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Publication Date
2021

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Activist Leadership Development:

An Engine for Social Justice Transformation

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Kareem Allen Elzein

2021

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Activist Leadership Development:

An Engine for Social Justice Transformation

by

Kareem Allen Elzein

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Daniel Solorzano, Co-Chair

Robert Teranishi, Co-Chair

Student activists have been an historic driver of higher education social justice reform. While this form of leadership is central to improving equity outcomes in higher education, scholars and practitioners often view organizational change as a top-down process centering senior administrators, staff, and faculty. Empowering student activists as more than token stakeholders in organizational transformation processes supports social justice outcomes, as well as broader institutional goals, vis-à-vis promoting civic engagement, leadership development, and knowledge production. Efforts to strengthen this type of student leadership require institutional resources that are supportive of activist leadership development, and administrative efforts to facilitate student activist's engagement in institutional change processes.

This dissertation study is an institutional ethnography of the Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST), a student activist leadership development program at the University of California, Los Angeles that sought to develop and empower student activist leaders. Specifically, the institutional ethnography utilizes autoethnography, centering my experiences as co-founder and leader of BEST, to explore the history, conceptualization, evolution, and impact of BEST in fostering student leadership and campus transformation. Using personal narrative to tell the story of the program, this research triangulates autoethnographic research with qualitative and quantitative data collected by the program from 2016-2020.

This narrative explores how leadership development programs can center student activist leadership growth and uncover the complex ways students engage in leadership to support equitable campus changes. Findings from the study contextualize the challenges and opportunities of activist leadership development programs within the often-antagonistic environment of a top tier public university. Institutional infighting over diversity resources and structural barriers such as funding and inconsistent administrative support pose an obstacle to impactful social justice initiatives. Further, leadership development programs working with activist students must seek to develop trusting relationships based on mutuality, socioemotional support, and an authentic commitment to social justice principles and practices. Findings from this research will necessitate the expansion of equitable policies and resources that support and affirm student activist leaders within higher education institutions.

The dissertation of Kareem Allen Elzein is approved.

Christina A. Christie

Tobias Higbie

Daniel Solorzano, Committee Co-Chair

Robert Teranishi, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

DEDICATION

To my wife who pushed me across the line.

To Lebanon, Palestine

To Nadia, Zeina, Lama, Ashraf, Zaynah, Daher, Omar, Wissam, Iskandarani, Bags, Camel, Jamal

To everyone that was a part of BEST. Even those I don't talk to anymore.

To the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples, the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and So. Channel Islands). As a student at a land grant institution, I pay my respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), 'Ahiihirom (Elders) and 'Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present, and emerging.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kareem Elzein is a PhD candidate in Education from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2021. Kareem is a community and labor organizer of 13 years, working with low-income and marginalized communities in California and Lebanon. He Co-Founded the Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST), an activist leadership development program receiving funding and support through UCLA's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Through BEST, Kareem femtored hundreds of student activists at UCLA, helping them hone their skills and grow their passion for social movement organizing and change. Kareem also worked with White People 4 Black Lives, a Los Angeles anti-racist organization that works in allyship with Black Lives Matter, Los Angele. Before returning to the United States in 2012, Kareem helped found the Al-Nakab Center for Community Activities in Beirut, Lebanon, which provides educational resources for Syrian and Palestinian refugees. He began working alongside with Palestinian refugees while completing his Master of Public Health at the American University of Beirut. Kareem's research explores the social justice mentorship, leadership development, higher education organizational, and diversity in higher education. His previous research includes qualitative and quantitative work in occupational health, gender-sensitive methodologies, intersectionality, and international education.

CHAPTER 1: RECONSIDERING CAMPUS SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

I sat across from Sam in a small meeting room and leaned forward in my chair, listening intently as they[1] shared the details of a recent incident that troubled them.[2] Sam tells me that they love parts of their work as a student affairs professional. They held their current position at UCLA for the past five years, where they supervised many student workers, all the while supporting students' personal and professional growth. Still, there were unloved parts of Sam's job—particularly the underwhelming professional interactions with co-workers. While their work environment was generally comfortable, as a queer, immigrant, person of color, Sam experienced frequent and firm reminders that the social climate was hostile to their identities and those of the students nurtured under their wing.

Sam shared the story of a student worker whom I knew through a mentoring program. This undergraduate was recently involved in a confrontation with an middle-aged staff person. The student with her peers reserved a multipurpose space for a club practice one night. Their practice ran later than usual because no one came to claim the room after their reservation had ended. At 7:05PM, the staff person threw the door open and impatiently demanded that the students leave. Apparently, he was running five minutes late and his clients were waiting outside the room for their class to begin.

The students took several minutes to pack their things, which angered the staff person who leered at them. One of the female students was bothered by his behavior and told him to relax. This comment set off the staff person, a tall and imposing white man. He followed them out of the room

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[1] Throughout the dissertation, I will use the gender-neutral pronouns "they" and "them" to describe individuals, unless revealing an individual's gender identity is instrumental to understanding the situation or concept being described. This serves both to anonymize the identity of people mentioned in this study, while also avoiding unintentionally misidentifying people's gender identities. Gendered pronouns will be used for public figures who present themselves using specific pronouns.

[2] The qualitative data that served as the basis for this introduction are data from a pilot study that is referenced throughout the dissertation.

as they left, shouting "If you want to be ghetto, I can be ghetto." The group of Black female students became increasingly afraid of the staff person's erratic and aggressive behavior. They continued to walk away from the man towards the reception desk. The man stalked them, unloading angry verbal attacks and threatening to call the police on them before the front desk staff intervened.

Sam was upset at the incident, although after years of service at UCLA, they were unsurprised, having witnessed similar events in the past. Sam was even more concerned by their supervisor's handling of the situation. Following the incident, the supervisor contacted the student worker and inexplicably criticized her for the way that she handled the incident. Meanwhile, the supervisor signaled no disciplinary measures for the belligerent staff person who fired racially charged attacks at the young women. Sam had higher hopes for their supervisor, who often said the 'right things' and advocated a 'social justice' work culture. "We talk a lot about social justice..." said Sam to emphasize the contradiction. Sam wryly noted that the supervisor, a white person, was also married to a "socially conscious person of color." However, none of these factors seemed to matter in their handling of the situation.

Incidents such as the one described here have deeply felt consequences for minoritized[3] members of campus communities. As an employee engaging with students from marginalized social identities and economic backgrounds, Sam knew they could not provide their students with true protection or justice. In fact, Sam experienced strong resistance from colleagues in the past when Sam noted harmful racial and gender dynamics within the workplace. In this moment, Sam felt helpless to support the students in transformative ways, fearing that speaking out would result in a hostile work environment and potentially other professional consequences. Equally discouraging

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[3] I use "minoritized" instead of "minority" in the same sense as Sean Harper (2012) does as it signifies "the social construction of underrepresentation and subordination in U.S. social institutions, including colleges and universities. Persons are not born into a minority status nor are they minoritized in every social context (e.g., their families, racially homogeneous friendship groups, or places of worship). Instead, they are rendered minorities in particular situations and institutional environments that sustain an overrepresentation of Whiteness." (p. 1) from Harper, S. R. (2012). Race without racism: How higher education researchers minimize racist institutional norms. *The Review of Higher Education*, *36*(1), 9-29.

was Sam's realization that student leaders are operating within educational and social contexts that can be extremely oppressive.

I later met with one of the affected students. She was emotionally injured by what her friend group experienced. Not only did she feel harmed by the incident, but her faith in the institution was shaken. The criticisms of a highly positioned superior felt suffocating. Further, as a Black woman, the incident only reminded her that her place in the 'ivory tower' was second-class on account of her sex and skin color. No one in authority seemed to care that as a female student, she was publicly stalked and harassed by an imposing man; nor did anyone seem to flinch when Black students were essentially 'put in their place' by a white person who demanded undue respect and threatened police intervention. This all in 'liberal' Los Angeles at a 'liberal' college campus.

Stories like these are commonplace among the students that I work with. As a graduate student mentor with a social justice intervention initiative,[4] I have advised many student leaders as they navigate the complex and challenging realities at UCLA. I have personally struggled with how to provide support and leadership development for students who are fighting for basic rights against a ceaseless tide. Based on my experiences thus far, at the heart of struggles to influence campus equity policies are conflicting visions of our institutions. Administrative leaders seem frequently perplexed by the concerns of minoritized students, even when students plainly articulate the fundamental needs of dignity, affirmation, access, and support.

What to do about campus equity?

For nearly 60 years, researchers and practitioners have studied student experiences under the auspices of campus climate (Hardee, 1961), now broadly understood as "the attitudes, behaviors, and practices of the campus community, including staff, faculty, and students" (Rankin & Reason, 2008).

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[4] The Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST) is a student-run activist leadership development and support initiative established in 2016 with funding and administrative support from the UCLA Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

As university communities have come to include more women, people of color, and other minoritized groups, so too has the meaning of campus climate expanded to address the experiences of LGBTQ, disabled, immigrant, and non-white people. Sam's story contours this definition of campus climate by demonstrating the complex contexts and encounters that impact working and learning environments in colleges and universities. Made further evident by this story, administrators continue to struggle with the thick daily interactions that reinforce racial, gender, class, and other social hierarchies that communicate secondary status to many members of campus communities.

Educational research confirms that campus climate has wide-reaching implications for higher education institutions, linking a supportive campus environment with student learning and wellbeing. Specifically, campus climate is correlated to a sense of community, cultural awareness, commitment to promoting racial understanding, and overall satisfaction with the college experience (Denson, 2009; Denson & Chang, 2009). Activities that promote a sense of social belonging positively impact students' academic performance (Yeager & Walton, 2011). Alternately, students who describe campus climate as hostile are more likely to consider leaving (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Denson & Chang, 2009) and experience greater stress and poor mental health outcomes (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Rankin et al., 2010). Campus climate also affects minoritized faculty, administrative staff and other workers, increasing their stress, workplace dissatisfaction, and turnover (Jayakumar et al., 2009; Locks et al., 2008; Mayhew et al., 2006; Victorino et al., 2013).

Campus climate has served as a hegemonic lens through which to understand the effects of the campus social and political environment on community experience. However, the language of campus climate has serious limitations, often serving as a red herring or catchall for the more vexing charges of racial, gender, and other forms of oppression. diane lynn gusa (2010) describes these underlying issues in their description of White chilly climate on African American students (p.466-467):

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It is essential that predominately White institutions interested in addressing African American attrition due to chilly or hostile campus climates realize how marginalization and discrimination are the outcomes of White mainstream ideology (Whiteness) and White privilege. These sources of hostile or chilly campus climates are what I name White institutional presence (WIP)…WIP, as a construct, names the racialized influences on discourses between and among students, between student and teachers, and between students and academic resources. Just as an online teacher cannot be seen, but his or her presence affects the academic discourse, the presence of Whiteness and privilege within policies and practices may go unseen. Nevertheless, it detrimentally shapes students' social and academic experiences.

Similarly, a qualitative study of campus climate research by Vaccaro (2010) found "what lies beneath" seemingly positive study results: vast gender differences in campus climate experiences, large issues of institutional sexism, general "hostility toward diversity efforts, resentment of liberal bias, and symbolic racism" (p.207). Evidently, improving campus climate will only result from naming and addressing the underlying issues of equity that lead to poor campus climates.

While higher education leaders publicly acknowledge a commitment to diversity and equity, the institutional policies and practices are at odds with their stated values (Ahmed, 2012; Sturm et al., 2011). Instead of prioritizing transformational interventions, senior leadership often engage in nonperformative[5] discourses around climate—issuing public statements and commissioning assessments—especially amid a public crisis (Ahmed, 2012; Harper, 2015). While some might see progress—for example in the treatment of white[6] LGBTQ students—the discourse in higher education has moved steadily away from explicit commitments to the public good and justice. Emblematic of this shift is the nationwide erosion of affirmative action policies coupled with the ascendency of diversity management as an administrative response to racism, patriarchy, and other systems of oppression (Berrey, 2011; Rhoads et al., 2005). Whereas these institutions once practiced explicit discrimination, higher education has adopted forms of colorblind neoliberalism. These

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[5] Sara Ahmed (2012) defines "nonperformative" work as diversity actions that do not do what they say they do.

[6] I specify white LGBTQ students, because non-white students still experience oppression based on their race and how their race intersects with their gender identity and sexual orientation.

institutions have increasingly adopted the language of non-discrimination while simultaneously codifying policies and practices that are implicitly discriminatory towards minoritized communities (Omi & Winant, 2014).

While recognizing a general environment of apathy, there are moments where institutional indifference to campus climate issues have resulted in severe organizational consequences. In the past few years, several top administrators have lost their jobs because of poorly orchestrated institutional responses. To name a few, University of California Davis Chancellor Linda Katehi, University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe, and University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Chancellor Phillis Wise were each forced out of their posts following backlash to campus climate incidents (Chokshi, 2016; Green, 2015; Gutowski & St. Claire, 2015). The case of former-Chancellor Wise in the firing of outspoken faculty member Steven Salaita is particularly instructive, demonstrating the complex dynamics at play within campus climate practice. According to Wise, several powerful alumni threatened to pull sizable donations from the school if the administration did not fire Professor Salaita following Salaita's provocative tweets condemning the 2014 Israeli assault on Gaza's civilian population (Heins, 2014). Certainly, Wise faced a dilemma: either capitulate to the demands of donors and make a mockery of academic freedom or undermine the financial future of her institution while alienating powerful stakeholders. Regardless of the reasons behind Salaita's firing, Wise's actions inspired months of student and faculty protest, a global academic boycott, and a two-year censure from the American Association of University Professors (Flaherty, 2017; Heins, 2014).

Each firing was not the result of thoughtful organizational reflection facilitated by a diversity administrator. Rather, institutional responses were often reactionary, responding to large-scale, organized, sustained protests led by students, staff, faculty, and community members. These examples highlight how campus equity leadership often arises from the bottom and middle of

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institutional hierarchies; and, thus, the importance of viewing campus climate leadership as simultaneously vertical, in relation to organizational power structures, and horizontal, as collectively influenced by all members of campus communities. This reorientation aligns with adrienne marie brown's (2017) vision of transformative justice, which recognizes change as community-informed and community-led. Transformative justice (1) acknowledges the realities of state harm, even those perpetrated by educational institutions; (2) addresses and interrupts this harm through innovative strategies developed and sustained by impacted communities; and (3) moves past individualized responses to transform the root causes of violence. Yet if institutions are implicated in this harm, to what degree are institutional leaders complicit in violence?

Leadership at the top?

Higher education scholars have written extensively about the importance of leadership in campus change (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Rankin & Reason, 2008; Strum et al., 2011). While scholars agree that leadership is instrumental to this change, they tend to adopt a top-down perspective that identifies senior administrators, staff, and faculty as de facto drivers of transformative efforts. This perspective reflects a bureaucratic-managerial model of leadership where authority is a function of organizational rank, and that the goals of change initiatives are necessarily aligned with organizational needs (Foster, 1989). Evidently, this perspective is limiting to campus climate change aligned with transformative justice in that: (1) administrative leadership may be ignorant or ideologically opposed to the needs and demands of impacted communities; (2) natural leaders may be alienated from change processes because of their lack of recognition, compensation, or standing within an organization; and (3) organizational authorities may experience conflicting interests, such that the pursuit of organizational goals might oppose the transformative visions of impacted communities.

To give a recent example of these dynamics, students across the University of California system have protested inadequate administrative responses to right wing provocateurs—such as Milo Yiannopoulos—who are staging incendiary speaking events on university campuses across the country. In fact, UC administrators have given conservative groups holding these events special treatment, including unprecedented funding and flexibility that is inconsistent with university policies (Lopez, 2017; Volokh, 2017). Administrators have argued that they are limited in how they can respond to these incidents because outside conservative political organizations have threatened 1st amendment lawsuits if the events are stopped. While these concerns are valid, acquiescence to these pressures demonstrate a lack of administrative commitment to campus equity. If administrators wished to, they could simply apply university policies consistently, enact countermeasures that creatively disrupt these events, or challenge speakers like Yiannopoulos on the grounds that they pose an imminent danger to vulnerable student populations. On this last point, there are documented cases where Yiannopoulos has engaged in violent hate speech and doxxing[7] targeted towards students at campuses where he speaks (Landsbaum, 2016; Martin, 2017). Despite this reality, institutions seem to have a greater appetite for facilitating white nationalist speakers than attempting to litigate their racist, transphobic, and xenophobic hate speech. Placed side-by-side, the cases of Yiannopoulos and Salaita demonstrate the contradictory ways that free speech politics play out on campuses, as well as how these dynamics produce enmity among campus communities.

Another area where higher education administrators are consistently at odds with campus communities is at the intersections of campus equity and class. When student and worker advocacy groups make demands for affordable education, housing, and living wages, they would be remiss to view university administrators—who economically benefit from rising tuition and depressed labor costs—as allies in their struggle (White, 2000; Rhoades & Rhoads, 2003). Administrative resistance

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[7] Dox: To search for and publish private or identifying information about a person on the Internet with malicious intent.

to these advocacy efforts make sense if seen as connected to the class orientations of high-paid administrators who have overseen astronomical tuition increases and stagnant salaries for non-tenured faculty and non-senior staff. Recognizing the obstacles to effective administrative leadership in the realm of campus equity, this dissertation seeks to identify and affirm other sources of campus social justice leadership within higher education institutions.

Students as Social Justice Leaders

Historically, student leaders have led organizing efforts to transform institutional campus climate policies (Broadhurst, 2014; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Rhoads et al., 2005). Students have unique insights because of their relative subordinate positions within higher education institutions. Drawing upon concrete experiences of oppression, institutional practices, and evident hypocrisy among leadership, students are often able to generate powerful analyses of campus climate (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). While students may not use the language of higher education administration, they often leverage their meaningful insights into thoughtful plans to address the specific justice claims of their communities (Kezar et al., 2017; Rhoads & Liu, 2009). Often, administrators respond to this type of student leadership with discipline, paternalism, and/or calculated indifference (Cho, 2020; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Kezar et al., 2017; Linder, 2019).

Student leaders are instrumental actors in campus transformation initiatives. In many of the ways that administrators are susceptible to conflicts of interests, students are less constricted by the political and structural forces that have perpetuated campus inequity. Further, while administrators must 'study' campus climate as distant observers, student leaders are able to draw from personal experiences that help them understand the impacts and importance of these issues. Students' closeness to the issues also engenders a greater ability to reflect on and propose adequate institutional accountability measures (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). Importantly, higher education leaders must embrace student dissent as a fundamental element of democratic practice within their

institutions and one that strengthens institutional change processes and accountability (Kezar et al., 2017; Rhoads, 1998; Stitzlein, 2012).

Beyond student contributions to campus equity improvements, supporting student activist leadership development corresponds with the educative mission of higher learning. Through activism, students become more politically aware and socially responsible, and they learn to develop strategic plans, political agendas, and negotiate across constituencies (Kezar & Maxey, 2014; Renn, 2007; Rhoads, 1997). These skills support students' critical thinking, organization, and effective communication skills (Maldonado et al., 2005). Further, students who identify as activists adhere more closely to transformational notions of leadership that emphasize leadership skill development in relation to social justice (Renn, 2007). As these students work collectively toward a common purpose—often through conflict—they also gain valuable skills in collaboration and collectivist forms of leadership (Astin et al., 1996). Evidently, identifying, developing, and empowering a leadership base among students simultaneously serves institutional campus climate and student development goals.

Efforts to build student leadership require intentional institutional guarantees to facilitate student growth, and, conversely, commitments to not obstruct students' influence on change processes. To this end, Kezar and colleagues (2017) found that staff and faculty can develop student leaders' abilities to navigate institutional culture and change processes. However, promoting this type of growth requires that institutional leaders embrace student collective action and activism (Komives et al., 2005). Empowering student participation and leadership are often at odds with the predominant bureaucratic-managerial approach that tasks administrators to lead the campus in understanding and changing campus climate policies. Further, by emphasizing vertical leadership structures, administrators can limit the change potential of student leaders. Institutions would be

better served teaching and facilitating student leadership, while promoting participatory change processes that generate student buy-in and offer meaningful development opportunities.

The Best Program: Toeing the line

The Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST)—a focal point of this dissertation—operated at the joining of several intersections of campus equity intervention and leadership support and development. As a student-led equity initiative, BEST sought to cultivate student leaders who will drive campus transformation at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).[8] The program accomplished this goal by providing participating student leadership groups with comprehensive support: funding, mentorship, leadership development, and networking. One of the program's goals is to support the growth and coordination of student leaders that will apply pressure on the institution to challenge and change institutional policies and practices. Adopting a wider perspective, the program also sought to establish a university space committed to developing new generations of leaders that would support social movements outside the university, in Los Angeles, the state, and nationally.

The ideals and goals of BEST are hardly original, having been articulated within higher education before. BEST is more adjacent in vision to radical education initiatives of the 1960s—such as the Lumumba-Zapata College at the University of California, San Diego or the Freedom Schools in America's South—which sought to establish alternative educational spaces teaching the arts and strategies of resistance (Hale, 2014, June 26; Lumumba-Zapata Movement, 1969). This programmatic orientation places it in a potentially tenuous and frictional relationship with the university administration.

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[8] This description of BEST arises from my experiences as a co-founder of the program. My positionality in relation to this research will be discussed extensively within the methods section.

BEST was the product of several years of student, staff, and faculty organizing and activism that yielded a critical analysis and institutional proposal to establish generative resources that could support a transformative institutional vision. Our organizing came to a head when the university established a new administrative unit, the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Recognizing an opportunity, we led a community forum and campaign to direct the resources of that office towards our own vision. The rooting of BEST within strategic activist practices casts it as an example of vertical and horizontal campus equity organizing, but one that was spearheaded from a relative mid-point of institutional hierarchies.

Research Questions

Strong student activist leadership is fundamental to achieving visions of institutional transformation and campus climate change. As such, it is imperative that higher education leaders are proactive in supporting student leadership development and agency. Students at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) have a storied history of leadership in campus climate transformation. Recognizing this past and its connection to current change efforts, my experiences in co-founding and co-directing a new leadership development program at UCLA will be the focus of this program study. UCLA was selected as a research site because the leadership development program, the Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST), was an intentional institutional effort to develop student activist leadership in support of campus climate change.

Building on scholarship of student leadership development and higher education social movements, this study examines individual and collective leadership among BEST student leaders engaged in campus social justice projects. There are few empirical studies systematically evaluating the effectiveness of activist leadership development programs in higher education. This institutional ethnographic and autoethnographic study explores the development and evolution of the BEST program in supporting student activist leadership. The study will document the institutional contexts

that shaped the formation, evolution, and eventual closure of the BEST Program, while also focusing

on the formal and informal leadership development activities that were unique features of the BEST

program. As such, the following research questions will guide this study:

1. What factors led to the creation of the BEST program?

2. What are the major features of the BEST program and how did these features evolve?

3. What challenges and obstacles exist in supporting student activist leadership and how can
   those be overcome?

4. How do institutional cultural practices and policies influence leadership development
   programs?

Significance

Scholarship on higher education social justice interventions has largely viewed change

through the lens of senior administrators and their role as institutional leaders. While this study does

not unseat this notion, it seeks to push back against that current of thought by amplifying the

leadership roles of student change agents. Specifically, in exploring student leadership growth, the

study will uncover the ways students engage in leadership through campus justice initiatives, as well

as the ways in which leadership development resources can affirm student activists while supporting

their growth as leaders. While previous studies have explored the interactions between student

growth and leadership development resources, this study is unique in its exploration of the BEST

program, an innovative leadership program that purposefully develops student activist leadership

through mentorship, skill development, and other coordinated support. Recognizing the value of

student leaders in advancing campus equity change validates their experiences and contributions to

university communities and facilitates the establishment of policies and resources that advance

justice-oriented student engagement.

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Evaluating development experiences of BEST student leaders will help evaluate the efficacy of institutional programs aiming to support students' democratic practices, activist identity, and leadership growth. This research will expand notions of leadership development to embrace and affirm activist forms of leadership—including critique and dissent—as well as demonstrate the ways in which institutions can proactively support student learning outcomes related to social justice activism. As one of the top public universities in the United States, UCLA often serves as a model and example for other colleges and universities. Findings from this study will add to a body of literature evaluating and critiquing diversity administration and practices within higher education institutions. These findings will necessitate the expansion of equitable policies and resources that support and affirm student activist leaders within higher education institutions.

CHAPTER 2 - "...IT'S NOT ENOUGH ANYMORE": THE NEED FOR CAMPUS SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISM

Introduction

"We met this weekend... it's been hard because of everything that happened last week. But we talked about it and we decided that we have to include activism in the work that we do. I know we said we were going to focus on services, but it's not enough anymore." Amal's eyes creased from sleeplessness. She shared that she had had several panic attacks since election night. Waking from that night, reports of white nationalists assaulting visibly Muslim women started circulating. Someone in a nearby neighborhood was physically assaulted, their head scarf ripped from behind by a stalking man. Hate crimes were on the rise across the country, but those directed at Muslim women, in particular, felt increasingly sadistic and violent. Following the election, every member of the UCLA Muslim community knew someone who experienced verbal abuse or experienced it themselves, as was the case with one student shouted down on Bruin Walk.[9]

At a pre-election gathering for the Beautiful Mind Project (BMP), a BEST-funded project focused on mental health in the Muslim community, students shared their own anxieties of student life. Alah, who wore a *hijab,* lamented that she walked daily with fear that in every interaction, people antagonistically saw her as a Muslim first and a person second. "However," she reminded herself aloud, "a tenet of Islam is to put forth the best face of the religion." The room of Muslim students nodded. Despite her optimism in that moment, the events that followed only confirmed the terrifying suspicions that she shared that day.

In the coming weeks, through conversations with me and with other members of their collective, the women leaders of BMP began to develop a framework that articulated the connections between mental health and activism. They argued that the current climate nationally and locally was

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[9] This anecdote is drawn from unpublished data from a pilot study in 2017.

too toxic to not consider the impacts on student mental health. Specifically, they did not see their community as having only a mental health problem requiring sedation or rest; rather they understood their current mental health status partly as connected to their oppression. By emboldening student activism, leaders in the Beautiful Mind Project felt a greater sense of agency to counter the legitimate fears they had while simultaneously strengthening ties to their community. They endeavored to discover the ways they needed to grow in order to engage their friends and family in work around mental health, political advocacy, and student retention.

Starting in Spring of 2017, BMP began a weekly event called Cookies, Coffee and Chill, a relaxed hangout space for Muslim-identified students to grab a caffeinated drink and snack and congregate. Students spoke openly about how the space was transformative: it helped de-stress their daily lives, facilitating their academic success; it built community between *brothers* and *sisters* who may not see each other regularly otherwise; and, importantly, it was held in a public space in which visibly Muslim people gathered during daylight, challenging stigmas and stereotypes. Almost awe struck, non-Muslim students would pass by the patio area and wonderingly peer into the crowd. Some would venture to ask if they could grab a coffee and share a quick conversation. BMP's seemingly pedestrian actions throughout those weeks were in fact bold and visionary, embodying a common activist refrain: existence and persistence is resistance.

Chapter Overview

The above story drawn from the BEST pilot year was reflective of student experiences on campus and in the program. Facing hostile social and institutional climates, students were called by conviction to meet urgent needs of their communities. These students often expressed not knowing what or how to carry out their visions for change. The primary goal of this study is to attempt to answer students' call, exploring how leadership development programs can center student activist leadership growth and uncover the complex ways students engage in leadership to support equitable

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campus changes. Before addressing the central tenet of this research, I must explore how activist leadership is typically developed among the student population, and what factors drive students to pursue social change.

Hostile or discriminatory campus climate environments resulting from institutional practices and culture result in the alienation of some students from the educational goals of higher education. Jayakumar et al. (2009) argues that factors such as being overlooked for opportunities or unfairly treated by the faculty or students can be characterized as a negative campus climate. Despite increased recognition and acceptance of LGBTQ++ students, sexuality and gender discrimination on campus are still common (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2020; Ullman, 2015). Hostile campus climates result in students experiencing isolation and alienation, and an array of negative outcomes, such as a poor sense of belonging, lack of acceptance, lack of mentorship or support (Mayhew et al., 2006). Furthermore, negative campus environment can severely affect the opportunities and experiences of students of color (Locks et al., 2008; Victorino et al., 2013). Higher education institutions that perpetuate the discrimination, marginalization, and invisiblization of minoritized students create the conditions where student social justice activism is an inevitable corrective.

Student activism has been fundamental to the evolution of higher education in the United States (Broadhurst, 2014) and has had wide reaching impacts on American society at large (Altbach, 1989). Student leaders have helped increase college access for minoritized populations and led curricular and structural changes, including the establishment of Ethnic Studies and Gender Studies programs at many colleges and universities (Broadhurst, 2014; Davis, 1990; Van Deburg, 1992). While activists are a subject of curiosity for many scholars, higher education leaders are generally less fond of these students. Institutions regularly resort to both passive and active forms of repression that seek to disrupt and limit student-led change initiatives (Broadhurst, 2014; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Kezar et al., 2017). This antagonistic dynamic between student leaders and many university

employees is under-addressed in the higher education and campus climate scholarship. To build horizontal and vertical leadership that can address campus climate in meaningful ways, the silences in campus climate discourse must be reconciled with the evident realities of institutional life. As such, this chapter frames the study within the existing scholarship on student activism, leadership development, and higher education institutional culture and practices related to social equity.

For the purposes of selecting the most relevant literature for this review, several key databases that were consulted, that is the JSTOR, Web of Knowledge, Scopus, Science Direct, and Google Scholar. Keywords and keyword combinations were *student activism, student leadership, activism identity, activism development in students, leadership development in students, leadership development programs, campus climate and higher education.* This chapter will be structured as follows. First, the researcher will explore the theoretical framework that will guide the remainder of this chapter to explain the concept of student activist leadership. Next, the literature review will discuss (1) activist identity development, (2) leadership development programs, (3) activist leadership skills, and (4) institutional cultural practices and policies. This literature review is organized into three sections. The first section, "Student Activist Leaders", conceptualizes the 'student activist' by synthesizing higher education and citizenship scholarship. The second section of the literature review, "Leadership Development for Student Activists," reflects on several leadership theories and proposes a leadership development framework for this dissertation study. The final section, "Campus equity for activism," explores the campus climate literature through a lens of student activism, reflecting on the functionality of campus climate discourse in supporting student activist goals. The aim of this literature review is to synthesize the scholarly literature in a way that aids the design, conduct, and interpretation of this study (Maxwell, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

Three theories will guide the current research. The first theory is the social activism theory proposed by Dewey (1938). The main principles behind this theory was establishing a sense of social consciousness as the ultimate goal of educational systems. Dewey (1938) proposed that learning can only benefit the individuals who use it as part of the social experience. Dewey derived these ideals from social constructivism, which is a framework viewing all experiences and meanings as a product of social interactions. Dewey formulated his theory on education, arguing that learning is a social experience and must therefore be experience-based. His later works also acknowledged the importance of learning and practicing democratic citizenship within schools through knowledge, inquiry, critical thinking and judgment, and reflections on social questions. Viewing Dewey's works in conjunction, it is the prerogative of educational institutions to promote democratic practices and citizenship among their pupils.

Dewey's theories demonstrated great foresight in describing, proposing, and anticipating the political role of public educational systems in a democratic society. Service-learning scholars have been among the greatest proponents of Deweyan education, highlighting the importance of practice-based education in citizenship education. However, service learning scholars have also identified that the need for a critical reflection on these education practices, as articulated by Pompa (2005, p.68):

> Unless facilitated with great care and consciousness, "service" can unwittingly become an exercise in patronization. In a society replete with hierarchical structures and patriarchal philosophies, service-learning's potential danger is for it to become the very thing it seeks to eschew.

Westheimer & Kahne (2004) elaborate on the political meaning of normative service and citizenship practices:

> At the same time, the visions of obedience and patriotism that are often and increasingly associated with this agenda can be at odds with democratic goals. And even the widely

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accepted goals--fostering honesty, good neighborliness, and so on--are not inherently about democracy. Indeed, government leaders in a totalitarian regime would be as delighted as leaders in a democracy if their young citizens learned the lessons put forward by many of the proponents of personally responsible citizenship: Don't do drugs; show up at school; show up at work; give blood; help others during a flood; recycle; pick up litter; clean up a park; treat old people with respect. (p. 244)

These critiques are not peripheral to social and political education in schools. This study is interested in the types of citizenship practices that higher education institutions advocate for. Specifically, are activist citizenship practices marginalized and discouraged within schools?

Engin Isin (2008) identifies these types of relationships to power as fundamental to understanding citizenship. Isin differentiates between *active citizenship*, or practices that largely reinforce the status quo, and *activist citizenship*[10], which encompass innovative and challenging citizenship practices. Much of the higher education research on student movements affirms this notion of activist citizenship. Students are identified as engaging in subversive actions against actors perpetuating institutional and societal orthodoxies (Mars, 2009). Given historic and contemporary climates of repression experienced by many student activists, higher education scholars and practitioners should be increasingly concerned with proactively supporting activist forms of citizenship and leadership in ways that recognize the marginality of these citizenship practitioners.

This study argues the need to promote activist citizenship rooted in individuals' and groups' relationships to power. Increasingly, scholars have promoted a generalist understanding of 'activists' to include any person desiring to enact social change, whether drawing from "liberal ideologies, such as support of multiculturalism, the rights of immigrants, affirmative action, and the defense of the LGBT community...[or] conservative student movements, including support of the Second Amendment and prolife causes" (Broadhurst & Martin, 2014, p. 76). This definition is limiting in

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[10] Engin Isin's (2008) conceptualization of the *activist citizen* is useful to understanding this dynamic. Engin argues that the *activist citizen*# actively counters normative and hegemonic citizenship practices. This definition of 'activist' shifts focus from the action itself towards a recognition of the contexts, intents, and outcomes of an action. Thus, within a society where conservative and liberal values and practices are the status quo, student organizers adopting these values are enacting normative notions of citizenship. On the other hand, radical student organizers seek to challenge and transform the boundaries of normative citizenship.

two important ways. First, the definition engages in an ideological erasure and appropriation of activist labor. By identifying progressive social causes as "liberal" work, the authors are appropriating the anti-liberal (and anti-conservative) radical politics of many student activist leaders. Second, this discourse equivocates conservative and liberal student organizers with radical[11] activists, despite the former groups having very different relationships with institutions and the public at large.

Whereas conservatives and liberals drawing on mainstream political narratives may have access and support for their demands,[12] radical students are routinely targeted and marginalized by institutional power (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Mars, 2009). Conservative and liberal student organizers also experience a very different relationship to repression than students with radical politics. University officials rarely call on the police to surveil, beat or repress conservative or liberal students, nor do these students receive the same types of threats of violence from the public for their activities. By comparison, university administrators have often mobilized tremendous institutional resources, security and police, and disciplinary apparatus to embolden white nationalist provocateurs such as Milo Yiannopoulos (Lopez, 2017, September 21; Volokh, 2017, October 30). This study is interested in exploring how types of citizenship practices are perceived and treated differently by institutional actors.

The second theoretical framework is the holistic support framework. Research has only begun to explore the specific mentorship practices that students, staff, and faculty engage in to support social justice activism. Researchers have shown that mentorship supports key social justice outcomes, such as identity development, social justice commitment, collaboration, and leadership

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[11] I am using the term radical to be inclusive of leftist, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and anti-sexist organizations that do not define their work as liberal projects.

[12] Examples from UCLA https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/charlotte-silver/uc-irvine-clears-students-pro-israel-groups-accusations

efficacy (Renn, 2007; Olive, 2015). Meanwhile, Kezar's and Maxey's (2014) multi-campus study of campus activism found that allied staff and faculty serving in informal mentorship roles were able to help student activists cultivate key leadership skills, including strategic planning, social justice learning, conflict mediation and negotiation, activist research, and navigation of institutional power and change processes. Evans and Lange (2019) offered an expanded vision of staff and faculty responsibilities to include proactive engagement in student initiatives, namely facilitating relationship and coalition building, leveraging formal and informal power, and showing up for students when called upon. While these theories consider the educational and developmental benefits student activists experience from institutional support, they do not consider the human and social needs of student leaders, most of whom are students of color with specific support needs.

Recognizing the limitations of traditional student affairs support models, Museus and Neville (2012) proposed *holistic support* as an approach to address students of color's often complex support needs (e.g., academic, financial, social). Holistic support involves an underlying recognition of these challenges, as well as a fundamental commitment to provide students with support, regardless of the types of problems that they face. Further, holistic support leverages proactivity, wherein institutional agents reach out to advisees without prompting, and bridging, in which the advisor accesses their networks and resources in support of students' needs. The present study explores how holistic support is reflected in students experiences with activist mentorship.

This study also adopts the third framework of *social justice mentorship* proposed by Paul Kivel (2004) within social movement learning and extended and applied to a higher education context by Helen Neville (2015). Helen Neville (2015) described social justice mentoring as "aspirational" because it requires mentors to create "transformative spaces for people to harness their potential" (p. 162). Social justice mentoring was first described by educator and activist Paul Kivel as encompassing a set of commitments, including "establishing an intergenerational community for

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social justice, building leadership for long-term struggle, helping youth establish self-care practices, instilling a sense of hope in change, affirming and celebrating successes, providing critical feedback, and understanding the importance of mutuality" (Neville, 2015, p. 162). These features of social justice mentorship appear simultaneously valuable and challenging within a higher education context. For example, the first two components of establishing an intergenerational social justice community and building towards long-term struggle push against the fabric of higher education, in which students and staff cycle in and out of their respective roles. Likewise, instilling optimism in institutional change processes may be difficult for staff mentors who themselves are often marginalized for taking activist stances (Harrison, 2011).

Building upon Kivel's framework, Neville (2015) outlined several additional components of social justice mentoring applied to counseling psychology training that are relevant to student activist leadership development. Specifically, Neville advocates that mentors identify the core aspects of social justice, clarify their own social justice position, model these values and practices, and work to transform learning spaces, while providing meaningful training opportunities. Neville's additions to the social justice mentorship framework make explicit the need to define and center social justice knowledge, values, and practices within the structural and curricular context of an academic and professional training program. Within social movement organizations, social justice commitments are typically explicit and understood by participants. The same may not be true within a higher education program, where mentorship ideologies and practices may not be evident to learners. This paper will utilize social justice mentorship as a conceptual lens to understand relevant mentorship experiences of student activists.

Student Activist Leaders

This dissertation focuses on leadership development paradigms for student activists in higher education. As such, this section engages the existing scholarship on student activism in order to

identify practical and conceptual approaches for this study. Higher education scholars have adopted an array of stances towards the subject of student activism. For example, scholars have questioned whether conservative student organizations can be activist, if community service and service learning experiences are activist in nature, and what are the different identities adopted by students who self-identify as activists (Broadhurst & Martin, 2014). The scholarship also takes divergent perspectives on the role of student activists within the institutional life of colleges and universities. This scholarly discourse is significant in that it informs institutional logics, which shape the actions and policies of higher education leaders and institutions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Friedland & Alford 1991; Lounsbury 2007; Thornton & Ocasio 1999; 2008). This section critically appraises the different ways in which scholars and practitioners talk about student activists. Using these critiques as foundational, the section proposes an affirmational conceptualization of the student activist.

Activist Identity Development

Before exploring the concept of activist leadership in students and its development, it is important to explore the literature that assesses the development of activist identity. Activist identity refers to a relationship between one's social identity and doing greater good for the society (Welton & Freelon, 2018). Horowitz (2017) explores two types of activist identity development, that is the role-based and collective-based identity. They argue that role-based activist identity refers to one internalizing their role through the responsibilities and expectations of others and the society. The second category is collective identity development, which refers to our relationship with our social identity and an injustice frame. Individuals incorporate their experiences and understandings of societal injustice into their existing social identity or use the societal injustice to form a new societal identity (Horowitz, 2017). Ultimately, activist identity formation occurs as a result of a sense of duty, but the driver could range from our immediate environment—i.e., friends and family—or wider environmental factors in our communities and society at large.
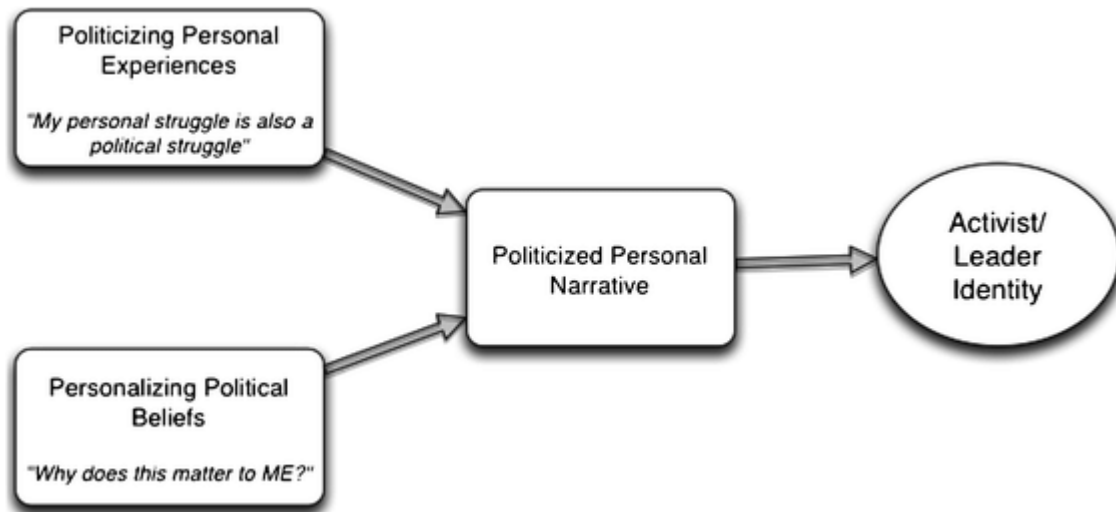
Figure 1: Activism/leader identity development[13]

Typically, activist identity formation is a response to a collective societal need. Welton and Freelon (2017) note that collective activist identity typically centers around one's social identity, and their perception of what is unjust. For instance, collective identity arises because of activists' strong relationships formed within their community, which grounds the reasoning for their cause. If an individual witnesses racial injustice within their community, they are generally more willing to engage in collective activism to seek racial justice. This definition of activism is different from that proposed by Horowitz (2017), who views collective activist identity as a product of societal expectations. However, Welton and Freelon (2017) note that sense of responsibility and willingness to engage in risky activism is a product of strong identification with community and relationships with community members.

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[13] From Oyakawa, M. (2015). "Turning private pain into public actions": The cultivation of identity narratives by a faith-based community organization. *Qualitative Sociology, 38*(4), 395-415.

There are different spectrums of activist identity formation. Stetsenko (2019) argues that activism can take form of reasonable, medium, or radical. The researcher referred to the radical activism as "transformative activist stance," which helps the individuals feel that their activism helps them to co-author the world around them. Individuals that develop the radical activist identity typically have a strong sense of purpose and sense of injustice, which is somewhat linked to the collective-based activist identity proposed by Horowitz (2017). At the same time, Stetsenko (2019) identifies the other end of the spectrum, that is reasonable activism, where an individual focuses on what they can contribute to society, as opposed to fighting a specific cause. Stetsenko (2019) views activist identity as a complex process of nature and nurture, where individuals engage in collective social practices because of an innately embedded and collaboratively established sense of purpose, which grows within communities from generation to generation.

There are several reasons why individuals engage in activist practices. Curnow et al. (2019) argues that partaking in activist practices is political in nature, designed to address the existing practices or to reconfigure existing way of doing things. Curnow et al. (2019) links activism to the ideas of politization and transformation to achieve changed practices, which is in line with the radical perspective on activism discussed by Stetsenko (2019). Curnow et al. (2019) view activism as a communal phenomenon aiming for collective transformation, suggesting that activism is largely shaped by collective needs of society as opposed to self-perceived role and expectations resulting from an individual's immediate environment.

Several factors contribute to the formation of activist identity. Fullam (2017) argues that social interactions and relationships influence the formation of activism identity. Typically, activist identity forms because of an already established identity within a social context (such as race or gender). Relationships with others help to expose the individual to the injustices experienced by others, which increases their sense of empathy. Fullam (2017) refers to this as "interdependent

relationships within the community," which increase the sense of political and social solidarity between the community members because of the beliefs that cultural integrity should be promoted to achieve political change and spiritual growth in oppressive conditions. Thus, Fullam's (2017) approach centers around the strength of the interactions and relationships that individuals have with others in their community, which increases their sense of empathy and purpose—and, in turn, helps to increase motivation to engage in activist actions. Building upon this notion, Suyemoto and Hochman (2021) argue that by having a deep understanding of oppression and privilege, individuals can shape their personal positionality to a social issue, which increases their desire to intervene.

Blatt (2014) offers a slightly different view on activist identity formation, proposing a social reconstructivist model where individuals construct and mobilize narratives connected to social and economic injustice in their society, thereby helping to raise awareness among new generations who can help address these pressing social problems. Blatt (2014) argues that this helps to shape an *activist mentality*, which involves a deep understanding of the existing issues in the society coupled with a vision of change. Thus, this approach helps to shape the individuals' role as an activist through improving their sense of identity as an activist. This notion of an *activist mentality* echoes the role-based activist identity approach proposed by Horowitz (2017), where individuals engage in activist practices because of the expectations and adopted "activist role" imposed on them by their immediate environment.

