Section 1

STUDY AND LAUNCH

"To accept your country without betraying it, you must love it for what it might become. America – this monument to the genius of ordinary men and women, this place where hope becomes capacity, this long, halting turn of 'no' into the 'yes' – needs citizens who love it enough to reimagine and remake it."

— Cornel West

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1. Introduction

The Growing Challenge:

At this time of crisis and rapidly accelerating change, the future of American democracy will depend upon whether we concentrate heavily on tackling our greatest domestic economic, social and political challenges:

- **Poverty** has become ever more entrenched and is largely ignored by the nation's leaders and both political parties.
- **Racism** and xenophobia dominate much of our politics and threaten to reverse hard-won gains in building a successful multiracial society.
- **Long-neglected neighborhoods and small towns** are continuing to decline**,** weakening important community ties and our social fabric.
- Our **fragile democracy** – the essential vehicle for positive change -- is under threat as so many people lose faith in our democratic institutions and withdraw from participating in public life.

These fundamental challenges are deeply interrelated and reinforce each other:

- Those most concerned about issues of poverty, racism and declining communities – **poor people and people of color – participate least** in voting, policy advocacy, and other strategies for reinforcing our democracy.
- At the same time, the **political influence of wealthy people and interests is growing ever stronger**, drowning out the voice and influence of people on the margins.
- This deepening shift in power weakens government responsiveness to the needs of disenfranchised people, further **increasing their cynicism about democratic institutions and reducing their participation and influence.**
- If this downward spiral is not reversed, it is inevitable that issues of poverty, racial division, declining communities, and democratic decline will continue to fester.

To reverse these threats to democracy and make major inroads on central issues of poverty, race, community and strengthening our social fabric, **America must act decisively to reinvigorate democracy where it is at the lowest ebb -- among low-income and working-class people and people of color who are being left farther and farther behind, with decreasing influence in our democracy**.

In this era of government retrenchment and disarray it is clear that we cannot rely on the public sector to take a strong lead in addressing tough issues of poverty, race, and community-building.

Furthermore, large nonprofit institutions are not well-suited for this task, as they typically work area-wide and must balance many interests and activities rather than focus heavily on poverty and strengthening our social fabric and communities.

There is no choice: Leadership on issues of poverty and race must come from the people who are most directly affected by those issues, and this will require bold measures to build outstanding community leaders and democratic organizations. They alone can be depended upon to push whole-heartedly for major social reforms and grassroots democracy, building coalitions with other groups whenever possible.

Well-led low-income community organizations and social movements are essential to the success of other partners committed to positive community change. Without effective systems for involving low-income people themselves, efforts to transform the lives of poor people and minorities will fail. So will initiatives to bring people together across race and class lines to confront the growing inequities, divisiveness, and racial tension which are ripping our social fabric apart.

All these reforms require a dramatic renewal of faith and participation in democracy and the development of systems which are sensitive to each community's unique needs and opportunities, are "owned" by those they are serving, enlist strong neighborhood backing and succeed in exerting major influence on the policies and practice of major institutions.

Therefore, there must be concerted efforts to develop a new generation of *community leaders and organizers* with the needed skills, knowledge, understanding and long-term commitment. They must be fully prepared to bring discouraged people together around common issues, and to help them develop the hope, collective strength, and strategies they will need to win on the issues which matter most to them. By building their own organizations, movements, power and influence and by winning victories, vulnerable people can steadily gain confidence that they can make democracy work for them.

Along with organizing and leadership skills, rising community leaders and organizers must develop the broad knowledge and cross-sector skills they will need to develop strong, creative and effective community-based organizations and broader alliances. In addition, with these strengths, they will also be strong candidates for key positions in politics, government agencies, the media, major nonprofits and the business sector. **People with their commitments are needed in those organizations, too, where they can be allies advocating for better public policies and substantial institutional reforms**.

The Crisis in Leadership:

Despite the critical need for organizers and leaders with these strengths, the field of community and social change faces a mounting crisis of leadership. *There is a severe shortage of people who are fully prepared for key positions in the field* – whether leading grassroots groups or providing vital support to them from other sectors. The infrastructure for learning is still pitifully weak, with community leaders, organizers, and top staff expected to learn on the job, through trial and error, with little access to the lessons others have learned in tackling similar challenges. Nonprofits typically are so overstretched that few can either hire people as apprentices to their top leaders or invest significantly in other forms of training and mentoring.

The shortage is especially great among people of color whose leadership is essential because communities of color are disproportionately poor, neglected and cut off from opportunities. Educational gaps, stubborn patterns of white dominance in key institutions, and the appeal of jobs offering greater security and upward mobility continue to limit the number of people of color in key leadership positions. It is unacceptable that the excuse "We can't find any" continues to limit progress in hiring and upward mobility for champions of change.

To build a strong community-based sector which fully responds to these needs, far greater priority must be given to **developing a pipeline** designed to generate the skilled people community groups, movements, coalitions, and their allies will need as our democracy faces extraordinary dangers.

It is essential that growing numbers of young people from lower income backgrounds, immigrant populations and other families of color be prepared for

challenging jobs in community-based nonprofits and alliances, as their backgrounds give them unique advantages for understanding and leading their communities. They have felt the pressures and faced the same barriers, and often developed a passion for changing things for the better. Because of their backgrounds, they also are particularly well prepared to build strong relationships in low-income communities and to identify common interests and understandings with their peers, while also serving as role models for them. Their backgrounds also increase the likelihood they will make long-term rather than fleeting commitments to the neighborhoods and people who most need their help.

In this time of great activism and deep concern, the time is certainly ripe for new initiatives to build on the extraordinary passion, concern, urgency and determination which young people and their allies are showing on so many fronts -- the climate emergency; the crisis in criminal justice; the pandemic and the disastrous weaknesses in our "social safety net"; the skyrocketing youth unemployment; the incredible obstacles which young people of color and poor whites face when they search for pathways to family-supporting jobs with decent benefits.

Young people are taking leadership on all these fronts. It is time to build systems which help them gain the knowledge and skills they need to bring about the levels of change which they clearly see as essential.

Community and social change is a tough and demanding job requiring a broad background, analytic and strategic skills, and practical experience in understanding and motivating people and moving them into action on strategies which will lead to growing success. It is a tremendously challenging – and exciting – responsibility, at least as complex as any other profession. **Like other professions, it requires extensive preparation, well beyond what most people can learn on a job without a serious educational component, mentoring and guidance.**

Leaders and agents of change with strong backgrounds are needed in all the sectors of society, not just in community-based organizations. Larger nonprofits, the public and private sectors have an equally great need for people with those backgrounds and with commitment, extensive knowledge, team-

building and change management skills. Furthermore, they are needed inside major institutions where they can reinforce community pressures for reform and greater responsiveness and accountability.

"Bringing about desirable social change requires a variety of strategies, approaches, and tactics. Recognizing and respecting the wide range of individual capabilities and interests the movement must provide opportunities for a broad spectrum of degrees of involvement. The dynamic character of the movement requires a variety of coalitions."

— George Wiley

CLP's Response:

The Community Learning Partnership was created to respond to this challenge. **CLP is unique in being the only national organization centered on creating College Degree and Certificate programs which are designed specifically to prepare low-income people and people of color to become leaders and organizers, tackling issues of poverty, discrimination, power, community-building, and reinvigorating our democracy**.

Over the years, with very limited resources, the Partnership has systematically moved from research and consultation, to creating a learning network of 14 pilot programs, to fostering learning in this **growing field of Community Change Studies.** To move to far greater scale, the CLP Network is working with state and national policy-makers on plans for new State and Federal programs which would support these new educational pathways for grassroots leaders, organizers and other agents of community and social change.

