Colleges and universities looking to strengthen their ecosystem support will benefit from internal work that identifies and defines connections that catalyze and support entrepreneurship. As large communities themselves, institutions of higher education often operate within silos, missing opportunities for collaboration, resource sharing, and culture building that can strengthen entrepreneurship and innovation. This conversation guide seeks to facilitate meaningful conversations among stakeholders—from faculty and students to administrators and industry partners—to map out synergies within your institution*.

* NOTE: This conversation guide has been written with colleges and universities in mind. However, it can be easily adapted to any organization, especially larger ones, that participate in ecosystem building. All organizations, not only colleges and universities, can benefit from creating stronger internal connections.

Start the Conversation:
- Strong representation across the university and its departments will determine the success of your conversation. Before you send out invitations to participate, generate a list of the various sub-communities and departments within the university that have a role to play in supporting entrepreneurship or the broader ecosystem, and consider who within those subgroups is playing a leading role. A conversation like this will benefit from the broadest cross-section you can engage. Consider also engaging external perspectives (especially entrepreneurs')—what connections are and are not happening within the institution, from the viewpoint of your external stakeholders?

- Gather some key internal stakeholders (and external stakeholders, too, if appropriate) to explore the ways in which internal connections could be strengthened to provide better support to the external ecosystem. You can gather stakeholders in a face-to-face or virtual meeting. You might also consider whether it's possible to carry out this "conversation" asynchronously via email, a discussion board, or across a series of one-on-one or small group discussions.

- Be sure to include people who have been active participants in the local ecosystem, who also may have experienced breakdowns in communication or missed opportunities for collaboration. This may include student entrepreneurs, faculty researchers, and community members who have tapped into existing university programming.

> **Just Getting Started?**
> If you and your colleagues are just beginning to engage your college or university in ecosystem building, you may feel the need to do some groundwork before you dive into conversations. Take a look at Getting Ready for Ecosystem Conversations for ideas and considerations for engaging both your internal ecosystem as well as with external partners.

> **Build an Equitable Ecosystem!**
> Ecosystems thrive when they are inclusive, fostering connections, conversations, and cultures that embrace the entire community. Before undertaking this or any of the conversations on C•CUBE, review Centering Access, Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity in Ecosystem Building. Apply the five questions under "Putting it into Action" as you plan this conversation.

- For this conversation, you will pair people from various departments for short discussions in which they will explore collaborative opportunities and shared needs. Use a table like the one on the last page of this guide to plan the speed networking matches.

- Start your conversation by asking participants to identify existing internal connections that are actively working to support entrepreneurship and innovation. Talk through these examples not only to highlight success stories, but also to look for opportunities to replicate or expand these investments to reach more parts of your campus.

- To enhance the speed networking conversations, consider inviting industry partners and entrepreneurs to share their experiences and observations. Encourage them to share where they see missed opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing. How could better interconnectedness across the university have helped them accelerate their businesses? Sharing by external stakeholders can provide focus and framing for the speed networking conversations.

- Prepare for speed networking: introduce the topics of Resources and Infrastructure, Curricular Connections, Research and Creative Activity, and Community Engagement (see the following bullets). Let participants know that they will be asked to generate, in each of their speed networking rounds, an opportunity for collaboration or a shared need that could be addressed by both individuals' departments. They can use one of these four categories to identify a target area for their collaboration opportunity or shared need or identify a new area.

- Introduce the topic of Resources and Infrastructure to support entrepreneurship and innovation. This can include technology transfer offices, innovation hubs, incubators, and other support programming. How does this infrastructure interact with departments on campus? Where can connections be improved? How can you ensure that students and faculty across all departments have access to these services and supports?

- Introduce the topic of Curricular Connections. Where is entrepreneurship education embedded into the curriculum? Are those programs available across majors? Can programs to support entrepreneurial thinking reach across departments? How can interdisciplinary thinking help to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship?

- Introduce the topic of Research and Creative Activity. How does the institution's research and creative activity enterprise (including work across the sciences as well as other disciplines) contribute to entrepreneurship ecosystem building? Do research support activities, such as innovation and entrepreneurship offices, need to be better connected to other units? How can undergraduate research programs support ecosystem building?

- Introduce the topic of Community Engagement. How can the institution get a better picture of the ways in which various units and departments are connected to the community? What kinds of connections within the institution would help strengthen relationships with community stakeholders? How do varying views or definitions of "the community" across campus advance or hinder approaches to engagement?

- Send participants to their first speed networking pair, then ask them to switch to the next pairing every 10 minutes until you've gotten through all assigned pairings.

- After the speed networking conversations, come back to the large group to share out these ideas for internal connections. As people share their ideas, look for patterns and commonalities that can inform your highest impact investments. What new programs, partnerships, and resources could hit the highest reach of campus? Develop an action plan for testing those ideas and rolling them out when they're ready.

Speed Networking Matches

Make a grid like the one below that lists the departments/offices represented in your conversation across both the horizontal and vertical axis. Pair the representatives from each department and challenge them to think of an opportunity for collaboration or a shared need that would engage both of their departments. Switch pairs until your grid is filled.

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
D1	■					
D2		■				
D3			■			
D4				■		
D5					■	
D6						■