

Transforming and Sustaining Communities Through Partnerships

Henry R. Cunningham and Daniel Hall, Guest Editors

Institutions of higher learning have a long history and tradition of service to their communities. Collaboration with the community started in the mid-1800s and continued into the early 1900s with the laying of the foundation for what later became known as land-grant universities, which created a system for higher education and the community to collaborate in strengthening the democratic society (Bonnen 1998; Burns et al. 2011, 1). This led to a partnership between land-grant institutions and rural farming communities. Attention was once again brought to the role colleges and universities should be playing in their communities when Boyer (1996) reminded higher education that they had strayed from their public agenda. He made a call for the scholarship of engagement, urging higher education to become a partner in searching for answers to our most pressing community issues (Boyer 1996). The Kellogg Commission (1999, 1), reinforced this point urging higher education to go beyond service and outreach to what it calls “engagement” whereby teaching, research, and service is redesigned to be more in tune with the community to better address social concerns in a spirit of “sharing and reciprocity.” Those institutions that rise to this challenge are known as an “engaged institution” (Kellogg Commission 1999, 1). The concept of engagement is collaborative and mutually beneficial to both partners (Weerts and Sandmann 2008).

Boyer (1996), noting that social issues abound in both rural and urban communities, stated that universities need to collaborate with urban communities with the same level of energy with which they had earlier worked with rural communities. Cities and towns across the country had experienced a major decline due to deindustrialization and globalization, two of the major factors that contributed to the loss of jobs in urban areas (Harkavy and Zuckerman 1999; Taylor and Luter 2013) as many manufacturing jobs either totally disappeared or were shifted overseas due to lower labor cost. This led to other challenges such as home foreclosures, unemployment (Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, 2011), poor schools, blighted neighborhoods, and general poverty (Taylor and Luter 2013).

Urban and metropolitan universities have taken up the challenge to increase the town-gown relationship in an effort to address the challenges facing towns and cities. Taylor and Luter (2013) provide a brief historical overview of urban and metropolitan universities’ urban-serving mission with the founding of John Hopkins University in 1876. Since then many institutions of higher learning have taken on the role of “anchor” (Taylor and Luter 2013, 2) institutions. According to the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (2008) and Harkavy and Zuckerman (1999), as anchor institutions in their communities, urban universities have the skills and intellectual, human, technological, and social resources to engage in the challenges facing urban communities.

The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities CUMU (2011, 5) supports this argument, claiming that CUMU members have a “broad range of skills and resources” to generate and guide urban renewal. According to Carriere (2008), engaging with the community is an opportunity for universities to use their resources to address critical community issues and build community capacity. While corporations, which may provide an anchor role in the community, may pull out, universities cannot easily pick up and leave and, therefore, are rooted in their communities (Harkavy and Zuckerman 1999; O’Mara 2010; Urban Serving Universities 2008).

The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) was created in 1990 to bring metropolitan and urban universities together to use their shared mission and capacity to enhance the well-being of their communities. As anchor institutions, these colleges and universities believed they were ideally positioned to address urban renewal, and they have since been engaged in collaborative efforts to address the physical, human, and intellectual viability of urban communities (Perry and Mebendez 2011).

Both the Initiative for a Competitive City (2011) and Harkavy and Zuckerman (1999) listed several capacities and ways in which anchor institutions can contribute to and impact their communities. Because of their status as a major employer in the city where they are located (CUMU 2011; Taylor and Luther 2013) anchor institutions play a significant role in the economic development of the community (Adams 2003; Bramwell and Wolfe 2008; Harkavy and Zuckerman 1999; O’Mara 2010). The economic contribution is seen through such activities as their purchasing power, hiring practices, and tax base (Harkavy and Zuckerman 1999). Economic development in any community can lead to social improvement where other areas such as education, health, and environmental issues are addressed. As a good neighbor, institutions of higher learning can play a major role in urban renewal (O’Mara 2010) and transformation.

In addition, federal resources were made available to institutions over time through a diverse array of programs from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and others. These funds enabled colleges and universities to develop strategic partnerships with the community while also building institutional skills and cultural values for the work. Likewise, a new emphasis on providing students with hands-on active learning experiences through such pedagogy as service-learning and internships make these institutions more visible in the community (Bingle and Hatcher 2002).

A Metropolitan Institution

This issue of *Metropolitan Universities* is grounded in the 2013 Conference of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, hosted by the University of Louisville. As an anchor institution in the City of Louisville, the University of Louisville is well positioned to help transform this city and its neighborhoods. As an engaged institution, The University of Louisville takes pride in its role as a major metropolitan research university that understands and values the importance of being an anchor institution in the community. The university has been busy redirecting its economic and intellectual

resources, facilities, and other assets to benefit the Louisville community, and it has called on faculty from every school and college as well as a wide array of staff and students to join the challenge in making the university a good neighbor.

