BUILDING INSPIRING AND DIVERSE NETWORKS FOR INNOVATION AT TSAI CITY
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SIX-PAGE NARRATIVE MEMO

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3) How is my attempt to answering the question different or the same from previous approaches
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APPENDIX (available upon request)

(a) The Omidyar Group Systems Practice Workbook
(b) World Economic Forum System Initiatives
(c) The Economics of Innovation: Evaluation of Leading Indicators of Innovation – WEF 2016
(d) Salesforce Community Manager Guide; Community Set Up and Management Guide
(e) TopLink User Guide

1) CONTEXT AND QUESTION

Tsai CITY (Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking at Yale) was launched with the mission to inspire and support students at Yale University in their search for solutions to *real-world problems*. But real-world problems are *cloud problems*[1] and their solutions require the contribution of people from diverse backgrounds and innovation that is different from the traditional and linear processes that organizations used to deploy in the past.

Real-world problems can be better solved through collaboration and universities are ideal places to build networks of people and components supporting the *non-linear innovation* that is required for these kind of wicked problems. Accordingly, Tsai CITY has a unique opportunity to become a key component of Yale's ecosystem of innovation, if the center is able to help students identify the *most promising opportunities* to engage with the world systems in ways that could push their problematic areas towards greater health[2].

But there is a challenge.

Tsai CITY has chosen a much broader mission than its precursor, the Yale Entrepreneurial Institute (YEI). And inclusion for students is a core guiding principle for its activities. Therefore, in addition to continue supporting for-profit startups, the center needs to support more *disparate groups of stakeholders*, such as

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[1] Some societal problems act like clouds because they are unpredictable, ever changing and hard to control. Clock problems, as the philosopher Karl Popper said, are mechanical, finite and controllable. Broken parts of a clock problem can be easily identified. Not so much for cloud problems. Other names for cloud problems such as homelessness, the refuge crises, etc. is 'adaptive challenge' or 'wicked problems'. The Omidyar Group: Systems Practice Workbook. Appendix (a)

[2] The Omidyar Group: Systems Practice Workbook. Appendix (a).

civic and community organizations, arts and cultural organizations, cooperatives, social justice movements, student clubs, faith-based organizations and other partners across the university[3]. This situation: a) increases the *granularization of engagement* for members of Tsai CITY b) creates the *risk of 'operational busyness'* rather than strategic progress[4] around Tsai CITY's programming, and c) establishes *potential 'blind spots'* to understanding the real impact on society of the efforts promoted by Tsai CITY.

Staffing: Tsai CITY is currently looking for the support of a *Director of Networks*. Reporting to the Executive Director, the Director of Networks (as in networks of advisors, mentors and partners of the center) will have the following key responsibilities: 1) develop an *inspiring and diverse* community of external collaborators, and 2) match external collaborators to students at Yale University to create *effective partnerships* for the generation of unique solutions for real-world problems. Some specific activities to be performed by the Director of Networks are: recruitment of subject matter experts for various verticals, performance evaluation of mentor-mentee relationship, coordination with other Yale units working on innovation, development of external pro-bono support for student ventures, and other duties as assigned by the Executive Director.

Based on the above, the main goal for the Director of Network is to establish a comprehensive strategy to *build and sustain a strong community of innovation* that separates Yale University from other institutions.
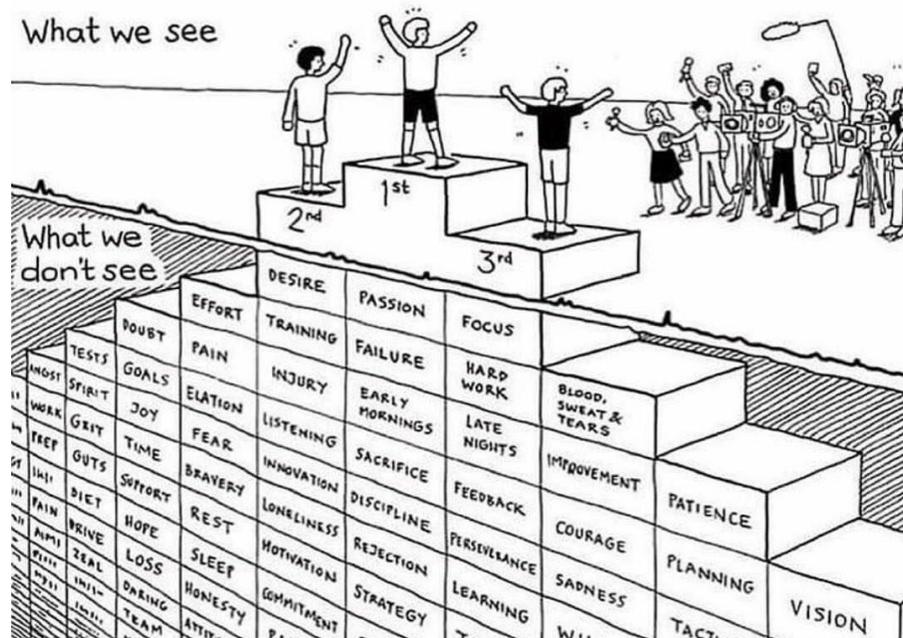
Source: https://goo.gl/hh6h8e

