Break it To Make It
Program Evaluation

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Executive Summary

U.S. colleges and universities are exploring best practices of resources, services, and programs to serve formerly incarcerated individuals in higher education. The need to determine which efforts are tailored to their students' social, emotional, and academic needs are fomented in a recent U.S. Department of Justice (2018) report that found 68 percent of formerly incarcerated individuals are re-arrested within a three-year window. Thus, our goal in evaluating this unique program is driven by our interest in reducing recidivism and developing productive and meaningful lives for formerly incarcerated individuals as a means of supporting communities. We see the Break It to Make It Program as a program that is uniquely positioned to fulfill those goals.

Results from our student survey suggest that there are high levels of program satisfaction and respect among administrators and students. These level of satisfaction and trust is a lynchpin for a student success program:

- 100% of respondents reported feeling respected by the program staff; 98% of respondents reports that they respected the program staff as well.

- 100% of respondents agreed that they would recommend BITMI program to others; 85% of those respondents strongly agreed that they would recommend the program.

- 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this program will enhance their success.

Results from our focus groups meetings with more than 30 students suggest that students were invested in the program and understand it's value related to their personal and professional goals. As one student shared:

> "[BITMI] gives people a second chance at life. That's how I feel. If it wasn't for them, a lot of people that's coming out of prison would feel lost and feel like, 'Well, my life is over with. Who could help me?' Break It to Make It, you don't get this everywhere! So, it's very important."

Our main recommendations for the report include: 1) Coordination of program services among program partners; 2) Stronger communication of program options to all students; and 3) Strengthening already existed resources related to immediate work experiences, via part time work or internships and long term career planning.

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Evaluation of the Break it To Make It Program
Introduction and Organization of the Report

The purpose of this evaluation is to review the Break It to Make It program funded by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. In our initial evaluation plan, we sought to review possible program deliverables and identify system impacts based on a 15-month evaluation timeline. Because we were not given access to the site until the last five months of the evaluation contract, we were not able to focus on system impacts over time. Instead this report focuses on the program deliverables and makes data informed suggestions about next steps for identifying system impacts in the long term. Appendix A includes a long term plan for planning, implementing, and measuring system impact.

Significance of this work. U.S. colleges and universities are exploring best practices of resources, services, and programs to serve formerly incarcerated individuals in higher education. The need to determine which efforts are tailored to their students' social, emotional, and academic needs are fomented in a recent U.S. Department of Justice (2018) report that found 68 percent of formerly incarcerated individuals are re-arrested within a three-year window. Our goal in evaluating this unique program is driven by our interest in reducing recidivism and developing productive and meaningful lives for formerly incarcerated individuals as a means of supporting communities. The Break It to Make It Program as one type of program that is positioned to fulfill those goals.

Description of the evaluation team. Adrian Huerta, PhD serves as the overall team lead for this project. Dr. Huerta's research focuses on college access and equity, boys of color, and vulnerable student populations in K-16. Huerta is a Provost's Postdoctoral Scholar at the University of Southern California. Joey Estrada, PhD is the quantitative team lead for the project. Dr. Estrada's research focuses on gangs, school violence, and vulnerable populations in K-12 and higher education. Estrada is an Associate Professor at San Diego State University. Kristan Venegas, PhD is a member of the evaluation team. Dr. Venegas' research focuses on college access and financial aid for low-income students and students of color. Venegas is a Professor of Teaching, Research, and Practice at the University of Southern California. Jonathan Villafuerte, a Master's of Counseling Student at San Diego State University also assisted with quantitative and qualitative data collection.

Organization of the report. The report is organized as follows. We provide the brief history, mission, and the organization of the program, including a description of the program partners and basic services for individuals who are post incarceration. It's important to note that there is significant programming, especially related to the work of the Strindberg Laboratory that occurs within jails that is not part of this report. Then, we describe our data collection and analysis methods. We evaluate program deliverables based on the data we have collected and offer

specific suggestions for improvement based on those findings. We conclude with final recommendations about next steps for this program.

