



Community Engagement Instead of PILOTS:

An Assessment of Penn's Support for its Academically Based Community Service Courses

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## Introduction

Many non-profit research universities were founded on the premise that they would advance democratic engagement and better the public good. In spite of this, with 8-figure endowments, expansive landownership, and an exemption from paying property taxes, non-profit research universities are exacerbating the wealth disparity in their home US cities. A popular method for non-profits to address this inequity is by making Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) to their local governments.

The University of Pennsylvania (University) in Philadelphia, which owns approximately \$3.2 billion of assessed tax-exempt property and has a \$14.7 billion and growing endowment, is a non-profit research University that does not pay PILOTS (McCrystal, 2019; About us, 2019). The property tax rate in Philadelphia is 1.3998% of assessed property value, which is broken down to a 0.6317% city tax rate and a 0.8669% school district tax rate (Real estate tax, n.d.). Thus, the University foregoes annual property tax payments of \$20.2 million to the City and \$24.6 million to the School District. The city of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia School District are in dire need of funds, which greater property tax revenue could alleviate.<sup>1,2</sup> Philadelphia School District, in particular, is dependent on local tax revenue for their budget, the majority of which comes from property tax (Philadelphia School District, 2018). As a major landowner, the University of Pennsylvania has been called upon many times, by politicians and activists, to pay PILOTS, especially to support the school district (Goldrick-Rab, 2019).

The University justifies not making PILOT payments by pointing to the “multiple layers of economic contribution” it provides Philadelphia (Econsult Solutions, Inc., 2013, p. 6). This

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<sup>1</sup> The City of Philadelphia is in debt \$15 billion. See Truth in Accounting (2019).

<sup>2</sup> The Philadelphia School District is still recovering from a major budget deficit in 2013 that forced it to eliminate standard resources that year, including assistant principals, all non-instructional staff, and supplies. See The School District of Philadelphia (2013).

economic contribution is made through its daily operations through its role as a major employer, its capital spending, its research awards won, and its local engagement. The University maintains that the way it helps Philadelphia, “by being able to leverage their people and their assets through programs” outweigh the benefits of an annual lump sum payment (McCrystal, 2019). The public education contribution that the University highlights it gives the most economic support towards is its \$1 million annual investment in its Netter Center for Community Partnerships (Netter Center), which “enables an array of local initiative including tutoring public-school students and providing health and nutrition programs inside the public schools of Philadelphia” (Impact, 2016, p 14).<sup>3</sup> The Netter Center runs two programs that facilitate this: Academically Based Community Service (ABCS), which is the University’s service-learning program, and University Assisted Community Schools, which provides an organizing framework to bring University programs, including ABCS, to West Philadelphia Schools. The first ABCS course was taught in 1985 and the Netter Center was founded in 1992. The University’s President highlights the University’s national leadership in ABCS as a key method the University’s students, faculty and staff engage with the community (Introduction to Penn, n.d.).

Given the wealth disparity that exists between cities and non-profit research universities, their claims for layered economic contribution and community engagement programs in lieu of direct payments are worth investigating. This study does this by focusing on the University of Pennsylvania’s support for its ABCS program, which is a key community engagement program the University supports in lieu of making a direct contribution to public education. First, this study lays out the means to study institutional commitment to service-learning. Second, this study evaluates the University’s support for ABCS by analyzing course listings, course syllabi,

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<sup>3</sup> The other local engagement that the University highlights is its \$800K investment in the Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander University of Pennsylvania Partnership School. See Impact (2019), p 14.

faculty and student interviews, as well as student survey data. The study finds that while the University expresses its support for ABCS, the program lacks adequate resources to effectively plan and coordinate across ABCS courses, faculty and students. It argues that the resource contribution that the University makes to ABCS should not be quantified as the resource contribution it makes to the City.

### **Assessing Institutional Support of Service-Learning**

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, in part responding to federal and private initiatives to increase their civic engagement, numerous universities introduced service-learning programs to their curriculum (Gujarathi & McQuade, 2002; Young, Shinnar, Ackerman, Carruthers & Young, 2007). Since the expansion of service-learning programs, research has examined the way in which learning can improve outcomes for university students and receiving communities (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda & Yee, 2000; Harkavy, Hartley, Hodges & Weeks, 2013; McCarthy & Tucker, 2002; Schmidt & Robby, 2002). Researchers have defined the characteristics of effective service and the metrics to evaluate the institutionalization of service-learning.

