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Desiree D. Zerquera

University of San Francisco, ddzerquera@usfca.edu

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## Urban-Serving Research Universities: Institutions for the Public Good

Desiree Zerquera\*

University of San Francisco, USA

**Abstract:** This manuscript seeks to situate access to higher education as part of the public good of universities, and connect that specifically to the mission of institutions that are charged with carrying this out more than others. One such institution—the Urban-Serving Research University (USRUs)—has a distinct mission that emphasizes not just location within the urban context but being composed of the city they inhabit. A key and significant part of the USRU mission is to provide access to urban and historically marginalized students in their regions, populations typically underserved by higher education. Further, this manuscript highlights the tensions inherent in this ascribed mission and the threats posed within the higher education environment. Centered within a U.S. context, comparisons to international urban contexts are drawn to situate these institutions within the global perspective as well and present takeaways that may inform the work of the global community in thinking how to better educate their diverse urban populations. Considerations for research, policy, and practice are posed to challenge the global community to consider ways to better uphold and preserve the significant role of USRUs in providing opportunity.

**Keywords:** urban university, urban serving research university, Carnegie classifications, institutional classifications, equal access, community engagement, public good

### Introduction

The diversity of access to higher education opportunities afforded in the United States is unmatched by any other system of higher education in the world (Kerr, 2001). It embodies and reinforces a national identity for the United States “as a land of unparalleled opportunities for individual advancement” (Brint & Karabel, 1989, p. 5) and is a part of what makes U.S. higher education a model for global higher education systems. However, this access is not equal. Though more people from marginalized populations enroll in higher education today than ever before, higher education opportunities have been stratified by race/ethnicity and income with those from marginalized groups highly underrepresented in the nation’s top-ranked universities and overrepresented in open-access institutions (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Aud et al., 2011). For instance, an analysis of enrollment changes between 1995 and 2009 showed that enrollment in colleges and universities overall increased by just 15% for Whites but 73% and 107% for Black and Latino students, respectively (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). However, the data showed no White student growth in open access institutions, while Black and Latino enrollment growth was 44% and 48%, respectively (2013).

While community colleges play significant roles in providing access to higher education and vocational training, the concentration of marginalized students in these institutions—which

have poor transfer rates for students with baccalaureate ambitions (Nunez & Elizondo, 2013; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005) and are highly underfunded to do the work they are charged to do (Mullin, 2010)—is problematic for the higher education system as a whole. While efforts to improve the efficacy of these systems is needed, universities that uphold access to educational opportunity must be identified, better understood, and supported at the same time so as to ensure the success of these institutions and promotion of equal opportunity in the United States.

That equal opportunity should be upheld is a given; from the perspective of economic vitality, however, equitable access is imperative. The United States is changing (Esri, 2012; Kelly, 2008; Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011; Shrestha & Heisler, 2011; Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2006). Latinos accounted for more than half of the nation's overall population growth between 2000 and 2010 (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011), more than doubling their numbers since 1990 (Nasser & Overberg, 2011). The Black population in the United States has grown notably as well, by 17% since 1990 and 10% between 2000 and 2010 (Esri, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Within urban and metropolitan regions, these changes are even greater—15 of the nation's largest metropolitan regions experienced decreases in their White populations by more than 20% between 1990 and 2010, with an average decrease of 8.5% across all of the nation's metropolitan areas (Esri, 2012).

The increased diversity of the nation is not unique to the United States either, as increasingly nations in Europe, Asia, and Africa are determining ways to navigate the diversity of their populations (Cross, 2004; Salto-Youth Resource Centres, 2006; UNESCO Bangkok & SEAMEO RIHED, 2006). Thus, in addition to the important public service role played by tertiary institutions through community partnerships and problem-focused research (Bender, 1998; van der Wusten, 1998; Wu & Oldfield, 2015), provision of equitable access to opportunity in higher education should be considered a significant part of the public good of higher education as well. While basic education is widely considered a global public good (Menashy, 2009; United Nations Industrial Development Organization [UNIDO], 2008; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2015), access to higher education is not a given.

