TOWARDS REALIZING ANCHOR INSTITUTION IDEALS WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATION OF ONE URBAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITY’S EFFORTS TO ADVANCE A COMPREHENSIVE, DEMOCRATIC, MUTUALLY TRANSFORMATIVE ANCHOR STRATEGY

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To the people of Rutgers University – Newark and the greater Newark community—past, present, and future—who have worked in partnership to create a more equitable, inclusive community.
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ABSTRACT

TOWARDS REALIZING ANCHOR INSTITUTION IDEALS WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATION OF ONE URBAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITY’S EFFORTS TO ADVANCE A COMPREHENSIVE, DEMOCRATIC, MUTUALLY TRANSFORMATIVE ANCHOR STRATEGY

Rita Axelroth Hodges
Matthew Hartley

A growing number of colleges and universities have come to recognize the role and responsibilities they have in the economic and social fabric of their surrounding communities and regions as anchor institutions. Yet, the conditions of urban communities surrounding even the most engaged universities—including under-resourced public schools, inadequate healthcare, and deep poverty—demonstrate that much more needs to be done. If a primary goal of anchor engagement is more equitable, inclusive communities, as much of the rhetoric suggests, scholars and practitioners need to better understand the policies and practices through which democratic, mutually transformative anchor-community partnerships are built and sustained. This qualitative study explores Rutgers University – Newark’s efforts to advance an anchor institution mission. The guiding research question of this study was: How is one university attempting to realize the ideals of an anchor institution strategy with its local community—including comprehensive engagement of academic and economic resources for mutual benefit, institutionalization of engagement, and a democratic process that centers community voice and co-creation—and what kind of institutional changes have facilitated these goals? Thirty-one representatives from the university and the greater Newark community were interviewed, including senior administrators,
staff, faculty, and advisory board members, as well as leaders of local nonprofits, community
development organizations, and corporate partners. Findings demonstrate the ways in which the
internal- and external-facing change efforts—that is, changing institutional policy, practice, and
culture and building trusted democratic partnerships with the community and other anchor
partners—have been inextricably linked at Rutgers-Newark as part of the institutionalization and
mutual transformation process. The findings also highlight key animating features of the
Rutgers-Newark experience, which include a clear and compelling anchor vision for the
institution that was consonant with its longstanding values, an outside-in framework that guided
institutional transformation based on what the public needed from the university, and the
building of diverse, inclusive, internal and external coalitions to advance and sustain the anchor
agenda.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In many urban areas, social and economic inequities continue to plague our most underserved populations, who often live in the shadows of relatively wealthy colleges and universities (Baldwin, 2021; Harkavy, 2016; Harkavy et al., 2021; O’Mara, 2010). The COVID-19 pandemic further revealed and exacerbated racial and social inequities with deep implications for higher education responsibility (Englot & Cantor, 2020; Harkavy & Hodges, 2021). In addition to their central role as hubs for research, teaching, and learning, universities are among the largest employers, real estate developers, and purchasers in their regions, as well as serve as centers of major arts and cultural activity and health care provision (Harkavy, 2016; Harkavy et al., 2009; Hodges & Dubb, 2012). Simply put, what higher education institutions do or do not do tremendously impacts the development of the neighborhoods and the lives of community members that surround them.

A growing number of colleges and universities have come to recognize the role and responsibilities they have in the economic and social fabric of their surrounding communities and regions. The term “anchor institution” has been increasingly used by university leaders, higher education associations, and the public over the last two decades to describe how higher education institutions engage with their surrounding communities (Dubb, 2019; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Maurrasse, 2019; Taylor & Luter, 2013). Although varying definitions may be used, the concept of an anchor institution strategy for a university might best be described as using the comprehensive resources of an institution (academic, human, economic, and cultural) in strategic partnership with its local community to the benefit of both (Harkavy, 2016; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Maurrasse, 2019). Specific anchor engagement strategies undertaken by a college or
university may include but are not limited to local hiring, workforce development, local purchasing, small business development, community-engaged scholarship, community-based participatory action research, K-12 educational partnerships, arts and cultural activities, community health initiatives, real estate development, affordable housing, and community capacity building.

University engagement through an anchor vision, then, focuses on how the activity of the entire institution, including the intellectual and institutional resources, works with the community for mutual transformation. The processes through which these activities are carried out matter. Explored further in the literature review, democratic engagement emphasizes the values of inclusion, mutuality, and reciprocity (Benson et al., 2007; Cantor et al., 2013; Hartley et al., 2020; Moore, 2014; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). Case studies of universities’ interactions with their local communities indicate how essential it is for universities to work not only in but also with their local community in respectful, collaborative, democratic ways to bring mutual benefit rather than displacement and/or increased stratification and inequities (Benson et al., 2017; Cantor et al., 2013; Gomez et al., 2019; Maurrasse, 2001; Puckett & Lloyd, 2013; Rich & Tsitsos, 2018; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011).

The anchor approach to university partnerships has grown out of a much broader movement in higher education civic and community engagement, which has experienced enormous growth in the last three decades with different strands of focus. The university as anchor institution is one of these strands, with key networks such as the Anchor Institutions Task Force (with over 1,000 individual members) and the Anchor Learning Network (with some 46 member institutions) helping propel the work forward. The Anchor Institutions Task Force,
which emphasizes its role as a values-based, action-oriented learning community has also included diverse sectors of institutions and had increasing influence on international networks and platforms. Yet, the social, political, and economic conditions of urban communities surrounding even the most engaged universities—including under-resourced public schools, inadequate healthcare, and deep levels of generational poverty—demonstrate that much more needs to be done (Brown et al., 2016; Ehlenz, 2016; Hartley et al., 2020). If a primary goal of anchor engagement is more equitable, inclusive communities, as much of the rhetoric suggests, scholars and practitioners need to better understand the policies and practices through which sustainable, scalable, democratic anchor-community partnerships are built and what is impeding progress.

Scholarship has simply not kept pace with this evolving field. Better understanding of the successes and challenges in operationalizing and institutionalizing an anchor vision is needed to help improve local practice and inform the broader anchor movement. The literature has specifically not yet explored how anchor engagement strategies have led to cultural and systemic change or how institutional change can best realize the principles of the anchor concept. As the anchor institution concept has grown within higher education, some have narrowed the focus on economic investments without as much attention to the strategic engagement of and alignment with the academic side of the university. Studies also remain limited on how anchor initiatives can best engage community voice and expertise in a way that builds trust and reciprocity and facilitates mutual transformation. Given the extraordinary resources that can be leveraged through anchor work, a better understanding is needed of how to actively and intentionally engage in democratic and co-creation processes that will help avoid causing more harm than
good. Overall, as local anchor institution strategies continue to proliferate, critical attention must be given to the factors that can best advance the anchor concept’s ideals. After designing, conducting, and analyzing this study, I have defined the anchor concept’s ideals as involving the comprehensive engagement of the university’s intellectual/academic and institutional/economic resources with local partners for mutual benefit, trusted democratic partnerships that center community voice and co-creation, intentional and institutionalized engagement that leads to mutual transformation of the university and the community with a focus on equity, and the building of robust webs of relationships and teams to advance and sustain the work. By examining the experiences of one urban research university’s efforts to realize the anchor concept’s ideals, this research study aimed to contribute new knowledge to help us make meaning of this growing phenomenon and help ensure the work leads to more equitable, inclusive campuses and communities.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research study used case study analysis to explore how one urban research university, Rutgers University – Newark, has attempted to advance a comprehensive, democratic, mutually transformative anchor institution strategy with its local ecological community. The guiding research question was:

- How is one university attempting to realize the ideals of an anchor institution strategy with its local community—including comprehensive engagement of academic and economic resources for mutual benefit, institutionalization of engagement, and a democratic process that centers community voice and co-creation—and what kind of institutional changes (policy, practice, culture) have facilitated these goals?
Sub-questions included:

- What role do various institutional leaders play in advancing and sustaining anchor work?
- To what extent is there evidence of second-order change at the site of study for institutionalizing anchor engagement?
- How have proponents of the change sought to shift the predominant culture—the ideals, norms, and values?
- How is this institution embracing critical community-based epistemologies that center the knowledges of community partners, particularly those most marginalized, in its anchor engagement?
- What lessons can be learned from this university’s experience that can inform national, and perhaps global, policy and practice?

PREVIEW OF FINDINGS

This study revealed how Rutgers University – Newark was primed in many ways to take on an anchor institution mission as part of its core identity—a vision catalyzed by the leadership of Nancy Cantor upon her arrival as Chancellor in 2014. This compelling vision, which was crystallized through an intentional and inclusive strategic planning process, galvanized partners across campus and the greater Newark community to rapidly advance a comprehensive and strategic anchor framework centered around equity and social justice.

Several key animating features supported Cantor and her team to begin making transformational changes both within the university and across the city in a relatively short period of time. The first key feature was RU-N’s conceptualization of its anchor work that
provided a clear and compelling vision. The conceptualization of an anchor mission not only helped to provide more cohesion to existing initiatives at RU-N that were focused on social justice and community engagement but also defined how the *institution as a whole* would embody a set of values and transcend business as usual. The anchor vision and process emphasized AITF’s core values of a commitment to place, collaboration and partnership, democratic practice with the community, and social justice and equity with an emphasis on racial justice and racial equity. Another key feature was Chancellor Cantor’s “outside-in” framework to RU-N’s anchor strategy, which entailed having the visioning and transformational process guided by what the community or broader public needs from the university. This meant that the change processes happening internally within the institution were inseparable from the engagement processes with the community and other anchor partners, which ultimately may help provide more staying power. A third key feature was the diverse and inclusive teams, or coalitions, that Chancellor Cantor built internally and externally to push the anchor agenda forward. This included embracing a shared equity leadership model (Holcombe et al., 2023; Kezar et al., 2021), building communities of experts that could co-create knowledge and projects through trusted democratic partnerships (Cantor & Englot, 2013; Bringle et al., 2009; Marga Inc., 2024; Scobey, 2002; Shah, 2020), and advancing the anchor institution concept across the city to stimulate a robust cross-sector coalition (Cantor & Englot, 2013; della Porta & Diani, 2005; Marga Inc., 2021). RU-N’s anchor strategy also highlights the way in which the work external to the institution—particularly building and nurturing trusted partnerships with community organizations and other institutions in greater Newark and helping these partners to fortify an anchor institution mission—encouraged transformation within the university itself.
Rutgers-Newark, nonetheless, faced not only common obstacles found within complex research institutions but also additional barriers of being part of a larger public university system. Among these barriers was the premature ending of Nancy Cantor’s tenure, announced by the system president in August 2023, just a few months after this study’s core data collection had concluded. Only time will tell if the anchor mission and identity will withstand leadership transition. The collaborative, inclusive leadership and many webs of relationships RU-N has spun across campus and out into the greater Newark community add strength and stickiness to its anchor identity.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION**

The first chapter of this dissertation has introduced the significance of this study and identified the guiding research questions. The next chapter offers an overview of the literature, contextualizing the anchor institution concept within the historical and current literature on higher education-community engagement before turning to the anchor movement that has evolved since the late 1990s. Literature on organizational culture and change, critical epistemologies, and social movement theory is also provided. Chapter 3 details the research design. This includes the rationale for a qualitative single-site case study approach, and particularly the selection of Rutgers University – Newark as the site of study, to conduct an in-depth review of the comprehensive nature of an anchor strategy, including attention to academic and economic engagement, institutional culture and change, and the process of involving community partners as collaborators and co-creators of reciprocal partnerships. This chapter also details the data collection process, which involved a total of 31 one-on-one interviews with institutional and community representatives, review of archival data and documentation, and
direct observation during five campus visits. The data analysis process is then described, including the use of in vivo coding that was then organized into analytical categories and overarching themes that aligned with the research questions and literature review. These key themes included: institutional culture; leadership; vision; community voice and co-creation; trust and relationships; structures, policies, rewards and recognition; ecosystem; and sustainability. Author positionality and limitations of the study are also described. Chapter 4 provides a rich case study of Chancellor Nancy Cantor’s tenure at Rutgers University – Newark, which began in fall 2014 and will now conclude in summer 2024. The case explores how RU-N, under Chancellor Cantor’s catalytic leadership, has attempted to realize the ideals of an anchor institution strategy with local partners, including the signature initiatives developed, the intentional approach to engaging community partners, the roles of various institutional players in advancing and sustaining this work, and some of the challenges that remain. Chapter 5 offers an analysis that draws on organizational change theory and critical community-based epistemologies to explore the internal- and external-facing change efforts that have been so inextricably linked at Rutgers-Newark—that is, the connection between changing institutional policy, practice, and culture and building trusted democratic partnerships with the community and other anchor partners—as part of the process of institutionalizing anchor engagement. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation study with some implications for the anchor institution field, ideas for future research, and personal reflection.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature takes a critical lens in understanding the university’s role in both perpetuating and deepening racial and social inequities and its responsibility to build more just, inclusive, and equitable communities. Because anchor institutions are considered a relatively recent phenomenon, embedding this concept within the current and historical literature on higher education-community engagement provides important context in understanding the challenges and opportunities for contemporary anchor institution strategies and this evolving field. In this review of the literature, I briefly explore the founding civic missions of American higher education, the urban renewal period of the 1950s and 1960s, a movement for civic and community engagement that began in the 1970s, a renewed focus on the economic function of higher education institutions beginning in the 1980s, and the emergence of the anchor institution concept in the mid-1990s, exploring some points of debate along the way. I then describe the current anchor institution movement and some conceptual shifts within the broader field. Finally, I review literature on organizational culture and change, critical epistemologies, and social movement theory that might be used to help examine how institutional culture and community knowledge and participation shape anchor engagement.

THE ORIGINS: FOUNDING CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC PURPOSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Scholars have documented a strong, historic commitment to the civic and democratic purposes of higher education (Benson et al., 2007; Harkavy, 2006; Hartley, 2011; Hartley & Hollander, 2005; A. J. Kezar et al., 2005). These accounts describe how the democratic purposes of higher education have been expressed from the founding mission of colonial colleges, to the
promise of land-grant institutions, to the establishment of historically black colleges and universities, to the mission statements of the first modern research universities (Alperovitz & Howard, 2005; Harkavy, 2006; Harkavy et al., 2013; Hartley & Hollander, 2005; A. J. Kezar et al., 2005; Office of University Partnerships, 2005). Hartley and Hollander (2005) further document how the “higher purpose for higher learning—to foster citizenship and to serve a democratic society—has remained an enduring, if contested ideal” throughout higher education history in the United States (p. 252).

Recently, scholars have drawn more attention to the ‘contested’ side of the equation, largely tied to racist and economic motives. Historian Craig Steven Wilder’s (2013) *Ebony and Ivy*, for example, exposes American higher education’s deep connection to the slave industry, including the use of slave labor and profits from the slave trade (Baldwin, 2021; Taylor, 2021). A growing number of universities have engaged in slavery projects and truth and reconciliation projects to reckon with this history. In a similar vein, land acknowledgements are providing increasing recognition of the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, particularly tied to the establishment of land-grant institutions. These histories highlight a higher education system and culture built on racism and colonialism and expose the depth of transformation needed (Baldwin, 2021; Englot & Cantor, 2021; Taylor, 2021).

**URBAN RENEWAL OF THE 1950S & 1960S: A CONTENTIOUS PERIOD IN UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

A useful historical lens from the last century for understanding urban universities’ impact on and interaction with their local communities and economies is urban renewal legislation in the 1950s and 1960s, which incentivized colleges and universities to redevelop land around their
camps. Specifically, Section 112 of the National Housing Act of 1959 made public funding available to cities for urban renewal, which counted university campus expansion dollars toward the required match (Ashworth, 1964; O’Mara, 2010; Souther, 2011). Many institutions had already been involved in such development efforts over the preceding decade through federal funds provided to cities by the Housing Act of 1949 for ‘slum’ removal (O’Mara, 2010; Parsons, 1963). By 1964, Section 112 had been used to finance 154 urban renewal projects involving 120 colleges and universities and 75 hospitals (Baldwin, 2021; Taylor, 2021). By the early 1960s, urban renewal projects were booming on university campuses and into their surrounding neighborhoods (O’Mara, 2010; Parsons, 1963). In a 1963 article, Kermit Parsons, a Professor of City and Regional Planning at Cornell, described renewal as a possible “remedy for the neighborhood deterioration which makes it difficult for students and faculty to live near the university…that meet their standards” (p. 208). Parsons built his argument on the philosophy of Julian Levi (1961), then executive director of the Southeast Chicago Commission in the University of Chicago area, who claimed, “A University must be a community of scholars, not a collection of scholarly commuters” (Levi, 1961, p. 137). Yet, Parsons also recognized significant potential conflict of the urban renewal approach: “The institution’s concepts of its needs in the neighborhood of which it is a part are likely to be at odds with those of a substantial number of the residents” (Parsons, 1963, p. 208).

The literature indicates that mixed, and often hidden, motivations existed behind the use of urban renewal funds. In 1964, Kenneth Ashworth, then Assistant Director of the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, published an article in *The Journal of Higher Education* describing the advantage for universities applying urban renewal policy: “It can accomplish two
major objectives simultaneously: it can improve the neighborhood by the removal of adjoining slum areas and it can expand its campus” (p. 496). Ammon (2009) describes how, in practice, urban renewal efforts were often used “to bulldoze once vibrant neighborhoods, uproot their poor residents, and create new ghettos” leaving a “mixed legacy” (pp. 177–178). O’Mara (2010) summarizes, “The university-driven redevelopment efforts of the 1950s and 1960s were a reflection of their times” which “deepened the divide between town and gown and exhibited thinly veiled racism” (pp. 244-245). She further emphasizes, “The lack of planners’ consideration of the human dimensions of cities prompted fierce and eloquent critiques by the beginning of the 1960s” (O’Mara, 2010, p. 244). Baldwin (2021) provides an even sharper critique of the “racially charged urban designation of ‘blight’” (p. 29). He describes how “the perception of decay is often tied to an area’s racial or ethnic composition” and has been used to rationalize eminent domain (Baldwin, 2021, p. 29).

Parsons (1963), in his prescient article, recognized such competing incentives: “Clearly, then, the urban university must steer a course through the conflicts between university and neighborhood objectives, guided not merely by its own needs but by recognition of the needs of its neighbors” (p. 210). He continues by rationalizing the mutual benefit of universities engaging in community development: “Realizing that the advancement of research and education is contingent upon the development of a favorable climate, it must give concrete expression to its concern for the neighborhood life around it” (Parsons, 1963, p. 210).

The continued decline of urban communities coupled by student- and community-led activism in the 1960s gradually began to turn universities’ attention to the full impact of their actions on their surrounding neighborhoods and the residents who lived there (Astin et al., 1997;
Baldwin, 2021; Glasker, 2002; O’Mara, 2010; Puckett & Lloyd, 2015; Souther, 2011; Winling, 2010). Student and community activists joined together to “protest how the renewal efforts…helped modernize racial segregation” (Baldwin, 2021, p. 31). This activism “forced the university to turn inwards and address its racism and sexism” (Taylor, 2021).

O’Mara (2010) emphasizes the importance of understanding the “long shadow of urban crisis” between 1949 and 1980 and its continued influence on university-led efforts for community economic development (p. 234). Campus expansion has remained a source of conflict between higher education institutions and their surrounding communities (Baldwin, 2021; Cooper et al., 2014; Etienne, 2012; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Perry & Wiewel, 2005). Moreover, as more institutions look at real estate and other community economic development initiatives as part of their anchor strategy, it is important to keep in mind the “mixed legacy” that may come with such investment, particularly if they improve the quality of life in targeted neighborhoods without markedly improving the welfare of longtime neighborhood residents (Etienne, 2012; Hodges & Dubb, 2012).

Finally, this period of urban renewal also points to lessons for authentic community engagement. Arnstein (1969) presented an early typology of “citizen participation” that involved eight levels or rungs arranged in a ladder pattern. The lowest rung of the ladder, manipulation, she associates with Citizen Advisory Committees formed for urban renewal projects, along with minority group subcommittees. These entities, Arnstein (1969) claimed, were really used as public relations fronts without any true function or power. At the top of Arnstein’s ladder was full citizen control.
RECLAIMING HIGHER EDUCATION’S CIVIC PURPOSE: BEGINNINGS OF A MOVEMENT

Since the 1970s, colleges and universities have increasingly—and voluntarily—committed themselves to reviving their historic commitment to civic engagement (Kezar & Rhoads, 2001). Among other things, the criticism of faculty, and of colleges and universities generally, for their lack of responsiveness to public issues helped stimulate this activity (Benson et al., 2007; Bok, 1990; Hartley, 2011; Kezar et al., 2005; Kezar & Rhoads, 2001). Taylor (2021) also points to the rebellions following Dr. Martin Luther King’s 1968 assassination and the activism of Black students, working with white students and faculty allies, as helping to pave the way for the engaged university movement.

A few other trends in higher education had emerged by the late 1970s and early 1980s that “undermined the democratic purposes of colleges and universities” that then helped spur action (Hartley, 2011, p. 15). Higher education institutions—faced with financial pressures from “a stagnant economy and rampant inflation”—had begun pursuing “a business model” to teaching (Hartley & Hollander, 2005, p. 255). Paulo Freire first described “the ‘banking’ concept of education” in his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). In this model, students are seen as “mere objects” into which professors would “deposit” their expert knowledge (Freire, 1970, pp. 72–73). Colleges and universities had also began embracing the notion of student-as-customers in a new era of what Bok (2003) stigmatized as “the commercialization of higher education” (Bok, 2003; Harkavy, 2006; Hartley & Hollander, 2005).

Over the next two decades, scholars and practitioners began pushing back against these trends to “reclaim” higher education’s civic purposes (Hartley, 2011, pp. 2, 15). Several
networks and initiatives emerged to promote the civic and public purposes of higher education, among them, Campus Compact founded by Frank Newman (Hartley, 2011; Kezar et al., 2005). Newman, then president of the Education Commission of the States, published a 1985 book that discussed the crisis of education. He claimed, “The most critical demand is to restore to higher education its original purpose of preparing graduates for a life of involved and committed citizenship” by providing opportunities for “active learning” (Newman, 1985, pp. xiv, 60–68). Several university leaders responded by forming a coalition of higher education presidents dedicated to civic engagement called Campus Compact; Hartley (2011) notes, however, that the coalition’s early focus was quickly diverted to volunteerism, which was seen as “a safe strategy” (p. 34).

The influential writings of Ernest Boyer in the late 1980s and early 1990s helped legitimize a more innovative pedagogy that integrated knowledge, teaching, and service (Boyer, 1987, 1990, 1996). Largely centered on Boyer’s theories of scholarship, service learning emerged in the early 90s as the focus of the higher education civic engagement movement. Campus Compact helped lead this effort, promoting the work through national conferences, local and regional workshops, publications, and statewide networks (Hartley, 2011, pp. 34–36). Publications such as the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, begun in the early 90s, also helped provide academic legitimacy of service-learning (Benson et al., 2017). During this time, Edward Zlotkowski led a project sponsored by Campus Compact and American Association for Higher Education to produce a 21-book series on the use of service-learning in various academic disciplines. This discipline-focused framing helped broaden the movement but also deepened some fissures (Benson et al., 2017).
“A significant ideological rift” (Hartley, 2011, p. 38) existed between those who saw service learning as a means of transforming students and the academy, versus those who saw it as simply an effective “pedagogical strategy” (Kezar & Rhoads, 2001, p. 158) for disciplinary learning. To address this issue, Campus Compact convened 51 university presidents in 1999 to establish a new agenda; more than 500 presidents later signed the resulting “Presidents’ Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education,” which emphasized instilling civic skills in students (Hartley, 2011, p. 62). That same year, the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, comprised of 24 land-grant presidents, issued a publication that focused on a recommitment to the land-grant mission of service, but which advocated for “‘value neutral’ engagement … an advantageous stance for avoiding messy entanglements in contentious local issues” (Hartley, 2011, p. 42). The next twenty years saw incredible growth in the movement for higher education civic and community engagement, including increasing calls for democratic engagement (Benson et al., 2017; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). This emphasis on democratic and reciprocal engagement, which will be revisited later in this literature review, was reflected in the Carnegie Foundation’s establishment of a Community Engagement Classification in 2006. Nonetheless, community service remained the dominant form of civic engagement (Hartley, 2011), pointing to the challenges of mutual transformation as well as movement coherence. Rifts also continue; for example, Campus Compact has undergone major organizational change in the early 2020s, with several state affiliates breaking off into their own networks.
THE ECONOMIC FUNCTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Meanwhile, beginning in the 1980s, colleges and universities began to increasingly document and advertise their local and/or regional economic impact (Adams, 2003; Elliott et al., 1988; O’Mara, 2010). Elliott, Levin, and Meisel (1988) credit the American Council on Education’s 1971 report by Caffrey and Isaacs for their “how to” manual for economic impact studies that popularized the production of these reports (Elliott et al., 1988, pp. 17–18). These reports typically include spending by faculty, staff, students, and visitors, as well as the multiplier effect of these expenditures. Elliott et al. (1988), however, advocated for a new conceptual framework that looked at higher education’s role in economic development “as a long-term process, the ultimate goal of which is an improved standard of living for residents of the region,” including measurements such as “enhanced earnings, reduced incidence of poverty, and increased employment” (p. 29).

A 1999 Brookings article entitled “Eds and Meds: Cities’ Hidden Assets” emphasized that higher education institutions and medical centers “are unique in that they are rooted to a specific place” and have important roles to play utilizing their purchasing power, hiring practices, research and teaching, real estate, tax base, homeownership, and opportunities to be a “good neighbor” (Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999, pp. 3-4). In this article, Harkavy and Zuckerman (1999) report that, in every one of the 20 largest cities in the U.S., higher educational institutions and medical institutions were among the top 10 private employers; and 69 cities documented at least one ‘ed or med’ among its 10 largest employers (1999, p. 2). During this period, several visible community development efforts had begun emerging on campuses across the country,

**EMERGENCE OF THE ANCHOR INSTITUTION CONCEPT**

Given the rapidly growing phenomenon of universities’ roles as anchor institutions, it is useful to consider the origins and evolution of this specific term. In 1995, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros, along with contributors Ira Harkavy and Joseph Foote, indicated the necessity for colleges and universities to contribute to cities: “Urban problems press heavily on higher education institutions…. But, like other great anchoring institutions [emphasis added], colleges and universities cannot wall off their surroundings; nor can they just pick up and move” (Cisneros, 1995, p. 2). The essay then discusses the “formidable intellectual and economic resources” of higher education institutions that can and should be brought to bear for improving local communities (Cisneros, 1995, p. 10). Thus introduced the modern concept of higher education institutions as ‘anchors.’ In previous decades, manufacturing and retail companies had served as important economic anchors in many American cities, but as deindustrialization and globalization led to shifting economies, people began to look at universities and medical centers as the key institutions that remained (Harkavy et. al, 2009; Marga Inc., 2022).

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of University Partnerships (HUD OUP) played an important role in advancing university-community partnerships generally and the leveraging of both academic and economic resources specifically. Marcia Marker Feld, a former director of HUD OUP, largely credited Secretary Cisneros for recognizing this potential for higher education and further emphasized in 1997, “[America’s
colleges and universities] are not only the creators, transmitters, and preservers of knowledge and culture, they are also economic engines, applied technology centers, major employers, investors, real estate developers, and reservoirs of creative and energetic people. They are the anchor institutions of neighborhoods” (Feld, 1997, p. 324). Harkavy also made early claims to the role of colleges and universities as “powerful partners, ‘anchors,’ and catalysts for change and improvement” when describing the university-community-school partnerships that he and his colleagues were developing between Penn and West Philadelphia (Harkavy, 1998, p. 35). Harkavy and colleagues further emphasized that integration with Penn’s academic mission would be key to sustaining the university’s local engagement for the long-term (Benson & Harkavy, 1991; Harkavy, 1998).

The next reference to colleges and universities as “anchor institutions”—the citation that Taylor and Luter’s instrumental 2013 literature review notes as the first formal articulation of the term—doesn’t appear until a 2001 report prepared by the Aspen Institute Roundtable for the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Taylor & Luter, 2013, p. 3). Specifically, this 2001 report describes the “exploration of partnerships between community-based organizations and colleges, universities, medical centers, and public utilities that we collectively refer to as anchor institutions” (Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001, p.1). The authors discuss the “significant infrastructure investment in a specific community” held by these types of institutions that makes them “unlikely to move” (Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001, p. 1). At the same time, they recognize that the term was not well received by all participants at the roundtable, including a participant who felt that residents serve the role as anchors in their community (Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001). Over the next two decades, the anchor institution concept “emerged as a
new paradigm for understanding the role that place-based institutions could play in building successful communities and local economies” (Taylor & Luter, 2013, pp. 3-4).

A place-based approach is central to the anchor literature (Alperovitz & Howard, 2005; Birch et al., 2013; Cantor et al., 2013; Harkavy et al., 2009; Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999; Hartley et al., 2021; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Maurrasse, 2001). Alperovitz and Howard (2005) refer to the “vested interest” of anchors given that universities “do not have the option of relocating” compared to “corporations, businesses, and residents [who] often flee economically depressed low-income urban and suburban edge-city neighborhoods” (p. 151). Maurrasse (2001) has described this as “sticky capital,” emphasizing, “It is difficult to imagine institutions of higher education packing up and leaving their neighborhoods given their vast acreage and local investments” (p. 4). Cantor et al. (2013) emphasizes that anchors “persist in communities over generations, serving as social glue, economic engines, or both” (p. 20). These citations support Birch, Perry, and Taylor’s (2013) emphasis on the “reinvigoration of place” as central to the growing anchor literature (p. 7). Focal points for place-based work have often included the improvement of local public schooling, public health, local capacity building, community economic development, and/or overall neighborhood revitalization (Benson et al., 2007; Benson & Harkavy, 1991; Dostilio et al., 2019; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Taylor et al., 2018; Taylor & Luter, 2013; Yamamura & Koth, 2018).

Maurrasse (2013) notes, “the definition of anchor institutions continues to evolve,” and the Anchor Institutions Task Force (described below) has worked to help “refine” its meaning, encouraging anchors “to transcend business as usual” (p.2). Maurrasse and the Task Force have emphasized the importance of values and process: “In our view, anchoring is more than being
present; it is an active commitment to reducing disparities and engaging in mutually beneficial, democratic collaboration. Not all ‘anchored’ institutions behave in this manner, but our goal is to dramatically expand the number of institutions that [do]” (p. 2). Taylor, in emphasizing the need for anti-racist university engagement, cites the work of Ibram X. Kendi and reminds us that “definitions matter” as they “‘anchor us in principles’” (Kendi, 2019 as cited in Taylor, 2021, p. 42).

