**Full Participation:**

**Engagement, Diversity, and the Success of Underserved Students**

*Full participation of diverse students and diverse faculty in higher education and the wider democracy asks the question of what is the connection between active and collaborative teaching and learning, collaborative knowledge generation and discovery, and the academic success of underserved students?*

Connecting diversity, community engagement, and student success has been simmering for some time now – and the dominant response is what might be called “thin” approaches: typically programs that have undergraduate students perform volunteerism aimed at preparing underserved high school students for access to higher education. While this is a useful activity and much needed, it 1) only addresses access and not persistence and success in higher education, and 2) it does not require that the institutions of higher education do anything differently to create environments where underserved students can thrive and succeed.

A “thick” approach is aimed at breaking new ground by making connections between advances in active and collaborative teaching and learning and collaborative knowledge generation and discovery, all with the goal of more effectively fulfilling the academic and civic missions of higher education. A thick approach explores connecting, in a systemic way *1) student success with faculty diversity, 2) faculty diversity with community engagement and inclusive pedagogical practices, 3) faculty diversity with engaged scholarship, and 4) engaged scholarship with institutional rewards and supportive institutional cultures.*

More specifically, a “thick” approach makes connections between the following areas of inquiry in ways that have not been addressed by the literature in ways that explore their intersectionality:

Data Points (There is a body of research for each data point):

* The aspirational mission of higher education is “to serve the people of {the state} and the world through preeminence in creating, communicating, preserving and applying knowledge, art, and academic values, and in developing leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future.”
* Demographics of students: greater diversity (ethic, racial, cultural) and increasing numbers of underserved students (first-generation, low income, students of color).
* The academic success of underserved students is enhanced by increased opportunities to identify with faculty and staff who represent ethnic, racial, gender, and cultural diversity.
* The academic success of underserved students is enhanced by increased opportunities to participate in high-impact teaching and learning practices - practices that involved greater engagement in learning.
* Demographics of faculty: greater diversity of graduate students and early career faculty – and a rotating door for careers in higher education – attracting more under-represented faculty into the academy than ever before and those faculty are leaving in greater numbers than coming in.
* Research has documented that women and faculty of color are more likely to engage in both interdisciplinary and community-service-related behaviors, including community engaged and inclusive pedagogical practice in teaching and learning and building research agendas related to public problem-solving in local communities and are more likely to cite such experiences as critical to their purpose in the academy.
* Faculty roles and rewards – and criteria for research/scholarship – either 1) reward community engagement as service (counting it for little in promotion and tenure) or 2) do not specifically reward community engagement in teaching, research and creative activity, or in service. The norms of traditional scholarship include privileging 1) single-authored scholarship, 2) credentialed, discipline-based peer review, and 3) publication in academic (selective, top-tier, highly specialized) journals. The norms of engaged scholarship value 1) artifacts of public value such as technical reports, curriculum, research reports, policy reports, etc., 2) evaluation by those in the community who are affected by the research and can recognize the data and findings as their own, value them in their own terms, and use as they see fit, and 3) collaborative knowledge generation.

This line of inquiry and action suggests that 1) if campuses are going to take student success seriously, they need to take engagement seriously, 2) if campuses are going to take diversity seriously, they need to take engagement seriously, and, 3) if campuses are going to take new forms of knowledge generation and discovery seriously, they need to take engagement seriously. To fulfill our missions and educate all our students effectively we need to diversify our faculty and provide environments where they can thrive as engaged scholars (teachers and researchers).

Each of these “data points” call for a changes in the culture of higher education if higher education is going to fulfill its mission of educating the next generation of citizens for productive and fulfilling lives contributing to a wider public culture of democracy.