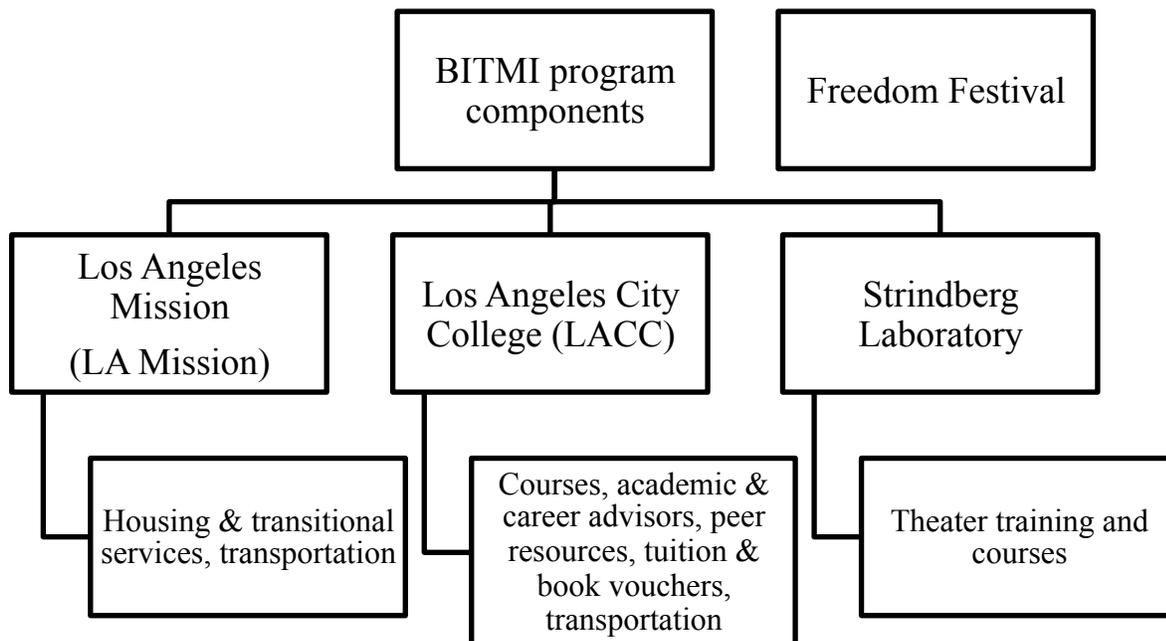**History of the Break It to Make It Program (BITMI)**

The Break It to Make It Program (BITMI) is supported through the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation based on the advocacy of state Assemblymember Mike Gipson (District 64) and the Strindberg Laboratory. The program is a joint effort of the Strindberg Laboratory, Los Angeles City College, and the Los Angeles Mission. These three organizations came together very quickly to coordinate services focused on education and rehabilitation for BITMI student participants. The program has been in existence for 15 months and currently serves approximately 140 students through its services. The program is dependent on legislative funding in this first year. Each of these organizations has worked with formerly incarcerated individuals in the past, however, the coordination of efforts signals a valuable possibility for other programs to collaborate in this manner.

Mission of BITMI and Program Structure

The mission of the Break It To Make It (BITMI) is to:

> Assist incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals successfully reintegrate into their communities and achieve long-term self-sufficiency through the arts, higher education, and rehabilitative services.

These support services are inclusive of the primary needs of formerly incarcerated individuals as they transition from incarceration to the next steps in their lives and is organized as follows:

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│ BITMI program   │        │ Freedom Festival│
│ components      │        │                 │
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 │       │                       │
┌────────────┐  ┌────────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│Los Angeles │  │Los Angeles City│  │ Strindberg   │
│Mission     │  │College (LACC)  │  │ Laboratory   │
│(LA Mission)│  │                │  │              │
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│Housing &      │ │Courses,      │ │Theater training│
│transitional   │ │academic &    │ │and courses     │
│services,      │ │career        │ │                │
│transportation │ │advisors, peer│ │                │
│               │ │resources,    │ │                │
│               │ │tuition &     │ │                │
│               │ │book vouchers,│ │                │
│               │ │transportation│ │                │
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Overview of Partners

The **Los Angeles Mission (LA Mission)** provides transitional housing, food, clothing, transportation, mental health counseling, and legal assistance to BITMI participants. To receive these resources, students must be enrolled in college courses through LACC and participating in the Strindberg Laboratory program. The LA Mission has been providing faith-based services to homeless and other disadvantaged men, women, and children since 1936. They are well positioned to serve the BITMI participants since they have long standing relationships within the prison system as well as support services throughout Los Angeles County. They play a primary role in helping individual learn about this program while incarcerated. Some LACC and Strindberg Laboratory courses were held on-side during this program.

BITMI students who access services from the **Los Angeles City College (LACC)** are able to enroll in college coursework, and received specialized support from an expert academic advisor to develop their academic and career plan. BITMI students have the opportunity to participate in specialized peer support networks and workshops that are customized to their needs as formerly incarcerated students, and they receive their course textbooks for free. These services are in addition to other resources available to all currently enrolled students, which as library access and WiFi on campus. The BITMI program is housed within the student support services area of the college, which offers a number of programs that are focused on serving the specific needs of historically disadvantaged students. The Los Angeles City College is part of the nine college Los Angeles Community College District and is a Minority Serving Institution.

BITMI participants who access services from the **Strindberg Laboratory** receive college credit bearing theater workshops at the LA Mission and during incarceration. The Strindberg Laboratory in a non-profit organization that provides workshops to individuals during and post-incarceration as part of their focus on providing educational credit, job training, and employment to current and former incarcerated people. The laboratory is well positioned to do this work because of their long standing partnerships with prisons and their ability to engage with this community. The Strindberg Laboratory is one of the few theater companies in Los Angeles County to engage in this work. The laboratory team offers theather arts LACC courses and workshops within prisons and discusses the program options with individuals while they are currently incarcerated and play an important role in helping people become enrolled in the program.

