

University of Massachusetts Boston

Building, Bridging, and Bonding

A Strategic Action Prelude for Campus–Community Partnerships



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Prepared by the Office of Community Partnerships/Division of
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Preface

I am pleased to submit *Building, Bridging, and Bonding: A Strategic Action Prelude for Campus–Community Partnerships*. Since I became chancellor in 2007, I have watched the University of Massachusetts Boston undergo a tremendous amount of change. This includes major transformation in the university’s physical, academic, and administrative structures. It is from this growth and more that is planned for the future that the university will continue to position itself to fulfill its promise as a community-engaged institution. Community is the fabric that created, formed, and has continued to shape UMass Boston from its origins. It is only through collaborations with communities that this university will continue to progress in the future.

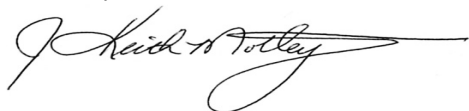
I regard partnerships as playing a critical role in the advancement of our university and our communities. This includes collaborating to ensure our students are not only getting a world-class education and experience, but also connecting to professional and community networks that will serve them for the rest of their lives, as students and as members of their communities and professions. Partnerships in which we engage have profound relevance for our students, because the young women and men who spend their days and nights working on class assignments and engaging in UMass Boston’s classrooms are the same young women and men who were raised, live, serve, and often work in the communities where we currently report having partnerships—whether across the street or across the globe.

In addition to enriching the academic experience of the university, I see partners playing a critical role in helping us to address and solve some of the greatest challenges that have plagued societies around the world. This will be done, in part, through collaborating to better understand the issues we face, their root causes, and the best approaches for eliminating the problems. Community partners hold a knowledge and expertise that can only manifest itself through the daily interactions of their settings and disciplines. At the same time, our students, faculty, and staff bring their own knowledge, experiences, and expertise. Together is the only way we will be able to make a permanent impact.

And this must be accomplished through intentional collaborations—collaborations that engage a wide range of stakeholders to advance a shared agenda while meeting individual goals and objectives; collaborations that leverage the diverse efforts, expertise, and resources of these stakeholders and that are rooted in a commitment to assessment, communication, and innovation. These ideas speak to UMass Boston’s core identity and foretell how engagement is being strategically institutionalized at the University of Massachusetts Boston to ensure we are advancing real and effective change and have a lasting, positive impact in our communities.

I am excited that the Office of Community Partnerships is engaged in building a solid and sustainable infrastructure to allow for the growth and development of our engagement with the community. Among the many institutional priorities contending for the attention of this public research university, community engagement grounds our identity and links us to our founding charge to “stand with the city.”

Sincerely



J. Keith Motley
Chancellor
University of Massachusetts Boston

Executive Summary

The University of Massachusetts Boston has been a member of the Massachusetts Campus Compact since its early years, with the assertion of our shared mission of strengthening communities through the university's intellectual and cultural resources. Since its founding in 1964, the University of Massachusetts Boston (hereinafter referred to as UMass Boston) has had a rich history of engagement with public and private partners through our research, teaching and learning, service, and leadership. As the only public research institution in the city, our founders sought to create a university that would “stand with the city” and provide students regardless of their backgrounds or socio-economic status with opportunities “equal to the best.” We have taken great pride in our relationships and contributions to the community and continue to stand firm in our commitment to civic engagement as a foundational value and principle. One of the ways in which this has been demonstrated is Chancellor J. Keith Motley's signing of Campus Compact's 30th Anniversary Action Statement in March 2016.

The chancellor created the Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) in 2011 to identify, strengthen, and support the creation of collaborative community partnerships that advance our mission as Boston's public research university. OCP led the successful 2014 self-study for the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification, which documented a rich assortment of activities ranging from participatory action research and service-learning courses, to industry and employer partnerships, to technical assistance and outreach programs at the university. The university's footprint in the community includes more than 3,000 partners through 1,168 projects in 213 Massachusetts municipalities and an additional 240 communities worldwide. The existence of such a full spectrum of engagement serves as a stepping-stone to developing broader campus-wide initiatives that weave together the strengths of existing stakeholders and projects, advance holistic community change, and align with the university's priorities.

With the OCP foundation established, we now embark on the next phase of the university's community-engaged work. The work to date presented here, and the evolving role of UMass Boston as a research-intensive as well as community-engaged university, evokes an action plan that is more indicative of a prelude—signaling the beginning of a new wave of possibilities and emerging opportunities. OCP has spearheaded the development of this strategic action prelude in collaboration with an internal advisory group of leading university faculty and administrators established in fall 2016. This group has guided the development of this plan and the future directions of OCP.

