Extending Our Conceptualization of Boundary–Spanning Leadership for Community Engagement

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Abstract

In this reflective conceptual essay, we critically examine two complementary models related to leadership for community engagement—the boundary–spanning model (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010) and the preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a). Both models organize and present prioritized activities necessary for individuals to advance community engagement. We believe an exploration of points of convergence and divergence between the models will lay the groundwork for continued inquiry and allow for further refinement of both models, with the aim of supporting the professional development of community engagement professionals (CEPs).

Keywords: boundary–spanning, leadership, community engagement, professional development, CEP

"Simply put, boundary spanning is not confined to an individual job description, but applied to broader institutional strategies to engage with external partners" (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010, p. 638).

"We cannot separate the identity of a partnership from the behaviors of the people who constitute that partnership, just as we cannot claim institutional orientations that are not consonant with the orientations of the people within those institutions" (Dostilio, 2017b, pp. 380–381).

I n this reflective conceptual essay, we examine the existing boundary-spanning literature in order to propose a detailed research and practical agenda for advancing a conceptual framing of boundary spanning related to the professional development of community engagement professionals (CEPs) in higher education. The preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a) is conceptually similar to the boundary-spanning model developed by Weerts and Sandmann (2010) in that both models organize and present prioritized activities necessary for individuals to advance community engagement in higher education. However, we believe an exploration of points of convergence and divergence between the two models will allow for further refinement of both models and lay the groundwork for continued inquiry into the professional development of CEPs. This essay emerged from an ongoing research agenda centered primarily on boundary spanning in higher education community engagement, and even though this is not an empirical research study, we were purposeful in our analytic approach. Each of the three authors independently reviewed relevant literature, after which we engaged in purposeful and detailed discussions about the two models, working toward agreement, similar to Merriam's (2009) description of investigator triangulation.

In order to lay the groundwork for this research agenda, we begin by providing a summary of key foundational literature around boundary spanning, including literature from the management field that informed the creation of the Weerts–Sandmann boundary-spanning model (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010) focused on individuals working in higher education community engagement. We also briefly summarize how others have sought to

expand upon the Weerts–Sandmann boundary–spanning model and how the conceptualization of boundary–spanning individuals is tied to the concept of CEPs. We then briefly describe the preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a), as well as areas for constructive critique of this CEP model. From there, we explore points of convergence and divergence between the Weerts–Sandmann boundary–spanning model and the preliminary competency model for CEPs. Finally, we outline our thoughts on how these points of convergence and divergence lead to a research and practical agenda designed to further the professional development of CEPs.

A Boundary-Spanning Model for Higher Education Community Engagement

In order to better contextualize the Weerts–Sandmann boundary–spanning model and its application to higher education community engagement, we provide a brief overview of the foundational boundary–spanning literature from the management literature, followed by a detailed explanation of how Weerts and Sandmann (2010) developed their boundary–spanning model. To conclude this section, we review a selection of the higher education boundary–spanning literature that was influenced by the work of Weerts and Sandmann (2010).

Foundational Work on Boundary Spanning

Inspired by Friedman and Podolny's (1992) suggestion that boundary spanning is best viewed at both the individual and organizational levels, Weerts and Sandmann (2010) first applied the concept of boundary spanning to higher education community engagement through an empirical investigation of multiple case studies at research institutions, ascribing the concept to individuals who represent the external community in their roles within the university, as well as those who represent the university within the broader, external community. These individuals need to be well-versed in the language, priorities, and needs of both the community and the university, as well as able to effectively communicate between both sets of stakeholders.

Weerts and Sandmann (2010) based their application of boundary spanning on some of the foundational boundary–spanning work in the organizational management literature. The need for boundary–spanning behavior makes sense only in the context of understanding how organizations are defined. Essentially, the defining characteristic of a formal organization is the distinction between members and nonmembers, existing to the extent that some persons are admitted whereas others are excluded, allowing boundaries to be drawn by observers (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). In order to maintain relationships among these emerging formal organizations, boundary spanners end up playing a central role in the relationships between members and nonmembers, meaning that they often have to engage in and manage role conflict, and they often become a dominant conduit of organizational influence (Friedman & Podolny, 1992).

To effectively manage these relationships, boundary spanners essentially perform two primary functions: information processing and external representation. *Information processing* refers to an organization's ability to adapt to environmental contingencies, depending in part on the expertise of the boundary spanner in selecting, transmitting, and interpreting information that originates external to the organization (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). *External representation* refers to an organization's ability to cope with environmental constraints based on the boundary spanner's ability to achieve a compromise between policies within the organization and environmental factors. These contextual factors further extend the boundary spanner's ability to strategically make decisions and recommendations to overcome environmental constraints or to create conditions in which the organization's autonomy is rarely challenged (Aldrich & Herker, 1977).

According to Tushman and Scanlan (1981), "the ability of an individual to span a boundary is predicated on their having the work-related expertise required to communicate effectively on both sides of the communication boundary" (p. 293), which occurs in a two-step process. First, the boundary spanner identifies outside units and the information within those units that is relevant to the organization. The boundary spanner then processes the information and distributes it among the appropriate internal users.

In their seminal work on organizational boundary-spanning roles, Aldrich and Herker (1977) made a series of hypotheses,

of which several have direct applicability and relevance to higher education community engagement. For example, Aldrich and Herker (1977) commented that an organization's ability to adapt to and work within environmental contingencies and constraints is dependent on a variety of skills and abilities possessed by individuals who work as boundary spanners. Specifically, the boundary spanners should have expertise in selecting, transmitting, and interpreting information, as well as the ability to find compromise between potentially conflicting organizational and environmental policies.