This manuscript seeks to situate access to higher education as part of the public good of universities, and connect that specifically to the mission of institutions that are charged with carrying this out more than others. One such institution—the Urban-Serving Research University (USRUs)—has a distinct mission that emphasizes not just location within the urban context but being composed of the city they inhabit. A key and significant part of the USRU mission is to provide access to urban and historically marginalized students in their regions, populations typically underserved by higher education. Further, this manuscript highlights the tensions inherent in this ascribed mission and the threats posed within the higher education environment. Centered within a U.S. context, comparisons to international urban contexts will be drawn to situate these institutions within the global perspective as well, and present takeaways that may inform the work of the global community in thinking how to better educate their diverse urban populations. Considerations for research, policy, and practice are posed to challenge the global community to consider ways to better uphold and preserve the significant role of USRUs in providing opportunity.

### **Situating Equal Access as Part of the Public Good of the University**

Consideration of access to tertiary institutions, particularly during a time of increased diversity in countries across the world, could be argued as part of the public good the university.

However, disagreements regarding who higher education benefits must be considered. Further, how different institutions carry out the public good of higher education is important as well. These perspectives provide an important framing for this work.

### **Higher Education as a Public Good**

Within the U.S. context, higher education has shifted from being a considered a public good that serves society as a whole to a private good that primarily benefits individuals. Guided by a human capital framework, economists have influenced this perspective to measure private benefits enjoyed by a postsecondary degree in a way that minimizes the public benefits afforded by a more highly educated populace and recognizes it merely for value of promoting individual interests (Bloom, Hartley, & Rosovsky, 2007). As captured by Giroux, “[r]educing higher education to the handmaiden of corporate culture works against the critical social imperative of educating citizens who can sustain and develop inclusive democratic public spheres” (2002, p. 42).

A need for the reclaiming and repositioning of higher education as working towards the public and global common good has been argued by critical social and higher education scholars (e.g., Giroux, 2002; Levidow, 2005; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Also within this framing, it is possible that as tertiary institutions uphold market values, then priority will be given to serving students best suited to fulfilling a market-driven agenda, threatening the provision of access to students less able to pay or uphold this agenda within society. Along these lines, in a recent report, UNESCO (2015) argued for a humanistic approach to education, one which upholds value of education as a common good that works towards societal equity and calls for policy making to be more inclusive to provide learning opportunities for all. Despite these threats of broader trends of the global market, higher education does fulfill a public good mission in a variety of ways, with some types of institutions better suited to do so than others.

### **Fulfilling the Public Good of the University**

However, both historically and currently, not all universities carry out this public good mission of access equally, and some are positioned better to be able to do so. American colleges and universities, like many across the world, serve a variety of functions categorized into three main areas: dissemination of knowledge, creation of knowledge, and public service (Budd, 2009; Kerr, 2001; Maurrasse, 2001; Ortega y Gasset, 1992). Certain institutions are charged with carrying out these missions more than others. For instance, community colleges are valued for their mission of providing access to students of all levels of preparation, providing both general education of students hoping to transfer to a 4-year, degree-granting institution and vocational preparation for new or returning students, and responding to regional economic and developmental needs (Bess & Dee, 2008; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Levin, 2001). The American research university which, although it plays a large role in the production of graduates at baccalaureate and graduate levels, holds the responsibility of being the primary provider of knowledge, distinct in their roles of conducting scientific research and advanced graduate education (Bess & Dee, 2008; Geiger, 1993; Kennedy, 1993).

The service of higher education may take many forms. The Carnegie Foundation integrated a consideration of “community engagement” in its classification which captures the service arm of institutions, characterized as curricular engagement through service-learning and as outreach and partnerships as the provision and collaboration of resources between the university and community (Driscoll, 2008). This engagement may extend into national and international communities as well and should maintain reciprocal and permeable relationships

between colleges and universities with their local communities “to have a sustainable impact on society” (Jacob, Sutin, Weidman, & Yeager, 2015, p. 4). However, service may also include the provision of access to higher education by individuals within a college’s region or state (Gerald & Haycock, 2006).

The USRUs are situated within American higher education as a special type of university that serves as *anchors* (Martin et al., 2010) for their cities and the nation. The following sections first present an overview of the history of USRUs, then examine trends in access for marginalized communities, reflecting the broader context of access as the public good of the university. Discussion of these points and trends center on lessons generalizable for tertiary education in the United States and abroad.

