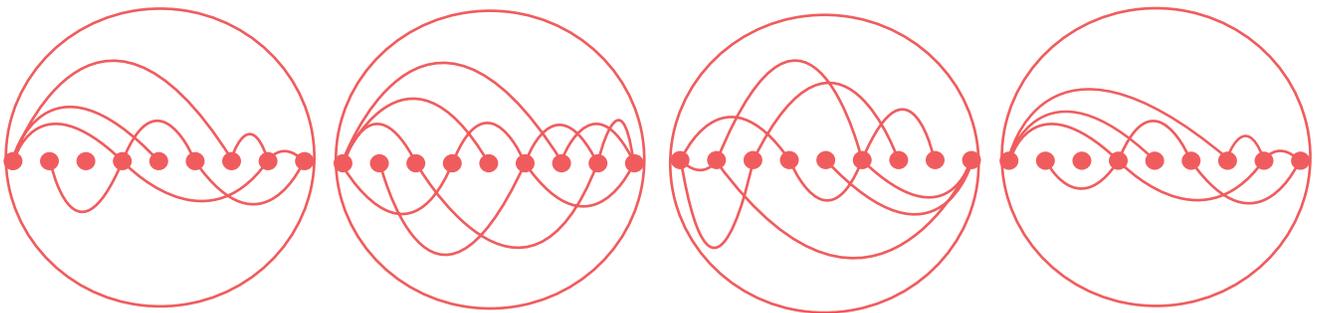


PROFILE
LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP



community learning partnership
Pathways into Community Change Careers

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BY ANDY MOTT WITH BENJAMIN TORRES

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community learning partnership *Pathways into Community Change Careers*

The Community Learning Partnership (CLP) is a national network of community change studies programs, based in community colleges in partnership with local nonprofit and civic organizations. Our mission is to develop a diverse workforce to address injustice and inequality, and to improve the quality of life in low-income communities. We reach out to low-income students and people of color who may not otherwise gain exposure to the career possibilities in organizing and related fields.

CLP's programs offer specialized degrees or certificates that can lead directly to jobs or provide transfer credit to other educational institutions. Community change studies prepare students for jobs in community organizing, economic development and policy advocacy — and to be agents of positive, social change in various aspects of their careers and communities.

PROFILE

LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

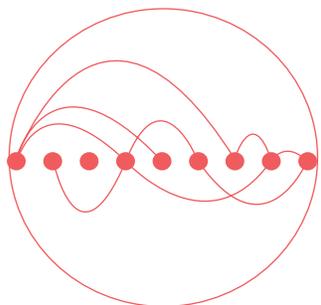
- Los Angeles Community Organizing Academy Trains Working Organizers and Community Members for Change Careers
- Over One Hundred Students Have Taken Organizing Academy Classes (Fall 2011 – Spring 2013)
- Focus on Engaging Men and Boys of Color as Part of a Broader Initiative
- Bilingual Courses Respond to Student Needs
- Pilot Program Developing For Replication as an Associates Degree Certificate Program
- Builds on an Organizational History of Connecting the Local Community College to Community Needs

TAKING A BROAD VIEW OF COMMUNITY CHANGE

The Los Angeles Community Learning Partnership (CLP) program is the Los Angeles Community Organizing Academy. The Community Development Technologies Center (CDTech), a local nonprofit, is developing the Organizing Academy as a pilot program with the intention of partnering with Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LA Trade-Tech) and other community colleges to offer a certificate in community organizing and social justice. The Organizing Academy aims specifically to meet the needs of working organizers seeking professional development, as well as low-income students of color.

CDTech has been developing academic, training and community development programs in South Central Los Angeles for 18 years. It has a broad view of potential careers in community change that spans organizing, economic and business development, community health and environmental careers. The Los Angeles CLP program operates within this larger picture of community change.

Benjamin Torres, who directs CDTech, applied his own knowledge and extensive relationships in the organizing world to designing and implementing the Community Organizing Academy, now in its second year. Students can take basic courses that are bilingual in Spanish and English, and that address the needs of students with less formal education and professional experience. The program adjusts the pace and course offerings to provide more individual



STUDENT IMPACT: A *Los Angeles Community Organizing Academy Graduate*

At the Los Angeles Community Organizing Academy graduation in September 2012, the youngest student in the cohort, an 18-year old Latina from an immigrant family, stirred the audience with her story. She used her time at the podium to recognize her mother, who was there to celebrate her daughter's achievement. When the student was seven years old, her mother took her to her first community rally related to immigrant and workers rights. She recalled how she felt that day, standing at the feet of this hardworking, committed woman who, despite working several jobs, managing family responsibilities and life issues, knew that nothing would change unless she gave her voice and her presence to social and political change.