Our approach focuses on areas of opportunities, building from past work and exploring possibilities for the future. We have chosen to highlight three existing initiatives where we see opportunity for further growth: UMass Boston's Engage web portal—which houses all documented campus-community commitments; assessing the Community Engagement Scholars Initiative (CESI)—a service-learning/faculty-development project; and strengthening a working group of multiple campus partners. Also included is a list of ten promising areas of opportunity, some just on the horizon, including a partnership-mapping and strategic action planning process with the local Boston Public Schools, as well as the development of stakeholder advisory groups that provide opportunities for shared visioning and leadership. Others are more long-term items, as more organizational capacity for OCP's work is put in place, such as a faculty fellows model that could help increase the quality of partnership experiences among faculty and in our academics. Our plan remains fluid as we adapt to our present context and the many partners we look forward to bringing to the table.

Building, Bridging, and Bonding:

A Strategic Action Prelude for Campus–Community Partnerships

I. CONTEXT

The Office of Community Partnerships (OCP), in the Division of Government Relations and Public Affairs, is in a transition phase, having hired its second permanent director in June of 2016 after a yearlong vacancy in this position and the transition of its entire staff. The transition from the inaugural team and foundation they created presents an opportunity to develop a strategic framework for building from past work and exploring opportunities for continued growth. *Building, Bridging, and Bonding* explores what we have learned and experienced through our engagement work and provides a foundation for the next phase of our institutional efforts. This strategic action plan focuses on the role that OCP can play in helping the university proactively sustain the commitment to our mission and facilitate the university’s role as agent of influence and change as the “urban university [that] must stand with the city.” Our present context of continued transition and rebuilding of OCP, and the evolving role of UMass Boston as a research-intensive and community-engaged university, evokes an action plan that is more indicative of a prelude—signaling the beginning of a new wave of possibilities and emerging opportunities.

II. BACKGROUND

From its founding in 1964, the University of Massachusetts Boston (hereinafter referred to as UMass Boston), Boston’s only public research university, has been defined as an institution with an “urban mission” for its focus on serving and engaging the community thoughtfully through research, teaching, and service. UMass Boston’s rich history of engagement is sealed in our DNA, spanning a variety of partnerships that include the public and government sector, nonprofit and philanthropy, community groups, neighborhoods and individuals, and the private sector. The university’s definition for community has also evolved over time to include communities outside of Boston and stretching across the globe—matching the rapidly changing and increasingly global environment brought on by enhanced technology and transnational interdependence.

When Chancellor Motley took on the leadership of UMass Boston in 2007, one of his four identified priorities was to “enhance campus–community engagement through improved organizational structures, create a government and community relations office to support high-level research and communication, and identify and promote signature examples of campus–community engagement, with community understood in local, national, and global terms.” Three years later, in 2010, he embarked on a long-term planning process, which in fall 2011 culminated in an extensive report intended to guide the university’s growth through 2025. This report—prepared by the university’s Strategic Planning Implementation Design Team and titled *Fulfilling the Promise*—links the noble aspirations expressed by UMass Boston’s founders in the mid-1960s to a highly ambitious vision of the university’s future. The plan included a revised Mission and Values statement that continues to speak to this “*special commitment to urban and global engagement [and to] serving the public good of our city, our commonwealth, our nation and our world.*” Engagement is defined as a core value and described as such:

We address critical social issues and contribute to the public good, both local and global. We participate in teaching and public service, as well as in basic, applied and engaged research, to support the intellectual, scientific, cultural, artistic, social, political, and economic development of the communities we serve. We forge partnerships with communities, the private sector, government, health care organizations, other colleges and universities, and K-12 public education, and bring the intellectual, technical and human resources of our faculty, staff, and students to bear on pressing economic and social needs.

Chancellor Motley quickly and very personally embraced goal two of five in the strategic plan, which specifically speaks to our commitment to civic engagement and urban communities local and global.

We at UMass Boston have steadily risen to this challenge, providing opportunities to an extraordinary range of students. We have also been redefining urban, stretching our horizon from greater Boston to urban areas throughout New England, the nation, and overseas. No longer are we simply Boston's public university; we now face the opportunity and obligation to apply our intellectual capital to urban life on an international scale.

With Chancellor Motley's leadership, UMass Boston has sought to strengthen and support this engagement by institutionalizing civic engagement through two offices. The Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement (OSLCE), created in 2008 as part of the Division of Student Affairs, promotes student leadership development through community service/volunteerism; and the Office of Community Partnerships (OCP), created in 2011 as part of the Division of Government Relations and Public Affairs with support from the provost, identifies, strengthens, and creates collaborative university–community partnerships. The Office of Community Partnerships, in particular, serves as a focal point for campus-wide collaboration and strategic community partnership building, working with nearly every entity on campus to support impactful, mutually beneficial community-engaged teaching, research, and service. One of OCP's academic partners is the university's Honors College, created in 2013. The Honors College at UMass Boston combines its emphasis on research and creative inquiry with a commitment to cultivating thoughtful and analytically complex approaches to civic engagement and community impact. The college is an example of integrated community engagement—one that is embedded throughout the organization's culture, curriculum, and expected outcomes. In addition, the university has been recognized for our commitment to mission-driven engagement, including the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification in 2006 and in 2015, the Association of Public Land-grant Universities (APLU) Innovation and Economic Prosperity University Designation Awards (IEP) in 2014, and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Excellence and Innovation Award for Regional and Economic Development Award in 2014.

