

# **The Great Cities Commitment: Leadership, Resources, Rewards and the Identity of the Urban Research University**

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## **Abstract**

*The article is meant to assess the ways in which the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and its Great Cities Commitment can serve as a model of academic institutional change that anchors or is, otherwise, foundational to academic institutional achievement and urban development. Through both normative discussion and case study, the article addresses the ways in which UIC consciously and strategically spent over fifteen years of sustained leadership, resource commitment and integration of the higher education reward structures into an engaged research mission in order to become a place-based, engaged urban research university.*

When deciding what the proper relationship between a university and its surrounding community should be, one must begin by recognizing that the university's primary contribution to the betterment of the human condition comes through education and the creation of new knowledge. That is what it is organized to do, and that is what it does best.

Sheldon Hackney  
November, 1986, 143

Just as universities make great cities, a great city makes a great university.

Mayor Richard J. Daley  
Upon laying the cornerstone for  
UIC, 1963

As a researcher, scientist and member of the faculty of UIC, I am not in principle opposed to the notion of the "engaged university," or even to the notion of a "scholarship" of engagement. It is the terms of engagement that must be clearly spelled out so that there is no confusion for faculty or community over the role of research and its beneficial relationship with those external to the academy.

Donald Chambers, President of  
the Faculty Senate. Remarks at  
the Conference on the Engaged  
University, Spring, 2002

In a well-argued essay on the relationship of the university to the community, Sheldon Hackney, several years back, began where we should all begin—with the fact that universities are first and foremost centers of learning. They are intellectual institutions that take as their sources of knowledge and sites of discovery, everything. To do otherwise would limit the very nature of their existence. Each institution charts its own course in the pursuit of its intellectual mission, calculating its goals for its students, faculty, and the generation of new knowledge. But, as Hackney, among others (Walshok 1995; Ylvisaker 1957; Klotsche 1966; Boyer 1990; Bender 1988; McDowell 2001; Holland 2004), has noted universities are not simply academic institutions, they are also social institutions—not simply located in a particular city and nation, but major units of society. This is apparent in many ways. In their daily institutional practices, universities have very real impacts on society—they employ people (Perry and Wiewel 2005), their buildings change the character of the landscape and transform neighborhoods (Rodin 2007; Weiwei and Perry 2008; Holland 2005), and they are major consumers of goods and services (ICIC 2002; USU 2010). Their students and programs directly impact the quality of those inhabiting other key institutions. For example, one out of every ten college graduates in the Chicago metropolitan region is a University of Illinois at Chicago graduate, one out of every six doctors was trained at UIC, one out of every three dentists in Illinois is a UIC graduate, and UIC is the single most important source of school teachers in Chicago. These latter features of university-community relations—the importance of community to the university as a source of professional opportunity for its students, and the importance of the university as a center of learning for the community’s citizens—speaks to a larger point of parity of needs and opportunities between the university and its community, alluded to by Mayor Richard J. Daley (see above). This parity is evidence of the real and academic dependencies between the university and its community, of its engagement with its surroundings as an institution, and in the relations that advance education and the creation of knowledge (Bender 1988, 4).

However such parity is not always recognized—quite often universities are perceived less as contributing institutions and more as distant, unresponsive ivory towers (Hackney 1986; Kellogg 1999; McDowell 2001) and their surrounding communities are often viewed by academics, if recognized at all, as sites for experimentation or application, not as centers of knowledge themselves or places of partnership in the education process and the creation of new knowledge. It is not uncommon to hear communities angrily critique universities for their imperious, unresponsive policies and intrusive impacts. It is also not uncommon to find the value of the community or the city to the university registered in the phrase—the city is a good laboratory for study. The history of universities and their communities is replete with community critique and academic arrogance—much of it well placed.

This has certainly been the case of the University of Illinois at Chicago. At the same time, UIC is the site of one of the more comprehensive attempts by a research university to consciously reflect its role as an urban institution in its primary mission of “education and the creation of new knowledge” (Hackney 1986, 143). This paper is a case study of the institutional strategy employed by UIC in this effort. Differently called the Great Cities Initiative or Great Cities Commitment, the effort did not eschew the service projects of faculty or the vast array of clinical programs and applied research. Rather, it confronted the question: how is research, a core activity of the research university, carried out in partnership with its community? This is both a narrower and more ambitious topic. It is here that the engaged university becomes especially important. The notion of engagement, as used in the term engaged university, is certainly of the willing variety, with university faculty and community, however defined, joining together to produce mutually agreeable results, though the purposes of each might be very different. For example, engineering and planning faculties from the university might join with the city and metropolitan planning agencies to design the protocols, models, and tests of new transportation alternatives in the metropolis. Without the university, the resultant regional transit plans are far less informed, and without the community the university would not have the same ability to attract federally-sponsored research and advance the state of published knowledge on transportation technologies and their impact on commuting patterns, sprawl, and public transit. In this case, the university actively seeks to be a center of engaged research—research, that from the beginning of the protocol, is a product of partnerships between traditional and nontraditional sites of knowledge, and where the outcomes have an impact not only on the creation of knowledge and education but on the city or community of which the university is a part.

Case studies have their limits—to apply too much detail would stultify and to include too little gives the story an order that was never there when the process originally unfolded. I hope neither outcome happens here. In this telling, I hope to balance the need to be accurate, without being overly anecdotal, with the goal of presenting basic elements of institutional strategy that I think must be in place for a research university to be an engaged one. I have chosen three such elements: (1) leadership, (2) resources, and (3) individual rewards.