The student spoke directly to her mother when she said: "I am so grateful to you for standing up for what you believed in and making me understand that I have a place in this struggle too. Now, because of the Organizing Academy classes, I can dedicate myself to working on those issues with an organization and play a leadership role in our community." As mother and daughter shared this moment of recognition, all in the room understood the passing of the torch of community activism from one generation to another.

attention to students. Those students who feel ready to move on can enroll in the intermediate classes.

The Los Angeles Community Organizing Academy aims to be particularly effective in educating men and boys of color for careers in community change. With support from The California Endowment as part of its men and boys of color initiative, the Organizing Academy emphasizes recruitment of this segment of the population, recognizing the high need.

An Advisory Committee for the Community Organizing Academy includes representatives of leading grassroots organizations, such as Inner City Struggle, Bus Riders Union, SAJE and SCOPE. The Advisory Committee helps with program design, student recruitment, student placement, experiential education, co-teaching and program expansion. Several members of this committee also serve as instructors in the program.

To better support students, CDTech is developing a coaching and mentoring class. It is also structuring students into *Familias*. This is a student support approach developed at De Anza College in Cupertino, California. It creates strong mutual support groups to help students as they face obstacles in their schooling. *Familias* greatly strengthen the sense of community among students and help significantly with student achievement, retention and graduation rates.

LOS ANGELES CLP COURSES FOR THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZING ACADEMY

BASIC LEVEL COURSES:

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZING METHODS

Students learn basic skills needed in community organizing, including how to build power through mass based organizations. Students learn about the components and tools for successful organizing such as how to build lists, do door knocking, engage in one-on-one conversations, share personal stories, build relationships and use the science of numbers. They explore previous successful organizing campaigns as examples of effective organizing efforts.

HISTORY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT THEORY

Students examine basic theory and ideological influences for organizing in Los Angeles, including Communism, Marxism, the influence of ethnic power movements, labor organizing models and power theory. Students learn theories and key lessons from these organizing experiences and successes and work with local grassroots organizations to research and trace their theoretical and ideological influences.

HISTORY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN LOS ANGELES

Students review the diverse history of development of Los Angeles from early settlements (and displacement of indigenous people) to the rise of industrialization, neighborhood development, demographic transitions and the intersection between race, class, politics and power. Students gain a critical analysis of how low-income communities of color developed as a result of economic disinvestment, deindustrialization, segregation, housing discrimination, immigration patterns and local, state and federal policy.

CULTIVATING CONSCIOUSNESS: REFLECTION OF SELF IN COMMUNITY AS AN ORGANIZER

Students consider the importance of self-reflection, self-identity and understanding of group dynamics as key elements in becoming an effective organizer. Students explore methods of creating balance in their own lives to be more impactful in their community organizing work, including reflection, meditation, understanding the significance and role of their own stories, creating self-development plans, creating affinity spaces and learning nonviolent communication.

ORGANIZING PROJECT PRACTICUM

Students gain basic tools for program and project planning, including creating strategy, goals and objectives as well as creating personal and team work plans. Students use these tools in organizing and for evaluating their work as organizers.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL COURSES:

ELECTIONS, POWER, AND SYSTEMS REFORM

Students learn about local and national efforts focused on elections and systems reform for social change. This includes evaluating the strengths and challenges of grassroots voter registration, voter education and electoral campaigns, and the role of movements in bringing about social change and broad systems reform.

INTERNATIONAL MODELS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Students consider approaches to organizing that have been especially important in other countries, including experience with popular education, participatory research and various movement-building and broad-based campaign strategies. Students learn about the connection between local and international organizing.

STRATEGIC MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS FOR ORGANIZING

Students examine effective media strategies for community organizing campaigns, effective messaging that reflects the values and goals of the community and how to use tools such as social media, self-generated radio and press events.

SUSTAINING SOCIAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGN VICTORIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Students explore models for sustaining a social justice organization including evaluating non-profit organizations and their missions, combining organizing with the operation of social services and/or community development programs, and social entrepreneurship and self-help models to support community revitalization and empowerment.