UMass Boston is poised to be a national and global leader in educating and empowering our students and the communities from which they come through community-engaged scholarship and servant leadership. As Boston's only public research university, we boast the most diverse student body in New England; the highest rate of university students (nearly 80% of UMass Boston students) who remain in state of any other research institution in the city; and faculty and staff who are driven by our public engagement mission. Our 17,000 students come from 149 different countries and speak 99 different languages; 55% of our student population identifies with a racial/ethnic minority; and about 60% identify as first in their family to attend college.

Community-engaged programs on campus support student experiences of leadership development through community-partnered research as well as existing programs of community-engaged learning traditionally referred to as “service-learning.” We already have several integrated community-academic models on campus, including the Honors College, named above, as well as the Latino Leadership Opportunity Program (LLOP). LLOP is celebrating 25 years at the university’s Mauricio Gastón Institute—one of more than 50 research institutes and centers housed at UMass Boston. The program selects a group of Latino students with strong academic background and leadership skills and prepares them to conduct community-engaged policy research in the service of Latino community priorities. We see an emergent opportunity in these models for building on the diversity, knowledge, and commitments of our students as themselves bridging the multitude of communities they represent while weaving a new tapestry through mutual learning, preparing to serve and lead in new ways. The Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) was established in the spirit of building on this rich context and is intended to set strategies for success in our community-engagement efforts.

III. OVERALL VISION FOR CHANGE

The University of Massachusetts Boston is evolving rapidly. The worlds of teaching, research, and service; the many communities our university serves; and the university itself all face different challenges than they did when the university was created. As Boston’s only public university, while we honor our origins as a teaching institution and our tradition of public service, we must also move forward as the increasingly sophisticated research university that we are and continue to become... Consistent with our traditions, we will maintain a strong commitment to educating modest-income and first-generation students from urban areas, and to promoting the best interests of the City of Boston, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the nation, and the world. (Vision Statement, Fulfilling the Promise: A Blueprint for UMass Boston, 2011)

Aligned with our university’s vision for 2025, the founders of the Office of Community Partnerships proposed a vision for engagement. Internally (within the campus), the OCP proposed the following goals:

- Develop an institutionalized system for documenting engagement activities, which will help us build on past and existing relationships and lead to the creation of sustained collaborations characterized by formalized agreements and long-term investment.
- Facilitate student participation in engaged teaching and research so that such experience will become a cornerstone of their academic journey, leading to improved learning and producing collaborative, engaged leaders for the 21-century workforce.
- Stimulate a discussion to underscore the necessity of formally valuing engaged scholarship in the faculty reward systems, and to embed such scholarship within the essential functions of teaching, research, and service.

Externally, they envisioned that our engagement would be defined by the core principles of reciprocity, equity, and attention to impactful outcomes. University and community stakeholders will engage collaboratively in decision making, implementation, and assessment of projects and work toward mutually beneficial or shared goals. Our partnerships will demonstrate relevance and impact, creating changed behaviors resulting in more meaningful outcomes. This will elevate the profile of the university by attracting funding and creating in-depth community champions.

Our broadest hope is for the work of community engagement and partnerships to become systematized so that all facets of our institution own it. Just as important, we hope our work is synchronous with our partners' greatest needs and aspirations—and that together we champion the advancement of society.

IV. AFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) is charged to be the hub of information on campus-engagement activities; connecting and facilitating engagement efforts across and outside of the campus; building a strategic focus for campus partnerships; strengthening the university's presence externally by highlighting high-impact partnership relationships; and supporting the advancement of faculty-engaged scholarship and teaching practices. It serves as a nexus for the university's colleges and schools, centers and research institutes, various administrative offices, faculty, staff, and, more indirectly, students.

OCP's mission is to identify, strengthen, and support the creation of collaborative community partnerships that advance our mission as Boston's public research university. This is accomplished through the following strategies:

1. **Gateway for Partnerships** – Serving as a connector and front door for campus and community stakeholders to strengthen existing or create new partnerships. OCP focuses on facilitating long-term, deep, strategic partnerships that go beyond one-time opportunities.
2. **Harnessing Campus Capacity for Impact** – Leveraging the strength of our campus community members by bolstering community-engaged work in the areas of teaching, research, service, and leadership; enhancing community impact by fostering collective approaches that are holistic, constructive, and transformative; convening to encourage coordination.
3. **Elevating University–Community Projects** – Highlighting partnerships and celebrating community-empowered projects that demonstrate relevance and impact, are defined by the core principles of reciprocity and equity, and are making significant contributions at the local level and beyond.
4. **Resource Hub on Partnerships** – Gathering, organizing, and analyzing information on UMass Boston partnerships in order to better understand and help align efforts for long-term and sustainable community–university impacts, creating resources for campus and community members on high-quality partnerships.