Top level leadership matters when establishing a university’s approach to engagement, especially in the research university, where decentralization at the disciplinary, college, or academic unit level is the norm. Clark Kerr, professor of economics and academic administrator, is reported to have described the organization of the research university as a group of disparate faculty members with a common parking problem. Others describe such decentralization as “organized anarchy” where, if “left to their own devices, most faculty members (and their departments) will bend to the daily preoccupations of research teaching and satisfying ‘service’ requirements with a campus or faculty committee” (Kellogg 1999, 43) assignment. Academic work produced through partnerships with the community will not become a key form of pursuing disciplinary scholarship, it will be shunted off, almost exclusively, to the extension divisions, or centers of service learning. When it comes to the university’s

reward system, this anarchy, ironically, does adhere, if not outright produce, order of two varieties. First, there is disciplinary order. A scholar's reputation is "substantially influenced by the disciplinary community at large, through the control of access to the communication network of the discipline—journals, presented papers, award and other such anointing form the community" (Kellogg 1999, 40). Second, when it comes to rewards, this anarchy has the potential to generate a certain class system: those who do choose to partner with communities or participate in public service and make their disciplinary discourse local rather than national or international, are in danger of becoming second class citizens of the academy, when compared to the discipline-directed researchers of the first class.

The third element is resources or funding: programs of engagement, especially those that seek to expand to sites of creative knowledge, need stable, recurring funding—so that the efforts are clearly embedded in the long-term future of the research university. A disappearing start-up account is not enough. If the university seeks status as an engaged university, then this must be registered in the institution's fiscal and structural investment in the process.

The history and present practices of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) are good examples of this entire process and of the three elements of institutional management that are key to the development of the engaged university.

## **UIC: An Institution with an Identity Problem**

In 1991, James Stukel was appointed chancellor of the University of Illinois at Chicago. His appointment was not universally accepted as the best one. Many among the faculty thought he was not academic enough. They knew him well because he was one their own, and yet he did not appear to possess the intellectual élan to give exciting new direction to a somewhat nascent Carnegie Foundation-designated top (Class 1) research university. The political leadership of the state and the city seemed equally disheartened by the appointment. To the governor and the mayor of Chicago, Stukel appeared too academic and removed from the realities of cities and as well as the broader, vexing public issues such realities created.

In a way, the new chancellor's predicament mirrored that of UIC as an institution. Neither he nor the institution he had been chosen to lead appeared to have a clear identity, much less a strategy or focus. UIC, in 1991, appeared torn between two key challenges: how to maintain a responsive relationship with its urban environment and how to build its new base as a research university (GCAC 1994, 3).

UIC had begun as an undergraduate commuter campus after the Second World War, and from the beginning, it was supposed to have an "urban mission" (Wiewel and Brosky 1999). What was meant to be a temporary two-year campus to accommodate the postwar (WWII) overflow of Chicago veterans wanting to attend the University of Illinois, continued to attract a sustained number of students, transforming it into the largest university in the city. With a student base consisting of a substantial number of

first generation college students, often coming from immigrant families, UIC appeared tailored to meet the challenge raised by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in its 1972 report on *The Campus and the City* “improving higher education in the nation’s urban areas and improving ... capabilities of ... colleges and universities to serve urban needs.” (Carnegie Foundation 1972). The combination of rapid growth and the 1982 merger with the University of Illinois Medical Center, quickly earned UIC Class I research university status. And just as quickly, the campus began to downgrade its urban mission. In fact, the goals of such a mission were frequently seen as being antithetical to the new research goals of the university.

The similar conflicts facing UIC and its new chancellor in 1991 were evidence of larger trends challenging most public research universities, especially those in cities. On the one hand, the conditions and political climate of society demanded the attention of the university, especially those in the immediate urban region. Since UIC was originally conceived to educate the students of Chicago, its urban mission demanded a response to the urban conditions that confronted many of these students. On the other hand, the university was committed to furthering its status as one of the nation’s fastest-growing, recognized centers of basic research.

This paper focuses on the ways in which UIC has sought to resolve the institutional tensions between these conflicting institutional requirements and, in the process, establish a distinctive identity or what the Kellogg Commission (1999, 9) would later call a “thematic structure” upon which to build an institution-wide approach to urban engagement. UIC’s Great Cities Initiative was designed, thus, to be more than a program of outreach or a center of extension, it was meant to be a fully realized manifestation of the research university as an engaged university.

For those familiar with the history of university-community relations over the past century (Kaluzyński 1975; Crooks 1975), UIC’s Great Cities program is one version of what Sheldon Hackney once described as the recurring attempts at “reaching accommodation between the mission of the major research universities have grown up in urban locations ... and the demands increasingly placed on them by residents of their immediate neighborhoods ... a process in which periods of optimism and innovative action inevitably seem to be followed by disillusionment” (Hackney 1986, 137). While the description that follows is certainly not one of unbounded success, it is still a story in which the measures of optimism seem to outweigh the case for disillusionment.

## **Leadership: Great Cities Initiative – Recasting the Identity of an Urban/Research University**

From its inception under the leadership of the new chancellor, the Great Cities Initiative was a product of a new approach to academic planning—substantive programming by a broad participatory collaboration of faculty and community leaders. The title of the initiative itself (Great Cities) came from outside the academy, a result of the chancellor’s consultation with his corporate advisory board. Rather than reflect the

requirements of disciplines and the order of the academy, it represented the requirements of city-building and the objectives that could be met by an active and responsive urban university. The result was a process of institutional planning and implementation carried out by a combination of new and traditional university units and fully funded through a blend of recurring state dollars and sponsored research grants.

