IN SEARCH OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY: SPANNING THE BOUNDARIES OF CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY

by

KAREN WHEEL CARTER

(Under the Direction of Karen E. Watkins)

ABSTRACT

This study explored how a campus and community team enacted diverse community engagement initiatives, improved stakeholders' sense of organizational identity, and formalized a campus–community engagement system anchoring the identity of a regional campus. Through collaborative inquiry, this team built a community of practice that fostered the development of boundary-spanning skills needed to grow partnerships, created opportunities for leadership development, and reestablished the campus's identity beyond its borders.

I collaborated with faculty, staff, middle- and senior-level college administrators, and community stakeholders to design and implement a series of interventions for advancing the college's identity through a community engagement plan. The team sought to determine (a) how campus and community members enact community engagement interventions to enhance stakeholders' sense of organizational identity; (b) how an action research team enacts boundary spanners' behaviors or functions in their community engagement processes; and (c) how communities of practice enhance/support faculty and community members' roles as boundary spanners.

Through this study, campus and community members learned how organizational identity devolves and can be reestablished using an integrated community engagement model. The findings revealed that an interdisciplinary model of community engagement supports the enhancement of organizational identity. The study also highlighted the time needed for organizational identity development to occur is a process that is incremental and requires trust and relationship building. Additionally, the findings showed that the collaboration between campus and community partners enhances organizational identity development while also creating a supportive environment in which middle-level members of an organization can learn and practice their boundary-spanning skills for improving collaboration among internal and external stakeholders. Furthermore, the shared leadership and co-creation of interventions enhanced trust among stakeholders in the implementation of this action research study.

Conclusions drawn from this study suggest that the development of an organizational identity during a period of change in a 2-year college is incremental and fluid. The most critical skills for implementing collaborative community-engaged initiatives include listening, communication, and trust building. Lastly, the study findings indicated that a community of practice can effectuate change using action research methodology.

INDEX WORDS: Boundary spanning, Community engagement, Organizational identity, Higher education, Communities of practice, Engaged scholarship

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2021

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Beverly D. Wheel, Jr., and Barbara E. Pembamoto. They have been my cheerleaders, my confidants, and my best friends. Early in life, they taught me to believe in the power of learning, to find the joy in sharing, and to be generous with praise and judicious with criticism. They taught me that life is an adventure to be fully engaged and that I should always seek to fulfill my highest purpose in life as a servant leader. Along the way, they also taught me how to make space for others to join the conversation and participate in my life's journey.

I also dedicate this work to my circle of encouragers and cheerleaders who left this earth before I completed this study. These guardian angels shared generously with me; they believed in the power of education and sought to make this world, and their community, a better place. I will always say their names: Thank you, Mrs. Annie S. Wheel, Lt. Col. Clayton T. Carter, Mr. Mario A.J. Bennekin, and Dr. Nathaniel C. West.

.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Through the years, I have been fortunate to have individuals who have chosen to walk a while with me on my journeys. By God's grace, when I decided to travel along the learning path toward this degree, I was blessed to have family and friends, old and new, walk a while with me. With the support and encouragement of each of these individuals, I completed the journey. I am forever grateful to God for each of you.

To Dr. Karen E. Watkins, my major professor, without your insight, patience, and gentle yet consistent nudging, I could not have made it to the finish line. Your wisdom and kind spirit made this journey affirming and life-giving. To my committee, Dr. Lorilee R. Sandmann, Dr. Laura Bierema, and Dr. Caleb Han, I appreciate your guidance and am truly humbled by the gift of your expertise, insights, and time shared to foster the development of this study.

To my action research team, Laurent, Hosanna, Jane, Mary Bethel, Mary Elizabeth, and Mollie, I am grateful for your shared vision, passion for the study, and commitment to see it through to the end. I am also thankful for the intervention team's commitment to the process. Anita, Barbara, and Tami, thank you for believing in this work and sharing in the creation of a new vision.

To my writing encouragers and readers, Karamo Barrow, Phyllis Lawhorn, Stephanie Robinson, Crystal Garrett, Marlene Patterson, Ursula Thomas, and Arto Woodley, thank you for listening to my ideas, reading iteration after iteration, and never

tiring of the content. Your responses to my midnight calls, texts, and emails kept me writing.

To Cohort 4—Angela, Jennifer, Ken, Sonya, Stephen, and Sarayfah—you are forever my learning family and thought partners. Thank you for sharing your time, talent, and meals as we learned our way through.

To my sisters in the law, Leila, Marlena, Tami, and Tonya, your continued interest in this study, the meals, phone calls, cards, and notes of encouragement helped sustain me from beginning to end. Thank you!

To Kiluba, Cindy, Kenny, Danny, Bryant, S. Denise, Tiano, and Tony, thank you for being patient and flexible when we had to cancel or reschedule family gatherings, vacations, or visits as I worked to complete this journey. I love you all to the moon and back.

To my extended Gillis, Wheel, and Ohio families, thank you for your unwavering faith in me, for supporting my commitment to education, and for taking up the call to servant leadership.

Lastly, to my village: Each of you lifted me when I stumbled, contributed to my successes along the way, made time to celebrate the big and small successes with great joy, and consoled me when I suffered the loss of my dear dad shortly before I completed this study. In your own way, each of you encouraged me to keep pressing on, to cross the finish line.

We are family.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Established in 1964, Border College[1] began as a junior college with one campus operated under the authority of the local county school board of education. Within the first year, the college expanded from one campus with fewer than 1,000 students to two campuses with more than 2,000 students. During the next 18 years, as enrollment grew on the central and south campuses, the college was encouraged to extend its course offerings farther north, opening its third campus in 1979. The college's multi-campus expansion also provided access to postsecondary education in more flexible formats, including a telecourse program. By 1980, annual enrollment at Border College had increased to an average of 14,000 students.

Border College's dual offerings of traditional collegiate programs and vocational programs on multiple campuses were considered innovative in its early days. According to its 2004 *Fact Book*, the college was also seen as a "pioneer in open-door admissions, personalized approaches to instruction, and community-related curricula and activities" within the state. In 1986, given these expansive program offerings beyond the county, the local school board transferred its interest in Border College to the state. With this transfer, Border College's programs were separated: The vocational programs were assigned to one state agency, and the college, with its traditional programs, was transferred to the state's university system. After the transfer, Border College was

[1] "Border College" is a pseudonym used to conceal the identity of the study institution.

deemed an “access institution” in the state’s university system, with authority to grant admission to traditional and nontraditional students. The college continued to grow and expand its course offerings, adding two more campuses and increasing its enrollment to more than 15,000 students by 1997.

Throughout its history and across its campuses, Border College has been known for its commitment to engagement with surrounding communities. Although the college did not apply for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching’s elective Community Engagement Classification, it has operated within the tenets of the classification. These have included incorporating and prioritizing community engagement in the mission statement, establishing a center for community engagement, developing a faculty fellows program for engaged scholarship, and maintaining a systematic campus-wide assessment of these activities (Public Purpose Institute, n.d.). Maintaining these tenets garnered Border College a place on the federal President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll—which “recognizes institutions that support exemplary service programs and raise the visibility of effective practices in campus-community partnerships” (AmeriCorps, n.d.)—and earned the institution the Presidential Award for General Community Service in 2013.

At the time of this latter recognition, Border College’s enrollment grew to more than 23,000 due largely to its open-access mission, commitment to community engagement, support for a diverse student population, and unique campus cultures. Unfortunately, however, in late 2012, the college was besieged with financial problems, resulting in an overwhelming budget deficit, a 9% reduction in staff, and a budget reduction of 25 million dollars. As the college community struggled to rebound from this

setback, Border College was identified as a viable candidate for merger with a larger research university. In 2016, the college merged officially with this larger institution to form the new Metropolitan University.[2]

Background and Context

Today, Border College remains a geographically diverse, 2-year, multi-campus college within the larger public Metropolitan University. At the time of this study, Eastern Campus,[3] a unit within Border College, was experiencing organizational identity challenges as members of the campus community sought to establish their identity within Border College, the emerging culture of the new university, and the external community. Unlike the college's other campuses, Eastern Campus is located approximately 45 miles from Metropolitan University's main campus.

Eastern Campus began in 1994 as a multi-institution center with 365 students. Border College, in partnership with its former vocational unit and a 4-year public institution in a neighboring county, opened the center near the eastern border of the adjacent county. These three academic entities filled a void for a five-county service area that did not have any public postsecondary institutions at the time. Although the center began as a collaboration, over time most of the courses were offered by Border College. The center enjoyed a positive and engaged relationship with the community in which it is located.

Through this continued interaction, the center evolved into a campus, and its members established a brand and identity that connected to the community through experiential or service-learning projects, and extracurricular events that were open to the

[2] "Metropolitan University" is a pseudonym.
[3] "Eastern Campus" is a pseudonym.

community. During its formative years, Eastern Campus was housed in a public shopping center and utilized shared resources with other educational partners. Many of the founding faculty and staff members considered themselves pioneers who had created a new frontier for serving students and surrounding communities.

The campus's founding leaders demonstrated a commitment to engaging with the broader community by establishing partnerships with two area high schools. The original location of Eastern Campus did not have certain resources needed to support some of the required classes, such as science laboratories. Campus leaders therefore developed a collaborative partnership with one of the local school districts that allowed the college's science laboratory courses to be taught in the local high school after traditional high school classes had ended (D. Chair,[4] personal communication, April 20, 2017). Later, the college offered courses in the high schools for dually enrolled high school students. Over time, additional campus and community relationships formed, and a desire to establish a more permanent campus emerged. Border College pursued opportunities for a permanent campus near the commercial complex; however, county and college officials were unable to reach an agreement, and a new location was sought.

As highlighted in Border College's 2005 annual report, a local community member donated 100 acres of land to the college in 2004. The institution began planning for a permanent campus that would serve an eight-county region that was "underserved in higher education." It was hoped that Eastern Campus would bring economic growth and a higher quality of life for citizens in the region. The new campus master plan included two buildings with traditional collegiate classrooms, laboratories, and administrative offices.

[4] "D. Chair" is a pseudonym.

A third building was designed for athletic programs and co-curricular activities. The permanent campus also included professional-quality athletic facilities. Moreover, Eastern Campus's proximity to the county seat and its new facilities expanded opportunities for college and community collaborations.

According to Border College's 2008 annual report, when Eastern Campus opened in 2007, "the College was reaching out to communities in many ways, such as partnering with public schools, expanding its service-learning programs and providing dental hygiene to elementary school children." Faculty at Eastern Campus created service-learning programs with organizations in the new community. They also continued to work with a neighboring county career academy by offering courses and co-curricular activities. Additional collaborations included working with the town theatre, community centers, and the county chamber of commerce (A. Faculty[5], personal communication, March 22, 2018).

During the first 5 years at the new campus, faculty, staff, and students engaged with community partners through community-based projects, service-learning projects, and community civic activities. Members of the community supported college-based programs such as theater, music, athletics, and literary symposiums.

Between 2013 and 2018 as college and campus leadership changed, the resources allocated for campus-based community engagement activities decreased, and administrators supported fewer opportunities for co-curricular activities. After Border College's 2011–2012 financial crisis and subsequent merger announcement, the campus lost some of the signature programs and activities that had promoted partnership activities

[5] "A. Faculty" is a pseudonym.

with organizations in the immediate vicinity. These included theater, softball, baseball, and joint courses at an area high school career academy. These activities had contributed to the ways internal and external stakeholders experienced the campus's organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985). During the merger planning period, Border College did not actively promote community engagement initiatives, and fewer faculty and staff members created new service-learning or other community engagement projects. The campus community no longer enjoyed its previous identity as being part of the "largest community college in the region." As students, faculty, and staff tried to make sense of these changes, so did the external community, including prospective students, partner schools, and community members.

During the college's 2018 strategic planning focus-group sessions (internal and external) hosted at Eastern Campus, participants expressed concern that more formal and sustainable connections between prospective students, current students, and the community were needed. Campus community members sought to explore and understand more clearly what it means to be known as a branch campus of Metropolitan University.

Problem Identification

As noted in Border College's 2008 annual report, when Eastern Campus opened in 2007, the faculty, staff, and students enjoyed a positive reputation and identity as a collective partner within its new and former geographic communities. Indeed, Eastern was one of the five vibrant campuses at Border College, which was the largest community college in the state at that time—a significant distinction. Yet, this level of recognition changed post-consolidation. Metropolitan University's new mission statement was broadened to reflect the comprehensive range of academic engagement,

indicating that the university "provides extraordinary experiential learning opportunities and supports the work of faculty tackling the challenges of an urbanizing nation and world." Although broad, the statement does not reflect the diversity of Border College's campuses.

Less urban and more rural, Eastern Campus is geographically different from the other campuses. The town in which it is located defines itself as a walkable community with modern amenities. Other surrounding towns in the service area are smaller, with a varied appeal for people who want to live in quaint historic buildings or areas that provide open pastures while offering the convenience of proximity to a metropolitan city. Adding to these geographic complexities is the absence of a single organizational identity across the five campuses which unifies them within Border College or Metropolitan University.

In reviewing the narrative descriptions of Border's campuses, as published in various university and college media sites, the other campuses continue to articulate their enduring and unique identity within the college and the geographic communities they serve. Central Campus's organizational identity has been promoted through faculty members' ongoing work with various community organizations and programs, and through community-based projects and service-learning activities. According to Border College's website, Central Campus serves as a "cultural hub for the community around it, offering art exhibits, concerts, theatrical productions and other programs open to the public." Also described on the college's website, North Campus's strong reputation as a community partner and institution for higher learning underpins its enduring and continuing identity. Likewise, South Campus experienced an identity expansion as it

became the beneficiary of a corporate partner's support for its new student success initiative, a high school-to-college program. These narratives demonstrate the ongoing development of identity and community connections for three of Border's four campuses. However, college publications as well as sentiment expressed by various stakeholders suggest that Eastern, unlike its peer campuses, has not been able to sustain or expand its identity, either by offering unique academic programs or by presenting itself as a community-engaged, connected campus.

Though Eastern had been a thriving and community-engaged campus, this is no longer true. When it lost its partnership with the regional career academy high school, the decrease in its community-centric programs and activities did not support a campus identity that reflects what is *unique*, *central*, and *enduring*—hallmark tenets of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organizational identity. Eastern no longer has a unique identity or a sharp image (Hatch & Schultz, 2002) among its peers within the institution or its competitors in the region. In fact, as reflected in local chamber of commerce meeting minutes, members of the business community have often confused Eastern Campus with the regional vocational college, which has a similar name.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this action research (AR) study was to explore how campus and community members operating as boundary spanners used community engagement programs to improve stakeholders' sense of organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985) in the context of a 2-year regional campus of a multi-campus university. This AR study focused on faculty, mid-level campus leaders, and community partners as the primary research participants. There is limited literature exploring how individual

members of an organization who do not hold leadership positions can create or foster the development of a new organization, design, or reclaim an identity that is congruent with the intentions of the new organization. Thus, this study explored the process by which non-leader employees develop or create a new organizational identity within a larger system. Three research questions guided the study:

1. How do campus and community members enact community engagement interventions to enhance stakeholders' sense of organizational identity?
2. How does the action research team enact boundary spanners' behaviors or functions in their community engagement processes?
3. How do faculty learning communities and communities of practice enhance/support faculty and community members' roles as boundary spanners?

Definitions

This study sought to incorporate concepts from the fields of management and community engagement within the context of higher education. As these concepts have numerous meanings within the broader range of literature reviewed, it is essential to establish a common meaning for terms as used in this study. The definitions for *boundary spanning*, *organizational identity*, and *signature identity* originated from their business or management frames. The term *boundary spanners*, as defined by Tushman and Scanlan (1981), refers to individuals who cross organizational borders, (units, sections, or sectors) to build connections and establish relationships in an effort to manage complex problems. In the context of this study, this definition was applied to the participating faculty, staff, and community partners who were asked to engage in activities that extended their day-

to-day activities beyond the borders of their employment. In these activities, these individuals were designated as boundary spanners.

These individuals were asked to address the loss or lack of a campus identity as experienced by numerous stakeholders. The expansive body of organizational identity literature has offered multiple definitions for what an organization's identity is or can be determined to be. This study used the definition of *organizational identity* initially conceived by Albert and Whetten (1985): "those symbols, experiences, and activities within an organization's culture that are enduring, continuous and distinct" (p. 265). One of the goals of the AR team in this study was to establish a signature identity for Eastern Campus.

An exploration of community engagement literature reveals a broad range of terms and definitions related to community-engaged activities. From the ongoing dialogue among scholars, some definitions have emerged that can be applied across higher education endeavors, and many of these terms have been advanced by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Additionally, Carnegie established its classification framework through which colleges and universities can voluntarily pursue a designation as a community-engaged institution. Within this context, the Carnegie Foundation defines *community engagement* as "a 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" (Public Purpose Institute, n.d.) Border College has incorporated this definition in its broad efforts around engagement. Additionally, when considering the use of community-engaged activities within the classroom, the college

also uses the term *academic community engagement* (ACE), which it defines as the intentional pairing of faculty and students with community members to collaboratively address community-identified needs.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The conceptual and theoretical framework for this study, as illustrated in Figure 1, builds on Weerts and Sandmann's (2010) boundary spanners model and incorporates the theoretical underpinnings of organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985) and community engagement.

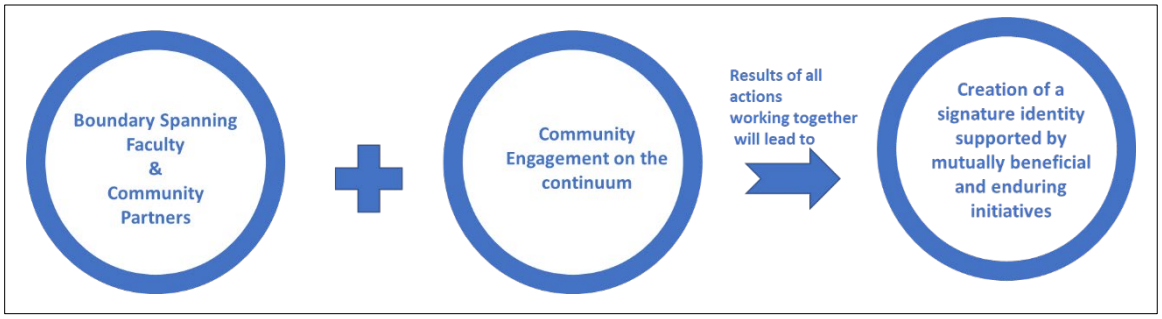

Figure 1. *Conceptual and Theoretical Framework.*

This conceptual model reflects the intentional the faculty and community partners' development and use of boundary-spanning skills in various community engagement initiatives to create an environment that fosters a signature identity for Eastern Campus. In this model the term "Community engagement on the continuum" refers to a range of community engagement activities including one-time service-learning projects with community partners such as cleaning "lost" cemeteries, assisting with a one-time community service project such as a voter registration drive, to a term based project with a community partner in response to a mutually identified need such as voter

education and registration to more long term projects that may include a community based research project or other on-going projects with a community partner that crosses multiple academic terms. This model evolved as the stakeholders developed and engaged in boundary-spanning activities. Some faculty and community partners were able to establish projects that could be conducted as discrete units across more than one academic term.

As a systematic and rigorous inquiry-based process, the study's action research methodology allowed the team members to individually and collectively understand the research problem and develop interventions to resolve that problem, thereby improving their circumstances (Stringer, 2014). Using this real-time methodology, the AR team engaged in four iterative cycles of inquiry, implementing interventions as they planned, acted, reflected, and revised their actions (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

Guided by this methodology, the AR team used a qualitative case study approach to data collection and analysis. Creswell (2014) maintained that a qualitative approach to inquiry provides the researcher and others with a better opportunity to understand a research problem. However, unlike quantitative or qualitative research methodology alone, action research comprises an evolving process that supports the intention of collaboration and co-inquiry.

Study Significance

This study is significant because it advances the organizational identity and boundary spanning research at the level of the 2-year college. A review of the literature indicates that various studies have examined multiple facets of organizational identity within higher education. However, these studies have focused primarily on large public

universities (Brewer, 2015; Browning, 2015; Gioia et al., 2010). As boundary spanning studies has evolved in higher education, they too have focused on large public universities (Adams, 2013; David, 2013; Martin & Ibbotson, 2019; Mull, 2014; Prysor & Henley, 2018). The results of this study expand research in these areas to include 2-year colleges. This research also advances the use of communities of practice to support engaged scholarship at the 2-year-college level, moving the conversation beyond the public university setting, which has been addressed extensively in the literature (Furco & Moely, 2012; Gast et al., 2017; Glowacki-Dudka & Brown, 2008; Mullen & Schunk, 2010; Nistor et al., 2015).

Conclusion

This AR project studied a significant problem faced by campus members: their loss of identity and community connections. Internal and external stakeholders had three years to adapt to the organizational name and structure change, as a result of the merger of Border College with Metropolitan University. However, at Eastern Campus, they were unable to define the campus's identity or articulate a sustainable relationship with and connection to the community. Findings from this study will help internal community members make sense of the events that have affected organizational identity and culture, as well as gain a clear understanding of who and what external community members think comprises the campus's identity. Through this study, internal and external stakeholders who were impacted by this problem determined the training, programs, and initiatives essential to supporting identity development and community engagement at the campus level. The learning generated from this project can offer other multi-campus

colleges that are experiencing a loss of identity a model for designing and implementing community engagement interventions that promote a positive campus identity.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the mid 1990's, higher education institutions (HEIs) have been asked accrediting organizations, donors, and state appropriation officials to conduct their organizational operations more like businesses (Ahmadvand & Heidari, 2012). Li (2017) reported that between 2007 and 2012, public HEIs were "increasingly expected to demonstrate prudent and effective use of taxpayer funds," and that "higher education accountability has been a prominent theme over the last two decades" (p. 396). Colleges and universities have responded to these demands by reorganizing, downsizing, or streamlining their operations (Cameron & Smart, 1997; Hidalgo-Hidalgo & Valera, 2016). In this evolving landscape, members of the institution, individually or within affected sub-units, often find themselves seeking to understand what this change means for them personally, collectively as a group and organization, and in relationship to the external community. Multiple frameworks for understanding organizational change and identity have been utilized in other studies and offered promise for the current study (Mills & Bettis, 2015; Weerts & Freed, 2016), which sought to fill a gap in the literature by exploring the role of college and community boundary spanners and the development of organizational identity within a more rural 2-year college setting.

This chapter provides a historical review of organizational identity theory, boundary spanning, and community engagement within higher education. The next section discusses conceptual and empirical studies that have applied organizational

identity in higher education, followed by a review of studies exploring boundary spanners in higher education settings and the emergence of faculty learning communities within this context. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the theoretical framework utilized in this study.

Organizational Identity

The study of organizational identity centered originally on the evolving identity of units within an HEI post-merger (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Albert and Whetten's (1985) seminal study established the conceptual foundation for what would become the theory of organizational identity. As noted earlier, they defined *organizational identity* as "that which is central, continuous over time and distinctive about an organization" (p. 265). The concept of organizational identity, as envisioned by Albert and Whetten (1985), is rooted at the intersection of organizational theory and identity theory. This bridge considers both the organizational unit and the affected individual employee. The evolving research on organizational identity served as the conceptual framework undergirding this action research study.

Even though Albert and Whetten (1985) established the conceptual foundation for the study of organizational identity, their framework failed to gain significant traction, waning for almost 15 years as other researchers struggled to apply the construct across organizations and experiences (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Whetten, 2006). In response to the diverse applications of organizational identity in numerous empirical studies, theoretical articles, and critiques, Whetten (2006) explained that when applying this theory, it is imperative to consider all three elements in the seminal definition. These elements are often referred to as CED: The explicit idea or belief, which is *central* to the

organization, is *enduring* through time and *distinctive* in that it separates the organization from others in the field. When applying this theoretical frame, researchers must address how employees answer the question, “Who are we as an organization?” That is, what actions, narratives, and processes are central to the organization, reinforce its distinctive nature, and have endured across time (Albert & Whetten, 1985). In this AR study, the campus members (i.e., faculty, staff, and students) were grappling with the loss of the central elements they believed represented their distinctiveness within the larger institution and geographic community. This loss of what was enduring had also affected the individuals at the campus level. They indicated they no longer enjoyed the same level of recognition or interaction that existed before their consolidation/merger.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) extended the exploration of organizational identity theory to include individual members’ perspectives on CED. Adopting a constructivist approach within social identity theory, they argued that, in order for an organization to answer the "who are we" question, it must first explore each individual member’s understanding of self, and self in relation to others. Using the principles of social identity theory, Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggested that individuals can place themselves within a social group based on personal identification as well as social (i.e., group) identification (p. 21).

Ashforth and Mael’s (1989) focus on the affected individual’s answer to the “who are we” question indicated that individuals often answer this question from the perspective of their relationship to the organization or perhaps the team. According to Ashforth and Mael, individuals can engage multiple identities in their personal and professional worlds. This process also supposes that the identity of individuals who make

up an organization will influence its direction. However, Ashforth and Mael did not explain how individual employees' identities blend into a collective organizational identity. Nor did they address how individual identities across various employee levels can be balanced in a manner that accounts for the diversity within an organization.

The ongoing study of organizational identity has been divided by researchers into two main focus areas: the exploration of organizational identity in relation to culture and image, and the study of organizational identity during periods of change. Throughout the last decade, researchers have extensively expanded their applications of organizational identity in business and management science.

Organizational Culture and Image

In addition to Albert and Whetten's (1985) definitive study, other scholars have attempted to distinguish organizational identity from culture, image, and brand. For instance, Dutton and Dukerich's study (1991) dissected Albert and Whetten's three strands of organizational identity, central, enduring, and distinctive character to address the more complex facets of identity that individuals experience. Focusing on multiple government transportation agencies, Dutton and Dukerich investigated the intersection between identity and image. They moved from answering the question "Who are we?" from an internal perspective to asking, "Who are we?" as perceived by external stakeholders. Dutton and Dukerich (1991) defined this expansion of identity as "the way in which members of the organization view the organization" and defined image as "the way in which internal stakeholders believe outsiders view the organization" (p. 520). In Dutton and Dukerich's case study, the organization's central, enduring, and distinctive identity was challenged. Specifically, they found that the perceived deterioration of

image was an important impetus for action. The study's data showed how interpretations and actions changed over time as the context for assessing image and possible implications for identity changed. Their findings indicate the organization's identity limits and directs image interpretations and actions. These actions, in turn, may gradually modify the organization's future identity or make certain features of the identity salient.