### **History of the USRU Mission**

Variously referred to in the literature as metropolitan universities (e.g., Johnson & Bell, 1995), urban-serving universities (e.g., <http://usucoalition.org/>), and urban state universities (e.g., Grobman, 1988), these labels all refer to overlapping characteristics that capture the USRUs’ shared history, mission, and roles. These institutions emerged in the United States during the mid-twentieth century in response to urbanization, mass migration to urban areas, increased enrollments primarily fueled by returning GIs during the post-World War II era, and unprecedented access extended to women and people of color (Cohen & Brawer, 2005; Geiger, 2004a, 2004b; Grobman, 1988; Harclerod & Ostar, 1987; van der Wusten, 1998). Predated by the urban universities of Europe (van der Wusten, 1998), USRUs in the United States were located in areas that were accessible to the influx of diverse communities moving to urban regions and to working-class GIs moving into the newly developed suburbs within metropolitan areas. Given their lasting impact on higher education, the establishment of these institutions has since been described as the third wave in American higher education and accompanied the community college movement (Cohen & Brawer, 2003), with the second wave being the land-grant movement following the Morrill Acts of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the first the establishment of the colonial colleges (Geiger, 2004a, 2004b; Grobman, 1988).

USRUs share two typical histories (Grobman, 1988). One set of institutions includes those that long existed in metropolitan regions as either private institutions, seminaries, or teacher’s colleges and were converted into public, urban-serving institutions to provide access for urban residents and develop their growing regions. Examples of these include the University of Louisville, a former seminary in the primary urban center of Kentucky; the University of Toledo, a former private arts and trades school in northern Ohio; and the Universities of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Texas at El Paso, which were former normal schools devoted to teacher training. Another set of institutions are those that were established as new campuses or created by combining disparate extension campus centers of a remote state university to become one, independent institution. Examples of these include Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, an extension of the previously established agrarian campus just 50 miles south of Indianapolis in Bloomington; and the University of Illinois at Chicago, extension of the flagship campus across the state in Champaign. What these historical narratives reflect is a shared history of being established—or appropriated—out of a need by states to serve their growing urban regions and meet increasing demands for access to higher education (Grobman, 1988; Harclerod & Ostar, 1987; van der Wusten, 1998).

## Defining the USRU Mission

The mission of USRUs is deeply tied to a historical purpose to provide access to groups that have been excluded from opportunities in higher education. The USRU mission emphasizes not just location within the urban context but being composed of the city they inhabit, with the life and vitality of USRUs thriving from the activities of their surroundings (Hathaway, Mulhollan, & White, 1990; Perlman, 1990; Perry & Menendez, 2010; Ruch & Trani, 1995). These institutions are distinct from many others that though may share many characteristics with USRUs do not have the same integrated urban-serving focus as a part of their teaching, service, and research missions (Barlow, 1998).

Whereas urban universities in the United States and abroad generally have a basic concern about the cities in which they are located (van der Wusten, 1998), urban-serving universities seek to act as “a participating citizen of the city” they inhabit (Grobman, 1988, p. 9). They are “the opposite of ivory towers”—a term pejoratively used to refer to research universities—and are “of their region and not just [located] in it” (Lynton, 1990, p. xii). Within this aim, USRUs are charged with the role of fulfilling the tripartite mission of the modern-day research university (Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker & Riley, 1977; Birnbaum, 1988a; Kerr, 1963/2001), which includes the functions of disseminating knowledge (i.e., teaching), creating knowledge (i.e., research), and serving the public good (i.e., civic engagement) (Gumport & Sporn, 1999; Kerr, 2001; Maurrasse, 2001; Ortega y Gasset, 1992). However, they fulfill these objectives via a focus on their urban surroundings.

