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*The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of University Partnerships sponsors the Community Outreach Partnership Centers Program (COPC), which enables colleges and universities to enhance university-community partnerships through applied research, outreach, and technical assistance projects. This article offers an overview of three successful COPC programs, at the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Arkansas–Little Rock, and San José State University. These programs serve as models of university-community engagement.*

## **Building an Engaged Institution: The HUD Community Outreach Partnership Program**

The Community Outreach Partnership Centers Program (COPC) was created by Congress in 1992 as a way to provide funding to colleges and universities working in urban communities. It enabled institutions of higher education to concentrate on a wide range of community-building activities through applied research, and through outreach and technical assistance projects. The first awards were made in 1994, and the program is now in its seventh year of operation. Thus far, 91 institutions of higher education in 33 states and the District of Columbia have received grants. In total, \$45 million has been made available to help build university/community partnerships.

The five key concepts of the COPC Program are:

1. Institutions should provide outreach, technical assistance, and applied research to neighborhoods and neighborhood-based organizations based on what residents decide is needed, rather than what the institution concludes is appropriate for that neighborhood.
2. Community-based organizations and residents should be empowered by the project and be an institution's partners throughout the life of the project and beyond, from planning to implementation to activities beyond the grant.

3. Any applied research should be related to the outreach activities and be used to influence activities within the grant period or shortly after it ends. HUD does not fund research without practical application.
4. Assistance provided should be primarily by faculty, students, or, to a limited extent, neighborhood residents or community-based organizations funded by the university. The purpose of the program is to build university capacity, not to serve as a pass-through to other entities.
5. An institution's program should be part of a broader effort to meet its urban mission and should be supported by senior officials, rather than just the work of a few faculty members. The proposed activities should be appropriate for an institution of higher education to undertake in achieving its teaching, research, and service missions.

Colleges and universities have used their COPC grants to undertake exciting and novel activities, but the COPC program is more than just a conglomeration of interesting projects. HUD views these grants as seed money to create a long-term commitment by its grantees to work with their communities on urban issues. HUD also looks to this program to encourage structural change—both within an institution of higher education and in the way it relates to its neighbors. The grant is meant to help institutions rethink how they organize and how they reward faculty for working with community-based organizations and local governments. The entire competition process is designed to select those institutions that have made a commitment to this rethinking and are well on their way to implementing a new role for the university in the community. That is, HUD wants the COPC program and its grantees to serve as role models for other institutions of higher education, demonstrating that university/community partnerships can be developed without diminishing the teaching, service, and research missions of an institution. Three grantees are presented here as diverse examples of how COPC affects institutions and communities. The interactions between these communities and universities provide road maps toward institutionalizing university-community partnerships that have a direct, positive impact on faculty, students, and residents involved in the programs.

### **Overview of Selected COPC Projects**

#### ***University of Illinois at Chicago—UIC Neighborhoods Initiative***

The UIC Neighborhoods Initiative (UICNI) is a university-community partnership between faculty, staff, and students at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and groups and organizations in two neighborhoods adjacent to the university, Pilsen and the Near West Side. Through communication, collaboration, and coordination, the UICNI strives to strengthen the quality of life for the benefit of current residents, businesses, the university, and other institutions. The UICNI acts as a facilitator for a wide range of programs in community development, health, and education. It fulfills

the university's land grant mission by using its resources in a direct and applied way to benefit the community and the public interest (Wiewel and Broski, 1997).

The UIC Neighborhoods Initiative is guided by the following key principles:

- There should be collaboration between community groups, university departments, centers and institutes, private businesses, and public agencies, as appropriate.
- Comprehensive research, teaching, and service partnerships are developed across a continuum, including housing, economic development, health, K-12 education, arts and culture, and other related areas.
- UIC is committed on a long-term basis to the UICNI, which is part of the university's Great Cities Initiative, expressing UIC's commitment to addressing urban issues. UIC provides recurring annual financial support for the greater part of the program's administrative expenses, allowing grant funds to directly benefit external and internal partnerships.

