EDA 611: Local School Community Description

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**Student/Community Profile:**

The School of Business and Tourism (BT), on the campus of the Miguel Contreras Learning Complex (MCLC), is a comprehensive secondary school established in 2014. BT is part of the District East Region located within the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), Los Angeles, CA. The larger MCLC campus began as a comprehensive high school in 2006. Initially, MCLC consisted of four small learning communities with one principal: Academic Learning Communities (ALC), School of Justice (SJ), Global Studies (GS), and The School of Business and Tourism Academy (BTA). All four separate small schools share athletic teams, the library, the cafeteria, Parent Center, and a central Welcome Center. The MCLC motto is “Four Schools, One Spirit.” During the 2012-2013 academic year, the faculty and staff of BTA applied as a pilot school via Los Angeles Unified School District and was renamed as the School of Business and Tourism (BT) in collaboration with Linked Learning.

**BT Vision and Mission:**

The vision of the School of Business and Tourism is to graduate confident, skillful students who are prepared for four year universities and ready to participate in the 21st century workforce.The mission of the School of Business and Tourism (BT) at the Miguel Contreras Learning Complex (MCLC) is to provide students with an education of enduring value. Our Linked Learning program is designed to meet students’ interests and industry demands by integrating a strong college-preparatory curriculum with career and technical skills within the business, tourism, and hospitality career pathways. By participating in thematic, interdisciplinary models of project-based learning, students will develop skills in interpersonal relations, leadership, effective written and oral communication, problem solving, technology, and teamwork. BT graduates are Critical Thinkers, Effective Communicators, Students of Strong Character, and Global Contributors.

**Local Community Description:**

The School of Business and Tourism (BT) serves the urban communities of Westlake, MacArthur Park, and Pico Union in Los Angeles, California. The BT campus is located west of downtown Los Angeles in the Westlake neighborhood, a densely populated commercial and residential district. The communities of Westlake, MacArthur Park, and Pico Union lie within the original boundary of El Pueblo de Los Ángeles, founded in 1781. In 2022, 67% of the 117,000 residents from BT’s Westlake, MacArthur Park, and Pico Union communities were categorized as first-generation immigrants: Central American (i.e., Guatemalan, El Salvadorean, and Hondurian), Mexican, Cuban, and Korean. Additionally, the median income of these communities, Westlake, MacArthur Park, and Pico Union, was $26,757–resulting in correlated societal trends impacting the BT school community: unemployment, immigration status, domestic trauma, mental health, and gang violence. Since the school opened, BT has served a primarily Latino student population. In 2022-23, the MCLC school population consists of 95.5% Hispanic or Latino students, 1.4% Asian students, 1.1% Filipino students, .9% African American students, .9% White students, and .2% American Indian or Alaska Native students.

BT at MCLC, “Home of the Cobras,” as of July 27, 2020, ranked in the top 10 neighborhoods in L.A. County for total deaths due to COVID-19. Additionally, in contrast to the 6% of L.A. County’s workforce employed in the accommodation and food services industries, 17% of the employed population of Westlake, MacArthur Park, and Pico Union works in this industry with 10% between the ages of 18 and 24. Prior to the onset of the pandemic and subsequent economic crisis, Westlake, MacArthur Park, and Pico Union had a higher rate of unemployment (i.e., 8.5%) compared to the rest of the county (i.e., 6.8%). The residents of Westlake, MacArthur Park, and Pico Union suffered a disproportionate economic impact due to the prevalence of accommodation and food service jobs in the neighborhood.

In addition to the pandemic, the death of George Floyd directly impacted the local BT communities with visible neighborhood protests and local-political response, resulting in the adoption of explicit and implicit bias pedagogy related to the heightened social justice movement (e.g., Black Lives Matter). Local District Central (LDC), now District East, established the Black Students Matter Task Force to align its mission towards addressing equity and access for all students. Together, the cultural and societal shift provided BT with a framework to create the BT Equity Committee and the Black Students Matter Committee (BSMC) as a school-wide approach to inclusivity. The BSMC provided professional development in the areas of implicit and explicit cognitive and social bias on race and racism.

In 2022, 97% of the students are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. BT at MCLC remains a safe haven for students with a welcoming, secure, and calm atmosphere. The continuing growth and gentrification of Downtown LA has put pressure on the housing prices in the surrounding neighborhoods. As apartment rents increase, some lower income families have become homeless, have had to share housing, or have relocated. The increased cost of living has forced many families to work multiple jobs to survive. Since the 1970’s, BT’s neighborhood has served as the port of entry for new migrants, many undocumented. Within the last 5 years many of our students have arrived in the United States as unaccompanied minors, often joining family members they have not seen in many years.

Student enrollment at BT has declined steadily over the past 4 years with this year being the lowest at 364 students as compared to the 2016-2017 being the highest with 457. The continuing competition from charter schools and the rise in the gentrification of the areas around DTLA have resulted in this enrollment decline.

On a personal note, after choosing a doctorate in Urban Education at the University of Southern California, I strategically chose to move districts and serve the challenging immigrant communities located near DTLA. I am blessed to be entrusted to BT’s community and consider it a most indelible, salient responsibility to devote my energy and efforts to the many contingencies associated with this specific urban educational environment. This choice is rooted in my educational philosophy and ambitions, the belief that educators are incredibly influential. We influence by imparting knowledge within and across disciplines, and by daily sharing our lives as fellow-learners, friends, mentors, and, occasionally, benevolent disciplinarians. We are role-models that foster the love of learning and the enthusiasm for life through strong, consistent, and practical teaching methods, in and outside the classroom. BT’s students require the collaboration from all participants (i.e., teacher, student, parent/s, and administration), a necessity to ensure a culture of learning. A collaborative effort combined with the students’ unique cultural/personal backgrounds and individual talents and intelligences allow for academic excellence and social competence, a daily achievement–ready for a 21st Century workplace indicated in BT’s Mission and Vision. The final objective of any Alma Mater is to foster life-long learners and conscientiously optimistic citizens. As a result, the education profession is an occupation with much responsibility and much edification.