From the beginning, the Great Cities concept at UIC was meant to resolve the conflict (for some, the institutional contradiction) between a university's attempts to be a research institution and meet its urban mission. At UIC the conflict was less resolved than lived out in different ways by different faculties and units of the university (Lauri Alpern, pers. comm.). The Great Cities theme was not an intellectual or institutional referent with which any college or discipline was familiar. The more institutionally accepted titles, even interdisciplinary ones such as community health, public policy, service learning, urban policy, urban study, extension, or community service all came with institutional baggage. Some created disciplinary exclusions and others generated service vs. research institutional class hierarchies. And for the chancellor's external advisors they represented an academic way of categorizing things that did not reflect the urban world they sought to engage. Therefore, while the theme Great Cities Initiative was an unknown way of characterizing a research university, it was also one that did not come with as many preestablished institutional barriers—internally or externally. It spoke to the outside world of a direction for urban change and it offered the opportunity for various members of the academy to buy-in to a new concept. It was and remains an umbrella, which includes service and clinical activity, applied research and technical assistance, and foundational research born out of partnerships with urban groups external to the campus. Others found in Great Cities, the very embodiment of the tension between the research mission and urban mission, and therefore the generative dynamics of an expanded notion of research university that went “beyond outreach and service” to what the Kellogg Commission defined as “engagement.” (Kellogg Commission 1999, 9).

Those who saw Great Cities as an umbrella argued that UIC should get beyond the traditional land-grant model of the University of Illinois to an “urban land grant mission,” where “teaching, research and service programs [are] designed to improve the quality of life in metropolitan Chicago and other urban areas” (GCAC 1994, 1). While others moved well beyond the land-grant metaphors of “outreach” and “service” (Stukel 1993), creating a new concept of “engagement” referring to a long-term “great cities commitment,” wherein partnerships would form the basis for an interdisciplinary research that at once contributes to education and the construction of knowledge, and to meeting the issues of the great cities of the world of which Chicago is certainly one (Manning 2002).

Over time, the land grant language of one-way extension of knowledge into the community, has been replaced at UIC by a new language of two-way engagement. The old language of privilege and power separating who, among the faculty, does research and who does service was replaced by a new campus-wide discussion of the parity

(Wiewel and Brosky 1999) that characterizes the relationships among true partners—both university-community partners and interdisciplinary ones.

None of these changes in the thematic structure of UIC or the language used to describe them, could have occurred if they were the products of a particular dean, research center, or faculty group. They were first and foremost the product of leadership—at the top of the institution and on down through the units of the academy.

The lack of clarity over the identity of UIC in 1991 extended two directions—into the university among the faculty and externally to Chicago and beyond to the state and the nation. At the time, this was not an uncommon theme. One of Chancellor Stukel's advisory committees counseled that “throughout the country, many public universities are wrestling with questions of identity and purpose. The challenges we face are numerous: demographic changes reflected in ... a college cohort and a greatly diversified student body, a decline in research funding because of the end of the Cold War, severe reductions in public funding due to budget shortfalls at the state level, and harsh critiques of universities' integrity and commitment to teaching” (GCAC 1994, 2). Stukel's fellow university heads (Kellogg Commission 1999) appeared equally convinced that the best way to meet these challenges was through a new, redefined commitment to societal needs. Such a commitment did not mean, as one fellow university president argued, that “we need to stop our research and start something else; we just need to direct more of our expertise toward public purposes” (GCAC 1994, 3).

For Stukel and his strategic team, one of the most important conceptual ways to look at this integration of research and society, was Mary Walshok's (1995) notion of “knowledge linkages”—whereby the societal needs of technology transfer and economic development and cross disciplinary professional education and civic education, for example, were met in new relationships between faculty and off-campus publics who together produced the knowledge necessary to meet such urban needs.

What other university leaders (Kellogg Commission 1999; Walshok 1995) and major university critics (Holland 2005) were arguing, was not simply for a new program, clinic or service center in the city, but a new way of thinking about the research university and its role in the city. Chancellor Stukel used the external corporate leadership of his chancellor's advisory board to help him arrive at this new way of capturing UIC's mission—the result of which was the Great Cities Initiative. For Stukel, “Great Cities” was to be more than a label or service theme, it was to be “a focal point for UIC's activities” (GCAC 1994, 2). In its earliest stages, Chancellor Stukel housed the initiative in his office, establishing an office of special assistant to the chancellor and setting in motion a broad participatory collaboration of faculty and community leaders charged with designing a university-wide program.

Just as the theme Great Cities had broken the mold of what constituted the research university, so too did the planning and implementation process. In March 1993, the

chancellor appointed the Great Cities Advisory Committee (GCAC, 1994) to develop and institutionally flesh out the Great Cities concept: twenty-eight faculty members, individuals chosen from every college in the university, were charged with refining the Great Cities concept (“to use its teaching, research and service programs to improve the quality of life in metropolitan Chicago and other urban areas”) into real programs. Substantively, the advisory committee eschewed traditional academic topic areas and organized itself into interdisciplinary subcommittees focusing the particular academic strengths of UIC on topics of clear importance to metropolitan areas: Health in the City, Urban Education, Urban and Public Affairs, Economic Development, Public Safety and Justice, Culture and Arts in the City, and International Urban Conditions. The subcommittees added another 140 faculty members to the process and the groups worked nine months, each committee meeting at least seven times, conducting public hearings resulting in a report to over 400 representatives of the university, the city, all levels of government, the private sector, and community leaders. Externally, the chancellor initiated a parallel process of interviews with key community leaders, focus groups, and corporate advisory meetings.

This represented the largest, most complex and detailed interdisciplinary academic programming exercise in the history of the university. The outcome was an action benefiting from an unprecedented level of participation by off-campus leaders, the public, and an equally unprecedented level of participation by the faculty and colleges. It offered new interdisciplinary programs—a new College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, a new Great Cities Institute, a new Center for Literacy, and a new City Design Center. It also provided new ways of “thinking” (Wiewel and Brosky 1999) in what the university was already actively engaged:

UIC comprises thousands of faculty and staff members and hundreds of units such as colleges, departments, clinics, institutes and centers. The Great Cities concept values all of their activities strengthens them and is nurtured by their rich variety. The Great Cities concept provides a focus and organizing principle for what many UIC faculty and staff are already doing, and it expresses an institutional commitment to others. (GCAC 1994, 2)

The GCAC and its subcommittees identified 212 such Great Cities-type programs at work in the university, providing added focus to these programs and legitimacy for Great Cities among the faculty. By casting Great Cities in terms of programs in existence, and not in need of new resources or definition, the chancellor gained support among the deans of the thirteen colleges. This provided early recognition for 200 programs, and naming them as part of Great Cities gave both faculty and their external community partners’ ways of understanding this new direction at UIC.