In addition to these on-going services, the BITMI program featured a two-day **Freedom Festival** (http://www.laccfoundation.org/laccs-first-freedom-festival/) at the LACC campus on September 28 and 29, 2017. The festival included performances and artists as well as panels from formerly incarcerated students at local two and four year colleges. Individuals who participate in programs for formerly incarcerated students at UCLA and California State University, San Bernardino

served as panelist, artists, and performers as well. BITMI students and the local community were invited to attend this event. The Freedom Festival was an optional event for program participants. The Strindberg Laboratory and State Assembly Member Gipson's office were key partners in the coordination of this LACC based event.

Core Program Elements

The chart of page 4 notes which services each program partner is responsible for providing to BITMI students. In the next section of the report, we clarify the scope and value of each service as it relates to success for each program. These program elements are presented in alphabetical order, rather than a program priority. Each of these program elements contributes to the success of the BITMI program participants.

Academic and career services: A full time staff member and two peer student workers provide ongoing support to BITMI students. The full time staff member is a counselor who develops educational and career plans to all program participants, as well as provides assistance with coordinating financial aid and other resources as needed. The peer student workers assist with group programming and events related to the program, such as workshops or invited speakers; they may also provide resources for peer mentors and serve as an academic coach. Based on student needs and eligibility, there may be a coordination of services with Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOP&S).

College level courses: LACC and the Strindberg Laboratory provide opportunities for college level credit. Once students develop an educational plan with an LACC staff member, they are eligible to take any courses for which they qualify. This is the standard process for all LACC students. Students may opt to take online and on campus courses. Students may choose a technical pathway, an associate degree pathway or plan to transfer to a four-year college or university depending on their educational plan. The Strindberg Laboratory provides college credit bearing coursework for students who chose to take their theater based courses.

Housing, food, and clothing: LA Mission provides transitional services that include room and board for BITMI participants who are part of their program. Clothing is also an important resource that is offered to BITMI students as they acclimate to the college culture. These services are coordinated through the Director of the Urban Training Institute at the mission. This program is part of her portfolio of service programs to those living at the facility. Non-LA Mission participants do not receive these benefits.

Mental Health Counseling: LA Mission and LACC provides resources for BITMI students to receive mental health counseling as needed.

Peer resources: LACC provides peer mentoring to BITMI students. Peer mentors are trained para-professionals that focus on academic coaching, which includes study skills, time management and a support network to talk about life as a formerly incarcerated college student. These peer support resources do not supplant mental health or counseling services from the full time LACC staff member. The use of peer resources has been found to have valuable as part of the college going experience.

Theater training: The Strindberg Laboratory offers theater training at the LA Mission, which may sometimes serve as BITMI participant's first experiences with college level courses. The theater training is specialized in developing acting and support growth in the interpersonal skills of formerly incarcerated individuals. In addition to the LA Mission based work, they also provide theater training to individuals during their incarceration which is part of the BITMI project but not part of this program evaluation.

Transportation: Individuals who are living at LA Mission may receive bus tokens to attend courses at the LACC campus. All LACC students are eligible to purchase a reduced cost "U-Pass" which is a universal transportation pass for the LA Metro's bus and rail lines. Some students may be eligible to receive these passes free of charge.

Tuition and book vouchers: LACC works with BITMI students to apply for financial aid, if eligible, to cover the cost of tuition and if needed, cost of living as a student. LACC provides much needed book vouchers as well. These are administered through the program.

Program Access and Length

Individuals may come into the program either via LA Mission or LACC. Some program participants may opt into the program as part of their post-incarceration plan through the LA Mission. Based on the documentation provided to our team, individuals must interview with program staff and be accepted into the program as they complete their terms of incarceration. The LA Mission based application asks questions that focuses individual goals and prior challenges, as well as asks about connection with family and prior college experience.

All individuals who transition into the LA Mission are required to complete a 30 day Jump Start program that provides basic transition and life skills services. It's important to note that the Jump Start can exceed 30 days for individuals who are designated as needing more time to participate in the program generally and/or as not being ready to move into the BITMI program. Once they have completed this program, they have five next step options to continue.

The BITMI program is considered a "Fast Track" Plan option for individuals who would like to attend courses at LACC, in addition to the other sources they will receive as LA Mission. The

Fast Track Option is designed to provide six months of services and support. Individuals who complete the Fast Track Option at LA Mission are then moved onto the Final Track Option, which may provide an additional three months of services and support.

Secondly, there are students who enter the program via LACC directly. These students do not receive the services at LA Mission offers. These BITMI students may learn about the program via word of mouth or posters placed around the LACC campus. These students must complete a BITMI application and interview to become part of the program. The application asks for basic demographic information. It also asks students to note which additional services they might be interested in, which paves the way for coordination of services for a student. In other words, the application is designed to help identify possible overlapping services that a student may benefit from in addition to the BITMI program.

Now that we have described the key partners, program elements, and access to the program, we turn to a discussion of our methods in evaluating the program.