The Partnership's work is based on the following **theory of change** –

- Low-income communities must become prime movers in community, social and political change efforts to ensure that the future responds to their needs and priorities.
- They must build their own democratically controlled organizations to represent their interests, and they must hold those organizations accountable.
- They cannot achieve success on their own but need to enlist the power and influence of allies, partners and coalitions.
- Their success requires that they be organized to build significant power as there will always be tough competition for resources and great resistance to policy reforms which benefit disadvantaged communities.
- Those efforts require volunteer and staff leaders with broad knowledge and skills, experience in involving people and developing leaders, a long-range vision and sophisticated strategy.
- People with lived experience with poverty and discrimination bring unique insights, knowledge, commitment and interpersonal skills to organizations working on these issues, and they also are uniquely qualified to be role models for other potential community leaders, organizers, and change agents.
- While people can learn and develop these capacities through experience, trial and error, they will develop far more quickly if they have an opportunity to learn through a combination of structured learning opportunities, extensive practice and critical reflection.
- College-based programs can become an invaluable route for developing these capacities, but those programs must be shaped to accomplish this specific purpose, and that can best be done in partnership with community leaders and organizations.

It may seem surprising that the Community Learning Partnership focuses on college-based programs to address this crisis, especially since CLP was initiated by people immersed in the nonprofit world rather than academia. The key people in its formation came from decades of experience helping low-income and working-class communities develop nonprofits to represent and involve them in joint action.

Leading nonprofits and networks have, of course, created their own training programs, many of which are of exceptional quality. For example, national community organizing networks systematically train new organizers by placing them with experienced organizers to learn on the job and through workshops. Many other organizations offer excellent 2-3 day training sessions focusing on

one or more aspects of organizing and issue work. **There is great potential in building up the nonprofit sector's capacity to provide much more extensive training and mentoring, building on the expertise and systems which are already in place.**

However, nonprofits cannot handle the crisis by themselves as they have strict limits in their access to resources, their access to young people, and the range of their expertise. These nonprofit programs are starved for resources: unlike college-based programs, they do not have access to streams of government funding for staff salaries, tuition, scholarships, stipends or seed money. Furthermore, they cannot offer their students college credit, Certificates and Degrees – especially significant benefits for people who, because of income or other barriers, have not had an opportunity to earn academic credentials which can help them in their careers.

Unfortunately, it is by now abundantly clear that nonprofits will never get the resources which are needed for the intensive, long-term educational programs which are needed. In the community change world, it is extraordinarily difficult to attract funding for more than a weekend training program. Most community organizations have no choice but to hire the best people they can find and train them on on-the-job.

Even at a sizeable national organization like the Center for Community Change -- with a staff of over 50 and a budget over $9 million[1] -- we could not possibly provide full-time training to dozens, let alone hundreds, of new community change agents. Like many other local and national nonprofits, we did what we could within the constraints of short-term funding cycles and changing fads in the foundation world. We brought community leaders and staff-members together as frequently as we could to learn from each other and from our staff and partners.

Each year for several years, we offered a set of four quarterly 3-day workshops to Executive Directors and lead staff of grassroots groups, covering community organizing, leadership, management, and public policy work. We also created more than a dozen "learning clusters" for peer learning among groups facing

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[1] These figures are from 2004 when the author was CCC's Executive Director.

common issues, such as saving and reforming public housing, and expanding the programs and power of urban Native Americans by building a national network of urban Indian Centers.

However, funding for these convenings invariably ran out, demonstrating the severe limitations all nonprofits face in trying to provide intensive preparation for emerging leaders for complex and important work.

The funding picture has worsened over the last two decades. Most notably, many foundations have retreated from "responsive grant-making" to designing their own initiatives and funding organizations which adopt the foundations' priorities. Current projections are that, within a few years, less than 10% of all foundation giving will respond to initiatives from independent nonprofits. This has coincided with the closing down of several small foundations which were strong supporters of community and social change efforts, and great reductions in collections and giving by the invaluable social justice funds established by the Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant churches.

Furthermore, in drastically reducing funding for VISTA and other Americorps programs and cutting federal support for community-based initiatives and other social programs, conservatives succeeded in greatly weakening the streams of young people preparing for careers in community and social change.

Increasingly frustrated by this dilemma, and especially about the shortage of people of color in leadership positions, I often thought back on my Peace Corps experience teaching in an Iranian university which created a five-year BA/MA program to prepare students for careers in village development work. The Major in "National Development" combined classroom and experiential learning. It was interdisciplinary, offering courses in agronomy, public health, and sociology; and its students spent two summers working with a faculty supervisor on community development projects in nearby villages.

A question kept nagging me – If Iran under the Shah could make a concerted effort to educate a new generation of experts for village work, why is it that, in 35 years of working in dozens of poor communities and recruiting staff for my own organization and local groups, I had rarely come across an American college which had taken on that important challenge?

What, if anything, could be done to rectify that situation in the US? Could American colleges become serious allies in creating new pathways into careers in community and social change in this country?

Research into College Programs in the US and Internationally:

CLP's background of deep immersion in grassroots experience enabled it to bring to the task a deep understanding of –

- The <u>impediments</u> which marginalized people face when they try to influence government agencies and policies or to gain support for significant community initiatives.
- The <u>challenges</u> of building strong organizations in communities facing so many serious issues and deficits.
- The <u>leadership and staffing needs</u> of neighborhood and other nonprofit organizations, and their acute need for access to new streams of people fully prepared for these challenges.
- The <u>latent talent</u> in those communities which could be tapped by creating new educational pathways for recruiting and developing future leaders for community-based organizations, and the other nonprofits and public agencies which provide essential services to people so often left behind.

CLP's initial studies enabled the Learning Partnership to balance this grassroots experience with extensive knowledge of the potential as well as the pitfalls of involving community colleges and public universities as key resources for tackling this set of issues.

Stepping down from being CCC's Executive Director enabled me to pursue those questions. With a small Ford Foundation grant covering some costs, I devoted full-time to researching the landscape of US college programs preparing students for community change careers. It explored broad trends and patterns while looking for especially promising prototypes. Site visits and over sixty interviews resulted in a US report on <u>University Education for Community Change</u>[2] It also resulted in a decision to create the Community Learning Partnership and to see

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[2] *University Education for Community Change* is available at
http://communitylearningpartnership.org/resources/

what we could do to help create several new educational programs, learn from that experience and then move to scale. **Our long-term goal -- to multiply the number of educational pathways designed specifically to prepare people from low-income and working-class backgrounds, especially people of color, for careers and leadership roles tackling issues of poverty, race, community-building, and strengthening our democracy.**

A second grant enabled CLP to bring together outstanding colleagues from several countries to form an International Working Group to learn from each other, conducting site visits and developing a fifteen-chapter international report on <u>Advancing University Education for Community Change</u>.[3] We all learned a great deal from those research and learning projects. Highlights for us included the use of Participatory Action Research in India, the UK, and the US, and the imaginative ways field work was being combined with popular education in Mexico, Tanzania and Boston.

The International Working Group's research and collaboration provided an opportunity for CLP to learn from academics and NGO leaders who have wrestled with these issues in other countries, and to collaborate in developing a consensus on key questions –

- The challenging relationships between communities and colleges,
- Different methods for combining classroom and experiential education,
- The knowledge and skills graduates need, and
- Essential strategies for starting and sustaining educational programs.

These studies enabled CLP to supplement its extensive experience at the grassroots level with a strong overview of the experience others have had involving colleges in preparing students for community change work. Dialogues with over 125 people in the US and overseas provided CLP with invaluable opportunities for learning as we developed plans for piloting educational programs in the US.