USRUs contribute to the local economy by providing training in professional fields needed for the success of their region in a context that interweaves theory and practice (Harclerod & Ostar, 1987; Mulhollan, 1990). Additionally, USRUs contribute to solving the city’s problems by serving as a model institutional citizen within the city, centering concerns on urban issues, and acting as a center of political, economic, and cultural advancement (Barlow, 1998; van der Wusten, 1998). For example, Florida International University—an USRU in Miami, FL—established its region’s first public medical school in 2006 to increase access to medical education for the South Florida community and improve medical practice for the diverse populations it serves (Florida International University, 2012). Further, its medical curriculum includes student engagement with families and communities through a service-learning program (2012). Another example of activity that distinguishes USRUs is demonstrated by the Alliance Bank Business Outreach Center at Northern Arizona University, located in Flagstaff, AZ. This center brings together a collaborative team that provides training, education, and consulting to develop business and the economy in northern Arizona (Arizona Board of Regents, 2015).

Additionally, as exemplified explicitly in the history and mission of Florida International University’s medical school, a key and significant part of the USRU mission is to provide access to higher education for residents of its surrounding regions (Barlow, 1988; Grobman, 1988; Hathaway et al., 1990). This function is imperative, given the rates of high concentration of poverty, racial and economic segregation, and educational barriers experienced by students within urban areas (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Bryan, 2005; Olson & Jerald, 1998; Kenny, Blustein, Chaves, Grossman, Gallagher; Squires & Kubrin, 2005). This, coupled with high stratification of students of color across higher education institutions and the limiting of access to state flagship and other top-tier colleges and universities for non-White and low-income students (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Gerald & Haycock, 2006; Haycock, Lynch, & Engle, 2010; Musu-Gillette et al., 2016) strengthen the significance of the access mission of USRUs to serve urban students.

## Identifying and Describing USRUs

USRUs are difficult to identify because of tensions and complexity surrounding an urban-serving identity and the difficulty of standard classification systems in capturing them (Barlow, 1998; Grobman, 1988; Severino, 1996). No comprehensive list of USRU's exist, nor is one easy to develop. As a part of the broader aim of this work, this manuscript seeks to contribute to research and practice by outlining a process through which to identify these distinct institutions. While not suggested as a prototype, the process development is described in effort to point to ways to begin identifying these institutions in the United States and abroad beyond just rhetoric to be able to better support them through research, policy, and practice. This information can be useful for academics, policymakers, and institutional researchers in their work to support USRUs. Description of the identified institutions follows.

### Identification Process

As USRUs are based more on their commitments and history than any predefined set of characteristics, an involved process was needed to develop a comprehensive list of these institutions. The process involved the development of two lists of institutions from which the intersection provided the final set of USRUs. First, a set of institutional characteristics were determined based on the body of literature described above to characterize USRUs; they are: (1) public institution; (2) located in an urban/metropolitan area; (3) grant baccalaureate and doctoral-level degrees and/or professional post-baccalaureate programs; (4) include research activity as a part of their focus; and (5) are not a Land-Grant or state flagship institution. Using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to identify institutions that have these five characteristics produced a list of 108 institutions.

Next, a second list of institutions was generated that aimed to capture the qualitative nature of these institutions. This started by identifying institutions that were members of either one of two organizations that provide support to colleges and universities that have espoused commitments to serving urban areas—the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) and the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities (USU). This decision was made because membership in these organizations represents an elective measure on the part of colleges and universities to be associated with organizations that define their members as being committed to serving their surrounding cities (CUMU, 2010b; USU, 2013). From this set, institutions that did not have the five characteristics described earlier were removed. For instance, Miami Dade College—a primarily community college that offers several bachelor's degrees—is a member of CUMU but does not include research as a part of its mission and so was not considered.

Building on the logic that institutions will designate peers who, to at least some extent, have missions aligned with their own, peer institutions (based on institutionally-designated peer institutions identified in IPEDS Data Feedback Reports or self-reported on institution websites) were gathered. These selected peers may include not just those which institutions identify as being similar to but also aspirational peers that institutions would like to be more like but may be quite dissimilar from (Brinkman & Teeter, 1987a, 1987b; Fuller, 2012). The full set of CUMU and USU institutions and their peers were filtered by the characteristics outlined previously. Doing so helped to maintain the integrity of the purpose of using peer institutions and produced a total of 195 institutions. Those institutions that were in both lists made up a final set of 51 universities determined to be USRUs.