OCP led the successful 2014 self-study for the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification, which documented a rich assortment of activities ranging from participatory action research and service-learning courses, to industry and employer partnerships, to technical assistance and outreach programs at the university. The existence of such a full spectrum of engagement serves as a stepping-stone to developing broader campus-wide initiatives that weave together the strengths of existing stakeholders and projects, advance holistic community change, and align with the university's priorities.

With the transition to new leadership, the Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) has been in the process of rebuilding and evaluating the next phase of the university's community-engaged work with a dedicated focus on strengthening two-way partnership development and fostering campus collaborations. In fall 2016, OCP launched its first informal advisory group, composed of a diverse group of campus members ranging from

faculty to deans to office administrators. (See Appendix A: OCP Informal Advisory Group.) The Informal Advisory Group has served as a sounding board and guide through the transition, and has played a vital role in the development of *Building, Bridging, and Bonding*. While this group is still in its infancy, it is a testament to the power of thought partnership and the importance of buy-in from university stakeholders. OCP sees this group as a start to establishing approaches for feedback from stakeholders and more collective inputs toward university–community partnership-engagement activities.

V. OUR APPROACH: FOCUSING ON AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

Upon the successful receipt of the 2015 Community Engagement Classification, the Carnegie Foundation issued a set of recommendations across four areas:

- 1) integration and alignment with other institutional initiatives,
- 2) faculty rewards,
- 3) reciprocal partnerships, and
- 4) assessment.

We agree that UMass Boston must work toward significant improvement within these areas to improve our overall institutional practice and advance our strong foundation as a community-engaged institution. We also understand that improvement demands reflection and recognition of our history of engagement, which spans 53 years since our founding.

Perhaps one of the biggest lessons learned about UMass Boston’s campus–community engagement is that projects and relationships with organizations range in terms of intensity, depth, and time. They also vary by associations with individuals, or a specific office or department on campus, versus institutional commitments. The creation of OCP, and the significant documentation of activities that followed, confirmed the notion that engagement outside of the campus’s boundaries is a non-negotiable part of our identity and practice. Moreover, while there are thousands of organically created points of light, we still have not figured out how to band our potential through a networked, more integrated approach that might garner greater impact, or how to measure impact and ensure that it includes feedback from our partners.

Another lesson is that our commitment to place-based engagement does not preclude our desire to be more global. For instance, OCP has documented that over a third of UMass Boston’s partnership projects are based in Boston, a city that is now majority minority. A 2015 report by the Boston Redevelopment Authority titled “Boston by the Numbers 2015” found that the number of newcomers to the city increased by 19.2 percent in the last 15 years, with immigrants and foreign-born residents representing 27.2 percent of the city’s population and over half of its children living with at least one foreign-born parent. The report further describes Boston as having the seventh-highest share of foreign-born residents of the 25 largest cities in the country. UMass Boston’s urban home is, in essence, a hub for transnational and transcultural engagement that allows our students and faculty to access global contexts in real time. Our place-based work inevitably positions us for greater globalized engagement and partnership potential—a cornerstone of UMass Boston’s vision for 2025.

Building on Past Work

We have chosen to highlight three existing initiatives where we see opportunity for further growth and strong alignment with Campus Compacts (CC) action statements one, two, and three. (See Appendix B: Campus Compact Action Statements.) We also believe that the action areas we have chosen to identify will better position us to address the recommendations set forth by the Carnegie Foundation.

1) Engage Web Portal

OCP underwent an extensive, university-wide collection of information that took nearly three years to assemble and eventually led to the development of the university's first data portal for engagement activities, called UMass Boston Engage. The portal houses all documented campus-community commitments, which includes more than 3,000 partners through 1,168 projects in 213 Massachusetts municipalities and an additional 240 communities worldwide. The development of the portal is ongoing and has not yet launched to the campus or external community, but it promises to be a game-changer in our ability to create connections, report on activities, and serve as an opening for partnerships. Once launched, the portal will serve as a central resource that connects a broad array of stakeholders within the university and across the world to the everyday work of our campus. Users will be able to navigate through a rich assortment of activities that UMass Boston faculty, staff, students, and partners engage in, from local service-learning courses and internships to global research projects and everything in between. The application also enables users to identify faculty with relevant expertise and interests, determine existing or past connections with partner organizations, and more.

Spearheaded by OCP, every college and division across the university provided input that shaped the core features and required functionality of UMass Boston Engage. The result of this collaborative approach is a university-wide web application that streamlines data sources and the collection process, and maximizes utility.

At this time, the portal relies on self-reported data and manual inputs. Sustainability of the portal requires consistent participation of faculty and staff and/or integration with other existing reporting mechanisms, such as the Annual Faculty Review (AFR). Nonetheless, if kept up to date, the portal can help streamline more quickly information needed for future national reclassifications and accreditation exercises, organize system office and elected official data requests, and improve internal coordination.