Dutton and Dukerich (1991) recommended that future research should move beyond Albert and Whetten's (1985) seminal view of organizational identity theory to examine how organizations adapt to new identities. Following the action research process, in which co-inquiry promoted learning for the individual, the group, and the organization (Argyris, 1977; Herr & Anderson, 2014) this AR study incorporated both the perceived deterioration of identity from the internal stakeholders' perspective and the external stakeholders' understanding of the organization's identity.

Gioia and Thomas (1996) extended the concepts identified in Dutton and Dukerich's (1991) study to the higher education arena. Gioia and Thomas (1996) focused on the perceptions of senior leaders within HEIs and their influence on others. Through this study, the researchers established that organizational perceptions influence individuals' interpretations and actions during change within a university. The change aspect of Gioia and Thomas's study added to previous studies in a limited yet meaningful way, building on how individuals and organizations experience the sense-making process. The results of their qualitative and quantitative assessments suggested that identity might not be as rigid as Albert and Whetten (1985) had concluded. Gioia and Thomas's participants expressed a desire for identity to be more fluid, particularly during change initiatives. They noted that participants closely linked identity and image.

Specifically, as they considered their future identity, participants concentrated almost exclusively on pursuing the future image of a mythical university, based on the assumption that attempts to change the current image would foster desired changes in the institution's identity (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Building on the analysis of their qualitative data, the researchers then surveyed the top three leaders at 372 HEIs. The results of their "multivariate analysis … showed an overall pattern of relationships among the variables indicat[ing] that identity type, identity strength, and desired future image were related to strategic interpretation" (p. 390). Gioia and Thomas (1996) concluded that there is a relationship between identity and image that influences sense-making in general and the impact of "top management teams' perceptions of the organization" on how subordinates make sense of change in identity and image" (p. 396) in particular.

Gioia et al. (2000) moved beyond the first element of organizational identity—"Who are we?"—arguing that identity and image are more closely entwined than the collection of activities or symbols that are central, enduring, and distinctive. They asserted that image must be considered. Moreover, though centrality is coupled with enduring and distinctive elements, this triad does not imply what identity is static. In their analysis, Gioia et al. stated that

> we need to be careful of this presumption; even the core can shift, not only because of altered beliefs and values but also because of changing interpretations of persistent labels. Although we maintain a belief in "core" elements of identity, this does not imply that the core is some tangible entity. (Gioia et al. 2000, p. 76)

Ashforth et al. (2011) extended Ashforth and Mael's (1989) earlier analysis of an individual's multiple identities within an organization to emerging cross-level dynamics.

Unlike Ashforth and Mael, who used social identity theory as the framework for exploring individual identity and organizational identity, Ashforth et al. accepted Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of identity. Ashforth et al. extrapolated that the question "Who are we?" is central, enduring, and distinctive for the individuals in their own identity as well as their identity across levels (i.e., workgroups and the whole) within the organization. These researchers distinguished their application of CED from earlier analyses within the framework of social identity theory. Instead, they held that the study of cross-level dynamics of identity offers a richer discussion of how one can define what is central, enduring, and distinctive across these levels of identity. Ashforth et al. also recommended further exploration of how nested identities influence one another and how external stakeholders can trigger change in identities that permeate across levels.

Brickson (2005) built on the three tenets of organizational identity by offering a construct for examining identity orientation at the organizational level. Brickson defined *organizational identity orientation* as "the nature of assumed relations between an organization and its stakeholders" (p. 578). This construct examines how individual members of an organization view themselves as an organizational group, how they see other internal stakeholders as individuals, and how they view themselves in relation to the external stakeholders with whom they interact. Unlike many researchers in this field, Brickson used quantitative methodology to identify linkages between organizational identity and the relations that members of an organization had with one another. Brickson also compared these linkages to the internal members' relationships with external stakeholders with whom they interacted. Brickson (2005) found that, in most instances, when the organization and stakeholders behaved in the manner agreed upon in their

identity orientation negotiations, all parties could move forward. If, however, stakeholders perceived the organization as operating in contradiction to the agreed-upon identity orientation, there were negative consequences. Brickson's (2005) findings suggested that during this action research study, the team would need to consider how it would negotiate its identity orientation with internal and external stakeholders to ensure a mutual understanding of what organizational identity is, how it is distinctive, and how it can endure in constant or changing times.

Organizational Identity and Change

Building on earlier multiple-identities studies (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Gioia, 1998; Pratt & Foreman, 2000), Corley (2004) explored the change process and how it affects organizational identity when an organization spins off (forms a new independent company from an existing unit or subsidiary of the parent organization) part of the team. Through his analysis of direct observations, interviews, and institutional documents, Corley determined that employees across organizational levels perceived organizational identity very differently. This qualitative study identified four overarching dimensions that account for differences in perceptions across the hierarchy within an organization:

> (i) differences in the perception of the nature of organizational identity, (ii) differences in opinions about the discrepancies that were deemed most important to the stability of organizational identity, (iii) differences in the basis for changes to organizational identity, and (iv) differences in views about how identity change can be implemented. (p. 1155)

Although Corley's study offered a primer for further exploration of organizational identity across levels and the dynamics that impact the diverse perceptions of employees,

his suggestion that high-level employees tie identity to strategy and low-level employees tie it to culture can be problematic. Corley found that higher level employees used language (i.e., identity labels) as one means of signaling organizational identity change, while for lower level employees, the change was based on behaviors and emotions. These changes were slower to evolve as lower level employees had to give up a prior identity for the new one. One of the promising findings of Corley's study centered on the role that middle-level employees could play. "Those in the middle … often found themselves playing the role of a bridge between the more strategic perspective of top management and the more culturally based perceptions of those lower in the hierarchy" (Corley, 2004, p. 1170).

As organizational identity literature has evolved, more studies have sought to distinguish between culture and identity. Corley (2004), however, pointed out that lower level employees' responses were more closely aligned with culture (i.e., values and beliefs) as indicators of the organization's identity (p. 1159). These reactions also suggest that the employees believed that their culture was enduring and distinctive. The researcher noted, "Operational employees lower in the hierarchy saw the organizational identity as an outgrowth of their organization's culture and therefore as much more stable and unchanging than senior leadership saw it" (p. 1157). Corley's research informed the data collection and classification processes in this action research study. Specifically, the classification of identity or image artifacts helped the AR team sort and classify material gathered during the study.

In particular, two types of artifacts were most useful: "(i) *identity artifacts* (i.e., paper and electronic representations and descriptions of the organization's identity); [and]

(ii) *image artifacts* (i.e., paper and electronic representations of how the [organization] projects itself to outsiders as well as how outsiders actually perceive the organization)" (Corley, 2004, p. 1152).

In their exploration of evolving organizational identities that result from organizational units or divisions being established as separate entities, Corley and Gioia (2004) adopted a model for testing the transitioning employees' responses to change and found that during periods of transition, employees may experience identity ambiguity. They discovered that ambiguity and temporal identity discrepancies created a vacuum in which different meanings may be inferred when answering the central questions, "Who are we, what makes our company distinct and how might we continue in a manner that holds the confidence of the various stakeholders?" (p. 193). Although Corley and Gioia's study was conducted in a corporate environment, it nevertheless offers guidance for studies set in higher education which consider the issue of ambiguity in evaluating the current state of identity as experienced by employees.

Clark et al. (2010) maintained that a transitional identity can be a viable framework for understanding organizational identity. In their study, they shadowed and interviewed several leaders from two merging organizations over 11 months. During this period, they found that identity destabilization led to executive members of both organizations being unclear about the future structure of the organization and surfaced their respective desires to retain their old identities, thus stalling the transition. A temporary placeholder name for the new emerging entity was introduced to help the two groups move beyond their historical positions. Through the review of meeting minutes, participant observations, and interviews, the researchers completed a detailed analysis,

ultimately identifying four overarching themes. Throughout all levels of analysis, transitional identity emerged as the most prevalent. In the context of this AR study, possessing a concept of a transitional identity supported the team's design of intermittent interventions to help Eastern Campus understand the larger organizational identity change that occurred during the merger of Border College and Metropolitan University.

Clark et al.'s (2010) study participants reported their perceptions of an emerging identity. As one participant stated,

> The vision of [the new organization] is falling into place, and has been for a while, but people below us don't feel like they know enough. The proposed marriage is like stages of dying: shock, anger, denial, grief, and acceptance. We're going through it. (Clark et al, p. 409)

Clark and his colleagues recognized that the study participants were experiencing first- and second-order learning (Argyris 1977). Unlike Corley (2004) and Gioia (2008), Clark et al. (2010) suggested that intentionally creating room for ambiguity through a transitional identity provides opportunities for various stakeholders to collaborate in the development of an organizational identity that is central, enduring, and distinctive. As the researchers noted, "We eventually developed the second-order term for the concept of [the new organization] as a 'transitional identity,' which we defined as an interim sense held by members about what their organizational identity was becoming" (Clark et al., 2010, p. 420).

The pivotal studies described previously demonstrate the importance of answering the question "Who are we?" through an exploration of the actions of an organization and its employees. More recent empirical studies have focused on traditional business

organizations, suggesting that there are opportunities for additional research focusing on identity, change, and transformation in higher education.

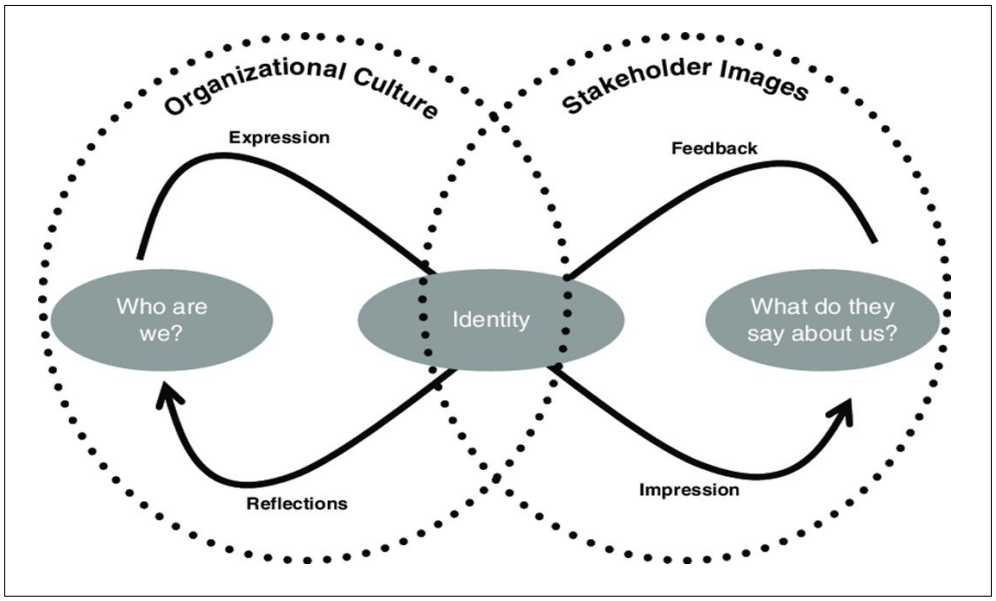

Figure 2. *Model of Organizational Identity Dynamics*. Adapted from Hatch and Schultz (2002).

A model proposed by Hatch and Schultz (2002) highlights a connection between organizational identity and boundary-spanning behavior. Applying this model within the context of an organizational identity study, the members will consider the symbols, activities, and artifacts that reflect who they have been while also considering what their external partners, prospective students, and supporters perceive them to be. Hatch and Schultz's model also offers a way to examine the communication and information flow between the community and organizational boundary spanners. Focusing on the relationship between external stakeholders' perceptions of an organization's identity and internal stakeholders' presentation of identity and subsequent reflections or modifications

in response to the external stakeholders' feedback, the model allows for an exploration of boundary-spanning activities in relationship to organizational identity. This AR study adds to the literature by situating Hatch and Schultz's model in the context of a 2-year public higher education institution. It also expands the knowledge around new identity creation and organizational adaptation in relation to how internal and external stakeholders perceive an organization's identity within a community. Finally, the study's participant sample included internal constituents across levels of responsibility as well as external stakeholders. This is a departure from more recent studies that have focused on low- or high-level employees individually.

Community Engagement: Historical Perspective

In the early establishment of public education, various philosophers and education leaders considered community, or civic, engagement and citizenship to be core principles of education (Dewey, 1938). Though Dewey called for educators to make this commitment, the development of community engagement as a field did not evolve seamlessly or consistently across institutions of higher education. Moreover, except for land-grant universities, community engagement as a core principle was not typically incorporated into the missions and value statements of public or private colleges and universities (Jacoby & Associates, 2009; Stanton et al., 1999). However, there was a growing momentum within higher education around returning to this principle in practical ways.

Beginning around 1985, higher education institutions and communities began working together in earnest to establish programs and/or projects that promoted engagement. These activities were also supported through the efforts of organizations

such as the Campus Opportunity Outreach League, which helped students across college and university campuses become engaged in community service, and Campus Compact, which assists colleges and universities in providing structured opportunities for service and civic engagement (Campus Compact, n.d.). These organizations generated interest in and called attention to civic engagement and service-learning at the collegiate level (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Most colleges and universities, however, did not adopt service-learning institution-wide; rather, they chose service-learning as a component of the classroom experience in various majors, not necessarily all majors or academic programs (Stanton et al., 1999). These activities within HEIs suggested that service-learning was becoming the primary pedagogy for civic engagement.

Boyer (1996), building on Dewey's (1916) call for civic education, created the frame for the scholarship of civic engagement when he stated, "The academy must become a more vigorous partner in searching for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and must affirm its historic commitment to society" (p. 15). Boyer urged a renewed commitment to the scholarship of engagement:

> I am convinced that in the century ahead, higher education in this country has an urgent obligation to become more vigorously engaged in the issues of our day, just as the land-grant colleges helped farmers and technicians a century ago. (p. 23)

While it took time for the principles of such scholarship to ignite, scholars in the mid-1990s began to examine the meaning of service-learning and civic engagement in higher education (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). This movement was spurred by support from the Corporation for National and Community Service as well as the Carnegie Foundation.

Throughout this time, the definition of civic engagement continued to evolve to include civic learning, service-learning, and community engagement.

Civic Engagement and Service-Learning

While the coining of the term *service-learning* is attributed to Robert Sigmon and William Ramsey during a cooperative effort of the Southern Regional Education Board in the mid-1960s (Sigmon, 1996), it would be almost two decades before there emerged a renewed call for active civic engagement and intentional service within education. Since 1984, educators in K–12 schools and in higher education have been expressly asked to respond to this national call for civic education, engaged community service, and volunteerism (Colby et al., 2003; Stanton et al., 1999; Wutzdorff & Giles, 1997). As the study of community engagement has evolved, there has been a significant expansion and focus on what *civic* means within various civic engagement programs. As a result, within the last decade, this expansion has also promoted a transition from civic engagement as volunteerism to civic engagement as pedagogy, with multiple models of engagement activities available to include course related service-learning, community-based course projects, and programs that focus on various facets of democracy and civic skills (Saltmarsh, 2005; Stanton et al., 1999).

In 1993, Dwight Giles, Jr. and Janet Eyler shifted the service-learning conversation from engagement projects toward the scholarship of service-learning. They conducted the first in-depth analysis of service-learning projects and activities in higher education, in support of the development of a conceptual framework that would support the creation of a service-learning theory (Giles & Eyler, 1994).

Hatcher (2007) used the four broad essential learning outcomes identified in the *College Learning for the New Global Century* report (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], & National Leadership Council, 2007)—which included the domain of civic knowledge and engagement—to lay the foundation and rationale for a standard definition of civic engagement. Hatcher's definition is as follows:

> Civic engagement is working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through political and non-political processes. (as cited in Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi)

AAC&U's Valid Assessment of Undergraduate Education team used Hatcher's definition in the development of the Civic Engagement Rubric, incorporating its essential qualities: knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make a difference.

Between 2000 and 2009, many research studies considered the impact of service-learning on student discipline and civic knowledge. Specifically, they examined service-learning curricula, the development of faculty competencies for incorporating service-learning, and their impact on students' commitment to democracy and citizenship. The locus of these studies ranged from programs at the departmental level to those at the institutional level. Since 2004, researchers have also focused on the assessment of service-learning (Bringle et al., 2004). Some scholars have suggested that the reflective aspect of service-learning may not allow for an adequate assessment of student discipline or civic learning knowledge, and turned their attention to the assessment of civic engagement (Goodell et al.; Saltmarsh, 2005*)*.

Another aspect of civic engagement and service-learning that has generated significant conversation and evaluation is the incorporation of democracy and citizenship into the curriculum. Scholars have advocated for a return to civic learning as a component of service-learning and civic engagement (Lin, 2015; Musil, 2009; Saltmarsh et al., 2009). This expanded conversation is linked closely with the 2008 colloquium hosted by the Kettering Foundation and the New England Resource Center for Higher Education. This colloquium provided a forum in which a group of leaders in civic engagement and higher education identified problems and issues associated with reforming higher education for community engagement and democratic citizenship (Saltmarsh et al., 2009).

Saltmarsh (2005) maintained that many institutions create opportunities for students to participate in service-learning without including specific processes for democracy education or development (p. 50). He argued that civic engagement can only be meaningful when there is an opportunity for the learner to develop the capacity for engagement. Saltmarsh, on more than one occasion, has reinforced Dewey's education theory that democracy is a learned behavior that should be considered in the development of service-learning curricula (Saltmarsh 2005; Saltmarsh et al., 2009).

Civic Engagement

As civic engagement has evolved, many colleges and universities have created their programs under the broader umbrella of community engagement. In 1999, the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities issued a report on engagement entitled *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution*. This report, which focused specifically on the work of state colleges and land-grant universities,

emphasized the imperative for HEIs to move beyond traditional outreach and service to what the commission defined as engagement. “By engagement,” the commission stated, “we refer to institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities, in whatever context a community may be defined” (Kellogg Commission, 1999, p. 9). Closely aligned with the Kellogg Commission’s (1999) study, Campus Compact’s (1999) *Presidents’ Fourth of July Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education* stated, “We also challenge higher education to become engaged, through actions and teaching with its communities.”

Byrne (1998) also expanded the application of engagement to include the understanding that engagement is a mutual process the occurs between the college and the community:

> [It] transfers in two directions: a partnership of exchange between the university and its constituents. Engagement is mutually beneficial to the university and society and frequently involves shared goals, agendas, and measures of success. It includes working together to solve problems and share expertise. Engagement is both outreach and “in-reach” into the university. (p. 5)

Byrne went on to reflect,

> During the past quarter of a century, engagement has become an integral part of the mission of the modern university. In the future, it will be even more so. Responding to the needs of a rapidly changing society, locally and globally, engagement will become increasingly important to the integration of higher education with the society it serves. (p. 5)

Although these seminal reports and articles have focused on state colleges and land-grant universities, the movement toward a broader definition of engagement is also applicable in two-year public colleges as well as private colleges and universities.

Boundary Spanning: Historical Context

Boundary spanning theory is grounded in the early work of several researchers. Aldrich and Herker (1977) identified the common roles that boundary spanners undertake, although these roles and the specific boundaries often vary by industry or sector. According to Weerts and Sandmann (2008), *boundary spanners* are "actors who are primarily responsible for interacting with constituents outside their organization. These spanners negotiate power and balance between the organization and external agents to achieve mutual objectives" (p. 708). A critical characteristic included in all definitions of boundary spanners is one's ability to develop relationships in order to manage complex problems (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). Successful boundary spanners have also been found to possess the ability to create trust, communicate with others, influence, negotiate, and understand the role and motivation of others (Adams, 2013 Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Tushman, 1977; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981; Williams, 2002).

In the last decade, there has been an increase in studies exploring boundary-spanning theory within various higher education contexts (David, 2013; Skolaski, 2012; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Several of these studies have sought to establish a connection between the behaviors of HEIs as organizations and the behaviors of leaders within higher education (Martin & Ibbotson, 2019; Prysor & Henley, 2018; Skolaski, 2012).

Boundary Spanning and Higher Education

Weerts and Sandmann (2010) conducted one of the earliest studies connecting boundary spanning theory and community engagement. Their study examined how the boundaries of different institutions expand or change in support of community engagement programs. They argued that community engagement is an innovation in higher education that has been treated differently in land-grant institutions and newer urban research universities. Weerts and Sandmann's (2010) findings suggested that traditional institutions are less likely to change, while younger, more flexible institutions are more likely to pursue engagement. In particular, "in … younger urban research universities, fewer forces act to preserve the status quo; and engagement can be a distinct element of the institutional identity that they are in the process of creating" (p. 193). They emphasized the connection between an institution's engagement agenda, the flexibility of its institutional boundaries, and its ability to be transformed (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010).

An earlier study by Sandmann and Weerts (2008) laid the foundation for their groundbreaking 2010 boundary spanning model. Initially, this model explained how research university members reach beyond the university's boundaries to connect with community partners. The researchers noted, "In the context of community engagement, university spanners perform teaching and learning functions to promote mutual understanding among the institution and community representatives" (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010, p. 638). Building on the findings from their 2008 study, Weerts and Sandmann (2010) offered a new framework for analyzing boundary spanners' behaviors or roles in the context of community engagement.

Weerts and Sandmann's (2010) seminal model considers individual work in two domains: task orientation and social closeness (p. 638). As people engage in boundary-spanning roles, the model suggests that they fit within one of four quadrants that reflect their level of technical or professional expertise combined with their social closeness, that is, their proximity to or alignment with the university or the community. The model has been used to advance organizational community engagement agendas, and more recent studies have used the model to understand community-engaged boundary spanners from the university perspective as well as the role of community partners as boundary spanners (see Figure 3).

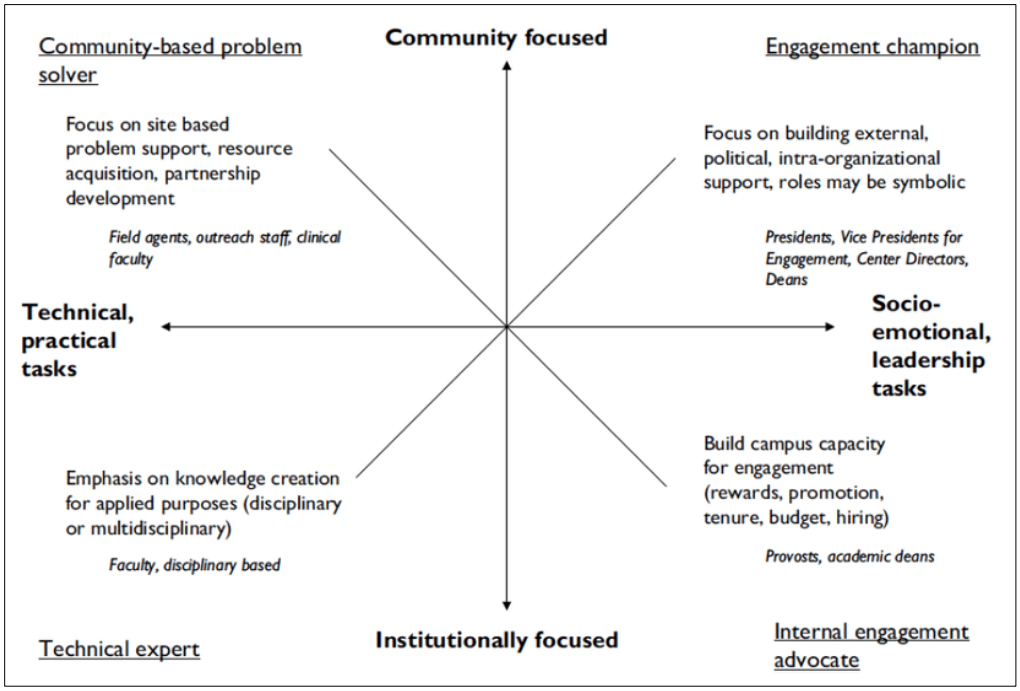

Figure 3. *University–Community Engagement Boundary-Spanning Roles at Public Research Universities (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010).*

Purcell (2014) used this model to explore how community colleges expand their capacity for community engagement collegewide. Focusing on internal boundary spanners (i.e., members of the college), Purcell found that at colleges attempting to institutionalize community engagement, the ability to lead and connect with others to pursue this agenda required traditional leaders to share leadership, roles, and responsibilities. Applying Weerts and Sandmann's (2010) definition of boundary spanners to community colleges, Purcell found that "boundary spanners for community engagement in community colleges are employees of the institution who bridge the resources and goals of the college with the resources and goals of the community or a specific community organization" (p. 27). Moreover, boundary spanning behaviors utilizing distributed leadership helped advance community engagement. Purcell's study also reiterated the importance of context, that is, understanding the environment and parameters in which boundary spanners are expected to operate. Lastly, she found that highly effective boundary-spanning behaviors included frequent and clear communication.

Mull (2014) examined the relationship between community engagement and networked governance. His findings around the limited impact of personal characteristics on boundary-spanning behaviors are notable. Mull found that while personal characteristics were not major predictors of boundary spanning behaviors, work/organizational characteristics were significant predictors. In fact, his research "indicated that the workplace or the organization has almost sole influence on the boundary-spanning activities of individuals" (p. 135). Mull's findings are compatible with previous literature indicating that individuals make meaning and sense of their

identity in relationship to their work and their organization's espoused identity (Gioia et al., 2000).

Farner (2016) conducted a single case study to understand how leaders at a land-grant university attempted to institutionalize community engagement. Using Weerts and Sandmann's (2010) boundary spanning model, Farner assessed the university leaders' perception of the qualities of institutional boundary spanners. This study expanded on Weerts and Sandmann's work by generating a new model that considers the multiple actions needed to institutionalize community engagement at a public university. Farner's findings suggested that the use of Weerts and Sandmann's model can assist in identifying qualities of institutional boundary spanners and in creating appropriate learning conditions for developing and sustaining community engagement (p. 166).

As Fitzgerald et al. (2016) specified,

> To make engagement central to the university requires input from the many communities that partner and work with university faculty and academic staff (business, health, education, government, rural and urban living environments), both locally and globally. Thus, while higher education works to align internally, it also must work with external partners to align externally (pp. 248–249).

Moreover, Fitzgerald et al. acknowledged that they did not "sufficiently engage colleagues from community colleges and private institutions or members of the community at large" (p. 248) in their research. This observation presented an opportunity to explore a process that would be appropriate to facilitate the work of the action research team in the current study. After reviewing the literature, it seemed suitable to develop the AR intervention team as a community of practice.