Activism helps to give individuals a sense of empowerment and inspiration to address a social change. Van Dyke and Dixon (2013) describe that the sense of empowerment from activism comes from collective identities adopted by individuals, which helps to shape a deeper conscious commitment that they have to activism. The key to a sustainable activist identity is building commitment, collective empowerment, social ties, consciousness raising and collective identity. Sustaining this identity is achieved through increased participation in intensive activist experiences,

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which in turn helps increase understandings and empathy around social issues. This in turn helps to increase their motivation to act as an activist. Thus, the approach proposed by Van Dyke and Dixon (2013) encourages increasing a sense of empowerment and fulfilment among activists to encourage them to carry their activist identity with them throughout lives. Paired with Blatt's (2014) social reconstructivist model and Fullam's (2017) notion of interdependent relationships within the community, activism should be nurtured throughout our lives with consciousness raising efforts and direct-action involvement that are deeply embedded within our communities.

Arguably, adopting an activist identity helps individuals to engage in a personal transformation from an object of oppression to an agent of social change. In fact, this type of identity transformation helps individuals explore the ways that they can transform existing institutional practices that are oppressive (Vianna & Stetsenko, 2011). Holeman (2007) argues that identity formation is often a product of negative emotional response to events or situations. In the case of individuals who feel like they are subject to structural oppression (that is, creating unequal environment for individuals from different race, gender or other marginalizing factors), activist identity formation creates a sense of commitment to overcome negative and hostile environments. In the next section, I will explore the process of development and growth of leadership among activists.

Leadership Development Programs

Having discussed the formation process of activist identity, it is important to understand the state of leadership development programs available to student activists. U.S. universities are locations of mass citizenship training and socialization (Barber & Bottoms, 2006; Gitlin, 2006). Collective activism is one of the many citizenship and leadership practices present in higher education (Altbach 1997; Rhoads 1998). Despite the relatively small number of people who engage in collective activism, their actions disproportionately impact institutional policies and practices (Altbach, 1989). As a hallmark of student citizenship practices, individual and collective activism

has been instrumental to realizing educational equity, inclusion, and economic justice (Mars, 2009). Although not often described in terms of leadership, student activism has been a potent and instrumental agent of organizational leadership and change in higher education.

Scholars frequently refer to the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s as a zenith of campus-based activism (Altbach, 1989; Broadhurst, 2014). The development of student leaders during that period looked very different than today. Specifically, student leaders worked much more closely with broader US social movements. Narratives of that time emphasize the role that organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Black Panther Party (BPP), and others had in training and guiding students through effective organizing and advocacy (Davis, 1991; Rogers, 2009; Van Deburg, 1992). In this respect, contemporary leadership opportunities for students are fundamentally different. During the 1960s, students had more opportunities to learn leadership from seasoned organizers with clear ideological and material commitments to national and international justice struggles. Today, universities may publicly exalt social movement leaders of the past, yet university programs are not invested in the types of development needed to produce similar leadership. With an interest in social movement leadership, this section synthesizes leadership development discourse from higher education and social movement scholars.

Having students engage in social movement leadership connects to the mission of the university, both in serving the public and in producing creative and innovative thought. Social movement scholar Robin D.G. Kelley (2002) speaks to the generative potential of social movement practices:

> Progressive social movements do not simply produce statistics and narratives of oppression; rather, the best ones do what great poetry does: transports us to another place, compels us to relive the horrors and, more important, enables us to imagine a new society[...]social movements are important, not merely as forces for reform, or self-defense; they are

incubators of self-transformation—democratic forums for the articulation of new ideas, new visions. (p. 9)

Students should be offered the opportunity to engage in these freedom practices, not through a crucible of obstacles and crises—as student activists often must—but with the support of institutional accomplices seeking radical transformations within and beyond their institutions.

Formal leadership development opportunities for student activists tend to take place within student organizations or student government positions, as well as through university civic engagement and service-learning curricula (Komives, 2016; Komives et al., 2011). Most higher education institutions offer formal student leadership development opportunities, although these initiatives vary widely in structure and approach and are rarely tailored to an activist education (Komives et al., 2011). These opportunities meaningfully benefit student participants, promoting deeper understandings, critical thinking skills, and cultivating a greater sense of social and civic responsibility (Haber, 2011; Komives et al., 2009). Student leadership development can also promote shared visions for change, fostering cross-group coalitions, and encouraging democratic participation (Astin & Astin, 2000).

While university leadership development programs have rapidly expanded in the last two decades, the quality of these initiatives is unclear (Komives et al., 2011; Owen, 2009). In particular, the qualifications of leadership educators have been scrutinized (Dugan, 2011a). Empirical assessments reinforce claims about the dubious effectiveness of these initiatives, evincing only marginal improvements for participants (Dugan et al., 2011). With these critiques in mind, scholars argue that educators should implement high-impact student leadership opportunities that incorporate increasing levels of complexity (Dugan, 2011a; 2011b) and promote holistic individual development (Allen & Roberts, 2011). Perhaps leadership development programs geared towards activists should seek to promote "intensive activist experiences", which Van Dyke and Dixon (2013) identified as impactful in activist identity formation.

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The leadership development literature must also explore the impact of structural barriers on student leadership. Importantly, Dugan (2011a) argues that oppression limits leadership opportunities for people who lack "access to resources, [face] pervasive cultural messages regarding social status and roles, and/or [have] genuine fears for safety or negative consequences" (p. 82). Dugan's findings suggest the need for an integration of a theory and practice of care—i.e., holistic support (Museus & Neville, 2012)—within leadership development programs. Studies of structural oppression might also extend to the ways in which institutions engage in ideological repression. For example, university staff and faculty might discourage the use of some impactful citizenship practices—such as protests, boycotts, and civil disobedience—while encouraging other potentially less effective measures. Absent explicit principles to support radical leadership, student development programs are likely to support the status quo of conservative and/or liberal analytical frameworks, advocacy skills, and value ideation. The present study explores both structural oppression and ideological marginalization through an analysis of my experiences supporting student activist organizations.

Another dilemma facing activist-oriented leadership development programs are conflicts of interest that staff may harbor between supporting student activists and loyalties or responsibilities to their employer, the institution that is often the target of student activism. A proposed solution to this conflict might be what Debra Meyerson and Maureen Scully (1995) coined as tempered radicalism, or individuals working within corporations who are committed to enacting social values and practices that are divergent from the dominant culture and practices of their institutions. Kezar (2010) extended the tempered radicals framework to describe faculty and staff who advocate for social change within colleges and universities. They observed that tempered radical faculty and staff engaged in a spectrum of change actions with students, from invisible (e.g., behind the scenes advocacy) to highly visible (e.g., participating in direct action with students) (Kezar, 2010; Kezar et

al., 2011). Further, this type of support often yielded important student skill development in strategic planning, critical thinking, communication, awareness raising, and institutional navigation (Kezar & Maxey, 2014).

The limited number of studies on tempered radicalism within higher education offer an important framework to understand faculty and staff advocacy. That said, tempered radicalism may have limitations within student activist leadership development. A primary concern is the role of power and hierarchy within corporate environments, which can have corrosive effects on employees' advocacy abilities. The flood of uncovered cases of sexual assaults and harassment discovered in the entertainment industry through the #MeToo movement is indicative of just how suppressed social criticism can be, even within organizations that the public view as 'liberal,' 'left-leaning,' or 'progressive' (Enzerink, 2017; Hess, 2018; Hunt, 2017). A parallel can easily be drawn with higher education institutions, as demonstrated by recent revelations that sexual harassment cases were rampant across the University of California (UC) system (Peele et al., 2017) and widespread reports from campuses nationwide (Department of Education, 2016). Student activists often have legitimate concerns with how far leadership development staff are willing to advocate for them, especially around issues that institutions have traditionally tried to minimize or silence.

A secondary concern with tempered radicalism is its rootedness in individualism. Specifically, for the tempered radical, accountability is a personal choice, a negotiation of an individual's values with the expectations and norms of their organization. Within a typical corporation, accountability to marginalized communities might be ritually dismissed because the purpose of a corporation is to turn a profit. In such a context, the socially-conscious actions of employees might be viewed as extraordinary. A higher education institution, on the other hand, is fundamentally different in that its purpose is immediately connected to multiple communities— students, staff, faculty, and the public, inclusive of adjacent neighborhoods and populations. As

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such, activist students who engage within their institutions should expect greater ethicality and

accountability from institutional actors. Carrying on with the example of sexual harassment in the

UC system, how might accountability be understood for the thousands of faculty, staff, and Title IX

officers who knew of and engaged in the bureaucratic processing of these cases? What about the

staff who maintained cordial relationships with the abusers? Would many of them identify as

tempered radicals? How might students advocating for an end to gendered violence view the actions

of these employees', especially in moments of employee complicity with broken institutional

procedures that helped to perpetuate violence?[14] In fact, student activism around gender violence is

often spurred by institutional betrayal: administrator's failure to prevent abuse, normalize abusive

environments, create complicated reporting mechanisms, inadequately respond to harm, support

cover-ups, and punish victims and whistleblowers (Smith & Freyd, 2014).These dilemmas highlight

the intense contradictions that can surround advising and allyship within higher education

institutions. As such, this study seeks to explore the ways in which leadership development programs

can foster student growth while simultaneously establishing accountability mechanisms that are

supportive of student goals.[15]

     Leadership development programs also offer an instrumental opportunity to expand student

activists' access to networks offering social capital supportive of change initiatives (Kezar, 2014;

Kezar et al., 2017). These are not limited to campus-related networks; peer networks, for example,

have supported student retention and leadership development (Shotton et al., 2007; Tinto, 2010),

while alumni networks have been an effective tool for influencing institutional change (Kezar et al.,

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[14] At UCLA, student protesters were horrified with the ways in which faculty and staff acquiesced to the university's inadequate response to History Professor Gabriel Pitterberg's sexual assault(s) of numerous students. Unpublished data from the 2017 pilot study.

[15] Within activist communities, the invisible-to-visible spectrum proposed by Kezar is often phrased differently, as a spectrum of ally to accomplice. Indigenous Action notes this distinction in relationship to the risks taken and commitment demonstrated: allies that provide "support or solidarity (usually on a temporary basis) in a fight are much different than that of an accomplice. When we fight back or forward, together, becoming complicit in a struggle towards liberation, we are accomplices." Indigenous Action (2016). Accomplices not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex. Accessed on December 27, 2017 at http://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/

2011). A fourth type of network that student activists can benefit from are those that link the university with local and national social movement leaders (Rhoads et al., 2005). The range of networks are an important yet understudied feature of student activism and leadership development programs.

The research literature would benefit from network analyses of student activists that explores the challenges students encounter when engaging with various networks. As critical higher education scholars have noted, neoliberal values often influence the types of partnerships that universities maintain and the ways in which partnerships are understood and enacted (Clifford, 2017; Cuban & Anderson, 2007; Mitchell, 2007; Mitchell, 2014). Specifically, we must question if these networks are based in mutuality such that students have agency in determining the terms of their relationship, as Rhoads (1997) suggests. How do students understand their relationship to various networks? Are there ways in which collaborations with networks can stifle student initiative or force undesirable compromises? This study will explore how students access networks through their relationships with campus leadership development programs.

Activist Leadership Skills

A basic definition of leadership is motivating others to act collectively to achieve a common goal (Wallace et al., 2021). Leadership literature is typically centered in an organizational context— i.e., business, school, government—where leaders are tasked to guide and motivate others to achieve organizational objectives. Leadership growth is typically centered around long-term strategic planning to produce significant positive returns and outcomes (Fusarelli et al., 2018). Leadership is focused on the development of activities that help to reexamine the existing societal structures, systems and processes, and help these systems to align with each other in a way that supports societal change (Fusarelli et al., 2018). Thus, leadership is a critical part of activism, as it helps to

combine the identity and commitment of an activist with the practical approach of engaging others in achieving unified goals of societal change.

Broadly speaking, the literature identifies a spectrum individually-focused and collectively-focused leadership practices. Wallace et al. (2021) argues that that individual-focused leadership is centered around the development of an individual to address societal change, while collective-focused leadership is about developing and motivating others to create a social change. These practices are not mutually exclusive, as leaders are more effective with strong individual and collective ability. In fact, strong collective leadership it reliant on an understanding of individual skills and leveraging them effectively to pursue collective goals (Sorge et al., 2018). That said, collective leadership is arguably more integral to social movement organizing, as it leads to collaborative change with the potential for greater impact. Effective leaders adopt a strengths-based approach where they identify and utilize the individual leadership strengths of others to help reach a common goal. Adopting such an approach requires leaders to have self-awareness of their capabilities (Katsioloudes & Cannonier, 2019). Rosch and Collins (2017) similarly found that leadership development in students is closely linked to promoting the capacity to lead others. Evidently, leadership is most effective when leaders are aware of their abilities to motivate others to a greater purpose. Without a clear understanding of the problems they seek to address or a strong sense of purpose and commitment, leaders will struggle to lead successful change efforts.

On a more practical level, educational leadership research emphasizes knowledge and values as primary outcomes of student development. Positive outcomes of leadership growth are self-efficacy, increased confidence, collaborative abilities, and greater interpersonal skills (Starbuck & Bell, 2017). In addition to the conceptual and motivational elements of leadership, social movement scholars Marshall Ganz and Liz McKenna (2017) argue for the complementary development of concrete and specific skills. There are few higher education studies that explore activist student

leadership skills. The most comprehensive of these studies is a multi-site case study of student activism by Kezar and colleagues (2017). Their research found seven student activism leadership skills that staff and faculty often help to cultivate: (a) developing plans for change, (b) determining strategies, (c) learning approaches to consciousness raising, (d) learning the language of those in power and how "the system" works, (e) understanding mediation and negotiation, (f) using data to influence decision makers, and (g) navigating and overcoming obstacles in the change process. Further, their findings highlight the intersections of leadership development, power, and privilege within hierarchical organizations. The study reveals the key role of staff and faculty mentors as ally-teachers. Their insider knowledge enables them to effectively cultivate the skills and knowledge students need to navigate institutional change processes. But what are some of the other skills that students need to become effective leaders, both within higher education institutions and in other contexts?

According to the social movement research of Ganz and Lin (2011), there are five interdependent leadership practices of successful social movement organizers. The first of these is *relationship building*, which is fundamental to the growth of organizational capacity. Collective learning, trust-building, and solidarity practices foster sustained participation and spur recruitment that grows group access to additional networks and resources. A second leadership skill they identify is *narrative*, which they state as a "way to access, express, and cultivate emotional resources embedded in shared values...Through narrative, the motivational values that define individual identity, group identity, and an urgent need to act can be experientially articulated as a story of self, a story of us, and a story of now" (Ganz & McKenna, 2017). Narrative is an essential tool of leadership, one which can offer inspiration, resilience, and hope, even in the face of perceived challenges and failures (Beckwith, 2014; Stewart et al., 2012). This study identifies the ways in

which students build relationships within and beyond their group members, as well as how narratives are employed by student leaders.

The third skill identified by Ganz and Lin (2011) is *strategy*, which they define as turning "the resources you have into the power you need to get what you want" (Ganz & McKenna, 2017). Strategy is the collective analytic, imaginative, and adaptive engagement to effectively and intentionally respond to challenges. As such, strategy is an adaptive practice that leaders must do in order to overcome the uncertain terrains they operate in (Jansen, 2016). Often with less resources than their opposition, activist leaders must be more resourceful and develop widely distributed strategic capacity across the rank-and-file to address dynamic realities on the ground (Ganz & McKenna, 2017).

The fourth leadership component Ganz & Lin (2011) identify is *structure*, or the ways in which leaders develop processes for decision making, accountability, and coordination (Ahlquist & Levi, 2013). Without an intentional structure meant to foster leadership development across participating members, groups may struggle to effectively respond to opportunities and challenges as they are presented. Increasingly, unstructured groups may experience dysfunctional leadership dynamics, such as the concentration of power into a select group of insiders or the chaotic fragmentation of leadership across sub-groups within an organization (Ganz & McKenna, 2017). This study will seek to identify the different types of organizational structures that student groups have and how decision making and leadership development operate within these structures.

The fifth leadership practice identified by Ganz and Lin (2012) is *action*, or the moments when organizational resources are mobilized in coordinated efforts, such as strikes, boycotts, or voter turnout operations. Beyond their strategic value to a campaign, actions can serve as "structure tests", presenting opportunities for leadership development and a vantage to learn the extent that constituencies are engaged (McAlevey, 2016). Poorly organized actions can undermine group

motivation whereas effective tactical actions can energize groups and create momentum. Ganz and

McKenna (2017) note that while action focuses on *mobilizing* resources, effective actions must

embed the first four *organizing* practices identified above. Thus, this study will seek identify discrete

student group actions and the ways in which leaders mobilize group resources and engage in the

previously mentioned organizing skills.

Institutional Cultural Practices and Policies

The final section of this chapter seeks to conceptualize institutional policies and practices in relation to student activism and leadership development. To develop this concept, the section will synthesize the existing higher education literature while reflecting on the experiences of student activists as a lens through which to understand how institutional practices of campus climate management affect impacted communities. The aim of this analysis is to develop a functional understanding of the institutional context within which student activists practice leadership.

Campus climate is often used as a barometer of the institutional environment. Prominent campus climate scholars Rankin and Reason (2008) understand the climate as the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards and practices of employees and students of an institution" (p. 264).[16] Hurtado and colleagues (1998; 1999) identify climate as a multidimensional construct shaped by actions within and external to higher education institutions. Institutional leaders frequently measure campus climate through surveys that assess the "the current attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential" (UCOP, 2014). Climate assessment tools generally measure perceptions and attitudes of specific social groups on college campuses, as well as experiences of bias, discrimination, and harassment.

Campus climate assessments have been helpful as a tool to understand how racism and other intersections of oppression broadly impact college and university environments. Importantly, research has emerged linking key educational outcomes with campus climate (Chang, 2000; Feagin et al., 1996; Hurtado, 2002; Hurtado et al., 2008; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Watson, 2002). Importantly, there are evident signs that poor experiences of campus climate are connected with poor

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[16] As students are the focus of this dissertation study, this section will not engage extensively with the scholarship on campus climate and staff and faculty experience.

mental health, greater stress among first-year incoming students (Cress & Ikeda, 2003), as well as reports of depressive symptoms among minoritized student populations (Arbona & Jimenez, 2014). Inversely, students who said they were satisfied with campus experiences reported better mental health (Byrd & McKinney, 2012). Students experiences of a poor and/or hostile campus climate have a profound impact on their persistence. Different dimensions of climate have shown to affect student's transition to college and retention (Chang et al., 2008; Fisher, 2005; Hurtado et al., 2007).

This scholarship on student outcomes has direct implications for UCLA, the site of this research study. Much like other campuses across the United States, the UCLA campus has been rife with climate tensions. The Moreno Report (2013) and Rankin and Associates (2014) campus climate assessment highlight UCLA community members' experiences of racial, ethnic, and gendered hostility. The most recent Rankin report suggests that between 18 and 28 percent of UCLA students do not favorably rate campus climate, with underrepresented minorities and non-gender conforming individuals reporting the least comfortability (Rankin & Associates, 2014). Poor campus climate measures confirm public outcry over publicized incidents of racial, ethnic, and gendered intolerance at UCLA (Svrluga, 2015; Ong, 2015; Huang & Yu, 2016). Relatedly, a sizeable number of student respondents to the Rankin and Associates (2014) study had considered leaving the institution in the past year. Populations most likely to consider leaving were students with disabilities, students holding multiple-minority identities, women in graduate programs, and low-income students.

Highly visible incidents of racial and gendered injustice at universities often serve as touchstones for student activism. Research has explored this relationship, tying poor campus climate with increased levels of student activism (Horowitz, 1987; Julius & Gumport, 2003; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Vaccaro, 2009).[17] Chesler and Crowfoot (2010) found that students can view

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[17] Broadhurst & Martin (2014) found that "social/political activism oriented" students had a more positive perception of campus climate, contradicting much of the other research. This study was excluded from the review because its inclusion criteria was too inclusive, including students who indicated engagement in volunteer activities and student leadership opportunities. Additionally, the

themselves as subordinate members of campus communities, driving them towards social change.

These students can experience campus climate acutely, both in relation to general interactions with

the campus environment, but also through experiences of conflict with campus administrators who

are often resistant to students' desires for campus transformation (Hurtado, 1992; Julius & Gumport,

2003; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Renn, 2007; Vaccaro, 2009). Specifically, campus administrators

have the power to foster climates that are threatening, dismissive, or open to activist students

(Chesler & Crowfoot, 2010).

Broadly speaking, higher education institutions measure campus climate to evaluate how

campus community members--especially those from minoritized populations--view their experiences

on campus, particularly in relation to incidents of bias, exclusion, discrimination, and targeted

violence. As the field of campus climate scholarship and assessment has matured, colleges and

universities have become more adept at responding to climate issues as they arise (Gose, 2006).

However, scholars of institutional diversity practices have questioned whether visible advancements

in policies and practices have been nonperformative, meaning they do not accomplish what they

state (Ahmed, 2012; Berrey, 2015; Harper, 2015). In fact, one study found that university

administrators favorably presented climate assessment data by amplifying positive quantitative

results despite interview findings that showed a poor climate for women and other marginalized

people (Vaccaro, 2010). In addition to nonperformative diversity statements, many institutions are

non-transparent with the results of their assessments, hindering authentic accountability processes

(Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). Campus climate scholar Shaun Harper (2015) openly challenged this

status quo around campus climate practice:

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study self-admittedly lacked an analysis around race and ethnicity due to sample size, variables that have been found to be instrumental in campus climate assessment.

The sad reality is that the administrators at this university paid us an enormous sum of money to remain in denial about its racial problems. This had happened to us before and has occurred again since.

...

Choosing to ignore these realities won't make them less real. Eventually, colleges and universities will have to pay a much higher price for racism should their leaders choose to ignore our findings, no matter how harsh they seem.

Students of color will continually drop out in higher numbers (lost tuition dollars), faculty and staff members of color will keep leaving through a revolving door (higher turnover costs), and alumni of color will be considerably less likely to contribute financially to an institution they know to be racist (forfeited donations for institutional advancement).

There is an evident tension between the stated intentions guiding campus climate assessment and the higher education policies and practices that affect campus climate. Against this backdrop, questioning the utility of campus climate discourse as a vehicle for institutional change is both valid and necessary.

Another limit of campus climate discourse might be its tendency towards theoreticism, meaning its abstraction of specific incidents of oppression into a generalizable concept that necessitates generalized responses.[18] Using the term to describe deeply personal and destructive incidents of racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and other bigotry and violence feels like an act of obscuring rather than clarifying. The divide deepens when considering the disconnect between campus climate and anti-oppression discourses that left-leaning student activists utilize. Specifically, campus climate scholarship rarely includes words like "oppression," "racism," and "sexism" in their analyses, while rarely if ever utilizing well-established theoretical perspectives such as white supremacy, nationalism, feminism, and settler colonialism. Critical race scholar diane lynn gusa

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[18] I use this term in reference to Engin F. Isin's (2008) interpretation of Bakhtin: Theoreticism accounts for acts "by interpreting them as an instance of something abstract...theoreticism [attempts] to derive the content of an act from its moral law: [reducing] the unique occurrence of the act to its interpretation, or, in Bakhtin's words, its special answerability to its general answerability." (p.28-29) In relation to campus climate, scholars and practitioners tend to propose generalized responses to 'campus climate' as opposed to targeted responses to the specific incidents of oppression that constitutes 'climate'. Isin, E. F., & Nielsen, G. M. (2008). Acts of citizenship. London: Zed Books.

(2010) noted the importance of explicitly naming the ideologies that lead to observable outcomes for

Black students:

> The intertwined social, political, and economic milieu of each African American creates a heterogeneous Black college population. As such, the social and academic impact of a predominately White chilly climate on African American students will vary. It is essential that predominately White institutions interested in addressing African American attrition due to chilly or hostile campus climates realize how marginalization and discrimination are the outcomes of White mainstream ideology (Whiteness) and White privilege.

The language choices of campus climate discourse—whether intentional or unintentional,

strategic or principled—matter in the ways that they may enable or disable scholars, practitioners,

and institutional leaders from addressing the core issues that affect marginalized members of

university communities.

Minoritized student activists may also be skeptical of the utility of campus climate discourse.

While student leaders occasionally use campus climate discourse in appeals to university

administrators,[19] conservative agitators have similarly wielded campus climate terminology as a tool

to challenge ideological differences (Gockowski, 2017; Hartocollis, 2015; Stanley, 2016). When

students of color lead civil disobedience on campus, they are often chastised for creating a divisive

climate that undermines the learning environment (Manne & Stanley, 2015; Spada, 2017). This line

of thinking was central to the strategy of Zionists and pro-Israel organizations seeking to stifle the

Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) student movement led by groups such as Students for

Justice in Palestine, as well as critics of Israeli state policies (Stanley, 2016; Vilkomerson & Rosen,

2017). BDS campaign detractors actively conflate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, in the process

weaponizing[20] campus climate by arguing that BDS activism created a negative climate for Jewish

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[19] To give a recent example, student leaders from the Afrikan Student Union (ASU) at UCLA publicly use institutional terms like "campus climate" while demanding institutional action. Bharanidaran, R. (2017, May 11). Afrikan Student Union Releases List of Demands for UCLA Administration. *Daily Bruin.* Retrieved March 11, 2018 from http://dailybruin.com/2017/05/11/afrikan-student-union-releases-list-of-demands-for-ucla-administration/

[20] Weaponizing: to convert to use as a weapon. Merriam-Webster (n.d.). Weaponize. Retrieved March 11, 2018 from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/weaponize.

students (Fouse, 2017; Katz, 2015). Zionist organizations sought to ban SJP chapters across the country, initiating litigation, applying pressure through donor networks, and wielding other forms of influence (Heins, 2014; Landry & Kozub, 2017; Vilkomerson & Rosen, 2017). Zionist lobby organization have pushed legislative and policy efforts to label and censure criticisms of Israel (Barrows-Friedman, 2017), including efforts to implement a "Principles Against Intolerance" at the University of California system which would censure anti-Zionism by conflating it with anti-Semitism (Watanabe, 2016). These clandestine efforts have been paired with targeted harassment campaigns coordinated by websites like Canary Mission, that dox student, staff, and faculty supporters of BDS by publishing their personal information (Salaita, 2016).

On an everyday practical level, campus climate research and terminology can serve as a double-edged sword, simultaneously validating experiences of racism and racist perspectives. Importantly, most campus climate surveys return a sizable percentage of white students who believe they are targets of discrimination (Cabrera et al., 1999; Miller & Sujitparapitaya, 2010), echoing national narratives and myths of reverse racism and white victimhood (King, 2015; Carstarphen et al., 2017). In these surveys, scholars and practitioners do not engage with the significance of these responses, namely their rootedness in racial mythologies and abstract liberalism[21]—arguments that reject race-based analyses on the basis of protecting 'equal opportunity.' This liberalism has mobilized terms like campus climate, intersectionality, and diversity (e.g. "diversity of ideas") to disrupt conversations about white supremacy, social and racial hierarchies, and white privilege (Rodriguez & Freeman, 2016). Reflecting on this critique of campus climate discourse and practice,

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[21] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Victor Ray argue that abstract liberalism is the act of obscuring "race-related issues in the language of liberalism" allowing whites to "appear 'reasonable' and even 'moral' while opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto racial inequality. For instance, by using the tenets of the free market ideology in the abstract, they can oppose affirmative action as a violation of the norm of equal opportunity." (p. 47) Bonilla-Silva, E. & Ray, V. (2010). "It's Real! Racism, Color Blindness, Obama, And The Urgent Need For Social Movement Politics" in Cassano, G., & Buono, R. A. D. (Eds.). (2010). *Crisis, Politics and Critical Sociology* (Vol. 17). Brill.

this study explores how student activists understand and mobilize around institutional discourses and practices such as campus climate and diversity.

Student activism has proliferated around ineffective administrative responses to inequitable campus environments (Fisher, 2005). Students have been a driving force of racial equity in higher education, largely because of the inabilities of institutional leaders' to explicitly acknowledge and address the historical and ongoing role of racism and patriarchy on diversity outcomes (Ahmed, 2012; Sturm et al., 2011). Sara Ahmed's research on institutional diversity practices in higher education highlights how this silence around structural racism functions as a "brick wall," and that many invisible institutionalized "brick walls" prevent the successful implementation of diversity objectives (Ahmed, 2012). According to the diversity workers that Ahmed interviewed, diversity work feels like continuously "banging your head" against "brick walls." Further, Ahmed found that when members of campus communities brought forth complaints about institutional inequality and injustice, these "complainers", as she calls them, were marginalized, repressed, and "exhausted" by obstinate gatekeepers and bureaucratic processes (Ahmed, 2012). The exhausting work of challenging institutional racism and racial inequalities poses a threat to the mental health and retention of student of color activists. This study seeks to understand the various ways in which student activists experience "brick walls" during their campus advocacy, as well as the impact that confronting "brick walls" has on student wellbeing and retention.

In fact, activist students often experience burnout because of these brick walls, as their struggling against institutional resistance results in cumulative stressors that wear away at their physical and emotional wellbeing (Linder et al., 2019). Activists can experience burnout as they carry emotional burdens related to their work, which can increase feelings of pressure or isolation (Gingerich & Peterson, 2013). Student activists may be particularly susceptible to burnout because of its possible interconnectedness with racial battle fatigue, which is the accumulative effects of

coping with everyday racism (Linder et al., 2019). In the aggregate, hostile campus environments present barriers to student leadership efforts that support diverse institutions.

While student activism can negatively impact mental health, academic performance, and future opportunities, students have established their own coping strategies. Responding to corrosive postsecondary experiences, student-initiated retention projects (SIRPs) reflect a synchronous social response to the pervasive barriers that exist (Maldonado et al., 2005). Large-scale SIRPs, led predominantly by student of color organizations, first emerged in the early 1990s. SIRPS represent a synthesis and evolution of current retention theories. SIRPs embrace calls for institutionalized academic and social support, while flaunting notions that retention requires students of color to assimilate to normatively white institutional cultures (Maldonado et al., 2005). Further, SIRPs endorse multiculturalist theories of retention—a la Rendón and Tierney—by centering cultural affirmations within retention practices (Jayakumar et al., 2009). These initiatives allow students to maintain cultural, familial, and community ties, while creating counter-spaces to experience moments of cultural catharsis—breaks from the alienating milieu of dominant social and institutional climates (Maldano et al., 2005). SIRPs represent another major departure from traditional retention theory. By asserting the role students play in mediating their own retention, SIRPs reject institutional leadership as the sole motor of change. Further, SIRPs demonstrate that activism can offer transformative opportunities to build community, safe spaces, and networks that are supportive of mental health and retention (Hartocollis, 2016). While not solely interested in SIRPs as a location of student activism, this study recognizes the discursive value of SIRPs in asserting the contradictions and potentials of student activism. According to Yosso (2005), this paradox is inherent in the ways in which youth of color enact "resistance capital", a form of cultural capital where youth must be "oppositional with their bodies, minds and spirits" (p. 81) to overcome race, gender, and class inequality. Thus, students engaging in activism are enacting survival strategies by challenging racial,

gender, and other inequalities in higher education. This study extends this scholarship to explore how activism leadership practices mediate the mental health and retention outcomes of student activists.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Student activist leadership is instrumental to enacting transformative justice within higher education institutions. Exploring activist leadership development processes within the context of neoliberal institutional culture necessitates research approaches that are critical of power and reflect social justice goals. Institutional ethnography offers an effective entry point to these overarching aims of my research; as an approach, institutional ethnography is invested in knowing how people and events are tied together in ways that make sense of abstractions such as "power, knowledge, capitalism, patriarchy, race, the economy, the state, policy, culture, and so on" (Campbell and Gregor, 2002, p.17). To this end, I use institutional ethnography to understand how student activism "actually is…how 'it' actually works, [and it's] actual practices and relations" (Smith, 2005, p. 160) within the institutional context of UCLA. While I employ a variety of methods, the data collected through my research is woven into an autoethnographic narrative that contextualizes and interprets the findings within the multi-layered and dynamic environment of a higher education institution. This dissertation approaches the study of BEST from this perspective, using institutional ethnography, autoethnography and narrative to understand the everyday practices of BEST, both as a vehicle for activist leadership development and a conduit of institutional change. Utilizing these approaches, I will explore the following research questions:

1. What factors led to the creation of the BEST program?

2. What are the major features of the BEST program and how did these features evolve?

3. What challenges and obstacles exist in supporting student activist leadership and how can those be overcome?

4. How do institutional cultural practices and policies influence leadership development programs?

Positionality Statement

Before further discussing the research process, I am sharing a statement of positionality to address how my identity and personal stakes impact this research. Positionality theory recognizes that researchers and participants have multiple and overlapping identities that can influence the research process, often in unconscious ways (Kezar, 2002). By reflecting on positionality and, specifically, the ways in which biases may shape this study, both the research process and outcomes may become more rigorous.

Relevant to this dissertation, as a white man with class privilege studying the leadership experiences of a population that is predominantly low-income women of color, I acknowledge my perceptual and analytical limitations. I have no personal experience with the race-, class-, and gender-based oppression that many of the study members of BEST experienced. As such, during all stages of the research process, I may have operated under flawed assumptions, asking the wrong questions in the wrong way or in the wrong setting, I may have interpreted what is said to me incorrectly or during analysis, drawing conclusions that are biased. Likewise, research participants may have shaped their interactions with me based on their perceptions of me as a white middle-class man (or based on other identity signifiers that I may not be aware of). My limitations in this respect call for reflexivity, whereby I must intentionally and actively consider and reflect on how these dynamics impact interactions throughout the research process.

Another factor that significantly impacts the research is my role as a founding member and leader within the BEST program. Importantly, my relative power over students' access to resources may have influenced how they responded to me personally, as well as other BEST Leadership Team (BLT) members who were involved in data collection. Further, my status as a scholar means that I stand to benefit if this research produces desirable outcomes. As a junior scholar, the success of this

program and my ability to generate meaningful research from it are of professional consequence to me.

While holding and acknowledging these interests, I believe that I have other priorities that help balance whatever perceived or real conflicts of interest that might arise. Importantly, I care deeply about the students that I work with and want them to receive impactful leadership development resources that changed their lives for the better. I also care deeply about social change and want students to be able to enact their own visions of social justice through the support that I help provide. Said plainly, I want programs like BEST to have meaning and impact beyond the findings of this research. If BEST was unsuccessful in achieving its goals, then programs like it must adopt different approaches that lead to greater success. As such, I am invested in a bigger picture: growing knowledge about student activism and social movement leadership development resources in higher education. Seen as an experiment in radical education, BEST deserves a history that fairly and honestly accounts for its strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

There are also many benefits of my prominent role in the research: namely that I participated in most of the events surrounding the BEST program from its inception and also privy to many conversations that were never made public. As such, I have access to the internal happenings of BEST and can tap into the conversations and thinking that were behind many of the decisions made through the program. Further, as a student activist throughout my career at UCLA, I have a deep understanding of the campus and the various actors and factors that shape and motivate student activism. While my closeness to the study topic may cloud my perspective, it also grants me deep and unique insights into the events discussed by this research. Moving from this statement, I welcome the reader to reflect on how my identities and roles within both the program and this research might influence the findings of this study.

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Institutional Ethnography and Autoethnography

Institutional Ethnography (Smith, 1987, 2005, 2006; see also, Campbell & Gregor, 2002) suited my research as it begins from everyday experiences to understand social practices and policies within institutions. This methodology helped frame my everyday experiences as a campus social justice leader within the institution's culture, policies, and practices. My research merges institutional ethnography with autoethnography and narrative writing as a method of contextualizing and interpreting institutional realities.

Institutional Ethnography was first developed by sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987). Smith's (1987) feminist research strategy "explicate the actual social processes and practices organizing people's everyday experience from a standpoint in the everyday world' (p. 151). Institutional Ethnography aims to create an alternative to the objectified knowledge of social scientific discourse (Smith, 2005, p. 11):

> The latter conforms to and is integrated with what I have come to call the 'ruling relations' – that extraordinary yet ordinary complex of relations that are textually mediated, that connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives – the corporations, government bureaucracies, academic and professional discourses, mass media, and the complex of relations that interconnect them.

Ruling relations interact with our lives in complex and interconnected ways, and we have agency to resist dominant discourses that attempt to generalize our lives. Student activists are affected by these ruling relations, while also leading efforts to modify, change, or dismantle these relations. By exploring student activists' interactions within higher education institutions, we can understand how people inhabiting different parts of a system have varying amounts of power to affect ruling relations. Yet, ruling relations are not just about who has the power to make change; they are also about how people implicated in a system or institution use that power.

At its heart, this study is about who has the power to transform higher education institutional policies and practices, and what are the levers of this change and the walls that stand in the way. The

first stage of institutional ethnography research focuses on entry level data (Campbell & Gregor, 2002) through various methods to "generate descriptions of what people do in their everyday lives" (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, p. 755). Rankin (2017) notes how the problematics embedded in these pieces of data serve as a starting point (p. 8):

> they produce the preliminary stages of turning the apparent chaos of masses of data about everyday life into specific, socially organized instances of a something…explicated as IE inquiry. The researcher examines these entry points—descriptions of people and happenings—to determine the relations that exist and to discover other manifestations of those relations that were not previously apparent.

An analysis of this data leads to second level data, i.e., texts and policies that help explore how participants' lives are socially organized within the institution. DeVault and McCoy (2002) describe this research approach as following three steps: "(a) identify an experience, (b) identify some of the institutional processes that are shaping that experience, and (c) investigate those processes in order to describe analytically how they operate as the grounds of the experience" (p. 755). This allows for institutional ethnography to "stitch together smaller social groupings into larger institutional contexts, which in turn leads to even larger power structures" (Taber, 2010, p. 11).

Institutional ethnography does not advocate for a specific analytical approach to understand data; rather, the institutional ethnographer must choose approaches that best suit their research. Rankin (2017) suggests the use of mapping, indexing, and writing as analytical strategies that can be used independently and together. Mapping processes involve creating visual or diagrammatic representations of the data that bring visual coherence to the findings, while indexing is a way to organize everyday practices and happenings such that they are linked to support an analytic view into the institution. Finally, writing an account involves selecting activities from the ethnographic data to describe how they are socially organized. I utilize these approaches in conjunction with textual analysis, which is a common way that institutional ethnographers analyze data without

decontextualizing participants' stories (Smith, 1987, 1990, 1999, 2001; also, Campbell and Gregor, 2002; Miller, 1997).

Textual analysis involves understanding how language, symbols, and/or pictures present in texts reflect how people make sense of and communicate life and life experiences, and how these messages are influenced by and reflective of larger social structures. DeVault and McCoy (2002) suggest that institutional ethnographers consider data by asking "'How is it that these people are saying what they are saying' so that you can go back to a political-economic context for the answer" (p. 769). This is where researchers approach participants' experiences, "from a woman's account of her everyday experience to exploring from that perspective the generalizing and generalized relations in which each individual's everyday world is embedded" (Smith, 1987, p. 185). From this approach, I explored the everyday experiences of student activists, myself included, and theorize about the way in which student activist work is sewn into a larger tapestry of power and social relations within the institution.

In this dissertation, I use autoethnography to explore how my experiences as a student activist are linked to institutional policies and practices at UCLA, as well as to larger forces that structure the practices of student dissidence. My lens into the everyday work of student activism is grounded in my own involvement in student activism, as well as my participation in an institutional program tasked with supporting activist student leadership. Engaging in this research through autoethnography is rare within institutional ethnography (Taber, 2010), and doing so makes "my subjectivity as a researcher…not only a starting point, but a central point of analysis" (p.12). Autoethnography as a method has tremendous potential to inform institutional ethnography, offering descriptive, contextual, analytical, and affective ways of understanding a topic (Ellis, 2002).

Autoethnography is often described as a 'rewriting of the self and the social' (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 4), while Ellis (2002) describes the potential of personal narrative in providing "a

substantial avenue to understanding the Other as well as the self, and an enticement to others to examine social problems, act in the world, and consider how to make the world a better place" (Ellis, 2002, p. 401). Autoethnography authors use their 'self' in different ways to analyze the researcher's own experiences towards understanding the research topic. For example, Smith (2005) reflects on how her autoethnography of her experiences using creative activities as a person with a brain injury allowed her "personal experiences to become valid data.... [freeing her] to write reflectively, thoughtfully, and introspectively about a very personal subject close to my heart" (p. 6). My research will explore the introspective and affective aspects of my experience, while also extending my reflections and analysis to social realities. This balancing act between the self and the social is an important feature where autoethnographies differ (Walford, 2004). This autoethnography will tilt more towards the social, as my experiences were heavily embedded within collective social practices where I worked in close collaborations with my comrades towards shared goals. My interest in the social is in line with Anderson's (2006) description of analytical autoethnography, which aims extend beyond documenting "personal experience, to provide an "insider's perspective," or to evoke emotional response with the reader. Rather, the defining characteristic…is to use empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves" (p. 386-387). My research subscribes to the analytic as opposed to the evocative approach, using my experiences for their insights into broader social phenomena (Anderson, 2006) relating to student social justice activism.

Institutional Context

This dissertation seeks to understand the institutional contexts, policies, and practices that shaped the Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST), an activist student leadership development initiative at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Much like other campuses across the United States, UCLA has been rife with social, racial, and political

tensions that negatively affect the experiences of minoritized students, staff, and faculty. Both the Moreno Report (2013) and Rankin and Associates (2014) campus climate assessment have highlighted UCLA community members' experiences of racial, ethnic, and gendered hostility. In the backdrop of these evergreen inequities, UCLA students have pushed for social justice dating back to before the 1960s. The following non-exhaustive list of significant activist events demonstrates both the recent history of exclusion at UCLA and the powerful and consistent opposition that students have mounted to challenge oppressive institutional policies and practices. These include a 1975 protest series successfully challenging proposed cuts to Ethnic Studies programs (Del Omo, 1975), a successful two-week protest at UCLA's law school in 1978 demanding increased admissions of Latino students (Harris, 1978), prolonged organized actions from 1985-1986 to force institutional divestment from Apartheid South Africa (Roark, 1986), a 1993 student hunger strike succeeding in their demands for the establishment of a Chicana/o Studies Department in 1993 (Gordon, 1993), and nearly a decade of focused organizing between 1995 and 2001 to challenge Proposition 209 (which banned affirmative action in California) culminating in a 2001 takeover of the UCLA Admissions Office in response to precipitous declines in student of color enrollment (Weiss, 2001). More recently, student activist organizations have protested unfair labor practices at the institution (Doan, 2006), structural and institutional inequalities negatively impacting Black students (Zhu, 2019), immigration policies (Leou, 2017), and prison divestment (Maskara, 2015). As this brief history demonstrates, student activism contesting structural and institutional oppression is indelibly linked to the promotion of social justice policies and practices at UCLA. Recognizing this vibrant activist past and its connection to students' current change efforts, UCLA offers an ideal institutional context to explore the research questions identified by my study.

My research focuses on organized student leadership, as UCLA's history of activism is closely connected and rooted in the resilience, strength, and ingenuity of UCLA student

organizations, some of which spearheaded the acts of resistance listed above. There are over 1,000

registered student organizations at UCLA (SOLE, 2019), although only a small number of these are

actively and intentionally engaged in shaping campus equity policies. Student organizations are not

the only location of organized student political activity. There are four prominent campus spaces for

student leadership and organizing. The Undergraduate Students Association Council (USAC), which

encompasses elected student leadership, is influential in determining policies and funding allocations

for the student body, though their mandate is largely in flux based on the specific individuals who

occupy elected offices each year. The three other spaces are administrative units housed under the

Office of Student Affairs: namely, the Community Programs Office (CPO), Residential Life

(ResLife), and the Student Organizations, Leadership, and Education (SOLE) office. Each of these

administrative units offer students unique opportunities for leadership development, practice, and

institutional engagement. SOLE is the largest of these entities, serving as an administrative oversight

and advisory support for nearly all student organizations on campus. Student leaders are assigned a

SOLE advisor who helps them book spaces, order food and services, and navigate a complicated

administrative and funding bureaucracy. Neither SOLE nor the other student affairs units on campus

offer comprehensive resources and support tailored to students engaging in social justice activism.

Study Design

This institutional ethnography employs multiple methods—autoethnography, textual

analysis, and secondary data analysis—to answer the research questions. The autoethnographic data

includes my personal diaries, email communications, recollections, and reflections, field

observations collected throughout my participation as a member of the BEST leadership team. The

textual analysis focuses on UCLA policies and official communications, BEST program documents,

BEST email communications, media publications, and social media posts. Finally, the secondary

data analysis includes data from surveys, focus groups, interviews, and field observation notes

collected by the BEST team members from 2016-2020. The tools and research protocols that were used as the basis for the original evaluation studies utilized by this secondary data analysis can be furnished upon request. By using multiple tools and data sources, this study triangulates data throughout the analytical process, allowing for more comprehensive, quality, rigorous, and trustworthy findings.