As a result, the GCAC was able to report to the chancellor, “The Great Cities concept *reaffirms* that the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge are the fundamental functions of UIC. It signals a broadened responsibility to bring these

functions to bear on addressing the needs and enhancing the strengths of the Chicago metropolitan area” (GCAC 1994, 4).

A few years later, Stukel’s successor, David Brosky, saw the inclusion of external governmental, private and civic leadership, as the most important step in building the essential “close relationship between research and the issues faced by people and institutions in the metropolitan area. The metropolitan area poses questions and issues that actually represent opportunities for first class research, and interaction with external audiences is an essential component in conducting this research” (Wiewel and Brosky 1999, 3). For Brosky, these partnerships were the central element of Great Cities—the whole concept of Great Cities as engaged research rested on the construction of knowledge produced in such partnerships.

But recasting what the university was already doing and giving it new meaning was only half the story of the founding of UIC’s Great Cities Initiative. While the Great Cities program was established by the chancellor and his staff, the program would not be implemented by an administrative office; a new approach to the research university required new academic units and the resources to make them succeed. If Chancellor Stukel had simply announced a new approach to university-community partnerships and repackaged current programs to meet the program goals, Great Cities would have quickly been perceived as another weak, rhetorical, and institutionally unsupported effort. But Great Cities was proposed to be much more—it was to set a new tone, a new identity for UIC, and to do this the university would have to add some signature elements to Great Cities—places within the UIC academic structure that could serve as “knowledge linkages,” to borrow, again, from Mary Walshok (1995).

With the advice of the GCAC, the Chancellor established several new, interdisciplinary academic units and research centers; among them (1) a new College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs that could increase UIC’s profile in urban and public organizations, with two new, redefined academic programs in Public Administration and Urban Planning and Policy; (2) the Great Cities Institute, a new interdisciplinary research center with university-wide peer reviewed programs to support Great Cities faculty scholars and a Great Cities faculty seed fund for multidisciplinary research in priority areas; (3) the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative, to create a permanently funded, comprehensive collaboration between UIC, neighborhood institutions, and other partners; (4) a new City Design Center for multidisciplinary work on urban design and physical planning; and (5) a new Literacy Center to increase knowledge competency in K-12 students.

These, along with a new initiative in community health, were key action steps introduced by Chancellor Stukel to over 400 members of the university community and the external leadership of Chicago and other urban centers (Great Cities winter forum in 1993). By December 1993, each of the new Great Cities academic units and research centers were in proposal stage and by 1995 they had all become permanently funded elements of the university structure.

Hence, by the mid-1990s, UIC's Great Cities Initiative was in place, with support from the top leadership of the university, and internal buy-in from a substantial number of an initially skeptical faculty. The initiative also garnered external support from the corporate, civic, and philanthropic sectors along with support from key community groups in the neighborhoods bordering the university. Along with all of this backing, new permanent funding was allotted to support the development of the new academic units and research centers that would form the signature knowledge linkages of the Great Cities Initiative. Each new element of Great Cities contributed to the interdisciplinary growth and development of UIC: the new College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs combined programs of public administration and planning; the new City Design Center brought together faculty from the new college of urban planning and the college of art and architecture; the new Literacy Center combined education policy, social science, and teacher training; and the Great Cities Institute(GCI) was designed to be the academic hub of the concept, charged with bringing together the faculty from throughout the university in the service of the Great Cities mission.

Even the physical site of the building, chosen to house the new college and the GCI, was emblematic of this attempt to build a new identity for the urban/research university. A century-old, six-story industrial building was chosen to be retrofitted to house these new units. Located at the edge of campus—both on campus and in the community—the building's site embodied university-city engagement and its physical renewal served as an indication of development and change.

Several features of the Great Cities Initiative at UIC set it apart from similar approaches at other universities. First, with the new college in place and the Great Cities Institute established (along with other new interdisciplinary centers) the office of the Great Cities special assistant to the chancellor was disbanded. The day-to-day implementation of Great Cities was effectively turned over to the interdisciplinary centers and the colleges. If Great Cities was to function as designed and hoped for, it would need to be implemented by the faculty in the colleges, and not by distant order of the university administration. By 1996, this proved to be an important strategic decision. Chancellor Stukel left his position to become president of the University of Illinois system and the new chancellor, David Brosky, proved to be far less interested in substantively and structurally advancing the initiative of his predecessor. While GCI was kept on his list of campus priorities, he seemed more interested in setting his own mark. This meant readjusting priorities to more closely reflect traditional adherence to the research mission and bringing about a new \$700 million development project on university land just south of the campus. However, midway into this latter project, with controversy swirling around a series of development decisions, Chancellor Brosky resigned. When she was not named to succeed Brosky, then Provost Elizabeth Hoffman also left UIC to become president of the University of Colorado.