Short-Term Plan: Launching the portal to the campus community in 2017 with an integrated plan for continued maintenance, technical support for users and new user tools for getting started, and a three- to five-month monitoring period and assessment of continued need for ongoing development. OCP plans to “soft-launch” the application by integrating the application as a tool for two new initiatives: a partnership-mapping project (further discussed in the section titled “Exploring New Avenues”) and as part of a collaborative spearheaded by the Office of University Advancement focused on strategic corporate partnership development.

Long-Term Potential: Significant resources by way of funds and human capital have already gone into the present stage of the portal's development. OCP may consider the following strategies for the portal's future sustainability: (1) developing a partnership with another campus for further technical development, product distribution among peer institutions as a form of revenue generation for OCP, and national recognition; (2) working collaboratively with faculty and the faculty staff union to establish policy and parameters for the potential integration of AFRs as a feeder for the portal.

2) Community Engagement Scholars Initiative (CESI) (2011–2016)

Established in 2012 through a three-year grant from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, CESI aims to strengthen the university's ability to cultivate students' commitment to civic engagement in their public and professional lives. To achieve this goal, CESI provides faculty, departments, and teams with opportunities to design courses that incorporate a civic-engagement component—through community-based participatory research, service-learning, or other means—to address issues of importance to communities while enhancing student learning. This initiative has operated primarily with external grants, allowing the university to support five cohorts of faculty through mini grants. The Campus Compact sponsors CESI's current fifth cohort, with funds sunsetting in the spring of 2017.

CESI has been an approach for infusing a culture of civic engagement on campus, particularly on the academic side. Modeled through an intentional partnership between OCP and the Office of Faculty Development (OFD), the offices combined their strengths around civic engagement and partnership building with faculty professional development, curriculum, and pedagogical supports. CESI continues to be one of UMass Boston's innovations. Analyzing what is learned from this model would help the campus strengthen and possibly create new vehicles for supporting community-engaged scholarship. Future opportunities will depend on resources and support to increase CESI's reach, but could enable faculty and departments to propose courses and projects that support specific issue areas, university priorities, and partnerships.

CESI has been an evolving project, adapting with each new cohort and changing focus based on lessons learned, and in some cases funders' requests. The shifts demonstrate a level of responsiveness and flexibility that is welcomed with innovation. However, CESI has still not completed the evaluative component of its original plan. It is in the process of developing equitable measures and methods for data collection. Hence, the initiative has lacked an evaluation that would allow for meaningful reflection on the project's impact and continued needs. We do plan to address the evaluative facet.

Short-Term Plan: OCP and OFD will work collaboratively to develop an assessment to include faculty surveys and focus groups, to draw learnings and potential next steps for consideration by the two offices and the provost. Again, the transition of OCP leadership and expiration of external funds presents an opportunity to reflect and reimagine the possibilities as they relate to continuing CESI and exploring connected opportunities.

Long-Term Potential: There are several questions remaining for the campus to consider on how supports for community-engaged scholarship, particularly as they relate to faculty, are institutionalized. Where do community-engaged scholarship and curriculum supports live and what specific partnership-building components does OCP support related to the aforementioned? As OCP develops its own capacity, how might it play a role in enhancing understanding on the components of partnership development for campus-community members? How might OFD, OCP, and other faculty centers like UMass Boston's Center for Innovative Teaching (CIT, an established body on the campus for more than 25 years) work together to fill gaps in support around community-engaged teaching, research, and service, and foster further innovation? What faculty incentives might help increase engagement effort and where should this responsibility fall?

3) Engage Campus Working Group

Moving toward greater coordination across multiple campus partners, OCP convened a series of meetings with the Offices of Student Leadership and Community Engagement (OSLCE) and Career Services and Internships (CSI) in 2014. The group resumed in fall 2016 and now includes community outreach staff from the Division of

Athletics, as well as the university's new Economic Development and Corporate Outreach arm within the Division of Government Relations and Public Affairs. Collectively, the offices attempt to manage community engagement across the university and are working together to deepen connections among the various aspects of this work, such as student leadership, career development, and faculty research and teaching, with the goal of maximizing real-world university and community impacts. Functionally, the group is a support network for practitioners and provides enhanced communication across the offices. For OCP, this group is a valuable feedback loop for engagement work among campus colleagues with potential for focused cross-campus strategic inputs and outcomes.

Short-Term Plan: The group will build collective goals and work toward developing an internal map of engagement resources and supports for better alignment and communication, as well as build a simple directory for faculty and staff on where to turn for support.

Long-Term Potential: Once it is organized, the group has the potential to expand its membership to include other relevant areas of the university. As a practitioner-based group whose members' positions require a significant degree of interaction with external stakeholders, a long-term goal might include building shared definitions and guidelines for partnership engagement—moving from a reactive to a strategic approach.

