

University partnerships with local communities have become increasingly important, responding to societal needs as well as critiques of universities. This Overview introduces the articles in this issue that document approaches universities are taking, obstacles that are encountered, and ways in which programs can be evaluated and institutionalized. It also describes key areas requiring attention: the implementation of partnerships; the proper role for the university in applied work; the adaptation of university structures and processes; weighing who should benefit from community involvement by universities; and the staying power of this new direction in university work.

University-Community Partnerships: *Current State and Future Issues*

We believe that this issue of *Metropolitan Universities* is one indicator of a major sea change in American higher education. We define that sea change as a movement among higher educational institutions in general, but particularly among urban colleges and universities, toward becoming genuinely civic institutions devoted to solving the pressing problems of our society. Certainly there have been continuous outsider critiques calling for this kind of movement for quite some time. But the focus of these critiques has now moved from the outside to the very center of the academy itself. Two university presidents (Judith Ramaley and Carl Patton), a dean (David Sweet), and an Assistant Secretary of HUD (Michael Stegman) are contributors to this volume, along with other well-known university leaders. All of them are in full agreement that university partnerships with local communities are essential for both educational and societal progress.

Stated more directly, we hope that this issue contributes to the growing chorus of voices that are calling for a more engaged, active, and connected university. To mix metaphors, we believe that the chorus of voices, some dating back to the early 80s, began to swell into a wave of reform with Ernest Boyer's March 1994 article in the *Chronicle of*

Higher Education on the need to create a "New American College." Deploring the "crisis in our public schools" and the desperate condition of our cities, Boyer challenged American higher educators to radically change their priorities and act effectively to meet their civic and societal responsibilities: "Do colleges really believe they can ignore the social pathologies that surround schools and erode the educational foundations of our nation?" Specifically, Boyer called for the creation of a "New American College...[which takes] special pride in its capacity to connect thought to action, theory to practice...The New American College, as a connected institution would be committed to improving, in a very intentional way, the human condition."

Using Boyer's concept, and with 20-20 hindsight, we believe that a series of events in 1995 indicate that a New American College is beginning to develop. For example, in January 1995, seven national higher educational organizations sponsored an extraordinary colloquium, involving representatives of over 400 colleges and universities, to respond to a letter from President Clinton, emphasizing the significant role higher educational institutions could play in promoting service. Approximately a month later, the American Association for Higher Education held its national conference on the "Engaged Campus: Organizing to Serve Society's Needs." Over 1,800 individuals attended and the meeting led directly to the theme of the 1996 meeting on "Crossing Boundaries: Pathways to Productive Learning and Community Renewal." On the same days as the AAHE meeting, the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities held a major conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, that saw unusual agreement on focusing academic resources to solve the problem of the American city. And Harvard University, with support from the Centers for Disease Control, held a major national conference in April 1995 on "Higher Education and the Health of Youth: Charting a National Course," which was explicitly conceived as a practical application of Boyer's inspiring vision.

Neither the frequency of conferences nor number of participants attending meetings, a movement make. Nonetheless, when considered with other events, including the success of HUD's Office of University Partnerships; the appointment of James Stukel, (the former Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Chicago and a leading advocate for engaging urban universities with their communities) as President of the University of Illinois System; and the accelerating growth of Campus Compact since its founding in 1988, a discernible pattern clearly emerges.

In the spirit of these developments as well as others, Ernest Lynton in his *Making the Case for Professional Service* argues that higher education must return to an earlier tradition in which service (i.e., "the application of the individual's professional expertise to problems and tasks outside the campus") was at the very center of

the academy's work: "...[American Higher Education] is being exhorted to turn the rhetoric of mission statements into the reality of institutional commitment to direct interaction with public and private constituencies, helping them to apply the latest knowledge and the latest techniques to the analysis and amelioration of their problems" (op.cit., p. 9).

What accounts for the accelerating movement toward changing universities into connected institutions? In our view, both internal and external pressures are forcing the university to change. Among the central internal pressures, we would highlight concern about the quality of teaching and research, perceived loss of university mission as well as a sense of scholarly community, and, perhaps most significant, a recognition that higher education is failing to promote responsible citizenship among its students. In the October 6, 1995 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Alexander W. Astin, a highly respected and well-informed academic insider, discussed why "student interest and engagement in politics are at an all time low." His explanation, simply put, was that, despite their professed mission of promoting good citizenship, universities have devoted few resources to that mission and have performed it badly:

Why has higher education failed for so long to make good on its professional commitment to promote citizenship? Many institutions are caught up in this 'pursuit of excellence,' which usually means competing to acquire as many resources as possible and jockeying to build up their reputations so that they move up the pecking order among similar institutions. Those traditional approaches to excellence can lead us to ignore academe's own 'citizenship' responsibilities embodied in our basic purposes of teaching and public service...