With the unanimous support of the president and the board of trustees, Sylvia Manning, vice president for academic affairs of the University of Illinois system, assumed the post of chancellor in 2000. It was not until July of 2002 that R. Michael

Tanner, previously associate chancellor of the University of California at Santa Cruz, took over as provost of UIC. Both Chancellor Manning and Provost Tanner each expressed their support for UIC's Great Cities program. Chancellor Manning went so far to suggest that the nine year "Great Cities Initiative" needed to be reconstituted both in title and in the message it sent to both the faculty and the community. "How long can Great Cities be an 'initiative'?" she asked "at some point we either take Great Cities beyond the 'initiative stage' or we stop it." For Manning, the decision was clear, the Great Cities program was to continue to be a signature element of UIC—part of its long-term relationships with our home city. In late 2001, the Great Cities Initiative became the "Great Cities Commitment." By this, Chancellor Manning noted that:

Through the Great Cities Commitment, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) directs its teaching, research and service to address human needs in Chicago and in metropolitan areas worldwide by becoming a *partner* with government and public agencies, corporations and philanthropic and civic organizations. (Manning 2002)

Where past chancellors had described Great Cities as essentially a one-way street—touting the benefits of an urban land-grant mission of applying basic research to urban issues of government, public and private agencies, and civic leaders, Manning made a subtle but important shift in her description of the mission of the project—making the outcomes of Great Cities the product of two-way partnerships with external constituencies. By turning Great Cities into a commitment, Chancellor Manning sent the message that the Great Cities Commitment would be part of the identity and long-term mission of UIC as a public urban research university.

This shift from institutional initiative to institutional commitment carried additional weight as it reinforced not only the visible, active place of Great Cities in the academic structure of the university, but the equally active role and purposive behavior of UIC in the city. By embedding adequately funded Great Cities programs and units in the academic colleges of UIC rather than centralizing them as an off-line administrative unit, Great Cities found a place in the core academic fabric of the campus. Over the years, each college and dean has taken on his or her own version of Great Cities—recognizing faculty and programs that are built upon partnerships with external communities, and contributing research engaged in the issues of urban change. For example, where in the beginning there were just over 200 programs and projects that could be rightly considered engaged, a recent survey of the campus shows over 1,300 programs, research projects, and partnerships meeting the definition of Great Cities, in every college and department of the campus.

By implementing Great Cities in such a manner two things have been accomplished. First, the various programs of Great Cities are kept close to the faculty. They have better potential to be woven into the daily disciplinary practices of the colleges, than they would have had they been put in an office of extension or under the vice chancellor of external affairs. Second, the shifts in leadership—moving from one

chancellor to another—have brought shifts in institutional priorities. If Great Cities had remained in the chancellor’s office, the potential would have existed for the initiative to be administratively downgraded and the research more quickly politicized. While Chancellor Manning was willing to recast the mission of Great Cities in the new language of commitment, the recurring budget crisis during her tenure caused significant staff and program cuts in her office. It is impossible to assess how secure Great Cities would have been, had it not been spread throughout the academic units of the university. While a case can be made that proximity to top administrative leadership can contribute to the success of programs of engagement, the chancellor’s office is far more subject to the vicissitudes of politics—state, budgetary, and local politics—than the academic units. If Great Cities is to continue to evolve into a program of engaged research, built upon partnerships between faculty, students, and off-campus urban sectors, it must maintain its independence from these pressures, as real and necessary to institutional relations as they are.

Indeed, at one point early in her tenure, Chancellor Manning investigated the possibility of bringing the Great Cities Institute from its academic home in the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs (CUPPA) and into the provost’s office. As director of GCI, I made the argument that the institute would be far too vulnerable as a research institution in the administrative and political environment of upper administration. Chancellor Manning heard the argument and established instead a new executive vice chancellor for external affairs with oversight over public and press relations, physical plant, labor unions, student services, and alumni affairs thereby reinforcing the Great Cities Commitment’s academic path—one leading, among other places, to the Great Cities Institute.

## **Resources: The Great Cities Institute and Engaged Research**

The Great Cities Institute (GCI) is a focal point of UIC’s Great Cities Commitment. It is a university-wide, interdisciplinary research center, administratively and academically housed in the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs and committed to engaged research in and for the great cities of the world with a clear and particular emphasis on Chicago. The institute is the umbrella for two urban policy and development research centers, a new, advanced, community-university partnership initiative, a university-wide annual program of appointed faculty scholars, an equally broad faculty research seed fund, and a series of research and education divisions chaired by resident research fellows. What distinguishes each of these programs from similar efforts at other universities is the fact that, through GCI, they are, in part, underwritten with permanent funds from the University of Illinois, adding stability to UIC’s Great Cities approach to the engaged university. Of equal importance is the increasingly clear test that each of these efforts must meet to produce, what I called earlier, engaged research. It is through its attempts to produce such engaged research that the Great Cities Institute meets the challenge set forth by the Kellogg Commission

to “go beyond outreach and service to what it defines as ‘engagement.’” Kellogg defines engagement as “institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, extension, and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities, however community may be defined.” This definition, by itself, would not cut it at UIC—it is at once too amorphous, lacking academic direction—sympathy is not enough, even with a nod to productivity, and it also does not provide for the balanced recognition to the contributions of external or community partners. (Kellogg Commission 1999)

The UIC approach to engagement described throughout this paper has been an evolutionary one, benefiting from top-level leadership and program development, redefinition, and resource allocation at the academic unit level. The Great Cities Institute is an excellent example of the ways in which university-community research can be incrementally integrated into the reward structure of the academy.

The two GCI programs identified above are the Great Cities Seed Fund and the Great Cities faculty scholars program. Both programs require applicants to submit written research proposals. The Great Cities Seed Fund exists to provide seed grants to faculty who conduct a research project over the course of a year. The Great Cities faculty scholars program provides awardees with a year in residence at the institute, with no other obligation than to conduct a prescribed program of research, and to interact with other scholars and external partners.