Community Campus Partnerships for Health developed a “Self-Assessment Tool for Service-Learning Sustainability” to assess the institutionalization of service-learning within institutions (Seifer & Connors, 2007). The authors’ tool drew from previous frameworks about institutionalization, institutional commitment to service, and service-learning. The Tool assesses institutionalization on a three-stage continuum by examining five dimensions – 1. Definition and application, 2. Faculty support for and involvement, 3. Student support for and involvement, 4. Community Support for and involvement, and 5. Institutional leadership and support for – that affect institutionalization (Seifer & Connors, 2007, p 140). The Tool comprehensively considers the degree of institutionalization of each dimension by assessing several components that

comprise them. The Tool has been supported by universities engaged with service-learning across the nation, including the University of Pennsylvania, Vanderbilt University, University of California Berkeley, and Michigan State University. While the Tool does not put a dollar amount to the university's commitment to service-learning, it provides a strong method to evaluate how the university is devoting and positioning its resources to support its service-learning program. Thus, this Tool is valuable to this investigation, as it provides a means to understand how the University of Pennsylvania leverages its resources through its ABCS program.

### **Methods**

In order to assess the level of institutionalization of the University of Pennsylvania's ABCS program, I collected relevant data over a 5-week period in the Fall of 2018 and a 3-week period in Spring of 2019. My methodology included:

1. **Surveying the ABCS course listings available on the Netter Center website.** In aggregating the data, I determined key statistics that would enable me to better understand, holistically, course offerings over time. These statistics included the number of professors that had taught ABCS courses, the number of ABCS courses each professor had taught, the number of ABCS courses individual professors had taught in a semester, and the number of ABCS courses that had been offered.
2. **Collecting course syllabi.** I obtained the syllabi of 14 ABCS courses from peers and faculty. The syllabi enabled me to gain insight into how faculty laid out their courses and enabled me to understand the variation in the requirements of ABCS courses.
3. **Interviewing ABCS Faculty.** I cold emailed 15 faculty members across academic departments who had taught ABCS courses in Fall 2018, Spring 2018, and/or Fall 2017. I had not taken any of these professors' ABCS courses. Through this approach, I

interviewed eight ABCS faculty, who were professors, associate professors, and adjunct faculty, about the components of their courses, the assistance they received from their departments and/or the University in teaching their course, their decision to teach an ABCS course, and their perception of the University's civic engagement. I additionally interviewed an instructor who was teaching a service-learning course who had chosen to keep their course non-ABCS.<sup>4</sup> The length of interviews ranged from 25 to 50 minutes.

4. **Interviewing administrative staff.** I interviewed three Netter Center staff members about the capacity in which they work with ABCS, their offices' work with ABCS, and their understanding of the development of ABCS. The lengths of the interviews were approximately one hour. I additionally interviewed one College of Arts and Science administrator about their understanding of the development of ABCS courses as well as about ABCS courses ability to fulfill graduation requirements for approximately 1 hour. I also communicated with one Engineering School administrator about ABCS courses' ability to fulfill graduation requirements via email correspondence.
5. **Survey to University students.** I distributed a survey to students via 3 different listservs and Facebook.<sup>5</sup> I obtained perspectives from 56 undergraduate students, who had collectively taken 17 ABCS courses. Respondents ranged across years and represented all four undergraduate schools. The survey asked about their experience in each ABCS course they had taken and were willing to discuss, their perception of how service was integrated into the course, their perception of the University's civic engagement, and their experience with service outside of ABCS, both in college and before.

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<sup>4</sup> This course became listed as an ABCS course in Fall 2019.

<sup>5</sup> The groups included two community service clubs, one Fall of 2018 ABCS course, and one social organization.

6. **Reading University's website and documents.** I identified information about and relating to ABCS in the University's strategic plans, annual reports, and website.

I used the Community Campus Partnerships for Health's "Self-Assessment Tool for Service-Learning Sustainability" to analyze the data and determine the degree of institutionalization the University had reached (Seifer & Connors, 2007, p 140). I analyzed all Dimensions except for Dimension 4, Community Support for and Involvement in Service-Learning, and rated where Penn stood on the institutionalization continuum: Stage 1: critical mass building, Stage 2: quality building, and stage 3: sustained institutionalization. My data focuses on the undergraduate experience with ABCS because undergraduates could enroll in all of the ABCS courses offered, and about three quarters of the Fall 2018 courses were listed as undergraduate courses.