Participants

Written as an autoethnography, I am the primary protagonist and participant in the study. However, my research includes anecdotes, data, and stories about a variety of other people found in the institutional setting. These participants include other student activists, members of the BEST Leadership Team, UCLA administrators and staff, and community members. Generally speaking, I have anonymized the identity of anyone who is not a public figure, i.e., paid administrators and UCLA staff. With events involving students, I have taken particular care to anonymize their identities, often removing any information about events or interactions that might make them identifiable by people who were not directly involved in those incidents. This is particularly important given that student activists often engage in activities that can result in retaliation or negatively impact career opportunities. I also chose to anonymize the names of other members of the BEST leadership team, as several founding members asked not to be named in any publications.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study took place between January 2021 through June 2021. During this period, I collected my personal notes, the program evaluation data, media publications, social media posts, institutional and organizational documents, and email communications. I reviewed thousands of emails, texts, social media posts, *Daily Bruin*[22] articles, and other documents to identify

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[22] The *Daily Bruin* is the daily student newspaper published at UCLA.

relevant documents for analysis. I utilized keyword searches in my email and text accounts, and in the program's google drive to quickly sort through this vast number of documents. While I used hundreds of keywords through this process and cannot include them all here, a sampling of the keywords included "training", "vision", "accountability", "community", "outreach". I conducted similar keyword searches on the BEST social media accounts and in the *Daily Bruin*. I collectivized these documents into a folder for analysis. Much of the qualitative data that was collected through the BEST program had already been transcribed and thematically analyzed by members of the BEST research team. I reviewed these thematic analyses documents to identify data that might provide insights to this narrative study.

Data Analysis

The analysis process began with narrative writing. I outlined the story that I wanted to tell about BEST into broad sections, e.g., "leadership development", "institutional challenges", "program impacts". I then wrote out a rough personal narrative for each of these sections, describing key events, developments, conversations, and international reflections. Through this narrative writing process, sections were tweaked, merged, removed, and reordered to formulate various storylines about the program. These stories coalesced around several key topics: the founding of BEST and its place in the campus diversity ecology, features of the BEST program and their evolution, and BEST's swansong. Each of these stories became a findings chapter, with key movements in each story evolving into a chapter section. As these sections became more defined, I began to scan through the documents and index their data, lumping the documents into relevant narrative sections. Similarly, I reviewed data collected from the program's evaluation activities and started to sort the qualitative data into sections for further analysis.

After the data was indexed, I engaged in a close textual analysis of these documents to identify specific points from each data source that were relevant to each narrative section and how

they contributed to my analytical perspective into the institution. I wove these data and analyses into the existing narrative, which sometimes supported my initial writing of events, but more often forced me to reflect on and rewrite the narrative. Some documents were more challenging to analyze than others, particularly "living documents" that were altered over the years. In some instances, I had to sort through multiple versions of the same or similar documents to identify how organizational policies or practices changed over time. Utilizing the Google Docs version history function, as well as other contextual cues, I was able to evaluate content changes to these documents and chronologically place them. When analyzing these documents, I was also able to contextualize their contents through readings of email chains and/or the meeting minutes which recorded the conversations guiding the development of organizational documents. These "conversational" documents helped add vocal depth to my narrative by introducing collective voices addressing key issues in the program. Similarly, many of the documents that I analyzed, including field observations and personal reflections, were written by other BEST team members. These data make my narrative multi-vocal, broadening the perspectives included in my storytelling.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

This dissertation is a story about student activism, so I am less interested in reflecting on the "bias" I may have towards institutional actors, policies, and practices that contribute to social, economic, and educational inequities. I want to lay those biases bare, because I believe that institutions and their agents rightly deserve the great deal of skepticism and criticism that they receive. This study, however, is subject to some other regrettable biases that impact the telling of these stories. Foremost, my narrative marginalizes some very important voices, namely the other founders of BEST and the other team members who joined in leadership over the years. These people were instrumental to the everyday operation of the program and helped steer the research initiatives from which I draw much of the data for this study. Their voices are noticeably absent from

my narrative, as I did not interview them or request their feedback on the findings of my research. While I can point to my struggles with time constraints or other practical obstacles, I know that the deeper issue preventing this type of feedback were the tense interpersonal conflicts that ended up drifting and/or tearing apart many of us who led the program. Some of this drifting was perhaps a natural byproduct of graduate school, as each of us moved in separate directions after graduation or new career opportunities. Yet many of our separations were a result of deeply personal conflicts ending with hurt feelings and bad terms. I was at the center of several of these conflicts, and so I found myself talking around the feelings of those whom I had conflict with. These tensions were in the back of my mind throughout writing this narrative, requiring me to handle some subjects with greater delicacy. While some might consider this thinking of others as a form of self-censorship, I believe being reflexive in this way adds a criticality to the narrative process. Specifically, I am concerned about how my colleagues might receive my narrative, and I hope to tell stories of BEST that honored my former colleagues and align more or less with how they might understand those events and collective decision-making processes. My history with these former colleagues has also led to some gaps in the stories that I've told. I chose to include or exclude parts of the story by asking myself if aspects of my narrative might be received as airing out my own grievances with team members or misrepresenting their perspectives or contributions.

CHAPTER 4 – LESSONS OF STUDENT-LED LEADERSHIP ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

The Beginning

The Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST) began in earnest in 2015 and grew to become a multi-faceted and complex leadership development program before it was shuttered in June 2020. BEST provided guidance, education, and support to social justice activists at the University of California, Los Angeles. How the program took shape upon an uncertain path is a story of the vision and persistence of collective student leadership and activism. Reflecting to the beginning, BEST seemed like an example of cosmic alignment—people, events, and environments all choreographed into an opaque but fated destination. Each founding member had specific and unique experiences that brought them first to UCLA and then to work towards BEST. Each members' identities contributed to the project's initial vision and pathway beyond.

My own trajectory began several years before. I spent the previous five years living in different parts of Lebanon, organizing with Palestinian youth activists in support of refugees and their right of return to Palestine. In mid-2010, just before the Arab Uprisings took hold, an acquaintance asked me to lunch and shared his desire to form a team to establish a leadership institute for Palestinian liberation. We began meeting regularly at Beirut cafes and in the salon of his apartment, working devoutly to create a manifesto and the beginnings of an organization and liberation curriculum. Our small collective collapsed after six months under the weight of several heavy egos (mine included). The project fell apart and much of the fellowship faded. But the idea of teaching about liberation theory and practices became an important driving force in my decision to pursue a PhD in Education and resonated further in my work to establish activist leadership development resources.

Much like my history, each co-founder of BEST had their own pathway which led them to co-envisioning the program. One co-founder had created a social justice faculty-student mentorship program at a small liberal arts college on the East Coast, and they had extensive experience writing institutional grants. Another founder had tirelessly advocated for undocumented student rights, while bargaining with the University of California through the graduate student union, United Auto Workers local 2865. A fourth founder helped establish a successful graduate-undergraduate academic mentorship program, and the final co-founder was a student leader of the Undercommons, a collective of Black graduate students cultivating a space of revolutionary learning at UCLA.[23] Even before meeting, we each sought collective spaces for organizing having experienced alienation from existing activist spaces on campus.

Just as each of BEST's founders were on converging paths, so too did events on campus in the years preceding 2015 align to create conditions allowing for BEST. A key moment in this timeline was the widely publicized discrimination case of UCLA Medical's surgeon Christian Head first reported in 2012. Head took to YouTube, sharing his harrowing experiences of years of racial discrimination, including a workplace presentation in which he was depicted as a gorilla being sodomized by a caricature of his white boss.[24] Following an internal review by UCLA which found no fault on behalf of his supervisors, Head filed a lawsuit and in 2014 and was awarded $4.5 million. In this same period, a multitude of public commentaries were voiced by students of color critical of campus climate. Following Head's public complaints, a group of roughly 30 faculty petitioned Chancellor Block to conduct an independent review of UCLA's campus climate policies. In November 2012, the Chancellor commissioned an investigation led by the Honorable Carlos Moreno, which found that UCLA's campus climate policies were failing faculty of color on multiple

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[23] http://undercommoning.org/the-undercommons-ulca/

[24] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eMwYtycb_I&t=1s

levels (Moreno et al., 2014). Among the Moreno Report's recommendations, a key proposal was the creation of a campus diversity office. Within a year, UCLA would hire a Vice Chancellor to head the newly formed Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) that would come to fund the BEST program.

As students, the period preceding the founding of BEST was rife with racial conflicts that were instrumental to the formation of BEST. In 2013, a group of students led Sy Stokes posted the spoken word performance "Black Bruins" to YouTube.[25] This fiery indictment of UCLA's lack of diversity received national media attention and made waves on campus. Months later, Black students at UCLA's law school filmed "33", a commentary by law students of color sharing the emotional toll of studying in a program with alarmingly low representation.[26] These narratives were echoed by Call 2 Action, a group of students of color protesting racial bias and discrimination within UCLA's Graduation School of Education & Information Studies.[27] Call 2 Action's protests were significant to the story of BEST because they led to a series of townhalls where several of BEST's co-founders met and began collaborating.

One of these major collaborations was the Forum to Reclaim Diversity held in UCLA's iconic Pauley Pavilion on April 23, 2015 (Elzein et al., 2015). Myself and several of the people who went on to found BEST helped organize the Forum, which brought together over 200 campus diversity and equity leaders—students, staff, faculty, and community members—in a series of activities that included a large intergroup dialogue session, eight workshops on a spectrum of campus climate issues (from bias reporting processes to labor rights and racism in faculty and staff spaces), and a final session where Professor Daniel Solorzano facilitated a collective brainstorm on

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[25] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEO3H5BOlFk

[26] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5y3C5KBcCPI

[27] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/11/25/ucla-grad-students-stage-sit-during-class-protest-what-they-see-racially-hostile

needed policy changes to improve campus climate at UCLA based on notes from the Forum's

proceedings. The group of students, staff, and faculty organizing the Forum viewed the event as the

culmination of a year-long grassroots strategy to leverage community participation in influencing

campus diversity and equity policies. Specifically, the Forum was organized concurrently with

UCLA Chancellor Block's directive to establish a new Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

(EDI), with Jerry Kang as its inaugural Vice Chancellor (VC). The Forum organizers authored a

letter based on the proceedings of the April gathering hoping to provide a community-based vision

for VC Kang's tenure. This letter was published in the *Daily Bruin* and addressed the campus

executive leadership, as well as the incoming VC Kang (Elzein et al., 2015).

Briefly, the story of the Forum itself serves as a useful lesson in campus organizing. The

Forum began as a joining of energies: I and several students were organizing to create a leadership

body of student activist organizations, while Professor Grace Hong and other community members

were organizing from largely a faculty perspective in response to the Moreno Report's cutting

rebuke of social and racial inequities among UCLA's professoriate. Soon after meeting Grace, she

and I began collaborating around a proposal responding to the Research Initiative for Diversity and

Equity (RIDE), a funding vehicle offered by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research.[28] Our

proposal called for a months-long strategy of focus groups with campus community members

leading up to a day-long "research" seminar exploring various campus climate topics. In private, we

viewed the Forum as more of an organizing strategy to reach out to potential allies, get a lay of the

land, and find like-minded community members that would work with us in carrying forward a

community vision of socially just campus transformation. Our effort to galvanize community

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[28] The RIDE grant seemed like a knee-jerk reaction to appease public outcry over the Moreno Report, rather than a well thought-out response to an institutional blight. Our experience with the grant process was extremely frustrating. We requested $20,000 for the project but received half that amount. The decision was made, we were told, because a committee member said we had another funding source. This was false and dumbfounding. The RIDE Call for Proposals can be found here: https://ucla.app.box.com/v/RIDE-Announcementv5.

members highlighted some of the challenges of organizing at UCLA. Undergraduate student activist groups were overwhelmed with bloated event calendars, faculty were hard to reach and harder to engage, and administrators seemed unenthusiastic about a public community-led initiative critical of institutional diversity and equity practices.

To this last point, we came to learn from staff insiders that specific members of the campus diversity administration were displeased with our organizing, viewing our work as infringing on their organizational prerogative and territory. I personally began receiving the cold-shoulder from one high-ranking administrator in Student Affairs who appeared to be actively avoiding eye contact with me in public. As students, though, myself and my colleagues were largely shielded from petty campus diversity managers. Other non-student team members were not so lucky. The staff collaborators whose labor and insider knowledge were instrumental in our organizing effort experienced retaliation. We learned that staff members organizing with us were harassed by their superiors for months after the event. One staff ally may have had their promotion affected by their participation. This type of retaliation against diversity workers—which is widely reported (Bauer-Wolf, 2017; Harrison, 2010; 2014; Zalaquett et al., 2008)—demonstrates the often invisible political and structural obstacles that exist for staff participation in campus activism (Ahmed, 2012).

As quickly as a campus diversity community coalesce and gender justice initiatives. We argued that student leaders were the visionaries and leaders of many campus diversity policies; and, thus, providing student activists with resources to further their efforts to transform the campus would be an effective strategy to improve campus climate. The presentation went well enough that the VC and his team asked for a follow-up meeting and more subsequent meetings. Figure 2 presents a timeline of significant campus climate incidents at UCLA leading to the founding of BEST

Figure 2: UCLA Timeline of Campus Climate, 2012-2016

Jun. 15, 2012 - 30 concerned faculty sent Executive Vice Chancellor Scott Waugh a letter demanding a review of campus racial climate.

Nov. 4, 2013, a group of Black UCLA students led by Sy Stokes released a spoken word video criticizing lack of Black representation at UCLA.

Jul. 1, 2015 – Vice Chancellor Jerry Kang of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion took office.

Oct. 15, 2013 - Moreno Report released criticizing UCLA campus climate policies and recommending immediate remedies.

Feb. 10, 2014 UCLA law students release video documenting emotional toll of lack of diversity at the law school.

Sep. 28, 2015 - Racist Bruin satire calls out administrative failures to address systemic oppression.

Nov. 13, 2013 – graduate students in Call2Action held protest critical of bias & discrimination at UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies.

Feb 25, 2014 – SJP Divestment USAC resolution defeated after 6-hour public hearing featuring extensive racist comments.

Jan. 2016 - BEST founded, with first Call for Proposals in Spring 2016.

Apr. 23, 2015 – Forum to Reclaim Diversity held at the Pauley Pavilion.

Apr. 17, 2012 - UCLA Physician Christian Head files lawsuit against UC Regents for discrimination and retaliation.

UCLA TIMELINE OF CAMPUS CLIMATE, 2012-2016

Funding Student Leadership

We spent the next six months developing the concept, with the VC's staff negotiating budgets and vetting our rollout plan. Much like most student-led advocacy, the work of developing the program was bankrolled by thousands of hours of free student labor (Chatelain, 2020; Linder et al., 2019). Funding was a sticking point. First, we requested payment for our work in the design and implementation phases of the program, which the EDI Office categorically refused, calling BEST a "start-up" and "risky investment" that would require an initial sacrifice from the student founders. The EDI Office took budget negotiations with the same zealousness of venture-capitalists, low-balling our initial request for a reasonable funding package with a next-to-nothing figure, only to arrive at a take-it-or-leave-it budget nearly 40% below what was necessary to run the program. The EDI Office may have viewed their offer as generous, stating plainly that the program was untested and would eat a sizable portion of the office's annual budget. We countered that the funding amount meant we would have to run the program mostly as volunteers, to which they asked us how badly we wanted this.

We were committed to our vision and made a Faustian bargain with the VC. We viewed this moment somewhat bitterly as another instance of a high-ranking and high-earning University administrator asking students to work for them (gaining accolades their office would willingly take credit for) at great personal sacrifice. Working with BEST slowed our academic progress and affected our ability to pursue other professional opportunities—e.g., research, teaching, publishing. Ironically, the financial strains imposed by the VC's office would simultaneously undermine the program's effectiveness, leaving the staff uncertain about our futures, while dividing our attention between the tasks of organization building and securing alternative funding. These negotiations reflected a perverse academic capitalism, applying cutthroat market principles to campus diversity work (Rhoads & Rhoades, 2004). Using the language of investments, risks, and rewards, the EDI

Office was able to abdicate its responsibility to our livelihoods as workers and equivocate the social,

political, and productive value of our labor.

We reluctantly accepted the initial funding offer and began the work of developing the

program infrastructure starting in early 2016.[29] As we began this work, the implications of our

limited funds became more and more apparent: four team members were working on a volunteer

basis, while one team member received funding. This dynamic placed a strain on relationships

between members of the BEST Leadership Team (BEST), and particularly between volunteers and

the paid team member. During the summer, the BLT held a visioning retreat on the future of the

program and the program's long-term feasibility. After reflecting on our first six months leading the

program, we knew that the program's starvation budget set us up to fail. However, team members

disagreed about the correct course of action: should we abandon the project and move on or take

whatever resources we could from the University, knowing that if we refused, the funds and

resources would not reach students in need? Most of us felt a responsibility to take these resources

and direct them towards students on the front lines of campus change who were chronically

underfunded and maligned by the institution. We saw this as an act in keeping with Fred Moten's

and Stefano Harney's (2004) exhortation in the *Undercommons*:

> "To the university I'll steal, and there I'll steal," to borrow from Pistol at the end of Henry V,
> as he would surely borrow from us. This is the only possible relationship to the American
> university today...it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be
> accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one
> can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its
> mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of—this is the path
> of the subversive intellectual in the modern university.

Even with these aspirations, "to be in but not of" and "steal what [we] can" for student

leaders of minoritized communities, each member of our team had to individually consider whether

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[29] The program was first announced to the campus community on March 30th, 2016 through a campus-wide email sent by Vice Chancellor Jerry Kang (the email can be found in Appendix A). The *Daily Bruin* soon after published an article discussing details of the nascent campus program. https://dailybruin.com/2016/04/06/ucla-grant-funds-student-run-community-enrichment-projects

to carry forward with the work. While all but one of us decided to continue, within the first six months of the program's inauguration, another founder left the organization. Meanwhile, the three of us that remained essentially worked as volunteers during the 2016-17 academic year. This placed all of us in precarious financial situations. We each had to juggle multiple part-time jobs alongside our academic responsibilities and the incalculable work of establishing an elaborate leadership development program on a volunteer-basis. We took on the unpaid diversity labor that higher education institutions all too often force upon their conscientious student leaders, which took a personal and emotional toll (Chatelain, 2020; Linder et al., 2019). Further, with only half of the staff that we initially anticipated, we each were compelled to assume multiple organizational responsibilities concurrently, all while cobbling together a part-time staff of undergraduate and graduate students who churned in and out of poorly-defined roles.

Year One

The first year was a crash course. We were short staffed, new to running a leadership program, and at constant war with campus administration. That said, we were determined to hit the ground running with an incredibly talented team that was deeply dedicated to supporting student activists. And although we knew what type of student leaders we wanted to work with, we struggled initially to reach and invite them to work with us. We envisioned BEST as a vehicle for the campus activist movement to join, percolate, and mobilize towards collective goals of social justice transformation. Our efforts to bring in student activist leaders were instigated since the first planning phases of the program, whereby myself and several other student leaders began identifying and presenting to the type of student groups that we hoped would participate in the program. We sent out mass emails, requested meetings with tens of student groups, presented at a meeting of the Mother Organizations (MO) coalition, and attempted to meet with each organization individually. We shared

our proposals with each of these groups, inviting them to partner with us in designing the program so that it best suited their needs.

Reactions to our overtures from the MOs ranged from mild interest to outright skepticism. The Chairpersons for both Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanx de Aztlan (MEChA) and the African Student Union (ASU) were the most proactive in their support, but it was apparent that they did not have the capacity to meaningfully contribute. They were dealing with the complex weight of running large-scale organizations in a campus environment with swirling political conflicts. The other groups were unresponsive when we reached out to them. They were likely dealing with similarly impacted workloads and may have been influenced by the very same campus politics involving the Community Programs Office (CPO);[30] but more on that in a later section on the campus political terrain. When we launched our request for proposals (RFP) in March of 2016, none of the MOs officially attended our launch events, nor did they apply for BEST grants. In fact, when we held a series of workshops to educate students on the BEST program features and support them in applying for funding, several individual student members of a few MOs did attend workshops, but used the space to vent about the performance of the EDI Office. This specific vein of skepticism, bracketing us with the administration, was very common among student activist groups. We sought to dispel this concern by sharing our individual activist narratives, hoping that reflecting on the program's origins and our shared vision for institutional change might motivate participation in our coordinated efforts (Ganz & McKenna, 2017).

These initial grant writing workshops in Spring Quarter of 2016 were envisioned as outreach events that simultaneously raised student awareness about our program and provided developmental

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[30] CPO describes itself: "The mission of the Community Programs Office, UCLA's cross-cultural center, is to build and nurture an inclusive and diverse community of scholars and leaders who are committed to giving back to historically marginalized communities by engaging, educating, and empowering students to develop and execute student-initiated, student-run outreach, service and retention programs…We are committed to developing a new generation of dynamic leaders by shaping our students to become motivated, responsible, and critically conscious individuals and fostering a safe and positive environment where students can use their education as a vehicle for social change through direct action in the community." Community Programs Office (2021). About the CPO. Accessed August 28, 2021 from https://cpo.ucla.edu/cpo/.

experience to young leaders who had never written grant applications before. We viewed the role of an activist leadership development program to support the development of basic leadership and advocacy skills, even among students who were not yet accepted into the program (Kezar & Maxey, 2014). In fact, many students struggled to access campus civic engagement resources because of incomprehensible structural barriers that served to demobilize passionate student leadership. I still vividly remember a workshop led by a staff member of SOLE about campus funding, in which I pointed out how much time and labor was required to fill out simple funding applications. They responded that students had to learn about the "real world" some way. Nowhere in the professional world are volunteers who seek to improve the social and productive functioning of a multi-billion-dollar organization (such as UCLA) asked to spend hours upon hours to fill out poorly designed and complicated funding applications. But I digress. With these workshops and other features of the application process, we wanted to embrace student development and welcome student leaders who lacked the institutional knowledge to participate in fortified spaces of traditional student engagement. Thus, we designed a three-step application process whereby students attended the introductory workshops, met with a BLT member to discuss their project's fit within our program, and submit a draft proposal for feedback so that they might improve their application before submitting for final consideration. Students shared that they greatly appreciated the efforts that we made to demystify the process and create a fair and nurturing environment to invite their participation.

We received 34 applications for the 2016-17 grant cycle, mostly from student groups that were relatively new to campus organizing and unaffiliated with the major student leadership organizations. Outside of a few applications that did not fit within our mandate,[31] we had a hard time

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[31] We received one applicant that appeared to be the work of a professor concealing their own research as an initiative of one of their graduate students. Another campus department applied for the funding of a staff initiative that we viewed as valuable but not within

making final decisions. Applications were evaluated by a six-member advisory board of students, faculty, and staff who graded the proposals based on a rubric (See Appendices B and C for the advisory board founding document and the 2016 proposal evaluation rubric, respectively). The BLT took the advisory board's feedback into consideration, while also reflecting on the meetings held with each applicant and their responsiveness to the criticisms provided during the application process. Most rejections came to groups that were seeking to use BEST as an easy source of funding, particularly for one-off events or strictly off-campus activities, which we were unable to fund based on our agreement with EDI.[32] Using feedback from the board, as well as our notes from the application process, we selected ten groups to receive year-long funding, mentorship, and support.

The recipients of the BEST inaugural grant for the 2016-17 academic year were the Beautiful Mind Project (BMP), the Cross Cultural Research Center (CCC) project, the Graduate Undergraduate Mentorship (GUM) program, the UCLA LGBTQ+ HIV Counseling and Testing Coalition (HCAT), Life Sciences Collective, Providing Access To Higher Success for Undocumented Students (PATHS for US), Social Justice Advocates (SJA), United Graduate Students of Color in the Sciences, and voidLab.[33] We selected these groups because they represented student interest from diverse experiences and identities[34] and their projects attempted to re-envision social justice in higher education by offering support to youth access, retention and success in higher education, providing unique social justice experiences for student leaders, and impacting the health

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our mission of empowering student leadership. A final group that did receive funding during the pilot year appeared to have hidden their connection with a graduate student, as their project appeared to be a part of the graduate student's research agenda.

[32] Our agreement with EDI was that BEST grants would only support student leadership activities focused on campus change. The EDI Office argues that this policy was to ensure that our program was only funding activities that were within their mandate of affecting campus equity and diversity. There was also some conversation suggesting that we should ensure our funding translated to a good diversity bang-for-the-buck.

[33] There were two other groups that received funding promises, but eventually left the program because of their inability to meet our minimum requirement that they schedule a summer advising meeting.

[34] Note group memberships were Black, Chicanx, Muslim, Undocumented, LGBTQ+, and undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

and wellbeing of vulnerable populations. Appendix D includes a brief description of each of these groups and the specific projects that they engaged in during the year.

Our goal for the year was to provide each group with end-to-end support that enhanced their organizing, leadership development, and socioemotional growth. This process began during the summer months, where each group met twice with a transitional femtor who helped them think through the steps of translating their proposals to a successful launch in the Fall. This step was messy, in that many groups were unaccustomed to summer planning, while it proved difficult to coordinate meetings with enough group members or the right group members (i.e., decision-makers in their respective organizations) to progress towards actionable plans. Despite these difficulties, several groups jumped on the opportunity to have an experienced advisor helping with project management, organizational development, and moral support.

The next step in our developmental program was the Summer Bootcamp, a daylong event where groups had the opportunity to network with other social justice organizations, received activist-oriented training workshops, and developed their own organizing plans. Activities like developing, presenting, and critiquing a group elevator pitch helped participants hone their outreach skills, while workshops on base building and power mapping supported students in placing their tactics within broader strategies to grow their organization and affect change. A final purpose of the bootcamp was to match each group with a femtor for the year. We believed that allowing students to select their femtors would better the femtorship relationship and improve overall buy-in to the program. To facilitate the matching process, BLT members shared more about our own history and approach towards organizing. Students asked about our experiences and femtorship style. Afterwards, we circulated a selection sheet and groups ranked their choices. We held a brief caucus, matching groups with femtors based on their rankings and taking into consideration how a femtor's

strengths might contribute to each project's success. The bootcamp ended with each group

connecting with their femtor and making plans for future planning meetings.

My first BESTies[35]

I was matched with BMP, CCC, and SJA to start the year. I developed my own femtorship

plan tailored to each group based on their application and subsequent conversations that I had with

each leadership collective. Perhaps the simplest femtorship relationship was with SJA, who were led

by a staff and student leadership pair. They were training a group of students as peer-to-peer

advocates who would provide social justice-oriented workshops and activities in the campus resident

halls. Initially, I had some anxiety about femtoring a staff person who was older than me and had

their own well of organizing expertise. These concerns were immediately put to rest when we met

for the first time, and we established that the relationship was mutualistic. They communicated the

ways in which my background complimented their organizational needs. Additionally, they

expressed a personal need for peer support because they experienced marginalization both as a queer

woman of color and as a vocal advocate of social justice issues within their workplace. They said

that they had tried to have their department, Residential Life fund the initiative for several years but

were repeatedly turned down.[36]

I met with their leadership collective twice a quarter and provided support by reviewing their

curriculum, offering feedback on training materials, facilitating three workshops for their

organization, and providing other strategic advising and support. While this working relationship

was fruitful, the dynamic between me and their leadership collective created access barriers between

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[35] "BESTies" was the term that we used to refer to ourselves and the group members that we worked with. This was interchangeable with "femtees", although we preferred "BESTies" because it was a non-hierarchical designation and for obvious coolness-related reasons.

[36] Ironically, after SJA received funding from BEST, Residential Life decided to fund SJA in which I perceived to be a face-saving move. I believed that their departmental administrators were embarrassed having staff members turning to other funding sources for support, especially since their unit was among the most financially-endowed on campus.

our program resources and other members of SJA. Specifically, by limiting the check-ins to myself and SJA's leadership pair, we inadvertently shut off other members of the group from receiving either direct femtorship from me or access to other opportunities that BEST had to offer. These were some of the fits and starts that we experienced with our femtorship model as we discovered common blockages and bottlenecks that stifled our vision of support and community building through BEST.

Another group of my BESTies were CCC, a five-person collective which presented perhaps the most challenging experience in my four years as a BEST femtor. Their group planned to organize a campaign that would establish a cross-cultural center at UCLA based on the model put forth at other campuses. As a student organizer with several years of experience at UCLA under my belt, I was familiar with previous attempts to demand a cross cultural center and how they were ignored by the university. I contacted previous student leaders who advocated for these resources, and they agreed to share their proposal and contact information with CCC members. Despite some positive motion in the first weeks of Fall Quarter, it soon became apparent that the group lacked the requisite time and ability to carry forward the project. Their five-person collective had asked me to meet with them on a weekly basis, yet stood me up for three of their first four meetings. I gave them chance after chance and had accountability conversations with them as a group and individually as members. And then they stood me up again. After a disappointing and frustrating several months, I spoke with other members of BEST and we decided to cancel their funding and support, with the caveat that they could apply for event funding on a case-by-case basis if they were able to get it together. In this specific instance, guilt and shame were a powerful motivator, and in the ensuing quarters their group began meeting regularly and organizing events towards their campaign. I had also kept in touch and continued to offer individual meetings and femtorship support, though with a shorter leash.

Another complication with CCC were somewhat unforeseen political entanglements connected to an entrenched conflict on the campus that centered around CPO's place in UCLA's diversity food chain. CPO is a conglomerate student engagement department housed under the Office of Student Affairs, which offers instrumental resources that support the access, retention, and success of many students of color and low-income students at UCLA. They support vital programs such as a food closet, host cultural events with hot meals, and lead numerous other initiatives that offer direct material resources to low-income students who experience marginalization on campus. Despite the incredible work done through their office, many student communities felt excluded or uncomfortable with CPO's leadership. In fact, many of the major student organizations, including ASU, MEChA, SP, and QA were openly at odds[37] with CPO's Director and other entrenched staff. Despite these complications that made CPO an unideal cross-cultural space for campus, we learned that CPO had quietly named itself as the UCLA's cross-cultural center on the "About Us" page of their website.[38]

Apparently, CPO's leadership viewed our support for CCC as some Machiavellian plot by the EDI Office to undermine their position on campus. In fact, the EDI Office received an angry letter from CPO accusing them of this, and during the Winter Quarter of 2017, CPO organized over 20 students to crash a CCC community forum seeking student feedback on campus cross-cultural resources. CPO's students interrupted the event at every moment and berated the students, accusing the CCC members of being bratty rich kids and dismissing their desires for a space other than CPO as the frivolous desires of privilege. After the event, the CCC students were shaken up, and I did my best to console them. I also walked them through the pushback they received and asked them to

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[37] The latest outbreak of these tensions were reported in the *Daily Bruin*'s coverage of a campus protest held by the Mother Organizations critiquing CPO leadership's lack of accountability and transparency. Kovach, S. (2021, May 29). https://dailybruin.com/2021/05/29/ucla-students-protest-cpo-administrative-oversight-lack-of-budget-transparency

[38] https://cpo.ucla.edu/cpo/

consider the validity of some of the claims, as well as specific strategies to address these through organizing. The students planned a second forum, and this time came up with a better plan to engage attendees in an evaluative process to consider which cross-cultural resources were absent from campus and brainstorm how to offer these through existing campus units. We also devised a specific strategy to deal with interrupters, by asking them to either respectfully participate in the activity or leave. The second townhall was a resounding success, serving to educate participants about what types of support the campus was currently lacking, identifying an evident need for more cross-cultural resources. While these steps forward were encouraging, the end of the academic year was fast approaching, and it seemed like too little too late. As that summer came, the momentum dissipated and each member of CCC departed from their cause.

The third and final group that I femtored during that pilot year was BMP, a Muslim mental health initiative. Their leadership trio of undergraduate students were excited to work closely with me, as I had lived in a Muslim-majority country and understood Muslim cultural identity and social realities. They also appreciated my public health background, which enabled me to provide crucial professional insights into their planning around community mental health initiatives. We met on a bi-weekly basis to plan events, develop organizational development goals, create workshops, and hold space for personal check-ins. I also met frequently with individual members of the organization to provide socioemotional support and individualized spaces for personal reflection and growth. This group, in particular, had interpersonal challenges between members of the group, which I helped them navigate in what I hope was a clear, considerate, and careful manner. Whenever a student leader felt anxious about their working relationship with colleagues, I met individually with the student to talk out their feelings and brainstorm proactive and sensitive approaches to communicate concerns with groupmates. This type of socioemotional support was a hallmark of our femtorship approach that we as BEST femtors discussed and developed during our team meetings.

This approach grew organically from our own experiences with student affairs professionals and those shared with us by our students. Instinctively, we knew that many student affairs advisors on campus were extremely paternalistically, treating student interpersonal conflicts as "drama" and feeding into destructive interactions between students that were avoidable. As femtors, we understood that interpersonal conflict was an inescapable feature and function of the stressful realities of student life and political organizing. Student activists—many of whom are low-income and experience societal oppression for their intersecting racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual identities—must balance their weekly hours of organizing with a full load of classes, family and social obligations, and often part-time jobs as well. In their late teens and early twenties, most of the undergraduate student activists that we worked with were also still learning to navigate interpersonal relationships and social environments independently from the family and community lives that they lead prior to university. Adding these individual stressors to the often challenging, oppressive, and thankless labor of collective organizing creates activist workspaces that are prone to tension and conflict. Acknowledging the socioemotional aspects of student activism permitted us as leadership educators to engage students around their personal lives and affective development. These formative experiences helped shape a femtorship approach that mirrored some of the tenets of *holistic support* advocated by Museus and Neville (2012), providing students with proactive and diverse forms of support that addressed the varied and complex challenges that they faced.

In fact, our ability to engage with students' social and emotional experiences provided incredible opportunities to support young ascending leaders in developing the emotional awareness and interpersonal communication skills, particularly through conflict situations. To give an example from my years of femtoring, one group that I worked with was holding its annual board election. Two of the three student leaders that I met with were graduating and concerned with the future leadership of the organization. They both shared their feelings that, based on the students'

performance, the third leader—who still had another year at UCLA—would not be an ideal fit to head the organization the following year, although there was a natural assumption that they would do so as an ascending senior and current Vice President of the organization. The two graduating students agonized over how to communicate this to their comrade and close friend without seriously harming their relationships. I met with the two students several times over a few weeks and came up with a plan for how the students could share both with honesty and sensitivity. I also told them that after they had their conversation, I would have to disclose that I discussed the matter beforehand with their colleague to ensure that I was not perceived as taking sides or engaging in backtalk. The conversation between the students was hard and did lead to some hurt feelings; however, having the conversation was the right thing to do. The collective found a phenomenal person to head the organization for the following year; meanwhile, the returning leader took several weeks break, reflected and reevaluated their own actions, and returned with a renewed dedication to the program, serving again in the same leadership position but doing so with a much greater attentiveness and impact. The benefits of our femtorship approach mirrored those found by Kezar and Maxey (2014), who noted that allied staff and faculty were instrumental in supporting student activists navigating conflict resolution.

Femtoring in Trump's America

Our inaugural year began just months before Donald Trump was elected President; and our leadership team was deeply concerned about the tense climate twisted by Donald Trump's racist, xenophobic, and patriarchal vitriol broadcast on 24-hour news cycles. Hate crimes were on the rise[39] and students were suffering for their mental health and sense of personal safety. When we initially

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[39] The number of hate crimes in the 10 days following Trump's election were unprecedented according to a review of FBI data. Williams, A. (2018, March 23). Hate crimes rose the day after Trump was elected, FBI data show. *The Washington Post.* Accessed August 30, 2021 from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/03/23/hate-crimes-rose-the-day-after-trump-was-elected-fbi-data-show/

brought these concerns to administrators, they dismissed the likelihood of Trump's victory and his platform, as though the social damage wrought through the election campaign was not enough to justify a proactive approach. Fast forward to the night that Trump won the electoral college, students at UCLA—particularly those impacted by Trump's invective—felt a collective dread. The undocumented students that we were working with were having literal panic attacks, fearing an impending doom for DACA and the mass deportations of their families. The Muslim students that I femtored shared stories of Islamophobic hate crimes, of men ripping *hijabs* off unsuspecting Muslim women in the streets of Los Angeles. Students' legitimate fears of life-threatening harm to them and their families were largely ignored by callous faculty members, who refused to excuse student absences and denied requests for paper extensions or mid-term postponements.

The morning after election night, the BLT met and decided to form our own crisis response, reaching out to each of the students we worked with to check in with them, as well as offering crisis-response funding for groups wishing to organize post-election events. These funds were taken up by two of our groups that held gatherings in the next days where community members could air out fears, process emotions, and comfort one another. Even though the money that we provided for snacks and refreshments amounted to only a few hundred dollars, students were grateful, noting that traditional student funding sources did not offer emergency funding options and securing funds for such events could take weeks without the serendipitous intervention of an administrative ally with money to spend. We viewed moments like these as the *raison d'etre* for BEST, where student activists were calling on staff to show up (Evans & Lange, 2019).

Our team also determined that we must take a proactive advocacy approach in demanding a concerted university response. We held a meeting with staff members of the EDI Office and asked them what the institutional plan was if Trump won. They said that no plan was in place because they never believed that Trump could win the election. Members of our team dispersed to staff-led post-

election events meant to support students impacted by the election. At an event organized for the campus undocumented community, students shared how their mental health had suffered, that they could not sleep because they feared for the lives of their family members. Some shared that in requesting extensions from their professors on assignments or tests, they were forced to out their undocumented status, and still professors refused them. Other students said that they were too scared to ask for help and did not want to share personal information about their status or families with their professors, especially as some faculty had expressed anti-immigrant attitudes.

At the meeting, a representative from the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) office said that in these situations, students could request a counseling session and then receive an excusal. Another team member and I pointed out how this mechanism was clearly insufficient, as most students were unaware that they could request this type of relief from CAPS, and that undocumented students, in particular, might not wish to disclose sensitive information to university staff members that they had no personal connection with. Further, it would take several days if not longer to receive CAPS support, failing those students who needed immediate relief. We demanded that CAPS and the campus administration recognize the massive community mental health crisis that was unfolding and take proactive steps, such as a campus-wide moratorium on tests or blanket postponements and extensions while students coped with the news.

Despite these and other crises, we witnessed the resilience of our students who mobilized in support of community processing, healing, and protection. Two of the BEST groups whose membership were most directly implicated by Trump's vitriol spent several weeks reflecting on the changing needs of their communities. They were in the midst of key events in the formation of their activist identities incited by the societal and structural violence they witnessed and experienced (Holeman, 2007). During this period, we met with these groups multiple times each week and helped them think through how the changing political climate necessitated new approaches to their activism.

PATHS for US, an undocumented student retention project, arrived at the most radical departure from their initial plans. They began the year planning a series of post-graduation and career readiness workshops so that undocumented students could prepare for work without papers. After Trump, they decided to take a more material approach to student retention and success, developing Plan U, an expansive document outlining sanctuary policies for students.[40] A specific campaign arising from Plan U was the demand that UCLA provide affordable housing options for undocumented students, especially in light of the impending closure of "The Cabins", an apartment complex in Westwood that served as an informal undocumented student community. The property owner of The Cabins was evicting all tenants and renovating the space to capitalize on rising rentals and property values in the area—a byproduct of Westwood's ongoing gentrification.

During that winter, PATHS for US initiated the Pamilya Housing campaign, inviting community members to envision what an undocumented housing community might look like, while also entering into direct negotiations with UCLA's Residential Life and Housing departments to find a solution. There was initially a great amount of institutional resistance, but PATHS for US and their BEST femtor leveraged the openings created by the national political climate, challenging administrators to back up the university's public rhetoric about supporting undocumented students.[41] Over the course of four months, administrators went from suggesting that they might be able to have some housing available in a proposed 2025 new build to retrofitting an existing off campus apartment complex to offer low-cost high-density housing. The following year, hundreds of low-income students, including many who were undocumented, made use of this new offering, which cut housing costs in half, to below $400/month. This incredible accomplishment was enabled in large

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[40] I do not have permission to release the original Plan U document. However, revised versions of many of the provisions in the original document can be found in the list of demands published by *Splinter News* found at the bottom of the page. Rivas, J. (2017, March 15). How UCLA students hope to redefine 'sanctuary campus' to protect black, queer, and undocumented students. *Splinter News.* Accessed August 30, 2021 from https://splinternews.com/how-ucla-students-hope-to-redefine-sanctuary-campus-t-1793859131

[41] https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/chancellor-block-establishes-advisory-council-on-immigration

part due to the direct participation and advocacy of the BEST femtor, who was an experienced union organizer and often led the negotiations while training the student members of PATHS for US in how to make demands of institutional power.

BMP was another BEST group that significantly changed their plans in response to the Trump presidency. On an individual level, members of the organization became significantly more active in off-campus organizing, connecting with community social movement organizations like VigilantLove that were fighting Trumps new policies, such as the Muslim Ban. A second initiative was the Muslim Ally Training, a workshop developed by members of the Muslim student community to help educate and train institutional allies to advocate against Islamophobia. Students felt that this type of training was necessary given the normalization of Islamophobia, particularly in certain academic disciplines, such as political science and sociology. I partnered with two members of BMP and the President of the Muslim Student Association to develop a presentation and training manual, which we shaped over the next two years. I also worked with members of the organization to create Coffee, Cookies, & Chill, a regular event held at Kerkhoff Patio where the group brought platters of cookies, coffee, and tea, creating an inclusive public space for Muslim students to congregate and unwind. We viewed this initiative as more than a social gathering, but rather a public action against Islamophobia. Importantly, tens of Muslim students, including many women wearing hijab, met on a weekly basis in a prominent campus space with high foot traffic. Many students would stop to ask what was going on and would sometimes sit and socialize with us.

My favorite memory of the Coffee, Cookies, & Chill event was a special occasion where former NBA pro Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf attended our event and spoke about his experiences as a Black Muslim, a student with learning disabilities, and as a dissident whose professional career was derailed by his strong political stance. His convictions resonated with us considering Colin Kaepernick's protests and Trump's efforts to implement the Muslim Ban. We were all considering

what our obligations were to respond in this moment of crisis. The intimacy and informality of the setting gave it the feel of a family event with an elder sharing an important legacy. We basked in the sun and smiled for our blessing to be in the company of greatness. These moments reminded me of how close my bond was with many of the students that I worked with. Often, they considered me as their comrade and the feeling was mutual.

Figure 3: Photo of Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf and I

Diversity Wars: BEST and CPO

As a student-led activist initiative, BEST was constantly grappling with the complex and befuddling political landscape at UCLA. The most persistent political conflict that we faced as a program was our relationship with CPO, which I alluded to earlier. At UCLA, there is what has become a decades-long entrenched divide in the activist community and particularly among the MOs. Four of the MOs—the American Indian Student Association (AISA), Vietnamese Student Union (VSU), Pacific Islands' Student Union (PISA), Asian Pacific Coalition (APC)—had more closely aligned themselves with CPO, while ASU, MEChA, Samahang Pilipino (SP), and Queer

Alliance (QA) had adopted oppositional stances to CPO, and the Muslim Student Association (MSA) remained neutral.[42] I am noting these divisions, not to dramatize the student experience, but rather to shed light on the politics and processes that shape the work of supporting student activist leadership. These divisions are also included so that I may discuss their implications for our program—and there were many.

As a graduate student activist, I had little personal experience working with CPO, as they were mostly engaged with undergraduate student groups. However, during my first year at UCLA in which I worked with Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) on a divestment campaign[43], I had interacted with many student groups and leaders and heard a good deal about CPO. I learned that there were frequent student-led initiatives to oust the staff leadership of CPO, most notably due to an undemocratic decision-making process that favored student "allies" to CPO, as well as specific grievances around the mistreatment of student employees, particularly those affiliated with groups at odds with the CPO leadership. On the other hand, as I shared before, CPO was one of the few refuge spaces for students of color and low-income students. As one MEChista shared, "CPO is a necessary evil because they feed the people."

There were early signs that a clash between BEST and CPO was forthcoming. During our initial outreach before our program launch, I spoke with one longtime staff person at CPO about BEST, hoping that we could collaborate in supporting campus social change. As I shared details about the program, their reaction was essentially to dismiss our program as replicating the work that CPO already did. Further, they suggested the University might just redirect the funds that they were providing us to CPO. This attitude was apparently shared by other CPO staff who during meetings

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[42] These alignments are over-simplifications. Every MO has projects that are run through CPO, yet those in opposition have a long list of grievances with CPO's leadership that flare up regularly, including a recent lawsuit against CPO claiming racial discrimination that was amplified by ASU, MEChA, and SP.

[43] The Divestment campaign was part of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS) movement to censure and penalize entities that supported the illegal Israeli settlements Palestine's West Bank. For more information, read https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/33437.

suggested that we transfer thousands of dollars from our budget to support seemingly random pet projects that had absolutely nothing to do with our program's mission.

I later learned that CPO staff were openly trashing BEST with their students, and that they were directing specific attacks towards me personally. I did not understand where the bad blood came from, as I had maybe three interactions with their staff over as many years. The pettiness of this beef was laid bare during a CPO tailgate party open to the public. I was invited by a close friend and CPO student staff member who had been part of a CPO group that received BEST funding for three years. During the party, I sensed that several staff members were giving me dirty looks. After about a half hour, my friend came to me very upset, telling me that the head of CPO had asked him to kick me out and that another staff member suggested I might "report" them to university officials because some students in attendance were drunk. This is but one of many examples of CPOs pettiness and hostility that were unfortunate examples of the territoriality and departmental politics that can impede initiatives seeking institutional transformation. As a program, we had had many internal conversations over the years about how to improve our relationship with CPO, always reaching out to encourage CPO groups to apply for BEST grants.