The programs adhere to traditional academic evaluation procedures. Proposals are read by peer review panels comprised of representatives of the senior research leadership at GCI, past Great Cities scholars, Great Cities fellows, and distinguished faculty selected from throughout the campus. Each proposal is evaluated against three criteria or dimensions of engaged research:

1. Partnership. To what extent does the work benefit, from the protocol forward, from a *partnership* between the faculty member and external, non-traditional site(s) of knowledge. How much is the design of the research project a product of university-community partnerships, where both the academic and urban goals and outcomes play a clear role in the project. It is our experience that the most successful partnerships are established relationships that carry as much trust between the partners as research products. Therefore, the most successful proposals are those that are the product of a secured partnership, not proposals to begin one. Central to this criterion, is the recognition of non-traditional sites of knowledge, or local partners, in the creation of the research project/question, from the protocol stage forward.
2. Interdisciplinary. To what extent is the project interdisciplinary; if not in its production, then in its reach. Does the project benefit from cross-disciplinary collaboration; if not in its execution, then in its outcomes —

are the outcomes of the project likely to have interdisciplinary implications: i.e. how and by whom will the results be interpreted, taught or implemented? For example, how do proposals fit with the long term research programs of GCI? Or would a proposal attract support from other interdisciplinary centers such as UIC's Humanities Institute or Institute of Environmental Science and Policy in the form of a jointly sponsored faculty scholar position.

3. Impact. A scholar should be able to demonstrate the proposed impact of the research on education and the construction of knowledge. Its effect on the "great cities" of the world, including Chicago, should also be demonstrable. For example, in the past few years scholars have contributed to affordable housing policy in Chicago, the developmental costs and benefits of Tax Increment Financing, new models of pediatric mental health in public schools, new models of neighborhood economic development, and a documentary film on Rio de Janeiro and public sculpture, while winning prestigious research awards (Guggenheim), foundation awards (Russell Sage, Mac Arthur) and federal grants (HUD, NIH and NSF). The combination of journal articles, books, creative projects and substantive reports is further evidence of the viability of the engaged research focus.

These three criteria, or metrics, are markers—comprising an ideal type of engaged research—against which peer review evaluation can begin. No proposal ranks high on all three variables. The conversation with regards to engaged research fits into the traditional research practices of the university and is an important element in building the visibility of the Great Cities Commitment. In some departments and at the college level, it is becoming evident to faculty, department heads, and deans, that consideration to propose such research is a good preface to success. As a result, over the past fifteen years, both the seed grant and scholars programs have become very visible and increasingly competitive. Today, up to eight scholar awards and three to five seed grants are made annually. Since 1996, almost 500 tenured and tenure-track faculty have applied for Scholar and Seed Fund awards. This comprises almost 39% of all tenure-line, core research faculty at UIC, from every college on campus. Faculty from all but one college have been awarded faculty scholar residencies and research faculty from every college have been awarded, at one time or another, Seed Fund awards.

The process of application is more than an individual decision. The project and its parameters of engaged research must also be the subject of conversation with the department chair; the department will need to release the scholar for a full year and will continue to pay her/his salary. The proposal also requires the approval of the dean of the faculty member's college. The result is the yearly college-by-college consideration of the engaged research mission of UIC's Great Cities Commitment, including where it fits in a faculty member's career and in the curricular plans of the departments. Over the past sixteen years, well over one hundred faculty scholars from thirty-five different disciplines and twelve colleges have conducted some form of this engaged research. Seed grants have been awarded to an equally large number of

faculty in seventeen disciplines. Over time, the seed funds have been exceedingly productive, generating in the late 1990's over fourteen dollars in sponsored research support for every seed dollar. Over forty graduate students from as many as twelve departments often work with these faculty and other Great Cities fellows on a yearly basis. The resulting publications, grant proposals, seminars, community meetings, forums, and lecture series offer a new definition of interdisciplinary urban scholarship.

Each year, while director of the institute, I attempted to visit each dean on campus—from Art and Architecture and Liberal Arts and Sciences to Engineering and Medicine. When I met with each dean, I considered them to be my dean and the GCI is their institute. We reviewed the research initiatives in each college, and determined how the resources and activities of GCI could best be deployed in the college. Faculty scholars at GCI are encouraged to make presentations about the institute and their work to their colleagues in their home disciplinary unit. GCI contributes funding to the home unit to defray the replacement costs for courses that are not offered during the absence of faculty scholar appointees.

GCI also maintains full research programs in: metropolitan sustainability, international policy in contested cities, professional education, housing and community development, community technology, community health and epidemiological studies, and new studies of place-based, anchor institutions in cities. Most of these programs are captured in research clusters that focus the present work of GCI resident fellows and faculty scholars. At present, the research clusters representing GCI's research focus are in the areas of (1.) development, (2.) health, and (3.) governance. The GCI fellows are either faculty scholars with sponsored research programs who have allowed them the resources to remain at GCI on a full-time basis, or nationally and locally recognized researchers who have chosen to locate their sponsored research at GCI. Each of the fellows' research programs are representative of various facets of engaged research: they consist of interdisciplinary efforts grounded in partnerships between the institute, and external expert organizations. All of them contribute to the urban well being of those living in Chicago and in other urban centers around the world, and also help add to our knowledge about cities. At present there are three fellows in residence at GCI, each of them from a different academic discipline. Over the years, Great Cities resident fellows have been supported through a broad array of foundation and governmental organizations, including the NIH, NSF, HUD, the MacArthur Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust, the Grand Victoria Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and with further support from an equally robust array of state and local agencies.

One of the key programs of the Great Cities Institute is the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative (UICNI). UICNI is a signature example of our approach to engagement, built on long-term partnerships between community institutions and UIC faculty, research staff, and students that seek to improve and enhance the quality of life in adjacent and/or underserved neighborhoods in Chicago and the metropolitan region. UICNI's mission is "to develop a culture of partnerships that benefit both community and

university. It serves as a clearinghouse of information and analysis, a broker for potential research, a provider of technical assistance and an administrator of collaborative projects” (Gonzalez 2004).