It became overwhelming clear during these consultations that **colleges must be a major focus if we are to expand the pool of talented people of color and lower**

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[3] *Advancing College Education for Strengthening Communities and Democracy* is available at
http://communitylearningpartnership.org/resources/

income backgrounds who are ready to lead community-based organizations and allied efforts. That's where fully 29% of America's youth -- including the most upwardly mobile people of color and young people from neglected communities -- complete their education and make career decisions. It is a talent pool which must be tapped to address the leadership crisis in the field of community change.

Colleges also offer unparalleled access to great numbers of students who are committed to service and/or passionate about fundamental reform on the massive crises the US faces. They represent a huge potential resource for organizations working to improve opportunities for poor people and people of color. In addition, anchoring practitioner education in colleges can add greatly to its credibility and enable practitioners to earn credentials and concomitant respect and influence.

Another tremendous advantage of college-based programs over strictly nonprofit ones is that **they can count on major continuing government support** if they are based at state-funded institutions with the students' tuition costs being subsidized through Pell grants, government loans and other support from the public and private sectors.[4]

However, preparing students to win victories on issues which move them requires concerted efforts to develop new educational pathways which provide them with the knowledge and experience they need for careers in community and social change.

Furthermore, **we found fewer than a handful of undergraduate programs specifically designed to prepare people for careers in community and social change.** These were based in institutions which recruit directly from low-income communities and involve academics and practitioners in preparing young people for lives of service in those communities.

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[4] Falling enrollments and the resulting financial pressures on most community and four-year colleges make it imperative that CCS programs maintain a large enough enrollment to ensure their safety as budgets are cut and there are cutbacks in courses and areas of concentration. These factors magnify the importance of active recruitment and job placement programs backed up by current evidence that labor market conditions are favorable for CCS graduates.
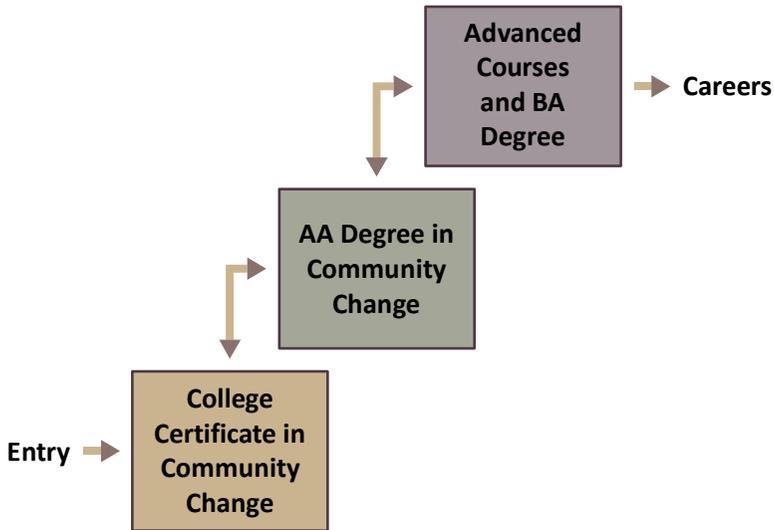
While a thorough review of the course catalog at many institutions reveals a surprising number of courses relevant to low-income communities, they are scattered in different departments and not linked. It would require both a highly motivated, self-directed student and a rare guidance counselor to piece these courses together and link them with on-site experience to give students a significant grounding in community work.

The gulf we observed between practitioners and academics was even wider than generally acknowledged. Even among those who share a strong common commitment to grassroots community organizations as key institutions for addressing issues of class and race, there is little contact between practitioners and academics. They live in parallel universes, participating in different meetings and conferences, rarely reading the same materials, and often not even knowing each other's names. It is rare for research and other materials to be shared across these lines despite the fact that both universes conduct extensive research on community issues. Despite talk of "partnerships", there were relatively few examples of close collaboration between academics and community leaders, even on research on community issues and student placement – two issues on which they have potentially strong common interests.

M**any of the most interesting programs have emerged in non-elite institutions.** Most are located in less well-known institutions, including community colleges and the less prestigious branches of state university systems. These institutions suffer less than elite universities from overwhelming pressures to ape the major research universities by publishing pathfinding research studies in academic journals. Their faculty members are often freer to create the practice-based and interdisciplinary approaches and university/community partnerships which are central to community work.

Community colleges offer particular advantages as the linchpins in an educational pathway. They often are entrepreneurial and accustomed to working with employer groups to fashion educational programs which meet their requirements for graduates with the motivation, skills and knowledge they need. They can partner with high schools, initiating "dual credit" early college courses in community change so students enter community college with credits under their belts. They offer "stackable credentials" with courses at times and on terms which are attractive to adult learners, enabling students to take a course or two,

move on to earn a Certificate and perhaps an AA Degree as their financial and life circumstances allow. They can continue this pathway, gaining useful credentials at each stage, and then having access to a four-year BA program where they can deepen their knowledge and skills while earning a Degree which significantly increases their upward mobility.

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Advanced Courses and BA Degree → **Careers**

AA Degree in Community Change

Entry → **College Certificate in Community Change**

Another finding is also extremely important. **The college programs which exist are highly vulnerable.** Their future often depends upon their ability to attract sufficient "soft money" from outside the university to justify their existence. When that funding dries up, the programs typically shrink or die.

The future of these programs too often depends upon the leadership of one or two people who have carved out space for their programs over a lengthy period of time. While there are outstanding instances of a university president, dean or chairperson of a department giving priority to community-oriented learning, there are countless examples of failure to institutionalize these efforts so they last beyond that person's leadership.

Pilot programs like these benefit greatly from collaborating, learning from each other, working together on joint projects, and building an increasingly robust common agenda for promoting rapid replication and new state and national policies which support their development.

Exemplary Programs of Community Change Education:

The program which most influenced CLP was the Community Development Technology Center's pioneering partnership with the Los Angeles Trade and Technical College. Dr. Denise Fairchild established CD Tech as a community-based nonprofit which provides technical assistance and training to grassroots groups and coalitions in South Central Los Angeles and other communities throughout the region. The nonprofit then took the initiative in designing an extensive educational program and convincing the local community college to adopt it and arrange for CD Tech's staff to do much of the teaching. This program has offered an Associate Degree in Community Planning and Economic Development for over twenty years and has graduated hundreds of students for community planning, organizing and development careers. One graduate now serves as Program Director for the LATTC Degree program as well as Co-Chairing CLP's Board with Denise Fairchild.

The CD Tech program demonstrated to CLP the enormous potential of involving community colleges in preparing the next generation of community leaders and change agents. Community colleges provide a particularly good way of reaching students from low-income and working-class backgrounds, including students of color – the target groups which CLP sees as most essential for work in marginalized communities – because those colleges are relatively affordable and accessible to people with limited incomes.

Over the years, the nonprofit CD Tech has been very creative and entrepreneurial in expanding its role in developing the next generation of community planners, community developers, and organizers. The largest of these initiatives has been Tech's role operating a major Americorps Public Allies program which supports over 50 Allies working on community projects throughout Southern California. In an educational innovation which deserves replication, CD Tech makes it possible for Public Allies to take courses in its Degree program, enabling them to earn college credit for introductory courses in community planning, organizing and development while they work, learn on the job and earn income from

Americorps. While those federal stipends are far from adequate, especially for volunteers from low-income families, this linkage provides a very useful **example of the potential of earn-while-you-learn approaches to the challenge of developing a surge of new knowledgeable, skilled and committed community-builders and change agents**. [5]

A sad illustration of the great vulnerability of even exemplary programs was based at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. The program was established in the 1970s as a special initiative to provide higher education to students of color and others who were already working in neighborhood-based organizations or interested in doing so. At its height it had over 800 undergraduate students and 250 grad students. Most students came from working class and low-income backgrounds and either had begun or were considering careers in community planning and development, community organizing or social services for low-income communities.