Exploring New Avenues

As part of OCP's new leadership transition, the first six months involved meetings with nearly 90 individuals across the university to hear about their community-engaged experiences, challenges, successes, and aspirations. The meetings resulted in the formation of an informal advisory group for OCP as a way of gaining deeper understanding and furthering a culture of engagement on campus. The campus listening tour, coupled with the collective wisdom of the Informal Advisory Group and a review of past engagement efforts, has led to preliminary ideas for new opportunities to explore. OCP plans to take action on several of these items in a phased approach, and as capacity and stability in the office are restored. The introductory concepts below align with all of the Campus Compact action statements, with direct implications on goals 1, 3, 4, and 5, and indirect impacts on goal 2.

The first areas of focus may include the following:

1) Building a Design for Partnership Development: The Engage Circles Pilot

In an effort to better understand our footprint and therefore our impact and areas where we might augment opportunities for impact, OCP will spearhead the design of a model for mapping, increasing campus collaborations, and developing strategic approaches to partnerships. OCP will develop a pilot demonstration of the model, beginning in spring 2017, focused on UMass Boston's activities with Boston Public Schools (BPS) in collaboration with the Office of Student Support Services and the College of Education and Human Development. The university has a long-standing history of engagement with BPS; it will be included as collaborators and partners throughout the process. The three UMass Boston offices will work together on the planning and design of the pilot, which will ultimately involve campus-wide participation. The pilot will lead to a documented framework, which can be replicated across other multidimensional partnerships and research areas, and shared with other higher-education community members. Objectives for this pilot include:

- Building a network (mapping) of projects, collaborators, and connections
- Identifying areas of excellence within our work with the partner
- Identifying areas for collaboration and collective impact
- Co-create action items to be pursued in FY18 (academic year 2017–2018)
- Document design for partnership development and dissemination

2) Creating an Arsenal of Resources on Community Partnerships

OCP is often enlisted by members of the UMass Boston community for consultations and assistance around incorporating a community lens in its research, teaching, service, academic program development, and grant pursuits. A virtual toolkit that could live on the OCP website, as well as on the Engage Portal, might serve as a first stop for faculty, staff, and even community members to get some of their basic questions answered on the “how to”s of university–community partnerships. The first phase of this arsenal would focus on assembling resources for faculty and staff, and later move to include a toolkit for external partners who are looking to understand how to enter a relationship with a higher education institution. The toolkits have the potential to take on the form of live workshops conducted seasonally for internal and external audiences, allowing OCP to reserve one-to-one consultations for constituents who are ready to make a formal step toward their partnership development.

3) Establishing an Infrastructure for Feedback, Vision, and Participatory Action

Part of institutionalizing engagement practices and culture on campus means being deliberate about opening the doors for shared visioning, goal development, and leadership. There are a number of ways in which this can occur; an approach that OCP is considering is the formation of three stakeholder advisory groups. The groups would meet separately to allow distinct spaces for nuances and may meet together once or twice a year to weave and build on their shared understanding.

- Campus Leadership Advisory Group (CLAG) – An informal group was established in fall 2016 and in the short term has played the role of guiding the office’s transition, has supported the development of this action plan, and will soon after build the basis for the formalization of OCP’s first Campus Leadership Advisory Group. The group would include a similar constitution of diverse members, representing various areas of the institution. While the charge for CLAG has yet to be developed, a potential role for this group would be to champion and broker opportunities on campus, provide high-level guidance on strengthening campus–community engagement infrastructures, and identify opportunities for networked partnership strategies.
- Community Advisory Group (CAG) – OCP will dedicate the next several months to conducting a listening tour of external stakeholders to better understand how external partners view campus–community partnerships and the needs and areas of opportunity within their organizations and across communities. Similar to the development of the above-mentioned, an informal community advisory group would be formed and later transition to a formal body. The group would provide inputs about “on-the-ground” opportunities for university–community collaborations and serve as a mechanism for feedback from external community members. CAG may support building a model for sustaining reciprocal engagement and inputs by community stakeholders, and a framework for assessing community impacts and alignment with community needs. The listening tour and this advisory group will be essential in helping OCP further determine the direction and initiatives that should be spearheaded by OCP and/or other areas of the university.

- **Community-Engaged Faculty Group (CEFG)** – OCP enjoys a strong relationship with the academic offices, centers, and human talent that drive UMass Boston’s community-engaged activities. Our ability to strengthen and align partnerships into holistic, signature initiatives relies on having a comprehensive awareness of all engagement activities and the type of buy-in that seeds championship for engagement in academics. CEFG would provide a convening space for key community-engaged scholars in every form (research, teaching, service) at UMass Boston to create and lead community-engaged initiatives, policies, and approaches that benefit faculty, students, and our partners; promote peer-to-peer supports and collaboration; and increase integration and strategic alignment in academic endeavors. A longer-term goal would be for this group of leaders to shepherd the formation of an “engaged faculty network” of and for community-engaged faculty across campus.

