

***From the
Editor's Desk***

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In January 1998, a conference was held that has advanced the understanding of the nature and form of complex university-community partnerships and of the role of the federal government in supporting such interactions. For the first time, the U.S. Departments of Education and of Housing and Urban Development jointly sponsored a conference exploring the lessons learned from some of their grant programs that fund university-community partnerships. For two days, lively discussions took place among community leaders, government officials, university representatives, and public school administrators.

Clearly, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of collaborations to address the large systems that shape community life, such as the schools, health care, public safety, job creation, or social services. The decade of the 1990s has been a time of increasing awareness of the multidimensional, interrelated nature of the challenges and opportunities facing our nation's communities. A theme that grew from the conference discussion was the new, experience-based understanding that the probable effectiveness of economic and community development strategies is driven, in great part, by the involvement of the educational system at all levels.

To see the growing integration of education with community and economic development, one need only look at some of the grant programs administered by the two federal departments hosting the conference. Both agencies have sought to use federal support as a catalyst for encouraging local solutions to local problems, utilizing the convening capacity and intellectual resources of higher education institutions as a means to organize and sustain local collaborations. Two programs intended to promote university engagement in community-based issues through partnership activities are the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) and the Urban Community Service program of the Department of Education (Title XI).

A study of the abstracts from the grant recipients yielded the following areas of emphasis. Among 59 COPC grants awarded from 1994-97 by the Office of University Partnerships at HUD, 34 included one or more activities related to educational reform, school improvement, and student success. Of these, 11 involved the creation of new or improved academic programs such as language education, math and science curricula, reading rooms, field trips, and experiential learning. Ten included strategies to improve student success and retention; seven had components related to school-to-work programs. Thirteen supported mentoring and tutor-

ing services for students. Other educational activities funded by COPC grants included parental involvement, technology education, links to social services, teacher development, and community involvement.

The 34 grants that included elements of education also had some combination of one or more other grant activities more familiar to HUD's more traditional interests: housing, community and economic development, job and workforce development, etc.

The Title XI grants have a longer history, beginning in 1992. Taking the 32 awards funded in 1995 as an example, these grants from the Department of Education included 18 projects that did not have any specific component related to schools or education. Many projects focused on other critical urban issues such as delinquency/crime/violence, health, community and economic development, housing, leadership development, community-based research, and environmental advocacy.

Clearly, the myriad issues and challenges related to improvement of the total educational system and the pursuit of effective strategies for community development and revitalization are increasingly understood to be interrelated. The ideas and models of university-community partnerships that were developed at the conference will be available in Summer 1998 through a proceedings publication produced by HUD and the Department of Education. It will be a valuable resource to all urban and metropolitan universities as we engage in more and increasingly complex partnerships with our cities.

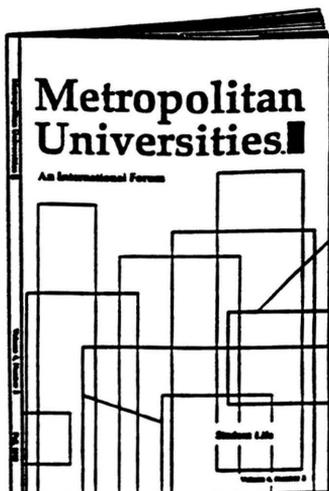
The two federal grant programs, COPC and Title XI, are relatively small in terms of the big picture of federal funding to universities, but for the institutions that have sought these grants, they have been key levers for achieving institutional transformation. Federal support has helped to validate the scholarship of community engagement as an important element of the mission of many institutions, certainly of the urban and metropolitan institutions.

Title XI, in particular, is the only federal program that uses specific eligibility requirements to designate urban and metropolitan institutions as uniquely qualified to apply for funds. Title XI has been sustained only through the coordinated lobbying efforts of several higher education associations (including the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities) and other advocates. Unfortunately, only continuation funding has been available during the last two years. The HUD Community Outreach Partnership Center program, which is the focus of this issue of *Metropolitan Universities*, was funded as a five-year demonstration project and will be up for review and renewal this year.

These programs are key to ongoing efforts to build and sustain university-community relationships that are the defining characteristic of urban and metropolitan universities. Even if your institution has not received one of these grants, your campus has benefited from the greater visibility they have given to urban and metropolitan institutions and to the growing value placed on university-community interactions. I encourage you to make sure that your Congressional leaders are

aware of the importance of these programs as tools for linking education and community development strategies in response to the challenges and opportunities facing our cities. In addition, we must continue to encourage, if not demand, the development of effective communications and logical relationships among different federal programs that have related purposes and goals.

I want to thank Mary Ellen Mazey, who has assembled a diverse array of articles for *Metropolitan Universities* that draw critical lessons from the experiences of some of the COPC grant sites. To give all COPC grantees an equal opportunity to contribute, the articles were selected through a peer review process. As Director of the Office of University Partnerships at HUD during 1997, Mary Ellen effectively raised the level of visibility of the COPC program among institutions of higher education, and improved the network of communications and sharing among the grant projects. She was a major force behind the idea of this first joint conference between two federal agencies. Her commitment to the program and to the promotion of community engagement as a defining aspect of urban and metropolitan institutions identifies her as a national leader in the exploration of community-university partnerships.



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