A GROWING ANCHOR MOVEMENT

The development and rapid growth of organizational networks focused on advancing anchor institution work demonstrates the growing significance of the anchor concept. In particular, a task force was created in December 2008, convened by Ira Harkavy of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at Penn, to advise the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and then incoming HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan on how the agency could partner with anchor institutions, particularly higher education and medical institutions, to improve communities and help solve urban problems (Harkavy et al., 2021). Soon after submitting their report in early 2009, this group of scholars and practitioners decided to continue as an ongoing network working to promote anchor institution partnerships with local communities: the Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF). David Maurrasse (2013), Director of AITF, has emphasized that the Task Force “is uniquely functioning as a values-based movement organization” (p. 3). This stands in contrast to the value neutral approach that remains the dominant form of civic engagement on most campuses (Enos, 2015; Hartley, 2011). Since its founding, AITF has been explicitly guided by the core values of collaboration and partnership, equity and social justice, democracy and democratic practice, and commitment to place and
community (Maurrasse, 2013). The Task Force was initially dominated by the higher education sector. Within about 10 years, nearly 1,000 individuals from the U.S. and abroad had joined AITF, representing an increasingly diverse array of anchors, including public and private higher education institutions, hospitals and medical centers, governmental agencies, foundations, and arts and culture institutions (Anchor Institutions Task Force, 2021b).

The anchor concept has also grown globally. AITF, for example, co-convened several meetings with the Council of Europe (and representatives from some of its 46 member countries) and served as a model for a 2021 proposal approved by the Council’s Steering Committee for Education to establish a European platform on the Local Democratic Mission of Higher Education (Bergan et al., 2019; Council of Europe, 2021; Harkavy et al., 2021). The European platform emphasizes the role of higher education institutions working with and not merely in their local communities with a clear values basis, as well as the importance of institutionalizing this engagement (Council of Europe, 2021). Although the platform launch was delayed when the Council of Europe’s Education Department underwent transition in 2022, the Council is advancing a new initiative that emphasizes “the local dimension of higher education” in the department’s program for 2024-2027 (Council of Europe, 2024).

Other anchor networks also emerged. For example, in September 2019, the Democracy Collaborative and the Coalition for Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) launched a new Anchor Learning Network with 31 member universities who initially made three-year commitments to implement anchor strategies (Dubb, 2019). This activity grew out of early studies conducted by the Democracy Collaborative emphasizing the university’s role in community economic development, as well as their pilot initiative with the Anchor Dashboard
Learning Cohort. The Democracy Collaborative launched the “Anchor Dashboard” in 2013-2014, in part, to address the lack of data and assessment tools for the anchor institution field (Dubb et al., 2013). The Dashboard, which outlined twelve desirable outcome areas, was revised with the input of higher education representatives to focus on five main categories: anchor mission alignment, economic development, community building, education, and health, safety, and environment (Sladek, 2017). The Democracy Collaborative then formed the Anchor Dashboard Learning Cohort to form a network of colleges and universities committed to measuring these outcomes and sharing best practices, which later joined forces with CUMU and evolved into the Anchor Learning Network for CUMU members (Sladek, 2017). The Anchor Learning Network went on to be supported through CUMU, and for a period also the Healthcare Anchor Network (which had split off from the Democracy Collaborative in 2021), and counted 46 members by 2023 (including participants from U.S., Canada, England and South Africa). The Network was relaunched by CUMU in 2024 with a new format, engaging participants in small cohorts of peers over a nine-month program. CUMU also launched its first ‘Anchor Mission Huddle’ in 2024 to support an informal, online learning community for individuals across the CUMU network regarding the role of higher education institutions as anchors (Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, n.d.).

In *The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads* (2012), Steve Dubb (then Research Director at the Democracy Collaborative) and I (while working as an independent consultant) drew upon 10 diverse colleges and universities as case studies to explore promising practices and strategies for higher education engagement that would improve conditions for low-income communities. We provided the first definition of the “anchor institution mission” as “the
conscious and strategic application of the long-term, place-based economic power of the institution, in combination with its human and intellectual resources, to better the welfare of the community in which it resides” (p. 147). This notion of engaging the comprehensive range of institutional resources is a notable characteristic among the literature on anchors; however, few institutions are actually achieving it (Harkavy et al., 2009; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Maurrasse, 2001; Vidal et al., 2002). Moreover, while similar to the general definition of an anchor institution, the significance of an anchor mission is the notion of both embedding the work fully and strategically into the institutional and academic culture of the university and also working to ensure long-term neighborhood residents benefit from this engagement. This mission reflects the values of the Anchor Institutions Task Force and was adopted as a defining element of the Anchor Learning Network.

The work and scholarship continue to evolve. Through her doctoral work, Jennifer Johnson Kebea (2016) developed the Student Anchor Engagement Framework to build on the Anchor Dashboard and provide strategies for the direct involvement of students in institutional anchor strategies. She argues for adding more specific student civic learning and democratic engagement outcomes for anchor strategies (Kebea, 2016). In their opening of a special issue of *Metropolitan Universities* journal on “The Pedagogy of Place-Based Initiatives and Anchor Institutions,” Haarman & Green (2023) explore the challenges of embedding anchor or place-based work into pedagogy. They point to the often heavy focus on economic development under anchor frameworks, which can erroneously “de-emphasize the important contribution the university can make around epistemic justice” (Haarman & Green, 2023, p. 8). Coming from another end of the spectrum, Ehlenz (2018), an urban planning scholar, has argued that the
current anchor frameworks have not focused enough on development-focused investments, particularly housing and commercial revitalization. Current studies, she argues, are insufficient in fully assessing the place-based impact of anchor institution strategies. Ehlenz’s proposed framework, however, risks placing too much emphasis on economic initiatives and not enough on academic partnerships that embed the work within the institutional structure. It also does not recognize the significance of the process and relationship building necessary for mutually beneficial outcomes. Michael Porter and the Initiative for Competitive Inner Cities (ICIC) had helped advance an anchor framework in the early 2000s focused almost exclusively on institutional economic investments for community revitalization. In a 2019 study, however, some leaders of ICIC recognized a “fundamental weakness” in their framework—namely, failure “to emphasize resident empowerment or include processes for getting more community involved in the revitalization process” (Zeuli et al., 2019).

Other related efforts have also surfaced. The Place-Based Justice Network (PBJN), for example, was established as a higher education network in 2018 after an initial set of convenings. PBJN has emphasized a place-based community engagement approach that complements both the service-learning and anchor movements. The leaders of this emerging place-based community engagement model have looked to differentiate their work by focusing on “institution-wide strategy embracing long-term reciprocal community partnerships” in a “clearly defined geographic area” that “draws leadership from both high-level university administrators and also grassroots community and campus members” (Yamamura & Koth, 2018, pp. 12-13, 18). This definition seems to reflect the values emphasis of the Anchor Institutions Task Force and the definition of anchor mission described in The Road Half Traveled and by the
Anchor Learning Network; however, the disconnect between ideals and realities and varying interpretations opens room for such spin-offs. Other anchor networks have also developed outside of higher education, such as the Healthcare Anchor Network (HAN), launched in 2017, which now has membership of more than 70 hospitals and health systems. HAN works to leverage hiring, purchasing, investing, and other key assets among its members to help support inclusive local economies (Healthcare Anchor Network, n.d.). In 2021, the Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank also launched the Anchor Economy Initiative to better understand the role that higher education and health-care institutions play in regional economies (Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, n.d.).

Growing numbers of higher education conferences and webinars have featured anchor institution engagement, further demonstrating a growing movement for universities and colleges as anchor institutions. Yet, having participated in many of these activities, it is clear that individual scholars, practitioners, and institutions embody different definitions and intentions for their work. “Like all movements,” Saltmarsh and Hartley (2011) underscore, “the civic engagement movement has struggled to find conceptual and operational coherence” (p. 14). Of significance, they recognize that this movement has often “adapted in order to ensure their acceptance and legitimacy” within the dominant culture of higher education rather than challenging the status quo (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011, p. 290). The literature suggests that the anchor institution movement must also find its balance between growth, legitimacy, coherence, and the mutually transformative change required to make a significant difference on campuses and in communities.
Indeed, as the anchor institution concept has grown, some continue to narrowly define the work as economic development (Ehlenz, 2018; Garton, 2021; Sgoutas-Emch & Guerrieri, 2020; Yamamura & Koth, 2018). This (mis)understanding limits the transformational potential of the anchor movement, and, yet may reflect a broader, more mainstream takeover. As cautioned by Hartley (2009), “Movement leaders inevitable trade off the more radical elements of their agendas in order to seek long-term stability” (p. 334). “Core principles” expressed through “a compelling collective purpose (or vision)” are the sine qua non of successful movement organizations (Hartley, 2009, p. 333).

**ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CHANGE**

The values and norms of colleges and universities, that is their organizational cultures, significantly influence their activity; substantial change is impossible, then, unless there is a compelling collective vision that is understood and enacted. The dominant epistemology (Saltmarsh et al., 2009) and architecture (Sturm et al., 2011) of higher education institutions often run counter to fulfilling a democratic mission. Sturm et al. (2011) call for “building an architecture of full participation” for stakeholders on and off campus that requires “a long-term yet urgent ‘campaign’ animated by a shared vision, guided by institutional mindfulness, and sustained by an ongoing collaboration among leaders at many levels of the institution and community” (Sturm et al., 2011, p. 13). The challenges to such a paradigm shift likely vary depending on the type of institution and its existing relationships with its community (Sturm et al., 2011).

Maurrasse (2001) published the first book of case studies exploring higher education institutions as both academic centers and local economic engines prior to the modern
terminology of “anchor institutions.” While presenting promising models of four engaged campuses, he describes a key challenge in this effort—that the core academic mission and the economic side of the institution drive different sets of priorities that are “not always in sync” (p. 13). Much of the attention of anchor work over the last decade or two has focused on the university’s economic resources, although Harkavy, the Anchor Institutions Task Force, and colleagues have continued to emphasize that this engagement must be strategically aligned with the academic side of the university, which requires cultural and institutional change (Hartley et al., 2020; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Taylor & Luter, 2013). In their review of the anchor literature, Taylor and Luter (2013) emphasize the focus on “conscious and intentional” anchor engagement that requires “internal changes” in an “institution’s culture, priorities, operations, and procurement policies” (p. 12). The literature does not yet explore how anchor engagement strategies have led to cultural and systemic change or how institutional change can best realize the ideals of the anchor concept. In exploring the institutionalization of anchor engagement strategies, then, it is useful to look at what we know about how organizational and cultural change is experienced within higher education.

William Tierney (1988) helped establish an early framework for describing and evaluating organizational culture specifically within higher education. Tierney draws on the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz to describe organizational culture as “the study of particular webs of significance within an organizational setting” (p. 4). “An organization's culture is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it,” according to Tierney (1988), and is reflected in decision-making, actions, and communication (p. 3). While Tierney lays out a broad framework for institutional culture, Hartley, Harkavy, and Benson
(2005) distill this into two “twin drivers of institutional change”—structure and ideology (p. 212). Structural support (including allocation of resources and supportive policies) and ideological support, of course, may vary through different stages of institutionalization (Hartley et al., 2005).

Hartley, Harkavy, and Benson (2005), in their study on the institutionalization of service-learning in higher education, built on the 1982 framework of organizational theorists Paul S. Goodman and James W. Dean, as well as studies by Kelly Ward, Barbara Holland, and Susan Ostrander. They look particularly at Goodman and Dean’s five stages for institutionalizing a new organizational behavior: awareness of a new behavior and its value, experimentation with the new behavior, encouragement of the behavior among more individuals, establishment of normative consensus, and then embeddedness into the institution’s values and culture.

Orphan and Hartley (2021) challenge Goodman and Dean’s notion of cultural change as the final stage of organizational change; their study on ideal-centered changed at regional comprehensive universities demonstrate organizational change as more of an iterative process. Orphan and Hartley (2021) particularly conceptualize “ideal-centered change,” such as realizing higher education’s civic purpose, as a distinct type of change in higher education institutions that is a “dynamic process necessitating ongoing cultural engagement with no end point” (pp. 406-407). They discuss the need for change leaders to assess how other institutional members are responding to the change efforts and “recalibrate their approach as needed” (Orphan & Hartley, 2021, p. 405). To create significant, sustained change requires efforts that move beyond improving current practices and involves restructuring of core activities.
A useful lens for exploring institutionalization of the anchor concept, then, is Larry Cuban’s (1988) study of educational reform. He distinguishes between “first-order” changes, which work to improve efficiency and effectiveness without challenging existing structures or goals, and “second-order changes [that] seek to alter fundamental ways in which organizations are put together,” introducing “new goals, structures, and roles that transform familiar ways of doing things into new ways of solving persistent problems” (Cuban, 1988, p. 342). Cuban also reminds us that frame of reference matters, since change does not always mean progress nor does it have the same meaning for all involved (Cuban, 1988).

The frameworks of Goodman and Dean, Tierney, and Cuban might be applied to studies of anchor engagement, particularly in looking at how the work has infused institutional and academic culture. As Hartley, Harkavy, and Benson (2005) remind us, “True institutionalization requires radical restructuring, the realigning of all the resources of the institution (structural and ideological) … [and] continual cultivating and tending” (Hartley et al., 2005, pp. 219-220).

Leadership is a significant focus within the literature on organizational culture and change (Hartley, 2009). For cultural change in higher education, senior leadership, including the college or university president, may be particularly important given that “leadership defines the values, directions, and priorities of a campus” (Kezar et al., 2021, p. 2). For transformational change that addresses more complex challenges such as inequitable structures, shared approaches to leadership might be most effective (Kezar et al., 2021). Leaders of university-community partnerships—whether individuals or collaborative leadership—also need to particularly understand and steward democratic engagement processes and roles, including transparency and inclusion (Dostilio, 2014). Kezar, Holcombe, and colleagues have particularly introduced the
concept of “shared equity leadership” in creating more equitable conditions on campus (Holcombe et al., 2023; Kezar et al., 2021). The Anchor Institutions Task Force has also started a leadership series based on the significance of leadership in the current anchor institutions movement and the need to capture lessons learned from existing leaders in how to build, advance, and sustain anchor work. This work includes building a “comprehensive commitment across institutional units and community partners” to better prepare for the “leadership transitions [that] will take place” (Marga Inc., 2022b, p. 9). In the series, Paul Pribbenow emphasizes the “grasstops/grassroots” approach taken by Augsburg University that has helped build a robust culture to support anchor work—that is, connection of presidential leadership and advocacy with work on the ground across all aspects of the institution including curriculum, campus life, community engagement, and business practices (Marga Inc., 2024, p. 16).

(Re)Turn to Racial and Social Justice and Centering Community Voice

In 2011, Hartley expressed that value neutrality and focus on volunteerism had remained the “prevailing conception of ‘engagement’” on many higher education campuses (p. 43). Enos (2015) similarly pointed out that much of service-learning has been oriented away from social justice values rather than working with community partners for long-term change. Critical service-learning, however, is a more recent body of literature and practice that seeks to link this pedagogy more explicitly to social justice (Butin, 2015; Grain & Lund, 2016; Mitchell, 2008; Smedley-López et al., 2017). Other recent critiques of civic and community engagement have focused on race and racism in service-learning (Irwin & Foste, 2021), the need to emphasize community impact over student learning (Yamamura & Koth, 2018), and a focus on
transformational versus transactional partnerships (Bringle et al., 2009; Clayton et al., 2010; Kniffin et al., 2020). Of course, many of these critiques have existed for decades. For example, the Rhodes Report assessing the state of Campus Compact in 1998 found that critics were concerned about service-learning being “palliative but not transformative” (Hartley, 2009, p. 331). Nonetheless, the service-learning and community engagement field is increasingly and intentionally turning to frame the work within a paradigm of justice, equity, and democratic process (Grain & Lund, 2016; Sgoutas-Emch & Guerrieri, 2020).

Though more limited in number, anchor engagement studies, too, have begun to focus more explicitly on the values of democratic engagement and democratic process that have been emphasized by the Anchor Institutions Task Force. The most widely accepted definitions of democratic engagement within university-community literature emphasizes inclusion, mutuality, and reciprocity (Benson et al., 2007; Cantor et al., 2013; Dostilio, 2014; Hartley et al., 2020; Moore, 2014; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). Moore (2014) refers to “engagement-as-process” to emphasize the ideal “transformative experience for all involved” in democratic university-community partnerships (p.5). Among the recent anchor literature, Rich & Tsitsos (2018) present a case study in Baltimore of anchor revitalization strategies led by Maryland Institute College of Art and Johns Hopkins University. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, they document the importance of transparency, reciprocity, and inclusion of neighborhood stakeholders for realizing revitalization goals, particularly where there is a history of mistrust and anger.

In the 2019 issue of the Journal on Anchor Institutions and Communities, a publication of the Anchor Institutions Task Force, several additional case studies point to the significance of
incorporating community members as partners in the process to avoid unintended outcomes. In their contributions to this issue, Chancellor Nancy Cantor of Rutgers-Newark, President Jim Harris of University of San Diego, President Emeritus of Wagner College Richard Guarasci, and President Paul Pribbenow of Augsburg University all underscore the importance of democratic partnerships for effective, mutually beneficial anchor engagement. Cantor et al. (2019) stress inclusive participation for equitable growth over displacement and gentrification. Sheryl Evans Davis, Executive Director of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, speaking on her anchor partnership experience with University of San Francisco, emphasizes the importance of inclusion and authenticity: “Authenticity requires, reflection, communication, shared leadership/power, reciprocity and inclusion as well as centering around the most vulnerable in the partnership” (Davis, 2019, p. 41). Beyond these recent articles, however, anchor studies remain limited on the connections between democratic process and product, on mechanisms for authentic community participation, and on what is impeding progress.

Within the broader service-learning and civic engagement field, there have always been scholars and practitioners with a vision of social change and transformation (Stanton et al., 1999). Likewise, some leaders in the field have pushed for democratic engagement even while it remained on the periphery (Benson et al., 2017; Saltmarsh et al., 2009). Scholarly inquiry in recent years has given increased focus on the need for democratic practices and process based on mutuality and co-creation of knowledge (Harkavy, 2023; Hurd & Bowen, 2019; Janke et al., 2023). As articulated in the 2019 issue of the International Journal of Research of Service-Learning, for example, Hurd and Bowen (2019) describe the shift to “genuine democratic engagement,” which is “inclusive of community partners not merely for their ‘voices’ or ‘input’
but especially their valued expertise and shared authority as both co-creators and co-educators” (p. 2.). The literature itself, however, has insufficiently represented community perspectives. In this vein, Rachael Shah’s (2020) *Rewriting Partnerships* draws on interviews with over 80 community members to call for a radical reorientation to knowledge construction that centers the experiential knowledge of community members. Arguing for democratization of the knowledge production process and theory building in community engagement, she proposes and demonstrates a “critical community-based epistemologies framework” that integrates knowledge from foundational scholars, from non-dominant theories/theorists at the margins, and directly from community members (Shah, 2020, p. 10). Shah explores approaches to ethical and inclusive partnerships that intentionally create space for community voice (inclusive of both nonprofit staff and residents) at a structural level including advisory boards, participatory evaluation, and community grading (Shah, 2020).

Within the anchor literature, Brown et al. (2016) advocate for policy strategies to “protect and enhance vulnerable communities … confronted with the plans of universities” including: community organizing, community boards, community land trusts, and housing/worker cooperatives (p. 94). Similarly, Baldwin (2021) points to the possibilities of anchor partnerships that focus on *development without displacement* [emphasis in original] including city-enforced payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs), Community Benefit Agreements governed by a community advisory board, community-based planning and zoning boards with subcommittees focused on university-based development, community-based public safety teams, more just labor practices for all workers, and redistribution of athletic revenues (p. 210). Further research needs to explore how these practices are or could be incorporated as part of a comprehensive anchor strategy.
Baldwin (2021) also points to the growing use of anchor language by both activist scholars and university administrators who generally share a desire for neighborhood improvement but do not necessarily agree on “whose interests should dictate community partnerships” (p. 36).

Events of the early 2020s, particularly the high-profile police killings of unarmed Black Americans and the extreme inequities revealed and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have further accelerated attention to issues of social and racial justice within higher education. The Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF) studied the response to the pandemic among higher education institutions and other anchors. Reflecting on the early stages of COVID, Maurrasse (2021) claimed, “society cannot navigate the duration and aftermath of the pandemic without colleges and universities” (p. 69). AITF also became increasingly focused on multi-anchor institution collaboratives, including the formation of an Anchor Partnerships Subgroup, launched in early 2022: “As the anchor institutions field has evolved, it has become increasingly apparent that the most pressing issues of our times, which are manifested and experienced in localities, require the collective attention of multiple anchor institutions and other partners” (Anchor Institutions Task Force, 2021a). Leaders in the field such as Chancellor Nancy Cantor, in addition to her focus on cross-sector collaborations and inclusion of marginalized voices, has continually emphasized a racial equity lens (Cantor et al., 2019; Englot & Cantor, 2021). AITF developed policy briefs and statements that increasingly focus on dismantling systemic racism (Marga Inc., 2021). For Henry Taylor, the engaged university must explicitly be an anti-racist university that “consciously seeks to dismantle the structures of racism and social class inequity” through knowledge production and policy implementation (2021, p. 42). If racial justice is to become a more defining element of university engagement, including anchor initiatives, then
exploring the movement through critical epistemologies could help the field bring a race-conscious lens to questions of democratic engagement, power dynamics, co-creation, mutual transformation, and justice (Irwin & Foste, 2021; Kniffin et al., 2020; Mitchell, 2008; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011; Sladek & Bergen, 2019; Smedley-López et al., 2017; Sturm et al., 2011; Taylor, 2021).

CRITICAL THEORIES AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

As referenced above, Shah (2020) makes a compelling case for incorporating critical community-based epistemologies into the research and practice of university-community engagement. Critical theory provides a lens for studying university-community engagement with attention to power and privilege, marginalized voices, and racial equity. It focuses on identifying social inequalities and the social factors that contribute to such inequalities, as well as articulating realistic solutions (Smedley-López et al., 2017). Critical theory holds important implications, then, for thinking about the potential role of universities as anchors in both contributing to growing social stratification and also helping to create positive social change. In the same family of critical theoretical frameworks, critical race theory embodies what legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw describes as “a race-conscious and justice-oriented intellectual project” (p. 54). As cited by Tate (1997), another early critical race theory scholar, Calmore (1992), claimed that the “task is to identify values and norms that have been disguised and subordinated in the law” (Calmore as cited in Tate IV, 1997, p. 197). Crenshaw developed an intersectional framework, now applied in many fields, that centers the lives and experiences of Black people (Tate IV, 1997). Other critical race-gendered epistemologies also emphasize the
value of narratives by community members who produce important insights through their experiential knowledge (Shah, 2020).

These critical theories have important implications for incorporating marginalized voices in university anchor engagement strategies, redefining the definition of “expert,” and disrupting traditional academic norms. They build on John Dewey’s pragmatic approach to knowledge building through experience (Benson et al., 2006; Shah, 2020). These theories also build directly on Freire’s (1970) concept of critical consciousness, or an awareness of social forces that impact one’s experience, typically in an oppressed setting, and an exploration of how those conditions may be changed (Moore, 2014). Freire also emphasized the importance of people as subjects rather than objects, and the need for active dialogue (Freire, 1970; Shah, 2020). Shah (2020) highlights both the “ethical imperative” and the “philosophical case” to “center stories of those who most vulnerable in the partnership and in society” to advance knowledge, research, and practice (Shah, 2020, p. 25, 31).

Indeed, service-learning as social justice often draws on Freire’s emancipatory work and the work of other “anti-racist, participatory action research, critical pedagogy, and feminist scholars to examine and resist political, economic, and social inequities that permeate educational institutions and broader society” (Grain & Lund, 2016, p. 47). While these discussions and critiques of service-learning are not new (Cruz, 1990; Mitchell, 2008), Grain and Lund (2016) partially attribute the proliferation of critical research in recent years to the growing number and variability in programs under the larger “banner” of service-learning (p. 47). Grain and Lund (2016) highlight what they see as the “greatest dilemma” within the service-learning field: “It has the capacity to exacerbate inequality when done poorly, and to be a promising
equalizing force when done well” (p. 48). A “conscious shift,” they claim, is necessary to advance social justice goals and avoid causing harm (Grain & Lund, 2016). The anchor institution literature, by comparison, is more limited in scope; I would argue, however, that the dilemma for the anchor institution field, given the extraordinary resources leveraged, is much greater.

Bergan and Sladek (2019) explore the anchor institution strategy through the lens of shifting paradigms within higher education to shed light on tensions within anchor institution engagement as it relates to power, privilege, and oppression. Based on their experience helping to develop, implement, and evaluate anchor initiatives (Bergen as then executive director of the Office of Community Engagement at Marquette University, and Sladek as then manager of higher education engagement at the Democracy Collaborative), they emphasize the importance of incorporating community-based expertise into anchor initiatives to help overcome this power imbalance and lead to true reciprocity with community residents (Sladek & Bergen, 2019). Nonetheless, their argument is largely a conceptual one. Again, while university-community partnership literature, particularly studies on critical service-learning, have begun to explore connections with critical frameworks (Butin, 2015; Grain & Lund, 2016; Mitchell, 2008; Smedley-López et al., 2017), few studies, if any, of anchor engagement have done so (Baldwin, 2021; Brown et al., 2016).

Social movement theory can also inform our understanding of how higher education civic and community engagement activities have been likened to a movement (Hartley, 2009). Members of a social movement are connected by a “shared set of beliefs,” says social movement theorist Mario Diani (1992), and their efforts are advanced through “networks of informal
interaction” (Diani, 1992, p. 7). “The decision to act – and, specifically to act collectively –
depends not only on basic internalized principles and/or attitudes but on complex evaluation of
the opportunities and constraints for action” (della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 72). “The power of a
movement,” says Hartley, “is significantly determined by its capacity to coordinate action and
the salience and power of particular ideas and ideals” (Hartley, 2009, p. 324). Although social
movement theory generally focuses on collective action, power dynamics and leadership also
influence the work (Diani, 2003; Hartley, 2009). Contemporary social justice movements such as
Black Lives Matter, rooted in Black feminist tradition, have a lot to teach us about organizing
and changemaking, particularly given the need for race-conscious transformational change
within higher education and the need to elevate marginalized voices in university engagement
(Crenshaw, 2019; Ransby, 2018; Taylor, 2021). For example, the protests following the murder
of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, according to the Movement Strategy Center, “is a story
of movement builders nurturing transformative practices within social justice, then, stepping up
and into a ‘movement moment’” (Zimmerman & Quiroz, 2015, p. 4). Taylor (2021) claims that
Americans’ growing awareness of racial injustice and inequity, particularly after the protests
following the police killing of George Floyd, have “created the conditions to transform higher
education” (p. 47). This renewed racial reckoning coupled with the pandemic could well be a
critical moment for universities to step up and into a values-driven anchor movement.

In her genealogy of the Black Lives Matter movement, Barbara Ransby (2018) also
describes how “[n]ational movements and campaigns are built upon the concrete work performed
on the local level” (Ransby, 2018, p. 130). The anchor movement, similarly, is bolstered by the
work happening in localities between individual and collaboratives of anchors working with city
and community partners. Understanding the successes and challenges of exemplary local anchor partnerships—nodes where sustained work has both created local mutually transformative impact and fueled the movement—is necessary not only to improve local practice but also to inform the field.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study took a qualitative single-site case study approach to explore the institutionalization and manifestation of an anchor institution vision at one urban research university. The methodology for this study was informed by the research questions and existing literature on university-community partnerships and anchor institutions. As previously described, the ideals of anchor engagement involve strategic engagement of and coordination across multiple units in deep reciprocal partnerships. The study and practice of university-community engagement, in general, and of democratic anchor institution engagement, in particular, exists within a complex ecosystem, including the local socio-political context. As Yin and Campbell (2018) describe, the “distinctive need for case studies arise out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. Case studies allow you to focus in-depth on a ‘case’ and to retain a holistic and real-world perspective” (Yin & Campbell, 2018).

Very few universities have adopted a strategic plan centered around a democratic anchor institution strategy. This research study took an embedded design to focus the case study inquiry through the experiences of individuals at different levels of both the university and the community as sub-units of study, while still returning to the larger unit of analysis, the institution as a whole (Yin, 2003).

A major goal of this study, then, was to dive deep into the experiences of an urban research university who has a clearly articulated vision and strategic plan centering anchor institution strategies, in order to explore all the ways in which institutional leaders and key community partners are making sense of and enacting the anchor concept’s ideals, including opportunities and limitations based on internal and external forces, and promising practices for
deeply reciprocal, mutually transformative engagement that can lead to more inclusive and equitable communities. Focusing on one site allowed for an in-depth review of the comprehensive nature of an anchor strategy, including attention to both academic and economic engagement, institutional culture and change, the nature of internal and external relationships, as well as the voices of community partners as collaborators and co-creators of reciprocal partnerships.

Through this single case study approach, this study was guided by the following research question: How is one university attempting to realize the ideals of an anchor institution strategy with its local community—including comprehensive engagement of academic and economic resources for mutual benefit, institutionalization of engagement, and a democratic process that centers community voice and co-creation—and what kind of institutional changes (policy, practice, culture) have facilitated these goals?

**RESEARCH SETTING – SITE OF STUDY**

The specific population of interest was an urban research university and its surrounding community. Prior to selection of the specific site for this study, I had engaged in a few other relevant studies, through both commissioned research and independent study courses, that explored university-community engagement through an anchor lens. These studies surfaced a list of possible sites of study. As my research questions narrowed in, only a few sites emerged as viable candidates.

The site selected for this study was Rutgers University – Newark, a diverse, urban, public research university in the largest city of New Jersey. This site of study fit several criteria highly relevant to my research questions. Rutgers University – Newark (RU-N) has had a clearly
articulated vision statement, mission statement, and strategic plan in place since 2014 that center
an anchor institution agenda. This agenda includes strategic integration of academic and
institutional resources in partnership with others to address five major areas in its local
community of Newark: building strong educational pathways (pre-K through 16) for increased
postsecondary attainment; strong, healthy, and safe neighborhoods; promoting and leveraging the
arts and culture; science in the urban environment; and equitable growth through
entrepreneurship and economic development. In selection of this site, attention was also given to
the current university leadership, given that anchor work involves engagement of an entire
institution that falls under the purview of a president. RU-N Chancellor Nancy Cantor has been a
long-time national and global leader in advancing mutually beneficial university-community
partnerships through publicly-engaged scholarship and anchor institution engagement. Since
arriving at RU-N in 2014, she has emphasized the anchor institution approach as part of her
university’s identity and operational strategy (Hartley et al., 2020). Cantor and her colleagues
publish and speak prolifically on, and are cited frequently for, their anchor engagement and
public mission. RU-N has been a leading member of two national networks working to advance
anchor institution engagement, the Anchor Institutions Task Force and the Anchor Learning
Network. As an original member of the Anchor Institutions Task Force and current Co-Chair of
the AITF Advisory Council, Chancellor Cantor has expressed a deep commitment to AITF’s
found ing values of equity and social justice, democracy and democratic practice, place and
community, and collaboration and partnerships; she has further centered racial equity and racial
justice in RU-N’s discourse and strategies of anchor engagement. RU-N has also been a regional
and national leader in building cross sector, multi-institutional partnerships to bring about more
substantial and systemic change in its locality. Despite this reputation, Rutgers University – Newark’s anchor engagement has not been examined extensively by outside researchers.

DATA COLLECTION

The primary form of data for this study was qualitative interviews. Archival data and documentation were also reviewed, as well as direct observation. Interview participants for this study included university and community stakeholders who have rich experience in anchor partnership activity in this setting and were selected based on the duration and/or depth of their involvement.