Communities of Practice and Faculty Learning

Lave and Wenger (1991) offered two definitions of a *community of practice* (CoP): (1) a group of people who share a concern; (2) a group of people who share a passion and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly, or, alternatively, a group of people who come together to share common interests and goals, or to share information, developing knowledge themselves both personally and professionally. Both definitions support the purpose of a faculty learning community, which is to "build community through teaching and learning, increase faculty collaboration and reflection on teaching and learning and to improve faculty teaching through a better understanding of the complexities" (Cox, 2004, p. 10). Some researchers and practitioners have used the terms *faculty learning communities*, *professional learning communities*, and *learning circles* interchangeably with *community of practice* (Chang et al., 2016; Mullen & Schunk, 2010).

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), a CoP requires three elements: a group of individuals who want to interact with one another (community); a shared domain (subject matter) of interest; and a common interest/concern about the identified subject matter which is not easily resolved (the practice). Cox (2004) expanded this definition by stating that a CoP is a group of people who already have ties or connections, and engage in behavior that expands the relationships in new ways, forming new groupings. Often these new groups comprise members who are engaged with or connected to the subject matter they are pursuing (Cox, 2004).

Although Lave and Wenger's (1991) work described this phenomenon of individuals coming together to learn their way through a troubling problem or concern,

the idea of people gathering to explore and learn is certainly not a new idea (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Orr, 1990). Lave and Wenger (1991) framed their perspective on communities of practice within a sociological lens. Their focus on the social nature of a community emphasized the ability of individuals to choose to come together and form and reform communities based on the problem of interest, applying what they have learned individually and collectively (Lave & Wenger,1991). Cox (2004) credited Wenger's 1998 study with defining the role of practice within a CoP: "Any community of practice produces abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts that reify something of the practice in a congealed form" (Wenger, 1998, p. 2).

Flogaitis et al. (2008) affirmed the connection between communities of practice and learning groups and emerging learning organizations. Their study focused on communities of practice within a primary and secondary school and how CoPs might transform the larger organization into learning organizations. They contended that educational learning organizations "entail and encourage the formation of learning communities and communities of practice with the participation of all parties" (Flogaitis et al., 2008, p. 220). Flogaitis et al. conducted three separate studies using action research methodology to test the viability of developing CoPs in various primary and secondary schools. They also used AR methodology to study their process. Each researcher served as a peer facilitator and external researcher for the study; the peer was a consultant and critical friend who could be trusted to ask questions, interrogate the researcher's inquiry, and "offer alternate interpretations [and] ideas for next steps or personal experiences" (p. 222). By adopting this process for their individual and shared reflection and the interrogation of their studies, these researchers created a CoP. Their activities also

evidenced the action learning model of AR and offered guidance to the members of the current AR study.

Agrifoglio's (2015) review of the literature identified other researchers, such as Gongla and Rizzuto (2001) and Fischer (2001), who have broadened participation within CoPs to include members from within the same organizational group or across groups. Drawing from Wenger's (1998) categories of CoPs, Agrifoglio regrouped these categories based on demographics as well as organizational structures. Within the new organizational categories, he argued that action research groups should be considered CoPs. Much like a CoP, an AR team is a group of people working together to explore a complex problem and pose interventions for solving the problem. Although Wenger (1998) initially resisted the use of CoPs within formal organizational boundaries, his work with Snyder (Wenger & Snyder, 2000) acknowledged that organizations could create boundary-crossing CoPs that provide breadth and depth of knowledge for problem solving

In addition to exploring the boundaries of communities of practice, several researchers have worked to develop a functional and operational definition of practice, which may be considered the third and most critical element necessary for a CoP. This third element includes an intent to improve the members individual and group's practice or work (Cetina, 1999; Cook & Brown, 1999; Corradi et al., 2010). Brown and Duguid (1991) argued that there are two compatible ideas of what practice is : (1) "practice as a way of knowing" and (2) "practice as learning in working," which "represents the fluid evolution of learning through practice" (p. 41). These definitions operate in conjunction with Wenger's (1991) premise of the group producing evidence of their learning through

the creation of objects, artifacts, or other items. These artifacts also represent how members have come to know the subject matter and their way of teaching. Such artifacts or other forms of documentation also represent the changes or improvements that have occurred because of their work together (Cox, 2004; Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

Faculty Learning Communities and Communities of Practice

Glowacki-Dudka and Brown (2008) established connections between CoPs and faculty learning communities (FLCs), noting that "the concept of a community of practice is central to the goals of FLC[s]" (p. 30). They linked learning to one's practice and the importance of the context in which the learning occurs. The formalization of FLCs in higher education has evolved since Boyer's (1990) call to action (Cox, 2004; Glowacki-Dudka & Brown, 2008; Layne, Froyd, Morgan & Kenimer, 2002). Members of FLCs at the college and university level, much like their colleagues in K–12 settings, are interested in exploring their effectiveness as teachers, new ways of delivering content, or gaining insights into how best to implement any of these changes. To this end, FLCs may comprise individuals from the same discipline focused on a single challenge, or the group may include individuals from different groups or units, all of whom operate as a community focused on a single problem.

The key underpinning of a community of practice, the study of the members' individual and collective practice is also important to teachers and professors alike (Cox, 2004). Glowacki-Dudka & Brown (2008) referencing Wagener's study (1991) stated, "The practice of a learning community is a 'culture of teaching' that holds academic departments and university campuses together" (p. 30). This focus—creating a culture of teaching—can be attended to through both formal and informal groups. Baker (1999, as

cited in Cox, 2004) noted that "in learning communities, all members of the group are learners, and the group is organized to learn as a whole system" (p. 6). Baker's perspective regarding learning communities aligns with Watkins and Marsick's (2010) definition of group learning: "Groups learn when members gain a shared understanding and/or set of capabilities" (p. 60). Cox (2004) also connected the faculty learning community to action research: "FLCs are different from, but in many ways like, most action learning sets (ALSs) in that they are 'a continuous process of learning and reflection, supported by colleagues, with an intention of getting things done' (McGill & Beatty, 2001)" (p. 11).

Miami University (Ohio) is considered an early adopter of FLCs both formally and informally (Cox, 2004; Glowacki-Dudka & Brown, 2007). This university defines a *faculty learning community* as

> a cross-disciplinary faculty and staff group of six to fifteen members (eight to twelve members is the recommended size) who engage in an active, collaborative, yearlong program with a curriculum about enhancing teaching and learning and with frequent seminars and activities that provide learning, development, the scholarship of teaching, and community building. (Cox, 2004, p. 8).

Although this definition focuses on formal university-created learning communities, it does not exclude informal FLCs. The definition also supports the framing and establishment of more informal learning communities, which include individuals choosing to work together, collective focus on an aspect of knowledge development, and time for reflection (Chang et al., 2016; Glowacki-Dudka & Brown, 2007).

Miami University's definition of an FLC supports an intentional process for group learning by creating the space and time for a small group of faculty to develop as a community of learners (Watkins & Marsick, 2010). The Miami University group, though formed through official university procedures, still meets Lave and Wenger's (1991) criteria for a community of practice. The members choose to participate in the FLC; they are not mandated or required to participate. By doing so, they demonstrate their willingness to engage with others who are interested in the subject matter, teaching, and learning. This model is also reflected in the action research teams in the current study, offering a comparison for the larger group and the faculty participating as members of the intervention team.

Various studies have shown that, regardless of whether individuals participated in formal or informal FLCs, when the context provided them with the tools, time, and professional resources to tackle the subject matter, the participants improved their professional practice and their professional relationships (Agrifoglio, 2015; Bruce & Easley, 2000; Cox, 2004; Flogaitis et al., 2012). The primary reasons faculty choose to participate in small groups include having time to grapple with a complex problem or challenge with others and time to work on their teaching skills (Flogaitis et al., 2012; Jaipal & Figg, 2011; Van, 2012). These reasons also translate into benefits that participants indicate they receive from their experience (Cox, 2004; Flogaitis et al., 2012; Jaipal & Figg, 2011). When individuals have chosen to participate in FLCs, whether formal or informal, the benefits have comprised a blend of professional development and personal growth. As members of independent or university-organized FLCs, these individuals enhance their ability to learn together and increase the potential for the

institution to become a learning organization as envisioned by Senge (1990). The challenge presented in the current action research study was whether these faculty, as a potential learning community, could also develop as boundary spanners. The challenges that primary and secondary schools experience are also found in college and university settings. At the postsecondary level, where learning communities should be supported or encouraged, there is still not a systemically incorporated process by which learning-community participation is factored into the evaluation and reward system (Cox, 2004). This lack of recognition is also evident regarding the role of community engagement in faculty evaluations.

Conclusion

This literature review explored the development of organizational identity theory and how it can be applied in the context of higher education, the role of boundary spanning, and community engagement within higher education. Based on my review, it is evident that organizational identity had its roots in higher education; however, I found a significant lapse in the theory's application within higher education settings. Only recently have scholars returned to its application in the context of large research institutions or in relation to merging institutions of higher education. This literature review also reflected an ongoing application of boundary-spanning theories in more traditional business environments.

Both conceptual and empirical studies focusing on community engagement and boundary spanning reflected the application of these concepts in higher education settings. The vast majority of these studies, however, have been conducted within traditional research universities. Only limited research has centered on the use of

community engagement and boundary spanning behaviors within higher education more broadly. Moreover, recent organizational identity studies have incorporated either community engagement or boundary-spanning behaviors of employees, but not both.

This action research study is significant because it used boundary-spanning theory to traverse organizational identity theory, which has been studied and applied primarily in the business-sector literature and the community engagement literature, the latter of which has emphasized the role of community engagement in large public research universities. The study findings will spark greater interest in the future application of organizational identity theory, boundary-spanning theory, and community engagement at the 2-year college level.

The primary empirical studies that informed this action research study are outlined in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Selected Organizational Identity Empirical Studies

Author	Date	Purpose of Study	Sample	Methodology	Results
Brewer, R. A.	2015	To understand how senior administrators, transmit a university's purposes and values from the home campus to the branch campuses. The theoretical underpinning was Multiple Organizational Identity Theory.	N = 15	Qualitative Case Study	The researcher found that purpose and value transmission between a home and branch campus can be understood and explained through by the Transmission Matrix developed by the researcher. The matrix provides a framework through which administrators can organize the intercampus relationship for long-term success.
Brickson S. L.	2005	To better understand the relationship between organization's identities and their relationships with internal and external stakeholders. Focused on privately held companies in the service industry.	N = 1,126	Mixed Methods: Survey with qualitative and quantitative questions.	The researcher determined that an organization's relationships with stakeholders is a key aspect of organizational identity.
Browning, B.W., Boys, S.	2015	To explore how interim leaders manage their individual leadership identities? As well as how individual and organizational identities are impacted by interim leadership.	N = 24	Qualitative Case Study - critical case sampling. Mid-sized private university.	This researcher found that even with internal knowledge, interim leaders have difficulty or experience difficulties managing their leadership identities. They found that this may be attributable to their relationship with the leaders above them. The researchers noted that this may be more common in an academic environment, although hierarchies can exist in any organization. They also found that "Organizational identity is both internal and external and, while the outer image may appear the same, an overhaul in the workforce can plausibly lead to a change in the overall identity of the organization as well."

Author	Date	Purpose of Study	Sample	Methodology	Results
Clark S. M., Gioia D. A., Ketchen D. Jr., Thomas J. B.,	2010	To explore the processes by which organizational identities changed during the initial phases of a merger between two former rival healthcare organizations.	N = 2 management teams	Mix methods - Longitudinal case study using mixed methods.	Using Transitional Identity proposed process model of organizational identity change for two organizations
Corley, K.G., Gioia, D.	2004	To understand the changes in organization identity and the labels and meanings associated with the organization's identity during and after an organizational spin-off	N = 1	Qualitative Case study	Findings revealed previously unreported aspects of organizational change, including organization members' collective experience of "change overload" and the presence of temporal identity discrepancies in the emergence of the identity ambiguity.
Gioia D. A., Thomas J. B.	1996	To understand how top management teams in higher education institutions make sense of important issues that affect strategic change in modern academia.	N = 611 individuals from 372 institutions	Mixed Methods - grounded qualitative case study and then quantitative	These researchers found that during times of change, top management team members' perceptions of identity and image, crucial to the sensemaking process. Moreover these serve as important links between the organization's internal messaging and team members explanations or interpretations.
Gioia D. A., Price K. N., Hamilton A. L., Thomas J. B.	2010	To explore processes and practices that lead to the emergence of a new organizational identity post-merger.	N = 33	Qualitative case study, Semi - structured interviews, formal as well as informal interviews, archival data meetings minutes, individual and small group communications (emails), journals	The researchers identified eight processes, four of which occurred in more-or-less sequential that support the formation of new organizational identity: (1) articulating a vision, (2) experiencing a meanings void, (3) engaging in experiential contrasts, and (4) converging on a consensual identity—plus four recurrent processes that were associated with two or more of the sequential stages: (5) negotiating identity claims, (6) attaining optimal distinctiveness, (7) performing liminal actions, and (8) assimilating legitimizing feedback.

Author	Date	Purpose of Study	Sample	Methodology	Results
Griffith, C.,	2016	To explore organizational identity processes occurring in an acquired organization.	N = 19	Qualitative case study, single organization privately held company	First, individual-level variables such as personal anxiety or career status were significant factors in the organizational identity processes. Second, sensemaking as critical in the identity process for members of Acquired Co. Findings indicated that sensemaking was enacted through several key factors, including organizational image, sensegiving by the acquiring organization, comparison processes, social learning, artifacts, and critical incidents. Last, the pre-acquisition environment of the acquired organization had a significant role in the identity-related processes.
LaBianca G., Fairbank J. F., Thomas J. B., Gioia D. A., Umphress E.	2001	This study seeks to expand the understanding of interorganizational emulation decisions made by top administrators in various colleges and universities in the United States.	N = 1,317	Quantitative	These researchers found that identity related attributes, such as reputation, organizational image, and organizational identity are significant factors in determining organizational emulation.

Table 2

Selected Boundary-Spanning Empirical Studies

Author	Date	Purpose of Study	Sample	Methodology	Results
Adams, K. R.	2013	To examine the characteristics, roles, and motivations of community boundary spanners in university–community partnerships.	N = 10	Qualitative multiple case study	This researcher found that community boundary spanners were most likely to be communicative, seeking and understanding multiple perspectives, were likely to gain. The researcher emphasized that community boundary spanners were considered visionary due to their ability to consider multiple perspectives and being forward thinking. Additionally those community partners identified as boundary spanners entered the partnership with developed boundary spanning capacities.
David, V.	2013	To explore how managers of outlying audiences span the boundaries between sponsoring institutions and the audiences they serve.	N = 8	Action research; Interviews; Multi-case study; Critical incident	This researcher found community-based problem-solver boundary spanners demonstrated behaviors of assessing, engaging, reformulating, and advocating. They used knowledge collected to build relationships, initiatives, and programs.
Friedman, R. A., & Podolny, J.	1992	To explore boundary spanning as a differentiated function, not tied to a single person.	N = 60	Longitudinal; Network data; Collected over the 3-month	These researchers found that role conflict is a problem most often associated with boundary spanning. As such the role and function of boundary spanning can be taken on by more than one person potentially reducing role conflict and increasing successful negotiations. Friedman and Podolny advance that boundary spanning is not a nominal position but in greater context of social relations can be the bridge between different units or internal and external entities.
Martin, L., & Ibbotson, P	2019	To explore how boundary- spanning is carried out to further community engagement in 15 universities of differing sizes/ages across the United Kingdom	N = 15	Qualitative semi structured interviews	These researchers found in this context, boundary spanning was synonymous with identity work. carried out to enable individuals to adapt to different internal and external conditions and requirements through processes of interaction and learning. It also suggests the strategic construction of identities to address perceived threats and insecurities - and the impacts of change, dominant organizational

Author	Date	Purpose of Study	Sample	Methodology	Results
Mull, C.	2014	To investigate boundary-spanning activities and behaviors of individuals who are employed by higher education institutions and build partnerships between higher education and the U.S. Department of Defense.	N = 237	Quantitative	This researcher expanded initial Weerts and Sandmann (2010) model from two constructs of task orientation and social closeness to four constructs: technical-practical, socio-emotional, community and organizational orientations.
Prysor, D., & Henley, A.	2018	To investigate British higher education leaders' perceptions of the types of boundaries that encounter in their roles and the extent to which these leaders can identify and use various boundary spanning leadership skills s proposed by the Center for Creative Leadership.	N = 5	Qualitative semi structured interviews	The findings highlight a varied range of boundary spanning forms encountered by HE leaders. Moreover, the degree to which they are able to use the various boundary-spanning leadership skills was also impacted by the type of boundary being spanned. The researchers noted " the findings here highlight the general importance of leadership development designed around the challenges of boundary spanning, as much as around or within the team's leadership, coaching and mentoring skills."
Purcell, J.	2014	To explore how community colleges increase their capacity for community engagement.	N = 12	Qualitative	This researcher found boundary-spanning behaviors utilizing distributed leadership advanced community engagement and that effective and frequent communication was critical. Context mattered in regards to institutionalization; however, authentic engagement is possible at any step. Organizational learning associated with community engagement enhanced the institutionalization of engagement
Skolaski	2012	To identify and describe the role of academic and extension staff who have boundary- spanning responsibilities	N = 832	Mixed methods	This researcher found that, at the institutional level, campus leaders can better understand the roles and potential conflicts for boundary- spanning staff by actively helping them feel recognized (supportive communication, rewards), valued (initiative, individual boundary spanners), and supported (financially, emotionally), and by providing flexibility to accomplish goals within the system.

Author	Date	Purpose of Study	Sample	Methodology	Results
Weerts, D. J., & Sandmann, L. R.	2010	To examine how research universities, build bridges to community partners and increase institutional capacity for community engagement	N= 80	Multi-case study; Interviews; Document review	These researchers identified specific qualities of boundary spanning in community engagement categorized within clear yet flexible roles: community-based problem solver, technical expert, internal engagement advocate, and engagement champion

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology used for this qualitative case study concerning the influences of boundary spanners and community engagement on organizational identity. The chapter details the study design, the participant selection process, and the data collection process. Additionally, the chapter addresses the procedures and processes used to safeguard the study's validity, trustworthiness, and ethics.

The purpose of this action research study was to explore how campus and community members operating as boundary spanners could use community engagement programs to improve stakeholders' sense of organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985) in the context of a 2-year regional campus of a multi-campus university. This AR study focused on faculty, mid-level campus leaders, and community partners as the primary research participants. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do campus and community members enact community engagement interventions to enhance stakeholders' sense of organizational identity?
2. How does the action research team enact boundary spanners' behaviors or functions in their community engagement processes?
3. How do faculty learning communities and communities of practice enhance/support faculty and community members' roles as boundary spanners?

Action Research Methodology

Action research was the methodology utilized in this study. Action research is a systematic and rigorous inquiry-based process used by individuals or groups to better understand a problem they are experiencing within an organization or unit within an organization, and to develop an intervention (or interventions) to resolve the problem or improve circumstances (Stringer, 2014). It was appropriate to apply AR methodology to this qualitative case study design because it allowed the researcher and the research team to undertake an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of organizational identity loss (Creswell, 2014. The methodology provided the researcher with a process for addressing the presenting problem while increasing the research team's professional knowledge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This focus is distinguished from quantitative and experimental research, the results of which may be applied more generally in many settings (Stringer, 2014).

Unlike other methodologies, such as quantitative, AR is an iterative and evolving process that aims to bring together stakeholders to explore and attempt to solve a present problem (Stringer, 2014). In this study, a representative group of Border College's Eastern Campus and community members—first-account experts—comprised the action research team. Through their collaboration and co-inquiry, they accurately defined the problem within the context of their roles and the perspective of the group.

Using AR methodology, the team members, individually and collectively, were better situated to understand the status of the campus's identity. Through the AR process, they increased their knowledge of the problem and became equipped as a team to design more effective interventions that supported group-level (i.e., second-person) learning and

problem solving that was meaningful for the members of the community (i.e., third-person, or organization-level, learning; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). This process also helped participants and other members of the organization gain a better understanding of the organizational identity challenges they were experiencing internally and externally. The AR and intervention team members used the knowledge gained to support identity development and community engagement at the campus system level by applying this methodology.

Action research is designed to be undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry. The process is grounded in the early work of Kurt Lewin (Adelman, 1993), whose AR model is not bound by a single definition of when and how the methodology should be followed. Instead, the model is fluid, with discrete stages that can be ordered and reordered throughout multiple cycles. In order for the action to be effective, the AR team's efforts within each cycle should encompass inquiry, learning, and reflection (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). In AR, reflection is a critical tool for driving learning and improvement. According to Stringer (2014), "it is the dynamic of this reflection on action that incorporates the learning process of the action research cycle and enables action research to be more than everyday problem-solving" (p. 13). This intentional reflection can generate new ideas, triggering another cycle of action in which plans are updated, additional measures are taken, reflection is continued, and a determination is made regarding the state of the problem and whether further action should be undertaken. In this study, the AR team agreed to meet monthly to discuss actions taken to date and their progress. The group shared their reflections using prompts designed to address the study's research questions. These shared reflections guided the team's conversations and

their decisions regarding whether to continue with their current plan of action or make modifications. These changes were documented in meeting minutes and through written reflections collected from the team members.

Study Design

Case-study design is a useful approach to research when the problem under investigation involves a current real-world problem (Yin, 2014). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), "a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 37). Yin (2014) also stressed that a case study is appropriate when it is structured within a system bounded by place and time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenon examined in this case study was intrinsically bound (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), focusing on one campus of a multi-campus, 2-year college. The study sought to explore and describe the current state of the campus's identity as experienced by internal and external stakeholders (Yin, 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) recommended several procedures or processes for conducting case studies, including the use of multiple sources of information; purposeful sampling; data collection through interviews, observations, and documents; inductive and comparative data analyses; and the presentation of findings using a themed or categorized approach.

In addition to being bound by time and setting, the unit of analysis in a case study is also essential (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) since it helps guide the identification of the data to be collected. This exploratory case study was bounded by location, and the unit of analysis was a single campus, Eastern Campus of Border College (Yin, 2014). Working together, members of Eastern Campus and representatives of its external community investigated the problem addressed by the research questions. Using the knowledge

gained, the team proposed and implemented interventions to improve internal and external stakeholders' sense of the campus's organizational identity.

Research Participants

The participants in this study included the action research team and two subgroups that carried out the interventions: the academic intervention team and the non-academic intervention team. These intervention teams included members of the AR team and representatives from the college's constituent groups, including faculty, staff, and external community members. AR team members recruited external participants from known community leaders who had prior experience with the college and were actively involved in business and nonprofit organizations in the community. The internal members were campus-level decision-makers or key influencers assigned to the campus and connected to the college through either dual-reporting lines or a college-wide job function. These individuals served as key informants, "individuals with special knowledge or perceptions that would not otherwise be available to the researcher" (Gall et al., 2007, p. 243). Additional participants for the intervention teams were recruited directly through fliers and informational meetings. This small group of participants represented a purposeful sampling of the community. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling should "highlight what is typical, normal, and average" (p. 182) for the organization.

Action Research Team and Intervention Teams

The campus dean and community-based learning coordinator identified prospective faculty and staff participants for the study who were then invited to attend a briefing on the project. After the presentation, faculty members had the opportunity to

self-select to participate based on the AR team criteria. The requirements for study participation included: (a) teaching at least two semesters during the study period, (b) collaborating with a community agency, (c) desire to participate in academic community engagement professional-development activities, and (d) offering at least one community engagement project in one class per semester.

Community partners were identified from a list of prior community engagement sites provided by Border College's community-based learning coordinator and from the campus dean's list of community business leaders who had served on a campus or college committee, or participated in a community civic organization supporting the campus or college. These individuals were invited to meet with the campus dean and the study researcher to learn more about the study. The individuals self-selected after reviewing the eligibility criteria (see Table 3).

Table 3

Action Research Team

Name*	College or Community Role
Dr. Eastern	Campus dean
Ms. North	Campus associate department chair
Ms. South	Campus tenure-track faculty
Ms. West	College community-based learning coordinator
Ms. Fall	External president of local civic organization/adjunct faculty
Ms. Spring	Community nonprofit organization facilitator
Mr. Winter	Community chamber of commerce officer
Ms. Global	Campus chair; study researcher

Note. *All team member names are pseudonyms.

Members from the AR team who were teaching during the initial cycle of the study and additional faculty who self-selected to participate formed the academic intervention team (see Table 4). This group also included two community partners. These community members helped the participating faculty identify appropriate community partners based on the requirements and learning objectives of the respective course the faculty member would be teaching.

Table 4

Academic Intervention Team

Name*	College or Community Role
Ms. North	Associate department chair
Ms. South	Tenure-track faculty member
Mr. Reid	Tenured faculty member
Ms. Polis	Non-tenure-track faculty
Ms. West	College community-based learning coordinator
Ms. Spring	Community nonprofit organization facilitator
Ms. Fall	External president of local civic organization/adjunct faculty
Ms. Speaks‡	Limited-term faculty
Ms. Justice‡	Tenure-track faculty & local community leader

Note. *All team member names are pseudonyms.

‡ Joined the team at the beginning of Cycle 2.

The second intervention team (see Table 5) focused on non-academic engagement. The AR team and second intervention team designed two new community-engaged interventions. The first intervention focused on connecting faculty and students with area high schools to garner their impressions and perceptions of the college, and the

second was designed to engage community civic organizations across the service area in a series of lunch-and-learn sessions. The team was unable to execute the first initiative—the high school preparatory pipeline partnership—due to changes in the local school board leadership and loss of the chamber of commerce champion. However, the team did carryout the civic organization community-connections lunch-and-learn series.

Table 5

Non-Academic Intervention Team

Name*	College or Community Role
Dr. Eastern	Campus dean
Ms. Justice	Tenure-track faculty & local community leader
Ms. West	College community-based learning coordinator
Ms. Fall	President of local civic organization/adjunct faculty
Ms. Spring	Community nonprofit organization facilitator
Ms. Global	Campus chair, study researcher
Mr. Winter	Community chamber of commerce officer

Note. *All team member names are pseudonyms.