Aldrich and Herker (1977) also hypothesized how organizational factors would impact boundary spanners. For example, organizations that operate in heterogeneous environments and those whose important elements are highly concentrated would require relatively greater proportions of boundary spanners, as would organizations that operate in rapidly changing environments.

Of particular relevance to higher education community engagement, Aldrich and Herker (1977) hypothesized that boundary–spanner roles are more likely to be formalized when critical external factors are recognized and valued by the organization. In a higher education context, this suggests institutions that place a high value on engaging with the community, by acting as an anchor institution or through earning the Carnegie Foundation's elective Community Engagement Classification, may have more specifically defined roles for community engagement boundary spanners. Similarly, these institutions may adopt organizing structures or strategies from other institutions that are viewed as successful.

From this series of hypotheses (Aldrich & Herker, 1977), several questions relevant to higher education community engagement emerge. For example, continued attention should be given to how to develop the expertise and abilities necessary to be a successful boundary spanner in higher education. Additionally, the landscape of higher education is widely varied in terms of institutional type; therefore, it is important to consider what types of institutions (size, control, mission, etc.) require more, less, or different types of boundary–spanning roles. Finally, if we are to consider the fit of individuals within their organizations, it is important to match the boundary-spanning skills of the individual with the needs of the institution in which they work.

Applying Boundary Spanning to Higher Education Community Engagement

Influenced by Friedman and Podolny (1992) and previous investigations into how institutions facilitate and support two–way interactions between their campuses and the community (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008), Weerts and Sandmann's (2010) original boundary–spanning model conceptualized the work of boundary–spanning individuals along two axes, one being their primary focus (institutional vs. community), and the other being the nature of their tasks (technical and practical vs. socio–emotional and leadership). By overlaying these two axes, four roles of boundary spanners emerge (see Figure 1): Community–Based Problem Solver (focus: community; tasks: technical and practical); Technical Expert (focus: institution; tasks: technical and practical); Engagement Champion (focus: community; tasks: socio–emotional and leadership); and Internal Engagement Advocate (focus: institution; tasks: socio–emotional and leadership).The Community–Based Problem Solvers are primarily focused on issues of relevant technical and practical tasks within the community. These individuals provide site–based problem support, the acquisition of resources, and the development of partnerships. At a university, the individuals in these roles may be field agents, outreach staff, and clinical faculty members. It is these individuals who "are on the front lines of making transformational changes in communities; they typically focus on problem support, resource acquisition, and overall management and development of the partnership" (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010, p. 643) and play an integral role in building and managing the relationships between the community and the university. Because of their roles and the tasks they are required to perform, they are often placed in positions in which their ability to remain neutral is tested.

Technical Experts are the individuals who place their primary emphasis on knowledge creation for applied purposes. Primarily faculty members, they engage in technical and practical tasks focused predominantly at the institution. The knowledge they create can be based within a single discipline or in multidisciplinary collaborations. Generally less adept at building and sustaining reciprocal community partnerships than the
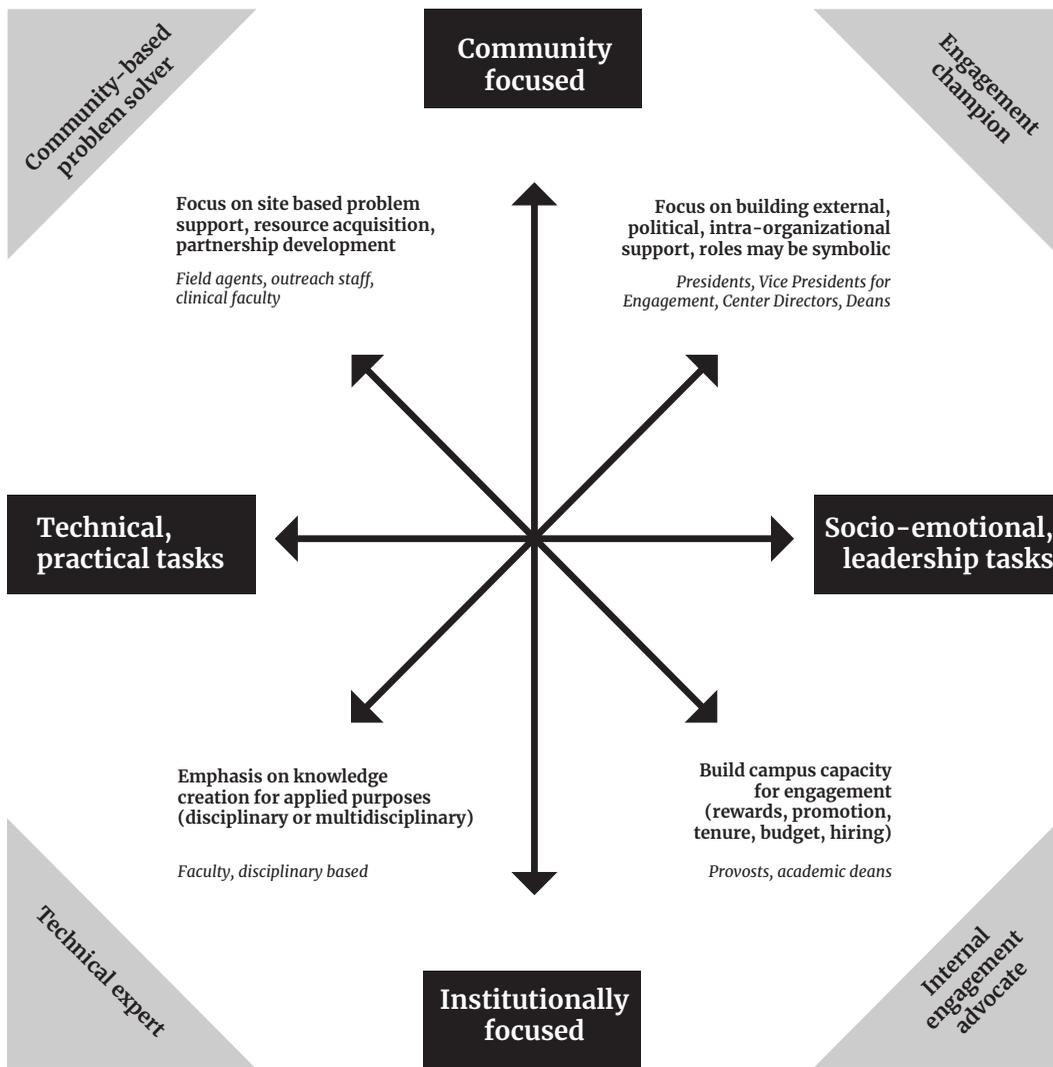
Figure 1. Boundary-Spanning Model (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010)