During the 2013–2014 academic year, the University of Louisville reported there were 889 university community partnerships including local, regional, and international partnerships. Every school and college reported partnerships focused on a wide range of initiatives such as education, workforce development, healthcare, economic development, technology transfer, social services, sustainability, and community development. The roster of community partners included community based organizations, public school system, governmental agencies, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, and other educational institutions as well as global partners. This extensive network of partnerships is reflective of the university's commitment to engagement and the growth of engaged scholarship lead by university faculty.

The University of Louisville in 2007 made a major commitment to work with community to revitalize the urban core, which has suffered from decades of economic and social disinvestment. Known as the Signature Partnership Initiative with West Louisville, this initiative represents a concentrated effort by the university and various community partners to address educational, health, economic, and social disparities that exist among West Louisville residents. During the 2013–2014 academic year, university students, faculty, and staff from every school and college participated in 105 community partnerships, programs, or activities serving West Louisville. The Signature Partnership Initiative is a long-term commitment to transform and sustain West Louisville, and this initiative is beginning to produce empirical evidence of positive impact, particularly in five targeted public schools. Some of these schools have experienced increased test scores, promotion and graduation rates, college-going rates, and parental involvement.

During the 2013 CUMU Conference, the University of Louisville was delighted and honored to showcase some aspects of the Signature Partnership Initiative as well as several other outstanding community partnerships that are working to transform and sustain community.

Conference Papers

The 2013 CUMU Conference brought member institutions together in the City of Louisville to share how they are transforming their communities. They explored many areas including education, health, economic development, and environmental issues through paper, poster, and roundtable presentations.

This volume of refereed papers submitted by conference presenters opens with a well-framed reflection on the challenges of community-engaged scholarship in the context of institutions with research-dominant academic cultures. The article is authored by Farrah Jacquez, the 2013 recipient of The Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement for Early Career Faculty. The Lynton Award is sponsored by the New

England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) and the Center for Engaged Democracy (CED) at Merrimack College and is awarded each year at the CUMU annual conference. Dr. Jacquez is a licensed clinical psychologist and assistant professor of psychology at the University of Cincinnati. Her disciplinary research agenda focuses on community-partnered approaches to promoting health equity. In this article, she reflects on the challenges for early-career faculty as they practice community-based research techniques, which require them to learn how to negotiate the balance between community needs and values and the disciplinary requirements for promotion and tenure. Like many younger faculty entering academia, she is motivated and gratified by research that addresses real-world problems, but must at the same time operate within an internal path of policy and values that has not yet adapted to a more diverse array of research methods, strategies, and outcomes. Her thoughtful reflection foreshadows emerging perspectives on academic culture that will lead toward a more accurate assessment of the growing diversity of scholarly approaches required by contemporary research questions.

In their paper, Laura Strickling and Karen Doneker at the Center for Application and Innovation Research in Education discuss the collaboration with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Breakthrough Center and its cross-functional team, which is charged with the task of identifying, brokering, and leveraging MSDE resources and other external supports. The goal of the initiative was to work with local educational agencies to provide better support to low-performing schools. Twenty-five cross-functional team members carry out the work of the Breakthrough Center in areas such as leadership, instruction, student services, special education, extended learning, school culture, grant writing, and early childhood education. In order to better understand how the MSDE cross-functional team navigates its dual role of being a compliance monitor to a breakthrough partner with these schools, in terms of discourse, time, and flexibility, a study was carried out. The researchers are trying to better understand the discourse and what light it may shed on how the cross-functional team functions in the dual role in which they find themselves. Their research has implications for state and local educational agencies, as well as other agencies and organizations within the educational system that grapple with compliance and partnership roles.

The Urban Teacher Preparation Academy developed through a partnership between the University of Central Oklahoma College of Education and Professional Studies and the Oklahoma City Public Schools is a great example of how an anchor institution can partner with others to place qualified teachers in the public school system. R. Michael Nelson and his colleagues at the University of Central Oklahoma developed a partnership to address a shortage of qualified teachers in Oklahoma City public schools and a need for the University of Central Oklahoma to have quality student teaching experiences for teacher candidates in urban schools. The Urban Teacher Preparation Academy provides teacher candidates extended experiences with urban communities, schools, teachers, and P-12 students over a three-and-a-half-year period. In addition, there is a year of student teaching after which individuals continue to receive mentoring from National Board Certified mentor teachers and professional

development while serving as teachers in Oklahoma City Public Schools. No doubt, this additional support enhanced teachers' performance in the classroom and led to more effective teachers, which consequently impacted student learning. While a few of the teachers in the program did not perform as expected, particularly lacking in their use of technology in the classroom, they excelled in other areas. They had a sound knowledge of the content area, displayed good classroom management and created a positive learning environment for students among other areas. This collaboration between the university and the school system addressed a critical need that resulted in more effective teachers.

