



# FINDINGS FROM THE 2018 UC LINKS FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

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# BACKGROUND OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

- Interviews conducted at 2018 UC Links Conference.
- A total of 5 group interviews, with each interview approximately one hour long.
- Groups featured people in different roles, including:
  - 15 University Faculty
  - 10 Graduate Students
  - 1 Community Partner
- Interview questions focused on three key areas:
  - Communication
  - Partner Roles and Support
  - Challenges and Resources
- Total of 11 primary questions with 15 sub-questions.

# ANALYZING THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

- Interviews transcribed in the months following the conference by Sos and a team of UCSB undergraduates.
- One round of open coding followed by discussions of codes with team of graduate students.
- One round of focused coding based on emerging themes.
- Consultation with Charles Underwood, Mara Mahmood, and Betsy Brenner.
- Explicit focus on the relationship between the university and community members.

# SOME NOTES ABOUT THE PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- UC Links sites are configured in many different types of ways.
- Unique experiences for each site, but many shared threads that the sites share.
- Responses featured a broad range of topics and matters, including:
  - Matters between university and community partners.
  - Matters between university and the local community.
  - Undergraduate volunteers.
  - Matters within the university team.

# COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY PARTNER

- Many participants made a distinction about two different types of communication: keeping people in the loop and relationship building.

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*“So the nature of the communication is different...email is more about sharing and making sure everyone is included in what’s going on and then the in-person is real, I focus on building relationships.” (PI)*

# COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY PARTNER—BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

- Communication is used to build and maintain relationships, which typically happens in-person.
- Meetings: opportunity to understand and align vision, goals, and objectives, as well as address concerns.

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*“I think that that process of transitioning and meeting and having lunches to check in are epic. And talking about, you know, who agrees to what and doesn’t agree to what. That’s how we figure things out.” (PI)*

## COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY PARTNER—BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS (CONTINUED)

- Having a shared vision and working towards achieving each partner's goals can foster mutuality and commitment.
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*“At Boys and Girls Club, we’ve been there so long that everything is face to face, very casual, very relationship honest and open because there is trust there on both sides. We know that they support our goals and they know we support their programming as well...” (PI)*

- Being able to adapt and make compromises is key!
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*“I think sometimes there’s compromising there I don’t particularly enjoy having to do with our program, but for the community partner’s sake, but I think being being flexible with that has helped us over the years.” (PI)*

## COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY PARTNER—BUILDING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS (CONTINUED)

- Importance of showing commitment by being involved at the site and in the community, especially in ways that extend beyond the UC Links program.

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*“So there’s this like, I am now a member of the grange, I sat through a business meeting, as a vegetarian, I listen a lot to like, we should have workshops on how to butcher these four animals kind of thing. That’s OK, I can sit there, that’s fine, and I can keep doing that...” (PI)*



## COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY PARTNER—KEEPING PARTNERS IN THE LOOP

*“I think it’s important first to have that conceptual communication where are we on the same wavelength, do we have the same goals, do we have this mutual relationship...and then as you get to know each relationship then you start realizing what lines of communication work best.”  
(Faculty Member)*

# COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY PARTNER—KEEPING PARTNERS IN THE LOOP

- Importance of three key ideas when it comes to keeping community partners in the loop:
    - Community partners have other obligation that they need to prioritize.
    - There are certain methods of communication that work best for the community partner.
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*“So it’s always good for me to know ahead of time what you need from me as the partner, right. And then email is always good but I prefer text messaging, I don’t check my email all day, I can’t, right. I’m not sitting at a desk all day, I’m moving, so to understand that part of the partner is pretty cool.” (Community Partner)*

# COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY PARTNER—KEEPING PARTNERS IN THE LOOP (CONTINUED)

- Importance of three key ideas when it comes to keeping community partners in the loop:
  - Community partners find certain types of information especially valuable.

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*“And maybe with some little snapshots of what was accomplished and that just brings, that involves everyone, especially the program director who hardly has any time to even think straight during a day. She really appreciates that.” (PI)*

# COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

*“The university has a long tradition of sending people out into the community and telling them what they’re going to do. And the community has a long history of entertaining these people for the short time they are there.” (OD)*

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- Many respondents (especially faculty members and PIs) mentioned the importance of understanding they have a position of power, especially in regards to giving the community a voice.

*“It can be intimidating to talk to adults of the kids that you’re working with, but we really are intentional about doing that and talking with them and making sure that we like, I don’t know, we care enough to like see you in person and talk to you and like we really want you there, so we’re here to like let you know and show you that we want you there.” (S)*

# COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY (CONTINUED)

- In addition, university members highlighted the significance of the program being sanctioned by community members, including both students and parents.

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*“So how do we involve the community? Because the community needs to sanction this program as well. It can’t be this weird little thing...it has to have a real involvement and a place in the community.” (PI)*

# CHALLENGES: CONFLICTS, AND CRISIS

- Many of the participants signaled that challenges and conflicts are natural in community work.
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*“So then I say how will, so we can expect and anticipate conflict, so then therefore how will we deal with it when it comes up.” (PI)*

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHALLENGES

- Some of the challenges and conflicts that were mentioned repeatedly included:
    - Scheduling concerns
    - Changes in community partner personnel
    - Inability to create a shared vision with the university team
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- Planning for conflict specifically by having explicit conversations about conflict with their community partners.
  - Anticipating the challenges that come up repeatedly by understanding the goals of the community partner.
  - Times when conflict has been leveraged.

# PLANNING FOR, ANTICIPATING, AND LEVERAGING CONFLICTS AND CHALLENGES

- *The Activism for Youth Example*
- *The XPLAN Example*
- *The Village and Nation Example*
- *The 7<sup>th</sup> D*



# GENERAL TAKEAWAYS

- Open and honest communication helps build partnerships that are built on trust, commitment, and mutual respect.
- Partnerships that are built on trust, commitment, and mutual respect are in a better position to overcome challenges, conflicts, and crisis, and furthermore, even strengthen partnerships by overcoming them.

# LIMITATIONS

- Different focus in each of the groups considering there were so many questions and limited time.
- Many talked about matters that weren't directly related to university-community partnerships.
- In particular, we want to learn more about the range of challenges and their results.
- Not everyone had an equal opportunity to talk.

# THIS YEAR'S FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

- More groups, fewer questions so everyone has a voice.
- Consent sheets (if you don't want data used, please return the consent form initialing the appropriate spot and putting on your name!)
- Each person should take a copy of the sheet of paper on the table. Questions on one side, group assignments on the other.
- Look for your table number and go to that table.