Operating as a "college within the college", **UMass Boston's College for Public and Community Service for many years offered an undergraduate major in Community Planning which was heavily oriented toward public interest work at the neighborhood level.**

 Undergraduates majoring in Community Planning learned how to conduct needs and resource assessments, community impact assessments and program evaluations as well as to help with planning, strategy and proposal development. They could concentrate in any of six areas, including Community Studies, Organizing, Legal Advocacy and Management. Other CPCS students could major in Criminal Justice, Gerontology, Human Services, Labor Studies, or Legal Education.

During that era several key elements of that design made it remarkably effective in attracting and educating students from lower-income backgrounds:

- The College for Public and Community Service was originally based in a building downtown, separate from the rest of the University and near

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[5] See Chapter 23 for details on CLP's proposal for state and federal support for well-paid 2-4 year Community Building Internships to respond to this need.

low-income neighborhoods and the community organizations where many of its early students worked.

- It was designed specifically to encourage people to continue in or prepare for community and public service careers (and to discourage a brain drain from this field).
- It actively recruited people from nonprofits and neighborhoods, many of whom were considerably older than the average college freshman.
- CCPS had a policy of open enrollment to reduce the barriers to enrolling for people who had low marks in high school or on college board exams
- It gave maximum credit for people's past experience and for experiential learning generally, either on the job or through other real-life experiences.
- Practitioners as well as regular faculty taught courses, thus increasing students' exposure to learning from people who were on the front lines bringing about positive change in low-income communities.
- Courses used participatory action research, participatory planning, internships with community groups, and other techniques to give students direct experience working with people in low-income neighborhoods.

There are many lessons from the CD Tech and UMass experiences. Most importantly, they show *it is possible to create a program which primarily recruits and educates people from disadvantaged backgrounds so they are well equipped to lead positive change efforts in their own neighborhoods and similar communities*. They demonstrated the effectiveness of special measures for recruitment, combining theoretical and experiential education, involving both academics and practitioners, and gearing an overall program to careers in community service.

It is noteworthy that both these programs were completely unique and largely unknown. While both were ambitious, well-designed, proven programs which educated and trained the community change leaders of tomorrow, neither was widely recognized or supported, and neither had been replicated before CLP's creation[6]

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[6] In a parallel development, the community organizing group Make the Road New York has adopted several schools in New York City and incorporated many elements in its curriculum to

Sadly, a decade ago UMass Boston's administrators decided to revamp the Planning Degree program, dropping its emphasis on neighborhoods and community-driven strategies, and following the dominant trends in planning schools. They renamed the program "Urban Planning and Development", dropped the emphasis on community capacity-building and grassroots planning, and instead stressed conventional community development and research approaches.

Despite such setbacks these pioneering efforts provide impressive examples of the pay-off from having community leaders, practitioners and academics work together to create learning opportunities for the community organizers, developers and leaders who are sorely needed. These programs can help the next generation learn how to play change leadership roles with unusual skill, broad knowledge, and sophisticated strategies. They thus can contribute greatly to efforts to enable grassroots people to become leaders in transforming their own communities and expanding opportunities. Exemplary academic programs like the ones represented in and studied by the International Working Group offer powerful examples of the potential of the creative new college programs which are needed today and in the years ahead.

It will require a major concerted effort to expand and broaden the pioneering programs which already exist. Moreover, it will take even more resources and a higher level of mobilization to increase vastly the number of such programs so they become accessible to people who need to learn how best to involve people in bringing about democratic change. This will require new resources of money and educators.

 It will also require creative, paradigm-shifting new partnerships between people in higher education and practitioners in social movements and nonprofits so that the educational programs can skillfully combine theory and practice, classroom and experiential education, applying a "clinical" approach to learning as medicine and other professions do so successfully.   Unlike most university-community "partnerships", these must be truly equal, showing equal

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educate its students about their community, the problems and institutions it faces, and strategies for bringing about change, especially through community organizing, advocacy and development.

respect to what grassroots leaders, other practitioners, and academics can bring to robust educational programs for community change agents.

Some educators like former Harvard President Derek Bok see a new emphasis on participation and civic values as an important counterweight to market forces as decisions are made concerning university curricula. Bok, for example, has long been deeply concerned about how university education is increasingly "market-driven" rather than oriented toward the common good, and is very committed to efforts to increase the emphasis on service and civic engagement.

Community Change Studies programs like those described in this book are powerful responses to this concern and great steps forward in promoting service and civic engagement.

2. Developing Community Change Studies Programs – A Preview

This chapter summarizes CLP's approach and lessons, which are then described and analyzed in detail later in the book.

Chapters 3 through 21 serve as an e-manual, a practical guide for designing and implementing a Community Change Studies Degree or Certificate program. They are designed to be equally useful to other educators, organizers, and community leaders who are looking for elements or strategies which may be useful in strengthening an existing course or training program.

Chapters 22 and 23 focus on strategies for moving to scale through promoting widespread replication as well as campaigns for state and federal public policies to support development of Change Studies programs throughout the U.S.

After completing its studies of College Education for Community Change in the US and internationally, CLP moved from research into action, recruiting a small staff and beginning to help develop local community/college partnerships and college-based programs in "Community Change Studies" (CCS).

To describe this emerging field of study, we chose to use the term "Community Change Studies" because it has great breadth, transcends any one academic discipline and stretches from local to global issues. These educational programs are being created as college Certificate and Degree programs in two- and four-year colleges, and are closely related to similar efforts in social justice high schools, action civics, graduate schools and continuing education. They are housed in disciplines ranging from Planning to Social Work, from Education to Public Health, from Environmental and Women's Studies to Economics and Political Science. The fact that even some Law, Divinity and Medical Schools offer courses on these strategies demonstrates the near universal relevance of bottom-up approaches to addressing issues.

We have set an ambitious goal – to work with others to develop Community Change Studies as a recognized field of studies in academic institutions across

the country and as a promising strategy for expanding grassroots leadership education and organizer training. [7]

We are convinced this goal is achievable. As global crises become ever more dramatic and threatening, and as the need grows to create new ways of working together to address those massive*, we expect a rapid escalation of demands inside and outside academia that our colleges and high schools be transformed and focus heavily on helping prepare people to cope successfully with these crises.*   When academics and social change practitioners collaborate, this transformation can be of maximum value in the US and worldwide.

 As it moved into action CLP focused first on Community Colleges because of their central importance in creating educational opportunities for people from low-income and working-class backgrounds, including large numbers of people of color and first generation college students. Since then the Learning Partnership has also helped several public Universities create CCS programs, focusing especially on institutions with high enrollments of Pell-eligible students and people of color as well as a commitment to their region.

By 2020, the Community Learning Partnership had succeeded in helping create 14 college Degree and Certificate programs in Community Change Studies. [8] At that time, over 1000 students were enrolled in CCS courses, 80% of whom were people of color. About 70% were income-eligible for Pell grants, and 15% had experienced homelessness during the school year. In its early days, CLP also helped the Association for Neighborhood Housing and Development in New York City create a non-college intensive training program in community organizing in collaboration with Americorps' Public Allies program.   ANHD's Center for

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[7] CLP's local affiliates use different titles for their programs including "Community and Social Change Studies", "Community Leadership", "Community Development", "Community and Political Organizing" and "Social Justice Leadership".

