



Building Pathways for a Better World

Real Partnerships

A Report Prepared by Marga Incorporated
on Behalf of the Association for Community
and Higher Education Partnerships

"Building Pathways for a Better World"
245 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10167
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Institutions of higher education are often located in or in close proximity to communities suffering from economic and social distress. Historically, these institutions have maintained their independence and have been regarded as islands unto themselves, disengaged from the environment around them. More recently, yet often to meet their own agendas, colleges and universities have begun to interact with their communities, sitting at the table of neighborhood alliances and committees for political and reputational reasons. Some have even begun to realize that partnerships and engagement with the community can be mutually beneficial, improving economic, social, physical, and political conditions as well as providing multiple opportunities to apply academic knowledge by involving faculty and students in real-world conditions.

Prepared by Marga Incorporated on behalf of the Association for Community and Higher Education Partnerships, this report sets out to distinguish between the political partnerships and those with real substance and potential for lasting impact on communities. From a funder's perspective, it is absolutely essential that lines can be drawn. The funding community has expressed concern that some universities are not genuine and that their intentions for engaging with the community are not at all altruistic, but entirely self-serving. Although it is important that partnerships try to improve the circumstances for all stakeholders, including universities, the funding community has feared that universities are particularly self-interested when approaching the community; this does not build sustainable, fundable programs for investment.

Marga Incorporated conducted research and three focus groups that informed this report. The focus groups took place in New York City on September 30, 2005, Atlanta, Georgia on October 24, 2005, and Los Angeles, California on May 5, 2006. The meetings brought together representatives from institutions of higher education, government, nonprofits, and the funding community and each generated stimulating discussions around the manifestation of partnerships, their complexities, and lessons learned. David Maurrasse of Marga Incorporated facilitated the

focus groups and attempted to tease out the identifiable characteristics of a real partnership and strategies for funders in recognizing sincere intentions and a long term focus by universities.

Background

Indeed, it was a growing recognition of the need to understand the keys to appropriate partnerships between universities and economically and socially distressed communities that led to the creation of ACHEP. How to create effective sustainable partnerships characterized by reciprocal relations emerged through the 1990's as an ongoing topic at local, regional and national forums of community representatives and academicians. Attendees of a 1999 Housing and Urban Development Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) Conference decided to pursue the creation of an association to address those issues. Following that meeting with support from the Rockefeller Foundation, the group expanded bringing together representatives of community associations and universities aimed at advancing understanding and building of health partnerships.

The result was creation and incorporation of ACHEP in 2002. From its beginning, ACHEP has represented a unique set of partnerships made up of residents of distressed communities and representatives of all types of higher education institutions. Its mission is to promote, enhance, and sustain community-higher education partnerships aimed at improving the quality of life and opportunities available to residents of economically distressed communities. It seeks to do so through the production and exchange of knowledge, advocacy for resources, and promoting significant changes in higher education institutions and communities. Its strategies include research to identify elements of effective partnerships followed by advocacy and educational services to disseminate that knowledge. This study is a core step in achieving that goal.

Driving purpose of this study

Marga and ACHEP hope to promote the importance and potential of university-



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community partnerships by identifying examples of success around the country. Not only do we hope to inform the funding community, providing philanthropic institutions with a greater understanding of the possibilities for partnerships between higher education and communities. But, we also hope to impact institutions and community organizations by highlighting the characteristics and steps to achieve meaningful partnerships. By providing an outline and examples of what makes strong university/community relationships, we hope funders will be better equipped to provide resources to partnerships that can work.

University-community partnerships have significant potential to produce results. Realizing that many higher education-community partnerships have not led to the greatest measurable improvements in communities, it remains difficult to ignore the enormous potential of the resources of higher education to address some of societies more pressing concerns. We hope to build upon this potential in the future and to encourage greater investment because where there are real partnerships, there is real gain.

MANIFESTATIONS OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

University-community partnerships manifest themselves in many different forms, through service learning activities, community-based research initiatives, and economic development projects. The important take-away for institutions, communities, and funders is that successful partnerships exist and have made demonstrable, measurable impacts on all stakeholders. With support, funding, inclusion, and creativity, the possibilities for partnerships are endless.

