



The PLACE Collaboratory—Shared Goals, Shared Values

Drafted by David Scobey (Director, Bringing Theory to Practice, and Principal Investigator, PLACE Collaboratory) after discussions at the PLACE launch convening (Greensboro, October, 2019)

PLACE (Partnerships for Listening and Action by Communities and Educators) is a collaborative network of community-university partnerships involving eleven academic institutions and their community partners in Newark, Baltimore, Greensboro, and Los Angeles. PLACE was launched by a multiyear grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. It is led by Bringing Theory to Practice, a national higher-ed initiative that works to advance the core purposes of higher education, including civic and community engagement.

PLACE is both a network of local partnerships and a national community of change-makers. Building the network into an authentic community of practice requires a foundation of shared goals and values. This represents a first effort to distill those goals and values; the PLACE community will continue to revisit it and revise it.

What are the goals of PLACE?

As a network of local projects, we aim to:

- build community-academic partnerships that take on issues of pressing importance to their local communities.
- build partnerships based on reciprocity, shared voice, and shared power, partnerships that set their agendas through dialogue that centers community needs and community voice.
- develop projects that use the public humanities and cultural tools to base partnerships in active listening and community voice.
- foreground the role of students, offering them opportunities for civic and intellectual growth and empowering them as co-creators.
- foster partnerships that advance positive change and take on systemic issues of power and justice, partnerships so robust that they can sustain themselves beyond the PLACE grant.

As a national collaborative, we aim to:

- build relationships that enable participants to work, learn, teach, and lead together as a community of practice.
- create and disseminate models of authentic community-academic partnerships, grounded in the need for both listening and action.

- create and disseminate models of humanities and cultural work that can leverage positive community change.
- create and disseminate models of teaching that link college learning with public good and empower students as public actors.
- create and disseminate models of research and practice based on shared agenda-setting, knowledge-making and expertise between academics and communities.
- create and disseminate models of collaboration among diverse communities and academic institutions.
- catalyze significant change in our communities, in the larger society, in our academic institutions, and in higher education as a whole.
- sustain and expand our work beyond the immediate PLACE community and beyond the timeframe of the PLACE grant.

What are the values that guide PLACE?

- We are committed to building partnerships and a national community that are **co-created** by all participants—community partners, students, and academic partners—and that are grounded in **inclusion, reciprocity, and trust**.
- We are committed to building partnerships and a national community where decisions, priorities, and accountability are guided by **shared power, shared voice, and transparency** among all participants—community partners, students, and academic partners.
- Our partnerships and the PLACE community bring together people of diverse generations, communities, work-roles, and spiritual traditions, with diverse viewpoints on the issues we are engaging and the ways we work together. We **embrace that diversity** and aim to be attentive to its strengths and challenges.
- The work of PLACE—both locally and nationally—will flourish only if all participants can bring to it **our whole self**. We are committed to building a community where everyone can bring their mind, heart, and body, their multiple histories, identities, strengths, and needs, to the work.
- We are committed to “eloquent listening” in building our local partnerships and the PLACE community. Listening to all participants—especially those who have historically been marginalized in communities and higher education—is an essential precondition to our work. And conversely, **shared listening must lead to shared action**.
- Both in the local partnerships and PLACE as a whole, we consider **both community and academic partners as knowledge-makers and repositories of expertise**; all of these sources of knowledge, experience, and expertise are essential to the success of our work.