Dimension 4 considers community partner awareness of, opportunities for, involvement in, and contributions to service-learning. I made the decision not to collect data and analyze Dimension 4 because it is not within the study's focus of the University's leverage of its own resources to ABCS. In addition, I did not want to add more requests for time of already burdened community members knowing that other students and the University were, and still are, collecting data at the service sites for various projects. Evaluating this dimension would not be mutually beneficial enough to warrant my disruption of the field.

## **Findings**

### **Dimension 1: Definition and Application of Service-Learning**

This dimension considers the structure of the university's service-learning courses and the university's integration of its service-learning program into its mission and goals. While the University has established universal language to discuss the ABCS program, there is significant variation across the individual courses and there is minimal coordinated planning for the

program. The University is in Stage 3 in the way it publicizes service-learning. It is in Stage 2 in the way it implements service-learning.

**Definition of Service-Learning.** The University has excelled at adopting a universal definition for service-learning to ensure that the program is understood both internally and externally. It created the Academically Based Community Service terminology and has maintained tight control over whether or not a course can be labeled ABCS. Courses can only become ABCS by being approved by the Netter Center's ABCS coordinator. Every faculty member that is teaching an ABCS course either reached out to the Netter Center to apply for their course to be labeled ABCS or was approached by the Netter Center to create an ABCS course. Because of this procedure, every ABCS course explicitly intended to be so by both the faculty teaching the course as well as by the University.

The University also operationalizes ABCS when discussing their commitment to their local community. In the University President's letter addressed to those interested in learning about Penn, ABCS is touted as a means by which the University's students, faculty, and staff engage with the University's community. ABCS is a recognizable term from the University's promotions. In fact, one student surveyed, a female Junior at the College majoring in Health and Societies, shared that in applying to the University as a civically minded student, "I wrote my "Why Penn" admissions essay about ABCS courses" (Student Survey, November 11, 2018).

**The Application of Service-Learning.** In practice, service-learning is not standardized across ABCS courses, even in the requirements relating to the service component of the classes. As I found by reading through course syllabi, while some courses require all of its students to engage in a single service activity, others offer students multiple service options that students can choose from, and a couple courses even make the service component of their class optional.

There was also variation in the hourly commitment of the service requirements. For example, a Fine Arts course required students to be at their service site for 5 hours per week, while an Environmental Studies course required students to be at their service site for 6 hours over the entire semester. In addition, ABCS courses hold students to different levels of accountability for even attending their service activities. For example, in a faculty interviews, one faculty shared that they suspected that some of their students skipped the service components, but they did not have system to keep track of it (Faculty Interview, November 27, 2018).

There is also significant variation in the way that ABCS courses integrate their service components. ABCS is not standardized in the preparation students have for service, how students are educated about the community, or in the learning outcomes they should reach. In students' surveys, 18 students reported, for about seven different classes, that they did not believe the service component of their ABCS course helped them to better understand the course material nor was it well integrated into the course (Student Surveys, November-December, 2018).

**Strategic Planning of Service-Learning.** There is no publicized strategic plan for ABCS and there has not been, at least in recent years. The Netter Center, and ABCS, is under the purview of the School of Arts and Sciences as well as the Office of the President. In the School of Arts and Science's 2015 strategic plan, they noted that they provide core support for the Netter Center's efforts in pioneering the University's academically based community service model. However, the strategic plan does not state any intention to integrate ABCS further into the college curriculum or to grow the ABCS course offerings (Strategic Plan, 2015). Similarly, while the Netter Center discusses how ABCS has expanded since its inception, they do not state how ABCS is intended to grow or evolve in the future (Netter Center for Community Partnerships, 2018).

Netter Center staff explained that the Netter Center develops to respond to the needs and desires of the University relating to community engagement. They noted that there were multiple initiatives that were underway with the assistance of the new Provost, including research fellowships, ABCS teaching awards, and discussions with schools about ABCS courses counting for general education requirements (Administrative Staff Interview, April 9, 2019). Ultimately, however, the development goals relating to ABCS are constantly changing. A lack of specific direction hinders a program's ability to grow. As is indicative of the lack of momentum around ABCS, over the past 10 years, the count of ABCS courses offered per semester has remained stable.