The University of Louisville J.B. Speed School of Engineering has been carrying out a summer program for more than thirty years for underrepresented individuals in the field of engineering. Brenda Hart from the University of Louisville and Kate McAnulty from Kent State University discussed this summer program, which targets minority and female students, who have historically been underrepresented in engineering and other STEM areas. The nonresidential program brings high school students on campus for three weeks in an effort to heighten their awareness of the opportunities within engineering. INSPIRE, which stands for Increasing Student Preparedness and Interest in the Requisites for Engineering, provides an introduction to engineering for students. The curriculum provides a solid, broad overview of engineering as it includes introduction to electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, bioengineering, and chemical engineering and introduction to computer engineering and computer science as well as field trips to places where students can see engineering at work. In addition, students also learn about their interests and strengths and gain tips on how to be a successful college student. They also are required to set personal goals. The program is provided free of cost to students, many of whom come from low-income families, because of contributions from the university and the business community.

Gary Rodwell and Elgin Klugh from Coppin State University authored a paper, which explores university-community relations between Coppin State University, a historically black university in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Coppin Heights community. The article discusses how to increase the community's capacity to engage the university and other institutions, concerning the development and implementation of the Greater Rosemont and Mondawmin Area master plan (the GRAMA Plan) developed through this collaboration, the Coppin Heights Community Development Corporation (CHCDC). The premise of the article is that in order for a healthy university-community relationship to exist, both the university and community must enter the relationship from a position of strength. The CHCDC focuses on five elements: the plan, articulated agreements, proven track record, strong partners, and university community alignment. The development of a synergistic relationship between the university and the community is a challenge as all these entities learn their respective roles working together.

Terri Lewinson describes a university-community partnership that empowered older adults living in extended-stay hotels to come together and focus on mental and

physical health outcomes. This project led by Georgia State University brought together several of the university's academic units, which used their resources and expertise in gerontology to address the issue of elderly citizens living in extended-stay hotels and the social problems associated with it. The project involved photo-elicitation, where residents used pictures they had taken of their living environment to tell their stories, highlighting challenges and issues they faced living in extended-stay facilities. Participants were led into an advocacy role where they build an alliance of aging hotel residents interested in improving their living conditions. This enabled them to work with organizations such as the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) to lobby on their behalf regarding rental rights as well as work with local community agencies to identify resources. The collaboration with the university and the advocacy work of the residents lead to enhanced services from local organizations. This project brought to light an issue plaguing the aging population in many cities across the country when it was taken on the national stage and shared with legislative representatives in Washington, DC. This university-community partnership also benefitted the university as it provided opportunities for student research and independent studies and research materials that were integrated into social work courses. It also strengthened the connection between the university and the community, which led to further collaboration on critical social issues in the community.

The 2008 housing crisis hit many parts of the country very hard, and Staten Island, a borough of New York City, was no exception. It created a challenge for urban communities like Staten Island with limited financial resources to acquire and/or maintain affordable housing after the 2008 economic downturn. Mary Lo Re in her paper details a successful partnership in researching the challenges faced by the residents of Staten Island and offer recommendations for the targeting of resources to maximize community benefits. The paper describes how students in a business course at Wagner College engaged in a service-learning project where they conducted research, evaluating the challenges faced by residents of the community and provided recommendations for the targeting of resources to maximize community benefits. The findings from students research led them to realize that only 19 percent have weatherized homes and less than half (41 percent) are satisfied with the price of their utility bills. This resulted in students educating residents about energy audits, alleviating their fear that energy audits are cost prohibitive and consequently signed up homeowners to an energy saving program.

Diane Hill, Rolando Herts, and Donita Devance present a strong argument of how Rutgers University-Newark, integrates Gray's (1989) partnership development framework and Kania and Kramer's (2011) conditions of collective success to document and assess a transformative initiative in the city of Newark, New Jersey. This was possible because of the visionary leadership, which was a key factor in advancing community engagement at Rutgers University-Newark. The university collaborated with several community organizations such as the Urban League of Essex County and the Newark Public Schools in implementing the Newark Fairmount Promise Neighborhood Partnership (NFPN) resulting from a Promise Neighborhood grant. The grant called for community partners to develop a plan based on data to

deliver health, social, and educational support to the community to improve educational outcomes from cradle to college. The team argued that their approach, collective impact is strengthened when participants can “effectively locate, document, track, and assess when, where, and how collaborative relationships were initiated and sustained.” While the project is still in its early stage, residents, service providers, and other professionals have designed a “visionary and transformational plan for the community’s future.” It would be interesting to see how the project proceeds and to learn about the outcomes of this great collaboration between Rutgers University-Newark and its community partners.

Conclusion

These are only a few examples of how the urban and metropolitan university members of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities are serving as anchor institutions in their communities. These exemplary collaborations with community partners reveal innovative ways to develop and implement new programs and advancements in education, health, social services, the environment and economic development. These initiatives are transforming communities across the nation and enhancing the quality of life for much of our urban population.

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