### ***University of Arkansas–Little Rock's Oak Forest Initiative***

As part of a revitalization grant received from HUD in 1995, UALR has partnered with the Oak Forest Neighborhood just east of its campus to help stabilize a rapidly deteriorating area. The Oak Forest Initiative (OFI) has been established as a network of four neighborhood associations in the area, three of which did not exist before UALR's involvement with the residents. The university subsequently received a Community Outreach Partnership Center grant from HUD in 1998, providing the funding to expand and strengthen the partnership with the neighborhood and allow the partnership to become a model for neighborhood revitalization in the city of Little Rock. The first major activity of the OFI was a strategic planning process that outlined the priorities of the neighborhood for a twenty-year growth plan.

Other activities of the OFI are the UALR Neighborhood Leadership Program (NLP); a partnership with the City of Little Rock to improve housing in Oak Forest; the establishment of the Oak Forest Community Development Corporation to help spur economic activity in the area; and a computer-based job training program for adults in Oak Forest.

### ***San Jose State University (SJSU)***

San Jose State University's COPC program started in the fall of 1997. SJSU is one of the California State University system's 23 campuses, and has had a long series of relationships with its neighborhood partners.

This project, funded by a COPC grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and matched by generous support from SJSU and grants from the city of San Jose, Inner City Games, and the Luke B. Hancock Foundation, as well as community and corporate sponsors, encompasses 360 square blocks surrounding the campus. Six colleges at the University are involved: applied science and arts, busi-

ness, education, science, social science, and social work. The faculty works in a cross-disciplinary approach to address needs identified by parents, community members, business people, and other participating residents and associations.

The following are highlights of four projects:

*Incubator Without Walls.* For people who are planning to start or expand their own small businesses, this provides a way to have access to the expertise of the College of Business faculty. Each term, a variety of businesses are contacted for assistance in such areas as operations management, marketing and finance.

*Parental involvement.* Parents Really Involved Directly in Education (PRIDE) are working with teachers and administrators to provide informational resources and support to parents of all backgrounds who want to assist in their children's educational progress from elementary school through college.

*Neighborhood Design.* Adult community members and local students work with SJSU faculty and students to develop neighborhood design plans. These plans help communities consider the best ways to attract growth, while preserving unique neighborhood features.

*Neighborhood and Community Services.* Working with a wide range of city agencies, the COPC program is helping to determine the best use of city resources within the COPC service area. Issues about traffic, safety, business development, parks, and beautification are addressed. The COPC program works with faculty and students, as well as in collaboration with a number of SJSU organizations, including Spartan's Offering Service, Greek Life, the Offices of the President and the Provost, University Police, and other administrative offices.

### **COPCs as Models of Engaged Universities**

The COPC program stands out among federally funded programs as the only resource with the stated goal of institutionalizing university-community partnerships. It provides a unique structure that serves as a first step for universities interested in engaging on a broad scale with their cities and communities. With a clearly articulated emphasis on engagement through research, service, and teaching, it has demonstrated how universities can use COPC activities as powerful vehicles for engaging faculty, staff, and students with community and civic partners. Our three examples illustrate how COPC programs operate on three campuses as models for engagement.

#### ***University of Arkansas—Little Rock***

The COPC-funded Oak Forest Initiative at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock is the university's first attempt at direct involvement over a long period of time with the residents of particular neighborhood. Further, the partnership is UALR's first venture into working with residents to create systemic change by addressing all aspects of the community's development, from raising human capacity to improving the physical condition. To achieve this goal, the university, with COPC funding, is establishing a multidisciplinary team of faculty members to work with the Oak Forest resident leaders over the next two years in developing implementation strategies for the 20-year neighborhood plan recently completed.

Table 1  
UIC Neighborhoods Initiative Activities

<i>Activities</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>Change</i>
Collaborative partnerships	9	40	+31
Faculty involved	36	58	+22
Students involved	42	104	+62
New courses	0	12	+12
New external partners	61	107	+46

Source: UICNI Files, Mike Lieber and Eve Pinsker, Evaluation of the UICNI, unpublished, 1998.