**Alignment of Service-Learning with the University's Mission.** The University has stated its mission to make *Impact* through community engagement. ABCS aligns with this goal (Penn Compact 2020, n.d.).

**Alignment of Service-Learning with Strategic Goals and Initiatives.** ABCS is mentioned as a way that the University is achieving Impact, which is a strategic goal (Impact, 2016, p 14).

## **Dimension 2: Faculty Support for and Involvement in Service-Learning**

This dimension considers the extent to which faculty, overall, are engaged with service-learning at the university and the extent to which the faculty teaching service-learning courses are supported by the university in doing so. Faculty systematic engagement in service-learning and the University's support of faculty teaching service-learning is limited. The University is in Stage 2 in the way that faculty can and do engage with service-learning.

**Faculty Awareness of Service-Learning.** There is not an established system in place to introduce faculty to ABCS. The Netter Center currently relies on staff members' personal

networks or by word of mouth suggestions to extend the reach ABCS has amongst faculty (Netter Center Staff Interview, April 24, 2019). Current ABCS faculty interviewed could all easily explain ABCS' approach. Several acknowledged the limited reach ABCS awareness had amongst the wider faculty, even in their own department (Faculty Interview, November 15, 2018; Faculty Interview, November 27, 2018; Faculty Interview, December 6, 2018).

**Faculty Involvement in and Support for Service-Learning.** ABCS faculty represent a small fraction of the University's faculty. In the Fall of 2018, the University had 9,586 faculty.<sup>6</sup> That semester, 40 faculty cumulatively taught 37 ABCS courses. These faculty were affiliated with six of the University's twelve schools.

ABCS courses are disproportionately taught by non-tenured faculty – faculty without tenure or tenure-probationary status – who have less authority and time to influence University decisions. Of the 40 faculty who taught ABCS classes in the Fall of 2018, 13 faculty had tenure and 27 did not. 22 of the non-tenured faculty were Lecturers at the University. Including Fall of 2018, each individual professor had taught an average of 6.8 semesters of ABCS courses, while non-tenured professors had taught an average of 9.9 semesters of ABCS courses. An education lecturer shared, “Tenured professors have been here longer and don't have much to lose by asking for more. They are the ones who can start the change, if they make the time to do so” (Faculty interview, December 6, 2018). Non-tenured professors, especially lecturers, are more likely to have commitments that prevent them from engaging with the University. One Lecturer shared that because of her full-time non-University job, she was limited in her ability to engage

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<sup>6</sup> Of these, 2,753 were Standing faculty, individuals with tenure and tenure-probationary status, 2,040 were Associated faculty, individuals in non-tenure tracks, and 4,793 were Academic Support Staff, individuals not eligible for appointment to the Standing or Associated faculty. See Facts (n.d.).

with other professors or attend workshops that are run during normal business hours (Faculty, Interview, November 19, 2018).

**Faculty Leadership in Service-Learning.** A number of tenured professors have leadership positions at the Netter Center. The Netter Center established a faculty advisory board in 1992, shortly after its inception. The objective of the board has been to advance ABCS across the University as well as to support Netter Center's work amongst faculty and the administration (Administrative staff interview, December 16, 2018). Currently 32 tenured faculty, who are in different schools across the University, have positions on the board, 23 of whom have taught at least one ABCS course. In addition to the advisory board, faculty can lead initiatives for ABCS and get the support of the Netter Center. Recently, two ABCS faculty began facilitating monthly workshops, which are open to all faculty involved or interested in ABCS. They last approximately one hour and include lunch catered by the Netter Center. One of the coordinating professors shared that she hoped the workshops will provide a space for faculty to coordinate on ABCS, perhaps by agreeing on a standardized set of learning objectives for ABCS courses (ABCS faculty interview, November 26, 2018).

ABCS faculty have also published papers to advocate for ABCS and service-learning as a model. Some faculty have published articles that highlight outcomes from their own ABCS course and others have published articles about ABCS as a model. These publications have supported the University establishing itself as a leader for service-learning.