Data Collection and Analysis

Our evaluation team had envisioned a 15-month data collection timeline, in which we would have been able to meet with individual students more than once and gain a stronger sense of their experiences in the program over time. We had expected to survey students twice--at the beginning and the end of the program. Because we were not able to do so, we adjusted our timing and increased the number of students that we had planned to meet with. We adjusted our timeline for meeting with administrators and other professionals connected to the program so that we could forefront the experiences of the BITMI students and then connect our administrator and professional interviews with those responses. It is worth noting that adjustments like these are not unusual when doing program evaluation or other rigorous research approaches. Research plans need to adjust to what is available to tell the story of what they find as it emerges from the culture and cadence of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In this section of the report, we describe our data collection and analysis.

Data Collection. We employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods research design for this evaluation plan (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In an exploratory sequential mixed-methods research design, researchers develop a protocol based on prior research and existing literature on the topic. Our team conducted a review of the literature of programs that serve formerly incarcerated individuals as well as college going and college access for low-income students and minoritized students; we also have contributed to that body of research.

Before our contract became finalized, we had preliminary conversations with the LACC staff and attended the Freedom Festival in September 2017 to gain a better understanding of the LACC

campus, the LA Mission, and the work of the Strindberg Laboratory. We also reviewed program websites for each organization to learn more about how the BITMI program is communicated broadly. We used those experiences to develop our initial protocol and begin drafting our student survey while waiting for our final evaluation contract to be approved.

In March 2018, we conducted initial focus group interviews with 20 students. Student participants received $20 gift card incentives for participating in focus groups. We then coded and used the results of those focus groups to revise the interview protocol for administrators and students and developed our survey instrument (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

In April 2018, we interviewed an additional 13 students about their experiences in the BITMI program to gather additional voices. Student participants received $20 gift card incentives for participating in focus groups.

In May 2018, we met with leaders from the Strindberg Laboratory and administered surveys to students at the end of the year ceremony and provided an additional opportunity for students' to participate online in June 2018. We provided $15 dollar gift card incentives for all students who completed the surveys.

In June, July, and August 2018, we met with administrators at LA Mission and LACC. Our final meetings in late July and August were especially helpful in responding to final questions about program design and implementation

Data Analysis. Our qualitative evaluation team independently read all interview transcripts and used intercoder reliability to develop a list of emerging codes through an open coding strategy (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Saldaña, 2013). We supplemented our analysis with field notes from individual observations of meetings, the Freedom Festival and the End of the Year Ceremony. After the initial review of transcripts, the evaluators collaborated and discussed the emerging codes and themes, and then developed two codebooks for data analysis: one focused solely on the focus group interviews and the second on professional staff individual interviews data. The codebooks were then uploaded to Dedoose 8.0.42, which allows additional members of the evaluation team to access transcripts and codes. As suggested by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), our team used an inductive and deductive design for analysis before the codes were analyzed. Intercoder reliability exercises were used to ensure trustworthiness throughout the coding process (Saldaña, 2012).

Our survey was distributed in two ways. Some students completed paper surveys at the end of the year ceremony. Those surveys were completed on paper and input into SPSS for review. Our second round of surveys was completed online. Based on those two rounds of survey distribution, we were able to collect 45 surveys, representing about 33% of the 140 students who

are part of the BITMI program. With these results, we are able to provide descriptive results and analyze responses for correlations and frequencies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As with our qualitative data, our team met to discuss these results both in terms of the quantitative findings alone and in combination with the qualitative results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

<u>Additional Data Considerations.</u> Although this evaluation used a range of mixed-method tools to understand the culture and experiences of the individuals involved in this study, it carries some limitations, as does all research. Generalizations and causal inference of the findings cannot be made to other students or programs due to the cross-sectional design of the evaluation, the sample of students having to fit a particular criterion to participate in the program, and concentrated location and services of the study.

While rigorous efforts were used to disentangle the student experiences, those living in the mission and those with other housing accommodations, and how they benefited and/or contributed to the program. Not all students participated in the survey and focus groups and not all stakeholders were in the individual interviews. Selection bias by those students or professional staff willing to participate may have influenced the findings, as they must have had stronger feelings about their experience with the BITMI Program.

We want to acknowledge that we received this data and did begin to review it for its relationship to the program evaluation. For the purposes of this evaluation, we focus solely on the 140 participants and organizations that are part of the formal BITMI program. The Strindberg Laboratory provided videos and additional material for our review. At the end of the year ceremony, a few LACC administrators offered their thoughts on the BITMI program, especially in comparison to other LACC programs or similar programs for formerly incarcerated individuals at other campuses.

Finally, the evaluators had to limited the number of questions on the student survey based on the advice of program administrators. Future evaluations should include questions that gather in depth information about the reasons who and when students moved on from the LA Mission, reasons for reducing course enrollment, or other social/emotional factors.

In this next section of the report, we focus on our survey and focus group results.

Perceptions of the Program

Survey results suggest that BITMI students who completed program surveys were by and large very satisfied with the program services that they experienced. 45 students of 140 possible students completed the survey, which is a 32% response rate.

Of those who responded, we offer the following overview of responses:

- 100% of respondents reported feeling respected by the program staff; 98% of respondents reports that they respected the program staff as well.