We felt that CPOs attitude towards us created barriers to engagement with some larger student groups. Over the program's four-year tenure, PISA, AISA, and VSU—the organizations most closely aligned with CPO—never applied for a BEST grant, while all the other MOs eventually partnered with us. We never wanted this conflict with CPO, yet we were often forced to respond to semi-annual flareups. Towards the end of our first year, with the experience of CCC in tow, EDI called us into a meeting. We learned that they were receiving lowback from CPO, and they asked us to fund a CPO organization during our second year. This unequivocal request from EDI came after the Spring application cycle had already ended. We did not appreciate EDI interfering in our

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program decisions like this, but we understood the political necessity of the move.[44] That said, there were also other organizations that we had turned down because they had missed the deadline, including a group that was working on the same issues as the organization affiliated with CPO. In the end, we agreed to fund the CPO group contingent on EDI covering their grant costs outside of our already allocated funds. To be fair, we saw the value that the group brought in addressing higher education access and retention for an extremely marginalized population and grew to have a strong and productive relationship with them as their organization continued to evolve. Despite the connection that we had with this one CPO organization, our relationship with CPO remained strained. And the reality was that there may have been no other way. CPO leaders themselves appeared to be unphased by the toxic dynamic they created, whereby half of the major student of color organizations did not trust them and only worked with them out of necessity. CPO would have been a natural ally to BEST had it not been our own organizational prerogative to remain independent, so that we could work with all student groups, regardless of their affiliation with CPO or otherwise.

We already had enough hurdles building trust with student activists, who rightly or wrongly viewed us as an appendage of EDI and the campus administration. We spent much of that first year proving to the student activist community that we shared in their politics and would stand behind them in conflicts with the administration if need be. Our first-year successes helped prove our case, as did my personal work in developing and co-facilitating a course with Professor Grace Hong on the history of UCLA campus activism. Many of the students who took that course would become MO leaders in the following year. I developed personal relationships with these students and encouraged them to submit applications to the BEST program. After a pilot year without any MO participation in BEST, we were thrilled that our second funding cycle fielded applications from

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[44] It is worth noting that this would be the only such time that EDI openly interfered in our organizational work.

MEChA, ASU, and QA, in addition to groups affiliated with the MSA and IDEAS, the major undocumented student organization on campus.

Structural Challenges

Finding sustainable funding proved to be one of the program's greatest challenges. The first year, we suffered through severe underfunding that left us feeling starved as individuals and as a program. Furthermore, we agonized over our second year of funding because we always received vague answers about which benchmarks EDI would use to evaluate our performance for renewal. We knew instinctively that something had to change, so we prepared a presentation on our first-year accomplishments and sent an ultimatum: either they fund our original budget, or we would leave the program. The EDI staff said that they appreciated our growth in the first year and agreed with our request. However, this was not a permanent solution, and, in the ensuing four years, we never received more than a single-year financial commitment from EDI. Further, our budget would be raised or slashed, up or down by as much as 20%, without real consideration for the impact on our program. EDI was also late to arrive at their final funding decisions, delivering their approval at the time of or after key program deadlines, which created rushed timelines for our annual calls for proposals, hiring cycles, and other major program initiatives. The uncertainty produced by this annual existential crisis left our team in a constant state of anxiety, resulting in wasted meetings and countless hours of unpaid overtime dedicated to finding alternate funding options that would grant us financial flexibility and autonomy. And though we had some success raising funds through research grants, alumni donations, teaching courses, and from other sources, these initiatives only added more labor and stress to our workload while not fundamentally changing the funding paradigm.

Our effort to raise funds were often stifled by the institutional hierarchies that exist at UCLA. As graduate students, our efforts to apply for major research grants and other funding was abnormal and treated as such by staff and faculty. Whenever discussing our pursuits, staff, faculty, and

administrators would always ask us which faculty member was leading our initiative. And even after insisting that we were running the show, we would receive blowback in the form of "constructive" suggestions that we should consider finding a faculty coordinator. There was some logistical value to a faculty support. Many if not all major funding opportunities ran through faculty lines, which meant that any time we wanted to teach a class, apply for a grant, or approach a department for resource, we needed to find faculty chaperones. And there were faculty members who obliged us, sharing their resources to aide us in our efforts. But such opportunities were only made available to us because we had become accustomed to asking regularly and with persistence. We learned that the institution was not designed to facilitate student-led initiatives such as BEST; and we felt that many staff and faculty did not like that we took such initiative in the first place.

We also did not ingratiate ourselves to administrators. We were often outspoken about racial and social inequality in our departments and on campus. Each of us had also engaged in prominent student activism that was critical of the institution and many of the leading administrators. It seemed that our reputation affected our access to key administrators, and as we made moves for the program, invisible yet apparent "brick walls" (Ahmed, 2012) were erected, shutting us out from parts of campus. A key example of this unseen resistance came when we approached Student Affairs as an administrative partner for our program. We had the expertise and personnel to run the program but required their support in administering the budget. I had asked a staff ally in Student Affairs to forward a proposal to the then Interim-Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. Every month I would ask my contact for an update, but after six months that our request remained "on the VC's desk", we got the message. We received many similar rejections from other campus departments when requesting administrative support. As relative outsiders to the institution, we were never able to fully pinpoint the blockages stopping these partnerships nor the reasons behind them. Was it connected to our activism? Did CPO poison the well? Or was there truth to the murmurs we heard that administrators

on campus did not like the new VC of EDI—and, by extension, our program? Whatever was behind this resistance, we struggled to find an administrative home for BEST.

And though we were promised funding and supposed autonomy, our independence was always intertwined with and complicated by UCLA's labyrinthian administrative bureaucracy. As students, we came into our leadership roles with BEST having limited knowledge of the inner workings of campus administration. It was not enough that we had money to spend, but we needed to know how the system worked so that we could mobilize our funds to realize our vision. And for those unfamiliar with how university bureaucracy works, it may come as a surprise that there is a great deal of discretion that goes into the administration of resources. Staff may choose to interpret policies conservatively or liberally, and almost any policy can be petitioned for an exception to be made. To carry out our vision of BEST, we required the support of sympathetic administrators who knew the policies well and would use their authority to advocate for us on the inside. Unfortunately, we did not find such administrative champions who were consistently in our corner; and our program suffered greatly because of it.

BEST began with its budget administered through EDI. This was a poor fit for many reasons, namely because their staff members were inexperienced in budget management; and as an office, they were conservative by nature, refusing our more unconventional requests. With this arrangement, most funding allocations took weeks if not months to process, and so the work of our program grinded to a halt: student groups did not receive their grant funding, events were postponed, and reimbursements took months to complete. BLT members were forced to incur debt to circumvent these delays using personal credit cards—placing a big financial burden on each of us since we ourselves had limited incomes. After six months of numerous delays and roadblocks, EDI asked that we find another administrative partner to take over processing of budget expenses. They had connected us with the Institute for American Cultures (IAC), whose Interim Director agreed to

handle hiring and payroll, and the Student Organizations, Leadership, & Engagement (SOLE) office, which administered the student grants. However, our partnership with IAC was similarly troubled. Their small staff was unable to process our requests in a timely manner, and they were also very conservative in what type of expenses they would allow. In later years, we would move our budget administration almost entirely to the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE), with some logistical support from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSEIS), particularly when it came to the administration of research grants. These administrative changes resulted in slight improvements to our workflow and greater clarity around administrative processes. However, these new working relationships also laid bare the incoherent and inconsistent policies governing campus bureaucracy.

As students running a program with multiple administrative partners, we had to navigate each office's unique interpretations of university policy, as well as their departmental politics, red tape, and bureaucratic processes. This presented an ongoing obstacle whereby departments would regularly refuse purchasing or hiring requests, even when they were consistent with UCLA policy. To give an example, we had to vigorously fight with administrative staff to approve living wage salaries for our workers. Per university policy, there is a floor salary for graduate and undergraduate students. This provides human resource managers in each Department with discretion in paying above the minimum using a pre-determined pay scale. Most UCLA departments ignore the pay scale, indiscriminately applying the minimum wages as a cap to student salaries as a clear cost saving measure. Through the program's tenure, we engaged in hiring through four different departments, with administrators from each department bristling against our decision to set worker' salaries above the salary floor. Each time we made a new hire, I had to spend hours brushing up on hiring policies and clandestinely organizing staff in the Office of Financial and Organizational to intervene on our program's behalf with the departmental administrators handling our hiring

paperwork. As might be imagined, this did not ingratiate me to departmental staff members, who viewed our efforts as attempts to circumvent their authority. My preference would have been that there was no need for this type of intervention. Instead, we were constantly forced into warring with staff so that we could exercise financial autonomy to pay ourselves a living wage that we deserved for the work we did in service of the university.

The administrative indifference and resistance we experienced, particularly around hiring, pay, benefits, and reimbursement was pernicious in undermining the program and at times had serious financial and personal consequences for our team members. Our team members regularly held several hundred dollars of credit card debt on program expenses that would not be reimbursed for months, with one reimbursement of over a thousand dollars taking over nine months to resolve. Long, drawn-out hiring processes were also commonplace—no matter how much advanced notice we provided—often leaving us without the personnel needed to run BEST effectively.

The worst example of administrative negligence came during our final year in hiring two staff members to femtor positions. I began making inquiries for hiring new staff in early June of 2019. The staff administrator responsible for hiring did not respond to our requests for over a month. When they did, they gave us inaccurate information and poor advising that led us to believe we could move forward hiring staff positions with certain salary and benefits. We went through the hiring process and found two incredible candidates, offering them positions as femtors. Then, without notice or coherent justification, the administrator decided to change the terms of employment, removing health care and lowering the salary offered. This decision was entirely unjustifiable, reckless, and had the potential to jeopardize our program for the year. This administrator also put us in a position where we had no choice but to move forward in hiring anyone we could to the positions. I had to take personal responsibility for the administrator's actions. Both applicants, who I had personal relationships with and had encouraged to apply, felt betrayed but

compelled to take the positions having already passed up other opportunities. An immediate consequence of this negligence was that two members of our staff suddenly were without health insurance and were entering into their positions feeling mistrust around their employment conditions.

When confronted with the evident injustice of the situation, the staff administrator exhibited complete indifference. They shrugged their shoulders and said that if the applicants did not agree with the terms of the hire, then we would have to find someone else. The delays that were already incurred because of the administrators multiple errors made this a absurd suggestion, as we were already out of time to engage in another protracted hiring process. Further, we strongly believed that the staff could have offered the salary and benefits that they initially agreed to offer, but they were acting spitefully to cover up their own negligence in the hiring process. Our presumptions were proven accurate when months later, the staff person made another oversight and was required to convert one of the staff positions into an appointment with benefits. The process was fast and easy, taking less than a week to complete. The same paperwork could have been completed for both staff members months before, giving them access to healthcare, especially as news of the COVID outbreak became public.

My experiences working with administrative staff demonstrated how detached and indifferent most had become to the financial burdens placed on vulnerable university community members. While administrators receive per diems and credit cards to expense their every activity, students already carrying tens of thousands in loans must shoulder even more credit card debt to conduct their own volunteered work that betters the institution. I even understand the perspective of some staff. Most university employees not in high-paid administrative positions are already overworked, and then they are expected to facilitate student interactions with an unwieldly, overcomplicated, and often unreasonable bureaucratic system not designed for student use. With all

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these considerations in mind, we were paying IRLE $20,000 per year to process our administrative budget. That cost should have but never translated to quality service. Instead, we received passive aggressive communications from almost every staff member when trying to process our requests. They would blame us when we forgot a step or requirement for budget requests, ignoring the obvious reality that as students, we are asked to volunteer our time in understanding and engaging in work that staff are often paid to do. And I would be remiss to think that staff treated faculty with such evident disrespect. Paternalism is the easiest and most called upon tool by university administrators, and it is dispatched regularly in students' daily interactions with university bureaucrats.

Our experiences with institutional bureaucracy highlight the need for higher education administrators to seriously reflect on the ways in which students are asked to interface with administrative processes. Efforts must be made to streamline and simplify these interactions so that students engaging in this type of work are not forced into even more unpaid labor. Institutional leaders that seek to empower student initiatives should anticipate common blockages in administrative processes, while developing clear, easy, and effective ways for students to engage with these processes. Further, staff allies who are supporting student programs should recognize that paternalistic attitudes are all too common, and that students sometimes need advocacy from insiders to be taken seriously (Kezar & Maxey, 2014). Inversely, students who are attempting to establish activist initiatives within their institution should seek to learn about and understand administrative processes so that specific demands regarding administrative needs can be articulated during negotiations with institutional leadership.

CHAPTER 5 - FEATURES OF AN ACTIVIST LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The BEST program was created with support for student activists in mind. In the early stages of the program, members of the BEST Leadership Team (BLT) reflected on our personal experiences as undergraduate and graduate student activists, considering which resources we wished had been available to support our own growth and success as leaders. We had also surveyed the campus leadership development resources and identified disconnects between what was offered and what student activists likely needed. The pillars of the program were meant to address these limitations, at first focusing on funding, advising, leadership development, and coalition building. BEST aimed to provide students with material resources and forms of affirmational support that nurtured caring leadership and inspired activist modalities of civic participation. Finally, we saw our program as challenging an institutional status quo that often treated activists as problems to be managed. Our leadership team consisted of graduate student activists supporting undergraduate student activists, creating what Paul Kivel (2004) calls "intergenerational communities for social justice" (p.25). In this and other ways, BEST was designed to address the specific resources, obstacles, and limitations of UCLA's institutional context in supporting student activists. The evolving components of the program were activist femtorship, leadership development, flexible funding, media resources, and socioemotional support. These components are explored in the following sections.

Activist femtorship

> I had lunch with [my femtor]…everything was building up, I wasn't doing well in school. I was just not feeling well and talking to her and kinda having all of my feelings out and crying and having someone to support me through that. I really appreciated it, someone hearing me out because at that point I didn't really have anyone to talk to about everything I was feeling that would understand [about my undocumented identity and family dynamics]...after that I found professional help because I was in a very bad place.
>
> - Student participant in BEST on impact of femtorship

Activist femtorship was a hallmark of the BEST program. Many alumnae fondly remember the supportive relationship that they had with their femtors and viewed femtorship as one of the more impactful elements of the program. When we started conceptualizing femtorship for the program, we first summed it up as affirmational and activist support for students. We implicitly understood affirmational support to mean that we acknowledged students' experiences with oppression, supported them as they processed trauma and oppression, and encouraged them to develop an activist identity based on their lived realities. One student described the importance of this type of validation from femtors:

> I felt personally more validated in my experiences, like this is not just me...like this is real and like people that are not my peers or people that haven't gone through this similar experience or not exactly the same and like understanding and being willing to support. I think that was very encouraging.

They described a sense of mutuality with their femtor, who recognized differences in their experience with their femtee, while still offering support. One BESTy noted the importance of building these types of connections with graduate students:

> I think they were really great. They had a great energy and we all meshed very well together. I feel like in terms of our needs...I think one of the strengths [of the program] is the concept of mentorship, like with the Grad students and whatnot. I feel like building those connections is super important.

With our femtees, we aimed to foster an "intergenerational community [by] creating bonds that are mutual, respectful, and reciprocal" (Kivel, 2004, p. 27). In many instances, this meant that our femtorship extended to academic advising, life guidance, and relationship advice.

BESTies appreciated that femtor support was grounded in personal experience navigating institutional challenges: "I've learned a lot from mentors that…supported me in terms of sharing their own experiences and the past. They have been like 'this is what I did and this is the path that I took.' And they provided resources and advice in that way." At the same time, students recognized

that as graduate students, we were able to approach the intellectual work of organizing with our own

insights:

> They came with different perspectives because a lot of the times when we need guidance, it really helps to have someone who has had different experiences or who can at least bring that outside perspective to help us navigate. Because if we're stuck in a situation we can't see through it clearly, it really helps to have someone kinda guide you to whatever direction you want to go.

Other BESTies shared similar ideas, appreciating that we could "translate that experience in a

hands-on way...to check in and give you tips;" or, as one student put it, apply our knowledge "about

the specific institution within which we're working" to provide tailored support, introducing students

to relevant resources and building connections with institutional allies. As activist femtors, we were

able to provide our femtees with critical feedback in navigating institutional bureaucracy (Kezar &

Maxey, 2014) based on first-hand knowledge as near-peers who engaged in activism at the same

institution (Biddix, 2010; Olive, 2015).

A second pillar of our femtorship was engaging in solidarity action with our students. This

meant that when called upon, we participated in our femtees' activism. Sometimes, our participation

was minor, reserving a room or helping to order food for an event if there was not time to go through

traditional pathways. Other forms of our participation included our intervention with campus

administrators, particularly when students were experiencing harassment or gatekeeping from

specific staff members. In one instance, a staff member who worked with undocumented students

refused to help facilitate work around the Pamilya Housing campaign to provide low-cost housing

for undocumented and other vulnerable student populations. Later, during a summer research

interview, a student recalled that their femtor "talked to like, [the staff person's] bosses and that's

why she had to be more responsive towards us." We often had to intervene in this fashion because

many staff were resistant to student-led initiatives.

I remember another instance of navigating gatekeeping during a campaign by the Beautiful

Mind Project calling on UCLA's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to double the

number of culturally-competent mental health providers available to Muslim students. BMP had

been trying to organize a meeting with CAPS for several months, but a staff member was

unresponsive to their many communications. The students were feeling disempowered and

disheartened. I told them that this behavior from staff was common and helped them craft an email

to send to the staff person, while 'ccing' the CAPS Director, thereby leveraging institutional

hierarchies to the students' advantage. This tactic worked and resulted in an immediate response

from the staff person, leading to a follow-up meeting several weeks later that included the Director.

In preparation for the meeting, I supported the students in developing an agenda and pushed them to

not be shy with their demands. The plan was to present the group's proprietary data on Muslim

students' experiences with campus mental health resources, propose different strategies to strengthen

outreach to their community, and double the number of Muslim mental health providers through a

partnership with a Muslim community mental health organization. Finally, the students wanted to

request an annual budget from CAPS to ensure that their organizing would continue unabated

regardless of their ability to secure funding from BEST.

I joined the students for their first meeting with CAPS leadership, and the students ran the

show. They were brilliantly prepared and argues their case to perfection. They won concession after

concession, including promises from the CAPS Director that she would personally advocate for their

demands and make them happen. However, the students were struggling to make their final demand,

securing annual funding from CAPS to support BMPs community mental health activities. I felt in

the moment that the students were anxious to make the demand for money to fund their group,

perhaps because they didn't want to seem self-motivated or perhaps because as Muslim youth, they

adhere to a culture of deference to elders—and the staff were well educated and over twice the

students' age. The meeting was closing, and I knew that without my intervention, the request would not be voiced and BMP would be at risk to lose funding the following year. I spoke up and shared my years of experience as BMP's femtor, noting the value and power of their work in supporting community mental health at UCLA. I told the administrators that BEST funding could not be promised to continue and that CAPS needed to step up and support students who were doing this amazing work—work that CAPS would be doing if they had the capacity and ability. After making my case, the Director noted the challenges and unprecedented nature of funding a student group, but agreed in principle to provide $5,000. We received several follow up emails in the next few weeks that confirmed approximately $45,000 in funding for additional resources to support the mental health of Muslim students, in addition to the group's funding for the following year.

In situations like these where BEST femtors were participating in crucial meetings with administrators, we viewed our role as a blend of teaching and action. While we wanted students to learn how to harness their power in these spaces, we determined a need to balance supporting their learning the finer points of negotiation with our own responsibility to ensure that administrators treated students fairly and that the specific goals students' set forth before the meeting were achieved. We would prepare and support students in engaging in these types of negotiations, but when our intervention was necessary, we would step in to do everything in our power to ensure student demands were won. Our direct participation also served as an opportunity for "shadowing", where the less experienced activists could watch and learn from our approach to handling the situation (Dugan, 2011).

Some of our decisions to participate in students' activism, and particularly in direct action protest, presented a different kind of balancing act—between student needs and our personal boundaries as individuals. Each femtor had different comfort levels and abilities to participate in protest action. Some femtors would join student protests without concern, while others might opt to

provide direct support in different ways. These boundaries were situational, shifting in relation to each femtor's identities, abilities, and positionality; and boundaries were often a topic of discussion with students when the need arose. This approach to allyship represents a departure from tempered radicalism (Meyerson & Scully, 1995) in that it is grounded in accountability to a community and transparency and dialogue around decisionmaking to engage advocacy actions.

Let me give an example to illustrate what this decisionmaking process looked like in real time. On November 11, 2019, Donald Trump Jr. participated in a speaking event held at Moore Hall. Several Mother Organizations organized a direct action to protest the event. Students were furious that the University was platforming a virulent white supremacist. Even more upsetting was the sentiment that the administration was trying to hide the event to limit student backlash. As an aside, I first learned of the event from a community organizer who sent me the flier lifted from a right-wing Facebook page that they monitored. I immediately contacted my then-academic advisor, Dean Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, whose departments held classes in Moore Hall. Marcelo responded to my email taken aback, insisting this was the first that he had heard about the event and that the department had nothing to do with planning the event. The UCLA administration had truly orchestrated the event under the cover of shroud, hiding information from high-ranking academic and administrative personnel whose immediate responsibilities were affected by the university's actions. This institutional approach to try and hide racist events from campus constituencies was yet another step in the cowardly evolution of the UC's diversity management approach to these types of events. Clearly, they were trying to avoid the explosive confrontations that occurred in years past (i.e., the nationally visible protests surrounding Milo Yiannopoulos at UC Berkely in 2017).

The event's abruptness gave students little time to engage with the administration or organize a mass response. Once we found out about the event, we immediately reached out to all of our groups. A Black femtor with BEST who was also an experienced community organizer with Black

Lives Matter (BLM) supported the Afrikan Student Union (ASU) in planning an action and joined

them on the front line that morning as they attempted to enter the event. Another non-Black femtor

and I remained outside of the event, participating in a broader protest on the east lawn of Moore

Hall. I chose to remain outside of the event in part because as a White man I didn't want my

visibility to take away from the symbolic potency of the student's action. The two of us that were

outside participated in the rally, which was directly across from a crowd of hundreds of Proud Boys

and other white supremacist groups who were hurling racist and sexist insults across the line of

police at us. The contingent of students from the Mother Organizations were never able to enter the

event that was supposed to be accessible to students on a first-come-first-serve basis.[45] They came

down to the lawn where the main protest was tailing off, with a group organized by the

Revolutionary Communist Party trying to syphon off students to their counter protest.

A congregation of about 30 students, including myself and another femtor regrouped in

Kirchhoff Hall on an upper-level patio balcony overlooking Moore Hall and the clusters of police

and secret service holding their own debriefing of the event. Students decompressed and reflected on

the action, sharing their frustrations about what transpired. As femtors, we sat in the circle and

listened. We also noticed that there were several University staff members in the space, which was

quite unusual following a student protest. The staff members one-by-one introduced themselves and

offered their own ability for support. While a seemingly helpful offer, to me, my colleague, and a

few students that we spoke with, the staff-members' presence felt like a veiled form of university

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[45] The event organizer's active refusal to allow members of ASU and MEChA enter the event was a violation of University policies, there adherence to which served as the basis for UCLA's financial sponsorship of the hefty security costs of the event. The UCLA major events policy insists that events receiving funding from UCLA must for security must ensure 70% attendance are UCLA students. UCLA Events Office (2021). FAQs for Events Planned by Registered Campus Organizations. Accessed November 9, 2021 from https://www.events.ucla.edu/plan-an-event/faqs-for-events-planned-by-registered-campus-organizations. Organizing the event, Turning Point USA—a national conservative student movement with a chapter at UCLA—prevented students from ASU and MEChA from entering the event, despite those students following the procedures to enter the event, including pre-registering and arriving early for "first-come-first-serve" seating. The students noted that many people who arrived after them were let into the event. Turning Point USA's discriminatory behavior towards student did not result in repercussions or censorship, though in clear violation of university policy.

oversight and surveillance. I knew several of the staff members present and believed that they had sympathetic politics; however, this did not feel like the time nor place for their presence. The staff had not actively participated in the protest, and in fact were placed in crowd-control roles surrounding the student protest area. Further, as tudent Affairs employees, they had an occupational obligation to report any students who planned to engage in actions that may harm university interests. Whether any of these staff members would act so duplicitously was irrelevant: their mere presence likely shaped the types of conversations that students were able to have, particularly in reflecting on the university's role in facilitating the events of the day. This moment had great potential to reveal the underlying contradictions that exist within higher education culture and institutions, which understandably can spark rebelliousness and upheaval among critical student leaders. That critical potential was hindered by the presence of university staff members whose relationship to the institution and unknown politics and allegiances placed them in the crossroads of students' political consciousness and development.

Our feelings of ambivalence were validated when one of the staff members—a Black person and leader in social justice staff spaces on campus—told the Black and Brown students assembled that they had spoken with the police Sergeant coordinating security for the event. According to the staff person, the police recognized that the students "were the good ones" at the protest and that they were "not trying to make trouble." We were mortified with the implications of the statement. It seemed that the staff member was suggesting students should somehow be concerned with approval from the police or should only engage in protests that conform with police sensibilities. This interjection came out of nowhere. None of the students were asking about the police or seeking police validation. In fact, their statements only reinforce stereotype threats that Black students often feel in interacting with police (Najdowski et al., 2015). Whether intentional or not, this rhetoric has a pacifying effect on students. And when seen in the broader context of administration-police

relations, are a great cause for concern among student activists. I have spoken with many student

activists who skeptically observe "social justice" student affairs staff hobnobbing with campus

police at protests, while students of color in particular must deal with the brunt of administration-

ordered outsized police presence. Even "the good ones" among student affairs staff had to maintain

cordial and transparent relationships with the police as a basic function of their job.[46] This

administration-staff-police relationship was one of the reasons why we felt a pressing need to center

solidarity action in our femtorship.

This general approach towards solidarity action exemplified in the anecdotes above were

pivotal. Without concrete evidence of our willingness to put ourselves on the line in the same way

that we encouraged our students, then our commitment to activism would appear as just lip service.

Students felt that they could not come to most staff or professors for help planning protests, advising

on ways to effectively demand institutional change, or navigating personal and political conflicts

impacting organizing spaces. For this reason, our students repeatedly expressed a need for femtors

that actively affirmed and participated in activism, echoing Evans and Lange (2019) call for student

affairs practitioners to show up for student activists.

These experiences with social justice staff bring up larger questions about social justice ethos

and practice within higher education administration, and particularly within student affairs offices.

There is some tension between what Evans and Lange (2019) describe as the role of student affairs

staff and the real obstacles and consequences that face staff who take principled stands, vis-à-vis

Linder and colleagues (2016). As noted in Chapter 2, the "tempered radical" framework has been

suggested as another approach to reflect on social justice practice within student affairs (Kezar et al.,

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[46] The nature of this institutional relationship with police is deeply entrenched at UCLA and may even be a matter of policy at Student Affairs. As early as 1980, student affairs staff were voicing a move away from the "confrontation politics" of the 1960s and 1970s– that saw hundreds of students arrested—towards a strategy of negotiation, trying "in every way possible to avoid confrontation" and thereby limit arrests or suspensions for civil disobedience (Activists have New Cause: Patriotism. *Los Angeles Times*. February 21, 1980).

2011). However, I would argue that the way in which higher education institutions often wedge student affairs staff between students and their campaigns to change the institution serves to undermine the premise of tempered radicalism. The status quo of university administration, institutional values and practices are complicit with a deep and violent disregard for human labor, safety, and health. Staff are called to defend the institution as students protest vile university policies that protect sexual predators, entrench labor exploitation, make education unaffordable for all, prevent affordable housing, discard food that could feed hungry students, and allow investments in the most unscrupulous corporations. Obviously, most university employees do not support the institution's positions on any or all of these matters. However, staff are at the very least aware of these issues, and are called upon to serve as what Ahmed (2012) calls the invisible brick walls that silence critique and stymie institutional change. Until there is a core change in the values of higher education institutions such that staff are enabled to act in solidarity with institutional critics, there is no clear answer for the appropriate role of student affairs staff in advocating social justice within higher education. There are examples, such as the Leticia A. Network[47], where heroic staff and faculty coordinated institutional resources to circumvent unjust laws around immigration, likely risking their own jobs in the process. BEST offers another model where insiders/outsiders can operate to promote institutional radicalism without the baggage and level of oversight and control that true insiders experience. However, establishing programs like BEST requires long-term institutional buy-in, commitment, and support.

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[47] The Leticia A. Network an unofficial association of concerned staff and faculty across the California public university system advocating for and supporting undocumented students during the 1980s and 1990s. State laws prevented undocumented youth from utilizing state funding and resources, erecting barriers to college access. Allies to the undocumented community formed a network that organized institutional resources to support undocumented youth as they navigated colleges and universities. Immigrants Rising (2019). California Community Colleges

Dreamers Project: Strengthening Institutional Practices to Support Undocumented Student Success. Accessed November 9, 2021 from https://immigrantsrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-Rising_CCC-Dreamers-Project_Full-Report.pdf.

Evolution of BEST femtorship

In the first year, BEST femtors helped new organizations grow from small collectives to large leaderful groups. We worked with established organizations to clarify their visions for change and focus their efforts, and we supported students as they carried out successful advocacy campaigns, such as the Pamilya housing initiative which provided over 220 low-cost housing beds to vulnerable student populations. We worked closely with the student groups that we were advising, cultivating strong relationships with core activists from each organization. Our femtorship was built on being supportive, meeting students where they were, and providing them whatever resources they needed in the moment to move forward. We helped students navigate resistant administrators, interpersonal and intra-organizational conflicts, and personal and political crises. And in the wake of Donald Trump's presidency, much of our mentorship involved deep emotional support for students who were fearful of the world changing around them and their communities.

Reflecting back on that time, I can acknowledge that while we did impactful femtorship, we were still new to the work and did not fully understand how to institutionalize effective practices. In the years that followed and as we hired new femtors, it became evident that the support we provided in the first year was heavily dependent on the knowledge and skills that the program's founders brought to their positions. As new people stepped into femtorship roles, they often struggled, citing a lack of clarity around role expectations, and feeling unprepared for some of the responsibilities they undertook. Said another way, we did not effectively translate our institutional knowledge and experience into frameworks and tools that would support new team members in providing impactful femtorship. This type of role ambiguity often has a negative impact on performance (Abramis, 1994). Obviously, creating that type of training infrastructure would always have been difficult under the funding conditions of that first year, where we were running a program designed for a team of five on a skeleton crew of three volunteers. We were so overwhelmed that whole year that

there was little room for us to reflect on our work and cultivate a community of practice that could support the creation of internal training structures.

In the second year, the EDI Office awarded the successes of our inaugural year with a 25% budget increase and collaborated to attract a $15,000 donation from Gold Shield Alumnae of UCLA. This additional funding allowed us to expand the resources that we provided students and enabled the hiring of a five person staff. While we were now able to pay everyone for their work and hire additional staff, we experienced huge turnover with two of the remaining three founders moving on from the program. With mostly new staff coming in, I was the only remaining founder with experience as a femtor in the program. In our effort to hire new femtors, we did not really know what qualities to look for in hiring new people into the program roles. We developed an interview guide for the hiring process, but even this was clumsy compared to the more evolved questionnaire and rubrics that we developed for future hiring cycles (Appendix E contains these materials). Going into the second year (AY 2017-18), we also lacked structured training and supervision for new femtors, while our femtorship pedagogies were not well defined, creating obstacles for new femtors in acquiring the skills they needed to succeed. As the year progressed, we started to develop some processes to help femtors navigate their skills and professional development, including check-ins during weekly leadership meetings and the implementation of leadership development protocols. Despite the growth of these internal processes, it took us another two years to understand the qualities and experiences that made for great femtorship and to slowly develop comprehensive onboarding tools.

In the fourth year of the program (AY 2019-20), we finally found precise language, structures, and protocols to develop sustainable and supportive activist femtorship. We created a document outlining femtorship roles, responsibilities, and expectations, which new femtors were familiarized with upon their hiring during a week-long training (Appendix F includes this document

followed by an earlier version developed in the first year of the program). Femtors made a contract with their femtees based on these expectations, committing to provide a minimum of support and ensuring that all BESTies received the baseline level of femtorship that we promised for their participation in the program (Appendix G). This contract was implemented to address the uneven femtorship that often took place, with some groups experiencing active and engaged femtors and other struggling to reach or connect with their femtors. Though bad relationships between groups and femtors were uncommon, there were six pairings out of the fifty-two between 2016 and 202 where students expressed dissatisfaction with their femtor. Each year, we attempted to identify problem pairings by sending anonymous satisfaction surveys and cultivating relationships with students that allowed for open and honest sharing. Generally speaking, we attempted to respond to students' concerns, although a few of the bad interactions had to do with poor performance, unavailability, or seeming disinterest from femtors.

The aforementioned contract, as well as an improved femtor applicant vetting approach and onboarding process was designed to pre-emptively address the common deficits that students experienced with program femtorship. In the fourth year, BEST also shifted its organizational structure to have co-Directors who each were responsible for supervising and supporting new femtors. We met with the new femtors every other week to actively engage them in reflections about their work and check-in about their wellbeing. We also asked them to have a running Instagram diary to document their successes, challenges, and growth over the year. That year, we expanded femtorship responsibilities considerably, asking femtors to facilitate quarterly leadership development workshops and personal check-ins with students, incorporating solution-focused brief therapy as a therapeutic strategy to address student burnout and mental health challenges (Gingerich & Peterson, 2013). Both of these femtorship tools helped establish trusting and meaningful relationships between femtors and femtees, which appeared to support students' leadership growth

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and wellbeing. Unfortunately, this final year was marred by the COVID pandemic and was halted by the university decision to end program funding.

As we developed these femtorship features and protocols, we also became clearer on a theoretical foundation for the work. Professor Chris Linder from the University of Utah recommended that we look to the work of Museus and Neville (2012), which proposed *holistic support* as an approach for institutional agents to address students of color's often complex support needs (e.g., academic, financial, social). Holistic support involves an underlying recognition of these challenges, as well as a fundamental commitment to provide students with support, regardless of the types of problems that they faced. This framework gave voice to much of the glue work that femtors did (e.g., from helping with CVs and graduate school applications to giving advice on personal relationships). It also affirmed the precepts of our proactive approach, whereby we actively sought to develop meaningful relationships with students. However, where the concept of holistic support was strong in terms of academic and life advising, it lacked relevance to the activist component of students' support needs. In further exploring the catalogues of one of the paper's authors, Helen Neville, we discovered their 2015 speech at the 31st Annual Winter Roundtable conference at Columbia University in which they referenced the social justice mentorship framework proposed by Paul Kivel (2004).

Reading Kivel's work on social justice mentorship and Neville's adaptation to an academic setting offered specific contours to BEST's proprietary activist femtorship. Neville (2015) described social justice mentoring as "aspirational" in that mentors create "transformative spaces for people to harness their potential" (p. 162). Social justice mentorship, then, was a set of commitments aiding that goal, including "establishing an intergenerational community for social justice, building leadership for long-term struggle, helping youth establish self-care practices, instilling a sense of hope in change, affirming and celebrating successes, providing critical feedback, and understanding

the importance of mutuality" (Neville, 2015, p. 162). Neville extended Kivel's framework with several additions, noting that mentors should articulate their own understandings of social justice, while simultaneously modeling these values and practices and working to transform learning spaces. Neville's insights into social justice mentorship within a higher education context were illuminative in that they highlighted the features that differentiated our model from the practices of most student affairs professionals at our institution.

Femtorship in Practice

The research memo below was recorded over a two-month period in which I was providing femtorship support to the Student Labor Advocacy Project (SLAP). During the final two years of BEST, each femtor wrote similar research memos for the groups that they worked with. The memos document the diverse ways in which BEST femtors were called to support student leaders. After presenting the memo, I will analyze the text, making connections between concepts presented in the previous sections on activist femtorship, while also highlighting the aspects of femtorship that are not as easily defined. I have provided pseudonyms to protect student identities.

SLAP – Ambitions Beyond Means
December 2018 – January 2019
Brief summary: Describes several meetings Kareem had with SLAP in planning an action and developing an advocacy campaign. Also describes interpersonal conflict between members of SLAP and how mentor helped navigate the situation. Key words: Action, protect, conflict, community, advocacy, campaign planning, leadership conversation

Description: In mid-December, SLAP members and I had a check in meeting brainstorming different creative tactics they could use to highlight their campaigns: supporting AFSCME and UPTE workers contract negotiations with UCOP and efforts to unionize undergraduate student workers. We developed a list of strategies, including engaging in an action to project visuals in public spaces. I reached out to several of my community contacts and found a generator and wagon to bring the projection show on the road. I picked these up last night (Wednesday 1/8/2019) driving across Los Angeles, picking up the generator from an acquaintance on a dark side street in Studio City and the cart from my friend Andrea in a library parking lot in Boyle Heights. I was told I could keep the generator for both upcoming actions in the next weeks, "Unless, of course, the President declares martial law. Then I'll need it back." I dropped off the generator to a member of SLAP on the Hill. I showed them how to use the generator, and he seemed confident that he could figure it out. As we walked away from one another, I turned around and asked "What's your alibi if people ask you?" He paused then said, "it's for my physics lab."

The next day I met with Sam and Alex from SLAP. I had scheduled a meeting with the Graduate Student Regent Nico to discuss SLAP's demands for the resolution of AFSCME contract. Several hours before, I texted them asking that they prepare talking points and specific asks of Nico. I knew that I should have done this earlier and offered to have a conversation if they wanted. Regardless, they came prepared! In the meeting, Nico listened as SLAP shared their campaign demands. He stated his solidarity and shared that his father is an AFSCME worker at UCSD and sole breadwinner for his family. He pledged to share a list of demands with the undergraduate student association, graduate student association, Regents, and President Napolitano who he was meeting the following weekend. He suggested we reach out to new members of the regents who were potentially more partial to the demands of the workers. He provided an in-depth perspective about the budgetary struggles that shape these decisions and suggested that in addition to pressuring the regents, we should lobby Sacramento and local representatives. I asked several follow-up questions about what talking points they usually bring up and how we might devise a strategy to pressure these politicians. Arising from this conversation was a proposal to develop an appropriation bill for basic wages for UC workers. We thanked Nico for his support and insights and left Moore Hall.

I invited Alex and Sam to coffee for a debrief. In the coffee shop, I saw several student members of MEChA who I thought were on MEChA's Community and Labor committees. I got them coffee as well and we had a quick collective debrief with them, asking if their committee might have interest in supporting a campaign advocating for an appropriations bill. Val and Manuel were both interested and said they would bring it to the committee. During the conversation, Sam joked that maybe the EVP (Executive Vice President of USAC) office might want to support this advocacy but "they're not really doing anything". Manuel smiled and said, "I'm actually a staff member of EVP." I asked if they would be interested, to which he replied positively. He said they were meeting tonight, that he would bring it up there and circle back after the meeting. Before leaving the coffee shop, I made sure that the students shared contact information (they were about to separate without a way to stay in touch!).

Later that night, I was to facilitate a leadership conversation with 7 members of SLAP. And after that, the first projector action. On my way to pick-up dinner for the conversation, Adelle, the

union-student liaison from AFSCME called asking about my relationship with the SLAP collective. I stated my role as a BEST femtor and asked them why they wanted to know. They shared that a student who was currently an intern with AFSCME was extremely upset and felt that they were getting picked on by other members of the group. I considered my options and suggested that I check in with the student and ask them the best approach to address the issue. I wouldn't get this opportunity until after the meeting.

The leadership conversation started slow, as students felt their way around their data sheets and their peers' energy. After a question about anxieties in leadership roles, students started vulnerable sharing with one another, prompting collective solution-posing and affirmations. At one point, a student brought up that conflict made them anxious and was hard to bridge in the group. When this was brought up, I felt an evasiveness grow in the group as members kept on latching onto lesser issues brought up in the student's comment. I kept returning the conversation to conflict and brought up the data sheet, which showed members evaluating their abilities in dealing with conflict as low. This led to several students acknowledging that there wasn't a place/space to air grievances, and several other members agreed. Eventually, students gave a round of suggestions about ways to air disagreements and friction within the group. They concluded to have a rotation of conflict "feelers" who would have one-on-one conversations with group members to get a sense of how they felt within the group. This was productive, but I still caught some dynamics that were taking place. I noticed that throughout the conversation, several members kept glancing at the student who Adelle called about earlier.

After the meeting was over, I texted Don, the AFSCME intern, and asked if they wanted to talk. They called shortly after and shared their frustrations with the group and what they perceived as back talk and cliquish behavior. The conversation lasted nearly 40 minutes. They were concerned that any conversation had with other members might center feelings and not the work. I suggested that they speak to group dynamics and culture, using the language that was discussed during the leadership conversation as a guide. During the conversation, another member of the group texted them, writing "Is everything okay? You seemed off." After some deliberation, Don said that they felt slightly better and that they would reach out to the student to start the process of confronting the dynamics that have carried a heavy emotional cost.

A first dynamic that the memo highlights is the ability of femtors to mobilize their own networks to support student growth, development, and direct action, echoing observations by Evans and Lange (2018) and Kezar and Maxey (2014). As a community activist myself, students were able to come to me for connections to resources that they might otherwise not have available to them through traditional student affairs resources. They certainly did not want to tell their SOLE advisor that they were planning a protest march that would disrupt the resident halls, which were managed through the Student Affairs Office. We built a trust with students such that they knew we would support their vision of direct action without interjecting university interests. Further, our ability to

actively support student action beyond campus resources (i.e., acquiring the wagon and mobile generator to power the projector) enabled students' vision of a creative protest action.

This type of support, drawing upon activist networks was a matter of design for the BEST program. In hiring femtors, we intentionally sought to bring in active community organizers with connections to Los Angeles social movement groups. We reflected on historic examples of campus-community activist relationships—and particularly the efforts of the Black Panther Party—which allowed students to transcend activist identities beyond that of a "student organizer" towards an identity of social movement leadership that could be sustainable beyond graduation. We hoped to both foster and build upon students' existing relationships with community organizing. One femtor noted in their "Instagramentor" diary that their femtees were surprised to see their femtor at a small community action. The femtor noted the power that that connection had in building trust between them and their femtees (Figure 4). For good reason, many of the undergraduates that we worked with understood that elder members in the university space—e.g., graduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators—were rarely engaged in activism, and so having femtors who themselves were independently active in the community in similar ways gave the program authenticity and facilitated deeper connections through BEST femtorship. Demonstrating that type of political commitment beyond our job description meant something to students, and it also
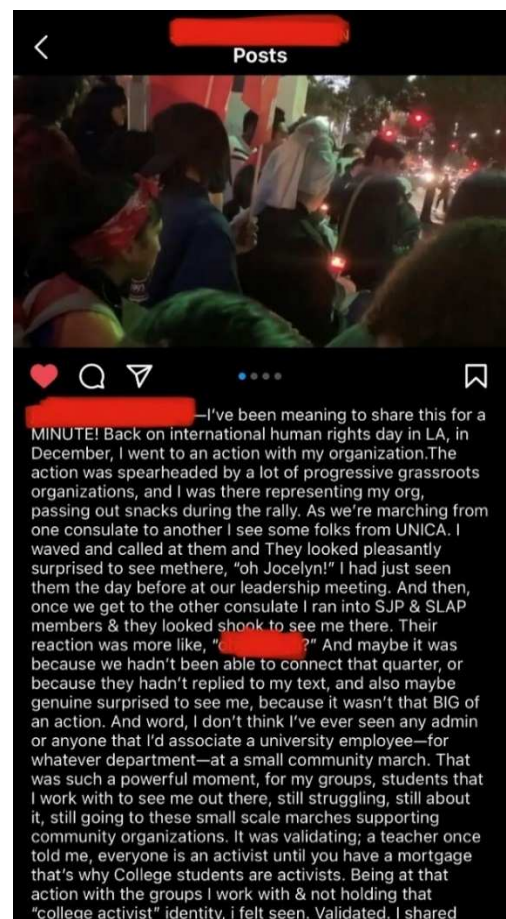

Figure 4: *"Instagramentor" post documenting femtor experiences and reflections*

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meant something to us. One of the central ideals of the program was practicing what we preached.

A second feature of BEST femtorship made evident by the memo is the on-the-ground nature of the work. Unlike traditional student affairs advisors who are accessible by appointment only, BEST femtors were visible on campus—walking the grounds, in the libraries where students studied, as their TAs in class, or as research supervisors in the laboratory. This visibility enabled a dynamic type of connection with students that made us more relatable, available, and approachable for all types of advising and support. One BESTy shared that their femtor "was always there for us, always there to listen… they were very flexible in being able to meet with us." This availability often manifested as impromptu check-ins with students that took place while walking across campus where I would offer words of encouragement on a midterm, ask after their family, or coordinate a next meeting. That type of presence and availability was often noted as an instrumental feature of BEST femtorship. One BESTy confided the importance of our physical presence: "physically being there for your members…that takes off so much stress from the things we have to deal with... I would say literally just like the physical, emotional support. That's my favorite thing [about BEST]."

Our availability was an intentional feature of our femtorship. We knew that to be useful to student leaders, we needed to make ourselves available when they needed us, and not the other way around. This was in stark contrast to the advising students received through SOLE, which generally kept normal business hours. In their interviews, students complained that SOLE advisors had limited evening availability making them extremely difficult to reach, as most students had classes or work to contend with. As BEST femtors, we were always happy to jump on a call, meet up at a coffee shop, or attend the students' group meeting at 7pm, so long as we were provided adequate notice. One femtee appreciated how open communication around availability was, sharing that femtors "responded quickly and at least set a time...[sic] I'm busy now, but I can talk to you at 5:00 PM for

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whatever amount of time...So a lot of the times it was very, very, very helpful to be able to reach out to someone...[to] let me just talk something out."