If we want our students to acquire the democratic virtues of honesty, tolerance, empathy, generosity, teamwork, and social responsibility, we have to demonstrate those qualities not only in our individual professional conduct, but also in our institutional policies and practices" (op.cit., pp. B 1-2).

Astin connects the concern for low "student interest and engagement in politics" to a pressing external crisis. "Something," he writes, "is terribly wrong with the state of American democracy." With Astin, we believe that the primary reason for the current critique of higher educational institutions is the state of American society itself. There is no need to belabor the increasing failure of urban institutions to assist those in greatest need, the inability of our schooling system to keep up with the

economic and social changes of the late 20th century, and the fiscal crisis threatening America's leadership. The visibility of these problems and the pressures universities are experiencing have been significantly increased because of the end of the Cold War.

The vast American university system is largely a result of the Cold War. Propelled by fear of and competition with the Soviet Union, American politicians, with significant support from the American public, unquestionably accepted higher education's request for increased aid and support. The collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the political disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 signaled the end of the "Cold War University," and triggered changes that were given insightful analyses by Byerly and Pielke and by Kleinman in recent articles. Internal problems, long ignored in the face of a perceived external enemy, could be ignored no longer. Forty-five years of looking outward had its costs, as unresolved domestic problems developed into unresolved, highly visible crises. These crises have led a variety of academic leaders, including Bok, Greiner, Hackney, and Boyer, to ask, in effect, a penetrating question: If American universities are so great, why does American society have such great and growing problems?

The authors in this issue go beyond documenting the need for change. Each article asks and attempts to answer the hard question of what should be done. Although providing different answers based on their different university affiliations and experiences, the authors each make a strong case for institutionalizing service and community partnerships as part of a college or university's academic mission. The various strategies proposed to reach our goals are, particularly suggestive and useful as we work to develop effective university-community partnerships.

For example, the challenges to the university are incisively presented in David Bartelt's article. He argues that universities need to move away from the view of their surrounding community as either a laboratory or as the needy recipient of charitable activities. Rather, the university needs to see itself as a "corporate citizen" of the community, with its own legitimate needs, strengths, and weaknesses. He places the different ways that universities have related to the city and the community in the context of the historical development of universities, as well as of the nature of post-war urban policy. Key steps that are needed to institutionalize a successful relationship between the university and the community are a clear definition and recognition by the university of its own interests; the integration of a community orientation with the academic mission; the creation of mediating institutions; and the recognition that in a partnership both sides have needs and both have assets.

Bartelt's challenge about institutionalization is answered in part by Judith Ramaley,

based on her work as President at Portland State University. The key implementation methods she describes include the development of service learning and the creation of partnerships. These are not just small, isolated, programmatic initiatives, but critical wedges in changing how the university operates. For instance, both methods require the formation of extensive networks of participating organizations that can then be tapped to marshal resources to address societal problems. These networks will also create a demand for people with professional training in collaborative work. Large-scale use of service learning will have a profound effect on the undergraduate curriculum; and because problems in the real world are holistic, the more we are engaged in addressing them, the more pressures will build to overcome disciplinary fragmentation and isolation. Similarly, involvement in the community will create pressures for changes in faculty evaluation and the very definition of scholarship. Thus, as the university engages in efforts to contribute to change externally, the university will inevitably be changed internally as well.

Also from a presidential perch, Carl Patton focuses on institutionalization, particularly in regard to public service activities. He identifies several approaches, including the establishment of centers, the appointment of public officials, the development of partnerships, and playing a convening role. In order to make such activities happen, universities must allocate financial and personnel resources, adapt their reward system, and highlight these activities through the involvement of high-profile people and old-fashioned advertising.

In order to provide some sense of the extent to which universities are actually involved in university-community partnerships, Joyce Scott and Meredith Ludwig report the results of a recent survey of members of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The increasing importance of this type of work to higher educational institutions motivated this focus issue.

More detail on how to establish and maintain partnership relations is provided in the articles by Wendy Young and by John Gilderbloom with R. L. Mullins. Young specifically addresses the issue raised by Bartelt regarding the need for the university to identify its own interests. She argues that universities can profit from these partnerships as they help add to knowledge and bring more creativity to the search for solutions; they also strengthen the university's long-term viability. She specifically recommends the need to work with a community with an organized voice; to be honest and upfront about what the university is willing to provide; to be patient; to act as a broker, not an expert; and to acknowledge the community's expertise. Similarly, Gilderbloom and Mullins document some of the successes and failures of the

University of Louisville's involvement in the community, and conclude that success requires planning, partnership, perseverance, and passion.