I sought to conduct interviews with at least 10-15 members of the university (administrators, faculty, and staff) and 5-8 members of the community (leaders of community-based organizations partnering with the university, other anchor leaders involved in RU-N’s cross-sector collaborations, and/or long-term community residents). From December 2022 through June 2023, I conducted a total of 31 one-on-one interviews comprised of 22 institutional representatives and nine community or city representatives. The interviews were each conducted in a one-to-one semi-structured format either in-person or over Zoom and lasted approximately one hour. No interview was shorter than 45 minutes and none lasted longer than 90 minutes.

Based on prior working knowledge of the institution’s engagement, data retrieved from online research, and in-person observation of a Rutgers University – Newark Advisory Board meeting in November 2022, I constructed an initial list of university administrators and community partners to interview. RU-N Senior Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs and Chief of Staff Peter Englot served as a key interlocutor, including helping to co-identify prioritized individuals from this initial list to interview. He also provided some direct connections for me
with several campus and community participants, helping to arrange several of the face-to-face interviews to occur on campus and providing email introductions to a couple others. Fifteen individual face-to-face interviews were arranged in this manner, which took place over three days between December 2022 and February 2023; four of these interviews ended up being conducted by Zoom based on participants’ logistical preferences and two others were rescheduled for later dates over Zoom.

Employing the snowballing method, each interviewee was asked for suggestions of additional information-rich informants at the end of the interview. This led to at least 64 additional individuals being named by the end of my data collection. To prioritize among this growing list of additional participants, I reflected on the data gathered to date and periodically reviewed names of potential informants with the Senior Vice Chancellor to discuss who might bring significant new perspectives to my areas of interest. With a narrowed list of 26 potential new participants, I sent letters by email to introduce myself and request interviews. Through this contact method, I secured another 16 interviews, all of which were conducted over Zoom, apart from one that was conducted face-to-face during a fifth visit to RU-N’s campus in May 2023. I contacted an additional 10 potential informants by email who were not interviewed either based on their complete lack of response (6), a declination to be interviewed (1), or an initial response but no confirmation after several follow-up emails (3). Interviews continued until I reached data saturation, when no new themes or insights emerged from gathering fresh data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The final 31 informants consisted of 22 individuals who work for the university and nine individuals from the broader Newark community. On campus, this included nine current
members of the Office of the Chancellor Leadership Team, as well as three individuals who had previously served in this capacity. Among those 12 individuals currently or formerly part of senior leadership, seven also held faculty positions, and four served as either administrative or faculty directors of centers or institutes on campus with a public serving mission. Outside of the senior leadership team, nine faculty were interviewed, five of whom directed major centers focused on publicly-engaged scholarship and/or anchor initiatives, such as the Honors Living-Learning Community, Express Newark, and the Newark Public Safety Collaborative. One additional staff person who worked across two arts and sciences departments was interviewed. Across the 22 university administrators and faculty interviewed, all six of RU-N's schools were represented. Many of these individuals had been at the institution for at least 15 years, some for nearly twice that number; others had arrived within the last five to 10 years.

Among the nine interlocutors representing community or city partners, two were deeply involved in the Newark Anchor Collaborative (including one executive at a corporation), two were retired community leaders who served on the RU-N Advisory Board, and five were leaders of local nonprofits. The latter included the chair of a collaborative of community development corporations and community-based organizations; the CEO of a statewide nonprofit based in Newark focused on racial and social justice advocacy; the CEO of a large Latinx-led community-based organization in Newark focused on early childhood, healthy homes, and community empowerment; the executive director of a small community development organization focused on neighborhood revitalization, particularly food justice, housing justice, and community building; and the executive director of a small non-profit organization dedicated to coordinating resources and efforts to improve the quality of public education across Newark. Most of these
individuals were long-time residents and community advocates and several were Rutgers-Newark alum.

The open-ended questions of a semi-structured interview protocol, with follow-up questions that emerged from the responses of individual participants, aimed to elicit extensive participant narratives and provided essential insight into stakeholder perspectives and experiences while also allowing for “the research to be taken in new and unexpected directions” (Johnson, 2017, p. 83). Administrators were asked, among other things, to describe some of the institutional supports and barriers they have experienced in support of realizing the anchor concept ideals within their institution. Faculty leaders were asked to what extent and how anchor engagement has been embedded in the academic culture of the institution. Community leaders were asked about the nature of their partnerships and the perspective of the broader community. Interviews were recorded on digital devices and inputted into Dovetail for transcription. A copy of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

Between November 2022 and May 2023, I spent five full days at Rutgers-Newark and in the surrounding area in observation in between conducting interviews. These visits helped provide additional context on the site of study, including the places and spaces that bring university and community partners together. These visits included several of the in-person interviews, observation at two of Rutgers University – Newark Advisory Board’s quarterly meetings (November 9, 2022 and February 21, 2023), observation of two of the Chancellor’s weekly meetings among her senior cabinet referred to as “huddles,” and self-guided walking tours across campus and surrounding neighborhoods. Following interviews and during the site visits, I wrote fieldnotes to capture emergent findings. During this period, I also observed a few
in-person presentations and online webinars involving Rutgers-Newark representatives and their partners speaking to various aspects of anchor work and publicly-engaged scholarship.

DATA ANALYSIS

Drawing on community-based qualitative research methodologies, data was analyzed through an inductive, iterative process based on a close reading of and reflection on the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Johnson, 2017). This allowed for emergent themes grounded in the perspectives and experiences of the participants. As previously noted, recorded interviews were inputted into Dovetail for transcription. After all interviews were complete, I re-listened to each interview recording while reading through the transcription word-for-word to correct misinformation and to begin analysis. All interviews were manually coded within Dovetail.

During the initial round of inductive coding, particular attention was given to *in vivo* coding that emerged from participants’ own words and language, giving necessary attention to lived experiences, local knowledge and meaning making for anchor institution partnerships (Johnson, 2017, pp. 122-124). This produced more than 50 initial codes, a sample of which has been provided in Appendix B. Second-level coding then developed more specific, analytic categories, as the concepts began to be organized into overarching themes that aligned with the research questions and literature review (Johnson, 2017, pp. 124-126). The following primary categories emerged from the thematic analysis: institutional culture (and cultural shift); leadership (presidential leadership, shared equity leadership, leadership transition); community voice and co-creation; trust and relationships; precursors; vision; structural support (policies, resources, rewards and recognition, centers); city relations and ecosystem; and sustainability. Secondary categories that emerged included: academic norms; university system and
bureaucracy; and student engagement. These key themes were then further analyzed in connection to the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks (Maxwell, 2013). For theoretical frameworks, I drew largely on the scholarship of Cuban (1988) for indicators of first-order and second-order change. Particular attention was given to institutional changes (policy, practice, culture) that have also facilitated community co-creation and reciprocity. Shah’s (2020) framework for critical community-based epistemologies was also applied to identify ways in which community members have been positioned as knowledge holders and producers. These theoretical propositions helped lay the groundwork for making analytical generalizations from the case study (Yin & Campbell, 2018).

TRUSTWORTHINESS AND VALIDITY

To increase trustworthiness and validity, Yin’s (2003) recommended tactics were deployed for three common social science design tests: construct validity, external validity, and reliability. For construct validity, I identified specific types of changes being studied and used multiple sources of evidence to evaluate these changes. I also discussed emerging themes with key informants during case study composition. External validity was enhanced using theory in the research design and a focus on analytical generalization based on the connection to that theory. For reliability, I kept documentation of my research procedures, including recordings of the raw data, demonstration of how the data was analyzed and synthesized, along with process and self-reflection notes (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

The interview data was triangulated through a review of documentation including university mission and vision statements, strategic plans, public reports, news articles, and communications with internal and external stakeholders to gather insight on community and
institutional values and priorities (Johnson, 2017). Triangulation also included looking at previously conducted studies and publications examining various dimensions of this university’s anchor partnerships, as well as participating in conferences and webinars in which aspects of this work were presented. Finally, the in-person observation at two internal weekly meetings of Chancellor Cantor’s senior cabinet and two quarterly meetings of the Rutgers University – Newark Advisory Board provided further validity as well as a more complete understanding of the phenomena.

“Member checking” activities involved sharing initial findings and draft of the full case study manuscript with key informants for feedback, as well as additional respondent validation on specific sections of the manuscript (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). Finally, reflective field notes were recorded throughout the research project to encourage critical reflection on positionality, ethical dilemmas, methodological challenges, and new insights (Johnson, 2017). Prior to collecting data, I received university institutional review board (IRB) approval. Participants were each provided an informed consent form outlining the research questions before the interview was conducted, and informed consent was confirmed verbally at the start of each interview.

REFLEXIVITY, POSITIONALITY, AND RECIPROCITY

The research questions and design reflected my personal experience and observations from working in a university-based community partnership center for nearly twenty years; learning from other university-community partnership and anchor institution efforts through research, site visits, conferences, and networking events; and my own understanding of the topic based on research and practice. I attempted, however, to “abandon my assumptions,” as Maxwell
(2013) advocates, to allow alternative concepts and “emergent insights” to derive from my participants’ responses by giving primacy to their truths (Maxwell, 2013, pp. 52, 89).

More specifically, my position at Penn and the Netter Center (frequently cited as a model for university-community engagement), my role in the Anchor Institutions Task Force (my direct supervisor serves as the founding chair and I have been involved since its inception), and my academic work (opportunities to publish research), may have placed me in a position of relative influence over my interlocutors. I also hold a unique insider position and relationship with several interlocutors, who have also been influential over the years in my thinking of the anchor concept ideals, which has both advantages and disadvantages. As Maxwell (2013) emphasizes, “what the informant says is always influenced by the interviewer and the interview situation,” and I kept in mind how this positionality may affect the validity of my data (p. 125).

Critical reflection and self-reflexivity on one’s own identity and how that identity affects relationships with interlocutors is essential in university-community research to help mitigate unintended outcomes (Muhammad et al., 2015; Shah, 2020). As such, throughout the study, I was aware of my role as a white, female, educated, upper middle-class scholar practitioner working within an elite research institution. This positionality demands special attention be given to not inadvertently reproducing traditional power hierarchies that my body of research is attempting to challenge. I also critically reflected on the unearned trust with many of my interlocutors that was largely based on either “role-based trust” (resulting from my title or role with little or no direct interaction prior to the engagement) and/or “proxy” trust (resulting from being invited or connected by someone who is trusted) (Lucero et al., 2018, p. 63).
Selecting a site in which I have no direct vested interest was intended to allow for more objectivity and “full expression of multiple perspectives” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 92). Nonetheless, prior to and during the study, I was influenced by a working knowledge of the anchor engagement practice of Rutgers University – Newark from collegial relationships with professionals at the institution and from presentations at conferences. Throughout the study, I continually adjusted my understanding and assumptions of the work through a reflection on the interviews, documentation, and observations conducted.

Reciprocity is critical in my work as both a practitioner and scholar. I have intended for this research study to be reciprocal and mutually beneficial. I aimed to provide not only new knowledge to the field, but also outside perspective and analysis on the specific experiences at Rutgers-Newark that might help guide colleagues at RU-N and their partners in further reflection and practice.

LIMITATIONS

This study presented several limitations. First, the study is small and highly contextual, with only one institution of higher education studied. The selected institution also had particular characteristics such as being part of a public university system and having a student body that reflects the demographics of its urban community. While this may limit the generalizability of findings, attention to theory aimed to help extrapolate more general findings. As Yin and Campbell (2018) emphasize, the focus for case study research is to have findings that are “generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (p. 20).

Second, my unique experiences as a practitioner scholar in the field, including previous engagement or collaboration with some of the interlocutors, may have led to bias that influenced
the research findings. Reflection on my positionality, as described above, attempted to mitigate such bias.

Third, many of the community partners interviewed represented the heads of organizations (both large city institutions and very small community-based organizations) and may not be reflective of the viewpoint of the average community resident. In a similar vein, most of the university representatives interviewed were identified based on their interest and involvement in anchor initiatives and/or publicly-engaged scholarship and cannot reflect the full array of perspectives across a research institution. Finally, exploring a university-community partnership as an outsider in a bounded research timeframe limited my understanding of the nature and process of the relationships that are so central to this type of work. Nonetheless, the interviews, data collection, and analysis process attempted to elicit the authentic experiences and perceptions of diverse key stakeholders.
CHAPTER 4: THE CASE OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY – NEWARK AS AN ANCHOR INSTITUTION

INTRODUCTION

Many long-serving faculty and administrators describe Rutgers University – Newark as a “special place” with a “spirit” of diversity and collaboration and a “tradition” of being connected to the city of Newark. When Nancy Cantor assumed the position of chancellor of Rutgers University – Newark in January 2014, the scene was set for the institution to take its community engagement to a whole new level. Nancy was drawn to this place, hoping to realize an anchor institution mission that she had attempted in previous posts at other universities. In many ways, Rutgers and the city of Newark represented the ideal opportunity. “There was a readiness on the ground, both in the city and in the university,” reflected Cantor, “even if people hadn’t necessarily articulated it as an anchor.” Chancellor Cantor’s passion and energy for elevating Rutgers-Newark as a community-engaged university to a deeply embedded anchor institution galvanized both faculty across campus who were committed to social justice and publicly-engaged scholarship, as well as leaders from other institutions across the city who were ready to conceive of themselves as anchors. She signaled this work would be central to the institution and immediately began putting resources and structures in place to support it. This helped advance and institutionalize existing engagement work that had been happening in a more fragmented way, as well as created significant new institutional commitments. She enlisted people across campus who shared her vision, as well as attracted new faculty and administrators from elsewhere who wanted to take part. She strengthened the university’s social and political capital across the city. While there were great possibilities, the chancellorship at Rutgers-Newark meant
that she would be working within a system, and this ultimately put limits on what she and her team could accomplish during her tenure. Nonetheless, the anchor institution framework enabled Cantor and her team, in a relatively short period of time, to begin making transformational changes both within the university and across the city.

This is a case study of Rutgers University – Newark as an anchor institution. It begins with a brief summary of the historical and institutional context of Newark and Rutgers-Newark, followed by a light overview of the university’s urban engagement from 1969 to 2013, before diving into the tenure of Nancy Cantor. The case explores how RU-N, under Chancellor Cantor’s catalytic leadership, has attempted to realize the ideals of an anchor institution strategy with local partners, including the signature initiatives developed, the intentional approach to engaging community partners, the roles of various institutional players in advancing and sustaining this work, and some of the challenges that lie ahead.

THE “PLACE”: HISTORICAL & INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF NEWARK & RU-N

Rutgers University – Newark is a public institution in Newark, the largest city in New Jersey, with a population of approximately 300,000 people. The City of Newark was founded in 1666 and, by the 1800s, was a major state economic driver based on its port, manufacturing, and insurance industries. Broader historical and socio-political trends in the mid-1900s—including the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to Northern cities, “white flight” to the suburbs, racist practices such as redlining, and discriminatory governmental policies—led to growing residential segregation and increased poverty (O’Dea, 2019; Jackson, 1985; Marga Inc., 2022a; Rothstein, 2017). Many Newarkers cite the 1967 “Rebellion” as an important mark in the city’s history. Mounting tensions between the Black community and Newark police climaxed
when a Black taxi driver was arrested after a minor traffic accident, beaten and then detained inside a police precinct, which led to several days of violent unrest and riots. This was followed by an accelerated flight of white working-class residents as well as middle-class and affluent residents to the suburbs. Newark’s population went from 11 percent to 54 percent African American from 1940 to 1970 (O’Dea, 2019; Marga Inc., 2022a). Poverty and unemployment continued to increase in Newark during the ensuing period of disinvestment, and by 2015, the poverty rate was twice the national average and the unemployment rate 70 percent higher, with disproportionate effects on people of color (Marga Inc., 2022a). At the same time, Newark became a center for Black arts and culture and of activism with a strong network of community-based organizations. The city remains approximately 50 percent Black/African American with a growing population of Hispanic/Latinx individuals, who make up approximately 37 percent of the population as of 2022 (U.S. Census, 2022). Newark continues to serve as a national arts and cultural hub today. It also enjoys many large public and private institutions (inclusive of higher education institutions, health systems, corporations, and arts and cultural institutions) that serve as the largest employers in the city, investors in real estate, purchasers of goods and services, and—in the case of the five colleges and universities—educator of 50,000 students and faculty (Newark Alliance, 2021; Marga Inc., 2022a).

Rutgers University – Newark (RU-N) is part of the system of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, which has three campus locations in New Brunswick, Newark, and Camden, as well as a major academic health center. RU-N was founded in 1908 and merged with Rutgers University in 1946. Today, the Newark campus has six schools and colleges, approximately 13,000 undergraduate and graduate students, over 40 undergraduate majors and
50 graduate programs, approximately 670 full-time faculty and nearly 900 full- and part-time staff. RU-N has been among the most diverse universities in the country for over two decades and earned federal designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution in 2016. As of fall 2022, its undergraduate student body was 34 percent Hispanic or Latinx, 19 percent African American or Black, 18 percent Asian, 21 percent White Non-Hispanic, 34 percent first generation in their families to go to college, 54 percent Federal Pell grant qualified, and 28 percent New Jersey community college transfers. The student body is also approximately 94 percent New Jersey residents and 14 percent Newark residents, a figure which increased significantly over the last 10 years. In addition to its diverse racial, ethnic, and religious makeup, RU-N has also been known for promoting educational opportunity for college students who are first-generation, whose home languages are not English, who commute to campus to save money, and who work to support themselves and/or their families.¹

SETTING THE STAGE FOR AN ANCHOR MISSION: RUTGERS-NEWARK FROM 1969 TO 2013

A faculty/administrator of over 25 years reflected that Rutgers-Newark has “always had an identity that was very social justice driven and community oriented.” Echoed by many others, this individual pointed to the leadership of Dr. Clement Price, distinguished professor and longtime Newark resident, as a critical player in establishing this ethos on campus: “People say that Clem Price was the heart of Rutgers-Newark, always pushing for justice [and also] recognition of Newark as a singularly unique place.” Dr. Price was one of the first Black students

¹ For additional demographic information, see “Newark by the Numbers,” Rutgers-Newark, accessed September 14, 2023, https://www.newark.rutgers.edu/meet-rutgers-newark/newark-numbers; see also “Embracing our Identity as a Hispanic-Serving Institution,” Rutgers-Newark, accessed September 14, 2023, https://www.newark.rutgers.edu/meet-rutgers-newark/hispanic-serving-institution.
to earn a Ph.D. in history from Rutgers University-New Brunswick and began teaching history at RU-N in 1969. This was on the heels of the 1967 rebellion in the city and the 1969 takeover by the Rutgers-Newark Black Organization of Students of a central academic building, Conklin Hall, in protest of the lack of minority students and faculty on campus. Meanwhile, the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program was approved by the legislature as a statewide initiative in 1968, establishing perhaps the first effort focused on increasing student diversity on Rutgers’ campuses by supporting highly motivated and capable students from low-income backgrounds with supplemental instruction and support services, along with financial assistance (McMillan-Lonesome, n.d.). Rutgers Law School also established its first law clinics as a result of the student demands; it now has 16 legal clinics across its two campuses in Newark and Camden. In 2002, Rutgers named Dr. Price a Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor. He was founding director of The Rutgers Institute on Ethnicity, Culture, and the Modern Experience. The Institute, which he founded in 1996 and was later named after him, became a model for public scholarship and engagement. He also co-founded the annual Marion Thompson Wright Lecture Series, New Jersey’s oldest and most prestigious Black History Month event. Dr. Price passed away in 2014 after having been designated Newark city historian earlier that year. It was his vision and Dr. Price himself that helped attract Nancy Cantor to Rutgers-Newark.

Over the last few decades, the institution has increasingly embraced its role as an urban research university. Under Norman Samuels’ tenure as Provost from 1982-2002, for example, the first residential halls were built, and several centers and institutes were established that addressed urban issues (Hill, 2012). Steve Diner, who served as Provost and Chancellor
(following a title change) from 2002 to 2011, worked to further increase the university’s
diversity and also significantly increase urban-based research, scholarship, and service (Hill,
2012). Under his leadership was formed the School of Public Affairs in Administration (in
2006), the Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (in 2008), and a
doctoral program in Urban Systems (Diner, 2019). Diner appointed the first female dean and
established Chancellor’s Awards for Community Engagement to recognize and reward research,
teaching, and service contributing to the surrounding community. Diner also elevated the Office
of University-Community Partnerships (OUCP), which was first created as the Office of Campus
Information and Conference Services in 2001 under Samuels, then became the Office of Campus
and Community Relations in 2005, and then given its current title in 2010 (Hill, 2012). This
Office served as one of the first institutionalized efforts at RU-N to increase collaboration
between faculty, staff, students, and community partners; Diner also promoted the OUCP
Executive Director to Assistant Chancellor for University-Community Partnerships and added
them to the Chancellor’s cabinet (Hill, 2012). OUCP’s small team of three to four full-time staff
and graduate interns would help connect faculty, staff, and students to community-engaged
scholarship and service opportunities in Newark, as well as coordinate a number of focused
neighborhood initiatives particularly in tutoring and youth development.

In 2011, however, Diner “was forced out” by Rutgers system president McCormick, as
Diner describes in an oral history. The perceived “threat,” per Diner’s memoirs, included his
efforts to merge Rutgers-Newark with other local academic institutions and his overemphasis on
the City of Newark (Diner, 2017). Phil Yeagle, who had been dean of the RU-N Faculty of Arts
and Sciences, served as interim chancellor from 2011 to 2013, followed by a six-month interim
appointment of Todd Clear, who had been dean of the School of Criminal Justice at RU-N, until Nancy Cantor arrived. Bob Barchi also began his tenure as Rutgers system president in 2012 and faced sharp criticism, including by Rutgers-Newark faculty and students who protested funding inequities of their campus (Heyboer & Calefati, 2013).

Meanwhile, the New Jersey legislature had approved structural changes within the Rutgers system in summer 2012 that, among other things, provided “a certain level of autonomy” for Rutgers-Newark according to one senior administrator. This included establishing a Rutgers University – Newark “campus advisory board,” as well as appropriations in the state budget specifically for the Rutgers-Newark campus (NJ Legislative Assembly, 2012). Effective July 1, 2013, the campus advisory board’s mission was to “work with the chancellor of Rutgers University-Newark in implementing the teaching, research, and service mission of Rutgers University-Newark, the engagement of the campus with its local community, its region, and the State, and its commitment to academic excellence, access, and diversity” (NJ Legislative Assembly, 2012, p. 17). Its duties included advising the president and Rutgers board of governors on selection of an RU-N Chancellor; proposing capital projects and bonding for RU-N to the board of governors; and proposing an annual budget for RU-N to the board of governors. Notably, the bill specified, “Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter, amend, modify, or diminish the authority of the board of governors of Rutgers, The State University to grant tenure and promotions to faculty at Rutgers University – Newark, establish standards for academic programs and for the awarding of degrees for Rutgers University – Newark, and make final decisions on capital projects, bonding, and the annual budget for Rutgers University-Newark”
(NJ Legislative Assembly, 2012, p. 18). Similar legislation was passed for the New Brunswick and Camden campuses.

NANCY CANTOR’S TENURE, 2014-2024

The First Months: Leadership, Strategic Plan, and Anchor Vision

Nancy Cantor had a reputation—from her previous administrative positions at Syracuse University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and University of Michigan, and her leadership within national networks such as Imagining America and the Anchor Institutions Task Force—for a steadfast commitment to publicly-engaged scholarship, diversity and inclusion, and community engagement through an anchor framework. Given its history, the Rutgers-Newark campus was “primed” as one senior administrator put it, so that “when Nancy came with the breadth of her ideas and work, at least it wasn't a shock factor in the way that it could have been.” As another faculty administrator put it, “[Nancy] came into a ready space, with faculty who know the institution, had the phenomenological wherewithal to imagine a different kind of relationship with the community, who had a taste for the gems of young people peppered throughout the immediate area who didn't see themselves as welcome.” In the months between her having been named chancellor and officially taking the post in January 2014, Nancy came back and forth to Newark from Syracuse. It was during this time that she worked with current RU-N and Newark leaders to begin identifying the different representatives of the inaugural Rutgers University – Newark Advisory Board as had been articulated by the legislature.

While the foundations may have already been laid for Rutgers-Newark to elevate its institutional commitment as an anchor institution, RU-N faculty, staff, administrators, and community members alike felt a notable shift almost immediately upon Nancy’s arrival. In her
first weeks on the job, “a new era under new leadership” was declared as Chancellor Nancy Cantor announced several major initiatives that would build on the existing assets, legacy, and diversity of perspectives at Rutgers University – Newark (RU-N, 2014a). This included a listening tour, a strategic planning process, a new naming convention for the university, and designation of a leadership team (RU-N, 2014a). The new naming convention and logo reflected the legislative changes made across the Rutgers system and was introduced for use immediately.

A prominent alum and advisory board member highlighted the significance:

She changed the whole mindset… Nancy was drilling everybody early on to refer to us as Rutgers University – Newark rather than just Rutgers – Newark because she was trying to make that point that we are not just an annex of New Brunswick. We are a research university.

Rutgers University – Newark’s evolving identity, thus, was significantly affiliated with the start of Chancellor Cantor’s tenure.

Many pointed to Nancy’s unparalleled passion and commitment to equity and inclusion, on and off campus. As one long-time senior administrator described, the previous university leaders supported diversity and community connections and “believed in equality, but I think until Nancy, there had not been a well-articulated, thoughtful, thought-out vision of how the university would actually act on [these values], as an institution.” In her first months, Nancy formed a senior leadership council with an unprecedented level of diversity. “We [went] from predominantly white and male to predominantly people of color, predominantly women… at least on the inner circle,” said one former senior administrator who had been connected to the institution for 30 years. Over the next few years, the deans also went from nearly all white and mostly male to persons of diverse races and ethnicities, genders, and sexualities. For many who had been at the institution for a long time and were committed to social justice and equity, Nancy
was the leader they had “been waiting for, a leader who could articulate and make happen the things that we were all committed to,” as one faculty member and previous administrator of 25 years put it. With RU-N's pre-existing orientation towards social justice and community engagement, this individual continued, when Nancy arrived, “that drive ignited” for like-minded faculty and staff. They added, “The ability for her to put political clout and financial support behind initiatives that would be transformative was just, it was shocking to all of us and so exciting.”

Nancy also brought a new leadership style to the senior administration. Members of the Chancellor’s Leadership Team emphasized what would come to be termed “shared equity leadership” through the research of Kezar et al. (2021). In building her leadership team, Nancy brought people outside of the chancellor’s office, including faculty directors of centers/institutes and student affairs, which helped bring critical perspectives and shared accountability into institutional decision-making. Nancy relied on trusted members of the Rutgers-Newark community who had both institutional knowledge and relationships. One long-time faculty member who also served on Cantor’s team reflected, “Nancy strategically hired people.... She hired me because every time she talked to somebody, they knew who I was.... I [could] call on literally a hundred faculty and say, Hey, what do you think about this? Will you sit on an advisory group? That matters.”

Diverse stakeholders on and off campus commented on a new level of intentionality with which the institution engaged with the city and community. This was key, several individuals cited, to moving to a place of true collaboration and partnership. “Intentionality matters,” as one long-time faculty and senior administrator repeatedly stated. Another administrator of over 25
years described a “huge dynamic shift” in how the university as a whole engaged with Newark residents—from a hierarchical relationship with the community, in which the faculty came in as experts, to a genuinely collaborative effort in which everyone is at the table as partners and the lived experiences of residents was valued as they work collectively to solve problems. This approach to working with community will be expanded upon later.

Nancy also saw the need to work in cross-sector and cross-institutional collaborations. The timing of Nancy’s arrival proved to be serendipitous as Ras J. Baraka became the 40th Mayor of the City of Newark in 2014 and was eager to engage in strategic partnerships that would help transform Newark’s economy. One RU-N alumnus and advisory board member called it “serendipity” to have Baraka and Cantor starting at the same time. Several of the major arts and culture institutions in Newark also went through a leadership change at that time. A faculty member and administrator who had been at RU-N through these changes described it as “watershed moment” with the “right leaders at the right time in the city who [were] all willing to engage in that [collaborative] conversation.” What had historically been described as a weak, and oftentimes strained, relationship between the university and local politicians would become incredibly robust within just a few years.

At the same time, not everyone embraced this shift. The strong emphasis on publicly-engaged scholarship perhaps met the most resistance. One faculty member who was in an administrative role at the time pointed to the fear of change, particularly “power shifts” related to what was considered valued scholarship: “People who didn’t have voice in the past, had voice, and people who used to have voice, their voice was diminished.” Despite great “momentum coming from the top” and “excitement” among staff, students, and a good number of faculty,
there was also a bottleneck among middle management. The shift among faculty was perhaps more solidified after they saw others starting to receive tenure and promotion based on their community-engaged scholarship, and specific faculty hired into the institution to do this work.

A significant milestone in establishing RU-N as an anchor was the strategic planning process completed in Nancy’s first six months as chancellor. President Bob Barchi was developing a strategy for the entire Rutgers system at that time and charged each campus to do its own plan. Nancy “leveraged the momentum that a new leader has,” reflected one senior administrator, as well as the interest that had been growing across campus and in the city, to drive an ambitious plan. “As far as we know, the Newark campus had never had its own specific strategic plan before.”

The strategic visioning and planning process exemplified the intentionality of the current leadership. In her written introductory message to the plan, Chancellor Cantor described the “multi-faceted, highly participatory, and democratic visioning process” that went into the plan and was reflected in the document (RU-N, 2014b, p. 4). The message continued, “We started our visioning process from an ‘outside-in’ view of what our state, nation, and world need from us, reflecting on the very real opportunities for our students, scholars, staff, and partners to serve the public good” (RU-N, 2014b, p. 4). Senior administrators described how the visioning conversations began at the senior cabinet level and then they strategically brought the deans in, followed by meetings between the Chancellor and “every single department, unit, program in the university for us to discuss what we have been discussing at the senior level, to get that input from across the university, from the bottom up and from the top down.” This also included building partnerships within the university, particularly with those “who were running
[community-facing] programs on the ground.” Inclusive conversations then involved a broader group of stakeholders that encouraged interaction and feedback. Key change agents like Todd Clear, who had been interim chancellor and then was appointed provost under Cantor, had laid a lot of groundwork and brought great energy to the strategic planning process; he served as a “cheerleader,” according to one senior administrator, encouraging individuals across campus to engage. Several administrators described town hall meetings, listening tours, and charrettes that involved a mix of faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders. The administration recognized, “The people needed to own the plan…. We listened to people…. It had to happen from the ground up.” This would become a repeated theme; as this senior administrator expanded, “The importance of the leadership at the top and the importance of the willingness of the people on the ground” was key to moving the anchor agenda forward. This included a focused and ongoing effort to create a “community of scholars as opposed to a very top-down model,” which takes time and involves a lot of “collaborative conversation.”