- 100% of respondents agreed that they would recommend BITMI program to others; 85% of those respondents strongly agreed that they would recommend the program.

- 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this program will enhance their success.

- 93% of respondents reports that they strongly agreed or agreed that the felt safe among peers at LACC.

- 90% of respondents selected strongly agree or agree to feeling connected to the BITMI program.

- 85% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they had a reliable mentor on the BITMI program.

- 85% of respondents agreed that spirituality has a role in their success.

- 80% of respondents reported that they knew who to talk to regarding academic support.

- 71% felt comfortable and empowered after participating in the Freedom Festival.

- 67% of respondents who attended the Freedom Festival agreed or strongly agreed to feeling empowered about the event.

- 62% were excited to participate in the Freedom Festival event.

- 60% of respondents enjoyed the theater and art offered through the Strindberg Laboratory.

- 55% of respondents said theater and art program opened them up to the possibility of changing their pathway. It's important to note that individuals who became part of the BITMI program via LACC might not have had the same access to the Strindberg Laboratory as a resource in the same way that other participants from the LA Mission may have.

- 50% of those in the BITMI program reported theater and art program offered in prison influenced my decision to participate in the LACC and Mission Program. It's important to note that some of the respondents might not have had access to this program during their incarceration. 20% of respondents either selected neutral or did not respond to this question, which could mean that they did not have the opportunity to learn about this program during their incarceration.

Demographic information is noted below and is organized so that the highest percentages in any category appear first:

- Gender
  - 83% male
  - 17% female

- Race/ethnicity
  - 38% of respondents identified as Black or African American
  - 33% of respondents identified as Latino
  - 20% of respondents identified as White
  - 9% of respondents represented other Race/Ethnic categories or Declined to State

- Age range
  - 35% of respondents were between the ages of 31-40
  - 35% of respondents were between the ages of 41-54
  - 20% of respondents were between the ages of 25-30
  - 10% of respondents fell between the ages of 18-24 or over 55

- Parental status
  - 72% did not have children
  - 28% of respondents had 1 or more children

- Housing
  - 50% of respondents reported that they were living in stable housing
  - 48% of respondents reported that they were living in temporary housing
  - 2% of respondents reported other housing plans

- Length of Incarceration*
  - 27% of respondents served more than 10 years
  - 24% of respondents served more between 5-10 years
  - 24% of respondents served between 24 months -5 years
  - 20% of respondents served between 0-12 months
  - less than 1% of respondents served between 13- 24 months
    * not all respondents answered this question

- Foster Care Experience
  - 70% of respondents had no experience in the foster care system
  - 30% of respondents had experience in the foster care system

Career goals for respondents included: sign language interpreter, drug and alcohol counselor, computer science, business administration, architecture, psychology, and the legal professions, which signal a variety of postsecondary goals.

We conducted focus groups with students during two different points in our data collection cycle. The main themes from these focus groups include that the program provided transitional support into postsecondary education and validated their sense of belonging.

Based on the focus group interviews with 33 students, we highlight some of their comments about their experiences in LACC, LA Mission, and the Strindberg Laboratory. The use of student voices is necessary to understand the the context of the survey results from the 45 respondents.

Benefits of the program. The immediate and long-term benefits of the program resonated with our focus group participants. They recognized the privilege of seeking postsecondary education, gaining skills to prepare for professional careers, and having focused support to concentrate on their education and rehabilitation. One student comments below:

> "[BITMI] is there for you to succeed and yes, it will help you a lot with the financials because... 'where am I going to get my [college] stuff?' If it wasn't for Break It to Make It, I would have probably had to have taken less classes so that I may be able to work more."

Many students were balancing family commitments, work obligations, and college coursework. Multiple students commented about the feeling of friendship and collegiality they experienced from the staff members and peers in the program. For many, BITMI helped in their transition back into society as some students experienced short-term (less than three months) to decades long incarceration (more than 20 years). One student shared the following:

In this case, it was like slowly being integrated into society, it was just very helpful. At the end of the day, even though it's a part of my life [past incarceration] I want to forget, I still had it and it still affects me to this day. So, being with people that were incarcerated, you're able to talk to in a different way, being able to know how they feel and slowly just integrate it right into society.

For many BITMI students they are aware of the challenges of having to learn how to concentrate on their studies with the new demands of life outside of incarceration. Many students commented that their time served was "easy" on terms of the structure, organization, and schedule of incarceration. As individuals were told when they would eat, when they would participate in programs or services, and when they could dedicate time for college courses. This "lack" of structure and distraction outside of jail or prison creates new challenges for students.

There's a disconnect when you've lived out of a general social construct and then to a different type of life. There's a disconnect on how to integrate yourself. Those networks and pathways like Break It to Make It, make it a lot easier too, and you can be who you are, you can be who you are. We are different.

While BITMI students acknowledge their "different" experiences, they find comfort and support in the various individuals leading who are guiding their transition back into society. BITMI provides pathways for them without judgement. Overall, the students feel respected and valued for who they are as people. Another student recognizes how the various services and programs provided by the LA Mission and Strindberg Laboratory facilitate their transition. The student comments that while incarcerated, they felt the need to wear a "mask" to disguise their true selves.