Community–Based Problem Solvers, the Technical Experts are the boundary spanners with the greatest propensity to use disciplinary or academic terminology that can often lead to difficulty in translating the analytic methods and results of the research. Because of this, the work of the Technical Experts is often complemented by the expertise of the Community–Based Problem Solvers.

The Engagement Champions are community-focused boundary spanners who emphasize socio-emotional and leadership tasks. These individuals build external, political, and intraorganizational support. These roles often carry with them symbolic weight and are therefore often filled by university presidents or other executive leadership, community engagement center directors, and deans.

The Internal Engagement Advocates are focused on the socio-emotional and leadership tasks at the institution. They work to build overall campus capacity for engagement, including affecting policies related to promotion and tenure. Internal Engagement Advocates are often provosts or academic deans.

Expanding on the Boundary-Spanning Model for Higher Education Community Engagement

Inspired by the work of Weerts and Sandmann (2010), several researchers have extended the research on boundary spanning in higher education community engagement. Adams (2014) extrapolated and conceptualized boundary spanning from the perspective of the community partner. Sandmann, Jordan, Mull, and Valentine

(2014) developed an instrument intended to connect the individuals who serve in boundary-spanning roles to the behaviors in which they engage. This measurement model paves the way for better understanding of organizational effectiveness and fit for boundary spanners, as well as issues of motivation and satisfaction.

Purcell and Pearl (2017) revisited the original boundary-spanning literature from the management field in order to identify areas for continued empirical inquiry, such as the development of competencies for boundary-spanning individuals (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). The conceptualization of boundary spanners is similar to other conceptualizations of individuals whose work is not easily categorized. Sturm (2010) created a taxonomy of five types of institutional intermediaries who serve boundary-spanning functions: program intermediaries, cross-institutional role intermediaries, problem-solving intermediaries, funding intermediaries, and knowledge intermediaries, each with a different approach to affecting multilevel sustainable change. Whitchurch (2013) described third-space professionals as those who operate in the area between the academic and professional domains, and often move beyond established boundaries in order to focus on broad-based projects. Bartha, Carney, Gale, Goodhue, and Howard (2014) refer to *hybrid-hyphenateds* as institutional actors who are committed to community engagement and operate "in the middle ground of campus-community partnerships," indicating they are "those working in or aspiring to para-academic, intermediary, coordinating, and administering positions at the interface of campus–community partnership development and in the interspaces of the university" (n.p.). Based on these broader conceptualizations, the work of individuals serving in boundary-spanning roles is clearly complex and often intersects with both the community and the university. The SOFAR framework (students, organizations in the community, faculty, administrators on campus, and residents in the community) is a useful model for illustrating the relationships and interactions involved in community–university partnerships (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009). It is also evident there is no one role or job title from which to draw to consider how these types of individuals might develop professional competencies. However, there have been efforts to develop competency models for those boundary-spanning individuals that exist within the higher education community engagement field in recent years. Blanchard et al. (2009) identified 14 competencies for community-engaged scholarship that are broadly applicable to faculty work, and that include various knowledge, skills, and abilities categorized into levels of novice, intermediate, and advanced (basic knowledge of community engagement history and principles, understanding of community issues, ability to write grants and articles related to community-engaged scholarship, understanding of the policy implications of community-engaged scholarship, mentoring others doing community-engaged scholarship, etc.). More recently, McReynolds and Shields (2015) identified multiple competencies for scholar-practitioners (cultural competency, partnership development, strategic leadership, faculty development, risk management, program assessment and evaluation, etc.) that vary according to four roles: organizational manager, institutional strategic leader, field contributor, or community innovator. Similarly, Suvedi and Kaplowitz (2016) spoke to competencies for extension workers and the importance of developing both process skills (e.g., program planning, program development, and program evaluation) and technical skills (e.g., day-to-day tasks working with farmers and other extension constituents). Further advancing the literature, Doberneck, Bargerstock, McNall, Van Egeren, and Zientek (2017) identified 20 graduate and professional student competencies, which are divided into eight dimensions that provide organization and scaffolding for competency development among students (knowledge of history and variations in community-engaged scholarship, developing and sustaining partnerships, approaches to community engagement, communicating with public and academic audiences, etc.). Finally, the team of research fellows who developed the preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a) focused on the knowledge, skills and abilities, attributes, and critical commitments that occur across six primary responsibility areas for CEPs (leading change within higher education, institutionalizing community engagement on a campus, facilitating students' civic learning and development, administering community engagement programs, facilitating faculty development and support, and cultivating high-quality partnerships).

