

# uCANRise Experimentation Year: **12 Takeaways and Next Steps**

uCANRise



Case studies of the three uCANRise founding organizations covering the experimentation year with the uCANRise Theory of Change and Promising Practices illuminated 12 key takeaways and next steps that are valuable to planning for the future of uCANRise efforts to inspire and prepare college access and success direct-service organizations to support student-led advocacy work and movements for educational equity.

## Keep Students at the Center

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Changemakers fellows provided valuable feedback during the course of the Changemakers pilot about pacing of activities, and SoCal CAN knew they had to be adaptive in their model to authentically incorporate student guidance. Future work for uCANRise should include student-engagement activities to capture key lessons about our models and pacing from student perspectives and the dissemination of these learnings back to organizations working with the uCANRise Theory of Change and Promising Practices.

## Clarify and Expand the Promising Practices

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Future iterations of Promising Practices should be clarified and expanded to ensure that direct-service organizations can more easily blend them into their current work models. This effort should include revising and sorting as necessary to differentiate practices from values.

**3**

An additional Promising Practice area should be developed that supports direct-service organizations in planning for and providing stipends to students interested in unpaid internships related to advocacy and nonprofits.

## Provide Tools and Approaches to Enhance Delivery Effectiveness

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A train-the-trainers curriculum unit for each revised Promising Practice would be useful for direct-service college access and success organizations that want to disseminate a cluster of practices for advisor use but don't have the capacity to create their own curriculum.

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We often think that we can only have rich conversations in traditional, in-person formats, but uAspire learned they could attract more students to working on a student-centered policy agenda when they offered it virtually – either through videoconference or even as a chat. In future iterations of the uCANRise work, increasing attention to engaging students through virtual methods should be more fully explored and resourced.

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Future versions of uCANRise can support direct-service organizations interested in operationalizing the uCANRise Theory of Change and Promising Practices by providing options for virtual and hybrid delivery of advocacy training, from the simple Slack channel to the more complex Mobilize site, or even by leveraging no-cost features of social media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

## Support Organizational Development and Evaluation

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Supporting organizations in understanding broader organizational strategies, planning processes, and impacts is key. Next-generation versions of uCANRise work should also include strategic planning, budgeting, and evaluation tools so that organizations can ensure that resources and work plans are aligned and outcomes are analyzed.

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Data-gathering and reflection tools tailored to specific Promising Practices would be useful to capture and relay stories about organizational learning for adopting organizations. For example, though SRA hosted a summer learning institute and set as a goal to learn from their students, they lacked a structured approach to capturing and reflecting on their learnings to share with others.

## Model Staffing and Other Resource Options

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Tying Promising Practices to a new hire can delay the work in ways that create missed opportunities for organizations that have interest in and momentum for supporting student-led advocacy. Future versions of the Promising Practices should address resource intensity, and provide approaches for integrating Promising Practices that do not rely on additional staffing or other resources.

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Future iterations of uCANRise can serve organizations wishing to launch student-led advocacy programs mapped to the uCANRise Theory of Change by developing and sharing sample work plans to show how goals such as the ones articulated by SoCal CAN for Changemakers can be achieved with a variety of resources, including various staffing configurations, as well as multi-year plans for rolling out program components (and sequencing resource load and program-lift intensity).

## Address Systems Change

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A key systems-change activity for uCANrise will be gathering and disseminating knowledge and practices to support college access and success organizations in persuading employers, including nonprofits and other advocacy organizations, to do away with unpaid internships and instead offer reasonable payment to student workers.

One way to do this is to demonstrate to organizations that the return on investment from stipended internships is greater than following unpaid internship guidelines, which are depicted as 80% learning opportunity and 20% labor. Students are eager to roll up their sleeves and embrace real-world learning through actual work.

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SoCal CAN realized that the attributes they were building into Changemakers – including the generous amount of the initial stipend for participants – will be contingent upon funding each time they initiate a new cohort, and that such funding may not be in place during the early recruitment period. They were thoughtful, therefore, about what information was included in program descriptions and on their website. Because they were not able to ensure full funding prior to launch, they also found themselves in the position of potentially overloading staff members because they did not have the assurance they needed that they could build out program staff.

A future role for uCANRise should be to continue to document the strain and impact that current funding models have on direct-service organizations who are attempting to build programming in support of the uCANRise Theory of Change, with the objective of increasing funders willingness to fund such work earlier and more fully so that programs are then set up for success and can achieve the theory of change outcomes.