From its inception in 1995, the neighborhoods initiative evolved almost organically (Wiewel and Brosky 1999) from previous community-based research efforts, including university-run health clinics, school and curricular reform efforts, and community and economic development planning initiatives. These efforts were scattered throughout the university, the product of individual faculty and a number of research centers. While these efforts gained support as a product of early partnerships with community institutions, the bulk of neighborhood residents and leaders expressed distrust and hostility toward a university that had been built as part of an urban renewal effort, and viewed by most as having effectively destroyed their community (Perry, Wiewel, and Menendez 2009).

The beginning of the neighborhoods initiative combined these past collaborations with focus groups and community meetings to build a range of new programs to complement ones in existence. The Initiative was also one of the very first U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Outreach Partnership Centers, or COPC, and one of five university-community collaborations to be awarded a multimillion dollar Joint Community Development grant. At the same time, UIC committed a recurring line item of \$250,000 to UICNI. Within two years the UICNI had grown to forty programs, with over sixty faculty members and over one hundred community groups, all involved in a combination of engaged research, technical assistance, and service learning efforts. The UICNI Steering Committee, later changed to the UICNI Partners Council, is the site to strike partnerships, assess the viability of sponsored research proposals, and administer the evaluation and oversight of the of university-community neighborhood collaboration. The council is made up of community representatives, UIC faculty and GCI researchers. If the faculty scholar and seed fund peer review panels are key to the oversight and sustainability of engaged research throughout the campus, the UICNI Partners Council has been an equally important site of engagement, meeting regularly for the past thirteen years under the cochairmanship of the director of UICNI and a community leader. More recently, the UICNI Partners Council was divided in two: one council adds to the university’s health and health related community-based programs, the other works with the new GCI and UICNI community capacity building network known as Illinois Resource Net. Faculty researchers work with these councils on projects and the UICNI works with external experts to enhance the technical capabilities of community organizations, especially as their relationships with state and federal government agencies evolve. Long standing university-community partnerships are nurtured and sustained in these ways. These partnerships and the councils provide the continuity for scholars and researchers from which to move in and out of projects: the oversight and review of the partners on the councils is critical to the success of the research, technical assistance, and student training programs. At times, the UICNI has had as many as one hundred faculty and

academic units working in partnership with an equally large number of neighborhood organizations, schools, clinics, and other public and private agencies. At present, there are literally thousands of Chicago residents who benefit from the school-based health clinics, nutrition programs, and community-based policy research programs of UICNI (UICNI 2009). There are also over 400 community organizations in the state of Illinois to benefit from technical assistance workshops and deeper interventions in building the capacity to apply for federal grants and other forms of assistance.

Through UICNI, the GCI has built an organically shifting university without walls—where faculty, technically competent staff, and students have joined with residents and community organizations to revitalize neighborhoods and cities in Illinois. At the center of the UICNI is the collaboration between community stakeholders and academics—an engagement between the traditional (UIC) and the nontraditional (Chicago and Illinois community organizations). The emerging partners' council model is the way UIC and Great Cities' have used this engaged research mission to redefine the land-grant tradition of one-way extension. The University of Illinois, Office of Extension, joined UICNI in this new model of two-way traditional/nontraditional engagement in building new levels of state-wide, community-based capacity, supported by the Grand Victoria Foundation and new federal grant programs. Today, UICNI/GCI is the most actively engaged arm of any urban research university in the nation: there are easily five hundred community-based partners in the state directly connected with UICNI, and over 500,000 individual contacts annually. UICNI has evolved into the most successful HUD-COPC and health center of urban university engagement in the country (UICNI 2009).

## **Rewards: Promotion and Tenure and the Engaged University**

UIC Great Cities Commitment is recognized as a success. Over fifteen years of committed leadership, considerable resource allocation, and the development of a university-wide set of academic and research programs, has made Great Cities a visible and well-integrated feature of the university's mission. In turn, Great Cities has made UIC a widely accepted example of the engaged university. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, the late-1990s' decision of the national organization of urban universities known previously as the urban thirteen to recast itself as the great cities consortium, with a new national mission of engagement and a new national office in Washington, DC, would certainly appear to have been evidence of the early success of the Great Cities Initiative. More recently, the larger mission of universities as engaged institutions has been further refined by recasting the membership of this consortium of urban research universities as urban serving universities (USUs). And now, the national Association of Public Land Grant Universities (APLU) has set forth its own urban agenda and incorporated these same USUs as the membership directorate to achieve this agenda, replete with its own APLU vice president.

But in at least one important way, the leadership and commitment of UIC's top administrators and the deployment of resources to create the thematic structure called for by the Kellogg Commission has not been enough. While the Great Cities concept has become a visible part of many of UIC's colleges and even more so, in UIC's departments and research units, there is little evidence of Great Cities having had a similar clarifying impact on either unit- or university-wide promotion and tenure guidelines. For all the activity of an increasing number of faculty members in Great Cities programs, the confusion over whether and how to reward such activities seems as rife among the faculty today as when the initiative began. Early in the past decade, the university proclaimed that "UIC faculty have been examining the issue of what, in our promotion and tenure documents, constitutes 'public service?'" (TFSE 2001). And today, UIC seems as confused as it was then. The UIC Faculty Senate Committee on Public Service issued a report in 1994, "Evaluating and Rewarding Public Service," that concluded "that it was time to better reward public service activities by the faculty, that the public would be responsive and supportive of greater public service by UIC and that the faculty would support such an effort." While the committee determined that the faculty was ready to include stronger language in their promotion and tenure documents, the larger UIC Faculty Senate remained unconvinced, as one faculty leader said: "service requirements for tenure and promotion, especially when applied to the careers of junior faculty unfairly raise another, institutionally problematic, hurdle to advancement" (UIC Faculty Senate 1994).