### ***University of Illinois at Chicago – UIC Neighborhoods Initiative***

When the COPC program began in 1995, the UICNI created a steering committee structure to guide its work. The steering committee is comprised of an equal number of university and community representatives and it elects its own chair person. During the past five years the steering committee has made significant plans and decisions that have resulted in dramatically increasing the level of UIC's engagement in Pilsen and the Near West Side. The overview in Table 1 of UICNI activity from 1995 to 1999 indicates the increase in the breadth and range of faculty, staff, and students, as well as external participation in the UICNI.

### ***San Jose State University***

Engagement with the community involves listening very carefully to people representing competing interests. University personnel attend a great number of meetings with the K-12 schools, neighborhood associations, and government agencies. Since the COPC neighborhood surrounds SJSU, decisions the university and the neighbors make will have direct impact on each other, especially in the area of land use, parking, and public safety.

Because of its reputation for listening, SJSU-COPC has taken on a role of match-maker between neighbors, government agencies, and faculty and students engaged in a wide range of community service. Two examples include linking SJSU Educational Counseling faculty with the San Jose Unified School District so they could successfully attract a \$4.5 million Gear-UP grant, and working with the Eastside Senior Center to offer training in basic computer skills to retirees seeking part-time work. Both projects are now supported with non-COPC faculty and non-COPC dollars in collaboration with non-COPC organizations.

### **Institutionalizing Partnerships**

Scholarly work that is often defined as outreach or public service at universities is typically the work of one or two faculty members within a department. In many instances, this activity is grant-funded and may be planned to operate only for the length of the grant funding. Further, recognition for this outreach activity may not be given in promotion and tenure processes. For these reasons, it has historically been difficult at

many campuses for work defined as outreach to become an integral part of the academic mission of the institution or to become institutionalized.

The COPC grant program at HUD is unique among federal agency and many foundation grant programs in that it places an acute emphasis on institutionalization of the activities it funds into the institutions receiving the grants. One of the more heavily weighted factors by which the grant proposals are evaluated is the institutionalization plan that the university or college puts forward.

An obvious indicator of the institutionalization of outreach is the reform of promotion and tenure policies to recognize and reward such work alongside that of research and teaching. If a campus has taken on this task, it is indicating the institution's interest in and commitment to value work conducted in partnership with the community. This reform, however important, will not alone ensure the institutionalization of the outreach activity. As with any decision in any organization to formalize a function or operation, institutionalization requires an implementation plan that includes the following elements:

*Determining a goal of how many faculty and students the college or university plans to involve in COPC activities may be difficult.* It is rare on any campus that all or even a majority of faculty will want to become involved in engagement activities. Judith Ramaley, president of the University of Vermont, refers to it as the "15-70-15" rule (Holland and Ramaley, 1998): Fifteen percent of the faculty are already oriented towards applying their expertise and knowledge to the needs of community organizations or groups. Fifteen percent more will never choose to become involved in outreach activity, choosing instead more traditional forms of research or a focus on teaching. The largest group—the other 70 percent—are the ones who can be recruited to work with community issues within the realm of their discipline.

*Developing a process that is understood and communicated on campus for matching community needs with the appropriate university resources may also be difficult.* On many campuses, COPCs have performed this clearinghouse function.

*Communicating to audiences, both internal and external to the campus, about opportunities that are available for faculty and students to become involved with programs that work with community organizations is important.* Consistency and frequency of communication are critical as universities seek to raise awareness of an outreach mission on campus.

*The institution should evaluate all impacts of COPC activities.* In addition to the evaluation evidence required by the funding agency, HUD, the institution should look for other evidence that the outreach is affecting, and therefore transforming, the institution. Are faculty members changing their teaching or research methods due to their engagement with the community? Are students reflecting on the perspectives they are gaining from engagement activities?