[8] CLP also helped create programs which were closed after 1-2 years. The Phoenix program was closed when conservatives took control of the Board of the Maricopa County community college system. An unexpected shift in foundation staffing and priorities suspended the CCS program in rural Mississippi. And high school budget cuts forced closure of the Detroit high school which offered a dual enrollment high school/early college curriculum in CCS.

Community Leadership has graduated ten organizers each year for eleven years and helped strengthen organizing across New York's five boroughs.

CLP's technical assistance work gradually expanded over the years, with four sites well underway within three years. Three of these were initiated by community organizations, with the fourth initiated by a community college. Each situation was unique with its own leadership, opportunities, and obstacles. These educational programs and the other ten which CLP has helped develop since then vary considerably to fit the local context and priorities, but all were designed to develop young people from low-income backgrounds to become agents of positive change for communities like their own.

Partnership staff has provided its sites with expert help in developing partnerships, and with planning, organizing and launching new college programs. We have provided advice and assistance with start-up and initial planning as well as continuing on-site help and coaching, curricular and program development help, and cross-site peer learning opportunities. In its early years, thanks to the generous support of Deerbrook Charitable Trust and the Kellogg Foundation, CLP was able to pass through initial funding for several start-up partnerships, leveraging philanthropic dollars to catalyze major public investments (since they were based at publicly supported colleges and their students had access to financial aid programs). *(See Chapter 21 on the dramatic leveraging success of private investment in the planning and start-up phase of CLP programs.)*

CLP Does Not Replicate a "Model"

It is important to emphasize a key difference between the CLP approach and many others. The Learning Partnership does not have a "model" which it strives to replicate in different settings. Instead the Partnership has developed an "adaptable framework" for expansion to new sites: CLP works with local people and institutions to develop a program which is firmly based on the local context but includes the basic features of CLP's approach (e.g. developing organizers and leaders for community change, combining classroom and experiential learning, and offering an educational pathway with stackable credentials).

CLP's stress on building on each local situation is based on our experience working in dozens of communities, learning again and again how critical the local context

is. As technical assistance providers, coaches and supporters of community-controlled efforts, we have learned to go into each situation seeking first to understand the local context and then to work with local people to help them design an approach which is based on their local situation – their assets, and needs, their local leadership and priorities, the unique opportunities, barriers and dynamics which exist there – while it also includes the essential elements of a Community Change Studies program.

We have also learned from witnessing the many failures of top down models and strategies which are <u>not</u> firmly rooted in local organizations and priorities, but are instead designed by thinktanks, government agencies, funders, and other outside institutions, and which stall out over time with little independent evaluation or lasting impact.

A New Phase in Our Work

CLP is now entering a new phase, preparing to scale up its impact by adding new strategies. The CLP Network now operates on a team basis. Its Board includes representatives from almost all its sites and meets bi-monthly by Zoom or in person. This enables the sites to be directly involved in shaping policy and priorities for the Network. It also facilitates unusually extensive cross-site learning, mutual support and collaboration. **This team approach has created great opportunities for shared leadership across generations and across roles, bringing younger people of color into powerful roles in the intergenerational Network.**

The concluding chapters of this book outline our plans for the future. This book is one of the first steps in that transition. Its central chapters provide an e-manual to guide people who want to learn from CLP's on-the-ground experience and ongoing evaluation and dialogue. Readers can download whichever chapters they find most useful or the whole book. They are available on the CLP website [www.clpclp.org.](www.clpclp.org)

We hope this book will help growing numbers of community leaders and faculty members to design and create additional Degree and Certificate programs in Community Change Studies. It should be equally useful for others who are

enriching their courses or training programs to expand the knowledge, skills and vision of emerging leaders and change agents.
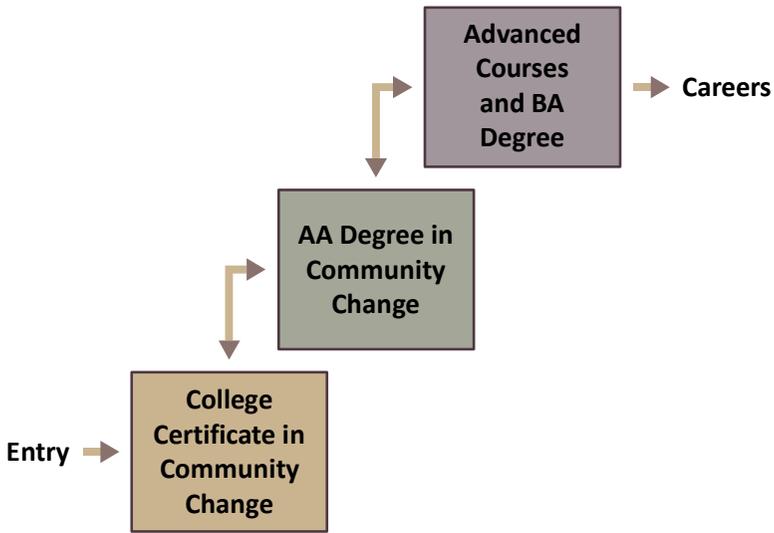
The remainder of this chapter briefly reviews seven key elements of CLP programs --

1. Educational pathways with stackable credentials.
2. Recruiting students.
3. The labor market for graduates.
4. Knowledge and skills needed.
5. Teaching practices.
6. Partnerships between communities and colleges.
7. Key courses.

Each of these key elements is addressed in greater depth later in the book.

1. Educational Pathways with Stackable Credentials

CLP programs are designed as educational pathways which enable students to proceed step by step to deepen their knowledge and skills and earn "stackable credentials". These start with college credit and perhaps a "micro-certificate" for each course they complete. These are steps toward College Certificates, Associate Degrees and, for many, Bachelor's Degrees. This system of stackable credits provides students with rewards at each step of their educational pathway, and each credential helps students access relevant part-time jobs as they continue along the path.

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2. Recruiting Priority Students

Since CLP's primary goal is creating new educational pathways to prepare people of color and students from disinvested communities for careers and leadership roles in community change work, CLP identified four major sources of potential candidates for local Community College and public University programs.

1. Current college students

- Especially people of color and first gen students
- Showing interest in and potential for tackling community issues and social change.

2. Youth in Low-Income Neighborhoods

- Especially people of color (POC), including kids not now college-bound.
- Showing interest in "giving back" and potential for change careers.

3. Community leaders

- Especially POC and first gen.
- With experience in organizing, working on a community issue, leadership potential.
- Showing potential to tackle larger issues or become organizers.

4. Early and Midcareer Organizers

At critical point in careers and needing chance to reflect, learn, look ahead, earn credentials for advancement

3. What Areas of Knowledge and Skills Are Most Essential?

Before CLP began its action phase, several key points of consensus emerged during a two-day meeting CLP hosted at New York University. That meeting brought together community leaders and representatives of outstanding college educational programs in the US and several other countries. It helped the Learning Partnership as it moved forward to help create new Community Change Education programs in the States.