We did classes, which was very therapeutic, considering that we were incarcerated, we got no real outlets to let our frustrations or just to get outside of our own skin cause inside we had to wear a mask...And, you know, be somebody that we were made to be in there. And so those classroom settings were good places for us to come so we didn't have to wear that mask, and we could just be ourselves.

The student highlights the socioemotional benefits he felt from participating in the therapeutic sessions. Upon his release, the student transition into college was facilitated through the support from the L.A. Mission which will allowed him to focus on his studies while benefitting from specific services, such as housing, laundry, and clothing.

> Our expectations here, they told us, was that we would be going to college, we would be given somewhere to stay and live free room and board, housing, and care, and laundry, and clothes, and honestly so far, all my expectations have been met.

For some students having access to their basic needs being met allows them to develop a new perspective on their goals and achievements. These new attitudes are captured in the student quote below.   The student comments below:

> "[BITMI] gives people a second chance at life. That's how I feel. If it wasn't for them, a lot of people that's coming out of prison would feel lost and feel like, 'Well, my life is over with. Who could help me?' Break It to Make It, you don't get this everywhere! So, it's very important."

The student explains how the BITMI provides has provided them and others a "second chance at life" and if not given this opportunity to participate in the program they would feel "lost" and that their life "is over with" as they would not have the formal support structures to guide and have the necessary foundation to do well in higher education and their lives. The student acknowledges that not many formerly incarcerated individuals have access to programs similar to BITMI and that is why this type of program is "very important" for this group of students. For many of the BITMI student this is their first time enrolling in higher education, outside of correspondence courses, while incarcerated. This may also be students first time to focus on doing well.

> [College] is going to be different. It's not the same as sitting in your cell and then you come to school and there's a lot of distractions sitting in a classroom than being in long-term incarceration, like I had. It's been difficult- not saying being around people- but feeling like I belong; like I'm in the right place. There's been times when I felt, "What am I doing here?" You know what I mean? I still have that stigmatize, like being a statistic. But, you know what, after completing a semester here and going through some of the growing pains that I did, I know I do belong here and I'm in the right place, for sure.

Students discussed their transitional issues and shared the sentiment of "not belonging" due to their past incarcerations, experience in foster care, being homeless, or having drug/alcohol addictions. However they were able to move past their stigmas and focus on their college coursework and employment. Through the support of the program, the students understood that "growing pains" of being in college and have their goals of transferring to four-year colleges or earning certificates as clear goals.

Apart of their transitional experiences, a small number mentioned "trying" college in their late teenage years or early twenties when they were not mature or prepared for higher education. Due

to their unfamiliarity with higher education process of applying, enrolling in courses, or developing academic plans, many students benefited from the personal attention and support from the LACC faculty and counselors. These professional staff members developed individual academic plans for each student to understand their pathway into college. One student comments below:

> "[LACC] just helped me get fully involved in my education, because, at first, I just applied and I was excited to go to school, but I really didn't know what to do as far as how to go through the proper channels to make sure that all my paperwork was in on time and all my things were in order and all my requirements for my student checklist for my financial aid. It's been really, really, really nice."

The student and others expressed similar excitements about being enrolled in college. Many discussed how they were unsure the "proper channels" or strategies on how to become successful in higher education. During the interviews, the students shared their challenges with various courses and would provide positive support and affirmation on the belief they would do well. Lastly, the student recognizes how LACC provided checklists for them to understand what components of the college process were completed or in the progress to move further into higher education.

Experiences in the LA Mission. As mentioned, the value of housing provided by the LA Mission helped students become accustomed with the expectations of the BITMI program and specifically LACC. The opportunity to earn college units while in residence at the LA Mission helped students develop new positive support networks and also information about college expectations as captured in the quote below:

> "I took actually introductions to college class [in the LA Mission] and that was so helpful, because I had no idea what college is or what it's about, I don't know what courses were, I don't know what units were. He gave me a whole break down of what college is and UCs and everything. So, that was very helpful for me."

Access to postsecondary education through the L.A. Mission is positive step for the students to regain their confidence towards eventually enrolling full-time coursework. Similarly, another student mentioned how he developed his plan of completing LA Mission, Strindberg Laboratory, and LACC courses while in residence at the LA Mission. The concurrent enrollment in these activities allow the student to focus on their personal development and well-being as their transition into society and higher education.

> I wanted to go straight to college when I got out [of jail]. I couldn't make this semester, but they told me to take my time and take the classes that they offer at LA Mission and

then in the summer semester, I'll come to the campus and do my classes here at LACC. So, I'm just taking a little theater class and a LACC counseling class at LA Mission, along with all the other groups that they make us take there and next semester.

The culmination of student experiences in the BITMI program has provided the necessary structure and support for them to prepare for college courses and outside life demands. Overwhelmingly, the students praise the BITMI program for providing them a second chance at life through various outlets of academic, social, and emotional supports available.