## Describing USRUs

These 51 institutions labeled as USRU's share a number of similarities and differences (see Table 1). Over half (54.9%) are located in large cities, and less than a fifth are located in large suburbs (15.7%). Just over half (51.0%) of USRUs are located within the states of the Southern US, about 30% located in the Midwest, 13.7% in the West, and just 5.9% in the Northeast. USRUs tend to be large, with almost 70% enrolling 20,000 students or more. The majority of these institutions are primarily nonresidential (82.3%), with less than a quarter of undergraduates living on campus. Further, there are high levels of research activity across these institutions, and about a quarter of all USRUs engage in the highest levels of research activity according to their Carnegie Classification, a framework to classify colleges and universities in the United States. A little more than half of USRUs have earned Carnegie's community engagement classification, and 52.9% and 47.1% are members of CUMU or USU. In terms of state governing agencies, 47.1% of USRUs are governed by a consolidated governing board—agencies that serve as the primary governing authority of higher education in the state—while 41.2% have a coordinating board, primarily serving an advocacy role, and 11.8% have a planning or service agency, serving an advisory role with institutions.

Table 1. *Select USRU Characteristics*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<i>Geographic Regions</i>		
Northeast	3	5.9
Midwest	15	29.4
South	26	51.0
West	7	13.7
<i>Degree of Urbanization</i>		
City: Large	28	54.9
City: Midsize	11	21.6
City: Small	4	7.8
Suburb: Large	8	15.7
<i>Carnegie Classification 2010: Basic</i>		
Research Universities--Very High Research Activity	13	25.5
Research Universities--High Research Activity	33	64.7
Doctoral/Research Universities	5	9.8
<i>Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (Any Years 2006 - 2010)</i>		
No	25	49.0
Yes	26	51.0
<i>Carnegie Classification: Size and Setting</i>		
Medium, primarily nonresidential	5	9.8
Large, primarily nonresidential	37	72.5
Large, primarily residential	9	17.6
<i>Institution Size Category (2010)</i>		
5,000 - 9,999	1	2.0



10,000 - 19,999	16	31.4
20,000 and above	34	66.7
<i>Membership in CUMU or USU</i>		
CUMU	24	52.9
USU	24	47.1
None	20	39.2
<i>Type of State Governing Agency</i>		
Consolidated governing board	24	47.1
Coordinating board	21	41.2
Planning/service agency	6	11.8
*Percentages sum to over 100% due to membership in multiple organizations. Membership according to membership lists posted on organization websites.		

### Tensions and Potential Impacts

In studying and supporting these institutions, it is important to consider their precarious situating within the higher education context. The USRU mission contains aspects that are sometimes at odds with one another. Further, the history of these institutions as compared to that of other institution types and the structuring of higher education may place additional strain on USRUs in accomplishing their aims. Indeed, there is some evidence that may point to ways these pressures on USRUs may be affecting how these institutions approach the fulfillment of their mission.

#### Tensions on the USRU Mission

The urban-serving philosophy of USRUs has created conflicts for these institutions. The association with the urban context brings about connotations and association that colleges and universities may try to reject (Elliot, 1994), invoking “images of crime, squalor, [and] underprepared diverse students” (Severino, 1996, p. 292). Recasting *urban* institutions as *metropolitan* can be seen as evidence of an effort to disassociate with this connotation (Severino, 1996). Further, urban problems—such as under-resourced schools, high concentrations of poverty and disinvestment in communities, and great segregation by race and class—that USRUs aim to address are large, costly, and difficult (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1972; Cisneros, 1995; Martinez-Brawley, 2003; van der Wusten, 1998). Though many institutions embrace this challenge by creating rich relationships with their urban communities and benefitting them in the process (Englert, 1997; Murrasse, 2002; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010), the challenge is ever present and may beget additional issues politically for USRUs in seeking funding and donors, and for establishing prestige within the academic hierarchy.