Another senior administrator reflected, “[The strategic planning] document actually became a community document, because after we did it inside, we took it outside to get feedback from the city, from the philanthropists who have been doing work in Newark, from community organizations. It was amazing. It was like we were in a campaign…. We were building a movement.” Once the strategic plan, a forty-page document, was complete, one senior administrator described carrying it around like “the Bible.” As it turned out, the strategic planning document became something people used for the next several years; one faculty member spoke to how the plan would continue to serve as a major reference point for their federal grant applications.
Chancellor Cantor reflected, “The thing that was great about the strategic plan from my point of view was all those working groups, all the community, all the different groups that were involved in creating it and making recommendations—despite all that, all those voices, the recommendations were pretty clear.... On the one hand it was hugely collaborative, and on the other hand, there were very specific things we could do.” The 2014 Strategic Plan for Rutgers University – Newark helped set a clear institution-wide vision and course of action. In her opening statement, Chancellor Cantor framed the plan: “Ultimately, our visioning process has shown that for Rutgers University – Newark, excellence lies at the intersection of commitments to boundary-crossing scholarship, diverse talent cultivation, and engagement as an anchor institution in the world through collaboration” (RU-N, 2014b, p. 4). Eight specific strategic priorities were laid out to help “realize [RU-N’s] vision to be a model urban research university serving the public good for the 21st century” (RU-N, 2014b, p. 5). While several goals emphasized institutional values of diversity, inclusion, and collaboration, and others emphasized RU-N’s commitment to its locality, it was goal number six that specifically articulated an investment in “anchor institution collaboration.” The plan detailed:

6. Invest in anchor institution collaboration – Being of Newark, not just in Newark, emerged as a key element of RU-N’s identity, and enhancing even more our anchor institution agenda is one of the highest priorities emerging from our strategic visioning process. There are five major broad areas that capture much of the scholarly expertise and civic-oriented interests in anchor institution work: K-20 educational pipeline and pathways; strong, healthy, safe neighborhoods; arts and cultural districts and initiatives; regional economic development; and science and the urban environment. (RU-N, 2014b, p. 6)

Chancellor Cantor reflected on RU-N’s identity as an anchor: “I constantly go back, even though it’s 2014, to the strategic document and process, and that was critical to us then being able to say, this is central to our mission. This is who we are.” Others echoed this sentiment. As one senior
administrator said, “[The Strategic Plan] really has become baked into all of our conversations about anything we do with purpose at this institution on an institution-wide level. It always refers back to these principles.” Another long-time administrator emphasized that the principles of community engagement were now “interwoven strategically into the mission for everybody to know… [they would all] play an important piece…. [The Strategic Plan] helped to create the roadmap.”

The vision and language around being a comprehensive anchor institution was particularly significant for Rutgers University – Newark and their partners. As one distinguished faculty member of 30 years noted, “The crystallization of a vision of anchor work under the leadership of Chancellor Cantor,” was a major turning point for the campus. This individual elaborated:

Because whatever else was happening in that vein had no name. It just, you know, it was a combination of untethered, individualized, professional instincts that may or may not have received support, for any number of usually discretionary reasons. And it really took somebody who would come in and call it something, embrace it within a philosophical framework and then execute its tenets, as if it had tenets, as opposed to just a kind of laissez faire operation of random do-gooders.

The campus, the community, and the city largely embraced the language of anchor institution, even if took some time for everyone to understand its meaning. Many diverse stakeholders came to have a powerful understanding for how the anchor institution vision shifted both the conversation and the commitment. One long-time resident and leader of a neighborhood-based community development corporation stated:

I think this move to an anchor institution kind of approach… supported work that the university [had] been doing in the community for a number of years, but [also] challenged the university to think about that work in a strategic way, and to double down on ways in which the resources and assets that they have to offer [could] benefit the community.
The Strategic Plan in Action: Further Buy-In, Seed Grants, and the Honors Living-Learning Community

The 2014 Strategic Plan articulated four action modes that proved to be of great significance over the next few years. The action modes included RU-N leadership convening further conversations about connecting the work of schools, departments, and units to the strategic vision; new strategic seed grants; establishment of four study groups to further develop recommendations; and ambitious cross-cutting initiatives.

The first and third actions allowed for continued participatory dialogue among stakeholders. For partnerships and initiatives that already existed, Nancy’s leadership and the anchor vision helped them take a more intentional and collective approach. For example, the founding faculty director of one such center that had opened just a few years prior, reflected that Nancy and her team collaborated with them to connect their vision with what she “was envisioning for the institution as a whole,” which was “absolutely critical” to expanding what was possible for working with a “variety of community actors… beyond [any one] specialization.”

The establishment of study groups was also named in the plan to dive more deeply into four of the priority areas identified in the strategic planning process: the new professoriate, staffing for the new mission, the anchor institution, and leveraging diversity. The four study groups—consisting of faculty, staff, and student volunteers across campus—began in fall 2014. To identify leaders of the study groups, Nancy relied on the advice and institutional knowledge of trusted faculty leaders who could identify “the likely change agents” that were already engaged in relevant work. There was a “convergence of readiness,” reflected Nancy. The study
groups, later to be renamed action groups, engaged in walking tours, listening tours, and conversations across campus. The groups compiled and submitted their final reports in fall 2015, with many recommendations to be implemented in the months and years ahead.

Creation of the Chancellor’s Seed Grants emerged directly out of the strategic planning process. The plan articulated:

It is anticipated that there will be an abundance of creative, promising ideas for addressing the priorities articulated in the strategic plan, many of which will require seed funding. To provide a fair mechanism for evaluating these opportunities, the chancellor’s office and the Newark Faculty Council will work together to appoint a standing Strategic Seed-Grant Committee comprising faculty, staff, and students. The committee will compose a request for proposal including the following criteria for funding: crosscutting—proposals must address one or more of the priorities articulated in this strategic plan; sustainability—provide a plan for a long-term funding; “bridge building”—involve multiple units; and innovation—create something new and different. A competitive advantage will be given to proposals that integrate one or more of our existing centers or institutes or programs, and/or provide support for graduate and professional fellows. (RU-N, 2014b, p. 35)

One former administrator reflected, “The first year we distributed two million dollars, and we supported, I think, about a hundred programs. Nancy said right from the beginning, we’re going to just try new stuff. Some of it’s going to survive and some of it’s not.” Chancellor’s Seed Grants were a way to fund projects that wouldn’t depend solely on school or departmental budgets. As it turned out, the seed grants—up to $25,000 for any given project over two years (with funding coming partly from the state and partly from tuition)—would be frequently cited by administrators, faculty, and staff as having served as key sources of structural support for generating anchor initiatives. Some faculty shared specific examples of being able to not only push their engaged scholarship agenda forward through a seed grant but also using those successful pilot efforts to later leverage major Federal or foundation dollars. One staff member described a community-engaged project that had been initiated several years before the strategic
plan. They had received general support from their dean and previous chancellor, which they felt was critical to launching; the seed grant then helped them build capacity and structure to sustain their initiative, which was now flourishing. Another individual identified the tension that can emerge on campuses when funding goes towards the “shiny new thing.” Cantor also recognized the challenge of having certain scholarship or projects being seen as championed by the Chancellor’s Office but noted, “It's a risk we've taken because we wanted it to be seen as not a burden on the schools and colleges, but as something that we do with them and that it's helpful to their faculty.”

The fourth action mode of the strategic plan focused on cross-cutting initiatives. The plan noted anticipation of several such initiatives emerging and specifically articulated “preliminary thoughts on one such signature initiative that addresses many themes at once of this RU-N vision – the development of a new honors living-learning community that anchors RU-N ‘in and of’ Greater Newark and its global connections” (RU-N, 2014b, p. 36). This signature initiative—what became known as The Honors Living-Learning Community (HLLC)—was imagined by Chancellor Cantor and then executive vice chancellor and chief operating officer, Dr. Shirley Collado. An interdisciplinary team of faculty and administrators, led by Associate Vice Chancellor Dr. Bil Liepold and Executive Vice Chancellor Dr. Sherri-Ann Butterfield, visited other college campuses’ residential learning communities to study promising practices. The planning of the HLLC also included a great number of meetings and collaborative conversations across numerous divisions to work through structural challenges and bureaucracy and to avoid as many anticipated obstacles as possible. It required “having people in place who understand that this is not business as usual” as one administrator put it.
The HLLC would of course take a few years to come to fruition. The project received a Chancellor’s seed grant to pilot the first Social Justice Learning Community cohort in fall 2015, and the full inaugural HLLC cohort started in fall 2016 comprised of 60 scholars, two-thirds of whom were from Newark. Following the hire of Marta Elena Esquilin as inaugural Associate Dean in 2016, and Timothy Eatman as inaugural Dean in 2017, as well as a $10 million endowment from Prudential Foundation in 2019 to create the Prudential Scholars Program for Newark Residents (the largest gift ever made to Rutgers-Newark), the state-of-the-art 320,000 square foot facility home to HLLC would open in fall 2022. It was built to house 400 undergraduate students when at capacity, in addition to classroom and convening space. HLLC quickly grew into an innovative student-focused anchor initiative, working to redefine honors by creating an intergenerational (ages 18 to 60) and interdisciplinary residential and learning community with a focused curriculum on tackling pressing social issues that values local knowledge and lived experiences. With an in-depth admissions process, the initiative has been working to identify student talent and potential holistically using a custom-designed set of criteria (including critical thinking and leadership skills, social emotional intelligence, academic and artistic potential) and with a particular emphasis on local students (Eatman, 2019).

Looking back on all the dialogue and actions that were set in motion following Nancy’s arrival, one former senior administrator reflected, “All of that happened in the first year that

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2 Prudential’s gift was designated for supporting cohorts of Newark residents in the HLLC—to be known as Prudential Scholars—with scholarships covering tuition, fees, room and board during the full-time study at RU-N. At the time of the gift, Prudential’s Vice Chairman Robert Falzon stated, “Prudential’s support of this program helps us stay true to our mission of helping individuals achieve financial and social mobility, while also investing in the future workforce that the world needs.” Rutgers President at the time, Robert Barchi, acknowledged Prudential’s and Rutgers’ shared commitment to the city and its residents. For more details on the Prudential Scholars Program and the gift, see blog by Timothy Eatman, May 8, 2019, “Prudential, Rutgers-Newark Partner to Cultivate Newark Change Makers,” https://hllc.newark.rutgers.edu/prudential-rutgers-newark-partner-to-cultivate-newark-change-makers/, accessed February 3, 2024.
Nancy came. It was like a whirlwind.” The Strategic Plan particularly laid the roadmap for fulfilling RU-N’s potential as an anchor institution.

### The Rapid Evolution of Anchor Initiatives

Chancellor Cantor articulated an “outside-in” approach to realizing an anchor vision, meaning that universities must change their practices—both those that are external facing (away from the “cult of the expert” and towards a “community of experts,” creating sustainable collaborations, and co-creating with community) and those that are more internal (strategic mission, recruitment, rewards and promotion, and leadership development). As one former administrator reflected, “‘Inside-out, outside-in,’ that Nancy would talk to us about all the time, was really a revolutionary concept.”

Largely mirroring the anchor framework as laid out in the 2014 Strategic Plan, most administrators pointed to the same major efforts when reflecting on their key areas of impact: publicly-engaged scholarship, educational access, arts and culture engagement, public safety, and inclusive economic growth. Supporting these focal areas involved the relatively rapid development of specific new partnerships and initiatives, centers, and/or physical spaces, as well as the support of existing initiatives to be part of a more holistic effort. To briefly illustrate these focal areas, as well as a couple others, major anchor initiatives over the last decade are presented below. Some will be touched on just briefly and others described in more detail to illustrate some of the dynamic players and processes involved.

Several initiatives were developed to focus on educational access and equity. RU-N took the lead in establishing the Newark City of Learning Collaborative, which launched in January 2015 as a partnership among dozens of local colleges, community organizations, school leaders,
and the Newark Public Library to strengthen equitable postsecondary pathways for Newark residents. NCLC is housed in RU-N’s Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies (which had been established in 2000 and worked on a number of research and demonstration projects to enhance urban quality of life, including improving secondary and postsecondary schooling). In 2016, the university launched the RU-N Talent and Opportunity Pathway (RU-N to the TOP) as a “last-dollar” financial aid scholarship program that covers full tuition and mandatory fees for students from families living in New Jersey who make below a certain income threshold; it began with newly admitted undergraduate Newark residents and expanded to include other counties. RU-N also strengthened its pathways for transfer students as well as returning citizens. The Honors Living-Learning Community, as described previously, was grounded in RU-N’s anchor mission to cultivate local talent and revolutionize honors. Together, these initiatives would significantly help increase the percentage of Newark residents among the RU-N student body, from four percent in 2014 to fourteen percent by 2022.

In arts and culture engagement, the signature initiative has been Express Newark, a 50,000 square foot center for socially engaged art and design that opened in 2017, in which faculty, staff, students, artists, and community members create art together, learn collaboratively, and build coalitions to advocate for change. Though not yet named, the project’s conception began years prior and was described in the 2014 strategic plan as a promising prospect for activating what Nancy referred to as a “third space” where the university “can engage with community partners more readily on equal footing” (RU-N, 2014b, p. 30). Express Newark was specifically made possible as part of a larger effort by Prudential Foundation and others to redevelop the former iconic Hahne and Co. department store that had closed in the mid-1980s;
Rutgers-Newark was asked to occupy 50,000 of the building’s 500,000 square feet. As former national co-chair of Imagining America, Nancy had long viewed the arts as a powerful medium to create organic connections between campus and community. A few years prior, faculty from RU-N’s interdisciplinary Arts, Culture, and Media department had developed the idea of a university-community arts collaboratory space, recalled one administrator; Chancellor Diner had asked them to put together a proposal that he would try to get funded but it had not yet materialized. This then served as a serendipitous starting point for what would become Express Newark, following the Rutgers Board of Governors’ approval of funding for renovations in 2014. Express Newark came to provide film, audio, photography, and 3D printing studios for free to the public, subsidized by the university. In establishing Express Newark as an arts collaboratory, “All of the decision making about how resources were going to be allocated there, how space was going to be used, what the mission of the organization was going to be, was all determined by a group of people who were from the university and from the community,” said one senior administrator. “That strikes me as really almost the purest form of the institution's intentions…. It was really embraced by the community, very genuinely. And it became a space right out of the gate that people from the community wanted to be in and felt welcome in.” Upon its opening, Express Newark was co-directed by Victor Davson, founding director of a long-time gallery in Newark called Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art, and Anne Schaper Englot, RU-
Chancellor Cantor reflected on how Express Newark “instigate[d] the kind of democratic voice in the community” that allowed students, faculty, and community members to come together around a variety of arts projects. It would later be under the leadership of Salamishah Tillet, contributing critic-at-large for the New York Times, who moved from the University of Pennsylvania to Rutgers University – Newark in summer 2021 as the Henry Rutgers Professor of African American Studies & Creative Writing, the Founding Director of the New Arts Justice Initiative, the Associate Director of the Clement Price Institute, and Executive Director of Express Newark. Notably, Tillet was also added to the Chancellor’s senior cabinet. Several other faculty and community artists help direct initiatives within this arts collaboratory. One of these leaders expanded upon the innovation that occurs in the space: “We aren't just supporting the artistic experimentation that's already happening, but we're actually creating possibility for other kinds of conversations and opportunities that wouldn't exist if we weren't here.”

Major initiatives focused on equitable community economic development have included the Newark Anchor Collaborative formed in 2017 (and described in detail below), the Center for Local Supply Chain Resiliency, and the Center on Law, Inequality and Metropolitan Equity (CLiME). The latter was founded in 2011 in the Rutgers Law School (Newark) by Professor David Troutt to support publicly-engaged scholarship focused on issues of structural inequality in Newark and beyond. Since Cantor’s arrival, CLiME has worked closely with city government on policy implications, particularly in housing affordability and equitable growth, with the first of several signature reports on housing affordability in Newark released in 2018. The Center for Local Supply Chain Resiliency was then created in 2022 to support goals of local
and sustainable purchasing, based on the engaged scholarship of Kevin Lyons, associate professor of professional practice at Rutgers Business School–Newark and New Brunswick. The Center identifies and supports small, minority-owned businesses to make them more competitive in winning big contracts with anchor institutions by, for example, offering repair and maintenance services. Faculty and students involved in the Center also conduct individualized research for the procurement teams of the 20+ institutional members of the Newark Anchor Collaborative to help them identify real opportunities to increase their local spend.

In criminal justice, the **Newark Public Safety Collaborative** was established in 2018 as a broad public safety partnership convened by School of Criminal Justice faculty that included local law enforcement agencies, the mayor’s office, and community-based organizations. It built on previous violence reduction initiatives but with greater emphasis on place-based, data-driven, and sustained community engagement. Meanwhile, in the space of reparative justice, the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Center at RU-N was one of 10 inaugural centers launched in 2018 as part of a national initiative developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. Then, in 2021, RU-N was invited to become one of nine higher education partners in the Mellon Foundation-funded project on “**Crafting Democratic Futures: Situating Colleges and Universities in Community-Based Reparations Solutions.**” For this three-year project, RU-N worked with the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and the Newark Community Development Network to co-create community discussions designed to produce tangible, community-based racial reparative solutions in Newark. The public safety and reparative justice initiatives are described in further detail below to exemplify RU-N’s approach to building trusted democratic partnerships and co-creating with the community.
Efforts to **institutionalize publicly-engaged scholarship**—scholarship that involves faculty and students engaging with local partners to solve the challenges facing Newark and similar communities around the world—was also seen as a key component of the anchor framework. This was a result both of Nancy’s championing of publicly-engaged scholarship, as well as the priorities that evolved out of RU-N’s new professoriate study group, co-chaired by Professor and CLiME Director David Troutt. Out of the strategic plan, RU-N established the **P3 Collaboratory for Pedagogy, Professional Development, and Publicly-Engaged Scholarship**, a university-wide center to support faculty development in this space. These efforts went hand-in-hand with further diversifying the faculty. As one senior administrator described Nancy’s strategy, “Diversity and publicly-engaged scholarship and excellent science are not separable.”

RU-N’s efforts to support publicly-engaged scholarship also dovetailed with conversations that had begun on the other Rutgers campuses: A central administrator in academic affairs under President Barchi put together a Rutgers system-wide working group, and in fall 2019, “Guidelines for Evaluating Publicly-Engaged Scholarship” were established for all of Rutgers (Rutgers, n.d.).

—We have a university-wide promotions review committee that has guidelines as to what community-engaged/ publicly-engaged scholarship, what it looks like, what is acknowledged as scholarship, and with some examples so that people can clarify what that is,” one senior administrator noted. “Having a university-wide policy posted on websites that explains what community-engaged scholarship looks like. I think that was the game changer.”

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4 For definition and criteria, see “Guidelines for Evaluating Publicly-Engaged Scholarship,” Tenure and Promotion Resources, Rutgers University Academic Affairs, accessed December 13, 2023, https://academicaffairs.rutgers.edu/tenure-promotion-resources.
The above-named initiatives were those most frequently cited by RU-N senior administrators and in the university’s communications about its anchor engagement. Other efforts came to be emblematic of a comprehensive, democratic anchor institution approach. Building on its many years of local engagement, for example, the Office of University-Community Partnerships worked with the School of Public Affairs and Administration to launch the Center for Health Equity and Community Engagement in 2020, particularly to support “public, nonprofit, and private sector entities to effectively engage underrepresented urban constituencies in health research, scholarship, policy and decision-making, service delivery, community engagement, and assessment” (CHECE, n.d.). In a separate vein, capital development and physical restructuring early in Nancy’s tenure helped make Rutgers-Newark “feel” more like a university campus for many stakeholders, while giving attention and respect to the historic nature of the community. Administrators involved in real estate pointed to a marked difference in this approach under Chancellor Cantor’s tenure, as well as a stark contrast to relationships with other major institutions in the area. RU-N would work with architects to understand the history of the neighborhood, and members of the community would be invited to view renderings and offer feedback. One anecdote was shared about a public presentation over Zoom by another major institution to discuss a new construction project that was underway. Local residents from the historical society interrupted with their own presentation that spotlighted Rutgers-Newark's sensitivity to the local community’s needs and concerns, which they emphasized worked to restore historical buildings and to match the current architecture, versus the presenting institution who planned to simply tear down and rebuild. RU-N’s efforts included the rehabilitation of old buildings for new residential spaces, such as Ruth Bader
Ginsberg Hall, and for new centers such as the first alumni building. New physical spaces were also designed to bring faculty, staff, students, and community residents together through music, art, and intellectual conversation. This included, for example, Express Newark and the Institute of Jazz Studies’ performance venue known colloquially as “Clem’s Place.” As one alumnus and advisory board member summarized, “[Nancy] did some things both physically and kind of psychologically that helped the place move to a new dimension.”

To create internal synergy and accountability for its anchor initiatives, the Chancellor’s Office created “anchor institution support groups,” noted one senior administrator. This included “an anchor institution group for economic development, an anchor institution group for public safety, an anchor institution group for education, an anchor institution group for arts and culture.” These groups, convened monthly by a senior vice chancellor, involved both faculty and community members.

**Building City-Wide Collaboratives**

Although many RU-N initiatives focused on internal structures and policies to support anchor engagement, a few signature efforts involved significant collaborations with other institutions across the city. Cross-sector, multi-institutional partnerships were laid out as a priority in the 2014 strategic plan. As Nancy Cantor would later reflect: “[Another] piece that is really significant and cannot be underplayed is the ecosystem that the Mayor and others have created in Newark. So you can do this work only so far unless you have genuine respect of people in the institution and you have an ecosystem out there that respects you as an institution.” For Rutgers University – Newark, anchor institution engagement would be defined as working at
both the grassroots level with community-based organizations and also with other public and private institutional actors, including other anchors and local government.

One example of working across this ecosystem is the Newark City of Learning Collaborative (NCLC), which involves dozens of local entities partnering to increase Newark’s college-going culture and is housed in RU-N’s Cornwall Center as noted above. Several community-based organization leaders highlighted this as a significant city-wide leadership role for RU-N. One such individual described:

One of the things that Chancellor Cantor brought to Newark is the Newark City Learning Collaborative….And one of the things I’ve appreciated about Rutgers kind of taking on that coordination role, kind of putting a stake in the ground in terms of helping to move the city forward in post-secondary attainment, is that it’s been a hugely helpful coordinating entity to get to the colleges and universities in Newark. Because I think you gotta knock on every individual door, you gotta negotiate how you're gonna work together with every college, you gotta do that thing, and it's just not effective. But the fact that NCLC is that sort of broad table that brings those university reps along in the conversation and now we've got one person to sort of engage, negotiate, and facilitate opportunities.

This work was not completely unprecedented. The Council of Higher Education in Newark (CHEN), for example, formed in the 1970s as an alliance among four public colleges and universities in Newark’s University Heights neighborhood to support pre-college programs for local students. With the NCLC, though, the executive director would hold an assistant professorship of professional practice at RU-N and be named to the Chancellor’s Leadership Team. One of the challenges with RU-N's leadership of NCLC, however, would be garnering collaboration from the other higher education institutions when it was initially “perceived as being a Rutgers initiative,” reflected one advisory board member. However, “They’ve come a long way in pushing back from the table and making it more of a collaboration.”
Cross-sector collaborations with other anchor institutions in Newark would come to quickly define a major focus of RU-N’s anchor engagement, particularly through the Newark Anchor Collaborative that formed in late 2017. As documented in a case study by Marga, Incorporated, Shané Harris of Prudential reached out to Nancy Cantor about the idea of creating a cross-sector collaboration in Newark, and Cantor became “the ‘thought leader’ behind the vision for creating a community of practice of anchors that would serve as a learning collaborative” (Marga Inc., 2022a, p. 7). While partners from other anchors felt that “Culturally, Newark has a high value on inclusion,” RU-N was seen as a significant leader and convener for this work, particularly having set an institutional anchor mission and vision. A partner at one of the other anchor institutions clearly laid this out:

Being able to leverage a national scholar on this work, which is what Nancy is, is great because she provided language to the work. You know, in many ways Prudential did not start coining itself as an anchor institution, even though we've been headquartered in Newark for almost 150 years, have played that role, but didn't have the language to articulate it as such without the influence of Nancy. So I think being able to articulate the role that anchors can play in inclusive economic growth, and framing out a broader picture of what those possibilities are, I think started to change the lexicon of institutions in Newark that have been quietly doing this work, but not really calling it such…. [Prudential changed] how we defined ourselves and our relationship to the city of Newark because of the influence of Nancy. And now, you know, because we've been using anchor institution in almost everything that we communicate, our employees use the same language and embrace that identity.

The Newark Anchor Collaborative (NAC) officially formed after Mayor Ras Baraka’s launch of the Newark 2020 initiative known as Hire-Buy-Live, although its founding members had already been having conversations to explore opportunities around equitable hiring and procurement (Marga Inc., 2022a). The Mayor’s initiative created a call to action that was seen as a major factor in accelerating the work and getting other anchors to sign on to the NAC, which grew from seven anchors in 2017 to twenty members by 2023, representing a range of sectors.
including higher education, healthcare, arts and culture, and private corporations. Newark 2020 and NAC set major goals from the beginning to advance equitable growth in Newark. One of the anchor partners observed, “There [was] a benefit from a collective expectation bar being set, what it means to be an anchor and what it looks like.... I think it's led to a lot of groups doing a lot more than they had done individually.”

NAC would be co-chaired by RU-N Chancellor Nancy Cantor and Prudential’s Shané Harris (who is now Vice President of Social Responsibility and Partnerships, and President of the Prudential Foundation), and Prudential Foundation would serve as the primary philanthropic contributor (Marga Inc., 2022a). It would also come to be housed within the Newark Alliance and work closely with the consulting firm, Marga, Inc., led by Dr. David Maurrasse, who is also the director of the national Anchor Institutions Task Force (for which Nancy Cantor serves as co-chair). In their case study of NAC, Marga Inc. (2022a) highlighted:

Engaging such a large and diverse group of anchors was possible because NAC embraces a broader definition of anchor partners and included those institutions that were taking on the characteristics of anchors in the community. As Harris and Cantor identified, the criteria for anchors to be included in NAC was a willingness to make a commitment to Newark and the goals of [Hire-Buy-Live], and a willingness to have more senior-level leaders engaged in the collaborative. (p. 11)

Marga Inc. (2022a) also emphasized NAC’s unique and steadfast “commitment to equitable growth and racial equity and to addressing these issues from both an internal and external

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5 Newark Anchor Collaborative included twenty members as of December 2023, reflecting AITF’s broad definition of anchors. Those with an asterisk here indicate the original seven anchor members: Audible*; Branch Brook Park Alliance; Broadridge Financial Solutions; Essex County College; Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey; Mars Wrigley; New Jersey Institute of Technology*; Newark City Parks Foundation; New Jersey Performing Arts Center*; Newark Museum of Art; Newark Public Library; Newark School of the Arts; Newark Symphony Hall; Prudential Financial*; Public Service Enterprise Group; Rutgers University – Newark*; Rutgers University - Biomedical and Health Sciences*; RWJBarnabas Health*; United Airlines; and University Hospital. See Newark Alliance, “The Newark Anchor Collaborative,” accessed December 15, 2023, https://www.newark-alliance.org/newark-anchor-collaborative.
perspective” (p. 11). This intentional and explicit focus on racial equity as part of NAC’s efforts to promote equitable and inclusive growth began prior to the national racial reckoning in 2020 (Marga Inc, 2022a). Black leadership from the community who were involved in RU-N's reparative justice projects credited “Nancy [as being] really ahead of the curve” on emphasizing racial equity. Over time, NAC members from both non-profit and for-profit institutions would come to speak about their commitments to racial equity and the connection to their goals of institutional transformation as anchors.

Cantor and Harris always envisioned the Newark Anchor Collaborative as an action-oriented learning community, a way to create greater community impact, and a way to help create institutional change within the anchors themselves (Marga Inc., 2022a). “Public-private partnerships have served Newark well…. We mitigate [institutional] challenges by working together and having that really trusted foundational relationship that allows us to take risk together,” reflected one anchor partner. They expanded:

[NAC is] a community where you're able to talk about some of the institutional barriers so that you're, you're chipping away at those things as well, and that you can start to change internal policies and practices. So it doesn't take as much of that political cover and political capital from the senior leader to make things happen…. [It is] a safe place where you can talk through the barriers that you may be facing internally and get insights or tips or best practices on how others might have figured out how to crack some of those barriers or remove some of those barriers.

This included, for example, bringing procurement officers together from different anchor institutions to talk how about common barriers and opportunities to test out new things. “The support and the learning peer to peer was really effective. And it actually led to ownership and action,” noted this same anchor leader. Faculty involved in this effort on the ground had a bit more nuanced view: “The communication between the ‘C Suite’ of the anchor institutions and
their procurement folks is [inconsistent].” Like RU-N’s internal anchor work, cross-sector anchor engagement would require consistent communication with both the executives sitting at the NAC table and with mid-level administrators to share both the vision and strategies to work through specific barriers. Even so, for Rutgers University – Newark, NAC helped it set and achieve big goals. By the conclusion of Newark 2020’s three-year project, RU-N would have increased its local procurement by 20 percent and more than doubled its hiring goal, with over 400 new employees hired from within Newark.

**Serving as a National Model**

From the beginning, Nancy laid out a clear vision for serving as a national model of an engaged urban research university. Faculty and administrators involved in signature anchor initiatives at RU-N largely embraced this charge to become a national exemplar. “It’s pioneering work, which inherently means that we don't have everything figured out,” said one faculty administrator. They elaborated: “There’s a greater awareness than just the anchor in the proximity sense. But, you know, how do we share in a wider way, with all of the trepidation of doing pioneering work, what it means or what it could mean to cultivate and nurture the institutions of the 21st century that we need so desperately?” They went on, “I think pioneering work can be challenging because, you know, stuff gets cultivated and stimulated, some of which just doesn’t manifest.” Another senior administrator emphasized, “We work locally, but it’s not parochial, you know? The work we do locally matters, not just locally, but as an example of things that can happen anywhere.” Several prominent community leaders, too, wanted Rutgers University – Newark’s local engagement to be seen as a model of innovation that could be applied elsewhere. One advisory board member felt that they needed to do a better job of letting
the work be known—to “beat our drum even louder”—both to help improve the outside perception of Newark as well as to help create greater impact. They elaborated:

I’d like to see Rutgers University – Newark and its partnership with Newark be a place that is looked to across the state and across the country as an innovator, as a place that develops models that can be worked in other places so that everybody doesn't have to reinvent the wheel…. That to me would be a very valuable next phase for us.

Another advisory board member recognized the need for Rutgers-Newark’s “scholarly engagement with the community” to be something that “the higher education community” values writ large, both to help further institutionalize the work at Rutgers but also to effectively address urban challenges across the country.

This vision to serve as a model echoed the 2014 Strategic Plan, which had specified, “building models of innovative collaborative, cross-sector problem solving and intellectual innovation that advance scholarship in our disciplines, strengthen the education of our students, and increase the broader impacts of our work that ripple out across our local and global communities” (p. 31). In many ways, the anchor institution framework, coupled with the institution’s leadership style, allowed campus and community partners to “dream big.” As one faculty member stated, “So much of this happens really at the level of people. So, thanks to Marcia [Brown]’s introductions, thanks to Nancy's natural charm and sincerity and generosity, the door was open.” They continued, “Shantè [Palmer] had all these relationships to public resources, public officials, which were also critical resources in facilitating the work. And so, all of a sudden, you know, I can dream.” Actualizing those dreams required trusted, democratic partnerships.
THE NATURE OF RUTGERS-NEWARK’S COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Administrators, faculty, staff, and community leaders alike viewed relationships as the center of their anchor engagement. Many individuals emphasized trust, authenticity, respect, and intentionality at the core of building robust university-community partnerships in Newark.