**Faculty Development, Incentives and Rewards for Service-Learning.** Faculty receive some key benefits from teaching an ABCS course, but they do not receive key benefits that would draw more faculty to teach them. In addition to previously mentioned benefits that ABCS faculty receive from the Netter Center, there is a Provost/Netter Center Faculty-Community

Partnership Award of \$5,000 to a faculty member and community partner in recognition of excellence in creating community partnerships (“Provost/Netter Center Faculty-Community Partnership Award,” n.d.). In addition, the Netter Center offers funds for ABCS faculty to hire student teaching assistants – both undergraduate and graduate students. These teaching assistants can support faculty in preparing lessons, managing course logistics, grading, and more. The Netter Center has also enabled some faculty to take on leadership roles in representing the University at service-learning. They have financially supported them attending conferences and interacting with professors at other universities.

Beyond the benefits described above, however, Penn does not provide other key incentives and benefits to faculty. The Netter Center does not pay faculty or professors for teaching their ABCS courses each semester. Their belief is that paying faculty to teach ABCS courses is against the model of change to use existing resources to improve the community (Netter Center Staff Interview, April 24, 2019). In practice, this can put the burden on ABCS faculty. Of her course load, a tenured biology professor shared, “Standing faculty have a required course load that they are required to teach by their department... In teaching my ABCS course, I am teaching above my course load, but my department had no problem with it when I asked for approval” (ABCS faculty interview, November 26, 2018). In order to teach ABCS courses, some faculty are actively making sacrifices.

### **Dimension 3: Student Support for and Involvement in Service-Learning**

This dimension considers how students can and do engage in service-learning. At the University, general information about ABCS is easily accessible to students but few students’ involvement in ABCS extends beyond taking one course. The University is in Stage 3 of institutionalization in

the way it generates student awareness for service-learning. It is in Stage 2 in the way it engages students with its service-learning program.

**Student Awareness of Service-Learning.** Information about ABCS courses is easy to find online for students interested in service-learning. On the University's course registration site for students, there is a filter- search for ABCS courses. In addition to making it easy for students to find ABCS courses, the tool encourages students to think about ABCS in their course search. The Netter Center's website also lists ABCS course offerings each semester and consolidates ABCS course offerings from previous semesters.

While students at the University are generally aware of ABCS, they are not uniformly aware across the four undergraduate schools. In Fall 2018, there were no ABCS courses offered in the Wharton School and there was only one ABCS course offered in the School of Engineering. Instead, undergraduate ABCS courses were concentrated in the College of Arts and Sciences – especially in the Urban Studies and English departments – and the Nursing school. A senior majoring in Biological Basis of Behavior stated about taking her first ABCS course that semester, “They are hidden gems... These classes should cover more topics and be more widely advertised” (Student Survey, November 11, 2018). The unequal distribution of ABCS course offerings across departments and schools inhibits its reach of awareness across students.

**Student Opportunities for Service-Learning.** A fraction of students enrolls in ABCS courses. The University enrolls approximately 25,000 students. In the 2016-2017 academic year, 1,700 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the University's 70 ABCS courses (Netter Center, 2018). Opportunities to engage in service-learning can be assessed by students' ability to take ABCS to fulfill graduation requirements. For undergraduate students, certain ABCS courses offered during the Fall of 2018 could fulfill seven general education requirements for Wharton

students, five general education requirements for Engineering students, and two general education requirements for Nursing and College students. It is interesting to note that an ABCS course is singled out by the Engineering school as being one of two courses in a Science department that cannot count toward students' "Natural Science" general education requirement. Over email correspondence, the department justified that it is due to the "difference in rigor and content" between approved and unapproved courses (Administrator Email, April 9, 2019). There is an effort to make more ABCS courses count for requirements to engage more students.

**Student Leadership in Service-Learning.** At the University of Pennsylvania, students are able to take on formal leadership roles in ABCS in several ways: through become a teaching assistant, joining the Netter Center student advisory board, or working at the Netter Center. Students can earn work-study and non-work study funding by becoming teaching assistants and working at the Netter Center, through the support of the Netter Center. These opportunities are somewhat limited – not all courses have teaching assistants, there are only 9 undergraduates on the student advisory board, and there are about 10 student positions available at the Netter Center each school year. Nevertheless, these opportunities enable students to better engage with, take ownership of, and shape service-learning.