Another important feature that the research memo highlights is BEST femtors' role in conflict mediation. Generally speaking, student group advisors at UCLA do not mediate conflict and can act parental or paternalistic towards student "drama". As BEST femtors, we viewed conflict as a natural byproduct of the often-contentious environment of campus organizing. And the situation described in this memo was no different. I wrote these notes amidst a massive conflict within SLAP that had the potential of destroying the group. I found the situation very sensitive to navigate as a femtor, because I was required to maintain trusting relationships with all members of the group and attend to their emotional needs, even when the source of their pain was one another. Don, the AFSCME intern mentioned in the memo was extremely troubled throughout the process. After meetings, they would confide in me, often breaking down in tears and sharing their desire to leave the group because of the bullying they were experiencing.

Unfortunately, I did not learn about the conflict for months before students were at a breaking point. Reflecting back, I believe that I was not told about the situation earlier because I had not yet established trust with the organization. That year was the first that SLAP had joined BEST, so the students did not know me or know if they could trust me as their femtor. Moreover, students may avoid sharing group "drama" with advisors because they did not view that as our role. A student from another BEST organization described this reluctance in dealing with internal organizational conflicts:

> At times I didn't feel comfortable talking about the staff drama and the interpersonal relationships and things that were happening…I viewed [my femtor] as someone who would help with programming. I didn't really view them as someone who would help with staff [conflicts] and it wasn't until later when they were like, "Yo, like there's stuff that I could have given you...Like we could have came in and led staff development workshop and talk this out loud, you know, and we're like, even if we didn't resolve everything. We could at least left with something, you know?"

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At that time, the program did not do enough to anticipate and address barriers students might experience to requesting conflict mediation support. Some students would occasionally ask us for help in negotiating group dynamics or interpersonal conflict, but we did not proactively advertise and promote this type of support as a feature of BEST. We remedied this issue in the following year with the femtorship contract and solution-focused brief therapy (described at length in a later section).

When I learned about the conflict around January of 2018, I began connecting with different members of the group. I was first told about the issue by Adelle, who I believe reached out to me because of my connection to community organizations. I had met Adelle several times through my participation in protest actions with Black Lives Matter, Los Angeles where Adelle was an active leader. This familiarity was the basis of trust that likely made possible the types of collaboration that we would engage in to support SLAP. After speaking with Adelle, I facilitated the group meeting and met with Don independently, who shared that they felt the main issue of tension in the group was still not being publicly addressed. During an interview in the summer, Don shared that "for me, I was able to trust Kareem as a mentor…enough to bring it into this space, to mediate conflicts with people that I did not trust because of how they dealt with things. And, um, like honestly having conversations with them."

I began meeting with different members of the group to gain their perspective and design an approach to support grieving, reconciliation, and resolution. After my meetings with students, it became evident that regardless of the conflict, they were all feeling burnt out and many planned to distance themselves from organizing with SLAP and elsewhere on campus. After taking determining that the situation was beyond repair, I began working with Don and Adelle to develop a transition plan that would bring in new organizers and help bridge the amazing work SLAP was already doing with a new vision for the organization that empowered new members into the space. We planned a

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series of organizer trainings and visioning meetings that would consolidate the outreach and base

building SLAP had already succeeded with since the start of the year. We set this plan in motion,

starting with a visioning retreat in March and a one-on-one training[48] in April. I led facilitation for

both events, as both Don and Adelle were at the center of the conflict that had unraveled the

organization. We hoped that by decentering Adelle and Don, new and old participants could refocus

on the work. In the end, only two or three of the original SLAP members attended these reboot

events, while over 30 new students joined—their recruitment stemming from SLAP actions that year

or through class presentations. What happened was miraculous: over the next month, SLAP went

from one group of about 10 committed organizers to another group of 15 completely new organizers,

save for Don. Don, Adelle, and I worked to rebuild SLAP in a period of three months. According to

Don, "SLAP would not have survived the school year without the support that we got." The

following year, Don was able to further transition new leadership and by Winter Quarter, remove

themselves entirely from SLAP leadership. By February of 2020, SLAP became a campus

powerhouse, holding general meetings with over 150 people, growing their core organizing

collective to 30+ active members, and expanding their organizing agenda considerably. This

momentum could only be stopped by a once-in-a-lifetime crisis, the COVID epidemic which halted

almost all campus organizing in its tracks.

Leadership Development

> The way the [administration does social justice training], it's pretty much useless. I'm not just
> saying that because I don't like them. I'm saying it because the way they approach it, a lot of
> times it's geared towards white people who have never met a person of color in their life...so
> the way they do that, is to bring up a bunch of trauma that [people with] marginalized
> identities are going through. So all the marginalized people in the audience get triggered, you
> know, but then the white people learn a valuable lesson.

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[48] We defined one-on-one's in our training materials as follows: "Relationship building is at the core of organizing and happens in many different ways. One core technique, the one-on-one, is an intentional conversation between an organizational leader and another member, potential member, or ally." From One-on-One 101 Guide (Appendix H)

- BEST student participant on institutional leadership development

I think BEST social justice trainings are extremely valuable. Honestly, I think they should be a priority for board members of organizations to go through. Honestly, I feel like it should be integrated somehow like a mandatory curriculum for UCLA students. It's extremely important, especially in this day and age.

- BEST student participant on BEST leadership development

Student activists have a deep desire to experience meaningful leadership development; and of all the areas of support needed by student activists, leadership education most aligns with the university's mission to cultivate civically engaged citizens (Arthur & Bohlin, 2004). Yet in spite of this alignment between student needs and institutional objectives, UCLA has few leadership education resources that support growth in line with student activists' social justice principles and goals. This is in keeping with the analysis of Evans and Lange (2019) and Karter et al. (2021), who both noted that universities are most comfortable supporting more liberally-inclined citizenship programs as avenues of civic and democratic participation. There is a parallel favoritism in leadership education, with institutional resources supporting leadership development in both business and the non-profit sector. As a result, student organizations invested in activist ways of knowing, being, and action are forced to lead their own development through peertorship and leadership retreats (Kezar et al., 2017; Olive, 2015). Some organizations, such as the Muslim Student Association, are part of regional and national leadership networks, where resources are pooled, institutional knowledge is retained, and newer organizers from local chapters receive meaningful, if infrequent developmental support at annual or bi-annual conventions. These networks with their strengths and limitations are not the norm for most student organizations, nor are they a replacement for comprehensive leadership development programs at an institutional level.

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While students strive to develop leadership among their collectives, their efforts are understandably limited by a lack of experience with designing and implementing leadership development curricula, as well as a lack of time and resources to invest in development with their peers. Student organizers' lack of time and resources to invest in collective development should be seen as a direct result of the intense bureaucratic burden placed upon students by the institution, where basic tasks (i.e., booking an event space or completing small funding applications) can require many hours of time. Engaging in these fundamental organizing tasks often requires the labor of experienced leaders, who have had years gaining the institutional knowledge and networks often required to move through UCLA's unwieldy bureaucracy. Given the obstacles preventing student leaders from effectively engaging in social justice leadership development, the institution should have even greater reason to support social justice leadership development. However, based on our research with student activists, they generally perceive leadership resources at UCLA as underwhelming. One respondent called a week-long mandatory training facilitated by one social justice-oriented office as "a waste of time", while the student who is quoted in the opening of this section experienced the social justice trainings of another campus unit as triggering to students of color. Responding to the gaps that exist in both institutional and student-led leadership development, BEST pursued the development of comprehensive formal leadership development tools and support.

Evolving Leadership Development Programming

Our ability to impact student leadership development was the result of a proprietary approach developed through years of experimentation, monitoring, reflection, and adjustments. The leadership development components of our program were rudimentary to begin with, but evolved as we began to recognize and respond to the unique conditions and obstacles of student organizational life. These changes were made possible through our intentional approach to observation and reflection throughout our work, as well as the critical perspectives and insights offered to us by the students

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that we worked with. This section of the narrative documents the specific programmatic changes related to leadership development within BEST.

During our pilot year (AY 2016-17), we had very few resources to enact leadership development as we envisioned it. The primary development tools were a mandatory summer training, ad hoc leadership trainings during the year, and femtor-driven leadership activities. This patchwork of activities left much to be desired, both in terms of what students needed and our programmatic execution. The first summer "Boot Camp" had its moments and let downs. According to student feedback, everyone was unhappy with the grueling 10-hour length of the training, which is what happens when you try to cram a two-day training into a single sitting. Another presentation was held over Zoom and was illegible due to technical difficulties. On the positive, many participants loved our panel on the history of UCLA organizing featuring three UCLA alumnae and former student activists who helped lead campus coalitions. We had hoped that hearing from these voices would inspire coalitional energy from the groups joining the program, but a follow-up activity meant to encourage collaborations between groups was a complete flop—in part because the activity was complicated[49], and partly because some groups did not appear interested in coalitional work. While many BEST groups would eventually come to realize and pursue intragroup collaborations with other BEST organizations, we learned a valuable lesson in not trying to force partnerships when students were not open to the idea.

Outside of the summer bootcamp, most of our leadership development was femtor-driven activities, such as coaching and facilitated presentations and conversations with femtees. This resulted in a very uneven development experience, with some femtors investing heavily in these types of activities, while others had less time or experience to support student growth in this way.

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[49] This was completely my fault. I designed the activity based on the "Peeling the Onion" protocol from https://www.nsrfharmony.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/peeling_onion_0.pdf. Students hated this activity.

Outside of the aforementioned development activities, our only "formal" leadership development opportunity was a three-day seminar on campaign development, media, and messaging led by an organizer from Dream Team LA, a Los Angeles-based undocumented youth organization. The seminar was clear, insightful, and powerful, yet had flagging attendance, between 4-8 participants depending on the day. Worse still, none of the participants were members of BEST organizations, which was personally disappointing to members of the BLT that labored for weeks organizing the event. We spent the next few months speaking with our BESTies about the types of trainings that they wanted and how to make trainings more accessible. In the summer of 2017, we sent out surveys to participating groups requesting their feedback on potential training topics and their scheduling availability for the Fall Quarter. We would repeat these surveys before the start of each quarter to account for students' changing schedules and shifting developmental priorities.

The second year (AY 2017-2018), BEST received a significant budget increase, allowing for an expansion of the leadership support that we offered. We also began to develop a more elaborated leadership development infrastructure, in part thanks to the addition of two new team members who brought new energy and vision to the team. During our BEST organizational retreats, we worked to create a year-round leadership development structure meant to support students in evaluating, reflecting on, and growing their abilities as leaders. This meant changes to the summer Boot Camp, the advent of structured leadership focus group conversations, and multiple training activities throughout the academic year, in addition to the continuous femtoring with training-oriented activities.

The second annual Boot Camp took place over two days in mid-September (See Appendix J for agendas and handouts for bootcamps between 2016 and 2019). The training was much more developed than the year before, benefiting from student feedback and the perspectives of a new BLT member's experiences working in leadership development among queer youth, as well as their

connections with community organizers. Points of growth for the summer training was the emphasis on activist knowledge and skill building. We brought in two community organizers to facilitate base building and solidarity organizing skills workshops, while I contributed an institutional power-mapping workshop.

I viewed this event as an important moment for our program. For the first time, we had several of the Mother Organizations participating in our yearlong program, and the Boot Camp was to serve as their introduction to BEST. I remember the opening moments of the proceedings vividly. As part of the welcoming and grounding ceremony, I was supposed to lead a land acknowledgement, recognizing UCLA as a Land Grant institution built on Tongva Land. As I began to speak, I had an acute attack of social anxiety and locked up. I fumbled around in silence for several moments and glanced over to one of the co-facilitators, whispering that they help me out…which they graciously did. It took me a bit to collect myself and rejoin the facilitation. I shared the details of what had happened with participants and acknowledged how my fears of public speaking affected my work as an organizer and leader. Training organizers often try to hide their flaws and limitations, but as leaders with BEST, we had made an intention and commitment to be honest, transparent, and vulnerable with participants. Following the brief opening, each member of the BLT shared stories of what brought us to the work, whether it be experiences of familial abuse, racial inequality, poverty, or responses to other injustice. We had practiced our anecdotes of vulnerable sharing beforehand so that we might model what it looked like for students. By modeling this vulnerability ourselves, we quickly established some baseline of trust with students, which facilitated their own participation in difficult conversations with so many unfamiliar faces. Students followed our stories with their own brief narratives of what brought them to activism.

Following these introductions, students collected into their groups and participated in a "speed dating" activity, where each organization prepared a 90-second elevator pitch summarizing

their organizational purpose and goals for the year. Groups ranging from two to five members (depending on attendance from each BEST organization) would practice critical listening while another group presented their pitch. The listening group would notate one strength of the presentation and one point of improvement, sharing their observations after the presentation. The "dating" pairs would then switch positions after three minutes, with the critical listening group becoming the presenter, and the previous speakers turning to thoughtful listening. This activity was a great success for students, who improved their presentation after each round, implementing feedback and incorporating the better features of other groups' pitches into their own. This activity was particularly effective for new organizers within each student group, who shared that the activity gave them increasing confidence in talking about their organization, a skill that is fundamental to base building and other outreach and organizing.

Another point of emphasis was our desire to concretely tie all activities to racial and gender justice. The thematic focus of the two-day bootcamp was anti-Blackness. Honoring this overarching purpose, we invited a campus activist who was a UCLA History PhD student to present a history of anti-Blackness in United States social movements. This facilitated dialogue was followed by a zoom presentation by ASU's Chair, who shared about anti-Blackness at UCLA, incorporating concrete examples from their experiences as a student and leader on campus. They ended on a call to action for support around ASU's historic and current demands for greater institutional resources and administrative redress of racial grievances. The feel of the training had a powerful and radical energy that I felt was rare on campus. Having conversations about racial justice, not from an abstract and academic vantage, but in a room full of organizers, was unprecedented for students who shared as much during a debrief at the end of the training. The presentations, skill sharing, and engagement between activist groups built strong bonds between the BEST groups that translated to collaborations throughout the year, with several groups co-organizing events and participating in each other's

events. We felt that with the summer training, we had struck a vein, with students having never experienced an "institutional" leadership training so in alignment with their politics and developmental goals. This would become the template for our future summer trainings.

In the pilot year, funding and staffing limitations prevented our planned rollout of a comprehensive leadership curriculum. The following year, we took measures to increase participation in development opportunities. We offered eight workshops throughout the year on topics ranging from social movement solidarity organizing, disability justice, self-care and burnout, and power mapping. We polled students' availability each quarter to align workshop times with our members' greatest availability, alternating workshop times and dates accordingly, and we improved outreach with save-the-date mailers, fliers, and individualized outreach by femtors. The events were also catered, and in addition to receiving a full meal, participants received a $30 gift card for attending. We wished to make development as supportive as possible, without having the resources to offer students "paid-training" opportunities. This approach noticeably improved participation, but still did not result in the impact we desired. One student's response during their interview that summer reflected on these extra efforts: "Those were super dope the topics... Y'all really like gave out prizes, like gift cards and free food and stuff. I was like wow I wish I would have went." BESTies that were interviewed were in general agreement that the "workshops BEST provided really aligned with what the members were there for."

Despite our efforts, scheduling remained a major challenge. The rigorous and packed calendars of most large student organizations leave little time for students to stop and take a breath, let alone attend extra development opportunities. One BESTy encapsulated this dilemma as a leader in a large campus organization: "I know that for ASU and like the MOs, [BEST workshops] often coincide with our programs and like general body meetings and stuff. Like we would have to miss…my only thing was just like, dang, I really wish I could go to this." This experience was

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mirrored by many BESTies, who were highly motivated but extremely busy community members with little ability to commit to more time. Our challenge for the next year would be finding compromises that joined our vision for development with the practical realities of student civic life.

As with the previous year, the program still experienced some challenges in providing all students a similar quality of leadership development through femtor-driven activities. During our summer retreat, BEST femtors committed to engage in specific development activities, namely group-based trainings and a group leadership conversation at the beginning and end of the year. Each femtor was to feel out the type of support and development that their femtees would benefit from, and then facilitate workshops that met those needs. We already had a few workshops that were piloted the previous year, but if those did not fit the bill, then the femtor was to make their own facilitation guide and receive feedback from the BLT during our regular meetings. This process was flawed from the outset. Those of us with more experience developing and facilitating similar workshops in the past were able to create and implement our own trainings. But others who did not share those experiences needed more support. By the year's end, only a third of proposed workshops were carried out. A recurring issue that some femtors experienced were challenges coordinating trainings with group schedules, although two student groups reported challenges reaching their femtors. A bigger issue was perhaps the lack of support infrastructure to ensure that femtors were prepared to carry out their duties with confidence. We had yet to formalize a program-wide curriculum that included femtor development tools, such as training manuals, train-the-trainer workshops, and workshop materials. Absent these resources, we were asking members of our collective to do too much with too little. As a result, we failed to ensure that each student group received a similarly powerful development experience.

The second feature of leadership development implemented that year were group leadership conversations, which were a multi-step process involving a skills assessment, group conversation,

and follow-up actions. The assessment, which we adapted from a social movement resource,[50] was

administered at the start of the year and evaluated activities leadership abilities (Appendix K

contains the skills assessment questionnaire). Most members of each group's leadership collective

completed the survey, the data from which was compiled and analyzed by the group's femtor with

support from a data analyst. Femtors then presented this analysis to group members during a

facilitated group conversation. Our first round of group conversations were a bit rough and awkward,

as we had never used the tool before and were still adjusting the facilitation guide. That said,

students expressed great appreciation for a dialogue space where they could be reflective of their

role within their group, their strengths as well as their insecurities in leadership. We centered the

conversation around a meal, breaking bread with our femtees to foster a more comfortable and

intimate atmosphere. My favorite part of these conversations invariably happened about an hour in,

when we reflected on areas needing most improvement. I would ask each person to share their

greatest insecurity as an organizer. I led by example, sharing my own greatest challenge, which

remains public speaking. I told stories about how my social anxiety affected my ability to organize;

how I communicated these issues to my peers; and what type of support I received in return to get

me through tough moments. Students then one-by-one opened up about their own insecurities as

organizers, and shared what support they wanted from others in the group. The beauty of the

exchanges that unfolded during this part of the conversation was the natural support and care that

members showed one another, affirming their peers' anxieties and committing to support them from

then on. As with the group trainings, there continued to be issues with compliance, as some femtors

did not facilitate the leadership conversations with all their groups. Only about two-thirds of the

planned conversations were held.

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[50] Unfortunately, I was unable to find the original document that was used to create the skills assessment.

After reflecting on the program's leadership development outcomes during the summer of 2018, the BLT decided to dramatically change our approach from "blanket programming"—where we held open-invitation trainings—to a custom experience tailored to each group receiving the grant. This new leadership development protocol which engaged members of each group entailed the following: a skills assessment administered at the beginning and end of the program, the summer leadership bootcamp, two facilitated group conversations on leadership at the beginning and end of the academic year, at least two leadership development workshops, and ongoing discussion and engagement around leadership development through femtorship.

As femtors, we compiled notes from these diagnostic conversations to develop a leadership development strategy for each group throughout the year. We reflected on these plans with students and identified development activities, such as targeted workshops that addressed specific needs for each group. A major development within this new approach was our transition to group-based leadership trainings, where femtors would facilitate training workshops within student group meeting spaces. This meant that workshops were being attended by most if not all members of a group, with attendance jumping from 5-10 to 10-25 participants at each workshop. We strived to make the development experience unlike any support that students were receiving at UCLA, ensuring that the workshops were closely aligned to each group's specific needs through careful planning. Femtors and group members met beforehand to co-create a tailored lesson plan that incorporated specific examples drawn from the group's experiences. Not only did students report gaining specific skills, but they also appreciated growing in a setting that allowed their collectives to immediately apply lessons to their organizational work.

Femtors also worked to improve the quality of these workshops by developing training manuals that provided detailed guidance on preparing and deploying trainings on a variety of topics. Appendix L lists the workshops offered through BEST. As we deployed these workshops during

student meetings, we adapted them so that they could be facilitated in an hour or less. While we developed these brief trainings responding to student feedback about time constraints, at the end of many of our trainings, participants shared that they wished they could have spent more time with the training. Internally, we continued to discuss the balance between time and content, deciding to develop short-, medium-, and long-length versions of each workshop.

By the program's final year (AY 2019-2020), our leadership programming and tools had been fine-tuned and greatly improved. For the first time, I f had confidence in the whole team's ability to implement the year-long leadership curriculum that we had collectively envisioned. We rebranded what would be the final annual bootcamp as the Bruin Leadership Excellence & Student Transformation (BLEST) Camp[51], which we whittled down to a day-long training. At this point, the student groups that were participating in BEST knew what to expect and wanted to be there for the development experience. The BLEST Camp included visioning activities and three workshop components supporting students' grasp of organizational narrative, base building, and campaign planning. In addition to the elevator pitch activity from previous years, we facilitated a training on one-on-one conversations, a bread-and-butter practice of community organizing to build relationships and community. Students practiced these relationship building conversations together and then collectively reflected on the experience. The final BLEST training was a collective power mapping exercise which was adapted to an active campaign of one of the student organizations receiving BEST support. This activity allowed students to co-create the training, while learning campaign planning techniques and building solidarity around active advocacy efforts.

In addition to the leadership programming changes that we implemented the previous year, we came to increasingly view BEST leadership support as an important resource for the broader campus community. We began to adapt our training materials to a format that could be deployed

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[51] Corny acronyms were kind of a group tradition (and a personal strength of mine).

more easily on the ground to student organizations not receiving a BEST grant. With each training, we began to create 15-minute rapid workshops that shared a central lesson that student groups could immediately apply to their work. Our leadership team started to reach out to new student groups who were unfamiliar with the BEST program. We scheduled introductory meetings that included a brief presentation on the program and a 15-minute workshop on a topic of the group's choosing. We facilitated four of these sessions before the COVID outbreak disrupted our work, and students were genuinely excited and appreciative. We envisioned deploying these workshops to activist organizations across campus as a way to network with more student leaders, sharing our knowledge and support more widely and identifying new opportunities for collaboration. In the final quarter of the BEST program, we offered our first major credited course, which we planned as an adaptation of our leadership curriculum to a classroom setting. This too was dramatically changed due to COVID, becoming more of an eclectic course of workshops facilitated by social movement leaders across California. We had hoped that this course would become a stepping-stone towards an institutional activist leadership development center that offered an activist curriculum, grants, and other opportunities to UCLA and broader Los Angeles social movement organizations.

Leadership Development in Practice

The following research memo was recorded over a three-month period documenting leadership development support provided to MEChA. As with the previous memo, following this document, I will offer a commentary which highlights some of the nuances of leadership development in the practice. I have provided pseudonyms to protect student identities.

MEChA - Sustainability, Burnout, and Healing
February - April 2019

Brief summary: Describes several meetings and a workshop that Kareem had with MEChA in response to concerns of group burnout among group leaders. The workshop helped create frameworks for the group to improvise solutions that would help address concerns with group dynamics. Keywords: burnout, sustainability, self-care, workshop, training, leadership

Description: During a February mentorship check-in meeting, I asked members of MEChA's MESA (leadership group) that they identify a leadership development workshop that BEST would facilitate for their team. They selected a workshop on group sustainability and burnout. Their interest in this workshop stemmed from their experiences as an organization over the last year and a half. At the start of the previous year, three members of the MESA left the collective in a very public and destructive resignation at their first general meeting of the year. Not only did this act open the year on an extremely negative note for the leadership and with their members, who did not know what they were walking into, but it also resulted in an extremely strained leadership who at once had to make up for the labor of three program directors. These incidents carried an emotional toll that was wide ranging and lasting. Stress became a part of the organizing culture of that entire year, and that stress seemingly impacted the 2018-19 chair of MEChA who themselves resigned, in part because they felt alienation while in the position. A desire to heal from this year and a half of obstacles, stress, and tensions guided their decision to hold a burnout workshop.

As their femtor, I coordinated with another BEST femtor who had developed the sustainability workshop materials. We tweaked the workshop to accommodate what I felt were the group needs discussed during separate planning conversations with their new chair and several other MEChistas. When we facilitated the activity on February 27th, 2019, the workshop attracted nearly 20 people who were part of MEChA's general body. As facilitators, we recognized the potential volatility of the conversation and considered the many ways it could "backfire". We shared the following acknowledgements in the space: 1) we were outsiders that did not know many of the people in the room and that might affect what was shared openly; 2) folks might be sharing information about trauma and suffering that required care and support from others in the room; and 3) that people had to recognize the impact that their words could have on group cohesion, and should thus be thoughtful and careful with what was said and how.

After these considerations were shared, everyone in the room responded to the question, "What does burnout look like to you?" This question started the conversation on a vulnerable note, with students sharing their experiences with burnout and its impact on their mental and physical health. We wrote keywords on the board and noted when specific issues were repeated. People's

honesty about their own challenges with burnout clarified the stakes for everyone in the room, and particularly for MEChA's leadership.

During the next part of the training, we facilitated a reflection activity based on something that Kristen Brock-Petroshius used to great success during a BEST leadership retreat the previous summer. We handed out notecards and asked people to respond to the following questions on either side: "What concerns do you have about your own ability sustain your participation in the group?" and "What most concerns you about group dynamics or organizational structure that might affect sustainability?" After people finished writing, we shuffled and distributed the cards. People formed four groups and read through the cards together, discussing their observations. The anonymous sharing of the cards allowed for people to speak candidly about their challenges within the organization. Walking from table to table, I noticed a dynamic where some groups, particularly those without members of the MESA, were having generative dialogues about the organization's limitations, while groups headed by members of the MESA seemed more dejected by the activity. Some of the participants in leadership roles had a hard time hearing some of the criticisms that were brought up and seemed to take it personally, as though the critiques were an indictment on their leadership. Each group shared out factors contributing to an unsustainable group culture, as well as their reactions, which we wrote on a board at the front of the room. As some of the more negative reactions came up, we reframed the conversation so that participants did not view critiques as evidence of failure, but as insights informing steps towards a more sustainable group culture. We acknowledged that it can be hard for those in leadership to hear feedback about their efforts to lead. However, it was better for them to know how people experiencing the group as unsustainable really felt so that the collective could work to keep everyone engaged and supported. We pivoted the conversation towards next steps, asking the group to identify possible solutions for each sustainability challenge that was identified.

Feedback immediately after the workshop was overwhelmingly positive, with most participants writing in that they wished there was more time than was allotted (the constraints were due to MEChA's meeting schedule). After a couple weeks, I met with the leadership and asked for more feedback and follow up. They were excited to share the outcomes of the workshop. First, they felt that the national conference, which was held at UCLA, offered several moments for members of the organization to grow and heal together. They then went point-by-point, outlining how they responded to some of the major issues that were brought up during the workshop. Specifically, responding to a lack of alignment between political identity and action, the collective took political stances during the national conference that they took together, folks who may have been less vocal were empowered to speak. In response to concerns that the space can be less welcoming for new people who don't know anyone, the group planned informal socials, going to conferences together, and building the general body by engaging each other. During the meeting, I introduced the idea of cultivating a "culture of care", or intentional approaches and practices that make members feel supported and cared for. They responded that a fellow organizer introduced the concept of being "heartfelt", or affirming and acknowledging folks for what they do in the space. I appreciated how they took it upon themselves to respond as leaders to the feedback that members had given them. Further, they were interested in exploring more healing and care practices that would proactively protect against burnout. We scheduled a follow up workshop to focus on more healing and care practices, but were unable to coordinate the event before the academic year's completion.

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The above memo documents the context and processes that contributed to leadership development activities in BEST. Specifically, the training described in the memo arose to address a very specific and urgent problem that group leaders had shared with me as their femtor. Their trust in me and other members of BEST to handle such a sensitive conversation arose out of nearly two years of relationship building since MEChA had joined the program. These relationships and my knowledge of group dynamics informed development of the training. However, these preparations were only a bridge to open the possibility of deep engagement with their group members. When we arrived at the meeting, we sensed a disconnect with many of the people who were present. Only five of the twenty-two MEChistas in attendance had relationships with me; and the group members that we did not know seemed reluctant to participate moments before the training began. We anticipated this possibility and frontloaded the conversation with acknowledgements about the relational dynamics in the meeting and the vulnerability that was required to have a fruitful conversation on the topic of burnout and sustainability. We also planned that the main activities allowed anonymous participation to dislodge the barriers that might prevent members from contributing to such a challenging conversation that might implicate the way things are run in the organization. Less senior members of the organization may have been hesitant to openly share a feedback about group burnout / sustainability in front of the organization's leadership team, but by writing their thoughts anonymously on index cards, there was less reason for fear. We doubled down on our efforts to anonymize and decentralize student participation and analysis by breaking up the attendees into five groups and distributing everyone's cards randomly across these groups. This made it such that only with each sub-group participating could a complete understanding of the organization's feedback on burnout and sustainability be achieved. No single voice or group of voices in the room could dictate the conversation, which seemed to empower some members to speak out about issues that were bothering them.

This approach appeared to be successful. In evaluations of the workshop, about half of the respondents noted how the activities were "making issues visible", airing "the frustrations people feel towards the org that were left unsaid," and that "discussing these issues can help us reflect and become a better org." One student called "these check ins hella important…to gauge where everyone is at. Burn out is real, so to talk about ways of addressing and reflecting on as to why is important." Meanwhile, another student felt that hearing everyone's experiences with burnout "validated my lifestyle and gives reasons for things I did not previously understand." While participants appreciated the workshop, 4 out of 15 respondents to the evaluation survey noted that they wished there was more time, and another 7 expressed some desire to have extended discussions of "solutions" to support group sustainability. This feedback reflects the tightrope that we walked while deploying our trainings. Student groups could usually only commit to an hour or so for trainings, yet once we shortened workshops, we always received feedback requesting a more in-depth experience.

With time limitations in mind, we generally designed trainings to engage three main concepts: identifying a particular organizing 'problem', understanding that problem as it applied to the group's work (and its impact on group members), and considering ways to address the problem.[52] Even in the workshop described above (which ran 15 minutes longer than the hour that was designated by MEChA's leadership), we had planned a 15-minute conversation on solutions that out of necessity was reduced to a 5-minute epilogue. And while we did not have the time to brainstorm in-depth solutions, Gadise, I, and MEChA's leadership group made a commitment to everyone in the room that the issues discussed during the workshop would be reflected upon so that correctives could be proposed to the general body. It was no surprise then that when I next spoke with MEChA's MESA, they had a point-by-point breakdown of how different issues brought up

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[52] This didactic structure is a simplification and did not represent the only way that BEST trainings were designed. However, as a rule of thumb, we avoided conversations that did not offer pathways to solutions (however limited or specific those solutions might be, such as when addressing entrenched systemic violence, i.e., sexual violence or racism).

during the workshop were in the process of being addressed by the organization. This type of proactivity from a student organization's leadership collective was atypical, at least in my experience as a BEST femtor. Following workshops, I would usually have to do a fair bit more of pushing and prodding to have students create and act upon follow-up plans. That said, when I checked in with one of the members of MEChA's leadership that summer, they felt that the organization's challenges with membership burnout were not resolved by the time that they had left the organization. I attempted to organize a follow-up meeting or workshop to engage the organization in future planning around sustainability, but their priorities had shifted and the next workshop that I was called to develop focused on creating organizational protocols around sexual harm and violence.

Reflecting on our efforts to support organizational change around burnout sustainability within MEChA, the months following the workshop were a clear indication of the challenges that BEST faced in achieving our goals to support student leader growth. On the one hand, we wished to develop student leadership around key competencies, such as understanding how cultures of care within an organization supported health and wellbeing and promoted sustainable activist practices. And based on my interactions with MEChA's leadership, I believe that we supported individual and collective growth in those areas. On the other hand, another goal of BEST's development efforts was to support the organizational success of activist groups so that they could have a greater impact on transforming campus. Evaluating success with this secondary goal is more difficult, given the many factors that contribute to group decisionmaking and success in any given year. However, my conversations with MEChA's leadership in the following months made clear that they had felt there was not necessarily a lasting shift in group culture. If at all possible, achieving those types of changes—especially with an organization like MEChA with over 50 years of history at UCLA— would require a yearslong organizational development process demanding buy-in from new student

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members of the MESA year after year. Achieving such buy-in was difficult given the specific parameters within which MEChA's leadership operates.

A comparison of my experiences supporting organizational development with the Beautiful Mind Project (BMP) and MEChA helps clarify some of the factors that support long-term leadership development in practice. Importantly, I femtored BMP leaders from the organization's first year in existence, supporting their board of directors in developing an organizational culture from the ground up. I had specific and ongoing conversations about how to create a group culture that optimized organizational goals with each iteration of BMP's board over three years. The organization's structure, its smaller size, both in terms of membership and scale of activities, as well as its relatively short existence, may have all made BMP's group culture more malleable for change. Whereas BMP's board could unilaterally decide to change course for their organization, MEChA's MESA had to pass every decision by a General Body that answered to many sub-projects and groups. BMP's brief years in existence also meant that at an institutional level, they were still revising basic foundational documents, such as their charter and board protocols. Meanwhile, MEChA's leadership had to contend with documents that were grounded in decades of organizational history. Even at a membership level, each organization was drastically different. For many members of BMP, the group represented their first foray into activism. This was not true for many members of MEChA de UCLA, who came to the organization with their own activist experiences and knowledge, and sometimes their own history of leadership in other high school or community college chapters of MEChA.[53] Whereas I might have been the only activist-oriented femtor that members of BMP had interacted with, many MEChistas had prior experiences of femtorship, coaching, and development that I had to consider while working with them. This type of

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[53] MEChA is a national youth movement with hundreds of chapters across the country. http://www.mechanationals.org/p/about-us.html

experiential diversity made some of MEChA's members more critical of BEST support, but also enabled them to engage in development in different ways than other students. When they felt that they were receiving a valuable resource, they put in the work to take advantage of it.

A final note that I wish to reflect on from the memo is how effective leadership development is grounded in collective knowledge and support. The materials which we developed for the workshop drew intellectual contributions from so many difference members of our team, as well as the organization which we were working with. The format and some of the workshop contents were drawn from the my co-facilitator's previous work as a multi-cultural coordinator at New York University. They were also tasked with developing the protocol for the burnout and sustainability workshop. After drafting this outline, they facilitated a brief version of the workshop with our team. We provided feedback to strengthen the materials, and offered another round of reviews after the materials were revised. Specific components of the training drew from our collective's experience: when discussing how to have difficult conversations with a group of people that did not know us, we decided to adapt the anonymous "cookie jar" activity, which was first introduced to us by a previous femtor and program administrator for the BLT. This colleague had facilitated the cookie jar activity during a BLT summer work retreat meant to draw out some of the growing anxieties, tensions, and conflicts that were affecting our work in supporting students and one another. Other elements of the workshop were finalized between the co-facilitator and I, fine-tuned in response to input that I received from members of MEChA who reviewed the workshop outline prior to the meeting day. Facilitating the workshop was itself a dance between our facilitation team, as we each identified parts of the workshop that we wished to lead beforehand. However, as the workshop was underway, our responsibilities shifted situationally, with there being some need to rely more on my own experiences with MEChA to inform parts of the conversation that ensued. As we neared the end of the workshop, the co-facilitator handled the evaluation while I transitioned into my role as MEChA's

femtor, discussing next steps with their leadership. Our facilitation duo met several times after the

training to review and rewrite the workshop protocol for future iterations. The team contributions

that went into BEST leadership development strengthened the quality of our support, providing

trainings that were grounded in the experiences of several activists, offering intellectually rigorous

and battle-tested support that spoke to the needs and outlooks of students that we worked with.

Funding

> One of the ways BEST helped with y'all support with having easy access to funding. It was really dope because we were like, what do we need this funding for right now? And at that moment we were like, okay, we need to prioritize undocumented people and low income, undocumented people who are currently not having ends meet. And so through access to funding...these easy ways of accessing money for events or programming or things like that we were able to do events supporting students' families who live right here in East LA with groceries or support students that are homeless and don't have money to go around to buy things for themselves with resources.

- BEST participant reflecting on impact of funding.

Proposition 209 banned affirmative action in California. One way in which the UCLA

administration translated Proposition 209 was the withdrawal of annually guaranteed resources from

Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) student organizations. The Mother Orgs had

become the major players in supporting college access and retention, particularly for low-income

non-white students. Despite the defunding of these organizations, student activists continued to fill

in the gaps, engaging in unpaid diversity work to support recruitment and success of a diverse

UCLA student body. One BEST participant called out the administration for "exploiting our labor

[to bring] Brown babies to UCLA and then use our faces to paint this beautiful picture." Meanwhile,

UCLA creates a culture of begging, where poor students must perpetually "ask the rich people that

we need money." Another student viewed the funding scarcity as an institutional strategy to "pit

marginalized people against one another…creating this idea that there's only a very small pool of

resources that all of these marginal groups have to fight for… creating those internal conflicts [that

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prevents] solidarity amongst one another as marginal people to come together and demand that the institution gives us all the resources that they have." With limited resources, student organizations engage in critical work for the institution that are almost exclusively funded through student fees.

BEST was unique in challenging this status quo on multiple levels. Foremost, our grant funding came from the Chancellor's Office, which meant that state funds were once again supporting the work of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) student organizations. Taking advantage of the opening created by the establishment of the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, we mobilized the rhetoric of campus climate to leverage institutional resources towards racial realist policies and practices, while also supporting student voice and democratic participation in institutional life. We also wished to counter resource scarcity and competition, actively encouraging students to engage in solidarity organizing, offering special grant opportunities and greater funding amounts for groups that worked in partnership.

When it came to how our funds were administered, we sought to address the more cumbersome aspects of the student funding apparatus on campus. Funding of student initiatives at UCLA is incredibly bureaucratic, time-consuming, and requires specialized knowledge that takes years to acquire. There are tens of unique applications, each with their own processes, limitations, timelines, and officers. Further, most funding is event-based, which means that student organizations must apply for multiple funding sources for *each event* during the year. As one BEST recipient put it, "for each event, you have to fill out five funding applications and still might only get a third of what you asked for." Many of the funding applications are also incredibly difficult to complete and can be upwards of 75 pages long. Asked in a public forum about the burdensome nature of the funding process, a Student Affairs officer within SOLE said "this is what you have to do in the real world". However, in the real world, multi-billion dollar organizations like UCLA would never expect volunteers to write 75-page-long funding proposals to support volunteer-based labor that, in

the end, added value to the organization through improved services and PR. Instead, the administrator was parading an apparently broken system as a professionalization tool. The irony is that SOLE administrators were well-aware of the flawed system (which remains inexplicably paper-based), as they had applied and received hundreds of thousands of dollars in student fees to streamline an online funding process that more than five years later had yet to be implemented.

Having ourselves applied for funds through this system, we recognized that making funding more accessible was instrumental to supporting student activist work and promoting student of color leadership (Jones et al., 2016). We created BEST grants to provide recipient organizations with "flexible funds", or year-long funding that students could spend when and how they wanted, as long as the spending aligned with the vision they outlined in their initial proposal. Funding was also flexible in that students could decide to repurpose their money to address urgent community needs that unexpectedly arose due to local or national crises. Further, we approached the funding application process with a developmental mindset, knowing that many students did not have experience with grant writing. We made sure that the application was simple and straightforward and provided interactive workshops where students could ask questions and work on their applications with an advisor present. This process forced students to reflect on their present work and their future plans, as the grant application required students to propose a project plan for the coming year. Student organizations that were selected for the grant program received between $1,000-$10,000 annually, covering the costs of honoraria, trainings, food, space, transportation, and childcare. Our flexible funding grants and straightforward funding process reduced stress and logistical obstacles of student organizing, while also affecting group efficacy. This removed a tremendous barrier, particularly for smaller and newer organizations that lacked the personnel and institutional knowledge to take advantage of traditional funding opportunities.

BESTies from the 2017-18 academic year brought up many of the benefits of this funding model during interviews in the summer of 2018. At least three students noted that flexible funding made possible projects that would have otherwise been difficult to launch. One student believed that their project may have been too controversial to draw support and funding opportunities from the Mother Organization that they were a part of. Another student felt that their project would have never been possible without BEST funding: "this was a really good opportunity for me to say to my staff, hey guys, we actually have funding to work on this project. So it was a way for me to get people involved. Yeah. We don't normally get to do that very often with our limited budget." For another student leader, securing a large grant was the "biggest weight off [their group's] shoulders," because with normal funding they were constantly "stressing about loose ends." As one leader for a large MO shared, there was a great "mental toll of finding funding," and the ease of this process allowed them "more time to focus on mental health." Further, they felt that during the application process, BEST team members validated their work and experiences by "trusting [them] throughout the funding process, [making their] experience so much smoother, easier, and better."

Another important aspect of our flexible funding paradigm was the agency it provided students in using the funds as they saw fit. In fact, in describing BEST funding, many students viewed BEST grants as synonymous with autonomy: "[it was] nice to be autonomous and not have strings attached to the funding, undergrads always fight for funding that we have control over." This was particularly important for the more protest-oriented student organizations who would avoid traditional funding sources believing that their requests would be outright rejected or serve as a means for surveillance or censorship. And though we generally did not intervene in BESTy spending decisions, we did veto some expenditures over the years that we felt were gratuitous or a poor use of resources. While we wanted to protect student autonomy, we also viewed access to these resources

as a sacred responsibility and an important opportunity for us to educate young leaders about economic justice.

Working through the university, students have unprecedented access to resources that most people could only dream of. We greatly discouraged "one-off" events that burned through budgets and involved a limited number of people over a short period of time. Galas and conferences were generally forbidden, unless they were components of a larger strategy to build a base of leadership around specific campaign or movement goals. We viewed our role as challenging students to think of "activist" ways that they could repurpose university resources to simultaneously serve organizational goals and provide material support to vulnerable community members. We educated students on ways that their organizations could be conduits for economic justice—e.g., partnering with poor and undocumented vendors, organizing community events that provided meals and hardship gifts to attendees, hiring speakers for events who wished to donate their fees to social movements. One student likened this to learning how to finesse the system, "finding a way to finesse and create these events that align with each other that are like block parties or whatever they are and that really support people who are in the community and even though it's not like a huge impact, it's still goes a long way for that person."

While BEST's funding represented a radical departure from the institutional status quo, there were limits to what we could achieve. One of our biggest demands was the inclusion of a stipend for student recipients of the grant, both in recognition of their leadership and advocacy and, quite literally, as compensation for *their labor* to improve campus equity and inclusion. Many of the students that we worked with were low-income, so a lack of compensation represented a literal barrier to their participation in leadership activities (Chatelain, 2020). Linder and colleagues (2019) rightly point out that student activists often do work that Student Affairs professionals are *supposed to do* but lack the resources, support, or political vision and will to carry out. Thus, it seems sensible

that students should be paid to do the work that professional staff receive salaries for. As graduate student activists, we knew how frustrating it was to work on a volunteer basis to improve the campus, all while well paid administrators fought tooth and nail against our demands for change and then would tout our accomplishments as their own. Despite years of advocacy and pushing, our institutional partners (i.e., administrators, alumni, extramural grants) were never open to providing stipends for student leaders impacting the campus.

Media support

Although not originally intended as a staple feature of the BEST program, media resources became an integral form of support offered to grant recipients. Originally envisioned as a tool for building community and broadly supporting student activism, the first year of BEST's media activity was focused on highlighting activism among BEST groups and connecting campus activists with Los Angeles area social movement organizations and activists. As the team member with significant graphic design experience, I was motivated to apply my skills in supporting BEST and its launching projects. I was often aided by undergraduate student workers who supported me with research and messaging.

At this early stage, our primary media projects included bi-monthly newsletters that highlighted student activism and served as a promotional platform for the projects that we were supporting. The newsletter was supplemented with somewhat regular posts on Facebook, including a weekly bulletin called the "Crisis Curriculum", which listed organizing-related activities happening at UCLA and in the Los Angeles area. Finally, leveraging the research that I was compiling for a course on the history of UCLA activism, I posted photos of archival documents reflecting UCLA's activist past. The hope was that these online activities would raise the profile of BEST among campus activists and foster and online network providing information, resources, and support for student activists on campus. In the first year, as much as I pushed to maintain these resources, I was

overwhelmed by my other responsibilities with BEST. We actively tried to identify student workers who could take on our work in its entirety; but we had trouble finding students with the mix of requisite skills and familiarity with campus activism. We tried to address this issue through a grassroots approach, encouraging one of the BEST grantees, voidLab—a feminist media collective– to create a graphic design cooperative that would support campus activists. While they were open and excited about the idea, at the start of the following year, their organization lost half of its members, halting that initiative considerably. We needed to find a long-term solution, and with increased funding were able to open a part-time graduate student position for media support and coordination.

In the second year, we hired a Media Coordinator who had extensive experience with filmmaking, photography, and graphic design. They were able to greatly expand the possibilities of what BEST could offer student leaders, including access to professional photography, videography, and other media support. They articulated the job duties of the Media Coordinator role in the BEST (2019) Media Guide:

1. Build and engage an online network for the BEST Grant Program using Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, and our own website platform.

2. Provide practical resources to our BESTies and network that model our approaches to navigating student activism and leadership development.

3. Highlight the work of our student organizations through high quality photo, video, and graphic design content.

4. Develop partnerships with other activists on Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube through collaboration on content and posts.