**Trusted Relationships: When Actions Match Words**

Leaders of community organizations in Newark—from small neighborhood-based community development centers to larger city nonprofits—spoke at length about the trust established under the current administration of RU-N. As one long-standing and prominent community leader put it, “Since Nancy got here, she has just been very authentic, in my opinion, about wanting to engage the community, wanting to hear the community, wanting to assist the community around various issues.” They contrasted this to the relationship under previous administrations, which they described as more “touch and go,” not consistent nor coherent. But under Nancy’s administration, “You could tell it’s sort of a core mission element to what they do.” They continued, “This institution has shown a, a full-fledged commitment, a core mission commitment to working with the community, to supporting the community, to being part of the community, to identifying issues that are of critical need in Newark.”

Faculty committed to publicly-engaged scholarship recognized the criticality of trusted relationships. In some cases, specific trusted officials at the institution who were well known in the community and city made the faculty’s work possible. One such individual was Marcia Brown, who came to Rutgers-Newark as a Black activist and law student in the early 1990s. Marcia went on to serve in various administrative roles at Rutgers-Newark, including serving in the senior cabinet under multiple chancellors since 2005, most recently as Cantor’s Vice
Chancellor for External and Governmental Relations from 2014 until retiring in 2021. Marcia also worked for over three decades in community development advocacy in Newark. One faculty member of 30 years reflected:

Marcia could walk into any room in Newark and be known and be trusted, which of course is probably the single most important unstated value that anybody attempting to do anchor institution work has to do.... What Marcia was able to do was to facilitate connections that would just not be there because you needed that sort of ambassador of trust, who knew what she was talking about, knew who people were, knew what the capabilities were, who was creative in the capabilities of the university, who was insistent that relationships that could happen did happen.

Marcia herself reflected on the importance of being known and being “likeable.” In the beginning of Nancy Cantor’s tenure, she was recruited back to the Chancellor’s cabinet to serve as a special assistant. Marcia brought Nancy to events across the city, which helped give her “credibility.” Now, Marcia reflected, “[Nancy] has a brand in Newark, and wherever she goes.”

Community-based organizational leaders enjoyed personal strong relationships with senior administrators, as well as with many faculty and center/institute leaders. They also pointed to the genuine engagement of community residents in various RU-N initiatives. “People are invited,” as one individual put it. There are “genuine community level people who are involved at the regular meetings or part of the planning, ideating about what might happen, and then [there is] activation.” They continued, “There's definitely a feedback loop between a number of the Rutgers centers and community groups…. We want to look into doing this. Does this make sense? Is this needed in your community? There has been, you know, sort of a back and forth.”

Several local leaders emphasized that the community had experienced tangible results from institutional efforts under the current administration—from the great increase in students from Newark Public Schools being accepted to RU-N, to the hiring of Newark residents, to
residents being invited to events on campus, to seeing the university’s involvement in important public projects like the Harriett Tubman monument. One nonprofit leader and long-time resident felt that, “People have a certain pride around Rutgers-Newark in a way that they didn't, and they also see it as a resource in the way that they didn't before [Nancy] came.” A concrete impact this individual pointed to involved legislative change. For example, they worked with Rutgers-Newark to restore the right to vote to people with criminal convictions. This culminated in the introduction of a bill signed by the governor that restored the right to vote to approximately 83,000 people on probation and parole, which partners then followed with public education campaigns.

Another community leader emphasized the ripple effect of seeing Newark residents enroll and graduate from RU-N: “It was like, [Nancy said], I came here, I said we wanted to do this, I've been able to do it, and here are the numbers to prove it. That builds trust.” They continued, “I think your actions have to match your words and then you have to get those messages out, and then it allows you to kind of create tables that people are at least willing to entertain.” ‘Tables’ was a concept frequently referenced among different RU-N stakeholders. Nancy herself would discuss how anchor institutions have to help bring everyone to the table, then the anchors really have to listen, and then you have to “stay at the table.” The “trusted tables” created through RU-N's anchor initiatives, as was described at an Advisory Board meeting in reference to the Newark Public Safety Collaborative, went a long way in making bold new initiatives possible. One leader whose community organization was involved in the Reparative Justice project described this as the “pre-work”:

I would say it was the pre-work, but it wasn't necessarily the pre-work related to this specific thread. It was the pre-work that more globally Rutgers-Newark has been about
that made the mention that Rutgers-Newark had wanted to do this—one, us be open to the conversation and, two, community being willing to come around the table—is that they had already kind of established themselves as being a part of community through some of their other anchor work, wanting to contribute to helping the community move forward and do it in a way that was a little more responsible than other attempts…. And so it's because of that pre-work that it made the reparations conversation an easier sort of pathway.

Another community organization leader felt that, while the engagement was always a work in progress, one of RU-N’s most significant roles was “modeling collaboration, modeling bringing people together, modeling public discourse, and being aggressive in the message that this is a critical way of working… [including] trying to break silos.” This individual was more nuanced, however, in their response to how well RU-N’s engagement was received in the community:

Rutgers has built a reputation for wanting good things for the city of Newark and for investing resources in trying to attain those things with a group of people. It could be a large group of people who have been a part of those processes. And for those people, I think if you were to interview them, you would say they're a trusted partner. They have a lot of goodwill. People would be willing to take a risk if they know Rutgers is in the mix. But there are people who have not had those experiences and are distrustful of large organizations.

Another community leader echoed this idea, noting that RU-N’s engagement wasn’t yet “kitchen table talk,” but that they were hopeful that the “anchor conversation starts to put some stakes in the ground and give some definition to what that looks like.”

On a broader scale, several long-serving stakeholders outside of the university referred to the times “before Nancy and after Nancy.” One corporate partner reflected, “We all in the community, remember a time when Rutgers was less embedded in community, and that really significantly changed under Nancy Cantor’s leadership.” They continued, “There's a lot more intentionality, and I think all of that is due to the fact that she lifted up the role of Rutgers, articulating that the role of Rutgers and their mandate was to serve as an anchor institution in this
community…. So, it was embedded into their strategy… moving from something that is nice to do, to something that is really core to the mission and purpose of the university.” That, in turn, influenced other anchor institutions. “Leveraging all the assets of an anchor institution, Rutgers has modeled that quite significantly in Newark. And, you know, that's all due to Nancy really centering that as core to her vision and her strategy for the university.” Nancy’s “branding” and leadership was top of mind for other partners in the city as well: “I don't know how much would've happened had there not been that sort of driving force [from a university chancellor].”

Across Newark, Nancy had a reputation of saying ‘yes.’ The philosophy was, as one campus administrator put it, “If you can make it happen, we need to make it happen.” University and community leaders recognized that while this notion built trust, it could also create some tension. While there was broad consensus that the university had a much better perception and reputation than it did previously, “It can never meet all of the needs or all of the requests that come to it,” said one advisory board member. They elaborated:

When you put yourself out there as an anchor institution, you can't control who's going to belly up to the bar and what they're going to ask for or what their perception of your resources are. And it's hard to say ‘no.’ And when you say ‘no,’ even if you have very valid reasons that are not intended to malign the initiative that you said ‘no’ to, they take it that way.

In a similar vein, a senior university administrator expressed the challenges of limited resources at a public institution with a big vision:

The city doesn't have the resources. I think they believe that Rutgers has the resources, and when they approach Nancy, the expectation I think from the city is Nancy will always say ‘yes.’ And I think there's a space where, how do you balance the resources that you need to run the institution and balance the resources about what it means to being an anchor institution…. That doesn't just happen with the Mayor.... Folks see us, I think, as a trusted partner now because of the relationship that Nancy has created and our departments have created. But I think what's strange about all this now is the
conversation about what's the give and take in this space to kind of make those things happen.

The Chancellor’s team recognized their efforts as a work in progress, as did a number of community partners. One leader of a small community development organization, after pointing to several concrete examples of impactful initiatives they were part of with RU-N, felt that there was still work to be done: “Being responsive to what community needs the most and then sort of seeing that thread through between the collaboration, the goal setting, the resource sharing, and kind of assessing and measuring impact. I think that's the pathway that is still being built out.”

Earning the trust of legislative representatives—local, state, and federal—was also seen as a boon for RU-N's anchor engagement. This took time and energy and dedicated personnel. Many faculty were excited about this agenda and pointed to the role Nancy’s vice chancellors for external relations played, first Marcia Brown and then Shanté Palmer, in setting that table and opening opportunities for deep collaboration. That being said, alignment with the mayor’s office was not without challenges. One faculty member had a particular experience where he felt that senior administrators were cautioning against his scholarship if it was not directly in line with the mayor’s vision, which began to encroach on academic freedom. While this situation has been resolved, there remained a disconnect for this individual with how well the work connected to the institution’s core scholarship: “There's a rhetoric of an anchor institution and the Chancellor's office does a lot of great things in alignment with the city, but it doesn’t necessarily penetrate in terms of how research and teaching are fully implemented and executed.” Community leaders also recognized that while Mayor Baraka was a very popular mayor, he was not without his political adversaries: “So the university’s obvious close relationship with him pleases some people and displeases others.” For other partners, they viewed the close relationship with city
leadership and “political imprimatur” of the mayor as providing “political cover to allow anchors
to test and learn new things and try out new things.”

Working in collaboration with other large anchor institutions for collective action can
also introduce another level of power dynamics. As one local nonprofit leader put it:

I think you have another set of power dynamics, which is the anchor institutions
themselves. Because they all are large, they all are politically powerful…. So, if you have
an NJPAC and you have a Rutgers and you have an Audible and a Prudential. If you
think about those, and then you think about smaller organizations and the work that
smaller organizations [do], how do you not get swallowed up? How is your voice heard
and honored? Who gets invited to the table and who doesn't get invited to the table? And
what does it actually mean to be invited to the table? And how are resources allocated…. So, while an anchor institution can leverage their power to create change and create
different conditions, it also has to be careful of the power that it has not to quiet voices or
diminish ideas.

Resident voice and impact were held up as a central feature not only for RU-N but among other
anchor partners. As one leader in the Newark Anchor Collaborative emphasized, “The inclusive
economic growth lens puts residents first and foremost, because success of growth in the city is
only judged or valued against whether residents actually benefit from the growth. I mean, in
some ways, that’s baked into the strategy of what success looks like.” Nonetheless, Newark’s
anchor work required an ongoing, intentional focus on equity and inclusion.

**Centering Community Voice & Co-Creation**

Many administrators and faculty from the university as well as leaders from the
community spoke clearly of Rutgers University – Newark’s approach to centering community
voice. “That’s really our main operating principle,” said Chancellor Cantor, speaking of
community voice and co-creation. One advisory board member articulated, “What Nancy tells
people from the university is, you can’t show up and say, we are Rutgers, we’re going to solve
your problem. You have to show up and offer yourself as a resource, as part of a team. You have
to be prepared to let the people who have more skin in the game lead.” Another prominent community leader and advisory board member put it this way:

All of the things that Nancy has encouraged the university to undertake have been undertaken with an appreciation that they, the university, is contributing to not leading the initiatives that they take on. They work collaboratively with the people who actually experience what they are attempting to address…. Not the typical town and gown…. So, it's a collaborative relationship as opposed to a hierarchical one. And that’s in everything that the university does now.

This individual continued to describe how community-based organizations have “relationships with Rutgers, and they’re relationships that are based on equal status and equal ability to contribute to the conversation about how you address the issues that the university is being asked to participate in.” A senior university administrator described the importance of embedding this notion into the culture of university leadership: “Getting to the mindset where you see no divisions between you and the community is critical.”

One community-based organization leader spoke to what they believed were the key elements of true engagement—a commitment to opening up spaces for true participation and idea generation, the opportunity to share those ideas, and then involving community members in the decision-making process. They felt that Rutgers-Newark did a good job in this space, even if there was always room for improvement. Community leaders as a whole expressed a deep appreciation for the process, approach, and overall ethos brought to this work by RU-N for genuine engagement with the community. One prominent community leader put it this way:

What I’ve seen in Nancy is a desire to embed herself in Rutgers to say that, you know, yes, we’re gonna be an anchor institution, but I’m gonna show you over time that being an anchor institution means we’re gonna dig into the community, understand from community what some of the challenges are, that we’re gonna work alongside you to meet those challenges by building systems.
In building these systems, the university was also seen as a trusted convener of diverse stakeholders. The Newark Public Safety Collaborative [NPSC] based at RU-N’s School of Criminal Justice was frequently pointed to as an exemplar by campus and community members that is now being replicated in other cities.

Through NPSC’s innovative “Data-Informed Community Engagement [DICE]” approach to public safety, data is “democratized,” providing access to the community and “intentionally valuing human input into analytics,” as described by one of the founding co-executive directors who is faculty in the School of Criminal Justice. This includes empowering local community stakeholders to review place-based analytics of crime patterns and help further identify the specific problems, priorities, and solutions for their neighborhoods based on their lived experiences. RU-N serves as the “neutral convener” bringing together leading criminologists, local government, police, more than 40 community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to analyze crime patterns, prioritize responses, and take collective action. This collective action has led to several focused projects, such as a data-informed LED lighting replacement project in the highest-risk areas of the city, which helped significantly reduce nighttime violent crime incidents in those areas. A faculty leader of NPSC highlighted the mutually beneficial nature of this approach:

The research is designed to share and get feedback so that the information can be improved and made more actionable.... It’s made the practical application of the research valuable—not more valuable, but had the community not been involved, it would be in- valuable. I mean, the data and results alone could never have done what was achieved without the community being invited to participate, connected with their lived experiences, and allow for the kind of multi-stakeholder engagement in a way that met local community expectations. Inviting the community offers an opportunity for transparency.
One prominent nonprofit leader observed, “There was lots of community engagement on the front end to understand how people in those neighborhoods are impacted by crime. And then return to those communities to share what some of the findings were, and to see if those findings were consistent with the lived reality of people.” They added, “It was probably one of the more thoughtful ways I had seen someone address public safety.” This genuine engagement of community residents on the ground, however, did not occur immediately. One senior administrator recounted the training that was needed for experienced researchers in how to genuinely engage with community, which was led by trusted university ambassadors, such as Marcia Brown or Sherri Ann Butterfield. Chancellor Cantor summarized the current effect: “NPSC is an example of where high impact scholarship, publicly-engaged scholarship, can feed the stability of anchor collaborations in a positive way, as opposed to the usual, you know, cult of the expert ⁶ .... The community now has much more influence on both the police and on how our data are used.” A former senior administrator also highlighted the significance of having community members at the table, which can break down the “victim mentality” that too often exists when the “community responds to [university] encroachments.” They continued, “You’ll see this more with the NPSC than in any other anchor group that we are in … I think they’re the future of how we really do co-creation.” This approach to genuine engagement and co-creation with community was something that Rutgers University – Newark hoped to influence in university-wide policy. As one senior administrator described, “That’s one of those things that we try to note in the university-wide document [on publicly-engaged scholarship]—community

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engagement means that there is some interaction, partnership, co-creation that goes on and that, you know, that takes work.”

The Reparative Justice Project was held up as another example of both authentic community dialogue and the start of a long-term project co-created with community. Rutgers-Newark worked very closely with the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (NJISJ) and Newark Community Development Network (NCDN), a group of neighborhood-based community development corporations, to develop this effort in Newark as part of the Mellon Foundation’s national initiative. Ryan Haygood, President and CEO at NJISJ, and Richard Cammarieri, Chairperson of NCDN, were named Community Fellows to work alongside RU-N faculty and students in this initiative. “The partnering organization will often be out front … do the inviting and set the table,” reflected one of the community leaders. The director of a smaller neighborhood-based CDC spoke to the intentionality of this reparative justice project:

It’s not just an extraction … partly what we’ve been intentional about is the learning, and giving people a chance to get something out of it, and also just kind of thinking about opportunities to do something. We haven’t figured out what that do something is yet, but in the world of reparations, you know, not just the ideological, sort of philosophical talk, but what could it look like? Brass tacks in [this specific neighborhood], in the city of Newark, maybe even in collaboration with Rutgers. And I appreciate that that’s sort of like an ethos in [Rutgers-Newark] in terms of how they work with community that, you know, I think gets us further and is not necessarily the case across the board.

All the meetings take place in neighborhood settings. Two years into the project, approximately thirteen dialogues had been hosted by seven neighborhood-based organizations, and more were being planned. A report was to be developed by the principal investigators at RU-N that would include a “historical narrative” and important knowledge gained from the community about “productive ways to think about reparations,” said one of the PIs. They would be bringing their early findings to future community dialogues as part of an iterative process. “I think whatever
that document is will not be the end of anything, but a foundation for further organizing, explicitly under the umbrella of reparations.”

In addition to these dialogues taking place in the community around reparations or public safety, several campus spaces were designed to bring community residents in as co-instructors or co-facilitators. In some classroom settings, particularly at the Honors Living-Learning Community, community members are treated as experts who share their information and experiences with the students. One faculty member emphasized the criticality of “humility centered in publicly-engaged work that has mutual respect for community indigenous based knowledges.” This valuing of community voice and co-design also went beyond scholarship.

One long-time administrator put it this way:

It happens on so many different levels.... Even on enrollment, the conversation is, we’re bringing in folks from the high schools to say, Hey, what are your students talking about? What’s happening there? And so that collaboration with the [Newark Public School] guidance counselors and us, it’s not, we’re coming in as experts.... I feel like it’s just second nature now.... We’re just trying to learn from each other about how we can do what we need to do collaboratively. So I don’t feel like there’s this hierarchy anymore. I feel like we meet each other on a space that’s much more collaborative in different ways. There’s a huge shift I would say in my past experience in terms of working with Newark residents and how it happens now.

This level of authentic community engagement takes ongoing care. Barriers cited included limited funding or resources, the time necessary for collaborative work, and withstanding changes in leadership. One faculty member emphasized that even robust relationships require ongoing maintenance and recognition:

I think finding the right way to ensure that everybody knows they are valued in this when something continues for so long is going to be a challenge if it is not a challenge already—without sounding like they’re being simply taken for granted, or that we just tell them they’re valued without showing it. We need to find a way to do it intentionally and systematically.
Chancellor Cantor also emphasized the importance of an asset-based approach: “Probably the most overwhelming lesson learned over and over is how quick it is, especially for higher education, but for everybody, to take a deficit lens” in community engagement or anchor work. Instead, she advocates “trying to keep attention on structural things, trying to keep attention on the assets that individuals bring to the team.” The NPSC again is held up as example, as the focus has been turned to policing places where crimes occur rather than policing of individuals as criminals. When reframing the work in this way, says Cantor, “Then you can build on the assets, namely the knowledge and lived experience of community members, to do interventions.”

“I think the most important thing that's happened here,” reflected Chancellor Cantor, “is the creation of collaborative, sustainable engagements with community that hopefully will have a lifespan beyond any given project or any given person.” This involves, she described, “centering co-creation and really trying to get away from the sort of one-sided approach.” From an institutional point of view, she added, “It’s also been really critical to fund and support and incentivize the publicly-engaged scholarship of key faculty who lead centers, who lead collaborative groups.”

**PERSPECTIVES ON FACULTY, STUDENT, & STAFF ENGAGEMENT IN ANCHOR WORK**

**Publicly-Engaged Scholarship**

Current experiences and viewpoints of the pervasiveness of publicly-engaged scholarship at RU-N varied among stakeholders, including between faculty along disciplinary lines. Within the School of Arts and Sciences, for example, faculty from history and from arts, culture, and media involved in publicly-engaged scholarship both felt that the work was relatively ubiquitous
across their departments. For many faculty who had already been involved with community-engaged scholarship, this was the first time they felt connected to a larger campus-wide initiative. As one faculty member in history put it, engaged scholarship previously felt “kind of isolated in certain pockets of campus… but didn’t exist as a hallmark of the place writ large. It wasn’t like the culture of the campus. And so now… I would probably be hard pressed to think of a colleague who’s not doing something that might be considered, you know, at least public facing.” A faculty member in the natural sciences, however, did not feel like they had many colleagues in their own department focused on community-engaged scholarship; they emphasized that, even if a number of faculty did research in the community, it did not involve working directly with community. While feeling somewhat isolated within their own field, however, they pointed to an “influx of like-minded faculty” across the broader institution.

On the other extreme, in the School of Criminal Justice, the Law School, and the Business School, faculty did not feel that community-engaged scholarship was sufficiently prioritized or part of the cultural norm. “I don’t think it’s interfered with, but I don’t think it’s incentivized,” said one criminal justice faculty. And in the Business School, while social impact is part of its strategic plan, one faculty member felt that community-engaged scholarship was not embraced unless it was seen as helping faculty directly get research funding, publications, and tenure. A faculty member in the Law School noted that publicly-engaged scholarship simply existed in “hotspots” across campus. These hotspots were based largely on “the capacity of particular disciplines to engage in work that might be considered anchor work, and then the capacity of individual faculty within those departments.”
The administration, nonetheless, was proud of the shifts that had occurred among faculty engagement. One senior administrator reflected on efforts to get the “academic side of the house” aligned with the anchor vision. “There were certain things you have to do to create the conditions for that to take.” Another senior administrator expanded upon this cultural change that had occurred over the last several years:

It’s a complete different shift… I think you see the shift in the attitude, the feel, the culture, where people openly talk about working with community, where folks who would see themselves as serious scholars are like, Well, have you talked to the community?… And so for me, it’s a marked difference in the conversation. There’s a marked difference in... just the feel, I think this market in who we hire, and what their understanding of the university is. I think Rutgers University – Newark is now known to be a place where it’s serious scholarship that’s in collaboration and/or in support of the community. And that was not always the case. So, when we look to hire people, it’s like, Okay, so how does their work fit in with the mission?

A third senior administrator reflected, “I think we’re now at a point where [community-engaged scholarship is] in more places than it’s not. So there’s some tipping point there.” This senior administrator and several others pointed to the importance of hiring and cultivating deans who would support faculty roles and rewards for publicly-engaged scholarship, as well as ensure departmental chairs were on board. “If you have the deans that get it, then you’re not fighting that battle where deans don’t value the idea of community-engaged scholarship. So we’re past that, and that takes a few years.” At the same time, this individual pointed to limited resources within the schools to support publicly-engaged scholarship. They instead pointed to the centers on campus that “often have infrastructure that a department may not have” as well as “connections” to community. A faculty member similarly recognized that while several deans generally supported the work, “the resources they have to create incentives for those interdisciplinary spaces are actually quite limited.” The centralized entities on campus included
not only those centers that focused on thematic areas such as those in K-12 education and economic development, but also university-wide centers such as the P3 Collaboratory to support engaged scholarship. These centers were places where both faculty and students could seek out opportunities to get more involved with community-facing work, particularly if these opportunities were not readily available through their department. One faculty member, for example, spoke of a large new grant from NSF for which they were establishing an interdisciplinary cohort of faculty who have experience in community-engaged scholarship, and the significance of being able to find connections through the institutionally supported centers and institutes across the campus who have community engagement as part of their core goals or visions.

Some faculty and administrators appreciated RU-N’s broad and inclusive framework of how scholarship fits the anchor vision. One senior administrator described, “Publicly-engaged scholarship that is place-based is a big tent. And there are different ways of doing that.” A junior faculty member reflected, “I think honestly that the beauty of the leadership of Nancy Cantor is that I would say she does actually make a lot of space and room for faculty to kind of express [anchor work] in ways that make sense for them in their departments and in the schools that they work in.” The anchor vision gave the opportunity for some scholars who had been at Rutgers for many years to shift the focus of their work, particularly to concentrate their engaged scholarship more specifically on Newark. As one faculty member put it, with the anchor vision, their research “became hyperlocal versus I was doing it globally [before].” Not everyone embraced a hyper-local view. For example, some faculty preferred to think of the anchor work as the role RU-N could play within the larger region.
Many community-engaged scholars who had arrived at Rutgers-Newark within the last few years spoke clearly about the institution’s and Nancy’s reputation for supporting publicly-engaged scholarship as a major attraction for them to move to RU-N. A number of these scholars had transferred from other prestigious research universities. This was seen as a major boon by the Advisory Board; one member highlighted, “[Nancy] has attracted talent that didn’t even know there was a Rutgers University in Newark.” These faculty often had personal/familial reasons they were interested in being in Newark, reflecting the strong local connections broadly felt across RU-N faculty and staff. But they also each compared their experiences at their previous urban universities and pointed to unique and deeply valued attributes of RU-N. This included a larger, unified vision that went across administrators, deans, and faculty; deep trusting local relationships that had been nurtured, and in some cases repaired, such as with Newark Public Schools; unique centers and spaces that brought community and university together in novel and powerful ways, such as Express Newark; a rare collective focus on publicly-engaged scholarship as advancing an anchor institution identity; and recognition of the role of a university as a large anchor institution and how it respectfully and intentionally managed its resources as a purchaser, employer, and real estate developer. Perhaps most significantly, it included an appreciation for not having to constantly explain or justify one’s community-engaged or publicly-engaged work. As one faculty member who had transferred from another elite research university put it, “I was pleasantly surprised that you could have such brilliant people and who are committed to social change in practical ways…. It’s more seamless here…. It’s just easier. It’s like you can just live the change.”
As has been described, publicly-engaged scholarship at RU-N was supported by the Chancellor’s Seed Grants, supportive deans, centers and institutes, and the overall imprimatur of the Chancellor’s Office. Senior administrators generally felt that they had made it clear to both deans and faculty at their campus that publicly-engaged and community-engaged scholarship was valued and rewarded. They took pride in having pushed and eventually influenced the Rutgers system on this issue.

At the same time, several tenured faculty spoke to a continued lack of clarity around the criteria for publicly-engaged scholarship. These faculty tended to recognize both the general challenges of traditional academia, as well as some specific challenges to being part of larger public system. As one faculty member put it, “New Brunswick has different metrics than Newark. No one knows what these metrics are for publicly-engaged scholarship. And so I think there’s a pressure to both be legible to traditional disciplines and to be experimental on campus.”

A faculty member from another department referred to Rutgers’ central tenure process as “a black hole.” They went on to describe how the faculty discussed Chancellor Cantor’s support and advocacy for how publicly-engaged scholarship should be valued in the tenure and promotion process, but that the “exact mechanism for that” was unknown and therefore felt more “like a rumor or like an urban legend.” Another faculty member felt like the lack of clarity on standards led to publicly-engaged scholarship being “interpreted in the most arbitrary and vague way.”

Administration also recognized that while the centralized definition had helped, there were additional concrete steps that could help push the agenda forward. For example, promotion and tenure portfolios at Rutgers needed to have more explicit opportunities to recognize
community-engaged scholarship within the various sections, since people often make 
“assumptions about what had value” based on what they see explicitly “in the forms.” The 
adминистration also pointed to ongoing efforts to both support junior faculty getting promotion 
and tenure and also having tenured faculty who were focused on publicly-engaged scholarship be 
recognized under Rutgers’ distinguished professor category.

Faculty administrators across campus had varying views. On one end were those who felt 
Rutgers-Newark had experienced major “success in rupturing the entrenched dysfunction that is so traditional in academia.” On the other end was a much more cautioned view. As one senior 
faculty member put it, “Rutgers University as a whole, having served on some of these committees, our campus is progressive in so many ways, but also still applies the criteria of what genuine research is about and all that kind of stuff that then constantly works against the more progressive understanding of what an anchor institution can be. So those are very real tensions that cannot be just wished away or ignored.” A few faculty expressed similar concerns about the ongoing challenges of being part of a traditional research university and its focus on disciplinary expertise, which is reflected in graduate school curriculum, publication, and tenure processes across higher education. These “antiquated views of what scholarship is” remains embedded in many tenured faculty, reflected one senior administrator, based on traditions that have “evolved over a few centuries” Indeed, the administration highlighted that the structural challenges were really challenges of individuals, while the faculty pointed back to the system. As one faculty member put it:

It’s not a clear-cut answer because it’s really not possible for a research university to stand on its own as long as it’s really part of that system of how things operate. But it becomes a question of how can you create those spaces that are rewarded within the conventional structure of universities.
To support recognition and reward of publicly-engaged scholarship, faculty and administrators alike felt that more work was needed to spotlight exemplary work being done. The P3 Collaboratory, for example, was working on an effort to further highlight faculty who are doing publicly-engaged scholarship and community engaged research, particularly looking to exemplify for other faculty “how the anchor institution mission of Rutgers Newark informs their work and how that manifests.”

While identifying tensions and barriers, many faculty, nonetheless, recognized that Rutgers University – Newark was ahead of other institutions in its championing of community-engaged scholarship. One faculty member reflected:

I just think that I’m fortunate to be at Rutgers-Newark because of people like Nancy, for instance, who really value this type of work and who are really pushing things forward… on all fronts…. The things that have really impacted me are the availability of funds… [and] the policies that are being communicated so that publicly-engaged scholarship is… considered for your promotion and tenure. I think that is beyond valuable.

This faculty member went on to describe interactions they had with peers from other institutions, concluding, “I’m in a special place [where engaged scholarship] is something that is truly valued and truly appreciated.” As previously described, many faculty involved in publicly-engaged or community-engaged scholarship expressed similar appreciation for their unique setting and level of support. They compared this to both their own experiences at previous universities and/or the experiences they heard from peers at other institutions across the country.

**Student Engagement**

Rutgers Law School had a long-standing tradition of engaging students in the community through its law clinics. Like many other urban campuses, students at RU-N have increasingly engaged with the community in a variety of ways, from service-learning courses to internships.
Nancy Cantor then elevated this engagement through her emphasis on having anchor work “woven through the curriculum,” as well as her focus on student equity. In speaking to how the work is embedded in the curriculum, one long-time staff member said, “It’s a cool tagline, but it’s not just a tagline to be in and of Newark. A lot of [the] faculty actually include experiential learning and service-learning into their syllabi… [although it] looks different for everybody… It’s not top-down.” As a largely commuter-based campus, service-learning and other community-engaged learning courses have helped connect more students to the urban community around them. As the same staff member put it, “Newark has a reputation… you’re fighting against people that have preconceived notions that it’s high crime, that it’s unsafe, all of those things… So the service-learning component has really helped them to connect with different places around the city.”

A long-standing advisory board member highlighted the importance of connecting anchor work to RU-N’s core educational mission:

I think the fact that through all of these centers and other initiatives we’re offering students those opportunities is really the essence of why we exist. And if other entities can benefit from our work while our students are getting to apply the theory that they’re learning, then that’s a win-win as far as I’m concerned.

In a similar vein, a couple of faculty members emphasized meeting both students’ learning and professional development goals: “I think the students are half thinking about impact as well as employment. So if they could do both, have an impact on the world and [get exposed to opportunities to] be gainfully employed in this particular area, then that would be great. So what I do is I connect those two things,” reflected a faculty member in the Business School.

For Nancy, the focus on increasing the number of Newark residents enrolled at RU-N through its scholarship funding and transfer pathways, honors community, and re-entry program
went hand-in-hand with student engagement and equity under an anchor vision. “We never saw student [equity and engagement] as independent of the anchor work,” she reflected. Under Cantor, Rutgers-Newark secured and intentionally embraced its identity as a federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution, with a growing Latinx student body whose diverse cultures are encouraged and supported as part of the anchor vision. As one concrete example, Chancellor’s Seed Grants enabled the launch of innovative faculty projects like “Lives in Translation.” This academic project, housed in the Spanish and Portuguese Studies Department, engages undergraduate bilingual students to interpret and translate for community members, particularly diverse immigrant communities in need of legal access, while also providing the students with professional skills training and mentoring for career opportunities in the growing, specialized field of translation and interpretation. The students “are actually putting their lived experience to work in what we do as part of the anchor mission,” described Chancellor Cantor. At least one faculty member expressed the importance of RU-N’s student body being representative of the community: “It was also really great for me to see black and brown people in these spaces, not as just the population of those that need the support, but as the population or demographic of people giving the support coming from academia.”