A Preliminary Competency Model for Community Engagement Professionals

Below, we describe the impetus behind the development of the preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a), provide a brief description of the research project that led to its development, and give an overview of the six main responsibility areas identified in the model, as well as the competencies (i.e., knowledge, skills and abilities, attributes, and critical commitments) associated with each of these responsibility areas. Finally, we take up the call for continued constructive critique of the model by introducing a comparison between this model and the Weerts–Sandmann boundary-spanning model, with the goal of fostering continued growth and support for the professional development of CEPs.

The Campus Compact Project on the Community Engagement Professional

In partnership with Campus Compact and the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE), Dr. Lina Dostilio and a team of 15 research fellows set out to collaboratively create greater understanding of those individuals known as community engagement professionals (CEPs). According to Dostilio and Perry (2017), CEPs "are professional staff whose primary job is to support and administer community–campus engagement" (p. 1). Further, Dostilio (2017b) posits

> community engagement professionals (CEPs) are charged with administering the implementation of community engagement and are in a central position to shape the synergy between institutional priorities, values, and the engagement strategies that are developed; stress certain orientations of engagement to which faculty and students are introduced; and sculpt the support they offer and the approach they take to working with others (e.g., faculty, students, community partners, and institutional leaders). (p. 370)

The work of CEPs involves students, staff, faculty, leadership, and community members alike, and they are often called to operate in the spaces between the university and community. The collective work of the research fellows led to the development of a preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a). Notably, this work is conceptually grounded in the work of Welch and Saltmarsh (2013), who identified the emergence of a second generation of CEPs as the field continued to grow and evolve, requiring more purposeful development of knowledge, skills, abilities, and dispositions to facilitate their work. Using the preliminary competency model as a guide, Campus Compact recently launched a micro-credentialing program for CEPs in order to provide

> civic and community engagement professionals with opportunities to earn formal recognition for the knowledge and skills they develop throughout their careers. It provides a framework for community engagement professionals to grow and achieve in the field in ways that encourage effective, inclusive, and equity-based partnerships and practices. (Campus Compact, 2019)

However, the purpose of the preliminary competency model for CEPs is not to prescribe how professional development for CEPs should take place, but rather what is necessary for these individuals to be effective—with a specific focus on their knowledge, skills and abilities, attributes, and critical commitments. As is rightfully acknowledged in the presentation of the model, it is preliminary, and the researchers welcome periodic and systematic refinement and revision of the framework. Doing so not only emphasizes the dynamic nature of the field, but also acknowledges the importance of how individuals from different demographic backgrounds and identities interact with competencies identified in the model. A static and prescriptive view implies that there is a "right" way to be a CEP, but it is the hope of the authors "that the professional development pathways created in response to this project honor multiple forms of integration and balance didactic education with professional socialization, mentorship, experiential learning, and critical self-reflection" (Dostilio, 2017a, p. 52).

Initial steps toward the development of this model included literature reviews conducted by the research fellows in six key practice areas of higher education community engagement: institutionalization, organiza-

tional change, faculty development, student civic learning and development, community partnership development, and program administration and development. In addition to the six areas of practice, the preliminary competency model is also informed by an intentional inclusion of critical perspectives and commitments necessary to the work of CEPs. These literature reviews were influenced by the work of McReynolds and Shields (2015), Bartha et al. (2014), and the research fellows' own perspectives on community engagement as critically reflective and relational. From these literature reviews, the research fellows developed a list of characteristics of CEPs that were then further refined and validated through sessions at several conferences held by professional associations focused on community engagement, as well as a survey sent to more than 400 CEPs. In the end, six responsibility areas for CEPs remained, and one practice area—critical practice—morphed into *critical commitments*, which are applied across knowledge, skills and abilities, and attributes for each of the six responsibility areas.

Core Responsibility Areas and Corresponding Knowledge, Skills and Abilities, Attributes, and Critical Commitments

The preliminary competency model for CEPs includes six responsibility areas: (1) Leading Change Within Higher Education, (2) Institutionalizing Community Engagement on a Campus, (3) Facilitating Students' Civic Learning and Development, (4) Administering Community Engagement Programs, (5) Facilitating Faculty Development and Support, and (6) Cultivating High-Quality Partnerships. Each area of responsibility is briefly described below, drawing on the work of research fellows as represented in Dostilio (2017a).

1) Leading Change Within Higher Education. Hübler and Quan (2017) define institutional change as a "complex process that can be led by people with or without positional authority that results in deep cultural transformations of existing norms" (p. 101). In particular, they emphasize the importance of collaboration, integration, and the building of relationships as necessary for CEPs seeking to envision, lead, and enact change.

2) Institutionalizing Community Engagement on a Campus. Weaver and Kellogg (2017) identify the need for CEPs, in order to tie community engagement as a cross-cutting approach to achieving institutional goals, to be politically savvy, relationship-builders, focused on data and assessment, and able to effectively communicate.

3) Facilitating Students' Civic Learning and Development. Benenson, Hemer, and Trebil (2017) discuss how CEPs foster and support students' civic learning through direct work with students, as well as through their influence on other faculty and staff members who impact the civic learning of students. These authors also identify the importance of CEPs' engaging in critical self-reflection as practitioners.

4) Administering Community Engagement Programs. Farmer-Hanson (2017) articulates how the work of second-generation CEPs is often focused on the support, development, and evaluation of a variety of individual and broadly considered community engagement programs, necessitating a wide range of knowledge, skills and abilities, and dispositions that call to mind project management.