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[3] Other close partners of Tsai CITY across the university are: 1) Dwight Hall, 2) the Center for Engineering Innovation and Design (CEID) at the School of Engineering, 3) the Center for Biomedical Innovation and Technology (CBIT) at the School of Medicine, 4) the Center for Business and the Environment at Yale (CBEY) at the Schools of Management and Forestry and Environmental Science, 5) the Program on Entrepreneurship at the School of Management, 6) Innovate Health Yale at the School of Public Health, 7) the Yale Landscape Lab, and 8) the Office of Cooperative Research.

[4] Operational busyness: when more emphasis is placed on the inputs of innovation rather than the outputs. The Economics of Innovation, 2016 Global Agenda Council at World Economic Forum. Appendix (c).

This draft narrative memo seeks to address the following 'creative' question:

- *How can Tsai CITY and its networks find new ways of working together on the most promising opportunities to solve real-world problems?*

2) APPROACHES TO ANSWER THE QUESTION

Creating an interdisciplinary learning environment that cultivates innovation in all academic fields and for all sectors of society is at the center of Yale University's mission[5]. This effort flows naturally from the institution's desire to efficiently support students in key service categories, namely: 1) the academic experience 2) creative practice 3) intellectual curiosity 4) personal growth 5) university commitment and 6) ethical conduct. Promoting innovation more broadly: this is Yale's vision for the student experience.

In accordance, with almost one year of activities completed, Tsai CITY has successfully programmed and delivered multiple offerings for students with the goal of 'making them more comfortable with taking risks', as Mr *Joseph C. Tsai* has said. During the first months of operation, the Center has deployed an *integrative approach* to the planning and execution of activities (see www.entrepreneurshipacrossyale.com) and Yale students, both undergraduate and graduate, faculty, university staff, partners and other related communities have witnessed the rapid ramp up of services and events and a long *innovation menu* full of opportunities for engagement.

Interested stakeholders soon will be reviewing the *first 12-month performance evaluation* for all these activities, along with a revised plan for the next phases of evolution. Therefore, now is an appropriate time to consider potential adjustments to the current approach, in order to maximize the available opportunities to delivering more value as Tsai CITY becomes a new of center of gravity for students, faculty and alumni at Yale University. After all, Tsai CITY is a startup and it must adapt to the changing context surrounding it.

For consideration of the senior leadership at Tsai CITY, The following are some other approaches that the center could consider to build stronger networks for innovation and to better solve real-world problems:

Approach #1: Enhancing the engagement journey for all network members from discovery (of Tsai CITY opportunities) to exit (off-boarding of students as alumni). Yale students and their supporting advisors, mentors and partners share a common journey in pursuit of innovative solutions to real-world problems. And the list of resources that Tsai CITY has put together at different stages of this journey is abundant. Still, *additional entry points* (via clustering of students around systemic 'cloud problems'[6], such as health and healthcare, food security, education, energy, etc.), *sufficient user checkpoints* (via scheduling of more touchpoints with students, advisors, mentors and partners before/during/after events) and *alternative maps of behavioural needs* (via tracking the students' progression from interest to purpose to action[7]) can make the engagement journey of network members more dynamic. Particularly for underrepresented groups, these enhancements have the potential to improve the inclusion of key targeted participants in Tsai CITY programs and can improve

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[5] Peter Salovey

[6] World Economic Forum (WEF) System Initiatives. www.weforum.org/system-initiatives. Appendix (b)

[7] Behaviors of interest (discovering, planning, context setting, reviewing); behaviors of purpose (consuming, collaborating, orienting); behaviors of action (applying, synthesizing). Source: WEF

the conversion of invitations into actual event participation. The disadvantage of this approach is that it requires increased management capabilities to fully implement it.

Approach #2: Deploying more features of the available software technologies at Tsai CITY to enable more access to its platform of services. Tsai CITY runs on *Salesforce.* But this software platform is currently under-utilized[8]. Deep dives into the advanced features for community management in Salesforce could enable the design of *non-linear engagement journeys* for network members, which enable more diverse audiences to personalize their own experience. In this manner, Tsai CITY could move from a 'push' to a 'pull' model of delivery. Additionally, introducing students, advisors and mentors to a truly *omnichannel experience* (physical and digital) could improve the capacity of Tsai CITY to deliver new services (i.e. 'granular match making', pattern finding) or enhance current ones (i.e. invitations, confirmations, notifications). Another potential benefits: deep dives into advanced features on Salesforce would help Tsai CITY generate a healthy volume of touch points with its relevant stakeholders and could also help setting up real-time *performance evaluation metrics*. Finally, Salesforce could make it more efficient to publish content via one or several 'plug-in' components that this software platform has for sharing content. A disadvantage of this approach is that it would require the launch of several software implementation projects in order to incorporate relevant new features into the center's workflows.