One participant of the California focus group stated: "We want to be able to know that there is a genuine commitment by the university and that it isn't simply seeking its own goals or partnering as a means to look good. It is hard as a member of the community to see a mighty, rich institution as anything more than a wolf in sheep's clothing." This "town versus gown" sentiment has certainly

been widely held in many communities. However, through partnership, universities and communities have successfully overcome bad blood and have established working relationships that have led to both institutional and community-wide transformations. Given the growing scarcity of available resources for community development, both municipal and private, cities and foundations have begun to look towards institutions rooted within communities to make a difference. University-community partnerships are a realistic, proven means to make change and examples exist that may serve as guidance for institutions and communities ready to collaborate.

In this section, we provide a number of examples of how partnerships can work in practice as well as case studies that demonstrate achievable results.

In Service-Learning

According to the National Service Learning Clearinghouse website, service-learning "combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity changes both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values skills and knowledge content." Service-learning programs at universities and colleges provide the person-power, know how, and drive to accomplish community projects that produce obvious results to the community as well as hands-on, real world experiences for students and faculty, allowing academic curricula to be put into practice. Often these programs are a part of a student's coursework that allows students to earn credit for their work outside of the classroom. Service-learning teaches students the importance of civic responsibility and community engagement, promoting participation in community-based activities.

Yet, one distinction made by focus group participants in New York City is that service learning cannot stand on its own as an effective manifestation of a university/community partnership, nor is service learning a must for a real partnership.



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"The boundaries of universities need to become much more permeable because that's how students learn."

Gwendolyn Cain,
Morehouse College

Too often, students and faculty enter their communities without a framework for service or communication with residents regarding their needs. This can be detrimental to relations between the institution and the community. Faculty and student placement in the community should be deliberate and must also incorporate a reflective piece, allowing students and faculty to truly understand their contributions and how their work fits into the general picture of engagement.

University of Maryland School of Social Work - Community Outreach Initiatives

The Community Outreach Service, an arm of the University of Maryland's School of Social Work, helps connect its students to community-based organizations in the Baltimore area. Field placements range from the East Baltimore Community-University Partnership and the Center for Poverty Solutions to the South and West Baltimore School Clusters and West Baltimore Empowerment Initiative. Student interns help these organizations organize communities, counsel residents, tutor youth, raise money, and lobby for social change. Recently, interns organized a town hall meeting of 300 residents to discuss a referendum that would directly affect their neighborhood. They also helped create successful grant proposals that raised money for a new community playground, organized successful book and clothing drives, and helped approximately 400 residents secure jobs. During the 2000-2001 academic year, more than 60 social work students worked in nearly 30 Baltimore neighborhoods.

Source: Engaging Resources in Higher Education: A Guide to Key Ideas, Effective Approaches, and Technical Assistance Resources for Making Connections Cities and Site Teams, David Maurrasse and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2005

In Community-Based Research

Institutions of higher education strive to produce new knowledge and apply it toward the benefit of society. Recent efforts to create, enhance, and sustain university/community partnerships have spawned innovative ways to apply faculty and student research to issues facing communities. Institutions and

communities have proven they can collaborate to create research projects that further data and information needed to develop and implement local efforts.

However, the funding community often requires institutions to partner with their communities to obtain research grants. In a number of instances, communities have been written into grant proposals without consultation. From the community's perspective, residents and businesses should reap some benefit from involvement in the project and resent being treated as "university guinea pigs." Therefore, the most effective research projects tend to focus on issues identified by residents and community organizations as priorities. The combination of skills, experience, know-how, and energy of faculty, students, residents, and local leaders uniquely positions university/community partnerships to create new knowledge and research methods. And, if a community has difficulty getting policymakers to respond to its needs or priorities, the credibility of the university can spur action and investment.

University of Minnesota, et al. - Research Assistance to CBOs

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization, an initiative including the University of Minnesota, Augsburg College, College of St. Catherine, Concordia University, Hamline University, Macalester College, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, and the University of St. Thomas, assists Minnesota community-based organizations with applied research, providing them access to the resources at the colleges and universities in collaboration. Various statewide organizations can request up to three research projects per year. Housing, land use, economic development, and local history are among the many topics around which this initiative has conducted research. The effort is entirely driven by community needs. If a request is accepted, the community-based organization hires a research assistant, paid by the program, to oversee the research project. A few hundred organizations have benefited from the services of this effort.