All the participants at NYU agreed that **three areas of study should be combined** in education and training programs on community change so students have the full range of knowledge and skills they will need. They include mastery of –
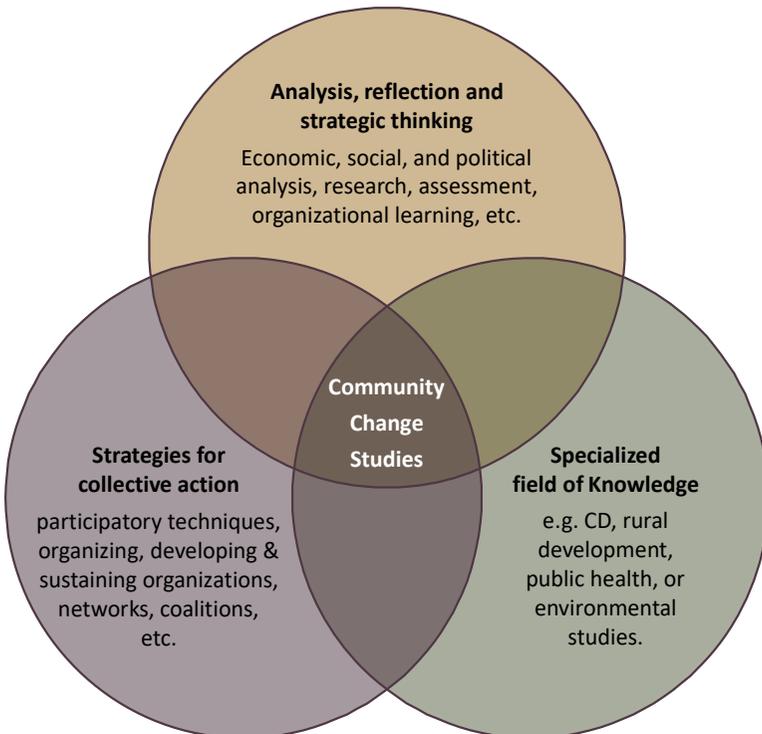
- The tools of collective action – getting people involved and participating, organizing them for action, and helping them build

movements and organizations through which they can have a growing impact;

- Strategic thinking, analysis and reflection – helping people understand the environments in which they are working, including analyzing trends, power, and potential allies, and developing their skills in critical thinking, strategy and reflection so they can become increasingly effective; and

- Knowledge of the specific issues they are most concerned about (e.g. community development, public and community health, environmental justice and sustainability), including understanding the root causes, current policies, how decisions are made, and alternative strategies for creating significant change.

These are depicted in the Venn diagram below.

Areas of Knowledge and Competency

Analysis, reflection and strategic thinking
Economic, social, and political analysis, research, assessment, organizational learning, etc.

Community Change Studies

Strategies for collective action
participatory techniques, organizing, developing & sustaining organizations, networks, coalitions, etc.

Specialized field of Knowledge
e.g. CD, rural development, public health, or environmental studies.

A Crucial Additional Area of Competency for the US

As CLP began working with local partners, it solidified our understanding that a fourth area of learning and competency is essential in the United States because of its racial, cultural and socioeconomic divisions. **This fourth area focuses on issues of race, cultural identity, class, prejudice, white domination, historical trauma and healing, and, especially, how they relate to a person's sense of <u>agency and identity as an agent of change</u>**.

Later chapters of this book flesh out these four areas of competency, showing the skills and knowledge which people need to gain substantial improvements in their communities and major policy and institutional reforms.

4. What's the Labor Market for Graduates?

As we moved into operation, we gave early priority to learning more about the depth and breadth of **the labor market** for graduates in Community Change Studies. While we were already thoroughly familiar with the personnel and leadership needs of community-based organizations, we were far less familiar with the broader job market for people of color and people from low-income and working-class backgrounds with the skills and knowledge they could develop from Certificate, AA and BA programs in Change Studies.

CLP therefore sought early funding to explore the labor market in one of our initial new sites – metropolitan Detroit. Following the DACUM[9] process, the gold standard for labor market studies, CLP worked with consultants to analyze that region's employment patterns, interview potential employers, and conduct focus groups of nonprofits and representatives of public agencies and the private sector to discuss their workforce and leadership needs.[10] The study greatly deepened our knowledge of the knowledge, skill-sets and credentials different types of employers require. We explored the nature and scale of the demand beyond community-based organizations so we could demonstrate to colleges that there will be enough jobs to justify launching CCS programs, while also helping recruit

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[9] DACUM is the acronym for Developing a Curriculum.

[10] This resulted in a report which is available on the CLP website entitled *Listening. Building. Making Change. Job Profile of a Community Organizer.*

students by showing them the wide ranges of career opportunities open to people with backgrounds in Community and Social Change.
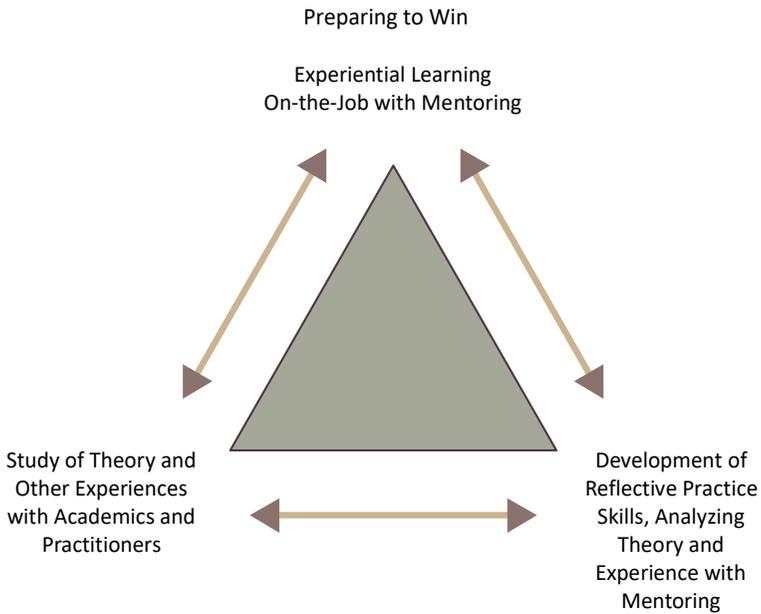
The DACUM study revealed that the cross-sector skills and knowledge which CCS graduates gain would open up career opportunities in a surprisingly wide range of organizations including —

- Community-based organizations and other constituency-based groups.
- Nonprofits advocating on issues and needing constituency involvement
- Nonprofits providing services to low-income people.
- Public agencies providing services and otherwise impacting poor people and communities of color.
- Electoral politics, including running for elective office, campaigns, and constituent services.
- Private sector jobs which are community-facing, including jobs in organized labor, the church, media, and business, including marketing, labor relations, and community reinvestment positions.

5. Teaching and Learning Methods

The NYU participants agreed on the critical importance of incorporating three learning methods into each curriculum. Together they reinforce each other, deepening the students' mastery of the subject and their ability to apply their new knowledge and skills in their community work. As illustrated below, **these three techniques for learning are** –

- **Reading and classroom work**, including attention to theory and to learning from the experience of others,
- **Experiential education** through field work with expert training and mentoring, and
- **disciplined reflection** to deepen a student's learning from both theory and practice.

Preparing to Win

Experiential Learning
On-the-Job with Mentoring

Study of Theory and
Other Experiences
with Academics and
Practitioners

Development of
Reflective Practice
Skills, Analyzing
Theory and
Experience with
Mentoring

All CCS programs use these techniques -- a cooperative educational approach which combines work, study, and reflection. Work on the ground in often challenging situations creates great opportunities for students to develop practical skills and test the theory and ideas they gain from reading and coursework and discussion. "Academic" study enables practitioners to go beyond the immediate issues they face to analyze their historical context, examine root causes and the roles various institutions play, and learn about the widely varying, often highly creative strategies which others have pursued in tackling those issues.   And, as skilled organizers constantly stress, reflective practice – continuously cycling through a repeating process of planning, action, and reflection. – is a third element which is critical to continuing learning and to success.