PRACTICUM

Students work in teams in existing organizing campaigns. They gain hands-on experience in the field of organizing by completing a project for a local organization.

USING AN ACADEMIC / COMMUNITY PARTNER STRATEGY

In 1996, CDTech received the assets of Rebuild Los Angeles, in a highly publicized effort to utilize profits from the Olympics and other private investment in South Los Angeles following the 1992 Civil Unrest. Over the years it has become a major source of leadership training, technical assistance and other support for community-based efforts to improve low-income neighborhoods in Los Angeles.

A central part of CDTech's vision has been linking the local community college much more closely to the needs of South Central Los Angeles.

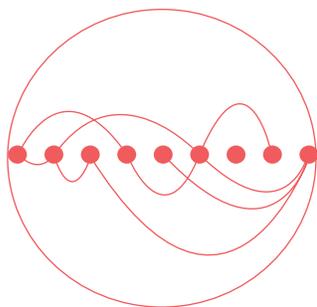
CDTech is known nationally for its pioneering work in creating academic programs that prepare students from low-income neighborhoods for careers that help strengthen those communities and meet their needs. It has a long-standing partnership with LA Trade-Tech. CDTech staff serve as adjunct faculty at LA Trade-Tech, teaching courses in community planning, community development, economic development and other topics.

One of CDTech's most ambitious programs offers LA Trade-Tech students a state-approved certificate as well as an Associates Degree in Community Planning. Unique in the nation, the program includes courses and experience in the development of real estate and community development projects.

Under the leadership of Denise Fairchild and her successor, Benjamin Torres, CDTech developed a rich assortment of educational and training programs that have included:

- Training for green jobs and developing green infrastructure projects.
- Training for *promotoras* — health promoters — to work as leaders of community development in low-income communities.
- Serving as the Operating Partner for Public Allies Los Angeles. CDTech is the local site for the national AmeriCorps program. This provides ten-month internships in local nonprofits for thirty diverse young leaders each year who serve as Allies in community development and neighborhood revitalization.

While education and training are primary tools for CDTech's work at the community level, CDTech also serves as a center for promoting the revitalization of Los Angeles in other ways. For example, it works in collaboration with other community development organizations and faith-based groups through the UNIDAD Coalition to develop community benefits agreements with three major redevelopment projects in South Los Angeles. Through these agreements, CDTech offers programming in workforce development, small business development



STUDENT IMPACT

A Community Organizing Academy Student and Her Son

One Community Organizing Academy student, a Latina mother, brought her 12-year old son to all of the classes because she wanted him to understand what she was learning. She wanted him to know how organizing addresses issues in the community. The instructors confirmed that he was an active participant in the classes. "He didn't just sit there and do his homework," one said. "He listened intently and asked questions through his mother." This example demonstrates the intergenerational, household or family-based role in community organizing and working for community change. The Organizing Academy fosters these connections and involvement.

and association building, and sectoral economic development. With its staff of planners, developers, trainers and other specialists, CDTech helps community groups represent their interests in the development plans that affect their neighborhoods.

CLP provides funding, program consultation and a network of colleagues to support the Los Angeles Community Organizing Academy to be a significant part of the academic / community partner approach at CDTech.

STRATEGIZING FOR GROWTH AND FOR ESTABLISHING A PATHWAY IN CALIFORNIA

As it completes its pilot program, CDTech is refining the design for an eventual certificate program as well as for its long-term relationship with LA Trade-Tech and other community colleges in Los Angeles. The California Endowment views CDTech's Community Organizing Academy as a model for possible replication in other sites in California.

The California Endowment is supporting the overall expansion of CLP in California. Working in collaboration with national CLP and De Anza College in Cupertino, California, CDTech is helping launch similar community college partnership programs in Oakland and Fresno. The first step in this work is to identify and bring together key leaders within each community along with the local community college. These partnerships then design and implement the certificate and/or Associate Degree programs in those local sites.

To build the pathway in Los Angeles, CDTech is piloting a program with two high schools. This program introduces 11th and 12th grade students to the field of community organizing through South LA Civics in Action. Forty-two Latino/a and African American students engage in leadership development training and take a one-unit course in Social Media, Power and Culture. CDTech encourages graduates of this program to apply to its Public Allies program. These students can then earn income while gaining work experience and taking additional courses in community change. The long-range plan includes developing dual credit courses in community organizing and community development in additional area high schools. CDTech sees this as an important first step on a pathway that can continue through college into a career.

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