<div align="center">**Response to Evaluation Goals**</div>

In developing our initial goals for the program evaluation, we responded to the request for proposals and responded to feedback provided to our team from the LACC leadership team in Summer 2017. In this section of the report, we respond directly to those evaluation goals. We rely on data from the student surveys, focus groups, and program administrators from LA Mission, the Strindberg Laboratory and LACC, as well as our own program observations. It is worth noting that we developed these recommendations without attention to cost. However, many of these decisions are relatively low-cost. They mainly signal a reallocation of resources and clarity within program services. We share ideas about costs in the conclusion of the report.

Provide research and practice-based recommendations to improve program implementation and student outcomes. The BITMI program follows many of the best practices that recommended in serving formerly incarcerated college students (Erisman and Contardo, 2005). These services include stable housing, food, and clothing, support with tuition costs, educational career planning, and strong mentoring and peer support networks. The addition of theater and art as a creative outlet is unique; it strengthens the value of the program and creates a pipeline of support from the incarceration to post-incarceration. The recommendations in this section would increase more seamless transitions for students who receive services from all three program areas. These recommendations are as follows:

- LA Mission should designate one staff member to serve as the liaison for BITMI students. Currently, the responsibility for decision making is rotating, which creates confusion for students in the program.

- LACC could create a one-unit elective course to supplement the college success course. The purpose of this one-unit course is for students to develop an understanding of college resources and services, learn available employment opportunities, develop their resume, and build new peer relationships. While students were appreciative of the opportunity to gain some of these skills through the college success course and other workshops, many students felt that their concerns were unique because of their former incarceration and

would welcome to opportunity to explore some of these challenges with their peers. If this is not an option, it might be possible to designate 1-3 college success courses for BITMI students to create this environment. This is a common practice in other colleges for specialized groups such as EOP&S students, and may already be a practice in place at LACC.

- LACC and LA Mission should provide support and/or better advertise existing support for BITMI students to expunge some of their previous convictions to increase employment opportunities and pathways. It is possible that these resources are available at either LACC and/or LA Mission. However, these services were not visible to the BITMI students in our data sample and need more visibility. BITMI administrators may wish to consider the model currently in place at Rio Hondo College as a best practice approach.

- BITMI students should regularly complete online surveys of their experiences in LACC, LA Mission, and Strindberg Labs, and methods to improve service delivery. The program evaluation that we completed in an important first step. The results of this report should be used to develop a short program satisfaction survey that can be distributed to BITMI students as part of a continuous improvement plan. The surveys should include incentives and should continue to be optional, rather than a mandatory program requirement. Continuous improvement plans should be grounded in program goals and resources. We have developed a logic model that can be used to inform a continuous improvement program. The logic model is included in the Appendix A of this report.

Highlight potential areas of improvement to better serve student participants and strengthen staff professional development if needed. These recommendations are based on data from the student surveys, focus groups, and program administrators from LA Mission, the Strindberg Laboratory and LACC, as well as our own program observations. The recommendations are noted below:

- LACC, LA Mission, and Strindberg Laboratory participate in a day long convening to establish timelines for the intake process and anticipated outcomes for the students. As with many ambitious programs, the BITMI program began very soon after funding became available. There was little time for extensive planning, communication, and coordination of services. Through our evaluation, we heard instances in which there was confusion or a lack of discussion about program processes, including intake processes, course taking opportunities, and requirements for Strindberg related courses. Each partner should present ideal intake and support structures to understand how to resolve students' needs and challenges within the delivery of services. The convening would benefit from an external facilitator who knows the programs well, but does not represent one of the three coordinating organizations.

- BITMI program should develop a half-day student orientation session each semester that describes program requirements, expectations, and resources. BITMI students are eager to be informed about all possible resources from the program and how they can access them. A student orientation session would also help students get to know one another and reinforce the peer mentoring and cohort model that the program currently benefits from.

- LACC should provide BITMI students priority registration for courses, so they can enroll in hours that best meet their residential needs. BITMI students living in LA Mission and in other residential facilities may have curfews, which means that some students may not be able to take courses if they overlap with these curfew times. BITMI serves about 140 students and are not concentrated in a particular academic program, this recommendation seems reasonable. It's likely that LACC would have strong working models on how to develop this type of registration through their transfer programs or honors programs.

- LACC should coordinate with career services to identify local companies that offer paid internships for BITMI students. LA Mission and the Strindberg Laboratory should continue to provide their services for the BITMI students they serve as well. However, students who do not receive services from LA Mission or have a career interest in theater or the arts would benefit from career services that supplement the detailed educational plans provided by LACC BITMI staff. Ideally, the LACC career center would provide detailed resources for formerly incarcerated students. Connection to a career path that engages an individual in work that is meaningful reduces recidivism (Erisman and Contardo, 2005)

Suggest intervention strategies to improve positive social behaviors, improve academic outcomes, and reduce recidivism. While many post incarceration programs focus on primarily recidivism as a measure of success, we acknowledge the design of the BITMI program as one that equally seeks to improve positive social behaviors and improve academic outcomes. Programs with designs like these have better long term outcomes (Erisman and Contardo, 2005). As noted in our quantitative and qualitative data, there are high levels of satisfaction with the program; the following recommendations seek to expand that satisfaction and students continue to grow in the program:

- LACC should incentivize the use of student support services that extend beyond the BITMI program. It seems as though the strategic practice of recommending that students participate in additional available support programs is already in motion. Eligible students have been encouraged to participate in other student support programs that meet their needs. This strategy is especially important given the uncertainty around continuing program funding and the possible available programs at LACC. At the same time, it's

important to note that the unique features of the BITMI program should serve as the primary point of service for formerly incarcerated students.