5) Facilitating Faculty Development and Support. In their discussion of the facilitation and support of faculty development, Chamberlin and Phelps-Hillen (2017) not only identify the importance of recruiting and providing contextualized, pragmatic training for faculty members, but also how CEPs can facilitate how community engagement work can be integrated into issues of workload, promotion, and tenure.

6) Cultivating High-Quality Partnerships. Martin and Crossland (2017) begin by framing and discussing their definition of high-quality community-campus partnerships in order to effectively identify the knowledge, skills and abilities, and dispositions that are essential for CEPs to build mutually beneficial relationships with the community.

We should also note that these responsibility areas do not exist in a vacuum, and there are several competencies that are common among multiple, if not all, of the areas. For example, effective communication, relationship building, and the ability and/or propensity to embrace the community's perspective can be found in several areas.

Limitations and Utility of the Preliminary Competency Model for CEPs

Although the preliminary competency model for CEPs is intended to be applied

narrowly to CEPs, we acknowledge several limitations to this application. In addition to CEPs, these competencies also apply to other individuals involved in community–university partnerships. Indeed, individuals involved in community engagement will often navigate a variety of professional roles throughout their careers, and they may not always function in the role of a CEP. Therefore, consideration of how these competencies relate to non-CEPs is necessary. Further, depending on institutional context, defining the role of a CEP as professional staff may be too narrow and inadvertently ignore existing roles of those who do the work of community engagement, especially when, in reality, the work of community engagement is often dispersed among various staff members and academic faculty through informal leadership roles (Liang & Sandmann, 2015; Purcell, 2013). Finally, we must ask: If an institution does not have an individual who would be considered a CEP according to the preliminary competency model for CEPs, does this mean that it is not capable of achieving institutionalization of community engagement or demonstrating this through recognitions like the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification? If we provide a normative model for what institutions should be doing with regard to institutionalizing community engagement, are we in turn sending an implicit message that there is only one "correct" way to do community engagement?

Despite these limitations, we believe the model outlined by the research team provides an excellent framework for understanding necessary competencies for multiple individuals involved in community–university engagement, including CEPs as well as non-CEPs. Beyond CEPs, the SOFAR framework (Bringle et al., 2009) provides insight into additional individuals who fill significant roles in higher education community engagement. For example, faculty members, particularly academic faculty members, have a direct impact on community–university partnerships, as they are most often the ones teaching service-learning courses or managing community-based research. And although they may be the technical experts in these partnerships (to use the phrasing from Weerts & Sandmann, 2010), they also are often placed in the position of managing, supporting, and administering the partnerships in which they are engaged. Therefore, the preliminary competency model for CEPs may inform their work.

At colleges and universities, many staff members who have primary responsibilities other than supporting and managing community–university engagement are nonetheless often indirectly involved in these partnerships; thus the preliminary competency model for CEPs may also be useful for this group of individuals. For example, faculty development responsibilities may be housed in a center or office focused specifically on teaching and learning, where staff members are not experts in service-learning or community engagement; however, staff members in those offices nonetheless require the necessary expertise to best guide faculty members in the appropriate pedagogical approaches to service-learning, as well as the knowledge to help these faculty members document and demonstrate appropriate measures of quality, significance, and impact for their work.

Although students do not necessarily have primary managerial responsibilities for community–university partnerships, they often play critical roles in community engagement. We believe the competencies outlined in the preliminary competency model for CEPs are also applicable to the students involved in partnerships as both participants and student leader–facilitators. Although performing work differing in scope from that of CEPs and other stakeholders within the institution, students can often be the drivers of community-engaged work. For example, they can play an integral role in service-learning courses and peer-leadership development programming.

For graduate students interested in pursuing future careers as CEPs, the preliminary competency model for CEPs can provide a useful framework for career development of future educators and scholars because "doctoral education . . . rarely provides future faculty with even 'glimpses,' much less 'portraits,' of what engaged scholarship looks like" (O'Meara, 2008, p. 7), and myriad barriers prevent graduate students from getting involved in community engagement (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006). Some institutions are working to professionalize and credential community engagement among graduate students (Matthews, Karls, Doberneck, & Springer, 2015), and integrating the preliminary competency model for CEPs would be beneficial in these programs.

Administrative leadership roles within colleges and universities are often positioned to influence community–university partnerships through the implicit and explicit messages these individuals deliver to the community about the university and the ways in which they seek to implement the institutional mission and strategic vision. Knowledge of the competencies within the preliminary competency model may provide those in these leadership roles with better understanding of how the work they do influences the partnerships facilitated by others within the institution as well as those within community organizations.

Finally, community organizations and community members engaging with higher education institutions would also benefit from the information provided in the preliminary competency model for CEPs. The concept of boundary spanning has been demonstrated to be a useful framing for community partners (Adams, 2014). As they engage in boundary–spanning behaviors, having a parallel set of competencies for engaging in these partnerships could be useful for community partners.

The development of the preliminary competency model for CEPs should be seen as a "first step in a multiphase inquiry" (Dostilio & Perry, 2017, p. 2). Dostilio and the team of research fellows expressed the hope that "the findings here and of future phases of the project will open up myriad researchable questions about CEPs that can be undertaken to build a knowledge base about this group of stakeholders so key to community–campus engagement" (Dostilio & Perry, 2017, p. 2). In considering multiple stakeholders in higher education community engagement and how they collectively function as conduits of organizational influence, we would expand the utility and influence of the preliminary competency model for CEPs and the Weerts–Sandmann boundary–spanning model by considering how the two models could be integrated with regard to competency development for individuals involved in community–university engagement. Therefore, within the remainder of this reflective conceptual essay we aim to provide constructive criticism of the preliminary competency model for CEPs by comparing and contrasting it with another model, the Weerts–Sandmann boundary–spanning model, with the goal of ultimately strengthening professional development for CEPs and non–CEPs alike.