In addition to these broad goals, the Media Guide outlined film, photo, and digital media aesthetic guidelines for organizational content creation. We wanted the content that our program created to have a high aesthetic value that left and impression, as well as impact. Much like our other forms of femtorship and leadership development, we wished for our resources to be at the highest

level so that students knew that their work was being taken seriously by us and that their media would be taken seriously by others.

As touched on in the job description, the Media Coordinator served as a different kind of femtor, providing direct consultations with the students in each BEST group for coordination around media needs. Together with each group's media liaison, the Media Coordinator would brainstorm a media plan for the year, while offering direct production assistance to students. BEST media resources were not universally utilized by all BEST student organizations, although most groups benefited from some form of support over the years—whether it be a flier that we designed, event photography support, graduation photos, or video production assistance. Some student organizations were more media inclined and were proactive in accessing the support of the Media Coordinator. Other groups were less likely to use media resources, perhaps because their project did not require it, or their organization lacked the personnel and resources to engage in extensive media work. With those barriers in mind, BEST media resources helped bridge the gap and provide media access to groups that otherwise would be less able to.

The collaborative process led by the Media Coordinator supported the development of numerous impactful social justice media projects. One of the major projects the Media Coordinator embarked on was assisting ASU in developing the *Black Book,* a resource guide for Black students at UCLA, for 2018-19. Working with ASU members, the Coordinator was able to develop annual student resource guides that were distributed widely to the Black student community (Figure 5). The Media Coordinator also provided documentary support to a number of BEST organizations, filming and editing a short documentary for Cosechando College Dreams as they facilitated a college preparation workshop for AFSCME workers and their children. Similarly, BEST helped the Underground Scholars Initiative (USI) develop a documentary short of their Just Culture event, a resource fare for formerly incarcerated students. Collaborating with PATHS for US, an

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Undocumented student advocacy group, we made a short advocacy film highlighting the benefits of the Pamilya Housing project, a low-cost housing option that PATHS for US had pressured the university to create. This media was presented to housing directors at a conference of PAC 12 universities, alongside the direct testimonials of student leaders living in Pamilya who were advocating broader adoption of similar sanctuary policies in higher education (see Figure 6). We also began developing promotional videos for each BEST grant recipient that they could use as outreach tools for on their media platforms (see Figure 7 as an example). These few examples highlight how BEST media support offered student activists more than slick branding tools, but also strategic means to expand their activism in ways that offered a broader reach to the public and target audiences, including key decisionmakers.
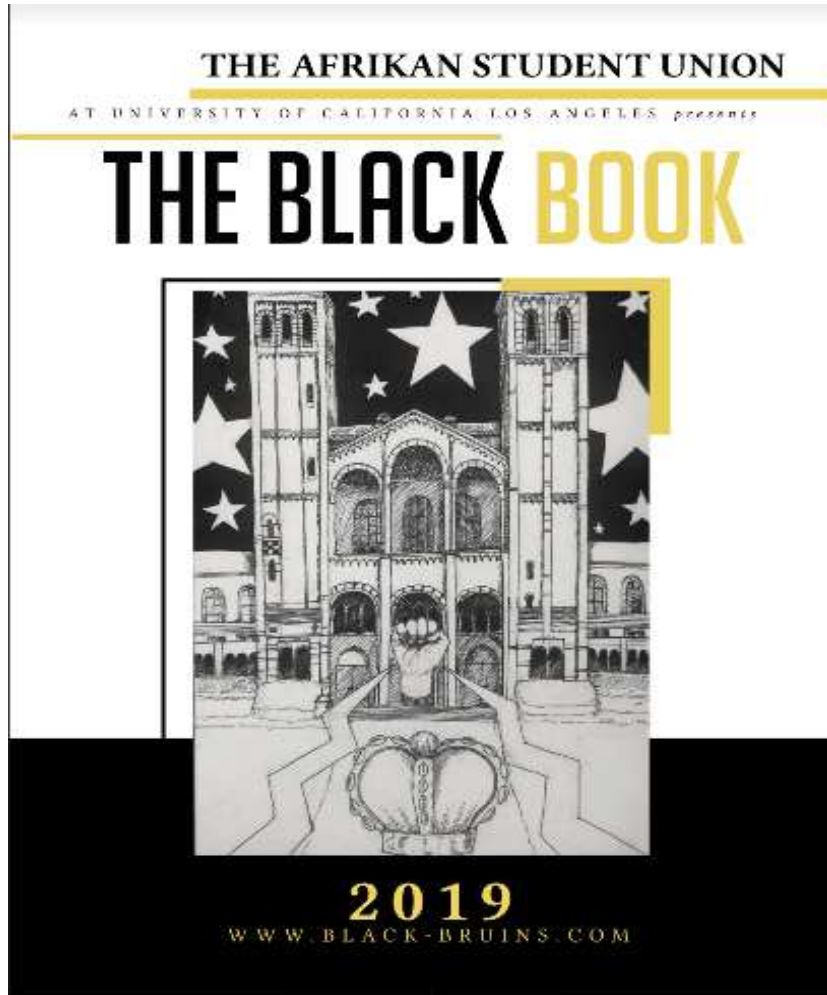
Figure 5: Cover image for the 2019 Black Book for the Afrikan Student Union (ASU)

Figure 6: Screenshot of Pamilya Housing Campaign video

Figure 7: Screenshot of Beautiful Minds Project promotional video

The Media Coordinator had a broader organizational role in promoting and publicizing BEST activities, simultaneously aiming to drive community attendance to our events, while also documenting our work for our archives and to share with campus stakeholders. The Media Coordinator documented a wide range of BEST activities, from our self-protection training series (see Figure 8) to a live podcast event in partnership with White People 4 Black Lives, a Los Angeles area anti-racist organization.[54] Documenting our events in this way gave them a life beyond the moments, as we would repurpose video and audio footage as online informational resources and for our own evaluative purposes. The program's media arm also seemed to satisfy our funders a great deal. Whenever we presented videos of our program activities during joint meetings, EDI staff members' eyes would light up, and they said that they desired more media like that. Our team would collectively roll our eyes after meetings at EDI's emphasis on publicizing our work, when we were struggling just to do our program's bread and butter of femtorship, leadership development, and broader activist support. While exciting the funders was definitely a positive (if sometimes cringy) outcome, the cost of preparing high quality media was very time and resource intensive.

Figure 8: Screenshot of BEST Self-Protection Training promotional video

In retrospect, our ability to produce the materials that we did was unsustainable, a mix of good fortune in finding a highly skilled graduate student invested in the type of work that we were doing, and contingent entirely on the exploitive economy of graduate school where talented people earn well below the market rate. The viability of sustaining the high-level media resources that BEST offered would likely cost significantly more if performed by a non-student staff person, while

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[54] https://www.awarela.org/bold-conversations-about-race

relying on student personnel to fill such a role would relying on periodic shots in the dark. This is not to say that students don't deserve these types of resources, because they do! In fact, media resources provide a range of benefits to student organizations: students successful use of social media for activism supports political efficacy, enabling direct actions as well as political advocacy work (Enjolras et al., 2013; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Velasquez & LaRose, 2015). Further, this support was engaging students of color in media and knowledge production, centering their experiences as activists from their communities. This media provided a voice to disenfranchised students while challenging biased representations of their work that were ubiquitous in the student and mainstream media, as well as among the online media campaigns of conservative national organizations intent on smearing youth of color social justice leadership. Students would get so excited about a video that we produced for them, sharing them immediately with their networks on personal and organizational pages. And the more ways that we can get students excited about engaging in the often thankless work of political efficacy and activism, the better! If future activist leadership development programs have the funding, they should definitely invest in similar activist media resources and support.

Socioemotional support

BEST leaders had always been concerned with the mental health and wellbeing of the student activists that we worked with. We knew from our own experiences as activists that challenging the status quo carried a heavy burden and took its physical and mental toll. Despite this awareness and acknowledgement, our program did not fully conceptualize what socioemotional support would look like through the lens of our leadership development program. This section seeks to document the various approaches to socioemotional support that BEST devised, and the evolution of these resources, and their successes and limitations.

Early on, intentioned efforts to provide socioemotional support were less structured than they would become. The BLT planned semi-quarterly potlucks where we hoped to provide a 'destressing' space for students. We brought the food and refreshments, and femtees joined for the semi-structured social activities that we had planned. Attendance to these events was inconsistent throughout the first year and a half, and while it offered venting space for the people who came, most BESTies did not participate. The primary avenue of socioemotional support in this early period, then, were femtor meetings with students. These often involved some form of personal check-ins, and most of the early femtors intentionally engaged in care work with their femtees. Supporting this perspective, students from the first BEST cohort shared about their experiences of socioemotional support:

> I remember there was a lunch I had with my mentor...everything was building up, I wasn't doing well in school. Um, and I was just not feeling well and like talking to my mentor and like just kinda having all of my feelings out and crying and like have someone to support me through that...I really appreciate it, someone hearing me out because at that point I didn't really have anyone to kind of talk to about like everything that I was feeling that would understand [about my undocumented identity]. After that I started going to therapy.

Another student reflected on the role of their BEST femtor in providing emotional support:

> Almost 100 percent of it came from [my femtor] and from BEST. When you're student activists, that usually goes into personal support, as well. Just because a lot of these issues are very personal. They, they are very close to home. That's why I do the work, because it's very important to me and I know that it's also important to a lot of people I care about in my community. So just having that, having any kind of support I wanted...aside from the weekly, biweekly check-ins that we would have, to also get coffee or just catching up and checking in. How are we doing personally? Um, that always helped...I felt so bad sometimes in the past two years.

Meanwhile, a final respondent noted the emotional support that they received from their femtor as the program's best feature.

In all honesty, though, this praise was not universal. Over the years, I can recollect three specific groups that felt neglected by their femtors; and these students explicitly understood that this absence reflected a lack of interest and investment in the students' work and wellbeing as individuals. One of these groups, which received a grant during the first two program cycles, was

paired with a femtor who left the position mid-year. Even during their brief tenure, the femtor had

not been actively invested in meeting and establishing personal relationships with students from the

organization. The students shared that they were very upset with this and felt that they did not

receive the support that we had promised. This type of disconnect between femtors and femtees

appeared most often to be personnel-based, with specific staff members seemingly less involved in

establishing close bonds and personal relationships with their femtees. The reasons for these

disconnects seemed to vary: sometimes, the femtor was overcommitted and thus did not have the

time for the level of engagement required; other times a femtor might go through periods of personal

crisis that led their engagement to suffer. Another reason may have been identity-based, with some

femtees perceiving that their femtor spent more time and energy with groups that they personally

identified with. A final and intertwined reason for these disconnections were a lack of structure,

training, and support to encourage and ensure that femtors were consistently connecting with

femtees and establishing caring relationships. Several of the first femtors that were hired outside of

the founding members of BEST said that they did not always know what was expected of them or

felt underprepared to meet the expectations that were placed on them. As more support structures

were developed, new femtors seemed more engaged in the care work that fostered effective

socioemotional support. This type of improved performance is common when greater role clarity is

provided to leaders (Bray & Brawley, 2002). While the evolution of femtorship structures have been

discussed previously, this section will elaborate how socioemotional support structures evolved over

the course of the program, particularly in relation to femtorship.

Initially, the program's lack of structured socioemotional support was based in our own

limited understandings about the mental health crises that our students were experiencing regularly.

We lacked the experiential and intellectual frameworks to conceptualize what a programmatic

approach to mental health and wellbeing might look like. In fact, our early efforts to support students

looked a lot like what other student affairs programs offered: guides listing campus mental health resources. Whenever we discussed triggering topics, offered vent spaces, or encountered students who were experiencing trauma, our response was generally to offer a compassionate ear and then provide a referral to mental health professionals and other campus resources. And while referrals are an important part of triaging students in crisis, there are many, many other forms of preventative and proactive support that leadership development programs can offer.

Mid-way through the program's first year, we experienced a wakeup call. We conducted monthly surveys and evaluations with students to check in on their state of being and to better understand the nature of campus activism so that we could improve our support. Following the election of Donald Trump to the Presidency, students were individually sharing their struggles with mental health. We sent out a survey on mental health and burnout that received responses from 28 participants. The results were horrifying: 40% of respondents said that they had recent thoughts of leaving school, and 78% experienced frequent anxiety related to three or more sources, such as family, friends, academics, paid employment, and student leadership activities (BEST, 2017). Interviews with participants during the summer painted a grim picture of what this meant for students: students described a range of negative health symptoms that they had experienced in the previous year, including numbness, body aches, panic attacks, anxiety, and various types of body pain.

While students recognized the complex nature and contextual factors affecting their mental health, they often linked experiences of burnout to their activism:

> This has happened for years in organizations like mine where students are legit burning out in order to fulfill their roles and responsibilities because that pressure is put on them that if they don't do it then who's going to do it…A lot of that pressure is put on people and they burn out and then aren't able to continue that work or completely leave the work or completely leave the university or whatever it is.

Another student also felt that their identity obligated them to engage in social justice work that was harming their mental health:

> Because I am of this identity, I'm in a place where I can't escape from the political context of my existence and because like I am just the way that I am, I want to help…people around me and the greater community and such. So I was like why do I feel this way? Like why do I need to feel responsible to give myself, to make this place or try to make a change or be better or something. Um, and I felt resentful at like my own identity and like my self-worth for like being that kind of person. And that was I think really difficult with my mental health because at the same time I'm feeling like, oh, but I like to help, I want to be part of this.

Hearing these stories from our students hurt my heart, and myself and the other team members felt the need to dramatically change how we approached student mental health. We began creating explicit resources around self-care, including a workshop on burnout and sustainability, and invited facilitators from the Spoony Collective to lead a self-care workshop for our members. At this time, we also began to have conversations with the Social Welfare department and CAPS about activist student mental health, trying to formulate an institutional response to support students. We conceptualized formulating an internship in partnership with the social work program for their graduate students to receive credited training hours for offering counseling and group therapy to BEST student leaders. We explored similar possibilities with CAPS, but felt that our request was brushed aside. They referred us to the GRIT program[55] on campus, which was doing excellent work, certainly, but did not provide the type of support to students that we were looking for.

Our internal efforts to identify socioemotional support resources for students were heightened by the increasingly toxic political climate on campus and in the country. In November of 2017, Conservative radio personality Ben Shapiro held a speaking event at UCLA which drew crowds of right-wing provocateurs and a heavy police presence. Students from MEChA and SJP wanted nothing to do with the event and organized a healing space at the bottom of the Janss Steps, several hundred yards from the Ackerman Student Union, where the Shapiro event was being hosted

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[55] According to their website, GRIT (guidance, resilience, integrity, and transformation) offers peer-to-peer couching around these four core values. Refer to their homepage, accessed November 9, 2021 from https://grit.ucla.edu/.

by the Bruin Republicans. Despite the peaceful nature of the students' event, a roving group of right-wing provocateurs began an aggressive confrontation, moving within inches of one student while shouting "fuck you" and "fat bitch" to her face. They chanted "Build a wall" and other racist tropes as the collection of about 20 students walked away to deescalate. While the university spent thousands on security for the event,[56] they did not anticipate the incredible likelihood of angry white mobs roaming the campus seeking out confrontations. This type of intimidation and harassment is in clear violation of UC policy Title V, Division 10, Chapter 1, Section 100013 G (UCOP, 20

21), that governs the conduct of individuals unaffiliated with the university. Students did not feel safe, nor did they feel that the university offered any real protection. Following these events, we began conversations with a community self-defense trainer,[57] and began a self-protection training series that we offered to BESTies and the broader campus community. Attendance to these weekly sessions kept between 5 and 9 participants, with most participants attending multiple sessions over the nine-week period. We would continue offering self-protection trainings in one form or another over the next three years.

While this year of patchwork efforts did not lead us to direct answers about how to approach socioemotional support within our leadership development paradigm, it did highlight for us the ways in which mental health and wellbeing were situated within layers of individual experience, community dynamics, and in interactions with the institution. Interestingly enough, growth in our approach to socioemotional support for the following year was spurred by our application to a research grant with the William T. Grant Foundation. In the proposal, we conceptualized the ways in

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[56] https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-ben-shapiro-20171113-story.html

[57] We had considered working with UCLA's John Wooden Center, but felt that the classes offered there were not as accessible to our student demographic. Further, while reviewing the self-defense training facilitators, we found that the listed self-defense instructor was Lance Wisdom, whose resume included extensive military experience and training under Shannon Kawika Phelps Sensei, who was a Navy SEAL and former certified case officer for the C.I.A.'s counter-terrorist task force center). This was sure to make our students feel uncomfortable at the very least, and when we mentioned the instructor's training lineage to students, they requested that we find someone else who held similar political and social values as the students.

which activism affected mental health and retention, and how we as a leadership development program could "intervene". We focused on promoting mindfulness-based approaches[58] within our own programmatic activities, mental-health informed femtorship, and mental health support workshops that taught embodied care (Cameron et al., 2004; Dutton et al., 2002; Simola, 2012).[59] This layered approach was meant to ensure that we were promoting student mental health and wellbeing through all BEST interactions, while also equipping students with the tools to promote socioemotional wellbeing among their groups (Hick & Furlotte, 2009; Pedigo et al., 2016).

The groundwork for this comprehensive approach was established over the preceding years, with the aforementioned self-protection trainings and the organizational sustainability workshop series on burnout, sustainability, self-care, and cultures of care. The major innovation over the summer of 2019 was the complementing of these activities with a femtor-based approach to socioemotional support. This innovation was thanks to one of our team members who was tasked with developing the theoretical framework for the mental health intervention outlined in the William T. Grant proposal. As a Social Work PhD student, the team member was instrumental in identifying a realistic model of mental health interventions with applications within our program context. They proposed solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) as a sub-clinical[60] approach for femtors to support students' socioemotional wellbeing and development (Gingerich & Peterson, 2013).

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[58] Mindfulness-based approaches: Mindfulness practices, such as yoga, meditation, and silent walking encourage intentional awareness of the present and slowing down. Mindfulness practices help regulate emotions and improve relationships, thus mitigating symptoms associated with depression, anxiety, and stress. Mindfulness-based approaches overlap with social justice theories in promoting deep awareness of social relations, recognizing interconnectedness, focusing on consciousness-raising, and encouraging critical self-reflection. The BEST intervention program will adopt mindfulness approaches during workshops and meetings, facilitating short meditative activities.

[59] This workshop series will explore embodied care, an organizational approach that promotes compassionate care towards group members within daily work practice. Compassionate care is associated with increased organizational effectiveness, an improved affective relationship with the organization, greater connectedness with group members, and greater resilience. Embodied care refers to both awareness and actions that seek to respond to the needs of individuals within a group. Informing this practice, intervention team members will learn and utilize the concepts of critical care, which center race and ethnicity as a lens to understand relationships of care. Mentors will promote embodied and critical care through formal trainings, mentorship, and modeling at program events.

[60] Decades of research has found SFBT to improve mental health in adolescents and adults. SFBT is well-suited to a mentorship context because of its short duration, ease of use (not requiring clinical training), and average number of two sessions.

That summer, femtors were trained to use SFBT in conjunction with a culturally grounded resilience-based approach to mental health practice[61] to support our students in individual and small group consultations (Houshmand et al., 2017). SFBT was perfect for our uses because it focuses on strengths and solutions rather than deficits and problems. During a typical SFBT session, femtors asked questions that guided participants in identifying challenges, proposing solutions, and setting goals (Franklin et al., 2011). Our summer femtor training included roleplay sessions where each femtor practiced SFBT on one another using real challenges that we were facing in our own lives. To be quite honest, we all felt a bit awkward with the model, because all of us were relatively close to each other, so using a structured-conversation format felt contrived. We agreed to push past this awkwardness and apply the method "by the book" until we felt experienced enough to reevaluate the approach. Appendix I includes the documents that we used to train one another on SFBT and the materials that were provided as tools for femtors.

That year, we began utilizing the SFBT framework during individual sessions with group members. Because of the nature of that COVID-shortened year, as well as it being the final year of BEST, there is limited documentation and evaluation of our use of SFBT. The following notes are collected from my own recollections, documents, and recordings made after each SFBT session with students. The first obstacle that we anticipated in implementing this approach was receiving buy-in from students in each group. We approached this challenge with a proactive outreach strategy, sending a program wide email to all groups detailing what to expect, and asking each femtor to contact their groups via email and text to explain the purpose behind SFBT meetings. I believe that we adopted a code name of sorts, calling the meetings "personal check-ins" so that students did not feel like we were ambushing them with therapy (which really wasn't our intent anyways). I

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[61] Culturally grounded resilience-based framework centers culture as a source of strength and considers how social group identities (e.g., gender and race) interact with peoples' behaviors, experiences, and perceptions.

remember making a personal effort to contact each member of the group that I was femtoring and setting up a personal check-in during Fall 2020. Beforehand, I sent an email to the group explaining the purpose of these meetings and offering the opportunity for members to opt-out if they were disinterested. Quite the opposite, students were thrilled that we had so much interest in them that we wished to talk about their lives beyond strictly activism. Texting each group member, I scheduled meetings for the coming weeks. During that COVID abbreviated year, I met with 8 separate student leaders for these personal check-ins, 4 of whom I met at least twice over the 5 months before campus was closed.

My experience with SFBT was incredibly positive, despite the real awkwardness I continued to feel while facilitating the conversations. I was not a trained facilitator or social worker and only had a couple of these conversations under my belt, so I'm sure some of the weirdness was connected to my lack of experience. That said, the conversations always seemed to be fruitful and instructive for the students I worked with. Further, they gave me a meaningful opportunity to get to know each person that I was working with and learn more about the challenges that they were dealing with in their life. This created openings for them to request support or follow-up with me if they needed to. The typical session lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, covering one to two main topics.

The conversation started with a basic check-in question: about the student's school obligations for the week, or I might check in on progress with an event that I knew they were working on. After some chit chat, I would ask them, "so, I know this is a bit of a change of direction, but I wanted to know if there was anything in particular in your life—it can be related to anything, school, work, personal life—that is presenting a challenge for you in some way or other." I would reassure them that they only had to share "what you feel comfortable sharing." This elicited a wide range of responses, with students sharing their personal goals, life challenges, and concerns:

- Two students talked about not wanting to overcommit themselves, and how their inability to say 'no' left them feeling overwhelmed and neglectful of their wellbeing and other goals.

- One male leader discussed learning to take less space as a speaker in group settings.

- Three students were concerned with their career options as they were graduating.

- Two students discussed relationship challenges that they were facing with family or close friends.

- One student discussed a friend's experience with sexual assault, and the challenges of finding them resources as the assault took place off campus and the student was graduating from UCLA.

I felt that students were very open in sharing with me, and overall went deep in discussing the issues that they brought up. I think that the SFBT sessions were effective in deepening my relationships with the students. I had been femtoring their group for over a year at that point, which brought with it some level of familiarity with each student. The SFBT sessions created openings for me to establish closer relationships with each group member, allowing for increased opportunities to femtor and have impactful interactions.

At the end of each session, we discussed ways in which the student could address the challenge they were experiencing, and I offered to be an accountability partner in their efforts towards personal progress. Of course, my accountability actions looked differently in each situation. For example, with the students exploring career paths, I would make generative suggestions, asking them to list or reflect on the different opportunities they were interested in. I would then follow up with them after an agreed upon time, and offer any additional support that they needed and was within my capacity. This chain of accountability actions could require as little as a follow-up text, as was the case with one student; or it might entail multiple conversations, reviewing and editing application materials and CVs, or identifying resources for the students to pursue.

The student who was trying to support her friend that survived a sexual assault presented the most challenging case. I viewed my role as helping the student determine what she wanted her role

to be in supporting her friend and helping her navigate the complexities of that position. Further, I hoped to provide the student with a picture of the resources that were available for their friend. I was familiar with campus sexual assault resources and knew how underwhelming they could be, so I shared my knowledge and experiences with these resources so that the student could weigh the potential costs and benefits of seeking out resources at UCLA. Further, since the survivor was soon graduating, we discussed identifying community resources that she could afford once she lost her student status. Beyond the details of my advising, it was also emotionally challenging to feel the helplessness that both the survivor and her friend felt in navigating a situation with few solutions and long-term harms. Other femtors noted similar personal challenges when engaging their femtees in SFBT sessions. It was comforting to have a group of other team members engaging in similar conversations, sharing their experiences, challenges, and growth, and opening spaces to commiserate and support one another. This form of care support from our community of practice could have been developed further and with more intention. Allyship, advocacy, and activism can be burdensome, especially when coupled with the increased emotional toll of providing psychological support to others experiencing trauma (Barnette et al., 2007). Incorporating mindfulness-based positive principles and practices into the work can be instrumental to stress reduction by increasing self-compassion and comfort with difficult emotions, while helping one navigating ruminative tendencies about difficult situations and our personal limitations in supporting others through their challenges (Wise et al., 2012).

Overall, I strongly endorse SFBT as a method to incorporate socioemotional support into femtorship, particularly within leadership development contexts. For our program, the approach addressed broader challenges that we experienced with femtoring, notably the difficult that femtors had in connecting with all members of a group that they worked with versus specific liaisons from the partnering organization. This approach allowed femtorship to establish relationships with more

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students, thus increasing their broader impact withing each group, and allowing for deeper impacts among individual members. The outreach strategy to approach all group members also created an organizational infrastructure within BEST to ensure that every femtor was providing each group with a more even level of support. Student leadership development programs that seek to adopt a similar strategy would benefit by also fostering humanizing conversations that allow students to grow relationships with femtors beyond strictly their role as a *leader*, incorporating some of the principles of holistic support (Museus & Neville, 2012) described earlier in this chapter. When pairing this individual-level form of socioemotional support and development with other programmatic initiatives to develop leadership competencies in this area, the result appeared to be an impactful impression that helped students experience and understand the importance of holistic approaches to leadership development extending beyond the nuts and bolts of organizing to the human elements.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Creating and running a pioneering program such as BEST required a great deal of learning while doing. We experienced a very severe learning curve establishing an untested and unconventional program in the less than friendly environs of an R1 University of the size and reputation of UCLA. This task was complicated by the specific values, vision, and personalities that drove BEST forward. In this chapter, I will exhume BEST, exploring several topics not discussed, reflect on my own role in the success and failings of the program, and recount the closing moments of a program that I gave five years to. This chapter will serve as a eulogy and burial, documenting any last important details for perpetuity. I will also explore the research, practice, and policy implications of this study.

Vision for the Future

BEST began as a passion project with a transformative vision for the campus. Touched on in Chapter 4, the founders of BEST viewed the resources and infrastructure created by the program as a vehicle to support campus activist leaders in their growth and success, while pushing for social justice institutional changes. BEST pursued both these goals through resource sharing, skills development, networking, coalition building, and direct advocacy. While we continuously worked to improve these facets of our organization, as student leaders and activists, we also dreamed of the program's greater potential.

In terms of campus impact, we wished to expand the program's reach to students who did not typically participate in BEST. Our program's model of student engagement worked primarily through student advocacy organizations, limiting our participants to members of these organizations. The leaders within these organizations that worked with us tended to be juniors or seniors with some previous advocacy or activism experience. And while these students were our ideal engagement group, there were many types of students, particularly first- and second-year students interested in or

new to activism who were unlikely to already be a part of these organizations. To use the analogy of a pipeline, BEST worked with students towards the middle or end of UCLA's student activism pipeline; and, in fact, our leadership development resources may have been even more impactful to novice learners. So while BEST was providing yearlong support to mid-experience student activists, we wished to create an entry point that encouraged greater student participation in activism. This intervention was the Justice Advocacy Institute (JAI), which we described in an email[62] to the Directors of the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment in May of 2019:

> Social justice leadership is fundamental to a thriving civil society able to advocate for and support the needs of disenfranchised communities. Despite the importance of this leadership, there are few opportunities through formal education to learn the diverse competencies that make effective community organizers, leaders, and advocates. We propose the Justice Advocacy Institute (JAI), a summer initiative for aspiring leaders from UCLA interested in developing social justice leadership knowledge, skills, and practices. The program will accomplish these goals through a summer course where 30 young leaders engage an immersive curriculum of workshops, community building activities, community actions, and knowledge sharing. Participants will receive intensive training with diverse organizing skill sets, including relationship building, campaign planning, media and outreach, organizational development, and advocacy research. During the course, participants will be encouraged to apply their time, energy, and skills to social justice causes that they are passionate for.

The JAI was to serve as an introduction to newer UCLA students as they entered the campus. The proposed program addressed one of the structural limitations of BEST, namely that we only worked with students who were participating in organizations that successfully applied for a grant. There were many students who could have benefited from our femtorship and program resources but would otherwise never interact with us. We also felt that the JAI would address what we perceived as barriers for young students wanting to participate in activism: their lack of familiarity with activism on campus, needs for skill development, social anxieties in joining student groups (that could sometimes be perceived as cliquish), and any other fears new students may have in engaging in campus activism. This vision of BEST as a pipeline had been with us since as early as 2016, when

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[62] Email correspondence on May 16, 2019.

JAI was first proposed as a collaboration between BEST and Residential Life's First Year Experience. We discussed creating a specialized track in the First Year Experience for incoming students who wanted to learn more about social justice activism. Appendix M contains the draft proposal shared with the then coordinator of the First Year Experience.

A second major component of our vision was establishing an academic component to our program. The basis for our academic initiatives was the activist curriculum that we developed as part of the leadership development program. We had hoped to translate these materials and our pedagogical practices into a classroom setting, which would have had multifaceted positive impacts. For students, they would receive academic credit as a type of academic compensation for their leadership development through BEST. Further, through the coursework, we planned to design practice-based learning that would effectively subsidize student's time as activists, allowing them to engage in their activism as part of their academic pursuits. I took advantage of a similar opportunity as an undergraduate student at the University of California, Santa Cruz, enrolling in a Community Studies elective course where I received 12 credits for the hundreds of hours that I spent as a community organizer that quarter. In exchange, I wrote several personal narratives and critical reflections. UCLA offers similar credited opportunities through the Civic Engagement program, although the options for partnering organizations are politically vetted, often excluding politically controversial organizations (i.e., Black Lives Matter). Having served as a Teaching Assistant for three quarters in UCLA's Civic Engagement program, I knew that there was a strong bias towards moderate and conservative non-profits to the exclusion of more left-leaning groups,[63] echoing

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[63] As a Teaching Assistant, I received complaints from students about the racism, sexism, and xenophobia of particular partner organizations. When I brought these up to the program's Director, they dismissed student complaints and reframed the conversation as "part of the learning process" of civic engagement. What purpose students would have interacting with an organization that was barred from recognizing gay and trans people was beyond me. And when I suggested that students be able to partner with Black Lives Matter Los Angeles or other social movement organizations, I was shut down and told that we needed to have trust that the organizations would partner with students in a competent way. With over a year of experience liaising with partner organizations, I can share numerous examples of supervisory negligence. These experiences highlight how the choice of partnership was political, and as a politically moderate/conservative organization, UCLA's campus partnership reflected those values.

concerns brought by other scholars (Biddix, 2010; 2014; Biddix et al., 2009). Through our curriculum that was akin to an activist civic engagement program, we wanted to give students the opportunity to learn about activism with campus and community social movement organizations that aligned with our students' politics. Fundamentally, our goal was to bring students' activist identities and experiences to the center of their knowledge production and critical inquiry. This is in stark opposition to the way in which higher education heterodoxy treats student activism as "extracurricular" (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2012; Linder et al., 2019).

Over the years, BEST leaders taught three academic courses: one on activist writing and publishing, another on activist historical research, and a third on activism theory and practice. The writing course, *Affirming Activist-Scholar Identities by Learning the Publication Process*, presented a wonderful opportunity for students to explore ways to engage in academic and professional writing towards activist ends. This course was ambitious in its effort to challenge common notions of activist-scholarship in academia, namely in our thesis that activist-scholarship was generally disconnected from social movement and community organizing, and thus often lacked accountability to collective forms of community leadership. While students responded positively to the course content, our ability to implement meaningful pedagogy was undermined by its 1 credit load, which severely limited the time of instruction and the types of assignments that we could assign to class participants. This credit amount did not provide students with enough time to engage in meaningful writing activities that would embolden the concepts we reviewed over the quarter. The historical research course, *Campus Activism and the Public University*—co-taught by Professor Grace Hong and I—was offered through the Asian American Studies Department as part of the campuses expanding diversity requirement. Although not an official BEST course, I am including it as part of the program's canon because the research tools that I co-developed while preparing for the course would become part of BEST's informal curriculum to be shared with BEST groups interested in

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engaging in historical research about their organizations and campus activism more broadly. Several

BESTies utilized these research tools to develop organizational histories and political education

materials and presentations. The final course, *Social Movement Organizing in Higher Education,*[64]

was the first class to incorporate BEST's patent leadership development pedagogy into an academic

curriculum. First proposed in 2016, this workshop-based course was finally held in Spring of 2020

through the Labor Studies program. Unfortunately, due to the COVID pandemic and the subsequent

impacts on classroom learning, the course was radically revised and simplified, and we were never

able to enact our vision for an activist leadership development course.

On a very practical level, our desire to establish an academic program also aimed to protect

BEST's long-term financial viability, while providing job opportunities and professional

development for BEST staff members. BEST had always relied on funding from the EDI Office, but

we knew that that source could not be guaranteed long-term. We began developing alternative

funding strategies, including the expansion of an academic program deriving from BEST. At one

point, the BLT approached Dr. Darnell Hunt, the Dean of Social Sciences, about the possibility of

establishing a Social Justice academic degree that would house the BEST program concurrently as

an academic and practice-based program. We viewed this development as a possible evolution of the

program towards institutionalization that would guarantee university support beyond the whims of

whoever was heading the EDI Office. In addition to diversifying our funding, we wished to create

professional development opportunities for graduate student members of the BLT, as it was quite

difficult for our team members to find teaching opportunities while holding concurrent appointments

with BEST. This resulted in some team members feeling like they were sacrificing necessary career

building opportunities to participate in the program.

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[64] Labor Studies 97-2, Spring 2020

Beyond our attempts to expand BEST on campus, we had envisioned the program as evolving into a local center of expertise for activism and social movement knowledge and training. We first expanded on these principles in a proposal to the USC Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education that envisioned an intercampus collaboration establishing and Institute of Activism:[65]

> In our ideal world, the sister programs [at UCLA and USC] would develop student engagement and activism with broad impact across Los Angeles, including a Los Angeles activist alumni network that transcends campuses. The growth of these programs would necessitate an Institute of Activism to provide ongoing programmatic support, trainings, and coordination emergent and engaged campus activists. Ideally, we expand upon the principles of full participation and are intentional about working with community organizations, so that students can translate their engagement and impact across campuses, neighborhoods, and audiences.

Although the proposal was rejected, it communicated our early desire to imagine BEST as more than just a leadership development program. Importantly, our vision counted on students as crucial members of communities beyond their campuses. Through BEST, we wished to create a radical space that bridged student leaders with broader social movement organizations in Los Angeles. Returning to the pipeline analogy, we hoped to create an exit point from campus that served as a pathway for students to contribute to broader justice struggles, both while as students, and as they transitioned to life after university.

While this vision of BEST as an activism center never materialized, in the program's final two years, we began implementing a framework for intracommunity organizing. Specifically, we partnered with community social movement organizations like BLM, Vigilant Love, Justice LA, and Centro CSO to offer students frequent opportunities to gain organizing skills, network with community leaders, and build organizational alliances between campus and community. This strategy was exemplified by the efforts of one of our BLT members who created the Disco Guide for

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[65] Unpublished proposal.

Student Organizing Training, which was used as a training tool during a phone banking workshop supporting our collaboration with BLM and their campaign to unseat the then Los Angeles District Attorney Jackie Lacey.[66] We began developing similar strategies to provide students opportunities to gain invaluable organizing skills while contributing to community social movement efforts.

Death to BEST

In the program's final year, we were hitting stride. We hired two incredible femtors who had potential to take on longer-term leadership roles, bringing future stability to the program. We had also consolidated the lessons from our first few years to create the tools, resources, and support structures resulting in an increasingly effective leadership development and femtorship program. We also reflected on the organizational features that were leading to workplace dysfunction, and transitioned from a non-hierarchical structure into a hierarchical organization with clearly identified responsibilities, authority, supervision, and accountability protocols. Those of us leading BEST believed that the program was successful and on a path to even greater success. Further, before the start of the 2019-2020 academic year, we believed that the program would continue to receive funding over the next several years. Our perception was grounded in the positive performance reviews we received from the EDI Office, as well as statements from their staff indicating long-term support.

A conversation that I had in June 2019 with Jonathan Feingold, the Special Assistant to VC Kang, only bolstered our confidence. During the meeting, I shared that we had excellent candidates for the job vacancies who would likely bring new and sustainable leadership to BEST. Their hires were to resolve a nagging issue in the program: who would succeed myself and other tenured team members in steering program once we graduated. I conveyed that to retain these highly qualified

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[66] BLM-LA's yearslong campaign was successful in turning public opinion against Lacey and ousting her for her lack of action in prosecuting killer cops.

staff, we would need a longer-term financial commitment from the EDI office; and that it would be irresponsible of us to hire these specific candidates without assuring them longer-term job security. I told Jon that without such assurances, we would pursue a different hiring strategy involving graduate student workers whose expectations were more short-term. Jon told me that there was a "95% likelihood" we would receive a three-year funding promise in the coming year. With this strong affirmation of our future, we moved forward in hiring our ideal candidates and entered the 2019-20 Academic Year feeling confident that our hard work finally paid off.

No 'good byes'

Throughout the start of the 2019-2020 academic year, we were in regular communication with the EDI Office staff, working through the hiring debacle that delayed the start of our new staff. During our meetings, we repeatedly requested updates on the status of our program's future funding, which we were always told were forthcoming. This was a great source of anxiety for our leadership, as the future of our program and our employment both depended on this decision. On February 12, 2020, we received an email from Jerry stating that his office would no longer fund BEST. The email noted Jerry was stepping down from his position as Vice Chancellor at the end of the academic year and wanted a "clean slate" for his successor. He also cited vague budgetary reforms which supposedly made cutting the program a financial necessity.

Our team's reaction to the decision was shock. We wondered how the EDI Office went from a 95% commitment in June 2019 to an email '*farewell*' in February 2020 with no communication in between. We felt blindsided by the decision and disrespected by the fact that Jerry ended things over email. Ending the program was obviously devastating news to us, since we had a deep personal investment in the program. We felt that communicating in this way conveyed a certain cold indifference to us as people, and was very reminiscent of how administrators generally disregard and devalue the labor of student leaders (Linder et al., 2019). The timing of his communication was also

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consequential, as the academic year was only months from its finish. To keep the program open, we would have to miraculously find $200,000 in a matter of months. Whether intentional or not, the months of delaying a decision sabotaged any real chance we had to save BEST.

Jerry's decisionmaking process also reveals another important dynamic within student-administration collaborations. Despite the decision resulting in the loss of significant diversity resources for student leaders, the process to cut these forms of support did not involve students. Not only were we as student leaders of the program left in the dark for months, but members of the EDI's Student Advisory Board were also not consulted in the decision. When we reached out to major stakeholders, such as large student organizations and elected members of student government, they also revealed that they were not consulted beforehand. This evident disregard for students in the internal decisionmaking process would become a rallying cry as we later mobilized students to save the program.

Beyond our critique of the content and delivery of Jerry's decision, we were left feeling that there were deeper reasons behind the shuttering of BEST that extended beyond the rationale provided to us. The first sign was Jerry's apparent unwillingness to extend any form of support to us in our effort to find alternative funding. When we responded to Jerry's email, we asked that he work with us to "brainstorm options of how to accomplish the program's continued funding and success beyond your term" and requested "transitional funding…from the institution to provide an additional year in which we can explore more permanent solutions, either with the incoming VC or another department." He responded ignoring our asks for advocacy, instead focusing on a passage where we described the program's recent successes. The response was brief: "Thanks for the list of important accomplishments. I appreciate the accounting." We held several follow-up meetings with staff members in the EDI office, in which they said Jerry could write a "letter of support" for our program. In other words, Jerry would not provide any information that might be helpful in

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identifying institutional allies. His email was the last communication that we received from Jerry that year—not even a 'good-bye'.

The actions of the EDI Office led us to believe that Jerry did not want the program to continue, and as we looked elsewhere for support, we soon learned that other institutional actors seemed in lock-step. Within weeks of the decision, we launched the 'Save BEST' campaign. These efforts were halted almost immediately by news of the COVID pandemic's permanence and the campus shutdowns that soon followed. As we processed the implications of COVID with the rest of the world, we began gentle efforts to organize students and community in support of BEST. We discussed an appropriate approach to advocate for our program while respecting the seriousness of the COVID pandemic and centering the life-saving community organizing that was taking place in Los Angeles and across the country. We pulled back on plans to reach for support outside of UCLA, nixing a public petition[67] as well as personal outreach to potentially influential allies. We determined that the right way for us to continue advocating for BEST was to uphold the values of community and advocacy that made the program so special. We began reaching out to many of our contacts, students, staff, and faculty with personal check-ins and offers of support. Our communications included prepared informational materials on local COVID relief efforts that we shared with those whom we spoke with.

While almost every student affairs program closed their activities in March, BEST continued to support our community of student leaders who felt alienated and lost. We did this while ourselves struggling to cope with the unimaginable changes that were affecting each of us profoundly. We provided socioemotional support to the students who were a part of our program, as well as offering ongoing funding support to students who chose to organize at the outset of COVID. Based on

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[67] The petition was accidentally leaked by a student organization whose members received a preliminary draft of the document. The petition can be accessed at the following website:

conversations with BESTies, our program was the only one still providing funding to student groups, allowing BESTies to continue their leadership activities.[68] During these check-ins, we wistfully asked that students support our campaign to save BEST, noting that in this moment of national crisis, the university was capitalizing on the confusion and attempting to take even more resources away from students. UCLA needed more programs like BEST reaching out to students and maintaining a sense of community, not fewer.

Despite these difficulties, the Save BEST campaign yielded some headway. BESTies from the previous four years responded with concern and outrage, writing letters at our behest to the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) and UCLA Chancellor Block's Office. They spread the word among their networks about what was happening, and many alumnae prepared heartfelt videos and written testimonials that shared their experiences with the program and pleaded that the administration act to save our program. Several BESTies who were connected to the Undergraduate Students Association Council (USAC) wrote a resolution that was approved by the Council demanding that the Chancellor and Provost approve funding for a transition year, and that the incoming Vice Chancellor of EDI meet with us to discuss a transition plan (USAC, 2020).

This pressure resulted in some movement. Specifically, UCOP passed the word along to UCLA Chancellor Block, who then set a meeting with top brass in the Office of Student Affairs. After several meetings and back and forth questions and responses, we were told in no uncertain terms that there were no additional funds for the program, especially considering the impacts of COVID on campus closures and revenue. While again there was an underlying logic behind these arguments, the way in which information was directed to us felt more like a management strategy than a transparent process. Most programs at UCLA had their funding frozen with staff members

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[68] In this period, BESTies continued to do incredible work, including organizing emergency response efforts at UCLA and in their communities.

furloughed until a greater understand about the extent and impact of the pandemic was evident. Further, the funds that supported our program did not suddenly disappear, nor did the six-plus billion dollars that UCLA raised during its centennial campaign. The fact that we had to initiate a letter-writing campaign to land a meeting with Student Affairs reflected a general lack of support we had in the administration.

In April 2020, we received a final and certain sign that the decision to end BEST extended beyond the EDI Office. We learned from a student leader on the selection committee that the administration completed a months-long process to fill the Vice Chancellor position that Jerry was vacating. Dr. Anna Spain Bradley had been selected as the VC, and despite our every effort to set up a meeting with her, we were repeatedly shut down. We found it very unusual that despite the vocal demands of students calling for a meeting—as well as the aforementioned USAC resolution—the new VC and the administration refused such a basic request. This refusal was surprising since it unnecessarily put the incoming VC at odds with student leaders who were already skeptical of her commitment to advocate on behalf of students. In total, the behaviors of UCLA's administration while shuttering BEST demonstrated a lack of transparency and accountability, flaunting the principles of shared governance and gutting invaluable student leadership and diversity resources without so much as a discussion.

Burnt bridges

While we were surprised at the timing and swiftness of the program's closure, the writing was always on the wall. As student activists, myself and the other members of BEST often carried ourselves with a defiant bravado. After all, we named our program 'BEST' with the sassy confidence that against-all-odds success brings. And as long as EDI was funding our endeavor, we had a veritable cloak of invincibility that kept the wolves at bay. However, as soon as EDI's backing dissipated, we felt that other administrators stopped showing us the same respect that they did when

a Vice Chancellor was cutting our checks. Our last meetings with Student Affairs that I briefly described in the previous section was a stark reminder of our tenuous position as student activists in the university's hierarchy.

We were meeting with Student Affairs brass to request summer funding, about $20,000 to hold BEST over through the summer until we were able to find alternative long-term support. We proposed that during this time, we would finalize leadership development resources that could be used by student affairs programs if we were unsuccessful in securing funding. While we wanted to be optimistic about the meetings, we felt deflated recognizing that we were requesting support from an organization with which we often had an adversarial relationship. And by the nature of our activism, many of the BEST's other co-Director and I reflected on the sad irony, that years of activism may have alienated our last potential allies.