Other participants included faculty and student groups. Each of the seven participating faculty members included one class in this study. Class size averaged from 20–25 students, resulting in the participation of 120–150 students in one of the academic community engagement projects. These students were recruited indirectly through their course selection. The participating faculty added the following supplemental information to their course descriptions, as published on the college's class schedule and registration site: "This course contains an Academic Community Engagement (ACE) component. ACE pairs students and faculty with community members to collaboratively address

community-identified needs, enhance student understanding of academic content, and inspire civic responsibility." Any faculty member who chose to incorporate a community-engaged activity or project in their course used the preceding additional description. The faculty also reviewed the requirements for community-engaged activities with the students during the first week of classes to give them the option to withdraw if they could not meet these course requirements.

Informed Consent

Prospective members of the AR team and the intervention teams were provided a detailed briefing that included a review of the informed consent form (see Appendix B, C & D). The informed consent documents offered a detailed description of the project, its benefits and risks, and an explanation of how data would be collected, used, and maintained through the completion of the study. The briefings gave prospective participants the opportunity to ask questions and ensure that they understood the nature of their participation, the risks involved, their rights, and the researcher's responsibilities. A follow-up meeting was held with those who expressed interest in participating in the study. During the follow-up meeting, individuals completed the informed consent form and were given a copy for their records. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

The students in the participating classes were given an overview of the study and of their responsibilities as participants. As a part of the briefing, the students received a copy of the consent form as it was explained; they were asked to review it and return the completed form if they wanted to participate. Those who chose to participate in the study completed the consent form and returned it in a sealed envelope to a collection box

located in the department's office (See Appendix E). This measure was used to reduce any stress or perceived pressure from the instructor or peers to participate. From the pool of consenting students, a representative sample was invited to share reflections and participate in the post-intervention survey (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Collection Methods

The action research team engaged in simultaneous data collection and analysis throughout this study. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested that this simultaneous process is preferable in qualitative or mixed-methods research. Additionally, Yin (2014) recommended that a comprehensive case study should include up to six sources of data: "documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts" (p. 105). Table 6 illustrates the data collection plan and linkages to the research questions.

Table 6

Research Questions and Data Collection Methods

Research Question	Data Sources	Participants	Analysis Approach	Timeline
1. How do campus and community members enact community engagement interventions to enhance stakeholders' sense of organizational identity?	• Interviews with internal and external stakeholders • Focus groups • Review of archival records • Review of current documents • Observation of group processes	• AR team • Business and non-profit community leaders	• Constant comparative analysis • Inductive coding of emerging themes	September 2018–December 2019
2. How does the action research team enact boundary spanners' behaviors or functions in their community engagement processes?	• Individual interviews • Group interviews • Individual reflection documents	• AR team • Intervention teams • Faculty • Staff • External community members	• NVivo coding • Inductive coding • Analytic memos (qualitative)	September 2018–December 2019
3. How do faculty learning communities and communities of practice enhance/support faculty and community members' roles as boundary spanners?	• Interviews • Questionnaires • Individual and group reflections • Analytic memos	• AR team • Faculty intervention Team	• Inductive coding • Emerging themes • Analytic memos	September 2018–December 2019

Review of Archival Records and Documents

The AR team reviewed various documents recording the establishment and development of Eastern Campus from its inception in 1994 through 2017. These archival documents (including fact books, annual reports, the board of advisors' minutes, regional newspaper articles, and clippings maintained by the Border College public relations office) provided the group with an understanding of what the creators and constituents of Eastern Campus experienced as the campus developed and grew. Reviewing these documents benefited the AR team's efforts to understand the ideas, efforts, and goals of the individuals who helped build and grow Eastern Campus. These documents also reflected the words and language used by the first campus and its community members. Some of these documents contained demographic data that helped the team make factual comparisons between prior campus engagement and current activities (Creswell, 2014). The challenge with the documents and artifacts, however, was that, even when identified, some were not easily located, given the change in campus leadership over time and the college's merger (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interviews and Focus Groups

The initial interviews with internal and external stakeholders were semi-structured and open-ended, designed to establish a baseline of each individual's general perceptions of the campus's identity (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2009). Each interview was scheduled at a time and location that was convenient for the interviewee. The interviews were recorded, and the researcher took notes during each interview as well. Additional interviews were conducted with members of the AR and intervention teams and with community partners who participated in the study. Each interview included a consent and

protocol form that outlined the project. The AR team members provided prospective interviewees with a copy of the protocol before the interview. At the time of the interview, the researcher obtained their consent to record the interview and take notes as needed (Creswell, 2014).

Initially, focus groups were used to garner current campus and community members' perspectives in an effort to uncover the perceived problem. These focus groups also provided the AR team with historical information to triangulate the data in the reviewed documents. From the focus groups, individuals were identified for more in-depth interviews that could provide context to the issues, occurrences, or actions that may have contributed to the perceived problem. Generally, one of the challenges related to interviews is the potential for participant bias or distorted recollections of previous events or occurrences (Creswell, 2014). However, interviewing a cross-section of constituents and comparing the interview data with the documents gave the AR team a more in-depth understanding of the current problem. Additional interviews were conducted to gain insight into how internal and external constituents' awareness of the college's connections in the community may have changed. These interviews were also used to assess participants' impressions of the college after engagement initiatives were implemented.

Observations

Creswell and Poth's (2018) eight steps for preparing for observations offered guidance to the researcher as a participant in this study. These steps include (a) selecting the site to be observed; (b) identifying who or what should be observed; (c) distinguishing the type of observation based on the role of the observer; (d) designing and

using observational protocol to guide notes; (e) recording aspects, including descriptions and interpretations of observations; (f) being introduced to build rapport; (g) slowly withdrawing (after observing), using good observational techniques; and (h) preparing timely notes that are thick and rich in narrative descriptions.

Following Creswell and Poth's (2018) procedures, the site and who was to be observed consisted of the AR team and intervention teams. The researcher (and the facilitator) designed the observation protocol for a participant–observer. During the initial phase of the project, observations were documented in the form of reflective memos prepared from field notes and through review of transcripts of the AR team meetings. However, these notes were not as complete as anticipated. The AR team developed a more detailed observational protocol to help the researcher and team members maintain a more consistent practice of recording notes that were descriptive and reflective. These observations were used to document the researcher's observations of the AR project and team, as well as the team's activities and development throughout the study (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the researcher, as a participant in the AR team, maintained notes of what was observed in the team members' verbal interactions and impressions of the research, planning, and execution of actions taken by the teams. The researcher's observations were documented in field notes on an ongoing basis.

Meeting Notes

The team meetings were recorded and transcribed. Meeting action items and agendas were electronically maintained and shared with team members before and in preparation for subsequent meetings. These notes captured all team deliberations and decisions in order to provide context throughout the iterative processes and cycles of the

action research and data collection. This method is often useful to a researcher because it offers a snapshot of the AR team's impressions at the moment and allows for later reflection and exploration of the conditions surrounding these actions. Because these observations were valuable to the study, it was important for the researcher to ensure that they were included in the consenting process.

Data Analysis Procedures

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested that all data should be organized in an easily retrievable manner. To help manage the collection, sorting, and retrieval of the qualitative data, NVivo data analysis software was used. The AR team began by reviewing documents, including press releases, the Border College website, and newspaper articles, for general themes, which were then compared to themes identified in the initial informational interviews. As the study evolved, the AR team evaluated the data collected at the mid-intervention point—that is, the end of one semester—to inform additional iterations of the same or new interventions. Upon completion of the last iteration of the interventions, all collected data were reviewed by the AR team to identify significant themes and to evaluate how they had evolved.

Document Review

According to Bowen (2009), document review is a logical way to organize, analyze, and interpret data. In the context of this study, the term *document* refers to annual or periodic reports, books, diaries, letters, memos, papers, and websites, and these items were in digital, electronic, or hardcopy format. The benefits of using documents include easy access, little to no expense, and having a collective summary of information in a single location that might otherwise require significant effort to gather (Creswell,

2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). These strengths, however, can also indicate potential challenges, including determining the authenticity of the document, ensuring that the information is complete, and knowing the bias of the authors or creators of the document (Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Trustworthiness and Validity

Herr and Anderson (1999) outlined five criteria for evaluating the validity and trustworthiness of action research: (a) outcome validity—action is taken toward a resolution to the problem studied; (b) process validity—there are adequate processes used throughout the study to collect, analyze, and evaluate the data; (c) democratic validity—the research and action are undertaken in collaboration with stakeholders; (d) catalytic validity—the action research moves the researcher and participants to undertake new ways of being and of doing their work in response to the study; and (e) dialogic validity—the extent or depth of reflection by and among the researchers regarding their work and changes they have undertaken and are undertaking in response to the research (Gall et al., 2007). This study's research design provided for continuous reflection and action in response to the data collected at each stage of the study. The structure of the team meetings included periodic reflection on action taken, its impact, and the opportunity to make modifications during the next cycle.

Guided by Creswell's (2014) and Merriam's (2009) suggestions that *trustworthiness*, *credibility,* or *rigor* are the most significant assessment terms for qualitative research, this study incorporated three strategies for increasing credibility and validity: triangulation, member checks, and reflectivity (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) identified triangulation as the most recognized and effective process for strengthening a study's internal validity. Denzin (1978, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) defined triangulation as the use of "multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings" (p. 244). This AR study incorporated multiple methods of data collection, including interviews, focus groups, and review of archival records and current documents. The study also involved numerous investigators (i.e., members of the AR and intervention teams). By asking each team member to review the data to identify recurrent (i.e., key) themes at various periods of the study. The team narrowed these themes and assigned to them major codes reflecting the theoretical frameworks of organizational identity and community engagement. The AR team also analyzed the findings using thematic-based codes.

Maxwell (2013) also recommended using member checks as a viable means of validation. In this study, the member-check process incorporated the team members' review of preliminary data to verify or validate whether the information, as presented, reflected accurately the participants' experiences (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Ethical Concerns

The design of this study anticipated the ethical issue of positional influence, namely the role of the researcher as a dean and supervisor of faculty who participated in the study and the role of faculty as evaluators of student participants. To minimize risks, the study proposal was submitted to the University of Georgia's institutional review board for approval. Additionally, all prospective participants were informed of the

study's purpose and how the data would be collected and used. After this presentation, the appropriate consent forms were reviewed with the prospective participants, who were given a choice to participate or opt-out. To minimize risks to participants, their feedback was collected through an online process that did not require any personal identification. The feedback process was designed to gather demographic information about stakeholders (i.e., community members, college employees, and students). Internal stakeholders were given the choice to participate via in-person interviews or respond to written questionnaires, and to provide reflections through an electronic platform. The data collected were coded using non-personal identifiers, such as randomly generated numbers.

Researcher's Subjectivity Statement

When I joined the Eastern Campus leadership team in 2014, I was one of four department chairs, two African American females and two Caucasian males. Like the other department chairs, I was responsible for leading faculty from two diverse academic divisions, developing the academic schedule, coaching, and mentoring junior faculty, and supporting professional development activities. Through conversations with faculty, I gained insights into their interest in expanding their work and scholarly research and their concerns regarding campus stability. In this position, I participated in campus-wide planning for co-curricular engagement to expand the campus-community relationship. As a member of the college-wide Academic Community Engagement Committee, having helped with faculty community-engagement training opportunities along the community engagement spectrum, I was predisposed to this process as an intervention.

Throughout the study, it was essential for me as an inside researcher to be aware that team members might want me to direct the team's research and activities without them as equal partners. However, I believed it was essential to create an environment where all team members were comfortable and willing to contribute, question, and evaluate the problem and possible solutions. Working with Dr. Eastern and Ms. West, we mutually agreed to start team meetings with a process that created space for all members to share and ultimately take on more responsibility during the study. As a campus leader, this was not always easy; however, with a little encouragement and a group reflection process to open meetings, team members became more comfortable leading meetings, conversations, and activities.

Besides being an inside researcher, I also recognized that my prior experiences as a student, manager, and senior staff member in other higher education institutions informed my understanding of college and university identity. Having led institutional advancement programs at an access university and a small college within a larger university, I recognized that I might have brought a bias for identity development through advancement initiatives in my approach to this research. I shared these potential biases with the team and invited them to test and question my assumptions. Some of my prior experiences with external stakeholders in those institutions informed my thinking about race and gender in external relations initiatives. While my gender was a positive in many of those instances, there were times when the external constituents of a different race were more distant in their interactions or the level of access to information or assistance.

At the beginning of this study, I did not openly explore my race or gender's impact on my viewpoint in this study. During the early phase of the study, cycle one,

I did not have any overt experiences that called my race or gender question. However, as the project evolved, I became more aware of the impact of gender in negotiating support from some male colleagues. I was also predisposed to scheduling mixed race and gender teams for the non-academic intervention presentations. My concerns that race or gender might impact the potential external partners' perceptions went unspoken until the project was in the third cycle.

Lastly, at the beginning of the study, I acknowledged a perspective, belief, and perhaps even a bias that senior leaders and mid-level leaders must be involved in building and sustaining a college identity. As a measure of accountability, I shared my prior experiences with the AR team, and I encouraged the team members to share their previous perceptions and values regarding the role of senior and mid-level leaders

After starting this study, I was promoted to an associate dean position, which significantly influenced decision-making and more outward-facing (i.e., community-oriented) opportunities. While my promotion was an excellent opportunity to influence change, it also required a greater self-awareness and sensitivity to ensure that all AR team members were participating and not assuming that, with two associate deans on the team, less decision-making responsibility was required of them.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed in detail the action research methodology utilized in this study. It also established the foundational underpinnings of this qualitative case study, whose context was bounded by a single campus studied over a fixed period. The chapter also described the data collection and analysis processes, as well as how the research team ensured the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the data collected. Guided by

the iterative process of AR, the team was able to identify and test multiple interventions as it sought to address the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

OUR STORY

How to tell the action research team's story? At the outset of this research, it seemed that telling our story would be the pinnacle of the study, highlighting significant moments of planned change. However, during the final cycle of the project, the already "lowly swamp" (Schön, 1983) of AR was hit by the storm of COVID-19, producing unexpected gales of more considerable change. Nine weeks into the project's last cycle, the fundamental ways of doing business in higher education, and in the business and nonprofit communities with whom we worked, changed. This unanticipated storm intensified the ebb and flow of change and transition among faculty, staff, and community organizations. Consequently, the significant change required to respond to the growing pandemic disrupted the academic community engagement activities of most participating faculty and staff.

The primary objectives of this project were to establish a signature identity for Eastern Campus that focused on community engagement, and reconnecting campus and community partners. The study was built on the premise that growing the boundary-spanning capacity of faculty, staff, and community partners, and enacting diverse community engagement initiatives, could re-establish the campus's presence and role as a partner in the region.

This chapter chronicles the research team's journey, its growth, and the development of its boundary-spanning characteristics. During the last three years of this

project, the faculty, staff, and community partners in this study became a community of practice that studied their individual and collective community engagement work to transform the campus's identity for both internal and external constituents. Although adhering to the cycles of action research appears, on the surface, to be an orderly and straightforward process, AR represents a fluid model with discrete stages that can be ordered and reordered through several cycles (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). For instance, during the transitions between Cycles 1 and 2 in this study, these discrete stages were reordered. In addition to the natural adjustments that occurred after reviewing actions undertaken, more adjustments were implemented during Cycles 2 and 3. This chapter addresses these changes, their impact, and the team's efforts to complete the project.

Context

As discussed in Chapter 1, Border College's Eastern Campus, which was the focus of this study, is located 43 miles east of its parent institution, Metropolitan University, and more than 20 miles from the closest Border College campus. While Eastern Campus had once been a thriving and community-engaged campus, this was no longer true at the time this project began. It had lost its partnership with the regional career academy high school, and the decrease in its community-centric programs and activities did not support an identity reflecting what is unique, central, and enduring—which, as noted earlier, are the hallmark tenets of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organizational identity. Eastern Campus no longer had a unique identity or a sharp image (Hatch & Schultz, 2002) among its peers within the institution or its competitors in the region. To address these unparalleled circumstances and the decline in enrollment and community relations, the action research team agreed to undertake this study.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand how a group of internal and external stakeholders worked as a community of practice to assess the perceptions of a campus's organizational identity and enacted boundary spanning behaviors to develop a campus identity grounded in community engagement. Specifically, the study explored the boundary spanning characteristics, learning journey, and processes of non-senior leader employees in developing or creating a new organizational identity within a more extensive system. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do campus and community members enact community engagement interventions to enhance stakeholders' sense of organizational identity?
2. How does the action research team enact boundary spanners' behaviors or functions in their community engagement processes?
3. How do faculty learning communities and communities of practice enhance/support faculty and community members' roles as boundary spanners?

Permission to Conduct the Study

Our story began in 2017 when the campus associate dean, Dr. Eastern, approached me regarding his concerns that the regional community did not know Eastern Campus still existed and that members of the campus and geographic community were no longer connected in meaningful ways that enhanced recruitment, enrollment, or retention. Moreover, there was a disconnect, he noted, between roles and responsibilities for growing community engagement. Associate Dean Eastern sought my input on how

members of the campus community could study the problem further and find and implement potential solutions.

In 2007, Border College constructed and opened Eastern Campus's current location. Originally housed in a local shopping strip, the new campus was the outgrowth of community members wanting to have a state school in their neighborhood and of private citizens in the area donating the land for the new buildings. Two years after the Eastern Campus opened, the nationwide economic recession initially encouraged an expected increase in student enrollment. However, unforeseen changes in Border College's budget prompted a reprioritization of resources, and by fall 2012, resources were no longer being allocated to the campus to promote admissions and retention.

Over time, the campus's dual-enrollment, and career academy programs, which had strengthened enrollment and retention, began to falter. By 2016, neither program was being supported at its previous level, and enrollment in each had decreased. The number of college courses being offered at the area career academy was reduced, and staffing for the dual-enrollment program was reduced and then reassigned. Additionally, academic program offerings were cut back or centralized. Thus, within 5 years of the new campus's construction, it had lost its significant ties to the area feeder high schools, and signature academic programming in the fine arts, nursing, and education were eliminated. These reductions also impacted the recruitment of students interested in those programs.

In 2017, when the associate dean approached me, Dr. Eastern had been with the college for 2 years and had led Eastern Campus for 1 year. He was at a loss for how to best approach realigning relations with the area communities, which were no longer actively connected to the college or the campus. He was greatly concerned about the

ongoing decline in enrollment and the lack of strategies for retaining students. At this time, Eastern Campus's faculty and staff were also experiencing anxiety and a sense of identity loss from the recent consolidation with Metropolitan University. This merger also consolidated athletic programs, resulting in the elimination of women's softball and men's baseball, two of Border College's and the region's hallmark programs. The ripple effect of the consolidation included a reduction in recruitment and retention tools, leaving the campus with two magnificent facilities that were underutilized at best.

Following several meetings and conversations, Associate Dean Eastern agreed that this issue was worthy of more considerable investigation in the form of my action research study. He presented the proposed project to Border College's dean and received approval for continued exploration. In late 2017, I presented the conceptual framework and draft intervention plan to Dr. Eastern. Upon review of the proposed study and plan for the inclusion of diverse stakeholders, Dr. Eastern agreed to sponsor and champion this study (see Appendix A).

My Positionality

In my current role as associate dean, along with my previous roles as a department chair, my responsibilities included leading faculty members, supporting faculty members' professional development, guiding instructional enhancement, and supporting community-focused engagement initiatives. I worked regularly with faculty on strategies for expanding their course design, delivery formats, and pedagogy. Through ongoing conversations, I learned more about faculty members' interests in expanding their scholarly research as well as their concerns regarding campus stability and loss of identity both internally and among external constituents. In all of the roles in which I

served, I was able to gather data for future planning and participated in the decision-making processes around the development of academic and community engagement opportunities. My efforts in both areas provided the opportunity to impact department and campus decisions in support of a sustainable community engagement program across the campus.

Action Research Team

As discussed in Chapter 3, the recruitment process for the action research team was iterative, with several small group presentations made to potential members. The prospective members were invited to meet with me, the campus dean, and at least one other committee member to learn more about the study, the perceived problem, and AR methodology. The initial AR team members—the associate dean, Dr. Eastern, the academic community engagement coordinator, Ms. West, and the researcher, Ms. Global—considered all potential members to ensure that there would be a diverse representation on the team of thought, content areas, and experiences within the college and community. After each meeting of prospective participants, the team met to evaluate the need for additional candidates. These discussions always included asking and trying to answer the following questions: “Whose voice is missing in this conversation? Do we have a diverse representation of thought, content areas, and experiences? In due course, six additional individuals were identified as viable members, and two additions were ultimately made. With one of the additional faculty participants also being a resident in the community, there were two community members on the team representing nonprofit and civic organization leaders. What was missing was the voice of business leaders. Working with both community-focused members, we sought to recruit a representative

from the local chamber of commerce. The team believed that having a chamber representative would promote more extensive information sharing among the study participants, the campus, and the business community. As a result of these efforts, we were able to recruit the president of the local chamber of commerce.

The AR team also wanted to include other individuals who expressed interest in the project. These individuals were invited to participate as members of either the academic or non-academic intervention team. Establishing this additional team also created opportunities for newer faculty to contribute to this study and added different perspectives to the inquiry process.

Action Research Process

During the action research team's initial meeting, I provided an overview of the AR methodology and process. We discussed our roles and how team members using this model would, individually and collectively, be better situated to understand the status of the campus's identity, define the problem, and develop and evaluate interventions to resolve the problem.

I also explained my role as an insider-researcher and the importance of all team members contributing to the process. The AR team also established ground rules for future meetings, including agreeing upon the frequency and preferred length of sessions. The members agreed to meet bi-weekly for the first 2 months to ensure that everyone understood the problem, the project as it was proposed, and the AR process. Guided by Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) AR model, comprising multiple cycles (see Figure 4 and Table 7), the team completed four cycles, with the last cycle shortened due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

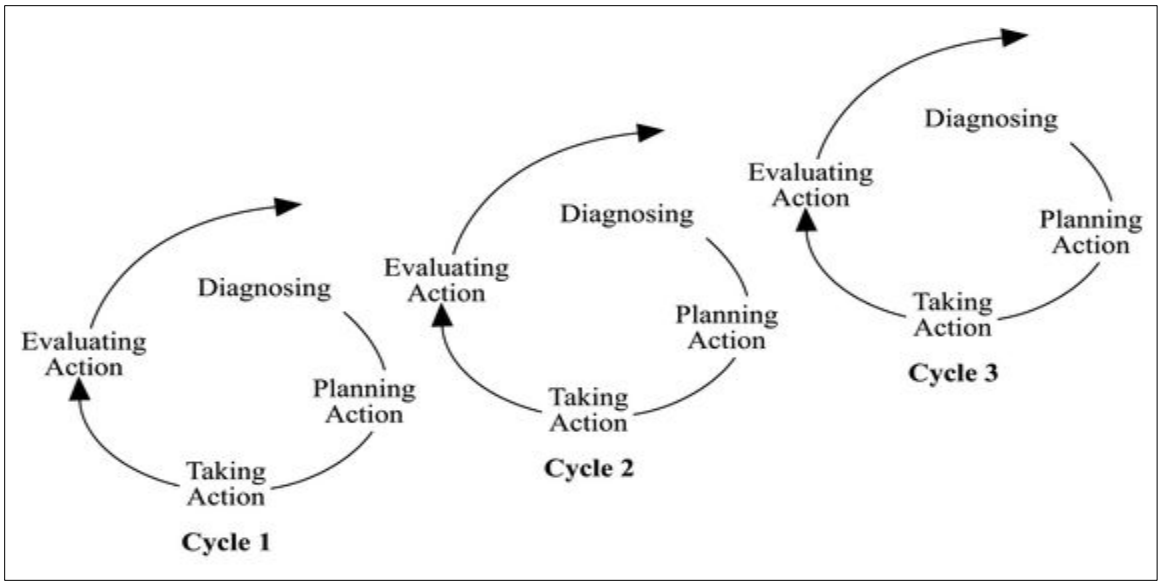

Figure 4. *Action Research Process.* Source: Coghlan and Brannick (2001), p. 19.

Table 7

Intervention Plan: Interventions and Timeframe

Interventions	Timeframe
Cycle 1: Initial Data Collection and Problem Framing	
Complete document review	June 2017–June 2018
Complete literature review	June 2017–August 2018
Conduct problem-framing interviews	June–August 2018
Form AR team	June–August 2018
Introduce AR team to AR methodology	June–July 2018
Analyze data from spring 2018 focus group and interviews	August 2018
Cycle 2: Initial Interventions	
Train AR team on community engagement and civic engagement processes	July–August 2018
Form campus–community partnership intervention team	August–September 2018
Analyze data from individual stories to assist in design of interventions	August 2018

Interventions	Timeframe
AR and campus–community intervention teams identify initial community engagement interventions	August 2018
AR and intervention teams implement initial academic engagement interventions	August 2018–December 2018
Evaluate initial interventions	December 2018
Cycle 3: Major Interventions	
Assess impact of initial interventions	January 2019
Expand second round of academic community engagement	January–April 2019
AR team implements non-academic community engagement initiatives	February–April 2019
AR team collects end-point data on participant experiences	April 2019
Hold ACE Showcase and collect community participants' feedback	April 2019
Conduct intervention team focus group	May–June 2019
Cycle 4: Closing Interventions	
Complete third round of academic community-based research project in selected courses	Fall semester 2019
Complete fourth round of academic community-based research project in selected courses	Ended March 13, 2020 due to COVID-19 closure of campus
Evaluate cycle	April 2020
Conduct final AR team interviews	May–June 2020

Cycle 1: Initial Data Collection and Problem Framing

In order to better understand the problem, contributing factors, and potential solutions, the AR team met with Dr. Eastern and me to explore the question, "What could we do to enhance the college's identity in the community?" During this meeting the team reviewed information collected during the Border College strategic planning committee's spring 2018 regional focus group. This information made clear that the participating

community members did not understand that Eastern Campus or Border College still existed. These participants also noted that the signage they saw for Metropolitan University led them to believe that the university was a 4-year-plus program within the community. That is, they did not understand that Border College and its five campuses were still a 2-year arm within Metropolitan University. Moreover, members of the community told us, “We don't know what you, [Eastern Campus] do.”

Action research team members reviewed campus and college communications such as yearbooks, annual reports, college catalogs, and newspaper articles. The team agreed that Eastern Campus lacked a clear and specific identity in the community. Moreover, there was a disconnect between campus and community programs and projects: The campus’s rich history before the economic downturn and consolidation of the college into the university system was largely unknown.