An additional contributing tension for USRUs is how the academic hierarchy, as structured, fails to perfectly fit USRUs within its institutional definitions. Perhaps, the most influential frame through which U.S. higher education institutions are understood is that provided by the Carnegie Classification system (McCormick & Zhao, 2005). Though not intended to serve in this capacity (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1973), Carnegie’s categorization of institutions has become the “dominant—arguably default” (McCormick & Zhao, 2005, p. 52) approach to understanding differences between institution types. These categorizations traditionally delimit institutions based on level of research emphasis, presence of different levels of graduate programs (doctoral vs. masters vs. none), and status (as a 4- or 2-year institution)

(Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1973; McCormick & Zhao, 2005). Consequently, the structure encourages a model that considers the most research-intensive institutions as the most prestigious. Given that the USRU mission is mainly captured more through a philosophy than any particular institution type (Lynton, 1991), the Carnegie Classification system falls short of capturing USRUs and their mission, which contributes to the group's lack of belonging and recognition by the higher education community (Elliot, 1994; Severino, 1996).

Further, the history of these institutions has contributed lasting tensions on their mission. The emergence of USRUs during the middle part of the last century has been compared to the Land-Grant movement of the United States which has been important in the development of an overarching USRU identity and had lasting implications (Severino, 1996). First, the Morrill Land Grant Act served a rural mission, distracting higher education's attention from the growing urban centers of the time, their problems, and their access needs (Geiger, 2004a, 2004b; Rudolph, 1990). Second, the ongoing investment and veneration of the land-grant colleges to the point of making them the prototype of public higher education in the United States has served to perpetuate the agrarian myth of higher education—a belief in the pastoral setting as being the ideal environment for college learning (Rudolph, 1962/1990; Thelin, 2004). As such, these USRU's are distinct from many state colleges and land-grant institutions that were “established as pastoral retreats, as part of a general social hostility towards the city and its corruption” (Barlow, 1998, p. 149). This has contributed to an ongoing dilemma for USRUs. With higher education's “persistent fixation on the pastoral model, the urban university has always had difficulty being accepted as “the real thing”” (Thelin, 1990, p. xv), shaping an institutional identity within a juxtaposed space rather than a reclaimed and distinguished one.

### **Potential Impact of Tensions on USRUs**

Researchers, administrators, and policy makers alike have suggested implications of these tensions on the identity and proclivities of USRUs. The numerous tensions described above have all had lasting effects on how USRUs are thought about and where they fall within the academic hierarchy (Birnbaum, 1983; Cole, 1993; Ehrenberg, 2003; Finnegan, 1993; Mophew & Baker, 2004). Their multifaceted mission in light of the multiple tensions described may exert pressures on USRUs towards a different model of institution that does not uphold the same values that they espouse (Barlow, 1998; Haaland, Wylie, & DiBiasio, 1990).

USRUs have been noted to be susceptible to the value systems of institutions situated “higher” in the academic hierarchy (e.g., agrarian, research universities; state flagship institutions) (Lynton & Elman, 1987; Mulhollan, 1995) and that have historically been criticized for lack of access, particularly for marginalized students (e.g., Gerald & Haycock, 2006; Haycock, Lynch, & Engle, 2010). Of concern, some have brought attention to the potential impact of these pressures within USRU institutions, particularly as they pertain to marginalized students. For instance, San Diego State University (SDSU) achieved higher graduation rates and narrowed achievement gaps among students; however, it did so while raising selectivity and excluding groups of students whom it typically served in the past (Nelson, 2011).

SDSU is not the only institution that has employed such a strategy—excluding students from backgrounds that have been historically served by the institution in an effort to meet other demands or goals. Across the country, colleges and universities have overtly outlined increasing selectivity and admissions requirements in their strategic plans. For example, in its *Graduation Rate Improvement Plan*, the University of Texas-San Antonio (UTSA) states that it will improve student success, in part, “through the use of greater selectivity in admissions” (2011, p. 7). As captured here, the institution overtly states their effort to increase success rates by excluding

students previously served by their institution and whom they describe as being less likely to succeed. These strategies and actions are important to consider, particularly in light of the access mission of USRUs. In the next section, these single cases of USRUs are contextualized by broader trends of enrollment at USRUs nationwide.

### Consideration of Access at USRUs

Given the rich history and espoused commitment to providing access to higher education for urban regions, it is not surprising that USRUs have historically played a great role in enrolling students of color, and continue to do so (see Table 2). The following considers demographic changes across USRUs from 1990 to 2010, a notable time period given global economic changes and demographic changes in the US, and enabling this examination to capture city demographic data according to the decennial U.S. Census.