In early 1998, with little movement in the UIC Faculty Senate on rewards for public service, a group of faculty scholars at the Great Cities Institute drafted a new "White Paper on the 'Scholarship of Application: Evaluating and Rewarding Public Service in the Research University'" (GCI 1998). The White Paper reviewed the key literature and practices on rewarding service and argued, somewhat differently than the UIC Faculty Senate committee, that a scholarship of application rather than service offered a clearer description of activities that could be properly rewarded in the research university. The White Paper focused "more narrowly on the expansion of traditional notions of research into the scholarship of engagement and application in partnership with entities in the Chicago area" (TFSE 2001,3 ). The parsing of the differences in what constituted service or application, was not as important to the provost as was the growing interest among the faculty in the topic, stimulated by the ongoing UIC Faculty Senate debate and the rising interest in university-community engagement brought to light by Great Cities.

In 2000, the provost formed a task force on the scholarship of engagement. Borrowing from the Great Cities language of engagement, the task force attempted to resolve the terminology debate by saying that the "scholarship of engagement is used to highlight a way of thinking of what is often called public service. This is explained as a focus on partnerships, as opposed to one sided-research; the co-creation of knowledge (between faculty and community and to be interdisciplinary); involvement in real-world problems meant to enrich research and teaching rather than be separate from them"

(TFSE 2001, 1). The scholarship of engagement was a compromise term, as it tried to create a category that could recognize the definitive elements of research and scholarship that best embodied the UIC Great Cities Commitment but would also be understood by the majority of faculty members who considered the work of the Great Cities Commitment public service. The final report to the provost waffled, using both the Boyeresque (Boyer 1990) language of the scholarship of application and service, which only confused the process rather than advance it. Ironically by conflating the notion of engaged research from Great Cities with service in order to attract the broadest number of faculty to the discussion, the task group actually made it more difficult for education and creative knowledge produced through university-community partnerships to be considered as other than service. It thereby placed such work at a decided disadvantage in the promotion and tenure debate. Still others among the faculty argued against the notion of the engaged university more broadly: for them, interdisciplinary and partnered research could be construed as political (Fish 2002) rather than scholarly; that is, the value of research that is measured in terms of its usefulness to communities is not a value that should be measured as part of a faculty member's contribution to his or her discipline, and cannot therefore be academically valorized and rewarded.

In spite of all these arguments, the task force pushed ahead and recommended that the provost “instruct units to establish norms for the amount and kinds of scholarship of engagement that faculty members in specific tenure levels are expected to achieve and the method of evaluation. These norms should be appropriate to the mission of the unit and will be approved by the campus promotion and tenure committee and the provost's office.” (TFSE 2001) The Task Force went on in some detail to describe ways to implement this process. The interim provost and the UIC Faculty Senate agreed to take the task force report to the full faculty in the form of a conference on the engaged university. The conference was held in the spring of 2002 and it represented the second largest interdisciplinary event of its kind, after the Great Cities forum in 1994. The conference attracted hundreds of faculty members and most of the deans and senior administrators. The discussion turned on the Great Cities' term engaged research. While more faculty at the meeting seemed to favor this term as more immanently susceptible to promotion and tenure evaluation in the research university, sizable sectors of the faculty argued for a retention of public service, while still others described a scholarship of application as the more understandable category.

At the close of the meeting, the provost suggested that she would consider all three designations. However, the three variations were never fully acted upon. Rather, the overall mission of Great Cities—engaged research—emerged, again organically, as the UIC signature element of the relationship with the modern urban fabric of Chicago and other great cities of the world. Under the leadership of the provost and chancellor, UIC's Great Cities mission had become one of the key elements of the university's key institutional documents (UIC 2006; UIC 2008, 2010).

However, in spite of this confusion over rewards, the Great Cities mission has resonance with the core faculty. As I stated earlier, of the 1470-plus tenure and tenure-track faculty at UIC, almost 500 have applied either for residency or seed grant funds from the Great Cities Institute, alone. Well over a 1,000 active programs and partnerships of engagement are at work across the campus. All but seven of the seventy-two departments at UIC are represented in these activities. Deans and department heads have signed on to this work and have supplied over eight million dollars in salary support to those who have been awarded faculty scholar positions at Great Cities. Finally, of those Great Cities scholars seeking tenure, in only two reported cases have they not achieved such rank without the need of a special award or designation by the university's promotion and tenure committee. UIC, by institutionally advancing the mission of engaged research and naming it Great Cities, had accomplished an identity that clearly specified that it would reward, in traditional disciplinary and university manner, research and teaching that focused on the urban. While the debate over service and application will most certainly continue, the university's Great Cities Commitment and the sustained level of resources mixed with a traditional application of rewards such a commitment represents has become a real model of the university as an engaged urban institution.

## **The Future: A New Chancellor and New Ways of Building the Engaged University**

This Great Cities tradition of “city as campus/campus as city” (see Daley above) was reinforced with the appointment of a new chancellor in 2008, Paula Allen-Meares. The history of UIC and Great Cities, fully embedded in a new university-wide strategic thinking document (UIC 2006) and a new strategic plan (UIC 2008, 2010) coupled with a new strategic approach to institutional advancement—were elements that made UIC attractive to Chancellor Paula Allen-Meares. The Great Cities traditions of blending university and city expertise became key ways with which to interpret the words of the mission of UIC: access to excellence. In the leadership pronouncements of the new chancellor and the institutional planning documents offered above, the excellence of expertise in the city is to be equally blended with the excellence of the university in ways meant to produce reciprocity between the city (and its public and private sources of expertise) and the university (and the excellence of its faculty, students, and world-class disciplines). The sustained, new round of institutional recognition of Great Cities through new leadership, new documents of institutional order, and resource allocation and rewards suggests UIC will continue to be a model urban institution as well as a successful institution of higher education for the twenty-first century.

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