To validate their perceptions and understanding of the problem based on the initial data-collection activities, the members identified four area organizations to contact to explore their knowledge of the college and the local campus’s presence. Through meetings, interviews, and more in-depth conversations with the area interagency group, the AR team found that the majority of these individuals within the local community believed that the college, and Eastern Campus specifically, lacked a clear identity. Many of these individuals were also unclear about the campus’s current relationship to Metropolitan University.

Listening to team members’ reflections on their conversations with the area interagency group it became clear that AR team members and interagency participants wanted to make connections and create new opportunities for the college and community.

It was clear that no one person had the solution and that we would be learning our way through the research project. In the early meetings, members were very much like a group of novice boaters, committed to navigating uncharted waters to find a solution or solutions to the college campus's lack of identity.

Dr. Eastern issued the following charge to the group:

> *I see what we are doing as an application of the concept of performative utterance, an act of meaning that does not simply provide increased output from the organization, but fundamentally and deeply changes its nature. In our case, the official "mission" and "strategy" of the organization no longer defines its activities. I fundamentally believe this goes much further than the simple reformatting or "tinkering with" our organization, but it should result in a radical transformation of its identity.*

Ms. South shared, "I've felt that the team, as it was initially meeting, was extremely supportive of my novice capacity and a supportive of my growth."

Likewise, Ms. North reflected,

> *In my experience, which precedes community engagement for this particular project that we're working on, what I have found is that it has been extremely welcomed within the community. The community really does have a desire to be connected to the university system, to be a partner. My recent experience has been the same, but the difference is, with what we as a university have undergone as restructuring through consolidation, our identity is not well-defined within the community any longer.*

I noticed in these early meetings that internal members of the AR team were passionate about their work within the college and with their students. They reiterated their desire to participate in the development of new ways to connect their courses and students to community needs. Each member was also willing to contribute to the project if they could add value for their students, the campus, and their professional careers while not being overtaxed.

Planning Action. After reviewing the initial data collected from early critical incident interviews, document reviews, informal conversations with community members, and focus groups, the AR team began to identify potential interventions for addressing the problem. More specifically, they explored the viability of engaging in a campus-based strategic plan, developing a few targeted, "one-off" special events, and interceding in the campus's admissions and recruitment process (see Table 8).

Table 8

Non-Academic Community Engagement

Event	Date Scheduled	Held/Cancelled; Additional Notes
Joint County Emergency Local Planning Meeting	September 22, 2017	Held
10th Anniversary 2017–2018	October 17, 2017	Held
1 Act Play (10th Anniversary)		College cancelled
10th Anniversary baseball game with community partner	October 17, 2017	Held (with alumni team); Community partner cancelled
Special signage (10th Anniversary) beyond campus		Cancelled
Local Town Friendship Festival 2017	October 7, 2017	Held; Registration fee paid by associate dean

Event	Date Scheduled	Held/Cancelled; Additional Notes
L4GA LEA Grant Partnership Meeting (area county schools' headquarters)	January 5, 2018	Held
Joint County Emergency Local Planning Meeting	March 16, 2018	Held
Local high school outreach visit	May 16, 2018	Held
Campus & College Strategic Plan focus group 2018	July 11, 2018	Held
Joint County Emergency Local Planning Meeting	August 14, 2018	Held
Community & Campus Open House 2018		Cancelled
Local Town Friendship Festival 2017	October 6, 2018	Held; Registration fee paid by associate dean
Local County CP Board Meeting	October 11, 2018	Held; Dean's conference room
County Career Academy Job Fair	October 20, 2018	Held
Joint County Emergency Local Planning Meeting	December 7, 2018	Held
Disability Services Lunch and Learn	January 6, 2019	Held
Donuts with the Dean	March 7, 2019	Held; 10–12 people in the "donut part" of schedule
Joint County Emergency Local Planning Meeting	March 15, 2019	Held; 20–25 participants
County Career Academy Day	March 0, 2019	Held; 4 BC staff; Estimated number of interactions: 100
Local County Commissioner Meeting	March 26, 2019	Held; 15–20 participants
Etiquette Club Dinner and Presentation	March 28, 2019	Held; 10–12 students, 3 faculty
Campus Open House	April 11, 2019	Held; 50–60 people in auditorium

Event	Date Scheduled	Held/Cancelled; Additional Notes
Local Community Master Plan Meeting	April 16, 2019	Held; 15–20 participants
State Poetry Association Meeting	April 27, 2019	Held; Auditorium rental fee "waived"
Presentation at the local Rotary Club	May 21, 2019	Held; 2 BC presenters, 10–12 participants
Outreach meeting, area county sheriff's office	July 26, 2019	Held; 8–10 participants
National Night Out (area county)	August 6, 2019	Held; 3 BC staff, 50–70 interactions
Campus visit by Dr. Hicks (Emory)	August 13, 2019	Held
Local Town Hall Meeting (pollution incidents)	August 20, 2019	Held; 60–80 participants
Police Community Run Vendors Meeting	September 10, 2019	Held; 20–25 participants
Police Community Outreach table + runners from Eastern Campus	September 14, 2019	Held; 3 BC staff, 3 BC runners; associate dean paid runners' registration fees
Drug Free Grant Meeting (local county board of education)	September 23, 2019	Held; 10–12 participants
County Census Meeting	October 22, 2019	Held; 20–25 participants
Campus visit by congressman	November 6, 2019	Held; 35–40 students in auditorium
Facebook Training Event	November 13, 2019	Held; 60–70 people in auditorium
Metropolitan University provost visit	November 21, 2019	Held
Kiwanis-Salvation Army Holiday Outreach	December 13, 2019	Held; 40–50 interactions; Collected $10–$120

As Dr. Eastern reflected after the second AR team meeting,

In some ways, the issues faced by Eastern Campus reflect a configurational conundrum after its merger with Metropolitan University. The positioning of the College and its campus components was radically altered without a clear congruence between structural strategic requirements and the situation "in the field," so to speak. As the associate dean for Eastern Campus I believe we are required to take action to address its weakening enrollment, organizational distinctiveness, and environmental relationships. Without any official guidance from the school administration's upper echelons I thought we should start with a strategic plan; however, the dean of the college, Dean King [6] has decided we should engage a college-wide plan. In the meantime, we have been in a situation in which numerous activities have to be carried out without a mission or budget. As you know to date, we have hosted the campus's 10th anniversary, participated in the local town's Friendship Festival, the area community's Fuzz Run and a few other events. These various events have been tentative and uncoordinated initiatives. It does not seem practical to continue in this direction; we need to try something that is more comprehensive and that can fit within the college's operational framework.

Ms. North commented,

We do many one-offs within the college and within the community. I've always gone down that road. My introduction to really in-depth study on civic

[6] "Dean King" is a pseudonym.

engagement, service-learning, and community engagement—I was a fellow at the Atlanta Center for Civic Engagement, Service-Learning. The program, unfortunately, ended, and we haven't had a program here for several years, and I feel that that was a big loss to this institution because it really gave people who had an interest or were very reticent to enter this, because they weren't sure how, again, to logistically handle it, and then how do we make those contacts with the community. How do we incorporate that into our pedagogy and our classroom? This really gave that formal structure, that you could work with other faculty members within those confines and really, deeply immerse yourself in the concept, and realize that it's trial and error sometimes, but the benefits for the community, and the benefits for the students, and frankly, the benefits for the faculty outweigh—and not having a formal program set for the last couple years, I feel, has been a disadvantage for the institution.

To address these and other concerns, the AR team designed a multi-pronged community-engaged strategy. The members determined that formalizing linkages among college expertise, student interests, and various community organizations' needs could strengthen the campus identity for its diverse stakeholders. This process could also grow the community and boundary-spanning skills of middle-level employees and community partners. Ms. Spring, a community member of the team, was familiar with the campus and its students from her prior work with the local community partnership organization. During one of the initial meetings she shared,

We have had community service, academic engagement … relationships going back, oh, we're 10 years. And because of that continuity, even though each of us

> *has, over that 10 years, held different positions in our community and in the college respectively, we were still in each other's network.*

Ms. North also mentioned,

> *We've gone through a lot of change on this particular campus, and on all of our campuses post-consolidation. We have a new name, but we are a college within that new name. I think we have to reestablish our connection so that the community understands that we are here, we are still who we are, but we are larger, and there's a larger view, which I think is probably a very good thing, because those resources are now expanded for the community. I do see that it's reestablishing ourselves within the community and really showing them that we can work in partnership with one another to enrich the area in which this particular campus is involved in the surrounding areas.*

Taking Action. In due course, the AR team agreed that the campus and external community stakeholders could readily solve the identified problem through a single action. The team faced the critical challenges of determining what interventions could be pursued that would be mutually beneficial for campus constituents and the external community. While sometimes spirited, team members' discussions were critical to overall team dynamics and to ensuring that all members believed their voices mattered. During these conversations, team members' preferences for their individual work began to emerge as each person championed their work and expressed concerns about not being overburdened with trying to meet the expectations of the prospective partner, whether it was community-to-campus or campus-to-community. At some point between the seventh and eighth meetings, team members agreed to use community engagement interventions

as a means of improving campus–community relationships in order to establish a signature identity for the campus. This agreement was based on consistent feedback from the interviews, focus groups, small-group conversations, and team members' own varied experiences with community and civic engagement.

To help them learn their way through these unknowns and develop a collective/common language, the AR team agreed that additional training and professional development were needed. After reviewing the earlier presentations and goals for the project, they identified four professional development workshops (see Table 9) through which they would immerse themselves in the language and models of community engagement. Each workshop was designed to increase subject matter knowledge, strengthen group dynamics, and support team building. The workshop topics included understanding action research, boundary-spanning theories, and the use of community engagement strategies. These sessions helped ensure that the team had a common language and understanding of the problem they sought to address. The first workshop, a half-day session, focused on AR, small-group processes, and an introduction to community engagement strategies. The subsequent sessions centered on developing community engagement-infused courses, assessing community engagement initiatives, and community partner relationship management.

Table 9

Community Engagement Trainings and Workshops

Topic	Description	Facilitators
Introduction to Action Research, and ACE Your Course Design I: Guiding Principles and Best Practices for Academic Community Engagement	Participants will receive an overview of the guiding principles and best practices for academic community engagement, including service-learning and community-based research. They will also learn about resources for finding local campus-community partnerships and brainstorm ways to modify their courses.	Community-based learning coordinator; AR team lead researcher
ACE Your Course Design II: Syllabus and Critical Reflection Assignment	Participants will discuss the "10 Steps to ACE Syllabus Development." They will also identify which course outcome(s) could be met through an ACE activity and which critical reflection assignment(s) could be created to assess those outcomes.	Community-based learning coordinator; AR team lead researcher
Outcomes for Academic Community Engagement: A Necessary Starting Point for Assessment	Participants will receive an overview of guiding principles for crafting assessments to evaluate different types of learning outcomes. They will develop or refine their outcomes and begin developing assessment plans during the session.	Associate director of assessment and review; Community-based learning coordinator
ACE Your Course Design III: Civic Responsibility in Academic Community Engagement	Participants will think through interdisciplinary ways to dialogue with students both about how to define and create positive personal and social change through academic community engagement.	Community-based learning coordinator
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program	Community-engaged research curriculum—three modules: • Introduction to Community-Engaged Research • Introduction to Community-Based Participatory Research • Ethical and Practical Considerations in Community-Engaged Research	CITI Program online courses

After completing the four professional development workshops the AR team met five other times to begin identifying the community's current needs around growth and development, and the practical realities related to the type and amount of support the college, via Eastern Campus, could provide. While each person and their reciprocal supporting organizations wanted more than one project, the AR team, though optimistic, recognized this might not be plausible in a single semester and began to plan for multiple cycles of interventions that could support growth. Moreover, team members willingly struggled through the various options and opportunities to select interventions that would be valuable and yield the most significant results for the initial cycle. Throughout the discussions and deliberations, all members kept the critical question of improving the campus's identity at the forefront of the conversations.

Given the team members' commitment to improving the campus–community connection and their prior experiences working together, they moved through Tuckman's (1965) forming stage and into the storming stage. The storming stage, however, was rather short since each member determined that, even with sometimes competing interests between "town and gown," the solution to the overall problem required working together and finding ways to maximize mutual opportunities. With this agreement, the team moved into the norming stage, with members demonstrating a sense of cohesiveness and becoming comfortable switching roles when needed. After reaching consensus on the project process, goals, and objectives, the team decided to meet monthly. They solidified the project timeframe, data to be collected, and methods to be used. I found that this team of diverse professionals were willing to work through the unknowns of what specific interventions might best support improving campus identity. The AR and intervention

teams decided to have ongoing training during the semester to help them manage their relationships with and expectations of their community partners.

The non-academic intervention team members were ready to move forward and had a meeting scheduled for the end of September; however, the meeting was delayed due to the absence of a critical member, Mr. Winter. The meeting was rescheduled for October, at which point everyone was aware of Dean King's impending departure. For team members who had worked with the project since its inception, this departure created a sense of urgency around completing the project. Yet, for Mr. Winter, who joined the team after it was formed, there was no sense of urgency—and perhaps an air of distance in light of the anticipated change in leadership.

Based on my observations, this slower movement was also compounded by the changes in the process for approving community partner activities through the various university sub-systems. The non-academic intervention team also experienced challenges determining what aspect of the problem they wanted to tackle and what interventions should be pursued first. I believe this stemmed from Dr. Eastern's sense of helplessness to manage the disjointed messaging and activities initiated by the Border College's public relations and development offices. There were several occasions when the College's office of development would schedule meetings with potential donors or bring them to campus and want Dr. Eastern to be involved at the last minute. This behavior was a symptom of a larger problem, the College did not have a unified vision for Eastern Campus and its role within the College which was most noticeable in the College's publications and promotional materials. Additionally, there was an emerging concern about the announcement that the college dean, Dr. King, would be stepping down at the

end of the year. As a colleague and team member, I found it essential to support Dr. Eastern's effort to expand his boundary-spanning skills with internal partners to mirror his level of engagement with external stakeholders. It was more important for Dr. Eastern to become an advocate for himself as the campus leader, the campus as an important partner in the community, and for his work within his academic department.

Although Dr. Eastern attended the AR team meetings, he did not always attend the intervention team meetings. The intervention team meetings were developing into communities of practice, during which the participants regularly shared their incremental successes as they built the academic community engagement projects, trained students, and worked with their community partners. They also used this forum to diagnose problems they were experiencing, solicit feedback, and offer suggestions for alternate strategies for correcting problems or expanding programming. During these sessions, team members explored their roles as boundary spanners with the external stakeholders. One of the "ah-ha" moments occurred when team members began to consider their boundary-spanning experiences with internal stakeholders. Upon reflection, Dr. Eastern saw this as a missed opportunity: Had he been fully engaged with this team, such engagement may have provided the help needed to get "unstuck." However, my limited consultations were not sufficient; they were only helpful until the next event disrupted Dr. Eastern's boundary-spanning activities. In spite of these challenges, he continued to be an advocate for Eastern Campus and a respected supporter of the faculty at Eastern Campus. He also continues to be an advocate for the college in the larger geographic community.

Evaluating Action. In December 2018, the AR and intervention teams held a joint meeting to discuss our first round of interventions, share reflections on the team's experiences with their students and community partners, examined what the team learned as a group, and consider what should be adjusted for the next cycle. During this meeting, the team members shared their successes, failures, and/or challenges.

Ms. Fall commented,

> *I feel like I did a decent job, not a great job, but a decent job at the front end and the back end of the semester and then in the middle—it was very gray and fuzzy, and I didn't do a lot to continue, meaning the continual dialogue about ACE through the semester. Does that make sense? I planned out that semester, although I think I could have done a better… we did have an exit interview, in fact, with my partner organization who came in, so I think we've addressed some of those issues.*

As Ms. North reflected,

> *I think … what I would have done differently as far as set up is once I received the information from Ms. Spring with the contacts, I think it would have been a good idea for me to contact them first before I had the students contact them because Ms. Spring was the one that set it up just to give them, "Here's my name. Here's my information. If you have any questions. Not that anyone said that they had any problems. But, just to answer and navigate it a little more fully …, I would have definitely done that, I think that would have been a good thing to do."*

Similarly, Ms. Polis indicated,

> *I wish I could have done maybe the campus outreach a little bit better, the YMCA project … that didn't—I mean that wasn't as I would like. We definitely have some work to do there. I don't know that they know much about us at all, really. I don't think we have much of a presence. I don't know if I could say certain characteristics, I don't live in the community either. So, I feel like I kind of have a hard time with that, knowing what the thoughts are.*

According to Ms. Fall,

> *I think just by doing this, we're building some of that capacity and opening the doors because, as Ms. Polis pointed out, I am the community. So, I do get the benefit of talking about it like that to the people of the chamber, to Kiwanis. I think we should present at Kiwanis, by the way, and Rotary and Lions Club.*

Ms. South followed with,

> *On the topic, present, on how [we are] perceived as a team member and how … we enact our role in the community, I believe we're improving. My projects were six different projects, so it's sort of like six different teams of students doing their stuff. So, I wanna say that it's a big task that I have. And I have at least four different community partners, and that adds to the complexity of what I did.*

Ms. Spring summarized the group's discussion, noting, "All of this communication has been internal, within the college, between the students, between the partners, within the ACE project itself. When the students talk about their involvement with ACE, in the community, you will have arrived."

The December 2018 evaluation session revealed several lessons learned: (1) Faculty needed to be more active with the community partners throughout the engagement; (2) it was not sufficient to introduce the partners and students and then let them proceed on their own; (3) faculty, staff, and community partners needed to learn and practice their boundary spanning skills; (4) not all participating faculty had the same level of passion or commitment to fully implementing the project; and (5) creating a model community of practice would help AR and intervention team members develop boundary spanning capacities.

While some intervention team members made gains securing a community partner and establishing a mutually beneficial project, others were less successful. Dr. Reid, who had actively participated in the workshops and intervention team meetings, was never able to gain enough traction with a community partner and project to benefit his students or a community business or nonprofit. It became apparent by the middle of October that he was not able to actualize the training and cross campus–community boundaries.

Consequently, Dr. Reid asked to be released from the project. His departure reduced the diversity of the intervention team and was a disappointment to team members who believed they were becoming a CoP. Prior to his departure, I noticed during a few meetings that some team members were becoming frustrated with Dr. Reid's disconnect. However, they continued to offer suggestions and ideas to assist in his efforts:

Ms. North commented,

> *So, I wanted to maybe do it a little bit earlier so that I could have, and I had document checks as they went through: "How are your interviews going? Show me the notes from the interview. Now, what research have you done and let's look*

> *at that and let's look at the outline format." I would like to have had those checkpoints earlier on instead of this week, this week, this week, and then them present. I think it would have been beneficial to the students.*

As Ms. South reflected,

> *The one thing about the first course was that I did a poor transition between the summer and the fall. That was really hard. A poor transition on both parts, between the community partners and me, and between me and the students and the previous students and the new students, and more needs to be done.*

According to Ms. Fall,

> *I do think that [the students] started to see themselves as that … as boundary spanners, and lots of their reflections there at the end, not in the beginning but definitely there at the end, and then tying in that community aspect, that community question that we used, I found it really interesting because, [from] my perspective, I really wanna tie in what they said about community and bring that into their work with the kids at the housing authority because that builds mentorship…. [S]o we're there to tutor, but the benefit of that is the mentorship …along with it, so they get the benefit of saying, "I'm in college, and this is how I got here, and this is what I want to do when I grow up."*

Ms. Spring added,

> *And all of this being said, that is, essentially, the note in my reflection, what I wish I had as the community representative who connects volunteers is this pool of students who have some burgeoning realization that they can be of benefit to their community and get something from it, that there's something in it for them*

> *as well. If I had access to offer additional opportunities to engage and to mentor them as volunteers…. There's that spectrum of, "I came, I did, I'm done" up to, "I have a passion, follow me"—and everything in between, and you grow in that spectrum, the more you practice volunteerism, and the more you understand how it fits into your life. But sometimes you need a little coaching, and that's one of the things our organization, me personally, does particularly for young volunteers is helping them find their feet. That's a win for the community partner, [and] that's a win for the school.*

Ms. South summarized the team's journey and Dr. Reid's challenge:

> *All of this is just learning. And we need to know that this is the first time, and it doesn't mean, as I tell my students, they don't understand that when your experiment doesn't work, that doesn't make you a failure or that you need to give up. That just tells you that didn't work, and we'll try something else.*

Cycle 2: From Babbling Brook to the Rapids

Cycle 2 began with two changes within the group. First, Dr. Reid resigned from the intervention team because he had been unable to enact a community-engaged project in his class that would be mutually beneficial. While he expressed regret for leaving the project, he was unable to offer unfettered support. I later learned that his lack of enthusiasm was not related to the uncompleted project but instead was an indirect response to other curricular changes and personal matters. The AR team accepted his resignation and wished him well; recognizing the loss brought on by his departure, the members determined that at least three other faculty should be recruited. The committee had already identified three additional faculty who might be interested in participating as

members of the intervention team. I met with each prospective faculty participant to provide an overview of the project and AR methodology, and two of them who had been observing the team's work during the fall agreed to join the intervention team. Both of these faculty members had prior academic community and civic engagement experience. To prepare them for team membership, they were asked to attend a condensed academic community engagement workshop within the first month of onboarding. The workshop provided the essential framework of the AR team's academic community engagement model as well as the standard language used by the team. Only Ms. Justice attended the workshop—which would later be problematic for Ms. Speaker. The loss of an intervention team member, however, was not the most challenging event that would occur that December. Like many others in the "lowly swamp" (Schön, 1983), the team would also have to wrestle with new changes at the college level.

Planning Action: Charting the Course for Round 2 of Engagement. With the first cycle's evaluation completed, the team worked to design and develop the next round of initiatives. During this cycle, the team set out to achieve the following objectives:

- all faculty would have an in-class workshop on the foundations of community engagement from the college's perspective and a workshop on engaging the community from a community partner's perspective;
- all faculty participants would actively practice their boundary-spanning skills by initiating contact with community partners at least three times: at the beginning of the engagement, at the midpoint of the students' participation, and at the end of engagement project;

- the non-academic intervention team would conduct community conversations with nonprofit civic groups within a three-county area, and the campus associate dean would host campus-based visits for area partners that would showcase an academic program during a class visit and conversation with a few faculty and students; and,
- an end-of-term ACE Showcase with student poster sessions and conversations with community partners would be held.

With its charge clearly defined, the academic intervention team members worked with one another to revise and update the spring projects, and to set pre-planning meetings with their community partners in order to establish more precise lines of communication and agreed-upon expectations. The two new members were given a brief onboarding during the first AR team meeting in cycle 2. The researcher and other members of the AR team were left with the impression that these new team members were conversant in the process, understood the expectations, and had the boundary-spanning skills needed to be successful. They had been engaged in the meetings, were perceived to be effective communicators, and had prior experience with community engagement initiatives—that is, they had participated in the CoP small-group meetings based on their work duties. The in-class workshops were scheduled for all faculty participants. These sessions and the supporting materials were designed to help both students and faculty understand their role and the opportunity to strengthen the campus's identity as a community-engaged campus. The faculty incorporated key language in their course descriptions on Metropolitan University's registration site, in their syllabi and stand-alone announcements, and in their courses' online repositories. For instance, the

ACE course registration and syllabi notice read, “This course contains an Academic Community Engagement (ACE) component. ACE pairs students and faculty with community members to collaboratively address community-identified needs, enhance student understanding of academic content, and inspire civic responsibility.” Additionally, the following language was printed in a course handout and in the online repository:

> Academic Community Engagement (ACE) at Border College is the intentional pairing of faculty and students with community members to collaboratively address community-identified needs and to create positive personal and social change. This process empowers, equips, and supports Border College students and faculty to deepen learning and enliven teaching through careful listening, critical reflection, and the application of their academic knowledge and skills. ACE includes the pedagogies of service-learning and community-based research but extends to other community-based learning opportunities that enhance student understanding of academic content and inspire civic responsibility. As expressed in Metropolitan University’s mission, “The university’s presence in the … metropolitan area provides extraordinary experiential learning opportunities and supports the work of faculty tackling the challenges of an urbanizing nation and world.” Many Border College students have an innate connection to the communities in which the college campuses are geographically located; they are from and continue to be part of these communities while in college. ACE, thus, supports the university’s mission by affirming the importance of place and the ability of our students and faculty to help address their communities’ needs.

The non-academic intervention team regrouped, updating their intervention plans for the spring 2019 term. During the AR team's January 8, 2019, meeting, we discussed building the non-academic program around two key strategies: hosting associate dean coffee-and-conversation meet-and-greets with area businesses, and engaging in community conversations with area civic organizations such as Kiwanis, Lions Club, Rotary, and the area chamber of commerce business-breakfast forums. The campus visits would allow partners to tour the campus and visit classes that support academic pathways to careers in their industries. It was known that these new initiatives would be undertaken with the support of Mr. Winter, the community chamber of commerce officer. Regrettably, the anticipated support did not occur.

Taking Action: Critical Incident. Shortly after Dr. Reid departed, we experienced a critical incident that had the potential to shift the entire project. What began as a trickling rain, the announcement that "Dr. King, dean of Border College, intended to step down from this role at the end of the academic 2018-19 year" would become an unexpected rainstorm. Not long after this initial announcement, members of the college community began to speculate about the college's future. However, many were encouraged by the announcement of a search committee being supported by a national search firm. The committee began its work, and various constituency leaders were invited to speak with the national search staffer in early November. Several of the campus and college mid-level leaders expressed their appreciation for being invited to share their thoughts. The Eastern Campus community and members of the AR and intervention teams left for the fall break believing that the status quo would continue for

the remainder of the academic year. The team also believed it would be able to make progress since Dean King had already approved the project.

Unfortunately, on December 16, 2018, the president of Metropolitan University informed the college community that instead of Dean King continuing through the end of the academic year, his tenure would end sooner, and Border College would appoint a new dean effective February 1, 2019. This announcement had a chilling effect on the committee, Associate Dean Eastern, and me, as the researcher. Dr. Eastern and I met separately with Dean King following this announcement. He assured us that the study could proceed as planned. Despite uncertainty about the level of support the new dean would provide, the AR team agreed to continue with the second round of academic engagement intervention projects and to launch the non-academic intervention strategy as planned.

While waiting to meet the new dean, the AR and intervention teams pressed on with the first non-academic event, participating in the regional community Martin Luther King, Jr. Day service project with the local high school. The AR and intervention team members, as well as students who had participated in an ACE course in the fall, volunteered to represent the campus in one of two ways: staffing the college information booth or joining one of several service projects. Eastern Campus's Office of Student Life gave us branded t-shirts to wear for this event. From my perspective, participating in these civic engagement activities represented an excellent kick-off for our boundary-spanning non-academic engagement activities and offered great promise despite the misgivings that both Associate Dean Eastern and I had about what was to come for the college (Figure 5).