According to analysis of IPEDS data, in 1990, Black students made up 12.1% of USRUs' incoming first-year students (first-time in college, or FTIC), on average, comprising as much as 40.6% and as little as 2.3% of some USRUs' FTIC students. Twenty years later, in 2010, average Black FTIC enrollment across USRUs had increased by 2.2% points to 14.3%. Indeed, the change in proportion of enrollment of Black FTIC students within individual institutions was as high as 20.1% points for one institution. Comparing these demographic changes within institutions with demographics across the broader city context shows that the rate of growth of Black students within USRU incoming classes was three times that of the growth of Black residents within the surrounding metropolitan region (see Rate of Change in Table 2). Still, not all institutions increased their proportion of Black student enrollments. The same data shows that 14 institutions (27.5%) decreased the proportion of Black students who enrolled in their incoming class. One institution decreased by as much as 9.2%.

Enrollment by Latino students—a population that has grown exponentially over the past few decades in urban areas (Esri, 2012; Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011)—has been even greater. On average, USRUs grew the proportion of Latino incoming FTIC students by 6.0% between 1990 and 2010. Proportion of enrollment varied widely across USRUs, as Latinos made up as much as 78.6% of the incoming class at one institution and as few as 1.8% of another in 2010. Similar to Black enrollments, while there were overall general increases, a number of institutions decreased their populations. However, unlike Black student enrollment trends, the numbers and proportions of Latino enrollments within USRUs did not maintain the same rate as the overall enrollment growth: USRUs enrolled just about one Latino FTIC student for every two non-Latino FTIC students enrolling between 1990 and 2010 (see Rate of Change, Table 2). As compared to their surrounding regions, on average, Latinos were slightly overrepresented in 1990 but slightly underrepresented in 2010, notable given demographic changes nationwide. These enrollment trends raise concerns about the continued fulfillment of the access mission of USRUs and the potential impact of tensions surrounding these institutions.

Table 2. *Black and Latino FTIC Student Enrollments at USRUs*

		Black/African American	Latino
Average Share of FTIC Enrollment	1990	12.1	8.3
	2010	14.3	14.3
Minimum, Maximum FTIC Enrollment	1990	2.3, 40.6	0.3, 68.0
	2010	2.5, 43.2	1.8, 78.6

Rate of Change* (relative to non-Black, non-Latino enrollment, enrollment change), Determined Based on Demographics Across all USRUs		0.2	0.5
	Min, Max across all institutions	-27.6, 7.6	-11.6, 3.9
Ratio of Proportion of Enrollment of Students Relative to Proportion of Surrounding Metropolitan Region Demographics	1990	0.5	1.2
	2010	0.5	0.9
Minimum, Maximum FTIC Enrollment, as Proportion of Surrounding Metropolitan Region Demographics	1990	0.3, 2.4	0.1, 14.2
	2010	0.3, 3.5	0.4, 1.9
Rate of Change** (Enrollment Change over Region Demographic Change), Determined Based on Averages of Demographics Across all USRUs		3.3	0.9

\*Note: Rate of change (ROC) here is determined as the ratio of the difference in enrollment for (1) Black students as compared to all students and (2) Latino students as compared to all students.

\*\*Note: Rate of change (ROC) here is determined as the ratio of the difference in enrollment for (1) Black students as compared to Black residents in the surrounding region and (2) Latino students as compared to Latino residents in the surrounding region.

The descriptive data presented regarding enrollments of students over time helps contextualize the single case examples offered by SDSU and UTSA. This data shows that more than one-quarter of USRUs decreased their share of Black FTIC student enrollments overall across the past two decades, increasing their proportional enrollments of non-Black FTIC students. While these institutions' incoming classes are generally not representative of their surrounding Black populations, for example, proportional growth of non-Black FTIC students is still greater within these institutions than within their urban regions. If these trends continue, institutions may eventually "catch up" to their cities in terms of the demographic representation of their incoming classes of their surrounding cities. Conversely, while Latino FTIC student enrollments were fairly representative of their surrounding urban regions, the growth on campus did not maintain the same rate of growth as their regions. As suggested by this slower growth of FTIC enrollments of Latino students as compared to non-Latino students, representation of enrollment may worsen if trends continue. These access concerns should be considered and examined further.