One prominent alum and advisory board member reflected on the overall demographic changes among students and faculty of the past few years:

The complexion of the campus has changed in a marked way over the last five, six, seven years since Nancy. She’s opened the place up to being welcoming, encouraging students of diverse backgrounds to see Rutgers–Newark as a place that they can pursue higher education and feel comfortable doing so. That’s number one. The second is that she had been focused on bringing to the campus faculty who ... believed that having a racially, economically, culturally diverse campus student population is a positive.... And third, the faculty have been, I guess, encouraged is the right word, but rewarded for undertaking scholarly exploration research that addresses issues that would matter to an urban
community—issues having to do with social justice, with economic opportunity, with equity, with environmental justice, you name it. Those issues have been embedded in the culture of the current iteration of Rutgers University – Newark.

Like many other campus and community leaders, this individual credited Nancy for bringing a cultural shift to the campus.

**Staff Engagement**

Hiring locally was not just a numeric goal to reach. Many of the administrators understood the value of bringing in local residents as staff, whose lived experiences could inform their programs and operations. This was especially true for Enrollment and Admissions, for example, given the institution’s focus on enrolling Newark public school students and returning students. Administrators who oversaw large staff teams felt that employees had a basic understanding of the anchor mission. They noted that a shift for many existing staff occurred during the strategic planning process, and that new employees now come in have a clear awareness of the university’s anchor framework. That did not mean that the work went without some tension. For example, campus space and events were often given for free or at very discounted rates to community partners, which can bring debt. Notably, this includes discounts not only for community nonprofits but also for ‘university affiliates’ such as Prudential and Audible. The events staff would sometimes push back against this, especially as they did not see themselves getting anything in return.

The anchor vision also required regular and creative communications with staff to facilitate their participation. Supporting local procurement, for example, required broad outreach as much of the institutional purchasing happens at the departmental level. “I think that we’ve communicated this enough so that the individual departments that do have their own decision
making have been for the most part doing the right thing. They’ve been seeing the value,” said the faculty administrator leading this effort. But it is also a work in progress. “We're coming up with a simplified messaging about the multiplier effect. So for every dollar that you spend locally, it equals $2.25… added to the Newark economy. We’re doing a lot to educate our own people… So we don’t have to be spending as much time convincing them that this is the right thing to do.” Nonetheless, others in the city pointed to the local procurement efforts as an exemplar of anchor work at a higher education institution. “Very rarely have I seen as seamless an integration of academic work with practical application,” said one leader working with anchor institutions across the city.

**PERSPECTIVES ON UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP**

*Chancellor & Senior Administration*

Leadership at Rutgers-Newark was understood and appreciated in a nuanced way. Most administrators, faculty, staff, and community leaders alike said that leadership started with the chancellor. Many would point specifically to Nancy’s personal leadership and commitment to diversity and inclusion. Members of the Chancellor’s Leadership Team spoke about Nancy’s leadership style and the shared equity leadership enjoyed among their team. They emphasized the high levels of transparency, as well as the encouragement to try new things, to learn from each other and grow from failures, and then to model that type of leadership for others on campus.

The interconnection of the anchor work was advanced in part by having academic affairs, student affairs, and financial affairs together at the Chancellor’s table—her weekly “huddle meeting” among her extended cabinet. “The accountability structure is what’s so different here,”
reflected one senior administrator. “You’re accountable to everyone in [the senior cabinet]…. Everyone has permission to ask hard questions. It’s not like many typical male-dominated organizations with a hub and spokes.” While the Chancellor may be accountable at the end of the day, another senior administrator described, decisions were made through genuinely collaborative conversations. This individual added, “I’m spoiled by Nancy. Because I think this is just how she leads. And you forget until you talk to folks from other institutions.” The leadership team also held an appreciation that the anchor vision and work was not only interconnected, it was also constantly evolving. Faculty and mid-level administrators also expressed both the importance and uniqueness of Nancy’s involvement and awareness of the full range of activity across the institution. Those leading specific anchor initiatives, such as local procurement, for example, recognized how rare it is that the chancellor would be able to speak to the details of their work.

Faculty also expressed an appreciation for the culture and leadership that was set by senior administration. The Chancellor’s Leadership Team was described as “approachable,” in part because “they show up for things…they’re there to support the students.” This presence extended across campus and the wider community, as many of the senior administrators sit on local city and community boards, sometimes based on their own relationships and sometimes as Nancy’s “proxy.” Faculty also felt that the senior leadership team modeled having safe and productive dialogue across differences. A junior faculty member even described the collegiality, mentorship, and support on the Rutgers-Newark campus as a “unicorn experience.”

City and community leaders recognized Nancy first and foremost as “the charismatic leader” of the institution but also emphasized that “she has put together an amazing team.” Many
stakeholders recognized that there was a senior cabinet surrounding her that had deep respect and trust in the community and city. One community organization leader pointed to long-time university leaders who were invited into Nancy’s cabinet and who were “well-respected and loved.” Leaders of other anchor institutions recognized that “Nancy has cultivated a breadth of leaders that believe in the vision that she has. So I do feel like when she retires … when that time comes, I do feel like the work will carry on.” Nevertheless, there was recognition of the influence that the Rutgers system still held on the Newark campus: “How do you influence that idea of what does it mean to be an anchor to the broader university network?” Staff also felt that the senior administration modeled good leadership and genuine community engagement. As one staff member of over 20 years said, “Our folks, really, they’re not just talking it, they’re walking it with everything that they do. They model what it means to be good neighbors in every sense of the word. Are we perfect? No, of course not. But… it’s a consistent effort to make sure that we are centering our communities.”

One senior administrator described the unparalleled commitment of the entire Chancellor’s senior cabinet to the anchor vision, which they felt was critical to their operations:

I can’t think of a thing that would make this more highly structured within an institution than to have all of the people, all of the senior executives, being involved in the conversation. Every conversation you get into when you come into this office is about, What are we doing to make Newark a better place?…. You have to come in understanding that there is no difference between your commitment to this institution and your commitment to this community. They’re one and the same…. And it’s so intensely place-based. There is no difference between the university and the place that we are.

For Nancy, shared leadership and accountability were built into her vision of an anchor institution: “I think the thing I always point to, and it may sound pretty simple, but is the degree to which student affairs issues and academic affairs issues are intertwined… all around equity as
a sort of centerpiece.” She expanded, “A perfect example is we’re facing a deficit and we're having to cut things and, the constant conversation is, Okay, how is this going to affect our equity agenda?” She noted that this fundamental collaboration around an equity agenda was not only central to her administration, but also in how they engaged the deans and other leaders across campus.

**Faculty and Dean Leadership**

Beyond the senior cabinet, local leaders pointed to individual faculty, including faculty leaders of centers/institutes who had established strong working relationships with community partners. As previously noted, Dr. Clem Price holds an important legacy at RU-N. He was a faculty member who, in some ways, served as the “prototype,” as one faculty administrator put it, of the strong and unique faculty leadership at this particular institution. Many stakeholders pointed to the importance of building the anchor work into the research and curriculum of the institution, as was discussed previously. Indeed, a number of RU-N’s exemplars of anchor engagement involved distinguished faculty whose publicly-engaged and community-engaged scholarship focused on Newark.

Getting community-engaged scholarship to a “tipping point” within the institution, then, took support and championing from deans as was also referenced above. Both senior administration and individual faculty involved in publicly-engaged scholarship pointed to the critical support of the deans. One senior administrator specifically described that it took both “faith and resources” from the deans. For example, not all anchor initiatives could be funded through the Chancellor’s Office, so they also relied on investment from the deans. This would
often involve a lot of conversation so that the deans saw the value and potential return of this investment. This was not without its challenges. One faculty administrator put it this way:

> There’s a gap between the dean’s position and the chancellor’s position. It’s not a specific comment about our campus. It’s just a real difference on all campuses … the difficulty of even aligning very progressive deans and very progressive chancellor’s offices and then many progressive departmental heads. But the structure of the traditional research university and what are considered the elite research universities is a very kind of conventional system that’s hard to make dramatic changes with.

This individual also hoped to see more interdisciplinary problem solving, with faculty and departments working across their silos. While they felt that some of the RU-N deans generally supported this work, “The resources they have to create incentives for those interdisciplinary spaces are actually quite limited.” At the same time, this individual recognized their own role to serve as a change agent:

> I have to constantly be pushing for changes within the department and within the faculty, and to kind of use my seniority and my privilege in a way to help promote the way departments and hiring processes and tenure processes need to open up more.

They then concluded, “But that again, is that we’re not a campus of our own, we’re not a private university. We are still accountable to the rest of the Rutgers system, which complicates everything.”

**CHALLENGES REMAIN**

*Need for Increased Communication, Documentation, and Connectivity*

Faculty and senior administrators, as well as some community leaders, discussed the need to better reflect on, document, and communicate about the work. “We have so much narrative work to do,” as one senior administrator put it. Another senior administrator described, “In anchor mission work, there isn’t always time to stop, reflect where are you, where do you want to go, especially when your resources are small. But I think that has to be a next step…. And
Rutgers-Newark is not great about writing down how this works.” A former senior administrator said she was constantly advocating for an archivist or a documentarian so that others would truly understand the work that was put into it:

Because as much as vision is important, as much as leadership is important, as much as having that one strategic moment that catapults people into another state of being, telling that story is also important to sustaining the will, you know, to want to still be in the struggle. And I don’t think we do a good job of telling the story.

A clear and detailed narrative, in other words, is needed to help describe the change efforts that have been undertaken to develop an anchor institution mission, what impact those efforts have had, and what enables these efforts to be sustained. This former administrator also emphasized Nancy’s anchor framework: “Keeping in mind the inside-outside approach, whatever story we tell, it has to be the story of co-creation. It has to be the story of we/us.”

Those involved in the Newark Anchor Collaborative also had a desire to share their work: “How do we start telling that story more broadly so that we are a part of the national conversation and that, you know, elements that have been successful in Newark start to become national models?” One senior administrator at RU-N summarized the importance of continuing to share their work as part of building their institutional identity: “This is part storytelling and part just a fact… To the degree that we have a national reputation, it is for this kind of work.”

At least one faculty member desired reflection time as an effort to coalesce around a collective vision going forward. They described:

I kind of long for a reckoning…. So we’ve been talking about this stuff. We’ve been doing it. What have we learned? What do we need to fix? And let’s do it while Nancy's still here. Cause when she leaves, who knows if, you know, the administration will be invested in this at all. I’m longing for us to come together and maybe forge some sort of collective vision or mission. Again, I think if you ask Nancy or [a couple other senior administrators], they would be able to tell you what it is… and I trust them and I believe
that they have the vision in their head, but I don’t think that’s shared by everybody, except, again, in those broadest terms.

Nancy recognized that more work needed to be done to build out a shared anchor vision across the entire campus: “One thing that is really critical and we need to keep working on is to show people the intersection between our social mobility and equity goals and our anchor work and our publicly-engaged scholarship…. These are all deeply intertwined.” She continued, “But I think the biggest thing is really trying to find ways for people to know what's going on and to be proud of it, and to feel connected to it if they’re not individually always involved in every piece of it. And I don’t think we’re great at that, honestly.” Other senior administrators similarly pointed to the need to highlight stories that demonstrated the effectiveness of various anchor initiatives, including the work of faculty, staff, and students who had received Chancellor’s seed grants, as well as the impact of the RU-N to the Top scholarship program for local residents.

For faculty, on the other hand, the emphasis was on the need to communicate the value of publicly-engaged scholarship clearly and persuasively. As one individual put it:

What Rutgers and probably most institutions don’t do a good job of is, is marketing itself and communicating the type of work that we're talking about right now, because we’re competing with scientific discoveries and all kinds of other really great initiatives and you’re just one major thing out of a lot of major things. And so folks are competing for attention as far as money and everything else.

Among faculty involved in anchor work, there was also a desire to increase connectivity. Some infrastructure was in place, for example, as the Vice Chancellor for Government and External Relations convened regular meetings for individual faculty and administrators in anchor projects to report out to the chancellor on what they were doing. This helped create a structure of accountability although did not necessarily help to facilitate cross-pollination of ideas. One faculty member reflected, “What I would like to see would be integrating [our initiative] with
other similar success stories within an anchor initiative program…. Innovation comes with finding meaningful ways to collaborate… to create a new level of success for both.” Time and capacity seemed to be the major limiting factor, especially when people are typically doing this work above and beyond their core teaching and research requirements. “Everybody's already overworked and overburdened and spending too much time doing some things that don’t really get credit for tenure, promotion, or other things,” added this faculty member. They suggested they would need to get 100 percent course buyouts in order to do the work full-time and really see how it could be taken to the next level.

In a similar vein, a long-time tenured faculty member from another discipline spoke about the challenge of managing obligations to their department, to their students, and to their community-engaged scholarship, noting that anchor work involves “structur[ing] the invention of roles” because “nobody gets hired to do this. Nobody comes in [on a] tenure track to do this.” Some identified a similar tension among staff, observing that people’s job descriptions did not include reference to anchor initiatives, nor were their performance ratings based on their involvement. Even some community organization leaders explicitly recognized this as a limitation in what could be achieved. Nonetheless, senior administrators pointed to certain positions that were indeed committed to different aspects of anchor engagement, such as advising for undocumented students or directing pe-college programs that were specifically aimed at building pathways for Newark students.

Some faculty highlighted that it was often up to individual faculty to find support and funding outside of the traditional departmental units. At least one emeritus faculty member pointed to the Office of University-Community Partnerships (OUCP) for this connectivity. For
several others, they recognized that they were not as aligned with the OUCP as they could be; they, too, pointed to general challenges of capacity and siloes that exist on most campuses. Still others didn’t know where to look, but expressed a desire for a better awareness of the community organizations that could connect to the scholarship that they are doing, which could be particularly challenging if you were not a Newark native and if you were not yet tenured.

Some community organization leaders also pointed to the lack of connectivity on the campus. After citing several prominent researchers with whom they individually engaged, as well as recognizing Rutgers-Newark’s relative leadership as an engaged institution, one leader of a community-based organization raised these larger questions:

Do they all talk? And does Rutgers-Newark come out with a comprehensive ‘State of Newark’ with tangible policy recommendations across all—the legal school, the public affairs schools, the medical school? What is all of this body of work? And what does it say about a policy and advocacy agenda for Newark, and by extension, black and brown communities and increasingly low-income white residents in our state? It’s that proverbial connecting the dots piece…. How does that coalesce into an agenda?

Another leader of a smaller neighborhood-based organization expressed the work that was left to be done to communicate RU-N’s anchor vision clearly to the community:

Has Rutgers said as an anchor institution, we care about these three things? We’re trying to work with community to accomplish this goal. Here are the sort of inputs from the university on each one of those pathways that support this work, here’s the entrée for how community can get connected if you’re not sort of, you know, been invited … or you just care about it and you want to get more involved. How is all of that managed? How is all of that messaged? How is all of that sort of resourced in a strategic way? I think in my understanding of anchor institution kind of work, that’s where I think additional investment and 2.0 or 3.0 kind of evolutionary work needs to happen. We got the definition, with the definition came a commitment, with the commitment came sort of these threads of work. Now how do we put it all together into a plan so that, you know, the university holds itself accountable to community partners?
It seems that several leaders at Rutgers-Newark would have answers to these questions, even if it is a work in progress. But, as previously discussed, setting an anchor mission leads to higher expectations, and the relationships and communication involved requires ongoing maintenance.

**Sustainability and Transitions**

A number of senior administrators organically turned to issues of sustainability and embeddedness when reflecting on the anchor engagement work underway. Leaders at RU-N recognized that sustainability required having structures, resources, and policies in place that would help institutionalize their change efforts. Several specific concerns, then, were related to being part of a larger public university system and the additional work needed to embed this work. Quoted at length is here is one poignant example:

There are no guarantees. And that’s why I think what we’ve been emphasizing is getting our institutional identity and our shared understanding of our institutional identity.... Here, we want it to be: We’re an anchor institution. And we care about, we are deeply engaged with, our community and what that means, and then you can get into the layers.... So that, if you look at it in one way, you could say, well, if Nancy were to retire, what would happen? It would be a tragedy in some ways...because she's such an extraordinary leader and somebody who’s so intensely focused on this. But it would be difficult for any next leader to try to change the direction of the institution. Because this is the institution. This is who we are. This is what we do. And the expectations have now been set by stakeholders also. You know, you have alumni, you have all the anchors in Newark [who] are expecting this out of this institution. So there’s an accountability that’s now become baked into [our] relationships.

They added that the 2012 legislation that had afforded Rutgers University – Newark additional autonomy had helped the anchor vision get “baked into the legislation to a degree,” but that “the culture of [the] Rutgers [system remains] a constant battle.” When discussing issues of sustainability, many other long-time administrators and community leaders indeed expressed concern about what would happen specifically when Nancy Cantor’s tenure was over. They did not anticipate it happening soon, and also expected it would be on her own terms when she ready
to leave, but nonetheless had genuine concern about whether her vision could be fully sustained.

One long-time administrator reflected on their experiences with an emeritus provost who had created much change during their 30-year administrative tenure at Rutgers-Newark:

And so in that generational change I’ve been here, the conversation is Norman [Samuels] was always a great leader, but Norman didn’t have the same type of intensity for an anchor institution that Nancy had. So that vision, that mission, that passion, I think she’s instilled in the folks who work directly with her, and she’s chosen folks who can do that. The question here is, when Nancy goes away, what do I think? I think some things will sustain, I just don’t know long how long it will sustain without another leader who has that same kind of vision and passion.

This individual also pointed to the need for “intentional successional planning.” Another administrator pointed to the need for “an academic leadership program” to support faculty members who championed publicly-engaged scholarship to advance into departmental chair and dean positions.

One faculty member emphasized, “What survives is the culture and the established projects and the new ways of working that have taken root here.” They elaborated: “The culture doesn’t require resources or the structures of Rutgers to survive, but some of those institutional manifestations, HLLC and Express Newark… the places that [Nancy’s] really invested in. How do they survive her not being there?” Despite this belief, for this individual, that engaged scholarship was ingrained in the faculty culture, there was still a reality check of being part of a larger system. Referring to a faculty strike that had occurred days before, this same faculty member said:

I think we saw some real ugliness of the system… and so I’m not convinced that a widespread collective faculty desire and value necessarily means that much to the powers that be at this university. And that’s just heightened my anxiety of what happens.
Some community members, commenting on the heels of the strike, expressed similar concerns. “You wonder where’s that disconnect…. How are these ideas concretized into the structure of the organization? And then how are those structures situated in relationship to power and resources? And I don’t know that Rutgers is there yet.”

A beautiful sentiment expressed by many across campus and in the community involved in RU-N’s anchor work was that the majority of stakeholders’ vision for the future was simply having the good work be bolstered and sustained. As one very involved community leader put it, “The next phase? I’ll be honest, I think that the phase we’re in now is what needs to be sustained.” For most, this good work centered around the strong, authentic relationships built between RU-N and Newark, as well as the intentional and mutually beneficial engagement in all the major areas of urban revitalization. As one individual who had received their education from RU-N and spent a 20+ year career at the institution said about their vision for the next phase of the university’s anchor engagement:

I would like to see it still happening. That’s a very short answer. And it’s the truth. Because all it really takes sometimes is a change in leadership. And if they don't share the same vision…. It’s funny how easy it actually is, but it’s very easy to undo years and years of relationship building...too easy. So what I’d like to see going forward is that we continue, we sustain these efforts.

Community leaders were also keenly aware of the importance of leadership transitions. For example, one said:

People matter, right? And the representatives of the university and the relationships, the trust that they build, really does matter. And, you know, having grown up in Newark, a lot of those folks have come and gone because their hairs have gotten gray. I’m curious about the next generation of university representatives that manage these community university partnerships. Like what is the sort of plan there in the sense of ensuring that institutional knowledge is transferred?… How do we introduce and help prepare the next generation of people who facilitate these kinds of relationships like that?… Building that cachet really matters.
When asked about tips to share with others, one community leader stated, “The number one thing would be to clone Nancy… clone her, but that would also have to include her mental and moral commitment.” Another organization leader, reflecting on sustainability and succession, stated very clearly, “I haven’t seen [President Holloway] walk in the streets with her. And listen, if you want credit in these streets, you better be walking with Nancy…. I think it definitely needs to be known that [a succession plan] is an open question and we’re not comfortable with the answers.”

Other community leaders expressed more confidence that the institution was ready to withstand transition whenever it came. “I’m pretty comfortable that, you know, the ethos of Rutgers University – Newark is going to continue even after Nancy.” Another prominent community leader expressed, “Nancy is a finisher. So I have all the confidence in the world that we’ll see these projects through.” Nancy herself concluded:

I go back to the one step forward, twenty steps back. How do we build appetites in higher ed institutions for the long haul in this work, in anchor work? How do we build it into the bones of the mission and strategic vison, but then do people really understand what that means in terms of sticking with it?

A couple members of the advisory board had a keen understanding of Rutgers University and returned to the challenges inherent to being part of a system. One such individual strikingly described:

I would hope that what Nancy has been able to do, the eyes she’s been able to open with respect to the role that a university can play in a community that is challenged in many ways, even if there were no challenges, that the university can be a very effective partner collaborating to advance the quality of life for the people in a community in which the university is located. I think, if that can be sustained, if that can be embraced by New Brunswick where the president of the university sits, I think the possibilities that flow from that are just enormous…. Probably the work that you’re doing now, this research that you’re doing, and its being shared both within the higher education community writ
large and beyond, will impact how the executive leadership in New Brunswick feels about the work that Nancy has been doing.

This statement would prove to be particularly prescient.

**EPILOGUE**

The sentiments expressed above were captured from December through June 2023, except for two brief follow up interviews with senior administrators in fall 2023. In August 2023, Rutgers President Jonathan Holloway announced that Nancy Cantor’s contract would not be renewed when it expires in June 2024. He praised her contributions without giving any details as to why this decision had been made. This came as an abrupt shock to most and was responded to with palpable concern by many diverse stakeholders. There was a huge outpouring of support from the faculty, from city and community partners, and from national partners. Most notably, the Mayor immediately wrote a letter to Holloway, which he also published, calling the nonrenewal decision a “grave error” and praising Nancy’s leadership and impact, with many prominent city and community as co-signatories (Zahneis, 2023). Rutgers-Newark faculty also wrote letters to Holloway and spoke out on X in favor of Cantor. This included a letter from the Newark chapter of Rutgers AAUP-AFT (2023) denouncing Holloway’s sudden and unjustified decision and calling for a reinstatement of Cantor as Chancellor. Notably, they expressed their solidarity with Chancellor Cantor’s vision of Rutgers-Newark as an anchor institution:

> We share Chancellor Cantor’s vision of Rutgers-Newark as a place “where there is an unfailing commitment to transcend traditional boundaries and collaborate to increase social mobility, spur equitable growth, advance racial equity, and leverage publicly engaged scholarship through the collective action of anchor institutions to move the needle on America’s most pressing challenges.”

Chancellor Cantor has embraced publicly engaged scholarship across disciplines, encouraging faculty to work in collaboration directly with local communities. She has undertaken meaningful and effective efforts to make Rutgers more accessible to Black,
Latinx, and working-class students, especially those from Newark. In addition, she advanced our union’s push for pay equity by supporting Newark faculty against the objection of the Holloway administration. (n.p.)

These outpourings of support serve as indicators of the anchor work being built into the culture and identity of Rutgers University – Newark. But of course, the actual test of sustainability is now underway.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

At the start of the 21st century, Rutgers University – Newark was primed in many ways to realize the ideals of an anchor institution strategy with its local community, but the work had not yet coalesced under this guiding framework. In 2014, Nancy Cantor came in as a seasoned visionary leader into a ready space at the right time. An anchor “in and of Newark” quickly became core to this institution’s new identity and operational strategy. And central to this comprehensive vision of an anchor strategy was the intentionality of engagement and mutual transformation involved.

Cantor’s passion and vision was unparalleled, but she didn’t act alone. She built guiding coalitions (Kotter, 1995), internally and externally. This included developing a shared equity leadership model within her cabinet (Holcombe, 2023; Kezar et al., 2021), building communities of experts and trusted partnerships that value community knowledge (Cantor & Englot, 2013; Bringle et al., 2009; Scobey, 2002; Shah, 2020), and spearheading a cross-sector city-wide collaborative (Cantor & Englot, 2013; della Porta & Diani, 2005; Marga Inc., 2022a). These coalitions did a lot of things, structurally and ideologically, to help overcome barriers and try to embed the change. As laid out in the case, however, RU-N has faced and continues to face many challenges in trying to realize the anchor ideal as a research institution that is also part of a larger university system. But, in the process, critical and robust webs of relationships have been spun on campus, with community partners, and across the city that will make the work hard to ever fully unravel.
Drawing on organizational change theory and critical community-based epistemologies, this analysis explores how Rutgers-Newark’s has attempted to advance a comprehensive, democratic, mutually transformative anchor institution strategy with its local ecological community. To date, the literature has not directly connected the internal- and external-facing change efforts that have been so inextricably linked at Rutgers-Newark—that is the connection between changing institutional policy, practice, and culture and building trusted democratic partnerships with the community—as part of the process of institutionalizing anchor engagement. This analysis attempts to make these connections in order to explore what the case of RU-N tells us about embedding change in a way that benefits both university and community.

READY FOR CHANGE: INTRODUCING THE ANCHOR INSTITUTION MISSION

When Nancy Cantor began her tenure at Rutgers University – Newark, the campus was ready for change. The 2014 strategic planning process laid out a clear vision for how and why the campus could build on its existing strengths and take its work to the next level as a fully embedded anchor institution.

The conception Chancellor Cantor and her team had of anchor engagement represents what I have referred to in this study as the anchor institution ideals. Given the mixed understanding of an anchor institution as laid out in the literature review, it is particularly important to define what this meant at Rutgers-Newark. In other words, Cantor’s and her team’s vision of anchor institution work was key to what kind of change was needed and how it would happen. I would argue that there are three critical elements to tease out here. First was RU-N’s comprehensive and values-based definition of being an anchor. Second was Cantor’s outside-in
framework for institutional transformation. Third was the importance of building coalitions internally and externally.

As a founding member and current co-chair of the Anchor Institution Task Force, Nancy Cantor has embraced (and helped drive) a comprehensive and values-driven approach for higher education institutions to serve as anchor institutions, as well as pitched a ‘big tent’ to include a broad array of cross sector partners in anchor work. AITF’s definition of an anchor institution is “an enduring organization remaining its geographic area and playing a vital role in its local community and economy” (Marga Inc., 2022b, p. 4). As a higher education institution embracing an anchor mission, this conception also emphasized the strategically alignment and engagement of the full scope of university resources—academic, institutional, human, and cultural—in partnership with its local community to the benefit of both (Harkavy, 2016; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Maurrasse, 2019). It also meant taking a very intentional approach to the process of engagement, with a focus on AITF’s core values of collaboration and partnership, democracy and democratic practice, commitment to place and community, and equity and social justice, with some emphasis on racial justice and racial equity (Marga Inc., 2022b; Maurrasse, 2013).

This approach at RU-N was clear from the intentionality with which the anchor mission and goals were framed, in how both internal and external stakeholders have been included in shaping those goals and programs on the ground, and in how resources have been deployed. Based on these definitions and values, the work of becoming an anchor fits what Orphan & Hartley (2021) call “ideal-centered organizational change” in higher education, “which seeks to realize societal values such as equity, freedom, community, or… higher education’s civic purposes” in an enduring way (p. 386). It also fits what Holcombe et al. (2023) call “shared leadership to create
equity-oriented culture change” (p.2). Both concepts will be returned to as they hold significance for how the change was being carried out at RU-N. Again, this anchor definition and set of values was particularly important given the burgeoning field of anchor institution work and scholarship, which has tended to emphasize the economic engagement as separate from academic engagement, whereas RU-N viewed these elements as inextricably linked.

As noted, Cantor’s comprehensive vision of an anchor institution included how the full range of resources of the institution could be part of this work. For RU-N, this centered the role of publicly-engaged scholarship in connecting the academic work of faculty, staff, and students with community partners to help create more equitable conditions. But it also involved the economic and institutional resources of the university. One long-time administrator reflected, “I think Nancy’s been collectively looking at how do we use our infrastructure, from budgeting to department placements, to chosen networks to chosen buildings, our master plan, to reinforce all those anchor mission kind of items…. She’s intentional about that.” The comprehensive and intentional approach of RU-N’s anchor framework is significant because it was leading to what change literature calls “normative consensus” (Hartley et al., 2005). In both a structural and ideological way, the anchor framework was being linked to all institutional planning processes and supported at the highest institutional level, signaling what Hartley et al. (2005) describe as “a lasting institutional commitment to this value” (p. 219).

Second, as described in the case study and consistently articulated in Chancellor Cantor’s presentations of anchor work, her personal perspective on institutional transformation utilizes an “outside-in” framework, which starts with asking “what the public needs from us” (Cantor, 2023, p. 3). This turns institutional change largely on its head, by having the transformational process
guided by what the community or broader public needs from the university and what kinds of changes are needed to rise to that task. It also requires looking at the engagement externally with community and other partners as inseparable from the change process happening internally within the institution. This is an area that is underexplored in the literature. Organizational change literature has not directly connected the internal with the external components—more specifically, the role of trusted democratic partnerships between university and community—in embedding institutional change. Rutgers-Newark provides a wonderful case for exploring this further.

The third element, building coalitions internally and externally, meant that Nancy Cantor was not acting alone. In his scholarship on transformation in the corporate setting, Kotter (1995) emphasizes the importance of “a powerful guiding coalition” inclusive and outside of the normal hierarchies to push reform agendas forward (p. 62). For RU-N, this included embracing a shared equity leadership model (Holcombe et al., 2023; Kezar et al., 2021), building communities of experts through trusted partnerships (Cantor & Englot, 2013; Bringle et al., 2009; Shah, 2020), and spearheading a city-wide coalition (della Porta & Diani, 2005; Marga, 2021). These coalitions introduced key new roles as part of the change process; each of which will be described later.

SECOND-ORDER INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: NEW GOALS, ROLES, AND STRUCTURES

To understand how Cantor and her team tried to advance the anchor ideal at Rutgers University – Newark, it is important to first understand how different orders of change have been characterized. One especially useful framework is from Larry Cuban (1988) who contrasted
“first order” and “second order change.” As Cuban describes, based on his research of educational reforms at the K-12 level, “first-order changes” involves “improving the efficiency and effectiveness of what is done…without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering the ways in which [faculty, staff, and students] perform their roles” (p. 342). Cuban distinguishes this from “second-order changes” that “seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together” by “introduce[ing] new goals, structures, and roles that transform familiar ways of doing things into new ways of solving persistent problems” (Cuban, 1988, p. 342). Cuban’s examples of second-order changes each included “attempts to fundamentally alter existing authority, roles, and uses of time and space” (1988, p. 342). Cuban’s second-order change is closely aligned with what Eckel, Hill, & Green describe in a 1988 ACE Project as “transformational change” within higher education. Eckel et al. (1988) specifically define transformational change as that which “(1) alters the culture of the institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviors, processes, and products; (2) is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution; (3) is intentional; and (4) occurs over time” (Eckel et al., 1998, p. 3). At RU-N, not only did an anchor mission help to provide more cohesion to existing initiatives at RU-N that were focused on social justice and community engagement—requiring first-order change—but it also defined how the institution as a whole would embody a set of values and transcend business as usual—requiring second-order change.