Figure 5. *Community-Engaged Activities.*

On the heels of team's participation in a great service-learning day, Dr. Eastern and I met to develop a strategy to present this study and gain the new dean's support. We agreed that we would both include it in our overview of initiatives in our work-plan for the year. Furthermore, Dr. Eastern as the Associate Dean for Eastern Campus would meet first and provide an overview of the study, and then I would present the study, the projected outcomes, and benefits for the College. In early February 2019, Associate Dean Eastern debriefed our new dean, Dr. Downton[7], who was receptive to the study. A few weeks later, I met with Dr. Downton and presented the current status of the study and anticipated outcomes including the transferability of knowledge gained to replicate the initiative on another campus.

[7] "Dr. Downton" is a pseudonym.

While the first two months of the new year felt tenuous to Associate Dean Eastern and me, the academic team continued with its work. Once the team learned that Dr. Downton was amenable to the project, the non-academic intervention team moved forward with its intervention strategies. The non-academic intervention team began scheduling meetings and presentations with area civic groups, school district superintendents, and small to mid-size businesses.

Both intervention teams proceeded with their initiatives. During this time, our original team members were able to refine their projects. Working with their community partners more consistently, they scheduled check-in meetings and provided orientation sessions to their students before the students entered the community partners' systems. The AR and intervention teams continued to experience an unpredictable flow of activity during this cycle. The teams met formally seven times during the spring semester. Both intervention groups held separate meetings to review their activities and make modifications to future actions based on their experiences in community partner meetings, their review of student progress reports, and their delivery of each presentation. Within this phase, the non-academic intervention team engaged actively in continuous planning, acting (i.e., meeting with various community groups), reflecting on the meetings individually and collectively, and, finally, revising the presentation or communications process for the upcoming community meetings. The CoP met frequently during this term to discuss what was working and to process ideas and suggestions for addressing aspects of their engagement and boundary-spanning activities that were not working or were not at the achievement level they desired.

During one of our mid-term meetings, Ms. North highlighted the importance of her boundary-spanning role:

> *I am also aware that contact with community partners is extremely important and valuable. I've communicated with our partners to introduce myself and let them know that I am available to them. I also formally thank them for their willingness to work with our students before and after each project.*

By the midpoint of the project, the AR and intervention teams shared a growing sense of accomplishment with the project and identified multiple outlets for sharing the project's progress to date. In February 2019, a smaller group of the team presented at the SoTL Commons Conference, an international conference focusing on the scholarship of teaching and learning. In April, this group, along with one of the AR team's community partners, presented at the regional Gulf-South Summit on Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Through Higher Education conference. Building on the momentum of the first presentation, the positive feedback from academic community partners regarding their student engagement projects, and the non-academic intervention team's presentations to area civic organizations, the joint teams determined that the last intervention for this cycle would comprise a community showcase that amplified our engagement with both academic and non-academic community partners.

The showcase featured student poster presentations and demonstrations of the work undertaken on behalf of or in conjunction with the community partner organizations. During the poster session, committee members circulated through the space, providing anecdotal information, and assisting students as needed. After the poster session, a brief history of the project was provided, and then ACE students and faculty

hosted interactive lunch-and-learn conversations with community partners. These guided conversations focused on campus identity and the community members' perceptions.

Each table at the lunch-and-learn included an ACE committee member, at least one student, and four guests from the community. The questions that guided the conversations were designed to garner a better understanding of the community members' perceptions based on their interactions with Eastern Campus's internal stakeholders. A summary of the responses is listed in Table 10. The afternoon ended with guests completing an exit ticket, which reflected their dream campus and community interaction. The information captured was used to inform the planning for the fourth and final cycle.

Table 10

ACE Showcase Lunch-and-Learn Questions and Responses

Question	Responses
What is your general perception of Border College, Eastern Campus?	• "Students—great engaged/motivated/master of subject, growth, good for community" • "Some engaged students" • "Students prepared & know content/students need to work on professional dress" • "Building relationships between school and community" • "Campus looks nice, it is small—don't have to search for programs and services" • "Professors are local or care about local community" • "Teachers care about individuals" • "Good transfer school"
Do you consider this campus a community resource?	• "Yes, but unsure of what resources can be utilized at [Metropolitan University]" • "Yes, but unsure of what community resource could provide to our students" • "Yes, but you need to be more present in the surrounding community, more to signage at community organization events" • "Would like to see Health fair w/vendors, Lunch & Learn, Coffee & Call once a month w/ community partner or at beginning of semester"

Evaluation. During the end-of-term review and evaluation session, Ms. North noted,

> *We have created a faculty learning community during this project that has been well-established, and I believe will continue. We have participated in various seminars, meetings, and activities to support and learn from one another. In my opinion, this particular group of faculty understands the value of academic community engagement for ourselves as scholars, our students, and the community.*

The non-academic intervention team moved forward with community speaking engagements that introduced the project to the various organizations. These sessions created a new awareness of the Eastern Campus and provided an opportunity for individual members of the organizations to schedule campus visits and tours, or volunteer to support career planning events sponsored at the campus.

Cycle 3: Moving into Calmer Waters, Leading Progress

Planning Action. During Cycle 3, members of the group began taking ownership of the process of engagement and building a campus identity, and the AR and intervention team members enacted their boundary spanning skills as leaders. The team again experienced change when I was asked to take on new responsibilities within the college which reduced my time spent on Eastern Campus. I still had a voice as an associate academic dean to champion boundary spanning faculty engagement and professional development. My new role also gave me a broader platform for supporting work across the college, which meant I could no longer advocate for Eastern Campus with the same laser focus. The change in my role also meant that Dr. Eastern needed to take on a higher level of participation and advocacy for the project, the campus, and community activities. In addition, two members of the AR team—Ms. North and Ms. West—took on new roles within the college. Ms. North's new position required that she move to another campus. Though she was able to remain on the AR team, she left the academic intervention team, which meant there would be one fewer community project for fall term. Ms. West, the academic community engagement coordinator, accepted a new position within the university effective November 2019. With this change in her

duties, the group decided it was time for someone else to take on the CoP facilitator role, and in January 2020, Ms. Fall did so.

Although Ms. North and Ms. West had been active champions, their departure created more opportunities for the remaining members to step up and to share the responsibilities of training and peer coaching through the CoP. During a fall meeting of the CoP, the faculty and community champions agreed that having a peer forum was essential, and the members established a meeting schedule to continue their reflection and improvement planning and practice.

Taking Action. Even with the changes in the team composition, we began to see a way forward. Several of the academic intervention team members continued to meet during the summer to envision new opportunities for engagement projects and to revamp prior projects based on feedback from the community partners they had worked with, from those attending the spring ACE Showcase, and from the AR team community members. Many of these members reported a shift in their work and approach to building relationships with community partners. Specifically, they noted a change in how they were working together and becoming more effective advocates for the campus needs, and how their students were gaining increased opportunities to engage the communities in which they lived and worked. Members of the intervention team were establishing the "ACE way" of connecting the college's mission and community needs as a model program for the campus and perhaps the college.

Cycle 3 interventions focused on growing the capacity of the faculty and community participants, and cultivating new team members for spring 2020. Even with positional changes, the transition from Cycle 2 to Cycle 3 was unified. AR team members

and group facilitators used the lessons learned from Cycle 2 to revise the recruiting and onboarding processes for new faculty and community partners.

The major challenge during this phase of the work was making the transition to a sustainable project that would be championed by senior administrators at the college level. While recognizing its success, administrators expressed moderate interest in using the model on other campuses to reinvigorate the campus–community connections there. The process for making that transition was not apparent at the beginning of Cycle 3. However, as my new role evolved, I was able to introduce this model to faculty and community constituents at the college's North Campus.

Evaluation. As a researcher–participant, I observed the transformation of the team between Cycles 2 and 3. There was an affirming development of mutual commitment to the project, with various members of the AR and intervention teams taking on the roles of leader, cheerleader, convener, and organizer as needed to move the teams' presentations forward. These individuals also stepped-up to help faculty and community members develop more successful boundary spanning skills. When there were miscommunications among the group or between community partners and faculty or students, the relationships that had formed were strong enough that, after the first of three incidents, I was not asked to intervene; the community partner could meet with the faculty member and develop a plan to restore faith in the program and the process. As a team, we were building sustainable programs that connected Eastern Campus faculty, staff, and students with the communities in which they served and many of them lived. A few members of the team offered ACE activities in their summer classes, while others continued to attend community civic organization meetings and the area interagency

group's meetings. We were reminding the community of our presence and the various areas of expertise we could share, and we were also listening for opportunities to volunteer our support in areas of mutual interest.

Cycle 4: Charting a new course in familiar waters

Planning Action. With three of the committee members, including myself, ensconced in our new roles, it became even more important for the team members to enact their boundary spanning skills for the project as well as their own professional development. The group met in August 2019 to plan the next level of training as well as one-on-one meetings with the former academic community engagement coordinator and the external community agency partner. Building on lessons learned, the team determined the following: the last cycle would include both semesters of the academic year; faculty would only implement ACE programs or projects in one class; the faculty and community partner communications strategy would be standardized; and new faculty members would shadow or meet with the CoP group in the fall and could join in the spring or summer term after they completed an onboarding program. Guided by best practices in faculty learning communities and by experiences of the newer team members during Cycle 3, the academic intervention team decided to meet every 3 weeks instead of monthly. The non-academic intervention team would continue the additional external relations strategies of hosting civic and business leaders for campus visits, and would host the end-of-semester showcase lunch-and-learn. Lastly, the AR team decided that members would meet monthly.

Taking Action. Even though the team had a defined plan, not all elements of that plan went according to the goals set forth at the beginning of the term. The ACE projects

and CoP group continued as planned, and the AR team's monthly meetings focused primarily on updates. There was great passion for the work, though many were finding their energy waning as additional assignments and responsibilities were added to members' responsibilities. With teaching loads increasing, the new faculty did not join the project, and the external presentations were not completed. The group was planning and looking forward to the end-of-term showcase. However, with the advent of COVID-19, all work transitioned to online formats, leaving the group with less than 3 weeks to plan and act. This shift resulted in most of the ACE class projects ending sooner than planned, and in the cancellation of external visits and the showcase. The team, however, did not concede defeat and close the project. We met in April 2020, and during that conversation, the team made a collective decision to move forward, meeting and exploring opportunities to develop their capacity as engaged scholars while also identifying ways to stay connected to the community remotely.

During the April meeting, Ms. Fall shared, "I also had a series of guest speakers who are joining my class via WebEx as a means of continuing our community engagement connection." Ms. Justice mentioned,

> *The grant project with [Eastern High School] is being extended to the fall. We, the faculty, and students, are working digitally to continue working on the project. Having this extension will allow us to get more community partners involved and continue with the area high school.*

Ms. Fall shared, "Some of us are just trying to get to the end, like its two weeks away, and we are almost there." Dr. Eastern reminded the group, "As you know at the end of

the semester, I will become the Associate Dean for another initiative. This remains my campus." Ms. Spring, the community partner, also highlighted,

> *I am working on a grant that applies to what Ms. Justice is working on. We want to make sure that you guys want to be a part of the plan. We have a large youth component. So, this is an opportunity for sustainability funds to support this college-community partnership."*

Ms. Fall contributed,

> *I don't know how many of us are teaching this summer and looking for projects to incorporate. I know my students will be doing census work, and if others are looking for a project, we can use the help. This is targeted for our county. It can be done remotely, and we are making a plan to engage them in a remote kind of way.*
>
> *I have connected a national nonprofit summer camp program that is working locally with other nonprofits that support special needs camps. They are facing a great deal of uncertainty in how to connect college students as counselors. They have created kind of a collaborative and are looking for creative ways to engage in remote and online. Maybe some research opportunities.*

Likewise, Ms. Spring shared,

> *Our plan, prior to the current situation, was to utilize students in large group situations assisting people with completing their census … to have them create fliers and promote participation in the community and on campus. Currently everything we are working on is now social media-based…. I have begun working*

with Ms. Fall and her class about developing an attractor tool for the summer's activities.

Ms. Speaker reflected, "This meeting has given me an opportunity to think about some things and ways to continue," and Ms. West concluded,

In my new role I will have the opportunity to work with developing "signature experiences within the classroom," so I will be in touch with you all as I learn more about how I can be helpful. There have been some conversations about what role I will have. I'll be working with them in some capacity.

Conclusion

Though this study came to an end without a grand finale or celebration of the work, it was nevertheless a journey that allowed a team of faculty, staff, and community stakeholders to find their way. During the course of the project, team members developed or expanded their communications and listening skills, fostered an appreciation for the scholarship of engagement, and enhanced their confidence to lead across the boundaries within the college and beyond the campus. The team built the skills and language for growing a community-engaged identity for Eastern Campus. During the last meeting and exit interviews, the AR and intervention teams developed a list of recommendations for continued engagement and sustainable momentum. These recommendations included implementing a semester-long onboarding process for faculty, implementing a prospective community partner meet-and-greet, maintaining the end-of-semester ACE Showcase, and expanding campus-to-college presentations.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

This action research study's focus was the pervading sense of identity loss experienced by Eastern Campus's leadership and campus community after the merger with Metropolitan University. The purpose of the study was to explore how campus and community members, operating as boundary spanners, used community engagement initiatives to improve internal stakeholders' sense of organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985) in the context of a 2-year regional campus of a multi-campus university. This research centered on faculty, mid-level campus leaders, and community partners as the primary research participants. Through a multi-cycle process, the AR team members explored the state of the campus community in the context of the college's organizational merger, designed and implemented interventions to advance the campus's identity, and learned about themselves as individuals and team members. This chapter presents the study findings in a narrative format. The findings emerged from a qualitative analysis of data collected from AR meetings, observations, focus groups, and individual interviews with campus leaders, faculty, and community partners who participated in the study. The finding narratives are organized by research question, key findings, and associated sub-findings (see Table 11).

Table 11

Summary of Research Questions and Findings

Research Question	Key Findings	Sub-Findings
1. How do campus and community members enact community engagement interventions to enhance stakeholders' sense of organizational identity?	An interdisciplinary model of community engagement supports organizational identity enhancement.	• Identity development requires relationship building. • Collaboration between campus and community partners enhances organizational identity development.
2. How does the action research team enact boundary spanners' behaviors or functions in their community engagement processes?	Effective communications between campus and community members are critical to the development and sustainability of community engagement initiatives.	• Regular and ongoing dialogue builds collective knowledge of current community issues. • Ongoing dialogue and sharing builds trust.
	Community engagement projects foster collaboration and relationship building between and among college and community members.	• Collaboration promotes collective ownership and commitment to the project. • Community engagement strengthens stakeholders' sense of commitment to the community and college.
3. How do faculty communities of practice enhance/support faculty and community members' roles as boundary spanners?	A community of practice provides a safe environment for idea sharing, problem solving, and creating new work.	• Through a community of practice, faculty and staff gain confidence in building boundary spanners' skills. • A community of practice promotes communications, creativity, and innovation.
	Successful boundary spanners are part of a larger community of practice.	• Participating in a community of practice supports novice community-engaged scholars.

Research Question	Key Findings	Sub-Findings
		• Active community of practice participants promote shared leadership. • Through a community of practice, a group can effectuate change through their study of a problem and action taken.

Research Question 1 Findings

This study began with the formation of an AR team that included faculty and staff from Border College's Eastern Campus and community members from the geographic area. As the team studied the problem associated with the campus's identity loss, the members determined that additional stakeholders should be added to the group and established two intervention teams. Working together, these stakeholders refined the study problem and developed and implemented an interdisciplinary community engagement model for supporting the campus's organizational identity development. It is essential to underscore that analysis of the team members' individual reflections, meeting minutes, and responses provided during the individual team members' exit interviews emphasized that organizational identity and community engagement initiatives require meaningful collaboration between campus and community stakeholders (i.e., partners). The exit interview responses also stressed the importance of group members learning how to lead change initiatives from their mid-level and limited senior-level positions.

Key Finding: An Interdisciplinary Model of Community Engagement Supports Organizational Identity Enhancement

After analyzing various organizational artifacts, including annual reports from the college president and foundation, regional area newspapers, organizational news publications, and the college's website before and after its merger with Metropolitan University, the team determined that more than one intervention was needed. The planned interventions were designed to address the general sense of identity loss experienced by internal stakeholders as well as the campus's lack of connection with the surrounding community. As the team members continued to analyze the data collected from focus groups and initial interviews with external stakeholders, they decided that a multi-pronged interdisciplinary model of community engagement would provide the best opportunity to enhance Eastern Campus's organizational identity among all stakeholders.

Sub-Finding: Identity Development Requires Relationship Building

During the team's early meetings, members determined that additional conversations with potential external stakeholders would help guide the team's intervention design. With most of the team members not being residents within Eastern Campus's geographic community, they found that building relationships with diverse stakeholders was vital to the study's success, and the team demonstrated a collective willingness to build these external relationships. Although the data supported this finding, it also revealed differing perspectives on the nature of the relationship-building process. During the December 2018 meeting, as the team analyzed the first cycle, it became evident that cultivating relationships with members of the community required each

member to expand their efforts to reach and get to know potential community partners. Ms. South shared,

> *I'm a chatty person; I'm not quiet, shy when you meet me. And so, I'm not afraid to talk to strangers about anything that I am doing, and I have a big commitment to the college and so I use my horn and my presence and my interaction with the community to promote what we do all the time. So, I think in that, we are improving. I see a lot of work to be done. Sometimes I'm aghast at how little of the community knows we're here and that we're an option and what we can do for them. It hurts my feelings, sometimes, to sit in.*

As a team member who did not live in the community, Ms. Polis also expressed concern about her role as a team member building identity. In the Cycle 1 evaluation meeting regarding the community's understanding of campus identity, she said, "We definitely have some work to do there, I don't think we have much of a presence…. I don't live in the community either, so I feel like I have a hard time with that, know[ing] what their thoughts are." Early on, Ms. Polis' perspective seemed to support Ms. Spring's point of view, as shared during that first-cycle evaluation. Ms. Spring noted,

> *Only one of the … the faculty members in the group … at the time of onset, actually lived in the community. We now have another who is local, and it's really obvious to me the difference in how capable they are in building local relationships with partners, as compared to folks who don't live here, don't know where to even begin to … access … context for those resources….. [A]nd as we know, if each faculty member and the group had attempted to make individual*

contacts, as they best could, the level of duplication would have been incredibly confusing to the community.

The team respected Ms. Spring's perspective; however, as a group, they affirmed their commitment to building relationships within the community. As Ms. North noted in her Cycle 1 reflections: "I live far from the campus; therefore, I am not a member of the surrounding communities. However, I have participated in vari[ous] events in order to cultivate these relationships and participate as a boundary spanner within these surrounding communities." Ms. Justice further stressed this principle: "I connect the people that I know in the community and let them know what we have going on."

Sub-Finding: Collaboration Between Campus and Community Partners Enhances Organizational Identity Development

The data analysis revealed that even as this group of boundary-spanning researchers were building relationships in the community, their efforts were not understood by other units within Metropolitan University. During the study, various university-level units or offices were interested in expanding their programming into Eastern Campus's geographic area; however, their activities were sometimes conducted without knowledge of Eastern Campus's engagement or relationships in the community. Consequently, the university's forays created some confusion for community members. Through the coalition-building work of AR team members, the community was made aware of the distinctions between the various university-unit efforts and those of Eastern Campus. This was most evident in one of Ms. West's experiences as the campus community-based learning coordinator. She recalled a meeting she facilitated introducing an ACE community member to a colleague from another unit in the university:

I was introducing one of our community partners, who is also a member of our team, to a new employee who had been hired by the university to help increase co-curricular service and civic engagement among students. We met in our favorite local coffee shop on the town square, near campus, rather than meeting on campus. The community partner and I had talked about how we would do this meeting. We wanted the new employee to understand that Eastern Campus and our college really took seriously the work of partnerships, and that we didn't always ask for partners to come to us.

So, a few months after that intro meeting, the employee, … under the direction of his supervisor, reached out to the community partner, Ms. Spring, who was part of our team, and asked her to set up for him a series of specific, a specific number of one-time service projects that were to take place in a specific timeframe on a specific set of days. So … it wasn't, "Hey, Ms. Spring, we're trying, you know, to reach students. How could we work with our community to do it?" It was, "I need you to help me set up X number of one-time service events that will take place on these Saturdays from this time to this time."

Ms. Spring was really shocked by it and reached out, and I was also shocked by it…. [B]ut then we both found out in discussing the request with him, with the employee who had made the request and with each other that … he was uncomfortable. He communicated to us that he had actually been uncomfortable making that request because of the expectation that had been set forward, but that he was obligated to do so because his supervisor had told him that their office needed to sponsor those specific kinds of projects on the specific days he was

> *requesting. And so … ultimately the … compromise was that the community partner helped him get in touch with other community organizations to try to set up the events. I don't actually think that any of those opportunities ever came to fruition. This incident stood out to me because of … the power dynamic involved. Like I said, our group [i.e., the AR team] tends to be really collaborative. Even though the new employee understood that expectation, his supervisor, or even his [next-level] supervisor, didn't share that understanding.*

This effort by another unit of the university, though well-intended, led to a loss of trust with an existing partner and created confusion for some members of the community who had come to know the AR team members and the community engagement initiative. The university colleagues' lack of knowledge and understanding of Eastern Campus faculty and staff members' relationship with the community members involved in this project could have caused greater disruption. However, during the early stages of problem framing and recruitment of the AR team, potential members had explored current community concerns by attending various community organization meetings. These meetings allowed the identified community liaison and partner, Ms. Spring, to introduce campus members to community members and to introduce this study to various community agencies and organizations. These meetings afforded the team the opportunity to begin creating a mutual sense of trust.

The AR team members who lived and worked in the community expressed an ongoing commitment to building collaborations through which the community would develop a greater understanding of Eastern Campus's programming and gain access to opportunities for continuing education. Our first community team member helped the

team remain cognizant of the importance of fully participatory community representation in this model. Another community situated intervention team member, Ms. Justice, also mentioned,

> *It's important for us to reach beyond what we know, for the students and for the community. I want the community to know the students personally, I want us to build relationships and have that experience where everyone was in the same room for a similar cause. So, we can connect the people that I know in the community and let them know what we have going on.*

Research Question 2 Findings

During the study, members of the AR team, the intervention teams, and the participating community organization partners identified several boundary-spanning behaviors as important to the community engagement process. The most commonly identified behaviors included listening, communicating, coordinating, collaborating, and relationship building. Of these boundary spanning behaviors, clear and open communications, collaboration, and the ability to create or work in coalitions were most frequently identified as important. During team meetings, members both individually and collectively identified their challenges or successes in demonstrating these characteristics.

Key Finding: Effective Communications Between Campus and Community Members Is Critical to the Development and Sustainability of Community Engagement Initiatives

The AR team's responses to initial and final interview questions, as well as their reflections during the Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 evaluations, indicated that effective communications and building collaborations were vital to their community engagement

initiatives. During Cycle 1, members began to recognize that their roles as boundary spanners cut across their internal communities (e.g., student, colleague, and supervisory) and their collaborations with external stakeholders.

Ms. Spring consistently emphasized the importance of effective communications between campus and community members. She and other members of the AR team noted that communications were critical to the development and sustainability of community engagement initiatives. Reflecting on the early trial run of a community project for this study, Ms. Spring shared,

> *If I had not been available and accessible through previous relationships, both with the college and with the community, the faculty would have been challenged to find a sufficient number of contacts for the full number of students that they needed to place.*

Throughout the study, the data indicated strongly that team members needed to communicate effectively and demonstrate that they were listening to and hearing what the community was saying. The second series of interventions affirmed that dialogue and candid conversations helped build understanding and create partnership opportunities. The data also confirmed that a commitment to mutuality of interest was needed in the community engagement process. Ms. Spring highlighted the importance of building understanding:

> *Recently, the college received a grant for work that impacts the work of a local community coalition that is preexisting, but was not consulted in the grant-writing process. It was solely by virtue of my relationship with the ACE group that I was able to facilitate the college's project getting started just simply by being aware*

> *of it. I was also able to ensure that the work of my coalition was protected and not [operating at] cross purposes with the college's project that was being funded by the grant.*

During one of her later reflections in her final interview, Ms. North restated the importance of speaking and listening as effective boundary-spanning skills in community-engaged work:

> *When I started to do my presentation for one of the community civic organizations, everyone was very open. We had dialogue going on. And I saw one gentleman … toward the back of the room who just did not seem—he seemed engaged, but … non-verbally not happy, unhappy. As I was answering questions, he finally raised his hand and asked me a question. His question or statement, rather, it wasn't really a question. His statement was, "You were talking about the projects that you're doing, and you're talking about the projects in the geographic area. And you're talking about organizations that you worked with there." He said, "I just, I really don't know what to think. You know, we, we are left out of the picture." I began to explain to him, This is why I'm here. You're not left out of the picture. What I'm doing is, I'm showing you what we're doing and what we can do with the local town. We want to build this partnership. We want to build this community engagement and this dialogue with all of the surrounding areas, this is what we've done, and this is what we can do for you.*

Ms. North further pointed out,

> *To actually hear what he was saying, to hear where he was coming from and my ability to be able to translate that. So he heard, he actually heard what I was*

> *saying and heard that it was not, it was not simply presenting information, but that desire to … be part of the community, to be embedded with the organizations so that they can support the institution and the institution can support them.*

While the AR team focused on building their communications skills as boundary spanners, some team members discovered that, without a foundation and context, their intentions might not help them successfully make the leap across college and community boundaries that they desired. This was particularly true for two of the team members—Ms. Polis and Ms. South—who described their boundary spanning experiences.

During the Cycle 1 evaluation, Ms. Polis expressed concern about her engagement level: "I mean, I wish I could have done, maybe, the campus outreach a little better." The data highlighted the need for AR team members to engage in boundary spanning behaviors at a personal level, not from a distance. The team also discovered the impact of affirmative boundary-spanning behaviors in developing or establishing common ground and mutuality in community engagement work. Even for those members who were uncertain about their success as boundary spanners, they were able nevertheless to identify their individual growth and learning. When asked about her boundary-spanning capacity during Cycle 1, Ms. Polis reflected, "Overall, as a boundary spanner, I've benefited as much as my students [have] by increasing my own knowledge and interaction with individuals or organizations in the community, outside of my campus comfort zone."