From the outset, the founders of BEST were committed to the practices of direct action and disruptive activism. Days before our first meeting with VC Kang in 2015, myself and several other student activists planned a guerilla action writing the *Racist Bruin*, a satire of the *Daily Bruin,* which we completed over the summer and printed as a page-sized sticker that was then placed on the front page of over 500 *Daily Bruin* issues. Appendix N includes both versions of the Racist Bruin that were distributed. Our motivation behind printing the *Racist Bruin* action was to start the new year with a public statement condemning the everyday racism and inequality that persisted at the university that were unlikely to go away just because the university appointed a new diversity administrator. Independent of my collaborators, I personally hoped that the *Racist Bruin* might apply a bit of extra pressure on VC Kang during our first meeting. Ironically, I had asked someone in Jerry's office about their thoughts on the *Racist Bruin*, and they seemed offended, stating that it crossed the lines of civility (what then is racism and sexism to an administration always doing too little too late?).

For various reasons, members of the *Racist Bruin* collective chose not to publicize our identities. While our identities were never revealed, I was apparently a prime suspect according to someone high up in the campus administration. A staff colleague later told me that they were ambushed in a meeting by several high-level administrators demanding the names of those involved. My name was brought up alongside a couple other UCLA alumnae who had no involvement in the action. One of the ringleaders of this punitive retaliation against my colleague was the Student Affairs administrator who no longer acknowledged me in public. Fallout from the *Racist Bruin* is what I believe to be the origins of their attitude towards me. And while the *Racist Bruin* did not mention this administrator by name, nor did it implicate them or their office in any wrongdoing, they—for some bizarre reason—seemed to take the *Racist Bruin* personally. They were in the room during that Student Affairs meeting where the program's fate was decided.

Perhaps our relationship with this administrator wouldn't have mattered much if not that they were closely tied to the Director of CPO. The same Director that half the student activists at UCLA annually called to be replaced or placed under student-led oversight; the same Director that sent a paranoid letter casting BEST as a covert institutional attempt to undermine CPO's stranglehold in the campus diversity turf wars; and the same Director that wanted to kick me out of CPO's public tailgate party at the Rose Bowl despite an invitation from a close friend. Combined, the administrator and CPO comprised a big part of the Student Affairs hierarchy; and both of their voices were in the room. And while we had better relationships with the other members of Student Affairs leadership in that meeting, I knew that each of these other Student Affairs 'friendlies' had one reason or another to tank our funding request.

A recent incident came to mind. Just several months before the meeting with Student Affairs, several members of BEST's leadership participated in a controversial campus protest. UCLA and

other UC campuses were roiled by massive cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) protests. The COLA coalition was demanding that graduate student workers receive living-wage compensation that accounted for the rocketing costs of living.[69] Undergraduate student leaders came to BEST team members for direct advice and support as they were planning an impromptu disruptive action at one of the campus dining halls. Students had long targeted campus dining halls as a location of inequality and political struggle. From a labor perspective, union workers in campus food service are among the lowest-paid, and yet still the university was actively attempting to undermine these workers by increasing the number of non-union student workers in the cafeterias. Moreover, the dining halls were also a locale of extreme food waste. Students questioned the administrative policies of tossing extra food when many low-income students experienced food insecurity. These reasons aside, the students wished to make a statement regarding inequality without causing any real harm.

The protest at the dining hall was a large-scale coordinated dine-and-dash.[70] The student organizers stood outside the dining hall, agitating passersby to enter the dining hall without paying and eating a meal on the institution. At first, goings were slow, but after several organized attempts, more and more students entered the dining hall before it was shut down by the administration. As members of BEST, we were treading perilous waters. I chose not to enter the dining hall since I was employed by Residential Life as a Residential Assistant and could potentially lose my job. However, I did stand outside the hall and agitate students who were passing by and encouraged them to participate if they felt comfortable. Another member of the BEST Leadership Team who was less known to administrators decided that they wanted to fully participate in the action and went inside. Although I did not go inside, my presence at the entrance was extremely awkward. Almost every

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[69] University of California, Santa Cruz graduate student workers documented many of the statewide actions on a website accessible at https://payusmoreucsc.com/

[70] https://www.dailycal.org/2020/02/24/protesters-call-for-cost-of-living-adjustment-on-sproul-plaza-at-crossroads-dining-hall/

member of the Student Affairs leadership was outside watching over the protest, including all three of the top administrators outside of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. Because of my long-standing relationship with them, I had to exchange pleasantries in what were very uncomfortable interactions. Each of these administrators were in the room when the future of BEST was being decided.

The meeting with these administrators felt like a play more than improv, with the ending written before the stage was set. During the meeting, they were all pleasant enough, congratulating us bootstrapping students on our accomplishments. They asked all the right questions about our program's approach, budget, evaluations, etc. Yet in the end, they had fistfuls of generic rationalizations for closing the program. It was clear that funding was never a possibility. But why then engage us in a weeks-long process if there never was a chance that we could sway them. I say this without any enmity or disillusionment: the meeting was simply diversity theater led by the group of administrators who are paid to manage students like us.

The fraught dynamic between BEST and Student Affairs was inevitable and one which we were aware of from the beginning. We always bristled at the idea of housing BEST under a student affairs office because of our perception that they were as much at fault for the suppression of student activism as any other entity on campus. This dynamic reflects the fundamental challenge in creating activist leadership resources within higher education. While activist leadership development resources seem a natural outspringing of student affairs civic engagement programs, these offices are often charged with the conflicting role of managing students that are critical of their institution or viewing students through the prism of institutional liability. Activist leadership development is not a space for student management or the conflicting interests and biases of institutional careerists. I believe that there is a way for student affairs offices to walk the tight line between both

responsibilities, allowing for the messiness and chaos that happens when institutional stakeholders are dissatisfied with the status quo.

Theoretically, there is great value in supporting student activists as they learn to critically engage in social justice advocacy. And theoretically, this type of education is in keeping with the civic and educational values of higher education. However, practically, student activism is a thorn in the side of most small-minded administrators, whose primary concerns are maintaining order, authority, and a sparkling image of effective management to donors and the public at large (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2014). Therefore, it stands to reason that administrators would likely view activist development resources as a tool that undermines their authority and goals.

Lessons for Research and Practice

This institutional ethnography and autoethnography documents the inner workings of a diversity and leadership development initiative at a large public institution. My narrative highlights the tremendous potential of activist education initiatives within a college setting, while also revealing many of the potential pitfalls and obstacles facing student leaders seeking institutional change. The anecdotal evidence of this study adds to the works of Ahmed (2012), Hoffman and Mitchell (2016), and Linder and colleagues (2019), who have all documented the ways in which college and university administrators undermine activist efforts to support campus equity. Uniquely, this narrative draws connections between specific instances of conflict between the students heading BEST and top student affairs administrators. These conflicts likely had implications on the long-term viability of the program, suggesting incompatibility between autonomous activist initiatives within traditional student affairs framework. Future research should explore these incompatibilities, as well as inconsistencies with student affairs discourse that often adopts social justice language. The findings of this study necessitate further research into the ways in which student affairs officers are deployed to manage and mitigate social justice activism.

Further, this study identifies institutional funding and compensation as key vectors of conflict facing social justice activists in higher education. This finding resonates with Chatelain's (2020) commentary on institutional funding of Black students' demands for equity resources. Importantly, my narrative highlights the specific ways in which institutions leverage student diversity labor to support the advancement of diversity initiatives. Administrators were resistant to compensate students with stipends or other forms of support for diversity labor that often aligned with institutional objectives of improving access, retention, and success. Further, a lack of consistent and long-term funding to diversity initiatives undermines their ability to succeed and often sets up the conditions of failure. Future studies should document and evaluate the sheer amount of uncompensated diversity labor that students engage in, as well as estimate the value of this labor to the institutions that benefit. This research might also explore the legal, policy, practical, and cultural hurdles preventing widespread compensation of student diversity labor.

Addressing the issue of diversity labor and funding, particularly the funding of radical education programs within higher education is a challenging policy issue. BEST struggled with the dynamics of annual funding cycles that applied constant pressure to allocate our time towards "show" achievements instead of the invisible work that might lead to greater outcomes. Further, our labor and resources were constantly being drained by efforts to find more sustainable funding. Traditionally, programs like BEST might seek funding from student referendums and fees. However, it was our ideological conviction that the University should pay for diversity labor directly benefiting the institution—*even if* activism work is seen as contrary to the interests of administrators. The thriving of radical education programs requires independent and long-term funding, either through commitments from foundations (i.e., Liberty Hill) or congressional allocations establishing funding that is not influenced by the whims of campus politicians. Direct state funding for these types of programs should be a priority to promote democratic and activist citizenship (Stitzlein, 2012). These

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funds can be directed through dedicated centers, leadership development programs, or even academic departments focused on social justice education, perhaps wedded to the civic education programs burgeoning within colleges and universities.

This study makes several important contributions to the scholarship on leadership development programs within higher education. Importantly, this research echoes the commentary by Dugan (2011b) that access to leadership opportunities are largely structured by students' socioeconomic status and social capital. Thus, institutions must empower leadership programs with the structural capacity (i.e., budgets, curricular flexibility, hiring autonomy, rewards structures) allowing program coordinators to proactively address the specific barriers preventing active participation of minoritized students (Jones et al., 2016). In fact, student affairs administrators must reenvision every way in which student leaders are made to interface with the institution. From funding applications to facility reservations, reimbursement and office hours: every point of contact with student leaders should be simplified for ease of access. These bureaucratic processes should be easy to access, clear, and streamlined minimizing the hurdles and learning curbs that student volunteers face in practicing leadership. Oftentimes, students are asked to use the same systems that staff utilize to access institutional resources. However, staff are paid for their time in navigating bureaucracy, while students are not. Administrators and others involved in setting these policies must find creative solutions that facilitate and not frustrate student leadership.

The findings also affirm the principles of holistic support as a framework for impactful mentorship and advising, particularly its emphasis on meeting mentees where they are at by recognizing the complex social, cultural, and economic factors that shape mentee experiences (Museus & Neville, 2012). Building on this framework, this research demonstrates the value of providing mentors with practical tools to engage in socioemotional support, such as the solution focused brief therapy model utilized by BEST femtors. Student affairs, student services, and

leadership program personnel should receive training in these sub-clinical methods of support to foster deeper connections with their mentees/advisees and create more opportunities to bridge student with needed resources. Based on our experience in BEST, these methods will likely encourage timely referrals to academic, mental health, and career support services, leaving fewer students who slip through the cracks.

BEST was a unique and unprecedented leadership development program in higher education. While other studies have documented near-peer leadership development among student activists (Biddix, 2010; Olive, 2015), there is no research on such programs receiving significant institutional funding and support. BEST was a year-round and student-led initiative with its sole focus was on activist modalities of learning and practice. The program's leaders were students who had complete autonomy in hiring, curricular development, program structure, and spending. Further, we made an intentional effort to practice what we preached, often joining students in their direct actions and negotiations with campus administrators. These features of BEST all served to establish authenticity and trust with student activists, who are among the university's most skeptical constituents. At an institutional level, university administrators must reflect on this issue of trust. Have they themselves engaged with vocal student leaders, especially those that they disagree with, in a manner that establishes trust and truly invites them to participate in change processes. Much like the bureaucratic processes that student leaders must engage with, institutional change processes (i.e. academic senate committees) are extremely time intensive and inaccessible to most students. Reshaping these processes to invite participation of activist students in inclusive and meaningful ways will lead to greater convergences between institutional leadership and student critics.

Future research should explore this notion of institutional trust to a greater degree, exploring the various ways in which activists are alienated from change processes and institutional resources. Specifically, studies on social justice mentorship and advising should focus on authenticity and trust,

both within formal leadership development programs and in more informal settings, i.e., interactions between student activists and faculty or other staff. Research might explore the relationship closeness between activist students and their mentors and advisors. How are boundaries established in these relationships and how do students negotiate any issues of trust? Further, what specific program features and practices might help mentorship and advising programs establish authenticity and trust with student activists.

An important way to address this issue of trust, as well as strengthening activist leadership development programs is establishing partnerships with local social movement leaders and organizations. These partnerships can be wide ranging in nature, from inviting social movement leaders as guest speakers and workshop facilitators to hiring personnel with experience in these domains and creating cross-programming with activist organizations. BEST encompassed all these forms of engagement with local social movement organizations, while also incorporating social movement ideology, knowledge production, and pedagogy into leadership development. Activist leadership programs would do well to marry social movement leadership and resource to learning settings while acknowledging, supporting, and compensating social movement members who help with bridging these resources to students.

Personal Reflections and Conclusions

The work of BEST extended throughout most of my doctoral studies and their completion with the submission of this dissertation. Establishing the program and fighting to provide meaningful support to student activist leaders at UCLA was a major focus of the last seven years of my life, save for the COVID leap year(s). Through BEST, I was blessed with the opportunity to co-create a radical initiative that I could only dream of years before, all while working alongside colleagues that I had a deep respect and appreciation for. I have grown a lot through these experiences and have many fond memories of the work that I have done and the colleagues and students that I had the honest privilege

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of working with. My greatest pride was the work of students that I supported through BEST. They were a marvel to watch as they envisioned a more just reality and took steps to make it so.

If I were to draw big picture lessons from my experience with BEST, it seems clear that students want activist leadership programs and resources, and that such initiative are invaluable to the higher education ecosystem. Further, activism and community organizing represent a significant aspect of American civic life and should be a major focal point of civic learning in higher education (Biddix, 2009; 2014). Despite the centrality of activist and social movement practice to US community life and history, these topics have largely been reduced to grist for academic critics and consumers (Davis et al., 2019). This treatment of activism as a passive practice contradicts the fundamental values of social justice and social movements. Further, it is inconsistent with how higher education institutions treat other forms of civic life, vis-à-vis institutional initiatives in business, civic engagement, community programs, and volunteerism. In fact, colleges and universities have invested extensively in models of leadership development and community engagement that could easily be adapted or expanded to support social movement and activist leadership, yet these institutional resources are almost exclusively allocated for more socially acceptable civic activities (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Evans & Lange, 2019). Promoting programs and support for young people interested in social movement work will only lead to more effective leadership and an increasingly vibrant civic life.

While there is an apparent value in activist leadership resources, I strongly believe that programs like BEST will not proliferate without fundamental changes to the values and politics driving higher education. Perhaps BEST as a program itself was fated to failure due to flaws in leadership, design, or environment that cannot be generalized to other contexts. However, the fact remains that initiatives like ours have been around since the 1960s and have repeatedly failed to survive or maintain the revolutionary character that sparked them. During her time as a graduate

student, Angela Davis and other activists that were part of the Lumumba-Zapata Coalition at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) proposed a "third" college where students could study revolutionary theory and practice, whiteness studies, and other socially conscious areas. Much like other colleges established during the ethnic studies movement, the administration eventually relented in creating UCSD's Third College, yet watered down the radical vision put forth by the original activists. At UCLA and other UC's, the ethnic studies movement, as well as the student strikes of 1971 sparked by years of state repression produced a bevy of institutionally authorized initiatives that empowered and supported activist modalities of learning and practice. However, as with the work of the Lumumba-Zapata Coalition, the revolutionary energy at UCLA and other campuses died off and students' vision for radical education shifted once again towards moderated institutional initiatives. At the start of BEST, we as founders all voiced our belief that the program was likely doomed from the start. This pessimism never dampened our efforts to make BEST work. We always saw the writing on the wall, but this experiment for each of us represented a new departure from previous failures. Or in the perhaps misapplied words of Samual Beckett from *Worstward Ho!* (1983), "Try again. Fail again. Fail better."

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Email from Vice Chancellor Jerry Kang announcing the formation of BEST

Jerry Kang, Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion <WeListen@equity.ucla.edu>	Wed, Mar 30, 2016 at 3:15 PM

Reply-To: WeListen@equity.ucla.edu
To: allstudents_r@bruinpost.ucla.edu

Fellow Bruins,

From Day 1 of my tenure as Vice Chancellor, I have said that we must "reboot" how we think about and do equity, diversity, and inclusion at UCLA. One piece of this reboot involves more emotionally honest and deeper intellectual engagements across diversity and difference. I have attempted to promote such thinking through CrossCheck, a blog-like feature on my website.

But thinking is not enough; there must also be doing. It turns out that there are already countless Bruins who engage in equity-building projects, self-organizing from the bottom-up, who struggle with the lack of institutional support. With this in mind, I am proud to announce that my Office is funding an innovative, grassroots initiative led by a team of outstanding UCLA graduate students. This initiative, known as the Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program ("BEST"), will target resources in ways that will change the way we think about and actually do diversity work – while building toward an increasingly inclusive campus environment.

It is an endeavor for the community, by the community, but backed by Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. To learn more about this venture, I invite you to read the attached letter from the BEST Program Team and related Request for Proposals, and to visit the program website at bestucla.squarespace.com. I would also like to thank Vice Provost M. Belinda Tucker and the Institute of American Cultures for their assistance and support.

In all my efforts as Vice Chancellor, I have tried to build an Office that models the entrepreneurial spirit of startups and "Silicon Beach." That's why I am especially excited about being a Social Entrepreneur backing this project. This is how we reboot.

Enthusiastically,

Jerry Kang

Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Appendix B - Guiding Principles for the BEST Advisory Board (May 2016)

Purpose

The Bruin Excellence and Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST) is a community-driven and community-oriented initiative. To this end, the BEST Program Team strives to realize decision making practices through open and transparent procedures that center the community. To facilitate this end and promote cross-community engagement, the BEST Program Team will establish an Advisory Board comprised of UCLA students, staff, and faculty. The Advisory Board has two responsibilities: (1) provide general program-wide guidance; and (2) review and evaluate project proposals.

Membership

The Advisory Board will have eight (8) members. This will include two (2) students, two (2) staff members, two (2) faculty members, the Vice Chancellor of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (VC-EDI), and the BEST Program Coordinator. The VC-EDI and the BEST Program Coordinator shall have standing positions and serve as ex officio Advisory Board members.

Students and Staff
The BEST Program Team will solicit nominations for potential student and staff Advisory Board members. Solicitations will be directed to institutional entities and individuals across UCLA, including the Mother Organizations (MO), Equity Advisors, and the VC-EDI. Based on the strength of nominations, the BEST Program Team will invite nominated individuals to serve on the Advisory Board.

Faculty
For BEST's inaugural year, the faculty positions on the Advisory Board will be filled by (a) one faculty member affiliated with the Institute of American Cultures (IAC), and (b) one faculty member affiliated with the Critical Race Studies (CRS) Program at the UCLA School of Law. The Program Team has elected to apportion the first two faculty board positions in this way to honor the IAC's and CRS's contributions to BEST. IAC is housing a portion of the administrative responsibilities associated with BEST's operation; Critical Race Theory – the precise body of scholarship produced by the CRS faculty – is the research paradigm informing the Program Team's approach to this project

In subsequent years, faculty nominations will be solicited in a manner consistent with that of students and staff. It is the Program Team's goal that over the course of several years, faculty from various departments and disciplines across UCLA will have opportunities to serve on the Advisory Board.

Term of Office

Students
Students will have a one year term with the possibility of yearly renewal. The maximum term is three years.

Staff and Faculty
Faculty and staff will have a two year commitment. There is the possibility of renewal, but the goal will be to extend the opportunity to other members of the community after two years.

Appendix C - BEST Proposal Evaluation Rubric (2016)

The Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST) supports campus climate projects at UCLA that actualize the University of California Regents Policy 4400 in removing "barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of talented students, faculty, and staff from historically excluded populations who are currently underrepresented." BEST defines campus climate projects as those that address the broad objectives outlined in Regents Policy 4400 and challenge and transform the campus climate status quo.

Members of the BEST Advisory Board will provide detailed feedback using the criteria listed below. In addition to qualitative feedback, reviewers will provide numeric scores for each criterion. Scoring is based upon the following scale:

  0 = Criteria not Addressed
  1 = Criteria slightly addressed
  2 = Criteria somewhat addressed
  3 = Criteria completely addressed

Evaluation criterion	Feedback	Score 0-3
Rationale - Why is this project necessary to improve campus climate?		
The project meets a clearly identified campus climate need.		
The goals of the project are clearly articulated and defined within the grant framework.		
The project demonstrates how working with student organizations/individuals is significant to improving campus climate for their respective community		
The project target population is well-defined.		
Implementation - How will this project be successfully implemented?		
The project clearly states how the proposed activities will be accomplished within the 2016-17 AY.		
The project team has demonstrated their ability (knowledge, experience and		

community connections) to successfully implement their project.		
The budget matches the project scope.		
This project demonstrates how organizations/individuals will work with one another.		
Grant outcomes - How does this project support the following grant guidelines?		
Engage marginalized UCLA communities.		
Enhance, expand, or create resources/experiences for marginalized communities.		
Promote sustainable or renewable equity-oriented leadership, programs, and/or resources.		
Support personal and collective empowerment of project participants.		
The project engages various campus organizations, groups, and/or that are significant to addressing the project goals.		
Strengthen and create affirmational spaces for underserved communities at UCLA.		
Advances collective understanding of equity issues on campus and beyond.		
Engages across social identities groups (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation etc.)		
Engages across multiple campus communities (e.g., faculty, staff, and students)		
Engages across disciplines and administrative units.		
Quality of action-oriented activity		

Comments or suggestions

Appendix D – Pilot Year BEST Projects, excerpted from Pilot Year Report

Social Justice Advocates

The Social Justice Advocates successfully established a student-staff coalition and implemented a system whereby students led social justice workshops and leadership trainings. The focus of this group was to train and support other student leaders living in student housing by building consciousness and sharing social justice organizing tools to establish young justice-oriented student leaders at UCLA. Their trained advocates cultivated a culture of accountability by raising consciousness of marginalized students about the realities of the world rooted in whiteness, patriarchy, heterosexism, etc. The SJA project was the first BEST project to receive media attention, particularly from conservative news channels about their model for training advocates. Despite the negative criticism, the SJA was successful in making a large impact on students through their workshops.

In the news:
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Gameday: UCLA vs. Utah

Social Justice Advocates program persists despite facing criticism

BY SHARON (YU CHUN) ZHEN   CAMPUS, NEWS
Posted: June 4, 2017 11:43 pm

Here are some key deliverables developed by the SJA program:

- Training Curriculum
- Social Justice Myths presentation
- Term talks - How to be a successful ally
- Activism and Unity Through Allyship Workshop
- All Aboard the Struggle Bus session
- Labels Workshop
- Love and Desire Workshop
- Second Year Application

HCAT

The HIV Counseling and Testing Coalition (HCAT) was formed in early spring 2016 by a UCLA medical student and two undergrads. Over time, the coalition began to gain traction as the concept of focusing on reducing HIV transmission through culturally humble care across marginalized communities became inviting to medical students, graduate students and undergraduates a like. The coalition now includes a variety of individuals with different backgrounds who all share the goals of reducing the stigma associated around HIV/AIDS, helping prevent transmission of HIV/AIDS and providing a safe, welcoming space for individuals who come from misrepresented or marginalized backgrounds. In order to reach their goal, HCAT is highly involved in Outreach and Testing in

communities with disproportionate rates of HIV transmission and on the UCLA campus. The coalition is primarily ran by UCLA undergrads, with a graduate and professional advisory committee.

In just one year, HCAT has expanded to over 30 active members due to the support from BEST! This BEST project experienced major challenges due to the other goal of their project to train students as HIV testers. The two major challenges experienced by this group included: change in BEST Femtor and approvals from Risk Management to process funds for the group. The latter is an ongoing issue and we hope to continue addressing in the BEST 2.0 year. In the meantime, HCAT is focusing on the comprehensive counseling and reducing of stigma at and around UCLA.

Website in progress: http://uclahcat.wixsite.com/uclahcat to highlight other major accomplishments from HCAT, below are details about an exclusive talk attended by HCAT leaders and a flyer from one of the major stigma reducing talk organized by HCAT.

HCAT at St. John's April 18, 2017
"Last week, some of our HCAT members attended a very exclusive talk at St. John's, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that specifically caters to Spanish speaking and transgender communities. We learned about the epidemic of HIV and how social determinants of health and health care disparities, impact the high transmission rate of HIV among African American and Latinx transgender women. As future HIV test counselors, physicians, and public health researchers, we hope to serve the most marginalized communities. To be humble, check our biases, and to listen to the needs of the people, whom we have the honor to serve, are some of the things we can do to #BreaktheStigma"
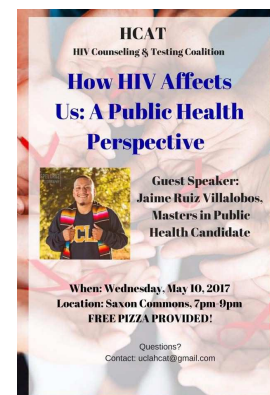

voidLab

voidLab's Decentralizing the Web cultivates critical evaluations of online presence through an intersectional feminist lens. They organized panels on campus to untangle the psycho-social implications of identity politics on the global web, examining the embedded biases driving dominant modes of representation in digital spaces. Photos or flyers from such panels are included below to illustrate the diversity of the work voidLab engaged in. Website in progress: http://projects.dma.ucla.edu/voidlab/
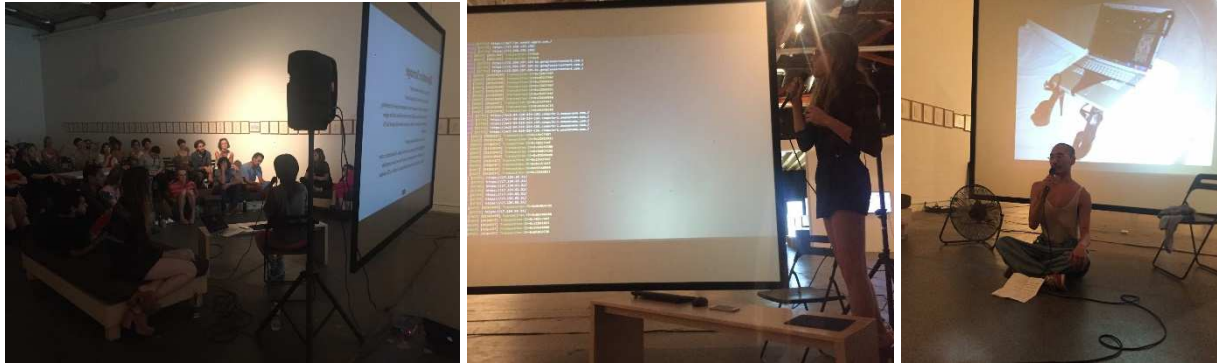
voiLab also had a journal project underway all of last year; Decentralizing The Web is a project that was created in response to inequality and bias in internet culture and a curiosity in understanding our collective and individual identities in this dynamic landscape. voidLab invites artists, activists, curators and media scholars to take part in multi-platform conversations and work directly with participants to define the parameters of presentation and archive based on their respective practices. One of these platforms is in the form of a short publication. This publication will include archival photos and transcripts from previous events, as well as artist writings, interviews, and photographs.

The book will be printed and then hand-made design elements will make each one unique and collectible. Release date: TBA. voidLab continued their work throughout summer as illustrated by the event details below:

voidLab was also one of the projects that took initiative to collaborate with other BEST projects. They were involved in helping the GUM project digitize their workshops as well as creating a film for PATHS for US project.
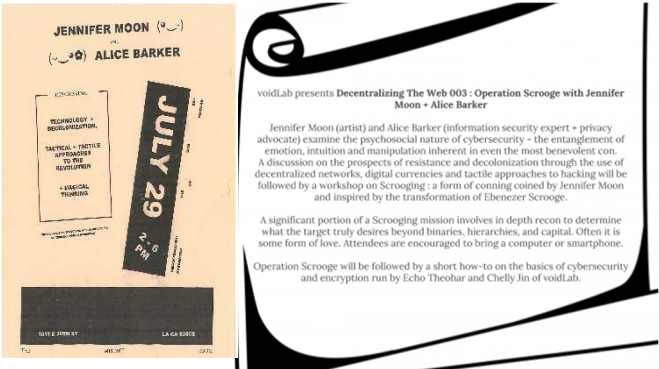
PATHS for US

PATHS for US bolstered existing efforts to serve UCLA's 600+ enrolled undocumented students by offering academic and professional development opportunities that support post-graduate success. With the outcome of the presidential election, PATHS took lead in responding to the needs of their community. Therefore, PATHS collaborated with the Undocumented Students Promoting Advancement, Retention and Community (USPARC) program, and Undocumented Student Program (USP) office to address these needs. In addition to putting together an emergency plan for the university and actionable tasks for the administration to embody the principles of a sanctuary campus, PATHS identified and took lead in establishing sustainable solutions for the undocumented student community such as through their Pamilya Housing Initiative.

PATHS for US also launched a culturally competent survey to assess the current resources available to undocumented students at UCLA, data from which has been used to develop retention workshops. PATHS successfully negotiated university housing for undocumented students and allies in the coming year. More details about this project are included below. PATHS also engaged in collaborative projects with the Beautiful Mind Project, voidLab and the Graduate Undergraduate Mentorship program. The partnership with voidLab is focused on developing a digital undocuserious project. Just in the spring quarter of 2017, PATHS held the following events to further their efforts: 1) a fundraising concert for undocumented students; 2) an UndocuBruins research workshop; 3) a town hall meeting with future residents of the undocumented housing initiative; 4) and a presentation about the housing UCLA housing initiative at the UC-Housing summit.

Pamilya Housing for the 2017-2018 Academic Year:
The Pamilya House Initiative helped identify lower cost housing in partnership with Residential Life and Housing. Housing (in consultation with the fire marshal) created increased occupancy in University-owned apartments (e.g. taking a double occupancy apartment and making it a 3 or 4 person unit). The tentative cost was to be reduced to approximately $450-$590 per month per person, depending on the type of apartment that is selected. PATHS sent out a housing intake form to assess housing needs for the community and identify high-need students.
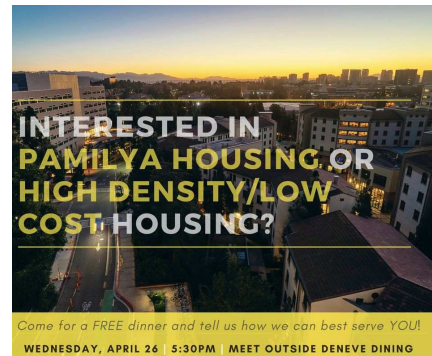
"This fall, in part through student advocacy efforts, UCLA is opening a low-cost housing option aimed at helping marginalized populations, including the undocumented, be better able to live on campus, avoiding long and potentially costly commutes."

Due to the students' advocacy efforts being widely recognized, they received hiring support from the Bruin Resource Center for the summer of 2017. Students used this additional support to continue their important work over the summer and to plan for the upcoming academic year.

Beautiful Minds Project

The Beautiful Mind Project focused on promoting well-rounded and intersectional understandings of mental health in the UCLA community, with a focus on the Muslim community. BMP aimed to transcend socio-cultural, political, and physical barriers of

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stigmatization, while also advocating for social justice initiatives that affect marginalized communities. They organized an internship for student activists with the goal to help interns grow their personal skills, while shadowing board members in their duties and helping to facilitate an environment in which BMP can reach its full potential. Web: https://www.facebook.com/bmpucla/

Among the many impactful events BMP organized during the 1617 academic year, one event was especially a major hit. BMP's Decompression Space offered Coffee, Cookies, and Chill as a safe space for everyone to relax and take a break from their "very long day and the insurmountable task of mastering the quarter system at UCLA. We won't have a particular topic to discuss, just how your life is going and a judgement free zone to get to know each other!" Decompression spaces took place EVERY Monday from 5-6pm on Kerck Patio!

Other key deliverables developed by the BMP program included:

Student Survival Guide
Post-election statement
Olympics
Saying No Workshop
Coffee Cookies and Chill (weekly)
Coffee Cookies and Chill w/ Mahmood Abdul-Rauf

Life Science Collective

The Collective was formed to focus on improving persistence and retention in the life sciences. The project aimed to address three aspects of the hidden curriculum that determine life science success: 1) Navigating the academic environment; 2) Strategic academic planning and engagement; and 3) Meaningful engagement. The Collective resources included a website, resource guides, and engagement events. While the Collective has successful events and created resources for students during the fall and some of winter quarters, due to a change in programming goals and particularly in leadership, they were not able to host events or meetings during the remainder of the academic year. Although they were funded for $3,500, the Collective only spent $618 of their total award.

Below are some of the accomplishments for the Collective while they were still active.
The Collective Website (has been taken down since fall 2017)
Web description of program activities
Life Sciences Student Resource Guides
Life Sciences Majors Student Guide to Graduating on Time

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One of our major challenges came from learning that this project was actually formed by a graduate student in support of their dissertation research. Once they no longer needed the project for their personal benefit, they withheld any support and guidance for the undergraduate students involved in the project. The project also experienced a change in BEST mentor during the winter quarter. However, we tried our best to be supportive of and still involve the undergraduate students involved in this project with BEST as a whole.

Graduate Undergraduate Mentorship Program (GUM)

GUM is a large-scale, student-run effort that supports undergraduate students' access to graduate school. GUM works primarily with undergraduates from communities underrepresented in higher education, offering them workshops and one-to-one mentorship to support their graduate learning goals. Through program activities, students learn about graduate school: what it is, how to get there, and what to do once they get there. GUM provides eight week workshop series for undergraduate students interested in graduate school in the following fields: education, neuroscience, psychology, public policy, public health, social welfare, sociology, and urban planning.

With the support from BEST, GUM received applications from a record breaking number of 117 mentees/femtees and 47 mentors/femtors for the 2016-2017 academic year. As a major success for the project that has been student-run for 4 years is their new partnership with Graduate Division. With the support of BEST, GUM focused on building a relationship with Graduate Division to help sustain and institutionalize the program. GUM will be launched in 2017-2018 as an institutionalized program with backing from the Graduate Divison and BEST. On the web at: www.gumatucla.com

Some of the GUM deliverables can be found on its Facebook page, which includes advertisements of workshops and application. Here are a few snapshots from the successful end of the year celebration GUM hosted for all of its Gummies.

Cross Cultural Research & Practice Center Campaign

The Cross-Cultural Center (CCC) was pilot program led by active UCLA student leaders that aimed to bridge different campus communities by serving as a liaison between students, faculty, and other organizations together, with a specific emphasis on raising awareness around issues of marginalized communities. At the same time, CCC Pilot Program also aimed to provide a range of programming that focused on intersectionality in order to foster safe spaces for students whose identities are not represented by singular identity groups, as well as any individuals who want to learn more but are not affiliated with cultural organizations. Their team of six campus activists sought to mobilize campus groups and resources towards the foundation of a cross-cultural center at UCLA–a dedicated space for inter-group engagement and resources. The CCC project held multiple town halls to gather information from other Bruins about their needs and also to garner support for moving forward with their project. However, the project received tremendous backlash from existing student groups on campus and were ultimately left with divisive support from student leaders.

Below are a few of the significant deliverables from this project.
Statement of Purpose
Powerpoint
Town Hall 1 Flyer
Town Hall 2 Flyer

Appendix E – 2018 Femtor Hiring Rubric and 2019 Femtor Interview Guide

2018 Hiring Rubric

Criteria	Scores (-1, 0, 1)	Comments
Dedication and passion in promoting a culture of inclusiveness for social justice		
Can easily work with student representatives and a diverse constituency		
Demonstrates ability to work independently, as a cooperative member of a larger team, and as a project leader		
At least two years of experience working as a community/labor/political campaign organizer **OR** At least two years of experience developing and/or managing social justice programs or campaigns		
An individual that is familiar with campus resources and bureaucracy		
Strong oral and written communication skills		

BEST Mentor Interview Guide 2019-2020

1. Briefly tell us a little bit about yourself, what you know about BEST, and why you would be a good fit for this femtor position?

2. What values and skills do you think are most important to cultivate among young organizers and activists?

3. Tell us about a previous femtorship experience you've had.

4. This question is meant to let you share what type of femtor you want to be. What type of relationship do you want to have with your femtees? What challenges do you think you'll encounter?

5. How do you address tensions or conflicts in groups? Please share an example of a tension/conflict that came up in a group setting. How did you address it?

6. Describe your experience putting together curriculum, workshops, or planning for one-on-one conversations. Can you tell us a specific time you trained or planned a one-one-one and it didn't go as you had planned - how did you prepare? How did you get feedback? How did you make improvements for future work?

7. How would you describe your communication style in a team? How do you hold others accountable?

8. One of the groups you femtor holds a very controversial event that stirs up conflict around various campus constituents. The group did not run this event by you prior to putting it on. How would you handle this situation?

9. What do your other commitments look like for next year?

2019 Femtor Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

Femtorship is the foundation of the Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST). Femtors provide student activists with holistic support--including academic and activist advising, life coaching, mental health support, and leadership development. Femtors are the face of BEST, engaging with students on a regular basis, helping to support student leadership as they enact their visions of campus transformation. This year, the femtor position is undergoing some changes. We are trying to bring greater clarity around expectations so that femtors are able to thrive in their roles.

The first section of this document reviews general femtor expectations, followed by an overview of the various femtor roles: Activist Advising, Academic Advising, Social and Mental Health Support, and Leadership Development. The final section explores other femtor responsibilities as members of the BEST Leadership Team. Review this document and prepare any questions you have about the femtor role.

Overview of Femtor Responsibilities

Monthly meeting or check-in (minimum)
Attend quarterly event for each group (minimum)
Quarterly progress report
Update BEST calendar with group events
Facilitate two leadership development workshops with each group
Two leadership conversations a year
Hold two solution-based brief therapy sessions with each member of your groups
Academic and personal check-ins as needed
Support student group budgetary management
Keep femtor Instagramentor

Femtor Expectations

Student Perspectives

"Someone who is available or who can be pretty available like most of the time. Most of the time like in terms of like can respond quickly, um, can, can be able to or at least set a time like, okay, I'm like, I'm busy now, but I can talk to you at 5:00 PM for whatever amount of time...So a lot of the times it was very, very, very helpful to be able to reach out to someone and whether that's Kareem or to another board member or to a friend and just be like, hey, can sound you. Like, let me just talk something out."

"Someone who can really think outside the box and come in with a different perspective because a lot of the times when like we need guidance, it really helps to have someone who has had different experiences or who, who can at least bring that other, that outside perspective to help us navigate because if we can't, if we're stuck in a situation we can't see through it clearly, it really helps to have someone like kinda guide you to whatever direction you want to go."

"Obviously someone who shares your vision of what that [activism] even means. Or at least someone who is capable of having a meaningful dialogue...someone who's knowledgeable about the specific institution within which we're working...And not just provide the same kind of support to everybody."

"And I would say to not be discouraged by our lack of response [from the students] and to keep following up, whether that's like within a few days, after a week, whatever it is, the follow up really does help. It's like a reminder sometimes things, they just, there's so much going on. Things slip our minds...Um, the constant meetings really helped. So if it's weekly, every two weeks, because there's so much that goes on with our organization."

"Well I, I, I liked being encouraged to do bigger and better things because I like doing big things and I feel like we could have done big things if like we were pushed a little more"

"I feel like with this, um, a lot of it's like sort of like showing and being like this is sort of like. And then also um, like introducing like different resources and kind of like building connections, um, I think has been like a big part of that."

"It would be someone who is a good listener and for UCLA in general being someone who understand the student experience. A lot the admin forget about what it's like."

Femtors are expected to support groups through the following:
- Cultivating a clear vision, goals and objectives
- Proactive and regular communication about goals, capacity, and support needs
- Build on existing strengths and take to the next level.
- Establishing community, trust
- Reiterate that we are here for support
- Foster group stability and sustainability
- Mediate conflicts and support positive interpersonal communication
- Nurture cultures of care
- Teaching autonomy
- Help navigating the institution

- Identifying positives and deltas in group dynamics
- Foster a leadership development agenda
- Greater community and coalition building
- Affirmation of skills and leadership development
- Translating group needs to administrative support
- Budget check ins (with project liaison)

Femtors Should Model the Following Qualities:
- Clear and timely communication
- Patient and generous with time
- Consist and available when needed
- Following up; we should not drop the ball
- Clear about boundaries and expectations
- Acknowledge limits, seek out support from others who might be able to help
- Caring and empathetic
- Fierce advocacy
- Adversarial when needed
- Knowledgeable about the institution
- Problem-solutioning oriented
- Proactive

Communication Guidelines
- Respond to emails, facebook, text, calls within <u>48 hours</u> (72 hours over weekends)
- Keep meeting notes @ monthly meetings
- Don't expect immediate turnaround (plan ahead)

Femtor Definitely Don'ts
- Never or almost never meeting with groups
- Embezzling BEST Funds
- Aggravating interpersonal conflict; talking about people behind their back
- Misrepresenting BEST in a way that's destructive or harmful to its future
- Any racist, sexist, homophopic, xenophobic, etc language or actions
- Missing meetings regularly without notice/regular excessive tardiness

Activist Advising

Student Perspectives

"I definitely don't think we would be where we are right now. We had a lot to learn...[through BEST], we were able to get that support and foundation that we needed."

"We tried to work around administrative obstacles and be more assertive and keep asking for what we needed until things were getting done. I remember at that moment our mentor talked to a staff member's bosses, and afterwards the staff person had to be more responsive towards us...Honestly, it was mostly the femtors that helped us navigate this and helped us go different ways. I remember it being a challenge but a challenge that the mentors would help us with."

"Honestly BEST allowed us to find a goal...that we wanted to achieve. I think without it we just kind of would have been like just aimlessly going around doing programs and things. Instead of like, you know, we want to improve engagement and we want to improve attendance."

"She was always there for us, always there to listen to what we said. Always providing good recommendations. She was very flexible and being able to meet with and I appreciated it...she was always very supportive and always congratulated us on the things we did, big or small. She always tried to help connect us to resources even when we didn't ask, which I appreciated."

"I didn't view her as someone who would help with staff and it wasn't until later when she was like, Yo, there's stuff that I could have given you, you could have used BEST. We could have led staff development workshops and talked this out loud, even if it didn't resolve everything."

"We were trying to figure out how to get people involved, and it wasn't until we told our femtor, 'Hey, we're struggling with this. We've been going back and forth with our staff. We don't know what to suggest, we don't know what to do.' And the femtor said, 'well, what if you had a scholarship?' And I was like, 'oh shoot, oh shoot, why didn't we think of that?' You know, facilitating that thought process to get us there, you know? That turned out really well."

Overview

A guiding purpose of BEST femtorship, activist advising boils down to full blown advocacy for student activists. Most students do not have mentors that affirm, support, and develop student activists. Our role is to fill the gap by helping activists achieve their individual and collective goals. We are not sources of unconstructive doubt or criticism. We are not critiquing students' ideas about activism, their methods, and/or analysis of the institution. We are supportive constructive, facilitating dialogue and leadership development. We are building trusting relationships founded on care and solidarity allowing for authentic conversations that support the achievement of transformational dreams.

BEST femtors are not just armchair advisors. Femtors support groups through participation, fulfilling supportive roles for student organizations. The nature of this participation is very different for each group and for each situation. Sometimes students need femtors to show up and volunteer at an event. Other times, femtors may need to take active roles in organizing a campaign. Some groups prefer distance from their femtors, while others view us as honorary members of their organization. A major factor that often determines the nature of femtors' relationships with their femtees is trust.

Activist Advising Responsibilities

- Meet with student organizations at least once a month for a check-in/support meeting.
  - Discuss updates on group activities
  - Discuss housekeeping (i.e., budget, reimbursements, other follow up)
  - Identify a tangible group goal(s)
  - Identify things they've done to help group accomplish goal and any obstacles they face.
  - Identify ways in femtor or BEST can support success in achieving the goal(s)
  - Complete an advising report every meeting (link)
  - (Optional) Brief leadership conversation/discussion around focus question
  - (Optional) Meditative practice
- Attend at least one quarterly event for each group you advise.
  - Offer to volunteer in whatever capacity is needed
  - Take pictures (ask if its okay, first)
  - Observe what works and what might be improved. Share these observations if you feel that such feedback is welcome
- Update BEST calendar and groupme with upcoming events for groups you advise (link).
- Engage in reflective conversations to identify creative and/or powerful directions to take student activist work.
  - How can students "next level" their work?
  - What role can you play in bringing their work to that next level?
  - Actively identify ways you as a femtor or BEST as a program can support student goals.
  - Consider developmental needs for each group based on their organizational features

Academic Advising

Student Perspectives

"In the individual talks I've had with the femtors, I think quite a bit of it was like talking about my experience and less about the work I was doing and more about like what I was taking away and the development of my experience and identity. And like understanding of where I fit into it all. Like with the work that I'm doing, if that makes sense. And as a student. I think um, I was felt like very reassured that there's so many like Grad students around me because I was like, I need to apply to Grad school who do I like help me, like, you know. And that kind of like I guess transfer of experience and stories was very helpful."

Overview

Navigating UCLA as both an activist and student can be challenging, particularly when we experience oppression related to the ways our identities are engaged within classes and in discussions with other students and faculty. There is no way to fully separate our academic and activist personas. Students may want to discuss the nature of these tensions in their educational experience, or they may wish to receive advice about potential academic resources that are supportive of their identities. Femtors can play an important role in supporting student activists find their fit within the academic terrain of UCLA. Femtors may also be called to support

students in developing their scholarly ideas, research, and professional materials. A challenging aspect of academic advising is finding a way to support students as they find healthy ways to balance their activism and academic responsibilities.

