

Improving the Urban Education Pipeline

Nancy Zimpher

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a European public policy think tank, the United States is one of the only nations on the globe where older adults are more educated than younger adults—we rank tenth among industrialized nations in the percentage of twenty-five to thirty-four-year-olds with an associates degree or higher (Making Opportunity Affordable 2007).

In a world where family-supporting jobs increasingly require postsecondary education, our failure to provide a globally competitive education to our young people—and especially our urban and minority youth—not only jeopardizes their futures, but the future of our country as well. Ensuring student access and improving our K-16 educational pipeline are not just educational issues; they are national priorities.

The Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU), comprised of thirty-nine public urban research universities from every region of the United States, has taken up the challenge. In addition to focusing the energies of its members on economic development and improving public health, the USU has set no less a goal than to advance the quality of urban education at every level from preschool to college. To do so, it has galvanized what it calls the Urban Educator Corps, a partnership of research institutions and comprised of the deans of education schools and faculty leaders from its member universities. Believing that solutions must be tested in the real world of America's urban neighborhoods, the Corps is sharing what it learns from the partnerships its members create across the United States.

This issue of *Metropolitan Universities* outlines the challenges that USU has identified and profiles the work of eleven of the Corps member institutions.

Clearly the focus of the USU on advancing the quality of urban education at every level is both timely and critical. Innovative and tested solutions are needed to strengthen our teachers and schools, educate all students, and equip them for success in postsecondary study and their careers. The power of urban universities is desperately needed to tackle the tough challenges of student dropouts and teacher attrition.

As Ken Howey outlines in the first article, these tough challenges include both a student and teacher dropout crisis; an urgent need to improve the quality of teachers in urban schools; and widening racial, ethnic, and technological gaps between the teacher workforce and the students they serve.

The solutions that USU members outline squarely address these challenges, from the community-wide P-16 partnerships that address student access to innovative teacher preparation programs serving diverse neighborhoods, from mentoring programs that are transforming what is taught and how to pre-college programs with a proven record of success.

The shared commitment of the USU members and the Urban Educator Corps to take on these tough challenges is enhanced by the diversity of expertise and experience each university brings to this collaboration. Each member institution is different—in the community needs to which it responds, in its access to resources and talents, and in the creative ideas it develops. It is from this rich well of diverse solutions that we will be able to improve America’s urban education pipeline.

Urban Serving Universities Members

Arizona State University
California State University System
California State University, Dominguez Hills
California State University, East Bay
California State University, Fresno
California State University, Fullerton
California State University, Long Beach
California State University, Los Angeles
California State University, Northridge
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Sacramento State University
California State University, San Bernardino
San Diego State University
San Francisco State University
San José State University
City University of New York, City College of New York
Florida International University
Georgia State University
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
Morgan State University
North Carolina State University
The Ohio State University
Portland State University
Temple University
Tennessee State University
University of Akron
University of Alabama at Birmingham
University of Central Florida
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado Denver
University of Houston

University of Illinois at Chicago
University of Louisville
University of Memphis
University of Minnesota
University of Missouri-Kansas City
University of New Mexico
University of New Orleans
Virginia Commonwealth University
Wichita State University

References

Making Opportunity Affordable. 2007. *Adding it up: State challenges for increasing college access and success*. The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and Jobs for the Future.
<http://www.makingopportunityaffordable.org/publications/>.

Author Information

President Nancy L. Zimpher is a past chair of the Board of Directors of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges and serves as chair of the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities. She is the co-author and co-editor of books on university leadership as well as books on teacher education and urban education. She also has authored and co-authored many monographs, book chapters, and academic journal articles related to academic leadership, school-university partnerships and teacher education.

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