In the long term, additional opportunities for OCP to consider in support of its mission and strategies may include:

- 4) Identifying institutional partners essential to our urban mission and identity** – Supporting the organic relationships that exist through individual enterprise, while working to distinguish those partnerships that could flourish independent of/beyond an individual person such that they become UMass Boston’s institutional partnerships. At the same time, codifying and magnifying our deepest-rooted partnerships without which we would not be who we are as an institution in the city.
- 5) Positioning ourselves for high-impact neighborhood-based and cross-sectoral partnership opportunities** – This starts with becoming an active voice off campus on the contributions of the university and the issues that are deeply connected to our values and principles. It includes participating in groups that influence policy and the implementation of new collaborations across the city, region, and country; co-initiating cross-sector collective-impact practices with a targeted focus in specific communities; and working more closely with leaders in our city and state to identify areas of strength and opportunity.
- 6) Forming a communications and design plan for proactive engagement** – Building methods for systemic outreach and intake of partners and partnerships; revising online and print language so that the campus’s community-engagement and partnership-building mission and work are accessible, clear, and appealing; working with the campus communications office to develop and publicize stories of impact; and leveraging champions to proactively message and position our community–university partnership work. UMass Boston will be best positioned to enhance our profile as a community-engaged global research university by delivering impact-focused messaging and communicating a clear and compelling return on investment to a broad array of stakeholders, including elected officials, community and business leaders, prospective students, and peer universities.
- 7) Starting an OCP faculty fellows initiative** – Working in partnership with the Office of the Provost to create a year-long fellowship appointment within OCP that draws on the expertise and commitment of tenured faculty. The fellow would advance university-wide and/or targeted activities that increase the quality of partnership experiences among their peers.
- 8) Organizing mentoring and exchange opportunities** – Developing a network and harnessing expertise of community-engaged veterans on campus to support the emergence of individuals who are interested in these initiatives, and newer entrants to community-engaged work. OCP would work collaboratively with offices linked directly to faculty-development issues such as, but not limited to, the Office for Faculty Development and the Center for Innovative Teaching. Exchange opportunities could take the form of speed mentoring, one-to-one, virtual, and/or group-based mentoring approaches. Likewise, OCP may consider

bridging similar opportunities for students under the leadership of and in collaboration with the Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement (OSLCE).

- 9) **Integrating community engagement in the conception of new academic programs** – Devising supports for those programs that have identified community engagement as a priority to their programs through thought partnership, resources, and connections. Collaborating with existing academic programs and elevating their examples of integrated community engagement, and encouraging their promising practices across the university.
- 10) **Actualizing our meaning of “gateway to partnerships”** – Considering how the university might thoughtfully provide access not just to our talent but also to our physical space. As the campus expands its footprint, OCP might together with other externally engaged offices be in a position to support the campus’s plans for space usage as new buildings are being developed, particularly when it involves partnership cultivation. In the spirit of aligning OCP’s mission of supporting deep, reciprocal, long-lasting partnerships, this plan of expanding our definition of a “gateway” goes beyond the one-time requests for space to hold a free-community event. It honors our long-standing relationships by considering the accessibility of visiting and convening at UMass Boston as part of the partnership-development process.

VI. MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

The academy must join with government, industry, non-governmental networks of organizations, and local communities to co-construct the processes by which knowledge is gained and distributed, and thus to co-create our common future. (Winston Langley, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, in Fulfilling the Promise: A Blueprint for UMass Boston, 2011)

As described, OCP is in a rebuilding stage in terms of our relationships on and off campus as well as in its team, infrastructure, focus areas, and initiatives. We believe that co-creating our measures of success through the development of shared goals with our stakeholders will position the university for better outcomes. With many existing entities on campus engaged with the public, OCP’s action items must be tied to our purpose, which is to broker, convene, coordinate, and disseminate. UMass Boston’s current structures that support community engagement include:

- Office of Faculty Development
- Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement
- Office of Career Services and Internships
- Office of Community Relations
- Office of Government Relations
- Economic Development and Corporate Partnerships
- Office of Student Employment

OCP will continue to work closely with our campus partners to minimize replication of efforts and support their endeavors. Moreover, OCP looks forward to supporting the campus in spearheading outcomes that lead to system/policy change and further embedding of engagement as a cultural principle. Moving forward, new action items will be approached with intentionality and with evaluative processes to ensure that we have achieved

what we set out to accomplish. The approach must include opportunities for reflection on what is working and where there is room for refinement and/or change.

VII. THE PLAN IN MOTION: 2017 TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Below is a preliminary implementation plan for some of the Office of Community Partnerships' immediate action items for 2017. Action items that are not included in the table may be anticipated for 2018–2019; they are contingent upon capacity and increased support for the Office of Community Partnerships.