On the ground level, however, there are a number of students who desire improvements of ABCS courses they took and who did not act on it. The student who wrote her admissions essay about ABCS courses became critical after taking her first ABCS course. She realized that ABCS may not be the best way to engage with the community. She felt that the ABCS Biology course was set up to benefit her and her fellow Penn students much more so than the community, and she questioned if the course had a net-negative impact for the community (Student Survey, November 11, 2018). As another example, a student said about an Environmental Studies course,

“this particular class did very little to update the curriculum for the students we were teaching. It felt as if we were burdening the students by taking up their time... I believe they were not benefitting from our teaching beyond the first and second lesson plans” (Student Survey, November 26, 2018). In the student surveys, 27 students expressed that their expectations exceeded their experiences in the ABCS courses they took.

**Student Incentives and Rewards.** The University largely does not give special acknowledgement to students for taking ABCS courses. While a course’s description states that it is ABCS, there is no distinction on a student’s academic transcript to state that a course was ABCS. There are two programs that are offered to undergraduates that focus on ABCS: Civic Scholars and the Urban Education Minor. Students can apply to the Civic Scholars program before beginning their Freshman year. The selective program earns students a certification upon their graduation and a distinction on their transcript. The Urban Education Minor is an interdisciplinary minor that is hosted within the Urban Studies department and is co-sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School of Education. The 7-credit minor focuses on enabling students to bridge their learning between the classroom and the community and requires at least one ABCS course. It is a formalized course of study and the distinction, as is true of completed minors, appears on students’ transcripts.

### **Dimension 5: Institutional Leadership and Support for Service-Learning**

This dimension considers the direct support that the institution provides the program. The Netter Center demonstrates strong support for ABCS. However, the lack of resources directed at ABCS limits its impact. The University is at the furthest stage of institutionalization in its established coordinating structure for service-learning, but it is in the quality building stage for the other aspects of service-learning support.

**Coordinating Structures for Service-Learning.** The University established the Netter Center to serve as the institutional center to coordinate, oversee, and support service-learning. The Netter Center is the authority that approves courses as being ABCS. Staff at the Netter Center serve as liaisons to University faculty and students who are interested or involved in ABCS. They also serve as liaisons for partner sites, where some ABCS courses engage in service, and K-12 partner teachers. The Netter Center has been able to maintain the ABCS program and stably championed ABCS on campus, since the Center's establishment in 1992.

**Policy Support for Service-Learning.** There are a number of policy-making boards and institutional offices that work with ABCS and the Netter Center. The Office of the President and the School of Arts and Sciences jointly provide institutional funding support to the Netter Center. Both bodies promote the Netter Center and ABCS, particularly when they talk about implementing research into practice to benefit the community. In addition, the Student Committee on Undergraduate Education (SCUE), a branch of the University's student government that advocates for students and advises faculty and the administration on both the undergraduate curriculum and undergraduate academic experiences, has worked with the Netter Center in the past and is currently working on expanding the requirements that ABCS courses can count towards.

In addition, over the past year, the new Provost has been making efforts to expand the Netter Center – he has had meetings with the Netter Center and its advisory boards, as well as has facilitated meetings between the Netter Center and the Deans of the different schools (Administrative Staff Interview, April 9, 2019). The Provost is in the process of creating endowed fellowships and grants to support student and faculty research and engagement in ABCS. A Netter Center staff member said of the mounting support, “There have been waves of

the Provost's Office and the Office of the President putting energy into ABCS. When those waves come, Netter Center tries to further ABCS as much as possible. It seems like the tides are shifting now" (Interview, December 12, 2018). Currently, there is momentum on campus to better ABCS through school policy. But this momentum from University administrators has not been consistent over the duration of the University's service-learning program.

**Staff Support for Service-Learning.** At the Netter Center, there are three main staff members who coordinate and advocate for the institutionalization of service-learning at the University: The Director, one Associate Director, and the Academically Based Community Service Coordinator. Between the three staff, they lead initiatives to expand ABCS in the University, handle the logistics relating to ABCS faculty and students, and manage service partnerships and service placements. The three staff members work very hard at the job. Multiple faculty recognized the Director and Associate Director as being champions on campus in expanding ABCS. Nevertheless, the tasks are extremely large for three to handle. A staff member at the Center stated that it would be more appropriate to have a department overseeing ABCS rather than a single coordinator (Administrative Staff Interview, December 16, 2018). Despite this, these three staff members have many responsibilities at the Center that are additional to ABCS. For example, the ABCS coordinator is also currently allocating incoming donations to the Netter Center.