### Considerations for Policymakers and Practitioners

The discussion above points to potential consequences for how USRUs navigate tensions of their missions and fulfill their role in serving the common good of the nation. A number of these institutions have systematically excluded students typically served and, in doing so, may arguably be internalizing and adapting models of higher education practices that are followed by institutions that do play the same role as USRUs. This brings to mind what Lynton and Elman warned in describing metropolitan universities at the time, that in "believing themselves to be what they are not, these institutions fall short of being what they could be" (1990, p. 13). The ideas presented in this paper indicate potential areas for consideration for research, policy, and practice.

More support is needed for the USRU access mission, particularly as access to opportunity for marginalized students is increasingly stratified (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Positioning this mission within the framing provided by UNESCO may help shift higher education back to a global common good framework. Policy needs to be restructured to better

recognize and reward the roles and contributions different types of institutions bring, USRUs in particular. Signs of this are demonstrated, for instance, through adaptations to the Carnegie Classification system. More recently, Carnegie has given more attention to the public good mission of tertiary institutions as an attempt to address critiques of the classification's "insensitivity to the evolution of higher education" (Driscoll, 2008, p. 39). They have implemented a consideration of community engagement that captures collaborations between institutions and their larger communities. The classification has been widely adopted by many different types of institutions. Still, it is a voluntary classification and not all institutions participate. Further, the classification does not report on institutions that seek to participate but do not receive a favorable categorization as an "engaged" institution. While the additional categorization shows promise, it has yet to be fully implemented to reshape the Carnegie system.

At the institution level, USRUs should focus on the ways that access may be affected by decisions made on campus. The impact of these decisions may not always be demonstrated immediately in measured quantitative data. For instance, the collective perspectives of students and residents of the surrounding region may provide important insight regarding the public image of the institution and how the messages shared to the community are interpreted. Campus evaluation efforts must have an equity focus and consider qualitative assessment of student experiences and how they are affected by institutional strategies and actions. For instance, the University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education has developed a tool for campuses to help illuminate inequity in student outcomes and find ways to ameliorate those inequities (Center for Urban Education, 2011). Further, attention to underserved students who are admitted but do not enroll, apply but are not accepted, and who do not apply at all, should be dominant concerns among not just enrollment management but the entire USRU community. Investment in data resources and capacity to analyze such data should be considered. These databases include student unit record level statewide databases and those of the National Student Clearinghouse that provide information about students beyond the data housed at a particular institution. Asking critical questions motivated by interest in equitable access issues may help better understand structural processes that contribute to inequities and identify strategic actions needed to ameliorate them.

### **Recommendations for Further Inquiry**

Research needs to consider how tensions on the access mission of USRUs are experienced and how they manifest. A better understanding is first needed of what these tensions are and to what extent they are experienced by institutions today. For instance, some literature describes *institutional striving*: a process of pursuing prestige within the academic hierarchy (O'Meara, 2007) which may also include attempts at revising institutional missions in effort to achieve higher levels of prestige (Longanecker, 2008; Morphew, 2002, 2009; O'Meara, 2007; Tuchman, 2010). In this vein, O'Meara (2007) identified five areas of institutional operations where striving occurs: student recruitment and admissions; faculty recruitment, roles, and reward systems; curriculum and programs; external relations and shaping of institutional identity; and resource allocation. While discussed by O'Meara generally for all institutions, additional ways of striving that risk the USRU mission need to be better understood.

Further, a broad conceptualization of the extent to which USRUs in particular are engaging in this type of behavior has not been examined. While the descriptive analyses presented here are used to contextualize ways in which tensions may be manifesting with regards to the access mission of these institutions, more sophisticated analyses are still needed to better capture the direct relationship between engagement in activity that results from

tensions on the USRU mission and the impacts of these tensions on outcomes. These understandings are needed to better inform policy and practice.

USRUs play an invaluable role in urban areas and within higher education overall. They aim to be all things to their urban regions, fulfilling a critical role to providing access to higher education for our nation's underserved student populations. Thus, risking the USRU mission jeopardizes the roles these institutions fulfill within society more generally and warrants better recognition and support.

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