The literature on institutional change within higher education tells us that, the “‘prehistory’” (Kanter, 1983, p. 282) or “seeds of change” (Hartley et al., 2005, p. 213) often lay important groundwork that enable important organizational innovations. We must, therefore, be reminded of what the picture was before Cantor’s arrival. As presented in the case, RU-N’s
historical commitment to social and racial justice was rooted in the Newark Rebellion and the
takeover of Conklin Hall in the late 1960s. There was pre-existing faculty and staff interest in
diversity, social justice, and connection to Newark, as well a generally collaborative campus
culture. The elevation of the Office of University-Community Partnerships and the establishment
of the Chancellor’s Awards for Community Engagement, as well as programming such as the
Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development were important developments in
the early 2000s. “The seeds were there,” as one RU-N faculty administrator reflected. But the
work was more fragmented. There was not yet a comprehensive and galvanizing vision for what
the next level of local engagement might look like. And the work did not yet have the structural
and political supports to get it to that next level and embed the work into the institution’s core
mission and strategy. The anchor institution framework, developed through an intentional and
inclusive strategic planning process, provided that vision.

Ultimately, this study provides evidence of second-order change underway at Rutgers
University – Newark through the new goals, structures, and roles that were established under an
anchor mission framework. While laying out each of these aspects, we will pay special attention
to not only what was happening within the institution, but also what was happening in terms of
its engagement off campus. We will also explore which specific changes, both structural and
ideological, are likely to withstand transitions. As the AITF Leadership Guide emphasizes, there
is “a range of internal and external considerations in the complex journey to instill, nurture, and
demonstrate this set of values in community partnerships,” so sustainability remains an ongoing
challenge for all involved (Marga Inc., 2022b, p. 2).
**New Goals: Anchor Vision and Mission**

A key aspect of helping people both within and outside of the university understand the nature of the change Cantor hoped to champion was creating a shared language about the work at hand. The primary focus here was a clearly articulated mission and vision for Rutgers University—Newark as an anchor institution. A secondary but also critical component was advancing the anchor institution concept across the city of Newark.

**New Goal 1: University as Comprehensive Democratic Anchor Institution**

In terms of new goals, the anchor institution mission that was laid out so clearly in the 2014 Strategic Plan—just months into Cantor’s tenure—provided a new language, scale, scope, and intentionality for how Rutgers-Newark would serve as an engaged urban campus. One major factor in the successful, widespread embrace of the new anchor vision was RU-N’s history of community engagement and the consonance with RU-N’s established values about what kind of work is important. This was key because the literature tells us when “certain values already have a degree of resonance within a community,” it can help set the stage for change (Hartley et al., 2005, p. 213). It was also significant that Cantor pulled in key trusted leaders within the institution to champion the effort, and they took the time to socialize this new vision at various institutional levels. As described in the case, collaborative conversations, town halls, and charrettes were an important component of RU-N’s comprehensive and inclusive strategic planning process; and specific goals were fleshed out through their four study/action groups that focused on the new professoriate, staffing, the anchor institution, and diversity. While completed relatively quickly, RU-N’s intentional and democratic approach to the strategic plan, with meaningful contributions and buy-in from many stakeholders and its use as a living document,
was key to its widespread adoption. This approach helped address a key challenge presented in the literature on the institutionalization of university engagement efforts, which is spreading the change across higher education institutions as a “loosely coupled” organizations (Weick, 1976). “Because the units [schools, departments] have specialized knowledge … change must occur through discussion and persuasion rather than command,” describe Hartley et al., (2005, p. 209). “It relies on the cooperation of administrators who understand the institution's inner workings and the faculty, who expertise must be brought to bear if there is to be any curricular change” (p. 209). As Cantor reflected in the AITF Leadership Guide’s second edition, “The point … was to widely involve people in thinking that the anchor work was core to the mission of the institution” (Marga Inc., 2024, p. 3).

In addition to the historical context and values and the intentional stakeholder engagement, a unique contributing factor to RU-N’s embrace of the anchor mission may have been the underlying but prevailing notion that members of the Newark campus had felt for many years like a “stepchild” of the Rutgers University system, both underfunded and undervalued. A bold new anchor mission and vision, that was consonant with its longstanding values, allowed the campus to rally behind a strong unique identity of its own. The legislative changes of 2012–13, immediately preceding Cantor’s arrival, had provided RU-N more autonomy and helped create the conditions for this change to take root. The naming change from Rutgers – Newark to Rutgers University – Newark became intertwined with the institution’s new identity as an anchor institution. Kotter (1995) emphasizes the importance of a “clear and compelling” vision in helping corporate institutional transformation succeed, which seems to hold true for higher education (p. 63). This includes a vision that clearly expresses “the direction in which an
organization needs to move,” is communicated through “every possible channel,” including having executives “‘walk the talk’” as “living symbol[s]” of this new culture and working to remove the biggest barriers (pp. 63-64). As described in the case, Rutgers-Newark leadership recognized the ongoing work of cultivating and communicating a compelling vision throughout the campus.

Critically, the anchor vision built on RU-N’s existing culture. As several RU-N faculty and administrators described, the anchor framework not only introduced a more cohesive vision to the community engagement and engaged scholarship already taking place at Rutgers-Newark, but it also allowed committed individuals to take their work to a new level. While always a work in progress, RU-N leadership worked to ensure that this activity was supported, recognized and rewarded, from seed grants to publicity to promotion and tenure. This included special attention to the work that was already underway, which fits the change literature that “a primary goal must be supporting those already engaged in the behavior [emphasis in original]” (Hartley et al., 2005, p. 215). Also key was RU-N's involvement of its advisory board as an integral part of the change effort, which is important on numerous levels, not least of which is their legislative role in helping to advise the Rutgers president and board of governors on selection of the RU-N Chancellor. This fits Kotter’s (1995) emphasis on the importance of institutionalizing change into an organization’s culture. He points out two key factors—first, a “conscious attempt to show people how the new approaches, behaviors, and attitudes have helped improve performance,” and, second, “taking sufficient time to make sure that the next generation of top management really does personify the new approach” by involving the board of directors as “an integral part of the renewal effort” (Kotter, 1995, p. 67).
Members of both the RU-N Chancellor’s cabinet and the RU-N Advisory Board were keenly aware of the challenges of being part of the Rutgers system and the overshadowing influence this imposed on their campus’s culture, and yet, they consistently lifted up RU-N values and practices to push back against those traditional academic norms. These norms were of course reflective of broader academic culture across higher education writ large. It remained a conscious and continuous process for RU-N’s leadership. This is important because Cuban (1988) posits that for second-order changes to succeed, there needs to be a clear understanding by those attempting reform of what they are attempting to change, of the power of organizational and cultural norms, and of the successes and failures of earlier reforms (p. 344). While the 2014 strategic plan document itself will likely be replaced by a new plan under future leadership, it was instrumental in solidifying RU-N’s new identity as an anchor institution that would be very hard to completely undo.

Administrators, current and former, clearly felt that an anchor institution mission was now core to RU-N’s identity, with Cantor and some of her senior cabinet using the refrain, “This is who we are.” But there was also a clear appreciation that the anchor ideals guiding their work required an evolving and ongoing process with new challenges, opportunities, and goals. Some of this was captured in the case when discussing the need for increased communication, documentation, and connectivity. Of course, embedding anchor work into the institution’s culture is not a one-time process. An organization’s culture—its values, norms, and beliefs—shape its behavior, structures, systems and processes (Holcombe 2023; Schein, 1992; Tierney, 1988) and cultural norms within higher education “dominate each level of the organization” (Norris & Weiss, 2019, p. 55). Orphan & Hartley’s (2021) multi case study of public regional
universities attempting to institutionalize civic engagement “suggests that ideal-centered change will fail without attention to organizational culture” and that “cultural change must be present throughout [the institutionalization process] for ideal-centered change to occur and subsequently endure” (pp. 406-407). They also suggest that “ongoing cultural engagement with an ideal occurs when members at all organizational levels use an ideal to guide their work, continually identifying new targets and assessing their efforts” (p. 407). In a similar way, Holcombe et al. (2023) discuss the importance of “equity-oriented culture change” being facilitated by a shared leadership approach, in which “both leaders with formal and informal power, at all levels of the organizational hierarchy, and can include administrators, faculty, staff, students, and key community groups or constituents … contribute to both agenda setting and decision making in shared leadership environments” (Holcombe et al., 2023, p. 2). It is the involvement of these external constituents that we turn to next.

*New Goal 2: A Cross-Sector Collaboration of Anchor Institutions*

As part of embedding RU-N’s new anchor identity and strengthening its impact, Chancellor Cantor saw the need to work in collaboration with other institutions who were ready to conceive of themselves as anchors. This conception meant taking “both an objective and philosophical perspective” to being an anchor institution, as AITF stresses, where an institution “transcends the mere objective reality of [its] presence in the community and contribution to a local economy” but also actively emphasizes “a conscious commitment to the community” as part of an ecosystem of stakeholders and organizations (Marga Inc., 2022, p. 8). The Newark Anchor Collaborative that emerged in the first couple of years of Cantor’s tenure in conjunction with the Mayor’s Newark2020 plan to ‘Hire Buy Live’ locally represented an important new
goal that went beyond traditional institutional structures, building a powerful cross-sector guiding coalition across the city.

As was detailed in the case, Cantor and RU-N gave a number of other enduring institutions in Newark the language, vision, and scholarship to define themselves as an anchor institution. This included helping to articulate and model the need for place-based engagement and mutual transformation in creating truly equitable and inclusive communities. For major actors like Prudential Foundation, for example, the anchor concept elevated their pre-existing idea about their presence and role in the city of Newark and stimulated an important new level of commitment. Building this coalition was highly significant not only for building collective goals and accountability—specifically goals for local purchasing, local hiring, and encouraging employees to live locally—but also in creating further institutional change inside and outside of RU-N that cannot be undone by any one leadership transition.

For RU-N, the goal of cross-sector collaboration seemed to be about driving both greater community impact by pulling together the resources and assets of many diverse players as well as sustainable change and impact by creating long-term collaborations that could work together at a systems level. This city-wide collaborative also brings up the importance of social movement theory in anchor work, as the anchor language and ideal proved to be particularly influential across the city. “The power of a movement,” says Hartley, “is significantly determined by its capacity to coordinate action and the salience and power of particular ideas and ideals” (Hartley, 2009, p. 324). As della Porta & Diani (2006) emphasize, “The decision to act—and, specifically to act collectively—depends not only on basic internalized principles and/or attitudes but on complex evaluation of the opportunities and constraints for action” (p. 72).
Ultimately, it was these goals of developing a comprehensive democratic anchor strategy and building a robust cross-sector team—and the collaborative process through which both were carried out—that put the work at the very center of RU-N’s mission and identity. Kotter (1995) posits that change must be driven by “a sense of urgency” (p. 60), but for Rutgers-Newark, it seems the critical element was a clear and compelling anchor vision that met its time.

**New Roles: Internal and External Coalitions**

Another strategy Chancellor Cantor used to advance change related to how she defined and formed collaborative teams. As described in the case, Nancy Cantor literally changed who was at the table—from her senior cabinet to the RU-N advisory board and from the cross-sector collaboration among institutional CEOs to the community of experts helping to shape specific ongoing anchor initiatives. As previously noted, this approach supports Kotter’s (1995) emphasis on building guiding coalitions for successful change. Like any change efforts, it requires ongoing conversation and consensus building among many different divisions. RU-N stakeholders at all levels, on and off campus, recognized that this was not business as usual, and it was a continuous process. This type of table-setting was key since “institutionalization requires continual cultivating and tending” (Hartley et al., 2005, p. 219). As Cantor reflected in the AITF Leadership Guide, “This robust participatory infrastructure, inside and outside the institution, signals to all that the work is important and should be sustained even in the midst of leadership transitions” (Marga Inc., 2024, p. 4). In other words, the expectations for RU-N to live up to its anchor mission and identity are now set by both internal and external stakeholders.
New Role 1: Shared Equity Leadership

As a visionary leader, Cantor worked to ensure that the anchor mission and strategy for RU-N was co-created and carried out by a diverse group of stakeholders. It was particularly important that she had built a diverse senior leadership team with a shared vision.

Members of the Chancellor’s Cabinet emphasized Nancy’s deeply collaborative and inclusive leadership style. This included a particularly high level of transparency and shared accountability. It involved encouragement to take risks and to continually learn and grow. It also included a clear and “undying commitment” to racial and social equity on and off campus. With these values and practices consistently demonstrated, Rutgers-Newark under Cantor exemplifies the model of “shared equity leadership” recently defined by higher education scholars at the University of Southern California and ACE (Holcombe et al., 2023; Kezar et al., 2021). This body of work draws from a multiple-case study of eight institutions across the country from 2019 to 2021, which in fact included Rutgers-Newark. This new framework draws on theories of culture change; leadership for diversity, equity, and inclusion; and shared leadership. While shared equity leadership focuses primarily on the transformational change and leadership needed “to create truly inclusive and equitable outcomes for students” on campus (Kezar et al., 2021, p. vii), Rutgers-Newark’s anchor framework has embraced this lens for its work happening both inside the institution and in partnership with its surrounding community.

More specific evidence of how shared equity leadership is enacted at RU-N for an anchor framework can be found in several areas. First, university leaders at many levels had a personal commitment to and understanding of their role in equity work, which Holcombe et al. (2023) emphasize as the first key element. Nancy Cantor’s own personal commitment to diversity,
equity, and inclusion was well established prior to her arrival in Newark and central to her identity as a social psychologist and institutional leader. “If you read her works,” said one former senior administrator, “you know that she believes that diversity breeds excellence. So it’s not just about inclusion, but it’s about the quality of the ideas that come from having different people around the table.” Second, Cantor surrounded herself with an incredibly diverse cabinet and other key change agents across the institution who shared a passion for creating a more equitable, inclusive community on and off campus. The senior cabinet, as described in the case study, included not only an unmatched level of diversity but also a very intentional bringing together of all the major functions of the institution, inclusive of academic affairs, student affairs, external relations, and business operations. These leaders came together each week for the Chancellor’s “huddle,” a very democratic meeting space in which they could collectively address the institution’s most pressing issues. Many other organizational leaders were also committed to equity work from their unique entry points and journeys in academia and within Rutgers-Newark specifically. As one junior faculty member noted, “What I would say combines [the anchor work] is a sense of the importance of social justice, of closing various equity gaps. And I think that we all kind of do that in ways that makes sense to us.” These “varied perspectives and experiences in the work” are embraced in a shared equity leadership model (Holcombe et al., 2023, p. 6).

A values base—particularly a commitment to social justice and racial equity—permeated the RU-N campus and was part of its unique historical context and culture. The anchor framework placed these values at the very center of the institution’s mission and strategy and put them into action. Faculty, staff, and community partners underscored the importance of Cantor
and her team not just talking the talk but walking the walk. This fits neatly with the second and third key elements for shared equity leadership, values and practices (See Figure 1). Holcombe et al. (2023) highlight nine specific values that are critical for how equity leaders ‘show up’ to the work: love and care, accountability to self and others, transparency, vulnerability, humility, courage, comfort with being uncomfortable, and mutuality (p. 6). In particular, the authors note, “mutuality underpins all the other values” which involves “embrac[ing] notions of leadership as a reciprocal and collective process” and having “participants come to the table as equals, whether they hold positional/formal power or not” (p. 8). These were the types of values that not only RU-N leadership but many stakeholders on and off campus expressed as central to anchor engagement. Shared equity leadership practices presented by Holcombe et al. (2023) include centering the needs of systemically marginalized groups; relational practices that center trusted relationships that also allow tensions; communication practices that emphasize listening, intentional language, and clear expectations; developmental practices that focused on learning and modeling; challenging the status quo and actively working to dismantle practices and policies that reinforce inequities; and structural practices including hiring practices, reward structures, and accountability. As detailed in the case study, these values and practices were very explicitly embraced by RU-N's senior cabinet—in how they engaged as a team, how they served as leaders within the institution, how they sought to influence the Rutgers system, and how they modeled engagement with partners off campus.

Other core champions and change agents—such as Professor David Troutt, distinguished professor of law and founding director of the Rutgers Center on Law in Metropolitan Equity (CLiME); Dr. Kevin Lyons, Associate Professor of Professional Practice and Director of the
Center for Local Supply Chain Resiliency and the Rutgers Business School Public Private Community Partnership Program; Dr. Tim Eatman, the inaugural dean of the Honors Living-Learning Community, who also served as Faculty Director of Imagining America 2012-2017 and is currently the Vice Chair of the AAC&U Board of Directors; and Dr. Salamishah Tillet, the Henry Rutgers Professor of Creative Writing and African American and African Studies and executive director of Express Newark (just to name a few)—were helping to drive the anchor and equity agenda forward on and off campus. Some of these change agents, like some of the members of Cantor’s cabinet, had been at the institution for decades. Others were attracted to RU-N because of Nancy’s leadership and anchor vision. Change agents also existed outside of the faculty and staff structure. One prominent advisory board member, for example, viewed their role as being “ambassadors for the university,” communicating the value of RU-N’s anchor work in their own professional and personal circles.

**Figure 1**

*Shared Equity Leadership Model (Holcombe et al., 2023, p. 5)*

*Shared Equity Leadership Model*
This study points to the importance of shared equity leadership in institutionalizing an anchor institution mission. Tying to what we know about institutional change in higher education, when there is a “broad-based network of faculty and staff actively diffusing the ideal within their designated areas,” the work is more “impervious to new administrator whims” (Orphan & Hartley, 2021, p. 405). As described, RU-N stakeholders at many different levels had an understanding for how anchor work advanced the university’s core mission and the role that they could play; as previously noted, the effective, democratic, and intentional strategic planning process seemed to play no small part in this widespread adoption.

And, yet, despite the importance of shared equity leadership at RU-N, Nancy Cantor’s role in RU-N's story highlights the singular role of an experienced visionary leader in embedding anchor work into institutional mission and strategy. Chancellor Cantor was a clear catalyst for taking RU-N from an engaged urban campus to a significant new level as a comprehensive democratic anchor institution. Given that the true scope of an anchor mission involves the entire institution, it is not surprising that the leadership and imprimatur of a university chancellor or president is a key ingredient for anchor institution work. Leadership plays a particularly important role in understanding and stewarding democratic engagement (Dostilio, 2014) and in driving values-based institutional and cultural change (Marga Inc., 2024). Nonetheless, Cantor built a robust and diverse cabinet representing all the major functions of the university who coalesced around this shared vision and collectively worked to infuse values-based anchor work throughout the institution, and this will be key to any sustainability. This is particularly significant given Orphan and Hartley’s (2021) finding that “ideal-centered change is a dynamic process that necessitates ongoing cultural engagement with no end point” (p. 407). In other
words, there is no true end state of institutional change. For RU-N, the change process was also
deeply connected to its engagement with the community.

New Role 2: Communities of Experts

Returning to Cantor’s outside-in framework for mutual transformation, a key animating
feature of Rutgers-Newark’s anchor work has been building sustained, trusted, democratic
partnerships and co-creating with community. Guided by what the community needs from the
institution, this framework requires relatively immediate internal changes that are a sharp dissent
from traditional academia. Nancy Cantor and colleagues have emphasized the need to move
away from what Harry Boyte (2009) labeled the “cult of the expert” (p. 2) that focuses on siloed
disciplinary expertise to what she and Peter Englot (2013) have described as a “community of
experts” that values the knowledge of those with and without traditional academic degrees (p.
121). Their concept of “community of experts” draws on David Scobey’s (2002) scholarship
describing innovative, collaborative projects that bring academic and community partners
together “to co-define and co-create public goods” (p. 50). An outside-in approach may be
applicable to all anchor institutions, but it holds particular significance for change within higher
education. To that end, the Rutgers-Newark Strategic Plan put publicly-engaged scholarship as a
central approach for building democratic, mutually beneficial anchor partnerships that would
also be mutually transformative. This approach, therefore, aims to shift the fundamental nature of
an academic institution in a way that is inextricably linked to outside partnerships. This aligns
with the growing literature on community-engaged scholarship as a way of building a more
inclusive epistemology that validates knowledge of those outside the academy (Harkavy, 2023;
Janke et al., 2023) but situates it within a larger organizational change process.
RU-N’s approach to anchor partnerships intentionally created space for community knowledge and expertise. One faculty member who also served in an administrative role described the “humility” and “mutual respect for community indigenous based knowledges.” Another faculty member/administrator noted that community members “are treated as expert who come in and share their information,” which involved “experiment[ing] with different models of this co-teaching, co-learning, and co-creating.” Another administrator with many years of working with community emphasized, “I stopped saying interdisciplinary. I say transdisciplinary because then I can include the community experts in their own ways. So we’re gonna respect everybody who comes to the table with what they’re bringing.” A consistent effort to build “an architecture of full participation” (Sturm et al., 2011) inclusive of diverse scholars inside and outside of the academy, allowed community-engaged scholarship to thrive at RU-N (Janke et al., 2023).

Leaders of community-based organizations also recognized RU-N’s intentional efforts to bring community residents to the table to both inform and provide feedback on research and other anchor initiatives. As described in the case, this included “community engagement on the front end to understand how people in those neighborhoods” are experiencing certain issues, and then returning with preliminary findings to see if they are “consistent with the lived reality of people.” The approach taken by RU-N reflects a growing trend in the service-learning and civic engagement field to move closer to genuine “democratic engagement” (Saltmarsh et al., 2009) that involves “community partners not merely for their ‘voices’ or ‘input’ but especially for their valued expertise and shared authority as both co-creators and co-educators” (Hurd & Bowen, 2019, p. 2). It also reflects a trend toward more critical frameworks and pedagogies, which have
particularly surfaced in the service-learning field in response to historical and current injustices and a desire to help create social change, develop authentic relationships, and redistribute power (Mitchell, 2008; Mitchell & Latta, 2020). Rachel Shah’s (2020) critical community-based epistemologies provides a useful lens in looking at both the “ethical case for considering community knowledges,” building on the work of Paulo Freire and Cornel West, and “philosophical case based on the nature of knowledge,” drawing on the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings and Dolores Delgado Bernal (Shah, 2020, p. 25). The ethical and/or philosophical case for centering community voice and expertise was echoed in various ways across many RU-N faculty (in various schools and departments) and administrators (at different levels), as has been presented here and throughout the case.

As detailed in the case, the Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC) provides a particularly poignant example of co-creating knowledge. Several former and current administrators described NPSC’s approach to genuine community engagement as an evolved process that required intentional training of faculty and relationship building with the community through trusted liaisons. As embedded in a longer quote in the case, NPSC faculty clearly articulated that “the data and results alone could never have done what was achieved without the community being invited to participate, connected with their lived experiences.” In other words, as the criminal justice scholars began to more directly work with local residents, this engagement seems to have evolved from an ethical case to a fully embraced philosophical case of why community knowledge was essential to crime reduction. A useful lens for understanding this evolution is the ‘relationships continuum’ for service-learning and civic engagement developed and later expanded by Robert Bringle, Patti Clayton, Mary Price, and other colleagues (Bringle
et al., 2009; Clayton et al., 2010). Bringle et al. (2009) analyze the quality of relationships between various university and community constituencies (students, organizations in the community, faculty, administrators, and residents) based on the degree to which interactions demonstrate closeness, equity, and integrity. They discuss how such relationships can evolve, either progressing or regressing, along this continuum from exploitative to transactional to transformational, as demonstrated in Figure 2 (Bringle et al., 2009, p. 8). While both Shah’s (2020) and Bringle, Clayton, and Price’s (2009) frameworks were developed with a primary focus on service-learning or community-based learning, they hold significance for the mutually transformative aims of anchor engagement.

**Figure 2**

*Relationships Continuum (Bringle et al., 2009, p. 4)*

As the community and university voices presented in the RU-N case study make clear, mutually transformative anchor-community partnerships require trust. While specific university
representatives initially served as the “ambassador of trust” (as one faculty member referred to a long-time administrator) or as “the trusted voice” (as one community partner referred to a long-time faculty member), this trust had spread to many individuals and initiatives and at least to some extent the institution as a whole, even if it was always a work in progress. This reflects Bringle, Clayton, and Price’s (2009) notion that “individual relationships, whether transactional or transformational, can be the basis for developing long-term partnerships between groups” (p.11). Bringle and Clayton developed the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES) as one tool to help operationalize and assess democratic campus-community partnerships (Kniffin et al., 2020). In their 2020 piece, they and other practitioner scholars pose for further inquiry: “What contextual factors (e.g., pre-established trust, relationship between participants and facilitator, community or campus setting, composition of group) influence the effectiveness of using such tools to improve relationships?” (Kniffin et al., 2020, p. 15). The Rutgers-Newark case seems to demonstrate trust as the most critical attribute at all levels and stages of engagement. Newark campus and community partners continually described how it was trust that allowed university and community members to come to the table as genuine partners, trust that kept them at the table, and it was the tangible impact of their work together that reinforced that trust and brought them, and others, back to the table. As described in a poignant quote in the case, authentic dialogue and shared authority in the Reparative Justice project was made possible through the “pre-work” that had already laid a foundation of trust.

Community-based organization leaders emphasized that the trust with RU-N had been strengthened not only through authentic and consistent engagement but also tangible results. The increase in Newark residents who enrolled and graduated from RU-N was highlighted as one of
these tangible impacts. This focused work of supporting degree attainment of Newark residents—whether it be through the Honors Living-Learning Community (with approximately half of HLLC’s 200+ scholars being Newark residents), RU-N to the Top (last dollar scholarship program for local residents), transfer pathways (numerous resources to support transition for transfer students), and support of New Jersey STEP (education for re-entering citizens)—provides a compelling example of how this work all comes together at RU-N under the broader theme of equity in a way that is mutually transformative for campus and community. Modeling a focus on communities of experts and critical community-based epistemology, HLLC’s mission and social justice curriculum emphasize building upon the “knowledge and lived experiences” of its students. In a similar vein, the “Lives in Translation” project centers the expertise of RU-N students’ 40+ home languages in providing translation and interpreting services, particularly in legal clinics and nonprofits supporting Newark’s immigrant communities. While long touted as one of most diverse institutions in the country, the percentage of Newark residents among the RU-N student body specifically rose from four percent in 2014 to fourteen percent by 2022. Inclusion of both student and community partner expertise in generating knowledge, in addition to further diversifying its faculty, represents Rutgers-Newark’s efforts for epistemic justice under an anchor framework (Janke et al, 2023; Shah, 2020).

As noted, what began as trust between individual representatives had largely come to transcend specific relationships. One additional reason that such trust may have come more readily in Newark than perhaps in other university-community partnership settings was the makeup of the students, staff, and faculty. As one prominent community leader, alumni and advisory board member observed:
I don’t think the general populace is suspicious of Rutgers Newark, largely because many of the people involved on the university side; if they are not of this community, the Newark community, they are of communities that look like Newark. They bring backgrounds that are similar to this environment. And for those who don’t bring that background, they are expected to become familiar with it.

Of course, the building of a more diverse faculty, staff, and student body that was not only reflective of the surrounding community but was also specifically comprised of local residents was an intentional equity strategy under RU-N’s anchor framework—as was the intentionality of its engagement process. Hiring Newark residents, in particular, was elevated by RU-N's work with the city and other anchors under the ‘Hire-Buy-Live’ campaign. It is this cross-sector role I turn back to now.

*New Role 3: Anchor Collaborative*

As noted above (under New Goal 2) and detailed in the case, the Newark Anchor Collaborative served as an action-oriented learning community aimed at creating transformative policies and practices across institutions. Started by Rutgers-Newark and Prudential Financial, the Collaborative now includes at least 20 members representing a range of sectors (higher education, healthcare, arts and culture, corporations, and nonprofits) under AITF’s broad definition of anchors. Nancy Cantor and Peter Englot have long highlighted the benefits of multi-institution and cross-sector partnerships for solving complex challenges in urban environments and having sustainable community-wide impact (Cantor and Englot, 2013; Hodges and Dubb, 2012). In Newark, RU-N was helping to push others to realize their role as anchors, which in turn pushed back on the university (and to some extent all of Rutgers) from the outside-in. Rutgers-Newark particularly innovated and accelerated the investment of its economic resources, a critical component of a comprehensive anchor strategy, as part of this city-wide campaign.
Drawing on the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz, Tierney (1988) described organizational culture in higher education as “an interconnected web that cannot be understood unless one looks not only at the structure and natural laws of that web, but also at the actors’ interpretations of the web itself” (p.4). He continues, “Organizational culture, then, is the study of particular webs of significance within an organizational setting” (Tierney, 1988, p. 4). For RU-N, these webs were not only strengthened internally through the anchor framework, but they also extended into the community and across the city, with a new level of shared understanding and goals.

Like its engagement with community organizations, trust was also significant for building an effective city-wide collaboration. Cantor and her senior cabinet earned the trust of the new Mayor, other legislative representatives, and leaders of other large institutions, who were open to working as partners in the revitalization of Newark. One anchor partner emphasized the “really trusted foundational relationship that allows us to take risk together.” As detailed in the case, several stakeholders also commented on the timing of Chancellor Cantor’s and Mayor Baraka’s tenures, with one board member calling it “serendipity,” and one administrator referring to the “watershed moment” when many new collaborative leaders assumed posts across the city. The literature reminds us that institutional change “must be both intentional and continuous” to be successful. “Although intentional change is always subject to the winds of serendipity, it involves charting a deliberate course” (Eckel et al., 1998, p. 1). It seems RU-N indeed had both intention and serendipity on its side. While the City of Newark may have been primed, Cantor was seen as the key champion and driver, giving them the language and scholarship of an anchor institution mission. Connecting back directly to Cubin’s framework, he emphasizes that “basic social and political changes would need to occur outside of schools” [emphasis in original]” to
create the conditions in which “fundamental second-order changes that will sweep away current structures”—that is, in a way that will be both accepted and sustained (1988, p. 344). In addition to the political shifts and readiness within the city, Rutgers-Newark enjoyed several internal changes during the period of study that also provided such conditions. As discussed previously, the state legislative changes that granted more autonomy to Rutgers’ three campuses and established the campus advisory board in 2013 allowed Nancy Cantor to come into a space ready and empowered to embrace a new identity.