Action Item	Key Collaborators	Anticipated Start Date	Anticipated Completion	Key Considerations
Engage Portal Launch	Government Relations & Public Affairs, Office of the Provost, Office of Information Technology	February 2017	Soft launch completed by April 2017, with larger roll-out through fall 2017	Soft launch with Engage Circles Pilot audience. The Planning team for the pilot will be essential partners, and all related faculty/staff will be enlisted to participate.
CESI Assessment	Office of Faculty Development, Office of the Provost	January 2017	May 2017	A final plan will be developed upon completion of the assessment determining next steps for community-engaged scholars' supports.
Engage Circles Pilot Launch	Student Support Services, College of Education and Human Development, Boston Public Schools	January /February 2017 (planning phase)	June 2017	This will be a campus-wide exercise leading to a partnership- development design for future partnerships to replicate. We anticipate the Pilot leading to an action plan for implementation in 2018.
Campus Leadership Advisory Group	Faculty, deans, staff	Currently informal	Formalized to begin new phase September 2017	Our current informal group will build the framework and goals for the formal group in spring 2017. The CLAG will include some of these members along with new allies.
Community Advisory Group	Cross-sector, select collaborators still unknown	Commence informal group fall 2017	Move to formal spring 2018	A listening tour of external stakeholders in spring 2017 will help to inform membership for CAG

VIII. CLOSING

The University of Massachusetts Boston was founded by the Massachusetts Legislature as a reaction to social upheaval, urban unrest, and a rapidly increasing demand for higher education. Fifty-three years later, we continue to strive toward fulfilling our potential as a great student-centered urban public research university. Engagement is in our DNA, and the energy toward standing with our communities also continues to grow as our footprint expands and our understanding of our interconnected global existence magnifies. We also recognize that we can only leverage our opportunities for impact with greater coordination, cohesion, and strategic focus, and two-way building with our partners. We have undergone changes and continuous transition in the Office of Community Partnerships, which provides a university-wide anchor for our deepest community-engagement efforts. Our plans remain fluid as we adapt to our present context and the many partners we look forward to bringing to the table.

In Chancellor Motley's 2016 convocation address, he reminded the UMass Boston community of our call to action as the university that so many of our community members are looking to for our greatest expression of leadership and partnership.

The University of Massachusetts Boston has been able to come so far in 50 years only because of the collective efforts of students, faculty, and staff who will stop at nothing to achieve excellence. I have used the word "excellence" many times today in reference to our university and community, yet I cannot think of an academic institution in the United States, or anywhere in the world, that does not have excellence as its goal. Administrators, faculty, benefactors, and students and their parents all seek it and want to contribute toward furthering it. In short, the search for excellence is pervasive...The use of the term means more than simply completing a task or reaching a goal. When we are committed to excellence, we seek to transcend the expected. A person or institution committed to excellence refuses to simply accept things as they are. They reject the status quo, and refuse to acquiesce to limits...[and] those who pursue excellence cannot be constrained by such boundaries. Today I want to look at excellence as a strategic goal, as an ongoing operation, and as a virtue.

At our best we show a divided nation how diverse people live, work, study, argue, and make change together. We inspire the leaders of nations toward peaceful resolutions of conflict. At our best we show corporate heads and captains of industry their next generation of leaders. We remind our communities to remember their poor and underserved. At our best we catch convicts with literature; we engage schoolchildren with philosophy; we lift communities with technology. At our best we show the world new possibilities and thereby change it.

APPENDIX A: INFORMAL ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

Dr. Ester Shapiro	Associate Professor of Psychology and of Transnational, Cultural and Community Studies, College of Liberal Arts
Dr. Joan Becker	Vice Provost, Academic Support Services
Dr. John Saltmarsh	Professor of Higher Education Leadership, College of Education and Human Development; Director, New England Resource Center for Higher Education
Dr. Maureen Scully	Associate Professor of Management, College of Management
Dr. Rajini Srikanth	Dean, Honors College; Professor of English, College of Liberal Arts
Dr. Tim Sieber	Professor of Anthropology, College of Liberal Arts
Dr. William Kiernan	Dean and Research Professor, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development
Carol Kelley	Assistant Vice Chancellor for Special Projects, Office of University Advancement
John Ciccarelli	Former Associate Vice Chancellor, Government Relations and Public Affairs (Retired)
Steven Neville	Special Assistant, Office of the Chancellor
Cynthia Orellana	Director, Office of Community Partnerships, Government Relations and Public Affairs; Convener for Informal Advisory Group

APPENDIX B: CAMPUS COMPACT ACTION STATEMENTS

We empower our students, faculty, staff, and community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships in pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable future for communities beyond the campus—nearby and around the world.

We prepare our students for lives of engaged citizenship, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in pursuit of the public good.

We embrace our responsibilities as place-based institutions contributing to the health and strength of our communities—economically, socially, environmentally, and politically.

We harness the capacity of our institutions—through research, teaching, partnerships, and institutional practice—to challenge the prevailing social and economic inequalities that threaten our democratic future.

We foster an environment that consistently affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education by setting high expectations for members of the campus community to contribute to their achievement.