what end do we use community engagement as a method, an approach, a strategy? What are the community and academic priorities that are to be addressed?

Collaboratory is a tracking tool that allows campuses to see fuller portraits of themselves as community-engaged institutions. What started in 2010 as a call to centralize communication and reporting on community engagement and public service activities at UNCG has evolved into a robust nation-wide platform supporting standardized data collection efforts across more than 50 institutions. The data Collaboratory collects across its membership powerfully illustrates concrete examples of how various priorities are

operationalized via community engagement and public service work conducted by faculty, staff, and students, across a broad range of intersectional issues (poverty, homelessness, workforce development, etc.).

Collaboratory is an institutional leadership strategy tool that enables institutions to tangibly demonstrate how community-engaged work can strengthen communications, partnerships, and teaching, research, creative activity, and service:

- IUPUI was able to create a community engagement map. It visualizes where, how and with whom they are involved and what issues they are partnering to address, and combines data from Collaboratory with local socioeconomic and demographic data to demonstrate alignment of university resources with local priorities and needs.
- The University of Washington Tacoma developed a network map that visualizes the nature of their community engagement (depth and frequency of connections, gaps, hubs, etc.)
- Arizona State University leveraged Collaboratory as the university-wide reporting engine to collect data about how faculty, staff, and students work to address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and is using the data as evidence in support of the Times Higher Education's Global Impact rankings.
- The Indiana University System uses Collaboratory to understand how their faculty, staff, and students are contributing to move the needle on k-12 education across the state.
- UNC Greensboro was able to launch a referral desk program to support and direct partnership inquiries from community members.

Collaboratory is a research tool. When Collaboratory was first licensed, it was done so with the aspiration that it would support and make available a national dataset that could be used by academic researchers to study the nature of community engagement and partnerships. Given the field's rightful attention to the process and purpose of partnership activities, much of the literature on community engagement is rooted in qualitative case studies with small sample sizes. A recent scoping review of community-academic partnerships in the community engagement literature confirms that the overwhelming majority of the literature is qualitative

research, followed by program descriptions (Janke et al., 2021). Roughly half are described from the perspective of someone who is a partner in the partnership being studied or described, and they are written about a range of community partner types (from k-12, to nonprofit orgs to informal organizations and others).

We believe there is a way to more systematically and comprehensively examine partnership activities. To date, Collaboratory publicly showcases more than 3,600 published activities encompassing over 7,000 community partner relationships, 2,500 course sections, and 1,000 research connections. Collaboratory provides access to coordinated data on engagement that can lead to more quantitative approaches while ensuring that comparisons are more consistent across institutions by using a standard dataset that is based on community engagement literature. The benefits of a common tracking process and dataset enable practitioners not only to better understand their local contexts but to also begin to examine benchmarks, standards, and comparisons across communities. Collaboratory data can be combined with other institutional and community data sources (IPEDS, The Opportunity Index, Census data, etc.) to segment and compare.

Collaboratory has aggregated and developed the processes and systems necessary to make Collaboratory data available to scholars who wish to access it for research purposes. Some Collaboratory data may be accessed through a limited open dataset, housed in the Civic Learning, Engagement, and Action Data Sharing (CivicLEADS) repository. More comprehensive datasets are also available through an application process coordinated by the Institute for Community and Economic Engagement at UNC Greensboro and Collaboratory. To request data from Collaboratory either via the Limited Open Dataset or a more comprehensive data request, visit <https://cecollaboratory.com/access-data-for-research/> for more information.

Future research might use Collaboratory data to explore questions such as:

- How can the role of the community partner help operationalize key characteristics of mutuality and reciprocity?
- Are successful outcomes (as defined by the partners) more likely if all

partners have the same or different reasons/expectations for partnering?

- Are institutions that use Collaboratory for monitoring and measuring community engagement more likely to have more closely shared or common definitions of community engagement and public service than institutions that do not use Collaboratory to monitor these activities?
- Are institutions that capture a greater range and portion of their community engagement and public service activities in Collaboratory more likely than universities that capture a smaller range and portion of these activities to have a stronger institutional engagement identity and image?
- What proportion of activities are community engagement versus public service activities within “engaged” institutions? What impact areas are most frequently addressed by community engagement? By public service?
- What are the common characteristics of community engagement activities that involve multiple faculty, multiple disciplines, and multiple community partners?

Strategic efforts to fulfill higher education public commitments require teaching and scholarly activities that are transformative. Colleges and universities are making great strides to encourage and support multidisciplinary as well as departmental commitments to engaged scholarship to achieve community and university agendas. Faculty, staff, students, and community partners collaborate through scholarship, teaching, research, creative activities, and service. Aligning priorities and talents requires a shift from individual efforts to collective agendas. To facilitate more collaborative approaches to achieving community and university goals, Collaboratory supports institutions to understand more fully and clearly their institutional portraits of engagement. Knowing who is doing what, where, with whom, and to what ends allows institutions to clarify goals; craft plans; improve teaching, research, and service; assess outcomes; and identify future opportunities that strengthen their capacity and reputation as proactive and responsive members of their communities.

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Emily M. Janke, Ph.D. has served as the director of the Institute for Community & Economic Engagement since 2012 where she has supported UNC Greensboro's transformation as a community-engaged university. As a scholar-administrator she has advanced practice and scholarship in the areas of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scholarship with diverse teams, the equitable treatment of community-engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure policy and practices, strategic efforts to track and monitor community engagement and public service within and across institutions, and the use of restorative practices in interpersonal, intergroup, and institutional culture. Emily serves as a reviewer and editorial board member on numerous community engagement journals and supports open and diverse forms of scholarship.



KRISTIN MEDLIN

Kristin Medlin, MPA, M.S. oversees Collaboratory's research and development efforts that support, promote, and enhance the field of study related to higher education community engagement and socially effective impact. She works to raise awareness about the value of community engagement data, the imperative to develop a data culture, and helps to build systems and structures for data access, analysis, and use. Prior to jumping into the corporate sector, Kristin served as the communications and partnerships manager in the Institute for Community & Economic Engagement at UNC Greensboro where she helped track and monitor community engagement and public service, developed a university-wide website and Referral Desk to advance communication and potential for collaboration, and support department-level community engagement partnerships.



BARBARA HOLLAND

Barbara A. Holland, Ph.D. is recognized internationally for her scholarship and expertise on organizational change in higher education with a focus on institutionalization of community engagement. As an academic leader, she held senior administrative positions at Portland State University, Northern Kentucky University, University of Western Sydney and the University of Sydney. In government-related roles, she was Director of the Learn and Serve America National Service-Learning Clearinghouse for seven years and Visiting Director of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of University Partnerships for two years during the Clinton and Bush administrations. As a researcher and consultant, she has been an on-campus adviser to more than 100 higher education institutions in the USA and internationally regarding community engagement institutionalization and leadership of change, and she has authored many publications of note, including the creation of the Holland Matrix for Institutionalization.

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