Points of Convergence and Divergence Between the Two Models

In the sections below, we suggest three different ways of considering how the preliminary competency model for CEPs and the Weerts–Sandmann boundary–spanning model might share points of convergence, as well as divergence. First, we offer a comparison of the two models along the lines of boundary–spanning roles. Then, we similarly offer a comparison of the two models along the lines of the two boundary–spanning axes. Finally, we explore how boundary spanning as an action may be an inherent part of the preliminary competency model for CEPs.

Alignment of CEP Responsibility Areas With Boundary–Spanning Roles

According to the Weerts–Sandmann boundary–spanning model (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010), the Internal Engagement Advocates are the individuals who hold leadership positions within the institution and have the positional or influential power to create the infrastructure and policy conditions conducive to supporting community engagement. They are focused primarily on the institution and are largely responsible for socio–emotional and leadership tasks and are often provosts or academic deans. However, the Internal Engagement Advocates generally do not have specific responsibilities to support and administer community–university engagement, and those responsibilities would almost certainly not be included as their primary jobs. Therefore, they would generally not be considered CEPs. However, many of the competencies outlined in the preliminary competency model for CEPs would be useful to their boundary–spanning roles. In particular, the competencies under the responsibility areas Leading Change Within Higher Education and Institutionalizing Community Engagement on a Campus are especially salient.

The Engagement Champions are boundary spanners focused on socio–emotional and leadership tasks and are more oriented to the community. According to Weerts and Sandmann (2010), they often provide critical symbolic support for the institution's engagement mission and communicate that message to external audiences. It is equally important that this symbolic support is also reinforced with other structural

or institutional support to avoid tokenizing community engagement work. University presidents and other executive leaders (e.g., vice president for engagement) often serve as Engagement Champions, as do directors of community engagement centers. Presidents and other executive leadership are less likely to have direct management responsibilities over community–university engagement and would therefore not necessarily be considered CEPs according to the Dostilio and Perry (2017) definition. However, like many who serve as Internal Engagement Advocates, the Engagement Champions would also benefit from the preliminary competency model for CEPs, including the competencies under the responsibility areas Leading Change Within Higher Education and Institutionalizing Community Engagement on a Campus. The center directors who serve as Engagement Champions, however, very closely match the definition of a CEP, making the entire preliminary competency model for CEPs directly relevant for them.

The Community–Based Problem Solvers are the boundary spanners who primarily provide site–based problem support, resource acquisition, and partnership development. They are community oriented, and their task orientation is primarily technical and practical. The Community–Based Problem Solvers are often field agents, outreach staff, or clinical faculty members. Individuals who serve in these roles may or may not be CEPs according to Dostilio and Perry's (2017) definition, depending on their individual job descriptions. From the preliminary model, the competencies under the responsibility areas Administering Community Engagement Programs and Cultivating High–Quality Partnerships seem most likely to be especially relevant.

The Technical Experts are the boundary spanners who are more oriented to the institution and perform primarily technical and practical tasks, with an emphasis on knowledge creation. This boundary–spanning role is most closely associated with academic faculty members. Though the Technical Experts may not be classified as CEPs based on Dostilio and Perry's (2017) definition, the competencies under the responsibility area of Facilitating Students' Civic Learning and Development are particularly relevant, as are, to a lesser degree, those under Facilitating Faculty Development and Support. For the Technical Experts who also are tasked with managing the partnerships in which they are engaged, the competencies under the responsibility area Cultivating High–Quality Partnerships are also useful.

Alignment of CEP Responsibility Areas Along the Boundary–Spanning Axes

In addition to considering how the preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a) relates to each of the roles conceptualized in the Weerts–Sandmann boundary–spanning model (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010), each of the six responsibility areas in the preliminary competency model for CEPs should also be considered along the two axes that constitute the Weerts–Sandmann boundary–spanning model—one axis focused on technical and practical tasks versus socio–emotional and leadership tasks and the other axis focused on a primary orientation to either the in-

Focus		Responsibility Area	Task	
Institution	*Community*		*Technical and Practical*	*Socio-Emotional and Leadership*
		Leading Change within Higher Education		
		Institutionalizing Community Engagement on a Campus		
		Facilitating Students' Civic Learning and Development		
		Administering Community Engagement Programs		
		Facilitating Faculty Development and Support		
		Cultivating High-Quality Partnerships		

Figure 2. Alignment of CEP Responsibility Areas Along the Boundary–Spanning Axes

stitution or the community (see Figure 2).

As shown in Figure 1, a majority of CEP responsibilities are biased toward a focus on the institution. Leading Change Within Higher Education, Institutionalizing Community Engagement on a Campus, and Facilitating Faculty Development and Support are all almost exclusively institutionally focused. For Facilitating Students' Civic Learning and Development, the focus is primarily toward the institution; however, in order to provide students with an appropriate understanding of how to work with the community to achieve positive learning experiences, there also needs to be a degree of focus on the community. Administering Community Engagement Programs also requires more of an institutional focus based on the knowledge, skills and abilities, and attributes described by the research team; however, CEPs are also called to embrace community partners as coeducators. Institutional focus and community focus are fairly balanced in Cultivating High-Quality Partnerships. The overall balance toward an institutional focus deserves further consideration. Although it follows logically that CEPs are employed by institutions and therefore should be more focused on the needs of their employers, those who serve in boundary–spanning roles often experience role conflict (Friedman & Podolny, 1992), which may create tension between CEPs and their institutions.