Approach #3: Establish a peer mentoring scheme for which tracks of engagement designed by Tsai CITY for students, mentors and advisors explicitly promote diversity, inclusion and systems thinking to identify and test unique solutions for real-world problems. Yale already supports a wide array of diversity initiatives for all types of shared interest groups on campus. And this is why at present Yalies represent without a doubt a meaningful collective of the most dynamic, promising and diverse communities in the world. Therefore, there is a case for Tsai CITY to create conditions where students can '*add more than extract*' to the innovation process on campus, while mining value from their rich pool of perspectives, identities, thoughts, socioeconomic conditions and experiences. Tsai CITY could provide induction training for advisors, mentors and partners to prepare them to curate, facilitate, inform, establish and manage the most effective conditions for *peer learning and exchange* amongst the student body. Programmatically, this would require the creation of spaces and methods (i.e. a multisided platform) to capture all *valuable insights living inside Yale's innovation network*. These valuable insights could be later shared or used for *program co-design* at Tsai CITY and for potentially generating unique approaches and solutions to real-world problems. To avoid duplicative efforts or recreating the curriculum, activities could be framed as an invitation to *design the future state* of global systems through strategic interventions and as opportunities to shape the quality of decision-making affecting these systems today. A disadvantage of this approach is that it would require training (or re-training) for advisors, mentors and partners in order for them to become *community builders* (community magnets, advocates, door knockers, cultural brokers[9]). This also makes recruiting, onboarding and convening the key 'moments of truth' for the success of the student's journey at Tsai CITY. The disadvantage of this approach could be that setting up a new *knowledge platform and digital community* with hundreds of *insight areas[10]* would most likely require a new software asset to be plugged to the currently available technology tools at the center.

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[8] Salesforce Community Manager Guide. Appendix (d)
[9] Roland, K. 2008. Educating for Inclusion: Community building through mentorship and citizenship. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23765471
[10] An example of this platform is TopLink from World Economic Forum. Appendix (e).

3) MY SUGGESTED PROPOSAL

Given all of the above, my proposal first suggests slowing down the integrative approach of the many innovation activities currently programmed at Tsai CITY. This is due to the fact that other strategic opportunities not considered at the moment could make programming at the center more effective in providing an improved user experience to students. Additionally, as the center is not fully staffed, *busyness* creates the risk of burnout for current collaborators. Linkages to the innovation topic across campus with other partners and programs are abundant and there is no shortage of opportunities to commit and consume resources.

Second, I would initially recommend a combination of approaches #1 and #2, as follows below, while assessing in the future the possibility of establishing a peer mentoring scheme amongst the student population at Yale. In the short term, combining approaches #1 and #2 means using systems thinking (or systems practice) to map and define additional points of entry for students into TSAI City programming. It would also help to identify, recruit, onboard and train mentors and advisors. For example, if a student is interested in the topic of financial inclusion, there would an available landing space to easily make connections with others sharing the same *interest*. Insights and resources on the topic, related events and initiatives (i.e. startups), activists (other students and/or mentors) could be pulled for the student using advanced modules on Salesforce to ease discovery. Additionally, students would also have a personalized profile page and have access to additional interaction features across the whole network. An opportunity would also exist to collect usage data and other metrics to make matches between students, mentors and advisors and to reduce the time to insight that Tsai CITY needs to understand how particular topics and interest-based communities are trending across its network.

Third, I propose the launch, at the end of the next 18-24 months (and then every two years), of an spectacular 'Summit for Envisioning the Future', where Tsai CITY networks would convene alongside its expanded community of Yale Alumni and other partners to showcase how in fact Tsai CITY is framing and finding unique solutions for real-world problems. This could coincide with the launch of the new building for Tsai CITY at Becton Plaza.

4) NEXT STEPS

The activities that generate from the above proposal are as follows:

- Recruit the Director of Networks in time to plan a Tsai CITY strategic offsite before the start of the fall semester of 2018
- Create preliminary 'systems maps' with the help of Tsai CITY network members to gain clarity on the most promising, non-linear engagement journeys available for students, advisors and mentors
- Create a implementation plan to incorporate to center workflows more advanced community management modules on Salesforce
- Launch the design process of the 'Summit for Envisioning the Future' in consultation with other partners on Yale Campus
- Evaluate the implementation of a peer mentoring scheme for Tsai CITY