6. Genuine Community + College Partnerships

CLP's central approach has therefore stressed the creation of local partnerships which bring together the knowledge and strengths of two key sources of expertise and capacity-building skills –

- Community-focused nonprofits, community leaders and organizers on the one hand, and

- Academic institutions and faculty with extensive community experience as well as success in educating students from minority and low-income backgrounds.

Both academics and practitioners can make tremendous contributions in developing people's knowledge and skills related to community and social change. In particular, professional teachers are expert in helping people learn and develop their analytic and strategic capacities can add greatly to the depth of the understanding, thinking and learning skills of their students, be they traditional students or activists, organizers, developers, researchers, or otherwise engaged in bringing about social change.

Experienced practitioners also have vital roles to play as educators, bringing great knowledge and skills to teaching in this field. However, their full involvement in college-based programs is still rare. While some college programs involve practitioners as formal adjunct faculty-members, or in co-teaching with regular faculty, or as guest lecturers or "community scholars", there are tremendous barriers to involving practitioners in these ways.

CLP works to create genuine partnerships between these two sectors, each of which can offer great educational value to students. We stress "genuine" because there are so many examples of pseudo-partnerships which adopt language stressing collaboration, while papering over the great power imbalance which usually exists between major institutions and small nonprofits, often resulting in top-down approaches in which a university, agency, or foundation imposes its model and its institutional priorities on its neighbors. Even when well-intentioned, such lop-sided relationships fail to create the levels of trust, mutual respect, and mutual support which are needed.

Creating a partnership and gaining support from both the community and the college is no easy task. It requires that the planners develop their own "organizing" strategy, including identifying and organizing supporters in the faculty, administration, student body and local community, analyzing how decisions are made and where power lies, creating an action plan, pursuing it assiduously, and constantly learning through reflection. *(See chapter 20 on partnerships.)*

With this expansion strategy, CLP is continually learning and adapting, discovering useful new lessons by testing different ways of creating local partnerships and programs, developing and adapting curricula, recruiting students and providing them with the support and practical experience they need to prepare for careers in this field.

Core Courses Offered Within the CLP Network

CLP's suggestions for the core CCS curriculum have evolved over time as we have learned from curriculum development at each site. CLP sites vary somewhat in the courses they offer, depending on what the local partners decide to emphasize and how much flexibility there is in the college curriculum for adding new courses and/or modifying existing ones.

However**, to be part of the CLP Network, a program must offer students a set of courses aimed at building their knowledge, skills, commitment and vision concerning community and social change, preparing them for jobs, leadership or further education in this field**. In particular, they must enable students to develop the initial knowledge and skills they will need to begin mastering "organizing". These include competencies in reaching out to people of color and others with low-incomes, bringing them together, helping them identify and analyze common issues and how they might be addressed, and preparing them to develop leadership and take collective action on those issues.
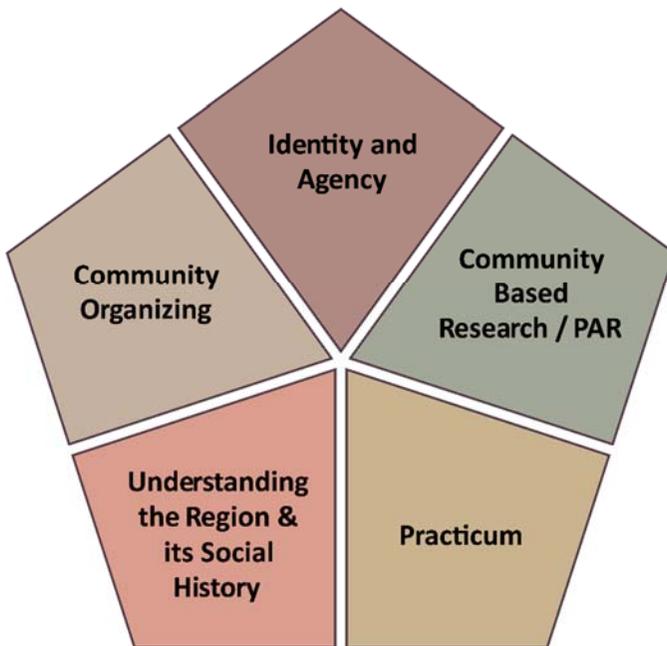
As noted earlier, **these cross-sector competencies are in high demand in several sectors of the economy** – community-based organizations, other nonprofits, public agencies and politics, and in community-related positions with banks and other for-profit businesses. This point is dramatically illustrated in a recent chart from *Business Week* listed as high priority for employers are virtually identical to those developed by CCS programs. *(The BW chart is included in chapter 11 - Linking Students to Jobs.)*

CCS programs range from 3-5 core courses and range in teaching strategies and emphases, but these are the main topics covered in core courses at CLP sites. These are described briefly in the remainder of this chapter and described in greater depth in Chapters 12-18. All the syllabi in the CLP website's sections on

Curricula on Community Organizing and Community-Based Action Research include examples of practical experience and skill-building for students.

CLP's website includes materials drawn from different CLP sites for each of the courses which are offered most commonly. To access those teaching materials, go to www.clpclp.org/curricula/.

Core Learning Areas

Identity and Agency

Community Organizing

Community Based Research / PAR

Understanding the Region & its Social History

Practicum

1. Culture, Community and Becoming an Agent of Change

CLP sites share an understanding that – to prepare for life as an agent of social and community change – students benefit greatly from classes which help them develop their understanding of themselves, their fellow students, their community and the broader society. These include exploring their personal history and identity while delving into issues of race, class, power and privilege, internalized oppression, trauma and healing. It also includes analyzing structural racism and other biases and how they affect public policy and the behavior of

institutions and individuals, and learning how they can draw upon the strengths of their own culture and community.

These classes help students understand the communities and context where they work and to develop their capacities for reflection, critical thinking, active listening, conflict resolution and the building of groups, organizations, coalitions and alliances. Most importantly, they develop the students' sense of agency, of being able to change things.

> *"Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle."*
>
> — Paolo Freire

2. Community Organizing and Other Forms of Collective Action

CLP sites typically offer at least one full course on organizing – the theory and practice of various strategies for organizing people around issues they care about. These strategies include community organizing, community development, organizing to influence public policy, nonviolent action, building effective nonprofits and unions, and mobilizing movements and voters. These courses introduce students to the skills and knowledge they will need to be effective in increasing people's engagement in influencing the social, economic and political institutions and policies which affect them, to become full participants in our democracy.

3. Community-Based Action Research

Like organizing skills, community-based action research skills are of central importance to change agents. Change leaders must continually deepen their understanding of the realities they face – the community itself, a major issue it faces, the causes behind the issue, where power lies and how it can be countered.

Virtually every course offered by a CLP site integrates some level of experience with community-based research as essential background for taking action. In addition, several CLP programs offer full courses on Community-Based Action Research.

"The popular education approach centers on creating opportunities for people to increase their consciousness of the circumstances they live in, the root causes of those conditions, and how they can become actors in changing them."

— Carlos Cortez Ruiz, Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana

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4. Understanding the Region -- the Issues, Politics, and Economy, and Lessons from the History of Struggle

CLP sites typically include courses designed to give students a strong understanding of the regional contexts where they will be working. These courses also develop the students' analytic skills, enabling them to better understand new situations as they face them in the future. While these courses differ significantly, all are aimed at helping students understand their regions from a social, economic and political point of view while grounding them in lessons from the history of efforts by marginalized people to influence issues which impact their lives.

"In order to see where we are going, we not only must remember where we have been, but we must understand where we have been....

"I have always thought that what is needed is the development of people who are interested not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership in others."