Meanwhile, the momentum of national networks pushing for the recognition of publicly-engaged scholarship, such as Imagining America, and for the role of anchor institutions in helping to improve urban communities through mutually beneficial partnerships, such as the Anchor Institutions Task Force, helped to provide further political and social capital to fully embrace this new institutional identity at this time. The importance of Chancellor Cantor’s leadership role, as well as leadership roles of other key change agents at RU-N, in these networks is not to be underestimated. This work was of course part of Cantor’s personal identity, which has been critical to her ability to embody shared equity leadership, as discussed above. But she also pushed for RU-N to serve a national model of an engaged anchor institution, as described in the case. This also aligns with what we know about change in higher education: “True institutionalization requires radical restructuring, the realigning of all the resources of the institution (structural and ideological)” to the new purpose, alongside a recognition by the university “that they are part of a larger movement that must challenge the norms of the entire academy to ultimately achieve complete success at the local level” (Hartley et al., 2005, p. 220). Indeed, these new goals and roles at RU-N—the anchor mission involving strategic and
comprehensive engagement of university resources, the dedication to mutual transformation, the focus on publicly-engaged scholarship, shared leadership, and multi-institution collaboration—all run afoul of institutional norms. They required second-order change, and while not yet complete, Cantor and her team put a number of structural and ideological elements in place to support and hopefully sustain this transformation.

**New Structures**

In terms of new structures for second-order change, Chancellor Cantor and her team supported academic centers, signature initiatives, and physical infrastructures for collaboration and co-creation; created multi-institution collaboratives that supported an anchor institution mission; as well as developed strategic resources and policies to support these efforts. In all these efforts, stakeholders at many levels, on and off campus, have been involved and the work has been continually championed by the Chancellor’s Office. As the literature tells us, structural supports need to be met with “widespread ideological support” to survive (Orphan & Hartley, 2021, p. 403). The following efforts at RU-N, which involved both structural and ideological components, were helping to “weave the innovation into the fabric of the organization’s expected operations” (Kanter, 1983, p. 300). It is worth highlighting again that, with Cantor’s outside-in framework, those expectations of RU-N are now set both inside and outside of the campus.

**New Structures 1: Academic Centers and Third Spaces**

Several existing academic or research centers across Rutgers-Newark's campus came to be held up as key components of advancing the anchor mission. This included centers that focused on K-12 educational policy and partnerships such as the Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies and the Center for Pre-College Programs, to those focused on equitable
economic growth such as the Center on Law, Inequality and Metropolitan Equity (CLiME) and the Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development. From the perspective of community organization leaders, these various centers were often critical partners and trusted collaborators in their daily work—the programming and projects in thematic areas that engaged residents, as well as publicly-engaged scholarship that informed local policy. Several centers seemed to shift their focus to align strategically with the anchor framework. The Office of University-Community Partnerships, for example, re-framed its longstanding community engagement work as part of advancing an anchor mission, as well as embarked on new anchor work such as establishing the Center for Health Equity and Community Engagement with the School of Public Affairs and Administration in 2020. Meanwhile, the Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC) emerged out of earlier work by Criminal Justice faculty and came to be presented as the “Rutgers-Newark, School of Criminal Justice Anchor Initiative” and eventually a model of co-creation (NPSC, n.d.). Reshaping existing structures to align with new institutional priorities can be especially important in helping “ideal-centered organizational change” endure (Orphan & Hartley, 2021). Brand new centers, such the P3 Collaboratory, were also established to advance the anchor framework as an immediate outgrowth of the 2014 strategic plan—in this case, to serve as unique space to nurture and advise faculty on publicly-engaged scholarship outside of any one individual school or discipline. Other new centers developed that helped advance specific initiatives under the anchor framework with both engaged research and practice, such as the Center for Local Supply Chain Resiliency in 2022.

RU-N's anchor strategy also created new physical structures and spaces that brought faculty, students, and community residents together in what Cantor has long referred to as “third
spaces” that intentionally attempt to break down “established and often unequal relationships of power and expertise” and instead bring university and community partners together to co-create (Cantor et al., 2013, p. 27). Express Newark beautifully exemplified this type of physical third space for the arts. Another significant new physical infrastructure was the Honors Living-Learning Community (HLLC), which created an intergenerational and interdisciplinary residential and academic space. The intentional process in physical development projects, built on conditions of mutual trust and respect also mattered. As described in the case, local residents recognized Rutgers-Newark’s attention to the community’s needs and concerns in these types of real estate developments, not only inviting community feedback but also working intentionally to restore historical buildings and match current architecture.

Cantor specifically sought to embed anchor work into the research, curriculum, and operations of the university. She reflects in the AITF Leadership Guide on how this was key to “engaging staff and students and faculty directly in the work so that it doesn’t seem like it’s siphoned off into some corner of the institution or some particular people’s responsibilities” (Marga Inc., 2024, p. 3). The many centers and initiatives at RU-N focused on different aspects of anchor work reflect Norris and Weiss’s (2019) finding that the “depth and breadth of activities associated with anchor work and how structure should follow strategy… necessitates greater alignment and higher vertical structures partnered with strong leadership” (p. 63). More broadly, these authors discuss how the infrastructure historically used to support community engagement, particularly a dedicated center or office, may differ from the vertical and horizontal structures needed to institutionalize an anchor institution mission. This continues to be an area for much further study, but RU-N’s anchor framework sheds light on a more integrated strategy.
Moreover, the range of centers and spaces now bringing communities of experts in Newark together through trusted democratic partnerships makes the work more likely to endure.

New Structures 2: Resource Allocation

RU-N’s strategic allocation of resources both rewarded those who were already involved in community engagement and also created intentional support structures for those who wanted to become more involved under the anchor framework. The level and source of resources also signaled this work was not a passing trend. Of particular note from the case study, Chancellor’s Seed Grants emerged directly out of the strategic planning process as a way to fund anchor projects that wouldn’t depend solely on school or departmental budgets. Funds for the grants came from a combination of state budget and tuition. These seed grants were frequently cited by administrators, faculty, and staff as a key source of structural support for taking existing innovative work to the next level and generating new engaged research projects or initiatives under the anchor framework, some of which have now leveraged major external grants. While the grants themselves may not continue under future leadership, they truly seeded things that cannot be simply undone. Other major anchor initiatives, like Express Newark, HLLC, and NPSC, directly received funds as strategic projects coming out of the Chancellor’s Office, which in turn, helped leverage additional sources of funding. For both Express Newark and HLLC, for example, this involved significant resources invested by Prudential Financial as well as cost-sharing with the School of Arts and Sciences–Newark. NPSC, in turn, involved cost sharing with the School of Criminal Justice.

As is the situation for many university-community engagement efforts, and described in RU-N’s case, some stakeholders had concerns about sustaining and/or growing financial
resources. Several university administrators and board members discussed how an anchor institution mission encompasses a comprehensive approach, but it is not possible to invest in every area. This tied into some tensions in how limited resources at a public institution were being spent, as well as frustration over not receiving enough resources from Rutgers central. One faculty administrator highlighted, “We need to enlist more of the resources of the [Rutgers] system itself....We’ve been systemically underfunded historically, and Nancy’s been fantastic in raising money, but I think that honeymoon period has long gone and it’s much harder to have those monies available.” Moreover, Chancellor’s strategic funds at this public institution were typically running at a loss, which put some fiscal pressure on the senior leadership. Nonetheless, this strategic investment was critical for leveraging other resources on and off campus. “It's not that we have always been the full supporters, but we’ve certainly been a partner budgetarily in all of it,” reflected Nancy in our interview, “because that sparks others to contribute.” The role of building collaborative coalitions cannot be forgotten here. Would Prudential’s 10 million dollar investment in 2019 to support cohorts of Newark residents in the HLLC have come to fruition if RU-N and Prudential had not deepened their partnership and collective vision through the Newark Anchor Collaborative (NAC)? Overall, RU-N’s anchor collaborations across Newark have helped leverage significant funds from corporate partners, foundations, state legislature, and federal agencies. While these other sources have been significant for building out the work, dedicated internal funds are critical for sustaining anchor engagement (Hodges & Dubb, 2012).

New Structures 3: Policy

Last but certainly not least for both structural and ideological support is the establishment of policies that support systemic change. Perhaps of greatest significance here is RU-N’s work to
advance recognition and rewards of publicly-engaged scholarship into the promotion and tenure guidelines, which surely involves second-order change. This included not only embedding this scholarship further into the curriculum but also supporting its development through resources, infrastructure, and rewards. While still a work in progress, RU-N leaders took intentional steps to embed recognition and rewards for this work in the centralized promotion and tenure policy of the Rutgers University system. Of particular note was the Guidelines for Evaluating Publicly-Engaged Scholarship, established for the Rutgers system in 2019, as described in the case (Rutgers, n.d.). As recent literature has emphasized, it is important to have core values and principles of community-engaged or publicly-engaged scholarship specifically in the policy text (Janke et al., 2023). In addition to trying to support faculty at various levels advance through promotion and tenure, it was also significant that RU-N put forth some publicly-engaged scholars for Rutgers’ distinguished professor category.

As also detailed in the case, there remained some tensions here, as the work resonated in some disciplines more than others, and faculty were still looking for further specificity in the evaluation guidelines. This of course all reflects the complexity of a loosely coupled organization that is mired in a deep legacy of disciplinary silos and norms. More broadly, Rutgers-Newark faced not only the common challenges of a decentralized and complex research institution but also challenges from being part of a larger public university system. This involved overcoming additional layers of bureaucracy, academic norms, and fiscal constraints. Many of these big challenges have been discussed already, but it also includes more mundane burdens for on-the-ground collaborations—such as credentialing people from the community to have access to specific buildings or computer software, sharing grants with community partner organizations, or
paying individuals outside of the institution in a timely way. Some faculty felt this “compromised” their efforts. Solutions were embraced by Rutgers-Newark leadership but beholden to the policies of the larger Rutgers system. The literature reminds us that consistent recognition by leadership is critical for successful change efforts, regardless of institution type: “Leaders or prime movers have to demonstrate that they want the changes and continue to push for them even when it looks as if things might slide back. In successful change efforts, there is a continuing series of reinforcing messages from leaders, both explicit and symbolic” (Kanter, 1983, p. 300). Continuous support of publicly-engaged scholarship also helped move institutional practices and policy forward. For example, Lyons’ extensive research and mapping of supply chains across the city has helped support local minority- and women-owned businesses and increase local procurement by the university as well as at the many institutions that are part of the Newark Anchor Collaborative. These efforts also influenced Rutgers University’s review (through a purchasing disparity study conducted by Lyons) and further development of its centralized supplier diversity program. Many other areas of publicly-engaged scholarship were championed at RU-N that were aimed at creating city and statewide policy, from affordable housing to educational equity to rights for formerly incarcerated individuals and more. All these areas support a comprehensive vision of an anchor institution.

One of Cantor’s mottos for anchor work is “one step forward, twenty steps back” because of the clear recognition of the challenges of embedding change in academia. Every step forward was still significant in creating short-term wins for the transformation process, which the literature says is key to successful long-term change. Kotter (2009) emphasizes, “Creating short-
term wins is different from hoping for short-term wins. The latter is passive, the former active” (Kotter, 2009, p. 65). He goes on to stress the importance of not declaring victory too early:

Instead of declaring victory, leaders of successful efforts use the credibility afforded by short-term wins to tackle even bigger problems. They go after systems and structures that are not consistent with the transformation vision and have not been confronted before. They pay great attention to who is promoted, who is hired, and how people are developed. They include new reengineering projects that are even bigger in scope than the initial ones. (p. 66)

Nancy Cantor was certainly not one to declare victory early, if ever. But when looking at the new goals, roles, and structures she put into place, it is easy to see the many steps forward she actively carved along the way and how this laid the path for more transformational change.

**KEY INSIGHTS**

Overall, the study of Rutgers University – Newark points to both the potential of an anchor institution framework to accelerate second-order institutional change, and highlights some of the nuances and ongoing challenges of completing and sustaining that change within higher education given the entrenched norms of academia. Much of the experience at RU-N confirms what we know about organizational change and specifically about change within higher education. But the RU-N experience also highlights a few specific insights for the growing field of anchor institution engagement.

Culture and context matter. Rutgers-Newark was a ready space to embed an anchor institution framework into its institutional mission, elevating its identity as a fully engaged urban university. Likewise, the city of Newark and many of the key institutional players were ready to invest more strategically as a collaborative. But they—the university and the city—needed the vision and leadership that Nancy Cantor brought them in 2014. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter
reminds us about leading change, “Change masters are—literally—the right people in the right place at the right time” (Kanter, 1983, p. 306).

Leadership indeed matters. But not just senior executive leadership, and not just the alignment of senior leadership with on-the-ground community work—both of which are crucial for anchor work. A comprehensive anchor vision involves all functions of the university and cannot be siloed off. RU-N had both a visionary leader and embraced a shared equity leadership model, as well as had key champions spread throughout the university, in the community, and on its advisory board, which makes the work more ready to withstand change.

Trusted democratic partnerships and process matter. The inclusive strategic planning process and regular socialization of new policies and practices and the ongoing process of engaging authentically with community were critical to ongoing trust, buy-in, and shared commitment across various stakeholders. Importantly, the work external to the institution—building and nurturing trusted partnerships with community organizations, with the city, and with other anchor institutions—encouraged transformation within the institution itself. The vision, values, and intentionality of the anchor ideal at RU-N (comprehensive engagement of the entire institution, including academic, human, economic, cultural resources in trusted democratic partnerships with the local community; focus on social and racial justice and equity; institutionalization and mutual transformation; shared equity leadership; and building communities of experts and a cross-sector coalition) were key to what change was needed and how it was carried out. The experience at Rutgers-Newark reinforces the findings of the ACE Project on higher education transformation in 1998 that “local context” is critical, “the power of language” cannot be underestimated, and that “key stakeholders must have input into the change
process and believe that their contributions are valued” (Eckel et al., 1998, p. 9). Indeed, the experience of Rutgers-Newark demonstrates that the anchor institution mission provides a useful test bed for examining transformational change within higher education. Nonetheless, the culture of the Rutgers University system was tough to crack and reminds us just how hard this change in higher education can be. Being part of movement-building networks and activity that help support transformation within higher education as a whole is an important piece of the work.

A lot remains to be seen, particularly given the leadership transition on the horizon. RU-N Provost and Executive Vice-Chancellor Jeffrey A. Robinson, who was selected to that post by Cantor, will become interim chancellor in June 2024. Robinson has been a leading faculty member at Rutgers Business School since 2008 and is the academic director of The Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development. The current RU-N leadership team thus has an additional window to solidify their anchor mission and identity. As the research shows, “Transitions in administrative leadership test a change’s durability” (Orphan & Hartley, p. 390). Will the second-order institutional change put in place to support an anchor mission be sufficient to withstand leadership transition? Only time will tell. The strength and stickiness of RU-N’s anchor work—especially the collaborative leadership and many webs of relationships RU-N has spun across campus and out into the community and city—can only help. After all, a spider’s silk is five times stronger than steel of the same diameter, and its web structure is built to survive any one strand being broken. The diverse, inclusive coalitions built internally and externally will of course have to continue to advance and maintain these complex and beautiful webs.
In many urban communities, relatively well-resourced colleges and universities stand in stark contrast to the conditions of generational poverty, under-resourced schools, inadequate housing and healthcare that co-exist around them. Higher education institutions, particularly urban research universities, have the opportunity—and I would argue the responsibility—to work in deep partnership with their local communities in ways that will advance knowledge for social good and create more equitable, inclusive communities. An anchor institution strategy—particularly one which focuses on comprehensive engagement of academic and economic resources for mutual benefit, institutionalization, and a democratic process that centers community voice and co-creation—provides a particularly powerful approach for mutual transformation.

This study provided the opportunity to dig deep into the nuanced experiences of one higher education institution’s efforts to realize an anchor mission and vision with its local partners. Given the complexity, breadth, and depth required for comprehensive, intentional anchor work, focusing on a single site allowed me to ‘look under the hood’ at how things have been operationalized and gather diverse perspectives across campus, the community, and the city. While it was Rutgers-Newark’s pioneering work in this space that led me to select it as my site of study, I did not realize just how special of a place it was until I began my data collection. The deep collegiality both on and off campus, the commitment to and honoring of place, and the unwavering focus on equity was palpable in one-on-one interviews, in meeting spaces with the senior cabinet, and in gatherings of the advisory board and other community partners. Chancellor Nancy Cantor set the tone for shared equity leadership that crossed campus and community
boundaries, but it resonated with the longstanding culture and values of Rutgers University – Newark and the greater Newark community.

As a community-engaged scholar-practitioner, my understanding of the work of an anchor institution has evolved throughout my doctoral journey, and as a lifelong learner, I expect it to continue to do so. When I first began researching and doing case studies on anchor work, around 2007, the anchor field was just emerging and there was a desire to emphasize the economic and institutional resources that could be leveraged and aligned with academic and human resources for place-based mutual benefit, since this was a phenomenon that was both under-tapped and understudied. Perhaps because it was both an emerging concept and an emerging language, the economic components (e.g. local purchasing, hiring, real estate investment) began to take forefront to the anchor mission, even though many of us encouraged that it must be part of a comprehensive approach. Based on this study and my ongoing practice at my own research university, I have returned to a sharper focus on the essential role of place-based community-engaged scholarship for fundamentally shifting the institutional culture in a way that allows an anchor mission to be built into a university’s core identity and mission. This proved to be some of the hardest and most nuanced work happening at RU-N, and it is even clearer to me that a more systemic shift is needed across higher education to get to the next level of institutionalization. Pioneering efforts at RU-N, such as the Honors Living-Learning Community, Express Newark, and the Newark Public Safety Collaborative, among others, demonstrated how an anchor framework focused on place, trusted democratic partnerships, co-creation, and social justice and equity can help lead to mutual transformation with community-engaged scholarship as a core component of a comprehensive strategy. In addition, the critical
role of leadership for instilling and sustaining an anchor vision has become particularly salient in
the field, and the study of RU-N clearly demonstrated this centrality and its potential fragility. To
this end, the Anchor Institutions Task Force has taken focused efforts to document lessons from
existing anchor leaders, including Nancy Cantor, and help develop the next generation of leaders.
I am thankful for the warmth and wisdom of the people at Rutgers University – Newark and in
the broader Newark community for sharing so many insights, and it is my hope that this
documentation gives something back to them and something to the field to learn from.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

By connecting Rutgers University – Newark’s unique context and experiences to
organizational change theory and scholarship on community engagement and critical
community-based epistemologies, some more general lessons were gleaned. An anchor
institution framework can provide a clear and compelling vision for propelling a university’s
community engagement and equity work to the next level—and beginning (or furthering) an
organizational change process that builds the work into the very heart and identity of the
institution. Some of the essential elements for the positive momentum around this anchor vision
at RU-N included building on the institution’s existing strengths and culture, leading with an
outside-in framework for mutual transformation, engaging in an intentional and democratic
planning and implementation process, and developing diverse, inclusive coalitions of campus
and community partners to carry out this agenda. These elements, in turn, helped embed the
anchor work into the core identity of the institution from the perspective of both campus and
community stakeholders, as well as other local anchor institutions—all of whom have begun to
hold the university to this high standard. This doesn’t come without its tension points, as RU-N
also demonstrated the struggle of most higher education institutions to balance limited resources, competing priorities, and the entrenched siloization and disciplinary norms of academia. Through an anchor vision involving all aspects of the institution and centered around an equity agenda on and off campus, RU-N leadership made some important strides in reconciling those tensions even as it was a continuing process. Rutgers University – Newark’s experience sheds some light on the importance of innovative, community-centric institutions pioneering new ways of creating epistemic and social justice while simultaneously pushing for broader systemic change. This both holds significance for how a university system might go about advancing anchor work (by building on the successes piloted at a member campus, for example), in addition to providing a global example of what might be possible.

A few other specific findings are worth highlighting. This study showed the importance of an ethical and philosophical understanding for the value of, and then the direct operationalization of, a diverse community of experts to generate knowledge that will address society’s most pressing problems. In other words, it is not just knowledge produced by the academy for the intention of public good. It is knowledge co-generated by bringing together the diverse collective expertise of university and community members that will create innovative solutions to local real-world problems. This overall philosophy and process of co-creation can also simultaneously strengthen trust and reciprocity between campus and community partners. The study of Rutgers-Newark demonstrated trust as a critical attribute at all levels and stages of anchor engagement. Individual ambassadors of trust, as well as intentional institutional commitments, helped bring about the building of broader trusted tables that made a lot of the co-created knowledge and work together possible in a virtuous cycle. Taking on this genuinely
collaborative approach at an institutional level also helps brings about the transition from merely being an anchor based on location and resources to an actively and intentionally engaged anchor. This study demonstrated that a fully inclusive approach and valuing of diverse knowledges and lived experiences can involve not only community partners outside of campus but also university students themselves. RU-N’s commitment and success in increasing the numbers of Newark residents attaining Rutgers-Newark degrees, including through its pioneering honors living-learning community, provides a compelling example of how the anchor framework can bring all these pieces together. This was one of many examples in which the university’s actions matched its words, the impact of which was felt strongly by community partners.

This study reinforced mutual transformation as a critical value, process, and goal for the anchor institution ideal. For an urban research university, this means a very deep focus on the academic and institutional culture and operations. Community-engaged or publicly-engaged scholarship is therefore an essential component to embedding the work into the core research, teaching, and learning functions of the institution. Given the entrenched systems and traditions across higher education that actively work against these efforts, moving the needle on this work requires strategic work on the ground to build community-engaged scholarship into the rewards and recognition structure and to hire faculty who want to do this work. It also requires being part of national and perhaps global networks and movement building activities to shift the sector as a whole. For anchor work to really take root in institutional culture, the engaged scholarship work must be systemically advanced as part of an integrated strategy that includes the strategic and democratic investment of the university’s economic and institutional resources. Rutgers-Newark leadership used the anchor framework to support existing and develop new academic centers,
signature initiatives, and physical infrastructures for innovation, collaboration, and co-creation. They also developed strategic resources and policies to support these efforts. The work underway at RU-N sheds some light on how these intentional and inextricable connections can be made that involve not only the entire operations of the institution but are also intertwined with how the university engages with community members and other local partners.

In sum, based on the findings from Rutgers-Newark, some of the specific practices and policies that I would recommend to institutional leaders looking to advance an anchor vision as part of their core mission and identity: First, develop an inclusive strategic planning or visioning process that builds on the institution’s strengths, values, and existing connections to community and coalesces under a bold anchor institution framework. Take an “outside-in” approach by asking what the community or broader public needs from the university and what changes would be needed to rise to that task. Enlist trusted leaders within the institution to champion the effort and socialize the new vision. Engage stakeholders at all levels in large (e.g., townhalls) and small (e.g., charrettes and study groups) settings, on and off campus, to contribute to the new plan. Provide enough specificity such that the plan can begin to be used as a roadmap but also allow it serve as a living document that continues to evolve. Include community-engaged or publicly-engaged scholarship as a cornerstone. Second, don’t carry out the agenda alone. Build a diverse senior cabinet (representing all major functions of the institution) that believes in and helps carry out the vision based on a shared equity leadership model, as well as empower change agents throughout the campus and develop inclusive communities of experts that drive specific initiatives forward. Ensure that there are consistent feedback loops between stakeholders at various levels of the institution and the broader community. Third, invest strategic resources
such as seed funds, new research centers, and physical spaces shared by campus and community that support and incentivize community-engaged scholarship. This will provide structural and ideological support for the anchor vision and bolster the co-creation being done on the ground.

Fourth, advance strategic policies that fundamentally change core culture and operations, such as promotion and tenure policies that recognize and reward community-engaged scholarship and procurement policies that encourage investment in local minority-owned and women-owned businesses. Fifth, identify other institutions in your region that might be ready to conceive of themselves as anchors in an intentional and strategic way. Then build a values-based, action-oriented, cross-sector collaborative that can build collective goals, learn from each other, and share accountability for building a more equitable and inclusive community. Finally, continually communicate the value and evolving vision of your work internally and externally, including to your board, your faculty, staff, and students, your partners, as well as broader higher education and anchor networks.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study was guided by the research questions exploring institutional change and community engagement processes. Many aspects of Rutgers-Newark’s robust anchor work could have been explored further. For example, this study took a more macro look at all the work that fell under the anchor framework while providing brief details on just a few initiatives to give readers a flavor of the comprehensive, integrated, and collaborative approach to engagement. There are many specific innovative initiatives connecting RU-N and the greater Newark community that warrant fuller exploration. Given the complexity of being part of the Rutgers system, additional research could also explore these dynamics further, including conducting
interviews and collecting data from central administration, as well as conducting studies of institutionalizing change in other public university systems. More generally, additional case studies that dive deep into other university’s efforts to advance an anchor strategy from institutional and community perspectives would be useful to compare to the Rutgers University–Newark experience.

Anchor work takes a long-term vision and commitment. Given the important role of university leadership, as discussed, and the fact that the average tenure of college presidents continues to shrink, with increasingly tense socio-political environments, it’s important that the work has staying power. Further research might be done to track this work more longitudinally to see how an anchor vision does or does not get truly embedded into institutional culture in a way that survives leadership transitions.

A multi-case study could also look at general preconditions or approaches that make the work more or less likely to be accepted and stick across diverse contexts, including public and private research universities. This could also involve looking more explicitly at how a wide range of institution types—community colleges, land-grant institutions, historically black colleges and universities, liberal arts colleges, research universities, rural institutions, and so on—define and advance an anchor mission. Among other factors, conditions that may affect the anchor mission include how reflective the student body is of its surrounding community and the level of historical mistrust between communities and institutions that must be acknowledged and worked through. These are areas worthy of further exploration.

Other scholars could also bring different disciplinary lens to the work. This might allow for greater focus on quantitative and qualitative impact at the community, institutional, and
systems level. It could also involve looking more directly at the development and impact of cross-sector anchor collaboratives, including the process of collectively advancing and renewing anchor ideals and the types of relationships and power dynamics that might be involved.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

The timing of my doctoral journey was such that I began writing while the RU-N campus and many Newark partners were roiling over the abrupt ending of Nancy Cantor’s contract. One of the community leaders interviewed for this project read a draft of my case study chapter and wrote that it was a “bitter-sweet experience,” given their feelings about the circumstances of the leadership transition while being able to recollect all the good work done together. Even as an outside researcher conducting this case study (which perhaps was never truly outside given my predilection for community-engaged participatory action research), writing this paper was indeed a bitter-sweet experience for me. I had to balance giving testimony to the exemplary leadership and efforts to advance and sustain an anchor mission that my findings highlighted while recognizing other strong forces that were at play and could potentially unravel incredible progress. But I will echo the response of another individual who reviewed the case and is deeply invested in Rutgers-Newark and the Newark community that “my hope springs eternal.”

Higher education continues to be in precarious times. Amidst ongoing financial and enrollment challenges, increased stratification, the end of affirmative action in admissions, and a waning in public confidence and trust in higher education, campuses across the country have been facing student protests at a scale not seen in decades as well as politically motivated attacks from government and donors. An anchor institution mission might well be one of the most
effective strategies for bringing local partners together across differences and building trusted
democratic partnerships that can create more equitable and inclusive campuses and communities.
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Dissertation Study: Towards Realizing Anchor Institution Ideals within Higher Education: An Exploration of One Urban Research University’s Efforts to Advance a Comprehensive, Democratic, Mutually Transformative Anchor Strategy

Research Question: How is one university attempting to realize the ideals of an anchor institution strategy with its local community—including comprehensive engagement of academic and economic resources for mutual benefit, institutionalization of engagement, and a democratic process that centers community voice and co-creation—and what kind of institutional changes (policy, practice, culture) have facilitated these goals?

Questions for Rutgers – Newark faculty, staff, administrators

[Confirm Informed Consent and Permission to Record]

1) What is your current professional role and what drew you to Rutgers University-Newark?

2) When you think about the work you are doing to help Rutgers-Newark serve as an anchor institution, what have been some of your biggest successes? And what factors have enabled this success?

   a) How do you see your work intersecting with the anchor mission?

3) Do you think there is a collective vision for the anchor work across campus (that is both understood and enacted)?

   a) How do you think others have responded to the change efforts?

   b) How has this shifted over time?

   c) How have/do you continue to cultivate?
4) How has the work been embedded into the research, teaching, and learning of the institution?

5) What kinds of structural supports have been put into place to support, grow, or sustain anchor work? [practices, allocation of resources, supportive policies, strategic coordination, restructuring]

6) What have been some of the key barriers, whether internal or external forces, that have limited the success of these initiatives?

7) From your perspective, how have community members been involved as co-creators and co-educators? [in conceptualizing, designing, implementing, and/or evaluating the specific initiatives and goals involved in these strategies]
   a) How have you intentionally created space for community voice (inclusive of both nonprofit staff and residents) at a structural level? [advisory boards, participatory research, and/or evaluation]
   b) What barriers to participation of community members do you think must be addressed?

8) What do you hope to see in the next phase of the university’s anchor engagement?
   a) How would Rutgers-Newark and Newark be different if the work were successful?

9) Based on your experiences so far with these kinds of university-community engagement strategies, what have been some of your major lessons professionally?

10) Are there any other key stakeholders from the university or community that you think I should speak with?

11) That wraps up my formal questions. Is there anything else you would like to share before we close?
Questions for Community and City Partners

[Confirm Informed Consent and Permission to Record]

1) What drew you to be involved as a partner with Rutgers University-Newark?

2) Are you familiar with the term “anchor institution” as it refers to the university’s community engagement strategy? If so, how would you define the university’s anchor institution strategy, and what are some examples with which you are familiar?
   a) When you think about the work you are doing with Rutgers-Newark as part of an anchor institution strategy, what have been some of the biggest successes? And what factors have enabled this success?

3) How have you seen this type of engagement from Rutgers-Newark shift over time?
   a) What do you think is the perspective of the broader community?

4) What do you understand the benefits of these initiatives to be for the local community? For the campus? For society in general?

5) From your perspective, in what ways do you see these initiatives incorporating community voice and co-creation?
   a) How have community members been involved in conceptualizing, designing, implementing, and/or evaluating the specific initiatives and goals involved in these strategies?
   b) What barriers to participation of community members do you think must be addressed?

6) What have been some of the key barriers, whether internal or external forces, that have limited the success of these initiatives?
7) What do you hope to see in the next phase of the university’s anchor engagement?

8) Based on your experiences so far with these kinds of university-community engagement strategies, what have been some of your major lessons that you would share with others?

9) Are there any other key stakeholders from the university or community that you think I should speak with?

10) That wraps up my formal questions. Is there anything else you would like to share before we close?
### APPENDIX B: SAMPLE OF INDUCTIVE CODES

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<tr>
<th>Asset-based approach</th>
<th>Lack of connectivity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Leadership transition</td>
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<td>Centers (structural support)</td>
<td>Mission</td>
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<td>CES Training</td>
<td>National model</td>
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<td>City relations (ecosystem)</td>
<td>Pioneering</td>
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<td>Collective vision</td>
<td>Precursors</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>Presidential leadership</td>
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<td>Community co-ownership</td>
<td>Promotion and tenure</td>
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<td>Community impact</td>
<td>Reflection and documentation</td>
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<td>Community voice centered</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<td>Competition for resources/recognition</td>
<td>Resources</td>
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<td>Comprehensive approach</td>
<td>Rewards and recognition</td>
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<td>Cultural shift</td>
<td>Rutgers system</td>
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<td>Culture</td>
<td>Seed funding (incentives)</td>
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<td>Dean leadership</td>
<td>Shared equity leadership</td>
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<td>Disruption of academic norms</td>
<td>Strategic plan</td>
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<td>Faculty leadership</td>
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<td>Humility</td>
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