*Finally, it is critical to look for linkages.* If COPC activities are not staffed, funded, and managed in an ongoing fashion, they will not be sustained. COPCs are an excellent tool for providing the glue to hold several disciplines together, many times

even helping to co-locate programs funded through other sources but serving the same audiences. Because COPC as a program within HUD requires activities to become part of university programs, several campuses have used it as the starting point for the engagement of the university as a whole. On other campuses, COPC funding has served the purpose of initially funding a center or institute within a college or department that eventually expands to become a research and outreach program of the university.

### ***University of Illinois at Chicago—UIC Neighborhoods Initiative***

To fully understand the impact COPC has had on institutionalizing programs at UIC, a brief overview of how the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative was formed is necessary. As the largest public university in the Chicago area, UIC has a long history of faculty, staff, and student involvement in urban issues in Chicago, including a number of programs in Pilsen and the Near West Side. However, it was not until 1993 that an institution-wide commitment to direct UIC teaching, research, and service programs to improve the health and well-being of Chicago and other cities was articulated as a critical component of UIC's mission. Working with his corporate advisory board, then-Chancellor James Stukel inaugurated the Great Cities Initiative at UIC. Through this Initiative—UIC's metropolitan commitment—there is a unified institutional approach to UIC's identity as a university in and of the city.

In 1993, Dr. Stukel directed faculty, staff, and students to engage in a campus-wide planning process to examine UIC's role in urban-centered teaching, research, and service. More than 150 faculty members participated in seven subcommittees in the following areas: public affairs and justice, international urban connections, K-12 education, health, economic development, arts and culture, and violence prevention. Each subcommittee was charged with examining the campus track record of teaching, research, and service in these areas, the costs and benefits, and recommendations for the future.

The establishment of the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative and the application to the COPC program were direct outcomes of the 1993 Great Cities planning process. A number of cross-cutting themes and recommendations emerged from the subcommittees, including examination of promotion and tenure rules and how they support the work of an engaged university, and the need for a new college to better coordinate urban research and academic programs. However, the most commonly expressed theme was the need for increased connections with the neighborhoods around the campus. Many UIC personnel believed that in order to have a genuine commitment to cities, the campus needed to begin right at home—in the neighborhood surrounding the university. Faculty, staff, and students across disciplines and traditional academic lines supported the notion of UIC working more closely with its neighbors.

After lengthy conversations and planning both internal and external to the university, the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative was established and charged with institutionalizing research, teaching, and service through partnerships with groups and organizations in two neighborhoods adjacent to the university: Pilsen and the Near West Side.

The following principles, established through the COPC program in 1995, continue to guide the program (The UIC Neighborhoods Initiative, 1999).

Research, undertaken in partnerships between university faculty, staff, students, and the staff of community groups, should generate useable knowledge for the two target communities, including community development corporations, primary, secondary, and adult educational institutions, umbrella organizations, small businesses, public housing residents' groups, mentorship programs, and neighborhood health clinics.

Teaching should include courses addressing issues of housing, commercial development, education, health, organizational structure, leadership, and community planning in collaborative work with underserved urban communities for UIC students.

Service and outreach to community organizations, local businesses, and public agencies, organized on an equitable basis in a collaborative and integrated way, should help to organize and implement a range of projects, including training and technical assistance for community organizations and community residents.

### ***University of Arkansas–Little Rock***

To profile and raise awareness of the university's metropolitan mission, the UALR chancellor in 1995 placed several existing community-related programs under the administrative purview of the Vice Chancellor for University Advancement. The service learning activities of the campus, a leadership program for juniors and seniors, and a neighborhood initiative funded with a special HUD appropriation were all being administered by the staff of the advancement offices. The COPC grant, once received, was housed there as well. In partnership with the academic affairs area, the advancement staff recruits faculty to work in outreach activities and administer mini-grant programs that provide incentives for faculty involvement. This combination of functions has provided an important link between the academic departments and the staffs of advancement for seeking resources, increase awareness, and provide valuable support services for outreach activities.

### ***San Jose State University***

At San Jose State a major goal has been to integrate the COPC program into new or existing programs of study that are supported by regular legislatively appropriated university funds rather than soft grant money.