There is also high turnover in the ABCS Coordinator position, as well as other Netter Center staff positions, which limits staff's ability to support ABCS. Over the past 4 years alone, there have been four different ABCS coordinators. Each coordinator has had to orient themselves to the position, their duties, and re-forge relationships. Multiple faculty teaching ABCS courses – a standing professor and three lecturers – felt that the relationship that they developed with their

service partner was stronger than was the Center's. They acknowledged that, while the Netter Center had been helpful in initially introducing them to service sites, they did not need to continue to utilize the Netter Center as a liaison (Faculty Interview, November 14, 2018; Faculty Interview, November 15, 2018). The turnover of staff members in the ABCS coordinator role may be restricting the authority the role has.

**Funding for Service-Learning.** Only approximately one third of the Netter Center's funding comes from the University. The majority of its funds comes from private and public grants or donations. Some of the large grants that the Center is funded by, including the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant for K-12 after school programming, have stringent reporting guidelines as well as student enrollment requirements, which the Center must prioritize. This takes away time from improving programs, including ABCS. The University has appointed a liaison in its Development office to assist the Netter Center in fundraising, which alleviates some of the burden from the Netter Center (Netter Center Staff Interview, April 24, 2019). Nevertheless, while the Netter Center is institutionally supported by the University, the University does not provide it with the majority of the funds it needs to operate. This hinders the Netter Center ability to focus on its work.

**Administrator Support for Service-Learning.** Administrators on campus advocate for ABCS and speak highly of the program on campus. The Director of the Netter Center, Ira Harkavy, in particular, has established strong relationships with administrators and faculty on campus, which has furthered the program. With the support of administrators, ABCS has continued to be promoted in University press frequently.

**Service-Learning Evaluation.** There is one staff member at the Netter Center that is responsible for all of the data collection and evaluation of the Center's programming, which

includes ABCS. That one staff member is supported by approximately 7 students per semester, each working 10 hours per week, some through work-study. For the evaluation of ABCS programming, the evaluation team compiles a faculty, teaching assistant, and site inventory through surveys distributed near the end of each semester. Additionally, the evaluator conducts focus groups of faculty, teaching assistants, and alumni and distributes surveys to alumni and, occasionally, to partner teachers. Despite the extensive data collection, my research suggests that the evaluation results are not widely known. None of the ABCS faculty in my sample of interviewees utilized the evaluation results. In explaining the evaluation methods, a Netter Center staff member shared that a couple of ABCS faculty had expressed interest in obtaining the results of their surveys (Administrative Staff Interview, December 12, 2018).

The data-evaluation team is responsible for evaluating all of the Center's programming – ABCS as well as all service programs with its community partners. Thus, this team concurrently evaluates about 20 projects at any given time (Netter Center Staff Interview, December 6, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

This study of the University's ABCS program was conducted in order to investigate the University's statements that the economic benefits it provides the City through its current operations and programs, which leverage its resources, outweigh the benefits of a PILOT. In the ABCS program, the University's direct support for ABCS programming – through the administrators committed and funding made – is multiplied by the efforts of its faculty and donors. Faculty teaching the courses give their time generously, some even completely volunteering to teach an ABCS course. Additionally, the existence of the program yields donations from the University's donors, which brings multiplies the University's funding of ABCS. The University champions the program and publicizes it greatly to its University body. In

spite of this, ABCS is still in the *quality building stage* of Institutionalization. The Netter Center staff are over stretched and unable to effectively coordinate the program. There is limited awareness from faculty and incentives for them to be involved. There is also limited coordination amongst the classes and faculty end up re-creating the wheel to teach their course – which does not even share common learning objectives with other courses. The requirements around service for students varies greatly across classes. In addition, administration support varies over time and the program has lacked a clear direction.

Thus, community engagement programs require a great amount of resources to internally run. These resources exceed the University's direct contribution to ABCS, and even the multiples of resources that the program yields. The resources being devoted to ABCS do not go directly to the community. The economic contribution that the University makes to ABCS should not be quantified as the economic contribution it makes to its community. Significantly less of the resources make it to the community, and the variation in the programming make it an inconsistent program for the community to rely on.

Ultimately, the investigation into ABCS showed that the University's funding a community engagement program does rally more resources within the University. However, it does not substitute the benefits of a consistent PILOT payment.

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