In terms of task orientation, the overall balance is much more even. The responsibilities of Facilitating Students' Civic Learning and Development, Administering Community Engagement Programs, and Facilitating Faculty Development and Support all require a fairly equal attention to technical and socio–emotional tasks. In other words, CEPs not only have to have the technical and practical knowledge and expertise to support community engagement; they also need to be able to influence their peers and other stakeholders that the work is valuable. For example, in order to effectively administer community engagement programs, CEPs need the ability to collect and analyze data, as well as the ability to understand and communicate what that information will mean to various stakeholders. With their heavy emphasis on relationship building, the responsibility areas Leading Change Within Higher Education and Cultivating High-Quality Partnerships both tend toward socio-emotional and leadership tasks, whereas Institutionalizing Community Engagement on a Campus often asks CEPs to undertake slightly more technical and practical tasks as they navigate formal policies and procedures.

Boundary Spanning as Supplementary to the Preliminary Competency Model for CEPs

Among the skills and abilities described for the Cultivating High-Quality Partnerships responsibility area is being "able to communicate across boundaries and roles, and between internal and external stakeholders" (Dostilio, 2017a, p. 51). Although not using the specific phrase "boundary spanning," the sentiment is certainly consistent with the definition identified by Weerts and Sandmann (2010). Above, we discuss how the six responsibility areas in the preliminary competency model for CEPs might be conceptualized on the task and focus axes of the Weerts–Sandmann boundary-spanning model, as well as how the four boundary-spanner roles might be able to draw on and utilize the competencies within the six responsibility areas, depending on their roles and responsibilities. These discussions have focused on boundary spanners; however, another important component is to think about boundary spanning as an action and a potential element of each of the six responsibility areas.

The connection to the responsibility area Cultivating High-Quality Partnerships is clear, in that boundary spanners must be able to actively cross boundaries between the university and community, but boundary spanning may also be considered as a skill or ability useful for the other five responsibility areas. For example, in order to engage in Leading Change Within Higher Education, CEPs need to be "able to articulate connection between institutional mission and community engagement" (Dostilio, 2017a, p. 46). This skill involves representing the community in the university, as well as representing the university in the community, and it is certainly a boundary–spanning behavior. To Institutionalize Community Engagement on a Campus, a certain degree of internal boundary spanning is required in order to manage relationships among and between administrators and faculty members, as well as represent the community at the institution and advocate for community engagement as an institutional funding priority. In many ways, CEPs who

work to Facilitate Students' Civic Learning and Development could consider boundary spanning as a personal attribute, one that is used to inspire their students. Helping students understand how community-based learning experiences can contribute directly to their learning goals while also addressing identified community issues teaches students to span boundaries and balance priorities. For CEPs who need to develop the competency Administering Community Engagement Programs, boundary spanning can serve as a skill or ability (in the need to assess and evaluate the impact of partnerships on all stakeholders), as well as a personal attribute (in the need to embrace community partners as coeducators). Similar to Institutionalizing Community Engagement, the competency Facilitating Faculty Development and Support requires internal boundary spanning to address the motivations of a variety of faculty members across the disciplines, as well as the many demands on faculty time. This competency also requires CEPs to build up the boundary-spanning abilities of the faculty with which they are working.

Notably, this essay does not specifically address the role of the critical perspectives and commitments that are necessary for CEPs, which is such an integral part of the preliminary competency model. This should not be interpreted as a lack of connection to boundary spanning in higher education; in fact, the question of what it means to be a critical boundary spanner deserves much more focused attention, particularly given the near eventuality of role conflict for boundary spanners (Friedman & Podolny, 1992).

A Research and Practical Agenda on Boundary Spanning and CEPs

We believe the boundary-spanning literature in higher education community engagement is ripe for continued exploration, specifically exploration aimed at better understanding the competencies, professionalization, and leadership development of individuals who engage in boundary spanning. The preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a) serves as a complement to this work. We believe there is a significant overlap between the Weerts–Sandmann boundary-spanning model and the preliminary competency model for CEPs, and by examining the broader context of individuals doing community engagement through both lenses, we will be better equipped to prepare and support those who are engaged in this work.

As outlined above, the three ways of considering how the preliminary competency model for CEPs and the Weerts–Sandmann boundary-spanning model might share points of convergence, as well as divergence, inform what we believe should be a future mixed-methods research agenda focused on boundary spanning and CEPs. One strand of research in this agenda could focus on identifying and describing different boundary-spanning roles held by CEPs, with a focus on either those four roles identified in the Weerts–Sandmann boundary-spanning model or a focus on new roles informed by those original four roles and additional exemplars. Variations across these roles could pull from the six responsibility areas described in the preliminary competency model for CEPs, as well as any additional responsibility areas identified in future research on the model. Expanding the parameters of who is a CEP, including greater differentiation among CEPs and the various roles they hold across organizations and throughout their career span, would contribute to the creation of a more expansive set of professional development opportunities for CEPs.