Academic Advising Responsibilities

- Check-in with students about their educational experience and goals.
  - Learn about students academic experience, goals, and needs
  - Provide space for students to share their feelings on their academic experiences
- Identify ways to support student academic and professional development (refer to others as needed)
  - Hold space for conversations about students' academic identity
  - Provide feedback on professional documents, i.e., Resume, cover letters, graduate school or scholarship applications
  - Write letters of recommendation when requested

Social and Mental Health Support

Student Perspectives

"When you're a student activist it goes into personal support. Just because a lot of these issues are very personal. They, they are very close to home. That's why we do this work a lot of the time. That's why I do the work. It's very important to me, and I know that it's also important to a lot of people I care about and people in my community. So just having any kind of support, aside from the weekly, biweekly check-ins that we would have coffee or just a chat or just catching up, like just checking in. How are we doing personally? That always helped… I felt so bad sometimes in the past two years."

"Just like checking in, seeing how we're doing it honestly, always helps. Even if someone doesn't talk about it at length, just someone asking like, oh, how are you doing? How's everything to be to honestly to be able to answer honestly like, Oh, I'm good or today I'm not so good, but working on or whatever it is. And that just really helped."

"I guess my sophomore year or like everything I was building up, I wasn't doing well in school. Um, and I was just not feeling well and talking to her and just having all of my feelings out and crying and have someone to support me through that. Like, that was, that was like some, like I really appreciate it, someone hearing me out because I like at that point I didn't really have anyone to kind of talk to about like everything that I was feeling that would understand [about my undocumented identity]. Um, and then, um, after that I actually kind of started going to CAPS and I've been going to CAPS for awhile now I'm talking to a therapist throughout all of these problems. Um, yeah, that's pretty much how I dealt with it was mostly just finding like professional help because I was in a very bad place."

"Just the support of like physically being there for your members. Um, I, I really feel like that takes off so much stress from the things we have to deal with...I think it's, yeah. I would say literally just like the physical, emotional support. That's my favorite thing."

Overview

Many students in BEST struggle with mental health challenges connected to experiences of trauma and ongoing interpersonal and structural oppression. In our experience, many students do not have people that they trust to talk to about some life issues. BEST femtors have been the difference between some students receiving the help they needed in times of crisis. To fulfill such a role, BEST femtors must cultivate [trust] and [vulnerability] while maintaining [professional relationships]. Femtors must be empathetic and supportive when students do confide in them, but also aware of their own challenges and limitations (i.e., own health status, triggers, lack of familiarity).

Sometimes it is enough for femtors to just be there. However, we want femtors to proactively support students and groups mental health. Femtors can do this by promoting positive mental-health practices, including employing mindfulness-based approaches, solution-focused brief therapy, and embodied care approaches among group members to strengthen the relationships between activists during their daily work.

Social and Mental Health Support Responsibilities

- Promote mindfulness-based approaches (i.e., yoga, meditation, silent walking, embodied activities) during workshops and meetings, facilitating short meditative exercises.
- Facilitate group learning and adoption of [embodied care practices] within group work dynamics.
- Check-in with femtees about work/life balance and socioemotional wellbeing.
- Hold two [solution-focused brief therapy] sessions with each leader from your groups.
    - Send an intake/scheduling email (link)
    - Prepare by reviewing the conversation guidelines, [conversation map] and [example questions resources]
    - Complete therapy intake form (link)

Leadership Development

Student Perspectives

"I like the skills because like the workshops took care of like the skill, like activists, like part of it, um, which is super helpful and maybe that has to do with femtorship also. Um, and I appreciated that part of it a lot because I learned so much"

"Yeah, they [social justice training and workshops] were really, I enjoyed them a lot. I think like I've got a lot out of them and I really liked going out to like the workshops and events when I could. And yeah, in general I really like valued it. It was very helpful in my development and learning about social justice and learning what it takes to be an advocate. The conflict resolution one…. when I went there I was thinking like, have there been any conflicts I've been a part of in my org? And I can only think of one or two. And I was like, I don't know how this could have

been resolved differently. So I was like, let me see if I can go and learn something new from this workshop and that workshop. I think that was probably my favorite one."

"We came back from that conflict resolution training. We talked about that a lot, looking at our different board members and seeing their different leadership styles and understanding where each person was coming from. We really liked using that and I think we had maybe 20 minutes of just straight talking about that specific leadership styles. Me and the other girl that went to the conflict resolution workshop gave a brief summary about leadership styles and then we kind of had a conversation about that pretty much. People looked at their own leadership styles. They talked about their own experiences and that was really cool. It was cool to implement that. "

"I consider it vital to my growth because I've learned a lot from the few BEST workshops I have gone to. I don't know if UCLA offers any others like that, but BEST workshops have helped me grow as a leader, as a student activist, and just as a person."

"Their [social justice trainings or workshops] are extremely valuable. Honestly, they should be a priority for board members of orgs to go through. They should be integrated as a mandatory curriculum for Ucla students. I think it's extremely important, especially in this day and age."

"I think that they've done this for the board this year. I really would want them to do the leadership curriculum. We had this conversation one quarter last year, and it was facilitated through BEST and it was about leadership development and I thought it was fantastic. I thought it was really important and really beneficial. So I'm hoping that BEST follows up with that at least at least once a year. But I think once a quarter would be great too, if, if he could break it down like step wise, like maybe started off in the beginning of the year."

Overview

While leadership is recognized as a critical college outcome and significant predictor of college success, there are few resources invested in leadership development, particularly for student activists. Most leadership training happens within student organizations, yet student groups are generally too busy to dedicate significant time towards leadership development (there are exceptions, of course). Existing programs tend to focus on formal training of hard leadership skills and often suppress transformative social justice agendas. Further, leadership education has often adopted frameworks that do not recognize the specific factors impacting leadership practices among students of color. Thus, a key femtorship role is to fill in this gap and support activist leadership development through formal activities, including femtoring conversations, reflective leadership development conversations, and workshops.

Leadership Development Responsibilities

- Facilitate reflective leadership conversations with each group in Fall and Spring quarters.
- Facilitate two leadership development workshops with each group throughout the year.
- Engage individuals and collectives in leadership development through femtorship.
  - Facilitate brief leadership development discussions / conversations during meetings (link)

     ○ Identify and affirm examples of student leadership practices and growth during participation in student activities

BEST Program Participation

Overview

Femtors play a number of other important roles to make sure the BEST program is successful. These include supporting general programming and leadership development activities, program evaluation and research, and participating in team and professional development.

BEST Program Participation Responsibilities

- Participate in BEST Leadership Team weekly meetings
- Participate in BEST Leadership Team quarterly retreats
- Participate in BEST Leadership Team professional development and review activities
- Participate in BEST programming and activities
- Contribute to the development of BESTy resources.
- Maintain femtor Instagram journal / diary (link)
- Maintain quarterly group progress reports for your femtees (link)
- (Optional) Participate in BEST research writing and development
- (Optional) Grant writing and fundraising development

2017 Femtorship Support Document

Effective Femtorship Principles:
1. Assist student leaders towards achieving institutional action and change on campus
2. Assist student leaders with skill development
3. Know where to meet students they are all at different levels/stages
4. Accommodate to meet the needs of each student group
5. Be present and cognizant of students needs
6. Provide instrumental support as opposed to giving ideas without guidance
7. Provide social and emotional support
8. Transfers institutional knowledge

How to Navigate Challenges
When experiencing any challenges here are some things to keep in mind.

1. <u>Meeting group needs</u>: provide the necessary support the group needs, while acknowledging that each of the groups has different needs
    1. Ask students what they would want you to do at any given occasion
2. <u>What is your role</u>: the goal is to assist in the development of student leaders
    1. Develop a culture that provides support

     2. If you attend any of their meetings have the group introduce you as a femtor if that is what they want

     3. Attempt to attend meetings to let everyone know that as femtors you are available

3. <u>About the group:</u> Have a clear understanding about the purpose of the group
4. <u>Awareness about the group:</u> Oftentimes students are not used to having the support from a femtor, acknowledging that this may be the case, make sure to show your support
5. <u>Self-awareness:</u> A challenge is not being too controlling and wanting to take a leadership role.
     1. There are groups who will not want as much support
     2. Be aware that marginalized groups need additional support. You are there to support.
     3. Be aware of when to shift roles. Know when to model if necessary. For instance, in meetings with administrators.
     4. Be present and flexible
6. <u>Sustainability of student project:</u> Assist students in developing a structure that is sustainable and promotes leaderful organizations. It is essential to invest/assist in the development of each student as a leader.
     1. Transferring roles to further develop leadership skills
7. <u>Your self-care:</u>
     1. If any conflicts come up you can always check-in with BLT to provide additional support
8. <u>Building relationships:</u> building relationships with student leaders happens organically. But perhaps you can facilitate an activity that is not related to the student project, such as coloring.

Appendix G – Femtor Agreement

This document was mutually developed between femtors and their groups at the start of the 2019-2020 Academic Year.

The purpose of this agreement is to assist you in documenting mutually agreed upon goals and parameters that will serve as the foundation for your femtoring relationship. This template is expected to be altered to meet individual needs.

Goals
What do you hope to achieve as a result of this relationship? *Make sure to share your quarterly goals sheet.*

How will the femtor play a role in helping you achieve those goals? *Speak here about how hands-on or hands-off you would like your femtor to be. (Femtors can simply help you talk through challenges, provide developmental skill-building opportunities, help with organizing strategies, etc…)*

Meetings, Communication Styles & Boundaries

Meeting frequency

How often would you all like to meet (weekly, biweekly, etc…) _____
How long would you like your meetings? _____
Where would you like to meet at? _____

Communication Style

How would you like to communicate? (circle most appropriate)

Text   Email   Phone Call   Zoom   Other:_____

What are your boundaries around communication? (for example, when will you respond? How long will it take you to respond? Do you communicate on weekends/breaks?)

Mutual Accountability

How will you keep each other accountable for what was communicated in this agreement. Make a plan for *evaluating the femtor relationship* (e.g., bi-annual review of femtorship communication, goals, and outcomes/accomplishments)

*Students, please note: If you feel that the femtor is not being responsive or you don't feel comfortable communicating issues with them, please note that you can contact the program coordinators.

ONE-ON-ONE 101 GUIDE

What is a one-on-one?

Relationship building is at the core of organizing and happens in many different ways. One core technique, the one-on-one, is an intentional conversation between an organizational leader and another member, potential member, or ally.

Goals of the one-on-one

The general purpose of the one-on-one is to build and strengthen a relationship. One on ones also model appropriate boundaries for community relationships to flourish; demonstrate organizational values as lived through our interactions; and practice self-care and respectful listening and sharing to create healthy relationships while doing change work.

Setting up one-on-one

The reason why you want to meet with the person should be shared with them beforehand. Be prepared for the person to say no, yes or ask questions that help strengthen the purpose of the meeting and relationship. Be clear with yourself about why you are meeting before asking and be receptive to the needs and time constraints of the person you're meeting.

Once clear about the purpose of the meeting, set up the meeting based on the relationship you have with the person: how do they prefer setting things up (in person/phone/email)? If your connection is through someone else's referral, can the recommender introduce you (by email/phone/in person) or suggest the best way to make the request based on experience?

The request should be short and clear and include how much time the meeting will last. Most people are okay with a 30-60 minute meeting and some one on ones could take place over a meal, depending on your relationship. The same is true for where to meet, but generally meet somewhere that is convenient for the person you are meeting. The key is to set expectations for the meeting, what will be discussed, etc. Make sure to exchange contact info in case plans change.

The Meeting

One on one meetings are not scripted, but you should come prepared to ask the questions that align with outcomes you discussed with the person. There are often unexpected outcomes that are exciting. For example, the meeting may have been set up to find out information but resulted in the person expressing greater interest in the organization. You can then schedule a time for them to come to a meeting to learn more, get trained, and do some work.

Here are some sample questions that can be useful at one-on-one meetings:

- How did you get involved in this issue? What do you hope to accomplish in the short term, long term?
- What organizations are you involved with, if any? Who else do you think I should talk with?
- What are ways you were hoping to be involved, what do you want to learn?
- What do you think it would take to win?
- What kind of support do you need to accomplish your goals? What special interests or skills you could contribute?

The best questions open up opportunities for learning, "how", "what" questions for example open up opportunities for story-telling. Questions that can be answered with a yes or no are not bad questions but try to mix them in appropriately to gain clarity or start a new conversation. Always remember the purpose

of the meeting which is to build a stronger relationship to advance the effort, so although focus is important so is staying relaxed, honest and present.

One of the primary outcomes of a one-on-one is you learning more about the people and groups that the person you are meeting with knows, and vice-versa. If there is time find out from the person who else they suggest you talk with. This should be reciprocated if the person is interested in making contacts with people and groups that you know.

Take notes or document the meeting in the way that is most comfortable and effective for you. If taking notes takes you away from being present than take some moment at the end of the meeting to review the discussion and write some things down. As you document your meeting, consider what do you need to remember months later? And how will you organize your notes so you can find them again, including their contact information?

Follow-up

Timely follow-up to one-on-ones is important. Follow-up in in the way that was agreed upon (if it was agreed upon) at the meeting or in an appropriate manner. Follow-through on any tasks that you agreed to on your end as well. You have invested a lot of time in the one-on-one and the quality and timeliness of your follow through will often determine whether or not it was worth it. Follow-ups also should include specific next steps and deadlines if any were agreed to and helpful reminders along the way.

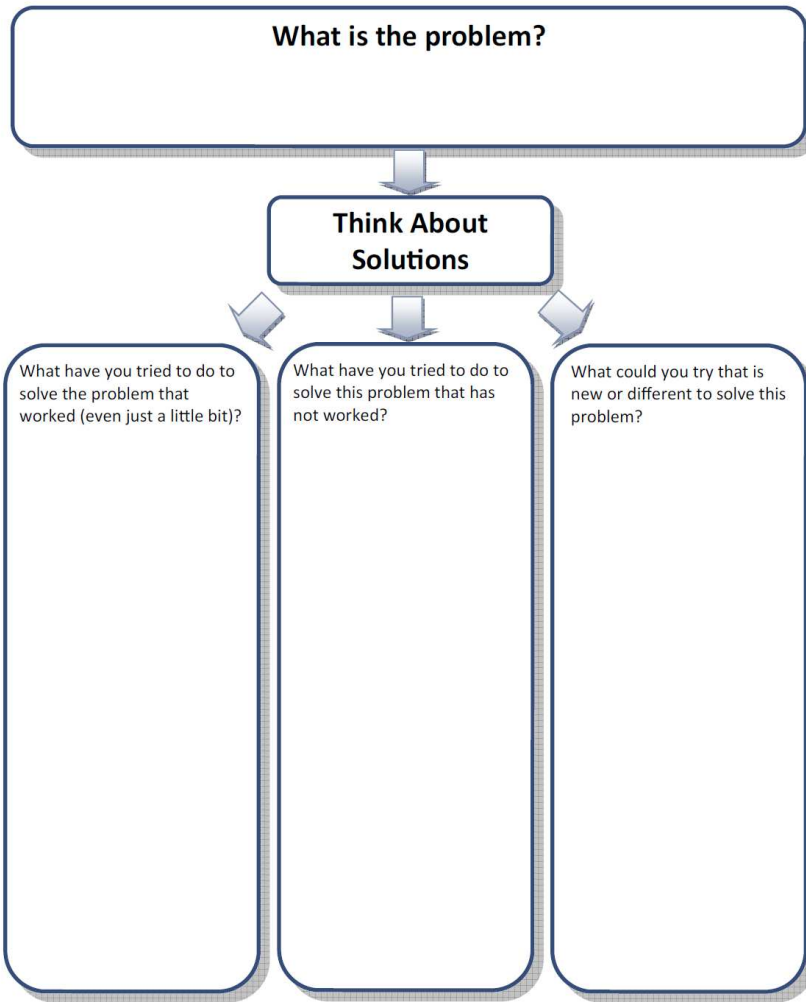Appendix I – Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) Materials

SFBT Map

Solution-Focused Map

What is the problem?

Think About Solutions

What have you tried to do to solve the problem that worked (even just a little bit)?	What have you tried to do to solve this problem that has not worked?	What could you try that is new or different to solve this problem?

How useful was this map and discussion?
NOT Useful   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10   VERY Useful   www.somaconsultancy.co.uk

Soma Consultancy (n.d.). Solution-Focused Map. Accessed November 9, 2021 from https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/49328558401250680/

Personal Check-Ins practice script

INTRODUCTION

How is everything with you?

It's great to see you today. I really appreciate that you're making the time for me, and I am excited to get to know you better. This conversation is an intentional space to check in with you as a person, student, worker, community member, and activist. I also want to provide space for you to get to know me so that you can feel more comfortable reaching out to me in times of need. Do you have any initial thoughts or questions about this meeting?

OPENING – General check-in and get to know them. Ask one of the following lines of questioning (or more if you have the time).

So, how is your week/quarter going? Any big events that you're looking forward to or anxious about for any reason?

How are your classes going? What classes are you taking? What are you passionate about with these classes?

Are you working this quarter? How is the work environment?

SFBT

Shifting slightly, I wanted to check in to see if there is anything that is giving you anxiety or concern in your life right now. In other words, is there something that you see as a problem that you are dealing with. This could be big or small, have to do with school, friends, family, activism, or work. Please feel free to share only what you are comfortable sharing.

[Show concern, affirmation, care, sympathy/empathy, love]

Now thinking about this problem, what have you tried in the past to address the problem that worked (even just a little bit)? On a scale of 1 to 10, how much better did this make things? What changed? What have you tried to do to solve this problem that has not worked? What could you try that is new or different to solve this problem?

What are your next steps?

Is there any way that you want me to personally support you with this (i.e., check in, talk more, brainstorm)?

Thank you for sharing this with me.

CLOSING

Before we wrap up, I wanted to let you know that I am available if you need me. In addition to my sparkling personality, I can also help with recommendation letters, provide academic advice, help with writing/editing. If you don't know if I can help you with something, just ask. I will be transparent about my own capacity.

Student 1 - Mental health struggles. Lack of motivation. Needs check ins.

Student 2 - Moving forward. How to grow. Balance. Struggling with identity.

Student 3 - Lack of confidence in abilities. Wants to feel connected with whole of self. Concerned about role of class in organizing.

Appendix J – 2016-19 BEST Summer Boot Camp Agendas

Please note that the documents below are not in their original form. They have been condensed, removing images and page breaks to reduce length. The content has not been changed other than the redaction of personal information.

2016 BEST Training Agenda

Saturday, August 27th, 2016
Meeting: Bradley International Hall A & B
Lunch and dinner: Moore 2120
9AM-8PM

AGENDA
9:00-9:30: [Bradley Hall A&B] Light Breakfast and check-in
9:30-9:40: Welcome and introductions of BEST Leadership Team
9:40-10:20: Icebreaker and community rules
10:20-10:30 Break with coffee
10:30-11:30 Navigating Identity and Group Conflict
11:30-12:30 Project Presentations by Project Leaders
12:30-12:45: [Moore Hall 2120] Walk to Moore for lunch
12:45-1:30: Lunch in Moore 2120 (Homegirl Catering)
1:30-1:45: Walk back to Bradley Hall
1:45-3:45: [Bradley Hall A&B] History of UCLA Past/Present and Panel of Activists
            Panelists: XXXX XXXX, XXXX XXXX, and XXXX XXXX
3:45-5:10: How do we build coalitions at UCLA activity
5:10-5:15: Break/Transition
5:15-5:45: Keynote by XXXX XXX: Being an Activist & Scholar
5:45-6:00: [Moore Hall 2120] Walk to Moore hall
6:00-6:45: Dinner at Moore Hall
            Introductions of Mentors for each project
6:45-6:55: Temperature check
6:55-7:15: Paperwork etc.
7:15-7:45: Vision Mapping
7:45-8:00: Closing Remarks and Next Steps
8:00-8:10: Any announcements or closing remarks from the Project Leaders?

2017 BEST Summer Boot Camp Agenda

BEST Boot Camp Agenda
Saturday, September 16 - Sunday, September 17, 2017
Meeting: GSE&IS 111 and 121

Lunch and dinner: GSE&IS 245
Quiet Corner: GSE&IS 228
10AM-7PM

Goals:
Build clear understanding of BEST and our work together over the year ahead
Strengthen relationships
Reflection on life experiences, activism, and solidarity organizing
Develop concrete organizing skills

Saturday, September 16th
10:00-10:30   Light Breakfast
10:30-10:45   Welcome, Grounding, Goals & Agenda Review
10:45-11:15   Introductions of BEST Leadership Team
11:15-12:30   Icebreaker and Community Agreements
12:30-1:15   Lunch (245)
1:15-1:45   What is BEST
1:45-3:15   Project Leader Presentations
3:15-3:30   Break
3:30-4:45   Developing Solidarity Partnerships (with XXXX XXXX)
4:45-5:45   Dinner (245)
5:45-6:45   Art Reflection: Past Year Learning
6:45-7:00   Evaluation & Closing

Sunday, September 17th
10:00-10:30   Light breakfast
10:30-11:15   Masks Art Reflection
11:15-1:15   Practicing Coalition-Building & Solidarity: Deep-Dive into Anti-Blackness (with XXXX
XXXX)
1:15-1:45   Lunch (245)
1:45-3:00   Skills Development Break-Outs:
Decoding Institutional Policies (111)
Base-Building (121)
3:00-3:15   Break
3:15-4:15   Femtor Speed Dating
4:15-4:45   The Year Ahead
4:45-5:45   Dinner (245)
5:45-6:45   Art Reflection: Year Ahead Longing/Desires
6:45-7:00   Evaluation, Closing and What's Next

BREAK OUT DESCRIPTIONS
Base-Building and Leadership Development
Facilitated by xxxx xxxx in Room 121

This workshop will focus on the core elements of building a base and leadership within your group - radical hospitality and one-on-ones. Through practicing in action, you will learn how to identify someone's motivation for social justice work, convey the importance of getting involved in your group, and make a concrete ask that will leave them excited to show up - again and again!

Decoding Institutional Policy and Advocacy

Facilitated by Kareem Elzein in Room 111

This workshop provides a framework for understanding the organizational structure of UCLA bureaucracy and leadership. Drawing from both facilitator and participant experiences from within the institution, we will identify guiding principles that lead to effective advocacy. In addition to the big picture, we will discuss specific leveraging strategies, tactics, and best practices.

2019 BLEST Camp Agenda and Handouts

*Please note that each document included in the welcome packet shared with participants has been differentiated using line breaks and the "*****" demarcation. The content has not been changed other than the redaction of personal information and removal of images.*

2019-2020
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Bruin Leadership Excellence and Student Transformation Camp
www.bestucla.com | @BEST_UCLA
BLEST CAMP AGENDA

BLEST CAMP GOALS
Build a clear understanding of BEST and our work together over the year ahead
Strengthen relationships and community building
Reflection on life experiences and organizing
Develop concrete organizing skills

BEST EXPECTATIONS
Demonstrate progress on the proposed project.
Follow Femtorship agreement (e.g. communication, meetings, etc…)
Commit to participating in at least two of the BEST Program's personal development and community activities per quarter (e.g., summer training program, monthly potlucks, and training, mentorship meetings).
Participate in all BEST assessments (e.g., surveys, interviews).
Adhere to all UCLA policies.

AGENDA

9:00-9:30A	Breakfast & Check-In
9:30-9:45A	Welcome, Grounding, Goals & Agenda Review
9:45P-10:45A	Community Agreements, Expectations for BEST, Icebreaker
10:45-11:15A	Introductions of BEST Leadership Team
11:15-11:20A	Break

11:20-12:30	Project Leader Presentations--Group Speed Dating
12:30 - 1:15P	Lunch
1:15-2:15P	Femtorship
2:15-3:25P	The Year Ahead & Femtor Connections: Goal Setting
3:25-3:30P	Break
3:30-4:15P	Power Mapping
4:15-4:20P	Break
4:20-5:05P	Self-Protection Session
5:05-5:15P	Evaluation and Next Steps

*****

GROUP NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Group Name: _____

Describe a typical week for your organization (i.e. what type of activities do you do, how often do you meet, etc.)
What are some things your group does well?
What are some things your group tends to struggle with?
Think back to the conversation we had earlier about femtorship. What types of support could a femtor offer to help you navigate these challenges?
What types of support could a femtor offer to help you accomplish your goals?
What other types of support might also be useful for your group (i.e. connections with external orgs, more funding, etc.)?

EXAMPLE RESPONSES

Describe a typical week for your organization.
A typical week for us includes putting on a program of some sort, a general body meeting, an executive board meeting, and organizing for our mid-year conference. Work responsibilities include everything from sending emails, to making room reservations, prepping for meetings, connecting with partnering orgs, etc.
What are some things your group does well?
My group comes up with great ideas that are aligned with our organizational goals and there is a great sense of comradery within the group.
What are some things your group tends to struggle with?
Sometimes our ideas don't come to fruition because we have trouble executing the plan. Work falls through the cracks, deadlines get missed, etc.
Think back to the conversation we had earlier about femtorship. What types of support could a femtor offer help in navigating these challenges?
We could use some help figuring out an accountability plan so that we can get our ideas of the ground.
What types of support could a femtor offer to help you accomplish these goals?

We could use some strategies for getting new members and some external accountability from femtor to make sure we stay on top of things.

What other types of support might also be useful for your group (i.e. connections with external orgs, more funding, etc.)?

Additional funding to attend an activist training in the fall and easier access to meeting spaces on campus.

*****

BEST MEDIA SUPPORT

We have a BEST media team who provide media support in the form of photography, videography, graphic design, and media consultations. To submit a request for media support simply open your camera app on your phone and point it at this QR code.

If you have any media related questions, feel free to email or text media coordinator XXXX XXXX

Follow us on Instagram and Facebook:

@BEST_UCLA & Facebook.com/bestucla

MEDIA WORK STUDY POSITION

This year we will also be hiring a media assistant as a work study position. If you are interested in this position, reach out to XXXX XXXX.

*****

POWER MAPPING

What is Power Mapping? When seeking a change in policy or practice, power mapping is a tool to identify who holds power in that decision, as well as who holds influence over that person. Clarifying these relationships and power dynamics helps with identifying the target of your direct actions and campaign activities.*

Step 1: Identify a specific policy or issue that your group wishes to change.

Step 2: List the decision makers who have power to change that policy or issue.

Step 3: Identify influencers who have sway over decision makers and their type of relationship.

Step 4: Identify specific decision makers you wish to apply pressure on and who among their network of influencers might be suitable targets of your campaign.

Step 5: Develop strategies and tactics for different campaign targets. Strategies and tactics should have measurable outcomes.

* There are some campaigns where power mapping is less relevant, especially when the "problem" we seek to change is particularly entrenched and spread across many decision makers.

BEST 2019 Leadership Skills Evaluation (Pre-Survey)

Please enter your full name_____

Please enter your preferred email address_____

Please enter your BEST project group_____

Leadership Skills Evaluation

In this section, we ask you to honestly evaluate your strengths as an organizer and leader. We hope that this evaluation provides an opportunity for personal reflection. This evaluation is adapted from a tool developed by Showing Up for Racial Justice.

Think about the statements below. How true is each one for you? Give each statement a number between 1-4 (the rating system isn't perfect, so just go with the flow).

1 = rarely2 = sometimes3 = usually4 = always

Facilitation	1	2	3	4

I am comfortable being in front of a room to facilitate ()	
I take time to design agendas for my group with clear goals and processes that encourage a broad range of participation. ()	
I can hold space for groups when they are experiencing conflict ()	

Leadership	1	2	3	4

I have a good sense of the skills and experiences my people need to become more powerful leaders ()	
I have a clear plan for deepening the skills of other people in my group ()	
I'm clear about the gifts and skills the people I work with bring to the work ()	

Clarity on mutual interest	1	2	3	4

I feel clear about my stake in advancing social justice ()				
I feel comfortable talking about my mutual interest in advancing social justice with others 1-1 ()				
I feel comfortable talking about my mutual interest to advancing social justice in front of groups. ()				

Accountability and Working in Diverse Coalitions	1	2	3	4
I can receive grounded feedback without becoming defensive ()				
I feel comfortable calling in others in my group who have made mistakes ()				
I feel clear about the role of my communities in diverse (e.g., race, class, documentation status, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, religion) coalitions ()				

Cross-Class Organizing	1	2	3	4
I am clear what my class background is ()				
My role in movement work given my class background is clear to me ()				
I actively encourage the groups I am part of to center class ()				

Base Building	1	2	3	4
I am comfortable talking with people who don't already agree with me ()				
I engage in courageous 1-1 conversations with comrades to help me understand their gifts and motivations ()				
I'm clear how to recruit and retain the number of people required to make an impact in my community ()				

Campaign Planning	1	2	3	4

I am clear about how to lead a group through a campaign planning process ()	
I'm comfortable talking with accountability partners about campaign planning ()	
I encourage my group to move beyond mobilization to running campaigns ()	

Connecting	1	2	3	4

It's easy for me to appreciate and praise other people in movement work ()	
I have the capacity to build strong relationships across lines of difference ()	
People generally find me approachable ()	

Community	1	2	3	4

I am connected with like-minded people and organizations outside of UCLA ()	
I actively seek out opportunities to connect with community members in the Los Angeles area ()	
I know how to join my work at UCLA with the work of people off campus ()	

Conflict	1	2	3	4

I'm good at dealing with conflict and confrontation ()	
I find that I fear and/or dislike conflict less than I used to ()	
It's easy for me to envision a broad range of possible outcomes and approaches to problems ()	

Visioning	1	2	3	4

I am creative in thinking of new solutions to old problems within my organizing context ()	
I am effective at bridging my own vision for the work that I engage in with the visions of my comrades ()	
I have a clear vision about where my organization is going and the steps that I and others should collectively take in order to achieve that vision ()	

Media	1	2	3	4

I have the skills I need to develop effective media resources that benefit my social justice work. ()	
I know how to utilize media platforms (i.e., print, social media, podcasts) as an organizing tool. ()	
I have a clear understanding of how to develop effective messages for media that convey the perspectives and needs of my social justice organization. ()	

Power Mapping	1	2	3	4

I have a clear understanding of how power and privilege shape the community issues my social justice work seeks to address. ()	
I understand the formal policies and informal practices that impact the social justice work that I engage in. ()	
I understand the motivations of people in positions of power and have a sense of how to influence their decision making. ()	

Appendix L - BEST Social Justice Leadership Workshops

Series title	Workshop title	Workshop description
Organizing 101 Series	Organizing 101	Knowledge and skills sharing around the basics of organizing. Supports recognition, reflection, and growth of fundamental organizing abilities among group members.
	One on One conversations	Learning the "bread and butter" tool of the "relational organizing" method. Reflect on the importance of relationships in organizing and practice one on one conversations as a way to support relationship building towards organizational goals.
	Power Mapping	An interactive workshop where group members identify the people in power who can influence change, while brainstorming strategic ways to mobilize influencers towards campaign goals. Engaging an entire group in a power mapping activity helps get our creative organizing juices flowing and gets everyone on the same page in moving towards unified goals.
	Campaign planning	Knowledge and skills sharing around the basics of organizing campaigns, including clarifying goals, targets, and strategies, building a base, and planning actions and mobilizations.
	Base building	Interactive workshop exploring approaches to recruitment, network building, and intentional organizational growth that is oriented towards cultivating leadership and growing power.
Group Culture Series	Group Culture 101	Introduction to group culture concepts: reflection on your group's culture, learning foundational concepts, and engaging in practices to support group culture.
	Cultures of Care	Learning and reflective discussions on group cultures of care, self- and collective-care practices, and growing supportive communities.
	Cultures of Leadership	Learning and reflective discussions on group cultures of leadership, leadership development practices, and infrastructure. Participants work collectively to develop a group plan for leadership development, as well as practice a leadership development tool.
Collective Development Series	Accountability	Facilitated conversation on group accountability norms. Aims to develop a consensus around issues impacting individual and collective accountability

	Burnout and Sustainability	Facilitated conversation on factors affecting individual and organizational sustainability with the work, such as burnout and self-care. Aims to develop a consensus around issues impacting sustainability and strategies to alleviate burnout.
	Addressing Sexual Violence	Facilitated workshop to help develop organizational awareness, consensus, and development around sexual violence protocols and practices.

BACKGROUND

Student advocacy is instrumental to a flourishing UCLA campus climate. Recently, student advocates have contributed to important changes like establishing the diversity requirement, the social justice referendum, and the Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST). These latest accomplishments, like all successful student campaigns, are the product of sustained struggle, requiring many students to make great personal, professional, and academic sacrifices. However, the sacrifices that students endure in order to improve the institution are often unhealthy and unsustainable. Given the value added to the university by student advocacy, it should be an institutional prerogative to facilitate and support student civic engagement within the university community, so as to reduce the personal costs. This institutional responsibility is even more urgent in light of a Donald Trump presidency, which may lead to increasing hostility and targeting of individuals and communities advocating for justice causes.

BEST

The Bruin Excellence & Student Transformation Grant Program (BEST) in its pilot year has innovated a model of support for student advocacy, providing student leaders with training, funding, data, logistical planning and support, networking and community building, and ongoing peer-to-peer mentorship. These program elements are designed to create a supportive environment for campus activists that fosters creativity, coalition building, and community. Nine projects have been funded in its first funding cycle, empowering 35 campus leaders to pursue social justice initiatives of their own invention. Only three months in, these groups have achieved tremendous progress and success. We are also encouraged to see the budding signs of coalition building between these groups, with students from different communities increasingly working together to support and learn from one another.

NEXT STEPS

In the second year of the BEST initiative, we are planning to expand the project component by 50%. This will translate to the support of an additional five student projects and the expansion of existing BEST student initiatives. We e are also interested in creating a new BEST program aimed at facilitating engagement and advocacy of students during their first year on campus.

Specifically, we propose the BEST Justice Advocates Institute (JAI) as a year-long initiative for incoming freshmen and transfers seeking to deepen their social justice understanding and practice. The program will accomplish these goals by engaging 30 first year students in professional development, project planning and implementation, networking, peer-to-peer mentoring, and knowledge sharing. The purpose of this program is to create a pipeline of campus advocates who are knowledgeable, resourced, and connected, so that they may thrive in both

their academic and advocacy work on campus. Participants who complete JAI will also be encouraged and supported in developing proposals for the BEST grant projects initiative.

PROPOSAL
BEST Leadership Team is proposing the establishment of JAI in partnership with Residential Life and First Year Experience. As an advocacy emergence experience for new Bruins, JAI will provide first year students with a working knowledge of campus resources and civic structures, a history of UCLA campus advocacy, social justice education, practical advocacy strategies, and the skills to balance and incorporate civic life and values within academic and professional aspirations. These program components will be coupled with ongoing peer-to-peer mentorship and networking and community building events that will form a support system meant to offset the challenges commonly experienced by campus advocates. This support system and approach has been used by the BEST program and has been shown to be helpful in guaranteeing participants' retention and success, while simultaneously deepening their social justice practice and commitment.

JAI will leverage the existing resources and infrastructure of BEST, including existing curricula, expertise, tools, mentors, and support. JAI will be led by a program coordinator who is responsible for developing and implementing core components of the program, including the summer trainings, year-long community and learning activities, and other student programming. The JAI program coordinator will be a graduate student leader who, as a member of the BEST Leadership Team, will collaborate with First Year Experience and Residential Life personnel to carry out this program. The coordinator would lead planning, development, and implementation this program, while promoting inter-unit administrative engagement and collaboration.

Recruitment
Students would be recruited during the new student welcome week and through the transfer student center, student groups, and word of mouth.

Program Description
Students would first be introduced to the program during a summer retreat that would take place on campus during welcome week built to facilitate initial knowledge sharing and community building. From there, participants would enroll into a year-long academic program of fiat lux courses focusing on skill and knowledge development. Participants would also be invited to monthly potlucks geared towards community and coalition building. Further, participants will receive peer-to-peer fem/mentoring with senior student advocates trained to provide counseling and support in both academics and advocacy. Through the fiat lux and peer-to-peer fem/mentorship, participants will be encouraged to develop, implement, and evaluate individual and collective advocacy projects.

Program Budget Pilot Year, Academic Year 2017-18

The proposed budget is for the JAI's pilot year. The BEST Leadership Team is asking for funding support from Residential Life and First Year Experience for part or the entire program budget. The proposed partnership would begin during the summer of 2017 through the end of the following academic year, upon which the program will be evaluated for renewal.

Category	Item	Cost	Narrative
Personnel	Program Coordinator; 50% GSR Step IV; 12 months	$40,829 including tuition remission	The program coordinator will oversee the planning and implementation of programming. The coordinator will also provide support and professional development opportunities for team program members
	Three Fem/ Mentor Salaries	$13,155	Fem/Mentors will provide peer-to-peer support and facilitation of participants' project development and implementation.
	30 Participant stipends	$4,500 ($50 per participant quarter)	Participants will receive $50 gift cards each quarter for their ongoing participation in all program activities.
	Subtotal	**$58,484**	
Summer Training	Space	Free (free to students)	Multipurpose space for workshops, presentations, activities, and meals.
	Food (Two meals, snacks)	$2,400 ($800/day)	Lunch, dinner, light breakfast snacks, and drinks for participants, organizers, and guests
	Honoraria	$2,000	For keynote speakers, panels, and special facilitators
	Materials and supplies	$800	Papers, pens, printing, and other supplies for all activities.
	Parking	$540 ($12 per pass,15 participants, 3 days)	For commuter students, presenters, and organizers.
	Subtotal	**$5,740**	

Community Building Activities	Food	$1,800	Twice quarterly potlucks
	Materials	$600	Activities at the potlucks
	Subtotal	**$2,400**	
Programming	Project budgets	$12,000	Each participant will receive $400 to develop an advocacy project during the academic year. Participants can join their resources to develop larger-scale collaborative projects.
	Contingency fund	$2,000	In the event that additional funding is needed due to unforeseen expenses or to address a community emergencies that might arise.
	Subtotal	**$14,000**	
	TOTAL	**$80,624**	

RACIST BRUIN

The *Racist Bruin* is not an attack on the *Daily Bruin*, but instead a critique of the university status quo that normalizes oppres-

TWITTER

UCLA prof Jeremy Boyce retweets **Bill Maher** @Bill Maher, 8/19/14 "ISIS... beheads another...keep pretending all religions are alike." Islamophobia or "academic freedom"? Meanwhile, Steven Salaita is fired for progressive tweets on the Gaza massacre.

SPORTS

65% of Black male undergraduates at UCLA are athletes. Black athletes are much less likely to graduate than white athletes. Truth is, a university with a mission to educate students instead pimps them for sports revenue. We agree with Kanye, UCLA doesn't care about Black people.

ABILITY & LAW

The UCLA campus and facilities are largely inaccessible to students, staff, and faculty with different abilities, despite federal law demanding access. Older buildings are not improved to avoid costs. Do they care about *all* students?

INSIDE: Back to your regular programming

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK: 🐦 #RacistBruin   #BRUINS4BLACKLIVES

BLOCK ASSAULTS WOMYN'S SENSIBILITIES

April 30, 2015, Chancellor Block released a PR statement updating the UCLA community about the work of his well-paid staff to end campus sexual violence. Was it coincidence his email arrived days after an on-campus investigation into UCLA's Title IX infractions by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights?

Block's suggestion of a fair and effective process insults our collective intelligence (check out http://bit.ly/1Loiflv). The administrative coverup of Professor Gabriel Piterberg's sexual assault of two womyn graduate students is obvious. Piterberg pressed his body against the students and forced his tongue into their mouths, and the administration shucked and jived. Block, will you acknowledge the willful, negligent failures of your administration? Or are you just another PR man in a clean suit? #DNB

Market update: Tuition up, education down

Yet again. The UC Board of Regents increased tuition last year. Yet again, this annual tradition massively impacts students from working-class backgrounds (disproportionately students of color), students with disabilities and chronic health problems, and students with dependents. Student debts will rise and a new generation of workers will enter a precarious job market. Because of increasing class sizes, students will do this with an even worse education than students graduating in previous years. You will read UCLA administration attempt to defend the costs of rising tuition. When you do, remember these words by economist Richard Vedder: "It's a lie. It's a lie. It's a lie."

The increase in the "costs of education" largely reflects a massive increase in the number and salary of administrators and associated staff (shout out to the Regents for copping themselves a salary increase the same year they hiked our tuition! Check out http://lat.ms/1lr5cWD) for the full story, paid for by replacing full-time employment of teaching professors with increasingly exploited part-time, adjunct faculty.

Those of us who are able to make use of many of the staff driven health, social, and organizing resources on campus know that many of UCLA's staff are indispensable parts of our community. We will not be convinced when they try to pit us students against the staff members, but we will remember "It's a lie. It's a lie." It's a lie because many UCLA staff do not work directly with students or in roles necessary to accomplish the university's teaching and research goals. It's a lie because the urgency and necessity of many of these campus resources, especially those dealing with mental health and marginalized communities generally, are face-saving reactions to the climate perpetuated by exclusionary curricula and admissions policies that dominate campus life and set the terms of the campus environment. "It's a lie. It's a lie. It's a lie."

Racist Bruin womynifesto

We are UCLA students opposed to institutionalized racism, sexism, and the corporatized university. This document is a response to pervasive bigotry, discrimination, and attacks on minoritized students, faculty, and campus workers. UCLA's solution – creating the Vice Chancellor of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion position – will not fix problems rooted in departments, administrative units, and many powerful administrators.

Meanwhile, the number of undergraduates increases with class sizes. Students pay more for less. Teachers work more with less. The most vulnerable among us pay more in student loans for lesser graduation rates and employment opportunities. Student tuition is up 5% while three UC chancellors will earn 20% more.

Courses are entrenched in Eurocentric ideas and modes of thinking. This inherently racist and colonialist system fails to equip students with the tools to interrogate contemporary issues of gender, sexuality, and ability, benefiting those with normative gender presentations and mental and physical features, and ultimately failing the university's mission.

Campus silence is deafening during the uprisings in Ferguson and Baltimore, the attacks on Gaza, and the murders at Ayotzinapa – broken only by student protesters and faculty-led programs – and are in stark contrast to Chancellor Block's willingness to open campus dialogue in service of the pro-Israel lobby.

We write the *Racist Bruin* to open an honest conversation and portray what students and workers are subjected to when the university facilitates racism, sexism, and the corporatization of our university. The injustices at UCLA are just a microcosm of larger white supremacy, institutional policies that criminalize, disadvantage, and kill the poor and people of color. By centering these issues in our community, we align ourselves with those fighting white supremacist patriarchal capital worldwide. We are committed to actualizing change within our communities. We call on you to speak louder, more often, and more openly to these problems. We stand in solidarity with University of Cape Town's #RhodesMustFall movement and #UStired2. #CarnesaleMustFall

RACIST BRUIN

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A&E
April 21, 2015 - CEC screens American Sniper despite Islamophobic posters on campus in February and Chapel Hill massacre weeks before. "Moderator" Professor Keith Fink avoid's discussing film's blatent Islamophobia, focusing instead on 'freedom of speech'.

SPORTS
UCLA more up in arms over bonfire disruption than proposed 30% fee hike. UCLA head football coach earns $3.25 million dollars, while black athletes drop out at high rates. What exactly are UCLA's measures of success?

SEX & LAW
Professor Raul Hinojosa of the Chicana/o studies department sexually harasses his female students and has had several Title IX comlpaints lodged against him over the last decade. The university refuses to take action, leaving female students to fend for themselves.

INSIDE: Back to your regular programming   **TELL US WHAT YOU THINK:** 🐦 #RacistBruin   #BRUINS4BLACKLIVES

BLOCK FUMBLES: No hope for students of color

Last spring, right-wing agitators posted racist stickers across campus, attacking black and undocumented students with racist and xenophobic statements. The Chancellor's response was a missed opportunity to acknowledge anti-Black racism. Writing to the *Daily Bruin,* Block suggested the UCLA campus should "respectfully debate" police murder.

The problem is, UCLA's position suggests we "respectfully debate" the merits of Klan ideology. When a UCLA student is killed by UCPD, should we "respectfully debate" that "incident"? Gene Block, all you've shown is that you do not know how to address institutional racism. #DNB

Violent/racist prof protected, nothing happens

February 6, 2014 -- concerned students in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSE&IS) held a town hall with about 150 students, staff, and faculty discussing ongoing incidents of racism and sexism at GSE&IS. Participants discussed racist incidents in Professor Val Rust's class that year, as well as others that occured in the past. A Black graduate student facilitated a discussion with Rust present. Rust never acknowledged or apologized for his actions, and the student openly criticized Rust for his ongoing intransigence and denial. The town hall ended soon thereafter.

Minutes later, Rust cornered the Black student to "explain" his actions. He grabbed the Black student's arm and hit him on the chest several times while shouting in his face. Over 40 people witnessed the assault. Many provided written testimony of the incident. Rust was physically removed from the room by another professor.

Since that moment, the Black student filed a police report, emailed the Dean, Chair, and administration to resolve the situation. Nothing happened. The Black student gave the administration every piece of evidence and nothing happened. The Black student contacted the new Discrimination Officers. They have been slow, promised little, and nothing will happen. The Black student has contacted Vice Chancellor of Academic Personnel Carol Goldberg, and, despite promises to follow up, she has stopped answering her emails. Nothing happened. The Black student filed charges with the university's Charges Committee, which took two months email him with a suggestion that he wait several more months for them to hear the case. They're acting like nothing happened.

In Fall of 2015, Val Rust will return to the classroom, despite a history of conduct that is unbefitting a university employee, let alone a teacher. He has not meaningfully apologized and or been meaningfully punished. The university has been delaying and delaying. This is the institutional norm, from the department to the school, to mid-level administrators to the Executive-Vice Chancellor Scott Waugh who knew of the case but, still, nothing happens.

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