In her reflection on her personal experience during Cycle 1, Ms. South reminded the team,

> *This is just learning, and we need to know that this is the first time. It doesn't mean—it doesn't make you a failure or that you give up. That just tells you that didn't work, and we'll try something else.*

Ms. Justice also reported that she learned that using generic tools, such as e-mails and cold calls, and waiting for potential community partners to respond was insufficient for growing or expanding community-engaged initiatives or campus identity. She shared that, early in the study,

> *I tried to make a relationship and contacts with some business owners locally to provide opportunities [for my business class]. And I wasn't able to get them [i.e., business owners] to see the importance of the project. I think I wasn't able to make it work. I wasn't able to make the connections timely enough so that it is a program that we could execute. I think for me, I should have been a little better on the follow-up. I should have maybe explained a little more what it is that I wanted to accomplish. I don't think I was, well, I know I wasn't successful in taking that idea to the next level so that I could explain to the local business owners what it … was that my students could offer them and what it is that they would be able to kind of get from the community or from the students, if that makes sense.*

Key Finding: Community Engagement Projects Foster Collaboration and Relationship Building Between and Among College and Community Members

AR and intervention team members found that they were able to build on prior experiences to initiate this project. Moreover, as they worked with one another they were able to build new relationships within the college and across the community. Ms. Spring indicated,

> *My participation in this project was initiated by a long-time community contact that has also been with the college for many years. We have had community service and academic engagement relationships going back over 10 years. Because of that continuity, even though each of us held different positions in our community and in the college, respectively, we were still in each other's network in a way to be able to say, "We're introducing this concept from the college's side." And I was able to receive and say, "I know how to facilitate that from the community side; I will be glad to do that."*

Sub-Finding: Campus and Community Collaboration Promote Collective Ownership and Commitment to the Project

The data showed the team members' individual and collective growth over the course of the study. For instance, when asked about her perception of her individual growth, Ms. North shared,

> *I don't even know that I can articulate how important I feel this work has been for me professionally and personally. It's how I think about it is that no longer is it a desire to do it, but it's [a] necessity to do this work. We can become so isolated in what we do as academics and in how we teach our students. Community organizations can become so isolated in the work that they do. More hands, more perspectives, and more perceptions and different points of view, bringing everyone together, makes for a richer academic and community engagement experience.*

An evaluation of the data analysis also highlighted the participating students' experiences. Ms. Fall concluded,

> *I do think that [the students] started to see themselves … as boundary spanners, in lots of their reflections there at the end, not in the beginning but definitely there at the end. Tying in that community aspect, that community question that we used, I found it really interesting because, [from] my perspective, I really wanted to tie in what they said about community and bring that into their work with the kids at the housing authority because that builds mentorship. We're there to tutor, but the benefit is that the mentorship along with it. So, they [our students] get the benefit of saying, "I'm in college, and this is how I got here, and this is what I want to do when I grow up."*

The data supported the commitment of community stakeholders to fostering relationships between the community and Border College faculty and staff. A closer analysis pointed to the various ways the campus and community partners sustained the relationship beyond the academic community engagement projects. While several team members emphasized this finding, Ms. West's observation was most memorable. During the Cycle 2 evaluation meeting, she recalled,

> *When our subgroup—Ms. South, Ms. North, Ms. Spring, you and me—were able to go to the Gulf South Summit together and present, it was really meaningful. We had to jump through a lot of hoops to get our community person to the conference; that is the funding support that we thought would be pretty easy to give her. Most of the time when we are going to a conference like this, you see people [i.e., community partners], even if it's … something like Gulf South, right, the community partners who tend to be there are folks who may be partners with the organization, that's hosting the event. So. they're local, but the fact that we*

> *were able to … go through the channels we needed to go through to support having our community partner come and present this work … really stood out to me as a sign of progress. We are actually putting actions to words and saying, "Okay, you know, you really are part of this research team." We're not thinking about Ms. Spring or a community partner as, like, a research subject, right. We're not reporting on them. We are creating together and the ability for us to go together and again, to show up all together in the same space and share our experience together with other people from other institutions.*

Building on other team members' reflections during team meetings, the final interviews also emphasized the importance of relationship building across campus and community stakeholders. Ms. Fall shared the following discovery:

> *What I have learned is that if I'm going to be effective at this work, because it's relationship-based, I really need to be both in the college and in the community…. [A]nd that was an interesting realization for me. I had not realized that I had shifted into … the college realm more than the community realm.*

Ms. Spring also shared the impact of relationship building beyond the faculty to include their students as emerging boundary spanners:

> *Most of the students are residents of the community in which they are project-based. Anecdotally, we know that some of those students have never considered their communities through the lens of some of the issues that they were … addressing through their projects. So, by virtue of creating a more holistic method of education, they are creating better student–citizens who, while they're at the campus, at least will move within circles in our community.*

Ms. Justice also stressed her growth as a boundary spanner during the course of the study:

> *As an evolving boundary spanner, I could see how just creating this opportunity [i.e., the study], allowed the community and the college to connect. I brought people on campus that wouldn't have otherwise been accessible for either one of those groups.*

Sub-Finding: Community Engagement Strengthens Stakeholders' Sense of Commitment to the Community and College

The AR team members learned that passion and interest alone are not enough to grow community-engaged projects. It is essential for boundary spanners to make connections that are driven by mutual interests, needs, or opportunities. The data highlighted the team's growth as boundary spanners who were able to move beyond self-interest as faculty members or community citizens to connect with outside organizations.

Ms. North highlighted this commitment when discussing her early boundary-spanning experiences:

> *My role in this preliminary meeting was to be part of the group but not necessarily as a boundary spanner. My personal desire to be a boundary spanner was not met, if that makes sense. There were several of us that met with one of the local medical facilities and the local hospitals. One of our colleagues in the group had a specific community engagement project in mind. That was a great partnership opportunity with them, what the hospital needed and, how Ms. South could organize her students to meet that need. I went into the meeting as support and to hear, and to be part of the team, but I had a personal desire to be a boundary spanner within that organization.*

Ms. Spring conveyed,

> *My position in the community allowed me to ensure, on an ongoing basis, a positive representation of the AR study to my colleagues. I was able to speak in regular meetings about the potential to access an academic community engagement (ACE) team for work and to speak about the ACE successes, so that there would be potential for future partnerships in the community.*

Research Question 3 Findings

The community of practice provided members an atmosphere for further learning from the experiences presented during the team's meetings. Throughout these meetings, participating members engaged in intentional reflection, celebrated their periodic successes, and learned from their failures by analyzing each project and intervention.

Key Finding: A Community of Practice Provides a Safe Environment for Idea Sharing, Problem Solving, and Creating New Work

The data showed that the CoP provided support for the team members, a finding best summarized by Ms. South:

> *Without the support team, I wouldn't be anywhere near where I am. Every meeting was a learning experience. Every meeting had some kind of a key element that would sharpen our skills to enable us to be better at what we're doing.*

The campus academic community engagement coordinator, Ms. West, provided an evaluation of the CoP within the context of higher education and spoke of the power of a community of practice more broadly. She concluded,

> *I think that it … for me, it really speaks to, again, I'm going to go back to the term collaboration…. [S]o much of academia is individual in nature. You know, what*

is lauded is when an individual person has an individual number of scholarly endeavors that have been published in certain journals, and collaborative work is not as rewarded, in the traditional sense, in higher education. It's really only in collaborative work that we can have actual change and be part of productive change in our communities. An individual person may be able to take one action, but really, it's our collective working together through those ideas and working together to decide on what actions to take that make us able to affect change.

While many of the team members were able to participate in the CoP on a regular basis, others were not. An analysis of each team member's level of participation in the CoP exposed different levels of member participation. Although most of the faculty participants were tenured or tenure-track, two intervention team members were not. For these two non-tenure track faculty members, the teaching load was six courses per term. With such large teaching loads, these two faculty members were not able to engage as frequently in the CoP. Moreover, further data analysis indicated that this lack of participation limited their successful development of boundary-spanning skills. Ms. Polis stated, "I like the group, that's definitely a valuable resource. I can say that in the second year, I just had no time to engage in it."

This inability to fully develop boundary-spanning skills was more evident in a report from the community liaison, Ms. Spring. She relayed the challenges described by several community partners who worked with one of the newer faculty participants. None of the partners approached for that cycle who worked with this faculty member had a satisfactory experience, which effectively eliminated them from potential project assignments in the future. Ms. Spring reported, "There's no desire to engage again. So,

it's really important that, as part of the model, the faculty involved are brought into relationship with the group as a professional learning community, perhaps in advance of even creating partnerships."

Although, the team emphasized effective communications as a critical boundary spanning behavior in developing community-engaged initiatives, it was not clear that these two non-tenure track faculty members' communications were aligned with the group's beliefs. Had they been more active in the CoP, they could have shared their communications plan with the team and received feedback prior to sending emails to the respective partner. In an effort to be efficient, Ms. Speaks sent the following e-mail to her community partner: "Hi [Partner], I have been assigned to interview you for the Academic Community Engagement Project on behalf of Metropolitan University, Border College. Please contact me to schedule a time prior to February 27." At first review, this seems like a direct and specific communication. However, the context and rationale for the request were lost in translation. This was a new partner whom Ms. Speaks had not worked with prior to this initiative, and she had not engaged in the relationship building that the team was practicing and discussing during their CoP meetings. In the spirit of team building, collaboration, and effective communications within the team, I was able to work with Ms. Speaks to resolve this disconnect and to affirm the value of actively participating in the CoP. Unfortunately, Ms. Speaks' workload and personal commitments beyond the college did not support her consistent participation and ultimately held her back from becoming a fully engaged boundary spanner across the college and community.

Sub-Finding: A Community of Practice Promotes Communications, Creativity, and Innovation

When considering the impact of this study and its level of innovation, Ms. Spring posited,

> *It's really important that, as part of the model, the faculty involved are brought into the relationship with the group as a professional learning community, perhaps in advance of even creating partnerships in the community, … with organizations, because really that professional learning community gives an opportunity for the … faculty peers to troubleshoot challenges, whether it's relating to the curriculum or whether it's relating to student management, or just even making sure that we're not cross communicating multiple faculty to the same community partner.*

Other members of the team highlighted the impact of the CoP on their growth and development. Ms. North recounted,

> *I really was having a difficult time trying to find what the community needed in order to see how my students in my discipline can help them meet that need and can help meet the need of what my students needed to do in the class and what they had to learn and to be in that group was a, think tank…. I was very, very perplexed and questioning my ability to make this connection. I could have made a connection, but I wanted to make a rich connection that was going to benefit the institution, benefit my students, and benefit the community. And everyone just stepped up and helped me think it through and gave me some ideas and some*

information to reflect from that really, to me created such … an important project for all involved.

Ms. Justice also emphasized,

It's been a great opportunity to have these meetings. We share ideas. It has helped me to think creatively about options. So, we've been able to share resources, share ideas. And it's one of the few opportunities we have to talk to someone about the work that we're doing, get feedback, and get some innovative ideas of people that are of the same mindset of boundary spanning, and wanting to do the work of how we can tie it all together.

Key Finding: Successful Boundary Spanners Are Part of a Larger Community of Practice

As Ms. South suggested, participating in a CoP supports novice community-engaged scholars. During her final interview, she reflected on her role:

I am on this team as a novice, I mean, extreme novice…. I know my content area, but of this particular, I have no field. I have no database to draw on. And so my learning curve has been ongoing, and I've felt that the team, as it was initially meeting, was extremely supportive of my novice capacity and … supportive of my growth, helping me to grow and yet supporting me in my mistakes by helping me step further forward and not be afraid to step forward.

Ms. North reinforced this perception,

We all enrich one another, that it does take a team to do this work, that this work is meaningful for us as individuals and for our institution. And to just the—the beauty of being around people who are like-minded, really, we inspire one

> *another to do this work and … support one another. And when someone is struggling, we can talk it out and … help one another, and this enriches what they're doing. It's just a force of nature.*

Sub-Finding: Active Community of Practice Participants Promote Shared Leadership

As a group, we learned that leading from the middle allowed us to get out of traditional hierarchical framework and cross boundaries to create new working relationships that advanced Eastern Campus's identity and helped make learning both practical and meaningful. When asked about her participation in the CoP, Ms. Fall, a boundary spanning AR team member from the community who also became a full-time faculty member, shared her growth experience:

> *What I love about this team or what I see this team coming together [for] is ever-evolving and not person-specific…. I think that's really important because it can be organic and exist on its own. That means that what I'm doing is, I'm setting up a legacy, I'm working to ensure a legacy … exists. I think we've been successful in laying the groundwork for that to happen, with new people coming in, with kind of shifting of roles, retooling, rethinking, and with the sharing of the ideas.*

When asked about leadership and team learning Ms. West recalled,

> *As I transitioned into my new position, … I told the group that I am not going to be able to do the organizational kinds of activities with this group anymore. I won't be able to do that as part of my new position responsibilities, and Ms. Fall stepped up and said, "Okay, I can do it."*

While Ms. Fall was a bridging member of the team, leading a community organization and serving as a faculty member on Eastern Campus, Ms. Spring solely represented the community stakeholders on the AR team. During her interview, she reflected on her experience:

> *I find it interesting knowing that … institutions of higher learning tend to be somewhat insular. I was incredibly well received as a local representative and a full colleague in this process. But I think [that was] only because the process was intentional to include the community in this research project, as well as building a model that could be maintained going forward.*

Sub-Finding: Through a Community of Practice, a Group Can Effectuate Change Through Their Study of a Problem and Action Taken

Change can be limited or become stifled when there are multiple organizational layers that are not directly integrated. The impact of such a challenge was identified by several members of the AR team. Ms. Spring raised this concern from the perspective of the community, stating,

> *It's obvious, much more obvious to me the challenges faced by an institution whose administration of … a number of different facets of their function are driven, is driven by a larger entity that has no roots in the community. When the local college is attempting to build relationships but is hampered by some policies and practices established by its larger institution based far, far away with no consideration of local relationships.*

The team's campus academic community engagement coordinator, Ms. West, also highlighted this challenge:

> *I'm going to go back to the term collaboration…. [So] much of academia is … individual in nature. You know, what is lauded is when an individual person has an individual number of scholarly endeavors that have been published in certain journals … and collaborative work … is not as rewarded in the traditional sense in higher ed…. [B]ut it's really only in collaborative work that we can have actual change and be part of productive change in our communities. And so for … me personally, it really just has … solidified that, you know, an individual person may have an idea…. [A]n individual person may be able to take one action, but really, it's our collective working together through those ideas and working together to decide on what actions to take that make us able to affect change.*

Reflecting on where the team started and its current position, Dr. Eastern declared,

> *In this erratic context, the ACE team brought something fundamentally new to campus life. Its goals and deliverables were consistent with the tenets of what I usually refer to as "operational strategy." I define this best practice as the mobilization of the material, human, and intellectual resources, the skills, the knowledge, the experience, the vision, and the willpower emanating from the internal community when the original action plan is rendered meaningless. This does not rest on improvisation in the least, but on the collective ability to create an alternate operational reality, i.e., another set of qualitatively and quantitatively meaningful community-building performances. By performance, I mean any activity that changes the professional nature and function of the organization and its members into an executable mission. This mission is not an*

ersatz or a "patch" but a form of identity growth impacting the fundamental mission of the school, the delivery of relevant educational materials.

Conclusion

In the fall of 2018, an action research team was formed to investigate the lack of organizational identity at Border College's Eastern Campus. The group engaged in three complete AR cycles and a foreshortened Cycle 4. During this time, team members gained individual and collective insights into the challenges of implementing community-engaged strategies, developing an organization's identity, and building a community of practice. Through this journey, the team experienced growth as a CoP that connected college faculty and staff with community partners and developed ongoing collaborative relationships. Team members also experienced individual growth as effective communicators, change agents at the campus and community levels, and advocates for academic community engagement as a lever for developing organizational identity. This team's work evolved from the conceptual model in support of a signature organizational identity grounded in community-engaged work into an organizational change model through the development of a community of practice that promotes boundary-spanning behaviors and community engaged initiatives.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this action research study was to explore how a small group of stakeholders operating as boundary spanners impacted organizational identity and community engagement at a 2-year regional campus of a multi-campus university. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do campus and community members enact community engagement interventions to enhance stakeholders' sense of organizational identity?
2. How does the action research team enact boundary spanners' skills or functions in their community engagement processes?
3. How do faculty learning communities and communities of practice enhance faculty and community members' roles as boundary spanners?

This chapter provides an overview of the study's findings (detailed in Chapter 5), summarizes the conclusions, and discusses those conclusions in relation to each of the study's research questions. The chapter also explores implications for future research and practice, and concludes with my closing reflections.

Summary of Findings

In response to Research Question 1, three findings emerged. First, an interdisciplinary model of community engagement supports organizational identity enhancement. Second, organizational identity development requires trust building and

relationship building. Third, the collaboration between campus and community partners enhanced organizational identity development.

Regarding Research Question 2, the AR team arrived at key findings: First, effective communications between campus and community members is critical to the development and sustainability of community engagement initiatives. Second, community engagement projects foster collaboration and relationship building between campus and community members.

Finally, two key findings emerged in relation to Research Question 3. First, a community of practice provides a safe environment for idea sharing, problem solving, and creating new work. Second, successful boundary spanners are part of a larger CoP.

This research was innovative in that it combined the concepts of boundary spanning and community engagement in a single study, and considered both in the development of organizational identity within the context of higher education. The AR team learned that the combination of boundary spanning and community engagement improved stakeholders' collaboration and their sense of organizational identity. Moreover, participation in AR and a CoP enhanced stakeholders' boundary spanning skills, including communications, listening, and shared leadership.

The following section summarizes the findings of this AR study in the context of the research questions.

Research Question 1: How do Campus and Community Members Implement Community Engagement Interventions to Enhance Stakeholders' Sense of Organizational Identity?

The Development of an Organizational Identity During a Period of Change in a 2-Year College Is Incremental and Fluid. As members of the AR team sought to build

a new identity for Border College's Eastern Campus among its diverse constituents, it became apparent that the campus's identity was tied to its history. Yet, that identity was giving way to a new reality, as defined by the stakeholders, and could not be represented solely by establishing a larger university's mission, though it could be muddled by the action of non-campus-based internal stakeholders. When organizational stakeholders coalesced around a defined identity or established a common understanding of the organization's identity, they could engage in like-minded behaviors benefiting the campus, the college, and the university. This study supports the findings of current organizational identity literature espousing the value of a more fluid identity that can adapt to changes within an organization's culture (Brewer, 2015; Clark et al., 2010; Griffith, 2016).

Research Question 2: How Does the Action Research Team Enact Boundary Spanners' Skills or Functions in Their Community Engagement Processes?

Various Boundary Spanning Skills Are Vital to Collaborative Community-Engaged Initiatives, the Most Critical Being Listening, Communications, and Trust Building. Having the time to develop trust through listening sessions, ongoing conversations, and improved written communications between internal and external stakeholders created a greater sense of mutuality among those stakeholders. For Border College faculty working at the community-college level, there has been support for community-engaged work. However, this study also emphasized the difference between tenure-track faculty and non-tenure-track faculty members' ability to engage in boundary spanning behaviors that strengthen their community-engaged scholarship in significant ways. Without the time to fully listen and build trust, these faculty members cannot cultivate long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with external partners.

Research Question 3: How Do Faculty Learning Communities and Communities of Practice Enhance Faculty and Community Members' Roles as Boundary Spanners?

A Community of Practice Can Effectuate Change Through the Use of Action Research Methodology. As the AR team members continued to work through the AR process, the conditions for a CoP within the study emerged. Most of the faculty and several community members became more engaged in studying their individual and collective work as a result of their participation in this research.

Action Research Stimulated Learning and Change Within Eastern Campus at the Individual, Group, and System Levels. Internal stakeholders at Eastern Campus were plagued with losses, including loss of connection with the local community, decreased enrollment, and cuts in programming. They understood that no single individual, internally or externally, had "the answer"; thus, these stakeholders sought to better understand the impact of these losses and how they could affect change at the campus level. By choosing to engage in an AR process, they undertook an iterative process in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry that included external stakeholders. The AR methodology supported their ability to understand the issue within the context of their individual and collective roles and to engage in real-time change at the campus level (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). As a result of their participation, members chose to continue working together as a CoP after the conclusion of the study.

The preceding findings informed the conclusions drawn from this study. The following sections offer a detailed discussion of these conclusions and consider the study's implications for future research and practice.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The Development of an Organizational Identity During a Period of Change in a 2-Year College Is Incremental and Fluid

As internal and external stakeholders seek to make sense of their interactions with one another, it is essential to establish a common language and form of engagement that allows all stakeholders to understand the organization's identity change and how they might move forward collaboratively. The results of this AR study expand the organizational identity literature by exploring organizational identity at the 2-year college level from the perspective of college and community stakeholders. Unlike earlier studies, which tended to focus on organizational identity through the lens of either internal or the external stakeholders, this study centered on both groups' perspectives working together.

Building on Dutton and Dukerich (1991), this study examined how Eastern Campus could create a new adapted identity. Albert and Whetten's (1985) seminal study defined organizational identity as central, enduring, and distinctive. Whetten (2006) suggested that researchers should address all three elements of this definition, and Ashforth and Mael (1989), advancing this recommendation, argued that internal stakeholders must wrestle with their individual and collective answer to the questions "Who are we?" During the early stages of this AR study, as internal and external stakeholders met, they engaged in an ongoing discussion about the internal stakeholders' perceptions of their organizational identity before Border College merged with Metropolitan University. This practice affirmed the findings of Griffin's (2016) study, which highlighted sensemaking as a critical factor in organizational identity development. The participants in this AR study were able to make sense of their evolving organizational identity through observations and

evaluations of the organization's image, as perceived by members of the team and external stakeholders, and as revealed through changes in organizational artifacts and critical incidents. Through these early explorations and the AR team's ongoing interactions with external community partners, the members also determined that the campus's organizational identity was evolving, not a fixed identity based on either the merger or the actions undertaken as part of this study.

As previous studies have argued, identity cannot be considered without exploring organizational image (Corley, 2004; Gioia et al., 2000). This study affirmed this argument in the context of the 2-year college. As the AR team members evaluated their perceptions as internal and external stakeholders, they found that, while they held on to prior identity artifacts, the institution's ongoing media representations of the campus and college reflected the identity of the new organization, Metropolitan University. These new image artifacts—print and electronic presentations from the university and the college to the external community—created a gap between the campus's and the community's perceptions of Eastern Campus's identity. Clark et al. (2010) argued for the adoption of a transitional identity, which they "defined as an interim sense held by members about what their organizational identity was becoming" (p. 420). This AR study expanded on Clark et al.'s research by developing and implementing an interdisciplinary college and community engagement model. This model facilitated the process of faculty from diverse disciplines, staff, and mid- and senior-level leaders at Eastern Campus working with community members. Through its joint efforts, the team established a transitional identity toward becoming a community engagement-focused campus. This transitional identity allowed the members to continue recruiting colleagues from the college and new partners from the community to engage in community-based academic learning projects. These ongoing

efforts supported and aided internal and external stakeholders' sensemaking and helped create a more consistent organizational identity for Eastern Campus.

This collaborative model incorporated ongoing conversation, community engagement initiatives, and reflective activities between internal and external stakeholders, amplifying Hatch and Schultz's (2002) model of organizational identity dynamics. This study's model focused on building Eastern Campus's identity through the ongoing interaction and boundary spanning behaviors of internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. These actions were reviewed by the external stakeholders to garner their affirmation or rejection of the emerging identity.

Conclusion 2: Various Boundary Spanning Skills Are Vital to Collaborative Community-Engaged Initiatives, the Most Critical Being Listening, Communications, and Trust Building

The academic community engagement initiatives that underpinned this study were grounded in the principle of mutually beneficial initiatives. The study resulted in the development and implementation of a model emphasizing engagement *with* the community, not engagement on or toward the community (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). From the inception of the study, external community stakeholders were invited to participate in the study's development and implementation, thereby extending Purcell's analysis (2014) by including community members in the initial planning. From the beginning, the inclusion of external partners supported the AR team's commitment to building trust through listening and sharing, establishing an early foundation for collaboration. The participants, both internal and external, recognized that their roles as boundary spanners were more likely to be communicative, seeking to gain and share diverse perspectives

throughout the study, in order to be collaborative (Adams, 2013; Purcell, 2014). Participants who actively communicated with one another, holding introductory or exploratory meetings, were more successful in building mutually beneficial projects (Adams, 2013; David, 2013).

This study extends the Weerts and Sandmann's model of university–community engagement boundary spanning roles (2010). The findings revealed that as members operating in the larger community of practice gained or refined their listening and communication skills, they built trust with and among one another. These boundary spanning skills were evidenced in the faculty by their increased sharing of ideas, exploring opportunities, and considering both potentially positive and negative outcomes of proposed projects. Through this growth, the faculty moved from Weerts and Sandmann's (2010) technical expert quadrant to the internal engagement advocate quadrant. Moreover, internal and external stakeholders who found success with early initiatives became more open to pursuing and/or initiating additional collaboration opportunities. These collaborations were sustained by the ongoing inclusion of external community partners in future planning (Purcell, 2014).

As they contended with organizational structural changes, faculty, and staff of the 2-year college within the merged university system experienced a decrease in their boundary spanning behaviors post-merger. Before the merger, members of the Border College community were clear about their boundary spanning roles. However, with the organizational structure changes, leadership, and institutional name, these individuals were reluctant to engage as boundary spanners as they sought to claim their personal, organizational identity (Prysor & Henley, 2018). Through this study, we learned that an

organization significantly influences an individual's boundary spanning behavior (Mull, 2014). The AR study's findings also suggest a linkage between the development of an individual's boundary spanning skills and the evolution of an organization's identity (Gioia et al., 2000; Mull, 2014). As individuals make meaning and sense of their identity in relation to their work and their organization's espoused identity, they can engage in and grow their boundary spanning skills and behaviors (Purcell, 2014; Skolaski, 2012).

This AR study's findings amplify Purcell's (2014) argument that successful community college boundary spanners maintain frequent and clear communications. By exploring the AR team's experiences, we learned that members expanded their boundary spanning skills, increasing their capacity to build trust and develop collaborative projects through improved listening and communication skills. As internal team members grew more confident in their boundary spanning abilities, they also began to operationalize a shared leadership approach toward identity development within the college. Thus, this study's outcomes support Purcell's (2014) conclusion that effective internal boundary spanners using distributed leadership can advance community engagement within an organization to include the capacity of both internal and external boundary spanners' sharing of leadership duties. Most of the team members in this study, both internally and externally, were able to adapt their boundary spanning skills and characteristics to match the circumstances and boundaries in which they were operating.