Another strand of research in this agenda could focus on identifying and describing in more detail framing each of the six responsibility areas in the current preliminary competency model for CEPs as taking place along the two axes that constitute the Weerts–Sandmann boundary-spanning model—the first axis focused on a continuum from performing technical and practical tasks versus socio-emotional and leadership tasks and the second axis focused on a continuum of a primary orientation to either the institution or the community. Figure 2 provides an initial framework for understanding where the responsibility areas of the preliminary competency model might lie along the axes of the boundary-spanning model. These assumptions are testable, which would provide empirical and more nuanced insight into both models. This conceptualization would allow for greater understanding of how the work of CEPs is organized, as well as the competencies necessary to do the type of boundary-spanning work done by CEPs.

Further, as we consider boundary spanning as an action, one that may fall under

the skills and abilities a CEP may require, another strand of research may focus on determining if boundary spanning should be considered a necessary skill and ability within each of the six responsibility areas of the preliminary competency model for CEPs. Utilizing the complementary strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research methods could enable a greater understanding of how the work performed across these six responsibility areas is organized, how this impacts necessary CEP competencies, and whether boundary spanning as an action is a necessary CEP competency across all six responsibility areas. This knowledge would contribute to informing decisions regarding what types of professional development opportunities are needed for CEPs across the various responsibility areas they inhabit.

Additionally, we acknowledge that "for engagement to work effectively, multiple boundary spanning roles—community-based problem solvers, technical experts, internal engagement advocates, and engagement champions—must work in harmony" (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010, p. 651). The preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a) is a valuable tool for beginning to understand how individual actors in various CEP roles can strive toward working in harmony to further the institutionalization of community engagement across higher education campuses. Furthermore, in some ways, CEPs are required to act as boundary spanners between the professional organizations with which they associate and their institutions. Dostilio (2017b) discusses how a "CEP's orientation is going to be influenced by the ideas of the professional association he or she most frequently consults" (p. 379). In their capacity as boundary spanners in this relationship, CEPs are largely representing professional organizations, as well as the values espoused by those organizations, within their institutions. They are able to communicate, translate, and contextualize the most current research and scholarly thinking on their home campuses to inform their roles as administrators and thought leaders. Conflict management is a common issue for those who occupy boundary-spanning roles (Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Therefore, it is important to consider the conflict that may emerge between CEPs and may also happen when a CEP's role at the institution comes into conflict with the values of the

professional organization with which that individual most closely associates. Further research should focus on examining not only the work of individual CEPs and how this is influenced by professional associations, but also on how groups of CEPs work together across the institution and between the institution and community to encourage, support, and facilitate community engagement.

A number of additional key questions can continue to guide this research and practical agenda: Are there consistent competencies necessary for higher education community engagement boundary spanning? If so, how do we purposefully cultivate these competencies and empower community engagement boundary spanners to prepare them as leaders, especially as they operate within increasingly complex multiversities? How do we facilitate building these harmonious working relationships among boundary spanners? Within these complex networks, how do we communicate the scholarly value of the work of boundary spanners among their academic peers and other institutional colleagues?

Several first steps to answering these questions include gaining a better understanding of boundary spanners' perceptions of their roles as community engagement boundary spanners, the expectations they have of their own professional competencies, and how they are prepared to successfully perform their boundary-spanning roles. As evidenced by the preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a), effective CEPs function as boundary spanners with requisite knowledge and abilities for each of the four boundary-spanning roles identified by Weerts and Sandmann (2010). This awareness of self and of individual role(s) is fundamental to each of the six responsibility areas. The Weerts–Sandmann boundary-spanning model is an apt foundational framework from which CEPs can develop their complex and nuanced professional identities. For example, the competencies within the responsibility areas Leading Change Within Higher Education and Institutionalizing Community Engagement on a Campus presume an awareness of the key players, positions, and processes that exist as part of an institution's overall commitment to community engagement. Understanding of the Weerts–Sandmann boundary-spanning model informs the execution of CEP competencies in that CEPs

are tasked with leading the development and implementation of strategies to institutionalize and enhance community engagement on a campus. Furthermore, recognizing the existing boundary-spanning roles and the stakeholders who function in these capacities enables CEPs to better navigate change and refine development strategies. Thus, familiarity with and application of the Weerts–Sandmann boundary-spanning model is, minimally, a corequisite step for developing the competencies defined in the preliminary competency model for CEPs (Dostilio, 2017a), but ideally it is also essential to a foundational prerequisite knowledge base for further developing one's capacity as a CEP.

Individually—as a chief institutional officer, operational support staff member, or change agent leader—or collectively as a comprehensive CEP team, each of the boundary-spanning roles must be understood and reflected within the context of a university's overall efforts. Therefore, we suggest future research into CEP competencies organized according to each boundary-spanning role such that we may understand the unique combinations of competencies common across all roles and those emphasized in certain domains. Such knowledge will inform CEP development strategies, curriculum, and professional and organizational outcomes associated with each. In reflecting on the CEP roles, Dostilio and Perry (2017) posit, "We have seen a distinct progression from what used to be primarily instrumental responsibility to more complex, transformational, democratic, and change-oriented work" (p. 10). Therefore, an understanding of how these competencies manifest within specific organizational types and contexts informs the ongoing refinement of the model. Refinement and focus of professional competency models are essential for clarity, yet potentially detrimental if too narrowly analyzed, particularly in cases such as the CEP, in which effective performance occurs in a networked system spanning multiple boundary types. It remains imperative to avoid a limited, overly narrow conceptualization of the CEP as we seek to further professionalize the role. Expanded application of the boundary-spanning concept will provide a more nuanced understanding of the facilitating role CEPs play between the university and the community and will ultimately provide insight on CEP career trajectories, particularly in this climate of changing faculty and administrator roles. Accounting for the numerous stakeholders involved in community–university engagement and the complicated connections among these stakeholders will help facilitate more effective and impactful partnerships.

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