- LA Mission develop and communicate a consistent roadmap to success for BITMI students. The roadmap should identify what is needed each stage of their transition through a predefined and approved timeline for the residential, academic, and theater-based programs and services. Our current understanding is that BITMI students may receive inconsistent messages about when they can take courses or in some cases participate in the program based on perceptions of their social actions and personal readiness. More clarity about participation requirements is needed so that students can work towards goals and make decisions based on this consistent set of guidelines. As the program is shared with students while inmates while they are still incarcerated, this information needs to be as consistent and accurate as possible.

- All partners should work together to continue the legacy of the Freedom Festival. The inaugural event was well attended and had meaning for those who participated in it. During our visit, we spoke informally with community members who also shared how impactful the event was for them. In future years, additional information about available educational and social resources for formerly incarcerated adults and youth could strengthen the artistic core of the event. The event should continue to be driven by the arts and resources.

- Strindberg Laboratory should develop a progression roadmap or appropriate visual so that students can better understand how exploring theater and arts skills connect to improving social expression and management of emotions. Consulting with an arts based therapy may lend itself to the development this kind of document. The data showed that these programs yield great results for those who understand the value of these experiences, which leads us to suggest that more clarity around the value is needed, beyond that it is an important program requirement, is needed.

- Continue to celebrate the program's student success in public forums. For example, a friends and family inclusive event, at the end of the Fall semester, so that students and program administrators can celebrate the completion of half the academic term. Engaging friends and family in a mid-term event would further encourage students to continue in the program. Our research team was extremely impressed by the care and culture created at the end of the year event, continuing that ethic of care within the program seems to be one of the main drivers of the program's current success.

Conclusion

In this report, we have provided an overview of each partner organization, described the services offered through each partner, described our data collection methods and results, and finally, offered recommendations for improvement and long term sustainability based on the evaluation request. The main question that underpins this evaluation is perhaps the most basic--which is "Does it work?" Our answer to this question, is yes, the program does "work." We know that students are reporting high levels of satisfaction with most program elements and that they are meeting their academic goals. Most of the students we spoke too and all of the students who participated in the survey reported that they were working towards their academic and career goals. In less than a year, we heard stories of students and observed awards being given to students at the end of the year ceremony that were for transfer progress and high GPA. Students were clear to us that they would have not been as successful or perhaps even successful at all without the support of the program elements. Because the program is very new, we do not have the kind of longitudinal evidence that might satisfy stricter outcome standards. Having run college access and success programs ourselves, we know that it often take a few cohorts of students moving through a program to before one can truly understand the outcomes of a program. We are hopeful that the logic model that we have provided will serve as a framework for measuring those future outcomes.

There are numerous positive aspects of this program. The commitment of the staff and students and the quality of the program design are well positioned to continue to serve the current cohort and plan for the next one. With stabilization of resources and a coordinated expansion this program has the potential to serve as a model for other programs in California and the nation.

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Appendix A. Logic Model for the Break It To Make It Program Evaluation

Resources/ Inputs	Tasks/ Activities	Outputs/ Participants	Outcomes/ Deliverables	Systemic Impact

Break It To Make It Program Staff
LACC Program Staff
TLAM Program Staff
Strindberg Program Staff
Student Program Participants

Existing program documentation
Existing staff training procedures
Existing referral procedures
Existing assessment procedures
Existing services procedures
Existing data collection procedures
Existing follow-up procedures

School-based academic data
School-based resource(s) data

Task 1: Develop a Collaborative Working Relationship with Break It To Make It Program Staff, Students, and Stakeholders

Task 2: Conduct an In-Depth Qualitative Data Assessment Through Multiple Perspectives

Task 3: Conduct a Quantitative Data Assessment of Program Procedures, Student Community Reintegration, and Academic Performance

Task 4: Finalize Data Analysis and Submit Progress Reports

Task 5: Submit Final Evaluation Report

\# Program Staff
\# Program Student Participants

Semi-Structured Interviews
Targeted Focus Groups
Written Reflective Journals

Develop a sustainable data-driven successful community reintegration monitoring system

Provide research and practice-based recommendations to improve program implementation and student outcomes

Highlight potential areas of improvement to better serve student participants and improve staff professional development, if needed

Suggest intervention strategies to improve positive social behaviors, improve academic outcomes, and reduce recidivism

Empirically documented increase in successful community reintegration rates

Empirically documented increase in positive social behavior engagement

Empirically documented increase in supportive relational engagement

Empirically documented increase in positive cognitive thinking

Empirically documented increase in academic performance rates