Conclusion 3: A Community of Practice Can Effectuate Change Through the Use of Action Research Methodology

This research confirms Adams's (2013) study, which explored community partners' boundary spanning characteristics in a university-community partnership.

Building on Weerts and Sandmann's model (2010), Adams concluded that the community members' boundary spanning roles and motivations might differ from those of the institution's participants. Unlike Adams (2013), who concluded that community members came to the university–community partnership with developed boundary spanning capacities, this study found that many, though not all, of the campus and community members came to the project with at least partially developed boundary spanning skills. This study suggests that critical boundary spanning skills can be more effectively developed when the participating boundary spanners are actively engaged in communities of practice.

During this study, most participating members began to meet and work together more frequently than the required scheduled meetings. In addition to the learning they acquired, these committed members also engaged in a supportive and safe environment that improved their individual and group learning (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Their commitment to these meetings evolved into a community of practice that allowed them to exercise boundary spanning behaviors. They were also able to study the challenges they experienced as they attempted to navigate Eastern Campus's internal boundaries. Through this CoP, they resolved missteps and developed new strategies for supporting their various efforts with external stakeholders (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

This study demonstrated how a CoP supported participants' success as boundary spanners. Throughout the study, members of the AR team who met regularly to examine their ongoing work, dissect their challenges, and share successes improved their development and implementation of community engagement initiatives. These individuals improved their boundary spanning skills such as listening, communicating

orally and in writing with current and potential partners, and building trust within and across the respective organizations (Adams, 2013). As a result of their individual and collective learning, the team members improved the overall communications and trust building between campus and community members. Campus members successfully articulated the campus and community engagement initiatives' value to students, campus colleagues, and community members. Community members gained confidence in the caliber of the community engagement initiatives, the training and preparation of students before they participated in community engagement projects, and their acceptance of ongoing engagement activities.

This study's results suggest, therefore, that campus and community boundary spanners who actively engage in a community of practice are more successful and able to effectively communicate an institution's contributions to the community. These results also establish a process for community-engaged boundary spanners to advance Border College's identity and image among participating partners. Throughout the study, members of the group determined that this CoP should continue beyond the research project. Having established a process for recruiting additional faculty and community partners, this group continues to meet monthly. These ongoing meetings and programmatic activities signal incremental learning at the system level. Eastern Campus is growing its organizational identity among the campus constituents and its geographic community.

Conclusion 5: Action Research Stimulated Learning and Change Within Eastern Campus at the Individual, Group, and System Levels

The AR process began with the internal members seeking to understand a local system-level problem—the loss of Eastern Campus' identity. To more accurately understand this problem, the team members engaged in individual and group learning about themselves, the campus, the college, and the external community. As the internal members gained a better understanding of the organization's current identity and image within the concentric communities of campus, college, and geographic location, they gained perspective on what was needed to shape organizational identity, as viewed through their collective lens.

During this process, both internal and external members learned how to lead community-engaged initiatives through workshops and online courses, and planned collective action. As each member gained an understanding of the various community engagement processes, they also developed a better sense of themselves as members of the community and as change agents in the process. This group became a learning community that fostered individual and collective learning (Kezar, 2005; Wenger, 1998). Consistent with Purcell (2014), this group, as a learning collective, "created conditions through which learning and change are not only possible but opportune" (p. 138). The majority of the group chose to become a community of practice. In their small-group meetings, they reflected on their initiatives' progress. Working together, they diagnosed many of the small problems that occurred during implementation and proposed alternative steps to either course correct or revise the next iteration of the project. By engaging in the action research process within each cycle and at a more granular level,

the team members improved their understanding of the process, increased collaboration beyond the research project, and made improvements based on reflection in action and on the actions taken in each cycle.

Summary of Conclusions

Through this study, the action research team members discovered that changing organizational identity is incremental and subject to the influence of multiple perspectives. Overall, individual learning was enhanced through their participation in the AR process. By collectively planning action, individually executing the plan, and engaging in joint reflection and evaluation, they became a community of practice. Through the ongoing iterations of their work, the process of collective learning became more concrete. Over time, the group formed a bond that reflected mutual trust and a shared understanding of the need for clear and convincing communications as well as a listening posture. This collective bonding and learning was experienced in various ways and thus was not a source of homogeneity.

As the researcher, I had certain ideas about how this study would be enacted. By including the AR team in vetting the problem, clarifying the proposed interventions, and the evaluating the process this study represents an alignment of the tenets of action research and community engagement. Ultimately, the internal stakeholders gained a new sense of their individual and organizational identity. The external stakeholders were better positioned to articulate the value Eastern Campus contributed to the surrounding communities.

Implications

This action research study's findings offer new insights for theory and future research. The study expands the application of organizational identity development and boundary spanning theories in public universities to the context of a 2-year college setting. The theoretical framework drew on the evolving concepts of organizational identity and the influence of boundary spanning and community engagement. The study's purpose was to explore how community engagement and boundary spanning behaviors could anchor the organizational identity of an outlying campus of a 2-year, multi-campus college. Using AR methodology, the AR team members grew as leaders, community engaged partners and boundary spanners moving from technical experts into a more comprehensive role, as defined by Weerts and Sandmann's (2010) model.

Through their participation in the CoP, faculty and external partners were able to increase their boundary spanning skills and engage in diverse initiatives along the continuum of community engagement resulting in organizational change and an emerging organizational identity that they helped define. The participating faculty moved from technical experts into the arena of community engaged champions who in partnership with external stakeholders created processes for growing organizational identity and change.

Building on the Weerts & Sandmann model (2010) this study demonstrated how individual participants in a CoP can enact organizational change through the levers of boundary spanning behaviors and collaborative community engagement (see figure 6). In the study, all members participated in a formal orientation process that provided them with a foundational understanding of community engagement in general and the various

facets of initiatives along the continuum of community engagement. As members of the intervention team grew more familiar with the various forms of engagement and the non-technical skills, they needed to successfully partner with organizations in the community they focused on their communications, listening and trust-building in particular. These boundary spanning skills were further developed in their community of practice which also promoted the development of more intricate CE projects that might be continued as long as these projects advanced student learning and the community partners' mission.

This revised conceptual and theoretical model (see figure 6) reflects the themes and conclusions from the study. The incorporation of a community of practice enhances the stakeholders' growth as boundary spanners, their potential for success as community engaged practioners and the pursuit of organizational identity development. This emerging model offers community college practitioners a process for connecting their instruction to a robust community-engaged program, and an integrated community practice.

Figure 6. *Resulting Change in Conceptual Framework.*

Implications for Future Research

This work reflects the complex and, at times, competing perspectives of personal and organizational identities that require sensemaking activities for all participants. The study participants learned that being actively involved in a community of practice supported the successful development of boundary spanning skills. As a result, this study adds to the growing body of organizational identity, boundary spanning, and community engagement literature. It also suggests opportunities for further research on community college's intersection within in the fields of organizational identity and boundary spanning.

This study supported prior research exploring organizational identity and sensemaking that anchor individuals working through organizational change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Participants recognized that the organizational change (i.e., the merger) created a vacuum in the conversation between internal members articulating who they were as individual members of the campus community and the college's role in relation to the surrounding community. However, because the study did not examine the relationships between internal stakeholders at Eastern Campus and other colleges or administrative units within the university, future studies should consider the impact of CoPs on boundary spanning behaviors within a large university with a 2-year college and a single campus or multiple campuses. This study's outcomes have potential implications for identity formation for 2-year colleges and larger institutions engaged in mergers, consolidations, or other systemic changes. The scope of this study could be expanded to explore all campuses of a multi-campus college or multi-system institutions.

The study also extends prior boundary spanning research to include internal and external stakeholders engaged with community colleges. Additionally, the study offers insight into the behaviors and characteristics of community college boundary spanners and their external partners, highlighting the leadership development potential that can emerge from within the ranks to advance a mutually beneficial partnership between the college and the community. Further research should also examine the power dynamic between boundary spanning university-centered employees and boundary spanning members of the 2-year college. Prior research has addressed the influence of institutional leaders on members' sensemaking of identity and their perceived roles as boundary spanners. However, few studies have explored the intersection of these areas and this may also offer opportunity for future research.

Implications for Future Practice

This study produced change at the individual, group, and system levels. The results also have implications for both faculty and staff members' practices as they seek to engage the community. Using the study's interdisciplinary model will further practitioners' understanding of how to effectively incorporate a community of practice in efforts to foster a more fully community-engaged campus.

This process began with the team seeking to understand a local system-level problem, the loss of Eastern Campus's identity. To understand this problem more accurately, the team members engaged in individual and group-level learning about themselves, the system, and the external community. As the internal members came to understand the organization's current identity and image within the concentric

communities of campus, college, and geographic location, they gained perspective on what was needed to shape organizational identity, as viewed through their individual lens.

During this process, both internal and external members learned how to effectively lead community-engaged initiatives through workshops, online courses, and taking action. As each member gained an understanding of the various community engagement processes, they also developed a better sense of themselves as members of the community and as change agents in the process. This experience offers future community college faculty, and staff guidance for developing a campus or single college process for promoting community-engaged scholarship that incorporates all members as equal partners.

For practioners seeking to improve their boundary spanning skills or community engaged initiatives they should begin with individual reflection and observation of their current work, seek out others who might also be interested in studying their practices. Together they can explore the benefits of forming a community of practice with others who are also interested in studying and improving their professional practice. The mutuality of the community of practice offers the participants support in their efforts to enhance their individual and collective boundary spanning skills or community engaged initiatives. Using the model proposed in this study, the participants would (a) form a community of practice, (b) develop a series of workshops to learn more about community engagement and boundary spanning as a field, (c) investigate and study their current boundary spanning skills, and (d) explore the current state of community engagement within their institution. Through their community of practice, participants can establish a safe space in which to evaluate their current practices, examine their current boundary

spanning behaviors and skill, and offer one another feedback for practice improvement. The model is grounded in the inclusion of a CoP, and so for practitioners who are not able to readily identify a CoP of faculty within their institution, they may seek to form a CoP with staff and external partners who are interested in exploring the development of mutually beneficial community-engaged initiatives.

Limitations

The most significant limitations of this study were length of time of the study, and the setting in which it was conducted. This study was limited to a 23-month period due in part to the unanticipated COVID-19 pandemic. The action research team was able to complete three full cycles before the pandemic's disruption. During this time the team had the opportunity to form, establish a foundation of trust, and begin to test their theories of action. We learned that the development of an organizational identity that resonates with all stakeholders requires time and sustained action. Building organizational identity through change requires a significant commitment of staff and faculty time, and a willingness to engage in shared leadership within the institution and across college and community stakeholders. The findings suggest that a more extended research period was needed. A two and a half to three-year period would have provided a more robust dataset and the greater opportunities to compare individual, team, and organizational change over the course of years. Additional time would have allowed the team members to further develop and test the efficacy of the non-academic interventions.

Coupled with the constrained time-period, the study was limited to a single campus of a multi-campus college. Although the study sought to understand how stakeholders could influence a single campus' development of a new organizational

identity; this study might also benefit from the insights of stakeholders from the College's other campuses. The research location is considered more rural than urban, unlike the other campuses of Border College or Metropolitan University's administrative central campus. Future studies should therefore consider researching all campuses of a multi-campus 2-year college, especially if all of the campuses are situated in similar geographic areas. Other variations of this study that may offer insight into the boundary spanning behaviors of academic community-engaged partners include focusing on a single-campus 2-year institution in transition or an institution consisting of a 2-year and senior-level institution. Future studies could also conduct comparative analyses of 2-year colleges in diverse regions of the United States or compare international postsecondary institutions.

Finally, the use of action research methodology also presents limitations. This methodology's design focuses on the study of localized problems with the generated results most frequently shared with the study participants and their local community (Herr & Anderson, 2014). As such the findings of this study may not be generalizable however they offer insights for the internal and external stakeholders who will continue the initiatives that emanated from the study. These findings also offer insights for future studies that may be undertaken by similar groups within this College or similar institutions (Herr & Anderson, 2014).

Closing Reflections

Loss marks the place where self-knowledge and powerful transformation happen if we have the courage to participate in the process. —Scazzero

When I began this program, I had suffered the loss of my organizational identity and, with that, what felt like my professional identity as a department chair at the state's largest 2-year college. Initially, I, like others, was not clear what these losses meant. Were they temporary? Would they matter in the world of higher education or offer an opportunity for a new beginning? My initial "solution" was to put my head down and plow ahead. However, that was not a sustainable solution as it became clear that this change was messy and tedious, and that the full implementation could take a long time. It seemed to require more fortitude than I thought I could manifest in the first year.

To navigate this change and help my immediate team and members of Eastern Campus find their way through this change, I took refuge in the work of William Bridges (1986) on managing organizational transitions. Bridges's (1986) argued that "transition is a lengthy and frequently traumatic process significantly different from simple change" (p.24)**.** This was an idea with which I could connect. I realized that my Eastern Campus colleagues and I had to find our way through Bridges's three stages of transition: "One must first let go of the old identity, then go through the 'neutral zone' between the old reality and a new reality, and lastly make meaningful new beginnings" (p. 25). This process resonated with me and offered our action research team a place to begin individual and collective reflection about the problem we planned to study. Like my peers, I was still grieving the old identity, what we had been, who we were before the merger. As each of the symbols and activities that had defined Border College and Eastern Campus began to disappear, it seemed that so too did a sense of purpose in relation to the community and control of campus programs, messaging, and plans.

Over time and through reflection, I found myself in the "neutral zone" and sought to find new ways of serving and being, making sense of my reality as a campus and discipline leader. In this space, the team began Cycle 1 of the research study, and I became more comfortable with the unknown facets of change and transition. This new comfort emanated from what I learned during the Facilitating Group Change and Leadership courses in this program which pushed me to become a more active learner and participant in the change process.

It takes practice until something becomes a skill; it takes practice until something becomes a habit or a consistent rhythm. —Chrystal Evans Hurst

This course work challenged me to look inward at the ways I learn and lead. Each class provided opportunities for me to question my assumptions about what it meant to learn, suspend judgment, and abandon some of the most familiar ways of doing my work. This introspection allowed me to reconsider how I have led and to identify and define new ways of working with direct reports, colleagues, and the action research team. In an effort to engage in deep listening with members from these various groups, I reframed what would become my new beginnings and encourage others to consider how we might engage collectively in new beginnings. By the end of 2019, I believe that my practice had become a habit and influenced others to define and take up their new beginnings. As a research team, we had entered Bridges's (1986) third stage, forming habits that would create the constant rhythm of community engagement and help us lead from where we stood.

Through this journey, I came to understand that sometimes "you have to go slow to go fast." Throughout the spring and early summer of 2018, though I thought I could go

fast with the critical milestone, I realized that I could not. Working with my major professor, I winnowed my too big wish list of what I wanted to achieve in my AR study. This required that I slow down and study the theories that would frame the problem and the proposed change theory. By giving more attention to these areas, I narrowed my proposed study and completed Critical Milestone 1. During this period, I helped others at Eastern Campus gain their footing, I led my team and created new opportunities for our individual and collective growth.

As an African American woman who has spent the majority of her career in the academy, I have experienced success and failure of my own merit in most instances. There have been moments or times, however, when I have wondered whether my race or gender had a part in the decisions by those around me as to whether I would advance, stay in the same role or be moved to a less prestigious or less valued role. During this study the cultural "isms" of race and gender were present, and I had to make peace with them, knowing that sometimes these "isms" are held in the minds of others. It was an ongoing conversation with myself and sometimes members of my team that I learned that internally, gender was often more of a factor than race. As the female members of the study became more confident in their leadership capacity and boundary spanning skills my male counterparts, their supervisors began to be less flexible or helpful. It became more important for me to reconcile this internal "ism" to support my team. Working with Dr. Eastern and external members of our team, we were able to shift some of the negative actions. More importantly, I became firm in my convictions that I would not allow these "isms" to be the arbiter of my choices to advance or retreat in my career.

Mid-way through this study I was promoted to associate dean which necessitated relocating to another campus. With this promotion, I came to understand that what I once thought I had lost was actually a realignment of my talent to meet the organizational shift. My identity was not tangled up with that of the organization's unless I allowed it to be. This promotion also required that I slow down and pay more attention to my work assignment changes and their impact on this study. I negotiated my time and assignments to be able to complete this study. The promotion provided me with a platform for promoting the work at Eastern Campus and the leadership that has emerged from and within the AR and intervention teams. In addition to my promotion, other members of the AR team were promoted in their departments to department chair (interim), tenure-track faculty, earned tenure and selected to be a co-principal investigator in new research initiatives.

Although the last round of interventions ended abruptly, my learning continues thanks to the ongoing community of practice developed during the study. Through the challenges our team has faced, we have created a network of mid-level leaders who persist in shifting culture by fostering a community-engaged identity for Eastern Campus. I continue to be grateful for this learning journey, the faculty who supported our programs, and the challenges around making change real and meaningful in my organization. During the last phase of this study, the organizational structure of Border College changed again and because of the lessons learned in this study, the community built, and leadership developed, I was given college-wide responsibilities that incorporate college and community engagement.

Through this study, I have become a more reflective scholar-practitioner. I have a more concrete foundation in the scholarship that underpins my daily work, and have evolved as a practitioner willing to serve as a change agent who seeks to incorporate the perspective of "the affected" when planning and implementing change.

As a work in progress, I seek to make space to reflect before action, evaluate the potential impact of each decision, and, afterward, assess the actual impact asking, "What could we do the next time to make it better?" Moving forward, I do so with the knowledge of the power of action research and the intention to use it mindfully as I grow in my work and support my team.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH PROJECT SPONSOR LETTER

OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
239 Cedar Lane
Covington, GA 30014
Phone 770-278-1210
Fax 770-278-1438
Web perimeter.gsu.edu

July 28, 2017

University of Georgia
The Office of the Vice President of Research
Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center
200 D.W. Brooks Drive Athens, GA 30602

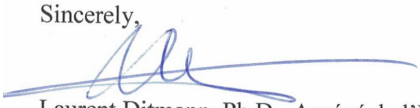
Dear Officers:

This letter serves to affirm that Perimeter College, Newton campus, Office of the Dean will serve as a sponsor for Karen Wheel Carter' s Action Research project beginning in August 2017. This research is needed for our campus and comes at an exciting time in the life of the college. I fully support this research and will provide any assistance necessary for its success including but not limited to: access to documents related to research subject matter, in compliance with Perimeter College policies and procedures (Rockdale Center, Newton campus and associated programs), identifying and supporting access to stakeholders via surveys, interviews and focus groups.

I will be available and in communication with Karen regarding further development of this research study and the data to be collected.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Laurent Ditmann, Ph.D., Agrégé de l'Université
Associate Dean, Fine Arts and Humanities Division
Newton Campus

Georgia State University, a unit of the University System of Georgia. is an equal opportunity educational institution and is an equal opportunity/affirmative ac

employer

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, RECRUITMENT OF ACTION RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS (INTERNAL)

Dear _____:

I am writing to invite you to participate in an action research study titled "Developing a signature campus organizational identity through community engagement". Your participation would involve taking part in professional development trainings, developing a community engagement project, participating in meetings, and conducting interviews regarding stakeholders' perceptions of the organization's identity, and impact of community engagement strategies.

Thank you for your consideration.

Principal Investigator: Karen E. Watkins, Ph.D.
Professor
Human Resource & Organization Development
Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy
University of Georgia
706-542-2214

Researcher: Karen Wheel Carter
Doctoral Student
University of Georgia
678-891-3401

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, RECRUITMENT OF ACTION RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS (EXTERNAL)

Dear _____:

I am calling to invite you to learn more about a proposed study "Developing a signature campus organizational identity through community engagement" at the newton campus, Perimeter College. The study is seeking the input and participation of community (civic and business) leaders. Your participation would involve taking part in developing community engagement initiatives that connect the campus and local community, participating in regularly scheduled meetings, and interviews regarding stakeholders' perceptions of the organization's identity, and impact of community engagement strategies.

Thank you for your consideration.

Principal Investigator: Karen E. Watkins, Ph.D.
Professor
Human Resource & Organization Development
Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy
University of Georgia
706-542-2214

Researcher: Karen Wheel Carter
Doctoral Student
University of Georgia
678-891-3401

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, CONSENT FORM (ACTION RESEARCH & INTERVENTION TEAM MEMBER)

"Developing a signature campus identity through community engagement."

Researchers' Statement

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form explains both the purpose of and the procedures for the research so you can decide whether or not to participate in the study. You are encouraged to read the following information carefully. Please speak with the researcher if you have a need for further clarification or additional information. When all of your questions have been answered, decide whether or not to participate in the study. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be provided to you for your records

.

Principal Investigator:

Karen E. Watkins, Ph.D.
Professor
Human Resource & Organization Development
Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy
University of Georgia
706-542-2214

Researcher:

Karen Wheel Carter
Doctoral Student
University of Georgia
678-891-3401

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how campus and community members can formally develop a sustainable community engagement program that improves internal stakeholders' sense of organizational identity, formalizes a campus - community engagement system that is reflective of the community and campus' regional identity, and supports the enhancement of regional economic development. I invite you to participate in this project. Your participation would involve taking part in professional development training, meetings, conducting interviews and surveys concerning how to develop an organizational identity through the implementation of community engagement strategies.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an action research study as an action research team member. Your participation will involve one or more of the following activities during the next 15 months:

- Participating as a team member means working collaboratively with other college faculty, staff and community members to develop and implement diverse interventions to address the research problem.

- Attend periodic workshops that address the use of action research, community and civic engagement, and building community dialogue workshops during the study.

- Attend bi-monthly project status meetings which will occur in person. Meetings will run approximately 1 and a half to 2 hours. In each meeting, you will share your reflections, thoughts, interpretations, and ideas related to the progress of the overall study. You may be asked to address other topics presented via the agenda in advance of the meetings.

- Maintain individual reflective journals.

- Contact the researcher or designated action research team member by telephone or email, if needed, for clarification on discussions or thoughts regarding the study.

- Provide relevant documents to explain or illustrate the progress of the project, and your thoughts discussed in the service learning project status meetings and other interactions. These documents will become a part of the study data.

Video and Audio Recording

Throughout the duration of this study, you will be asked to participate in video or audio-recorded meetings and interviews. Upon completion of the research study (2019), all video and audio recordings will be destroyed.

Please provide your initials below if you agree to be recorded.

_____ [Initial Here.]

Risks and discomforts

No discomfort, stress, or risk to participants are expected in this research project.

Benefits

While there are no immediate anticipated benefits for participants, it is the hope that the outcomes of this research will enhance knowledge concerning diffusion of adult-friendly institutional practices in higher education.

Incentives for participation

Participants in this study will receive no incentive (monetary or non-monetary) for being in the study.

Privacy/Confidentiality

Even though the investigator will emphasize to all research team participants that comments made during the research group meetings should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group over which the researchers have no control. Audio recordings collected during this project will be accessed only by the researchers. To complete the dissertation, additional writing, and publications, these recordings will be retained for a period of five years at which point all data files will be destroyed. Internet communications between participants and the researchers will be collected during the project. Internet communications are insecure, and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However, once the materials are received by the researchers, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed, including but not limited to password protected access to email. Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent, unless required by law.

Taking part is voluntary

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision to participate in the research will not affect your employment or employment evaluations. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions

- The main researchers conducting this study are Karen Wheel Carter, doctoral student at the University of Georgia, karen.wheelcart25@uga.edu, 678-891-3401, working under the direction of Karen E. Watkins, Ph.D., professor at the University of Georgia, kwatkins@uga.edu. The researchers will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.
-

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have either read the entire consent form or have had someone else read the entire consent form to you, and that all of your questions have been answered.

Karen Wheel Carter	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

APPENDIX E

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, STUDENT CONSENT FORM

"Developing a signature campus identity through community engagement."

Researchers' Statement

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form explains both the purpose of and the procedures for the research so you can decide whether or not to participate in the study. You are encouraged to read the following information carefully. Please speak with the researcher if you have a need for further clarification or additional information. When all of your questions have been answered, decide whether or not to participate in the study. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be provided to you for your records.

Principal Investigator: Karen E. Watkins, Ph.D.
Professor
Human Resource & Organization Development
Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy
University of Georgia
706-542-2214

Researcher: Karen Wheel Carter
Doctoral Student
University of Georgia
678-891-3401

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surveys concerning your experience in the course and being engaged with a community organization.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an action research study as a student enrolled in a designated course that has an academic community engagement component. Your participation will involve one or more of the following activities during the semester in which you are enrolled in the course (Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020):

- Participating as a student in your course service learning or community based research project.
- Maintain individual reflective journal for the course project
- Throughout the semester, student participants will be asked to complete questionnaires, surveys, and interviews.
- Interviews, lasting approximately 30 - 60 minutes, might be video or audio recorded (at the end of the course).

Video and Audio Recording

Throughout the duration of this study, you will be asked to participate in video or audio-recorded meetings and interviews. Upon completion of the research study (2020), all video and audio recordings will be destroyed.

Please provide your initials below if you agree to be recorded.

_____ [Initial Here.]

Risks and discomforts

No discomfort, stress, or risk to participants are expected in this research project.

Benefits

While there are no immediate anticipated benefits for participants, it is the hope that the outcomes of this research will enhance knowledge concerning diffusion of adult-friendly institutional practices in higher education.

Incentives for participation

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Privacy/Confidentiality

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comments made during the research group meetings should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group over which the researchers have no control. Audio recordings collected during this project will be accessed only by the researchers. To complete the dissertation, additional writing, and publications, these recordings will be retained for a period of five years at which point all data files will be destroyed. Internet communications between participants and the researchers will be collected during the project. Internet communications are insecure, and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However, once the materials are received by the researchers, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed, including but not limited to password protected access to email. Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

Taking part is voluntary

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision to participate in the research will not affect your employment or employment evaluations. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions

- The main researchers conducting this study are Karen Wheel Carter, doctoral student at the University of Georgia, karen.wheelcart25@uga.edu, 678-891-3401, working under the direction of Karen E. Watkins, Ph.D., professor at the University of Georgia, kwatkins@uga.edu. The researchers will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.
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To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature indicates that you have either read the entire consent form or have had someone else read the entire consent form to you, and all of your questions have been answered.

Karen Wheel Carter	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.