The COPC Incubator Without Walls (IWW) is furthest along in this process. Five sections of undergraduate students and one MBA class are devoted to projects with some of the more than 350 licensed businesses with three or more employees in the university's neighborhood. Firms range from manufacturing and food processing to software start-up and small family restaurants. Students work with existing businesses or neighborhood residents seeking to start a business.

To support the IWW project the University developed an active advisory board with members from other business incubators, the banking and real estate sectors, corporate law, and venture capitalists. New business proposals are reviewed by a team

of entrepreneurs and venture capitalists who evaluate funding support and commercial viability (SJSU has an investment position in a number of local business incubators).

When the program began, the existing businesses were uncertain how to use San Jose students. As the program progressed, the university learned how to better target existing businesses. Early projects focused on simple marketing campaigns or advice on how to better serve customers. Some of these same businesses want interns skilled in web-based electronic commerce in order to permit residents to order items from stores or other services over the Internet, rather like being globally networked for local sales.

### **Impact on Faculty and Students Involved in COPC Activities**

Faculty are affected in two ways: the reward system (retention, tenure, and promotion) and access to valuable community contacts for projects.

The faculty reward system must reflect the value COPC and COPC-like projects bring to the university. Faculty may need to be mentored on how to package their community service so as to meet the expectations of key decision makers in the tenure process. A clear message of the value of COPC projects from the university president or chancellor is critical. While the hearts and minds of “A-list journal counters” may never be changed, outlets for publication and documentation of effective teaching can demonstrate the value of community projects to most reasonable decision-makers.

COPC programs also provide access to community groups that permit faculty to develop professional relationships to fulfill and enhance research or teaching programs. Students can be engaged through a continuum of volunteer community service through paid professional internships. Neighborhood clean-up days attract members of fraternities, sororities, and athletic teams, as well as other students. At the other extreme, students in nursing, law, business, social work, and other professional schools may be involved in paid internships, sometimes including tuition waivers.

Here is an example from the UALR experience, where there has been a special emphasis for the past two years on the faculty mini-grant programs that facilitate community partnerships and service learning at UALR. One faculty member received a service-learning grant for have her students conduct a health needs assessment in the Oak Forest community. Although experienced in working with community groups in her own research, the faculty member had never before attempted to lead a class working with one community group. Her involvement with the community caused her, in her words, to “scrap it and start over halfway through the semester.” Together with neighborhood residents, she and her students began again in their design of a method for gathering information and analyzing results. The faculty member stated that it was the most exhilarating experience in her ten years of teaching. Similar testimonials can be gleaned from faculty at UIC and SJSU.

### **Conclusion**

At the national level, the COPC program’s goal is to foster engaged colleges and universities—institutions of higher education that have moved outreach activities to

the very core of their research, teaching, and service missions. COPC strives to do this through creating university/community partnerships in which all partners are equals and have equal knowledge to share; by seeking to reflect these mission changes in both a changed institutional structure and promotion and tenure policies; and by involving students and faculty in service projects and curricular changes. UIC, UALR, and San Jose State all demonstrate that they have become engaged universities through the COPC model. The examples presented here and other COPC programs around the country show that universities can and should be included as partners in urban revitalization and community building activities. They also show that university faculty, staff, and students have the necessary skills to work in partnership with communities, and that the institutions are ready and committed to the goals and processes on a long-term basis. Most importantly, COPC programs demonstrate that colleges and universities can engage in teaching, research, and service partnerships and imbed them in the universities' missions. Ultimately, this will enhance the quality of life in communities and the quality of education for students.

***Suggested Readings:***

- Holland, B. A., and J. A. Ramaley, "What Partnership Models are Making a Difference?" Paper commissioned by the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development and of Education for the Joint Conference on Community Renewal and Education Reform (Washington, DC: Unpublished, 1998).
- Wiewel, W., and M. Lieber, "University Involvement in the Community: Developing a Partnership Model," *Renaissance I* (Nashville, TN: Ambrose Printing Company, 1997):16-23.
- University of Illinois at Chicago, The UIC Neighborhoods Initiative flier, "Building Partnerships for Stronger Communities and a Stronger University." Author.