— Ella Baker

5. Capstone Projects and Internships

Most CLP programs conclude with a practicum or capstone project during which students work with others to make progress on a community issue These projects typically involve students in applying what they learned from their courses and field experience to a community campaign or analyzing how an organization is addressing a community issue. This analysis includes examining i their processes for identifying issues, involving their communities, developing a consensus on goals and strategy, planning and then acting to bring about change. The students' research methods usually include participant observation, interviewing, other field research, and an assessment of lessons to be learned from the effort. This includes self-assessment by each student of their own skills, knowledge, and personal strengths and weaknesses as potential agents of positive change.

Internships provide invaluable in-depth experience on the job. However, most community college students cannot afford to give up part-time jobs for an unpaid internship.   They need to be paid a living wage.   Because of the immense importance of lengthy, well-planned and well-paid internships which provide directly relevant experiential learning, the Community Learning Partnership and its network have recently begun campaigns at the state and federal levels for substantial new government funding for well-paid "**Community Building Internships". These would resemble apprenticeships in providing opportunities for low income and working class people to "earn while you learn" on the job**

and in the classroom, earning college credentials while preparing for careers in community health, sustainability, caring services and other careers helping strengthen the social fabric, community resilience and democratic participation and leadership. CLP has recently received funding to collaborate with local partners in five California cities in developing detailed plans for launching a California Youth Leadership Corps along those lines in 2021. (*See Chapters 13 and 23 for more information on this exciting breakthrough in paid internships.*)

6. Other courses

CCS programs also offer such electives as —

- Advanced community organizing, campaigns and movement-building.
- Political theory, democracy, history of social movements and social reforms.
- Social media and communications strategies for social change.
- Legislative and electoral organizing strategies.
- Nonprofit management.

Courses on such specialized issue areas as community health, criminal justice or gentrification may also be offered at a community college or a university.

STUDENT STORIES

Angelica Esquivel, on Building a Network Through Organizing

As a high school student, CLP Executive Committee Member Angelica Esquivel didn't think college was for her. Sure, it seemed prohibitively expensive. But mostly she figured the challenges to obtaining higher education as an undocumented student were insurmountable.
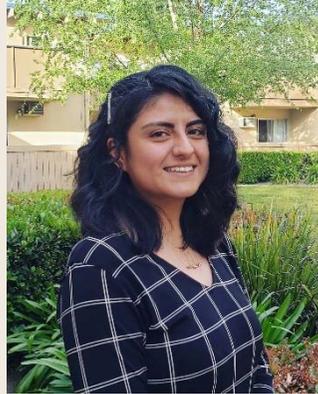
"I wasn't really ready," Angelica admitted. "I never thought I would go to college because of my status so I hadn't really prepared myself mentally to go."

Her senior year of high school, however, that all changed when an outreach coordinator from DeAnza College came to speak with students and do placement testing. "My cousin and I went and asked him: 'Can we take the placement test and go to DeAnza if we're undocumented?'"

When answer came back an unequivocal "yes," Angelica wasted no more time in pursuing her education. "I started at DeAnza in 2009 and right away I joined the student club for undocumented students, called I.M.A.S.S., that was just getting started," she said, using the group's acronym, which stands for Integral Movement for AB 540 Student Success. "That's where my activism started," Angelica said.

Through I.M.A.S.S., she learned about the Vasconcellos Institute for Democracy In Action (VIDA), which in turn introduced her to Cynthia Kaufman, VIDA's director. Cynthia informed her of the Certificate in Leadership and Social Change (LSC) program, which was just starting up in the fall of 2011. After joining the LSC program and becoming an intern

with VIDA she worked on institutionalizing a resource center at De Anza Community College. The resource center is called Higher Education for AB 540 Students (HEFAS) and has been serving undocumented and low-income students for the past 5 years.

"When I read more about the LSC program and the classes, I thought: 'This is perfect! I don't have to take random classes to learn more about civic engagement, I can take the classes for the Certificate.'"

By the time Angelica enrolled in the LSC program, it was her fourth year on campus. "I was already really active in movements on and off campus, mostly around immigration," she said. But being part of the LSC cohort helped her connect more with students who were similarly active and passionate, but on a whole array of community issues.

"It broadened my thinking about movements and how issues are connected," she said. Angelica said she benefitted most from being part of a close-knit cohort of students, whom she studied and worked with through the

LSC coursework. "Students were there because they chose to be there," she said of her cohort. "It's not just a random group taking the class because it fit their schedule. Everyone was involved in social justice because the issue affected them or someone they know."

Her cohort didn't always agree ideologically or politically, Angelica pointed out. "But having a consistent group to work with created a safe space where we can be open," she elaborated. "And you need that safe space because a lot of social justice is about being vulnerable. We don't all have to agree but we have to be willing to hear and respect what other people have to say. For me, having that space to share about my life and experiences and learn about other's was really important."

Angelica also appreciated how the LSC classes relied upon the lived experiences of the students in the classroom. "Usually, it's the other way around," she said. "You take what you learn in the classroom, and then apply it in your life." In the LSC classes, she said, "I brought to the class what I had from my experiences on the streets. That's the whole message of LSC—Come here with your experiences. Your experiences are important."

"Students were there because they chose to be there," she said of her cohort. "It's not just a random group taking the class because it fit their schedule. Everyone was involved in social justice because the issue affected them or someone they know."

Angelica's first job after obtaining her four-year degree was with a social justice nonprofit called Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action (TIGRA). Even though she was new to the professional non-profit world, she felt her classwork through the LSC program gave her a leg up in her new position.

"Thanks to LSC, I had the vocabulary and concepts I needed to understand the ideas and strategies we were using," she said. "When you come from DeAnza, and especially with the full-on training we get through the LSC, you come out and lead with a certain kind of experience. A lot of people running nonprofits have been there for more than 20 years and yet they never received that kind of training."

Angelica then worked at San Mateo Adult School as a college and career counselor. Here, too, she found opportunity to apply what she'd learned through LSC to her community change work and professional life. For me, having a Certificate in Leadership and Social Change at the college level is really important," Angelica said. "When I interviewed for the jobs I've had at TIGRA and the school district, they would point to the Certificate on my resume and ask me: 'So what is this Certificate about? What did they teach you and what kinds of skills did you learn?' I'm always very proud

to list the Certificate on my resume and explain what it is—that I have these extra skills and knowledge."

Angelica also attributes the LSC program for helping develop a useful network. "In the LSC, we had to do community service hours every quarter," she said. "That was great. Cynthia would bring nonprofits with different volunteer opportunities to meet with us, and that's how I met TIGRA. "

Her time in LSC also provided her with a surprising source of comfort, given the current political environment. Angelica says she, like many around the country, is concerned about the potential reversal of the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) program, which allows children of undocumented individuals to work and study legally in the country. But the LSC program, she says, helped her to build the confidence to face whatever the future has in store.

"Of course I want DACA to continue," she said. "But I lived before DACA and I can live after DACA. If it doesn't survive, I know I'll face obstacles. But I also know that I'll still have possibilities." If DACA is repealed, for instance, she and some friends from LSC have considered starting their own nonprofit. "Nonprofits can have private funding," she said. "We can still be entrepreneurs even without DACA."

"I feel very confident that there will always be a space and place in the community organizing and social justice world for me to work and volunteer in," she continued. "I see myself doing this work for a very, very long time."

Angelica is now back at De Anza College as the Program Coordinator for VIDA. She says she is honored to work with the program that gave her the tools to become a change agent in the community and pass the knowledge to current and future LSC participants. She is also the Director of HEFAS, the program she co-founded, which is now part of VIDA.

Profile by David Dodge