External agencies can play an important role in encouraging university-community partnerships. Michael Stegman, Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), describes the stimulative role HUD plays through its Office of University Partnerships. HUD offers programs that fund neighborhood development partnerships, training of students, and dissertation grants. It is also eager to facilitate the involvement of universities in addressing urban issues, and to assist universities in communicating with each other about models that work.

Finally, Johnson, Hexter, Garrison, and Sweet perform a much-needed service in reporting on the difficult issue of evaluation. The Ohio Urban University Program went through an elaborate process of developing an evaluation scheme for urban-oriented projects that illustrates what a good system could look like, but also points out the time and resource constraints of implementing a full-fledged system. Clearly, as more universities engage in urban partnership projects, the need for thorough evaluation will continue to increase.

Together, these articles make a good start at discussing specifics of how the societal and partnership involvement of universities might be conducted. It is no more than a start, though, in what is a burgeoning movement of change in American higher education. There is, in particular, a need for us to learn more about our practice.

As pointed out by Nyden and Wiewel, the academy has not yet devoted much thought to the study of partnerships and to its role in the social, political, and economic environment. There is a great need for systematic study of the relations of faculty and other members of the university with external constituencies. Questions to be addressed include: What does it take to establish partnerships? What factors determine success and failure, under what circumstances? What types of partnership are appropriate in different fields or for different problems? How can we teach graduate students and junior faculty the practice of establishing partnerships? Are there shortcuts in the process of establishing trust? There is a whole field of research here that will contribute to knowledge and to improving our practice.

Similarly, by taking our involvement in the community seriously, we can address a number of other questions that will help universities function better and will also contribute to our understanding of how institutions change. These questions include:

What is the university's niche? As students become involved in service learning, and faculty in applied work, we need to define the unique role and the optimal contribution of universities. What activities contribute usefully to learning and to

the advancement of knowledge ?

What are the best models for structure and process? Many universities are now beginning to adapt their faculty evaluation process to better measure and value both teaching and professional service. This change is just under way, and there is still much to be learned about what will work best. Also, we need continuing experimentation with, and evaluation of, new structural arrangements to facilitate external involvement. Possible models include the establishment of mediating institutions, applied outreach units, high level administrative offices, and creation of positions for clinical faculty and professional staff dedicated to outreach. What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of each?

Whom should we work for ? In the 1980s, farmworkers challenged the agricultural extension activities of the University of California for benefiting agribusiness far more than either small, privately owned farms or the workers in the field. Analogous questions can be raised in other areas of outreach. With whom will universities form partnerships, to do what kind of work? When universities are being asked to address society's problems, does that mean engaging in direct assistance to local government? Providing technological research for business? Developing better teaching methods for school systems? At present, a laissez-faire system appears to be in place, usually driven by a fortuitous combination of faculty interest, external demands, and funding streams. Universities will need to dedicate real resources to meeting society's demands, and to develop ways of setting priorities in their allocations.

What are realistic expectations? The social problems universities are now being asked to address may be much harder to solve than the technological and medical ones of previous periods. Indeed, the emphasis on university-community partnership has come about in part because of the recognition that the current problems must be tackled in practice rather than in the laboratory, because they need the concerted efforts of many institutions and constituencies. We in the universities need to be clear about what we can and cannot do, and to help others to develop realistic expectations about the capacity of our academic institutions.

Although we are only at an early stage of change, given the trends described earlier in this essay as well as the persuasive strategies presented in following articles, we are optimistic that the university of the next century will closely resemble Boyer's New American College. We are somewhat less sanguine that universities will respond quickly enough and with enough energy to reverse the tide of community and societal deterioration. To end on a cautionary note, we expand on Mikhail Gorbachev's warning to Eric Honecker as East European communism began to

crumble: "History punishes those who come too late." Our emendation is as follows: "History punishes those who come too late with too little." It is our hope that this issue of *Metropolitan Universities* will make a small contribution to spurring at least some higher educational institutions to provide the kind of response needed to meet the demands of the times.

Suggested Readings

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William R. Greiner. "'In the Total of All These Acts:' How Can American Universities Address the Urban Agenda?" *Universities and Community Schools*, 4 Fall-Winter 1994, pp. 12-15.

Sheldon Hackney. "Reinventing the American University: Toward a University System for the Twenty-First Century." *Universities and Community Schools*, 4 Fall-Winter 1994, pp. 9-11.

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