Source: Engaging Resources in Higher Education: A Guide to Key Ideas, Effective Approaches, and Technical Assistance Resources for Making Connections Cities and Site Teams, David Maurrasse and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2005



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In Economic Development - Contracts, Job Training & Employment

Institutions of higher education are economic engines and an increasing number of communities are leveraging colleges and universities as the local developer or employer. Many institutions of higher education outsource campus services to vendors, but do not view outsourcing as a means to improve local economies as most external contractors lack ties to the local community. However, local contractors are much more likely to create jobs, expand local businesses, or create new ones. Some university/community partnerships are beginning to hold workshops for local businesses on how to contract with these institutions. In addition, some partnerships have established job training programs as well as workforce development programs to expand the opportunities for local residents.

University of California at San Francisco - Bayview-Hunter's Point Neighborhood Initiative

The University of California at San Francisco's Office of Community and Governmental Relations and the Bayview-Hunter's Point Neighborhood Initiative have developed a comprehensive strategy to increase jobs, employment training, and business opportunities for residents living in the city's south-west side. The institution expanded an internship program to place local residents in temporary, entry-level jobs that are likely to result in permanent, full-time employment. The university also began an outreach program to local businesses to encourage them to bid on university contracts. A key element of this partnership has been leveraging the knowledge of community leaders and residents about the local labor pool and economy to help set the initiative's priorities.

Source: Engaging Resources in Higher Education: A Guide to Key Ideas, Effective Approaches, and Technical Assistance Resources for Making Connections Cities and Site Teams, David Maurrasse and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2005

In Affordable Housing

Institutions of higher education are often regarded as having too little concern for residents as they expand their campuses and undertake extensive real estate and

development projects. Some institutions have begun to involve local residents, ensuring they will benefit from construction activities and the introduction of new jobs. A number of colleges and universities have created homeownership programs for their employees, assisting low- to moderate-income families. Addressing the affordable housing crisis in the nation's cities and urban areas is an opportunity to build strong relationships and good will between institutions and local residents.

Jackson State University/West Jackson - Homeownership Opportunities Program

Jackson State University and West Jackson CDC (WJCDC) have several initiatives that promote economic opportunity for neighborhood residents and families. Their Homeownership Opportunities Program, funded by a HUD grant that supports historically black colleges and universities, helps low- and moderate-income working families and the homeless find and/or purchase affordable housing in five local neighborhoods. The program also enables students and faculty to work with community development efforts and provides leadership development training for neighborhood residents. A revolving loan fund run by the program provides low interest loans to rehabilitate existing homes. Through a partnership with HUD and the city's housing authority, the WJCDC operates a first-time homebuyers program to acquire, restore, and resell government-owned housing in disinvested neighborhoods.

Source: Engaging Resources in Higher Education: A Guide to Key Ideas, Effective Approaches, and Technical Assistance Resources for Making Connections Cities and Site Teams, David Maurrasse and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2005

In Education

In many urban areas, ties between higher education and public school systems have diminished. In recent years, many of the selective institutions have failed to recruit from nearby public high schools. Schools of education are participating in programs that seek to improve public schools through enhanced teacher training. Some institutions of higher education have even begun to form formal partnerships with school districts to improve student performance. Local public schools can benefit from student teachers, tutors, and mentors in the classrooms as well. The quality



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of public schools has an impact on the economic health and stability of a community. Institutions of higher education have a large population of faculty and students with an interest in improving the education and opportunities of children and engagement in public schools can supplement academic curricula by providing university students with a real-world experience.

The University of Pennsylvania - Penn Alexander School

A partnership between the University of Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia School District, and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers led to the development of a new public school to relieve overcrowding in West Philadelphia: the Penn Alexander School. The University of Pennsylvania provided financial as well as in kind support, including faculty assistance from the Graduate School of Education to teachers, student participation, access to Penn's practice laboratories, and professional development opportunities for teachers. The Philadelphia School District provided the capital to construct and design the school and worked with the University to select a principal and faculty. The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers agreed to make Penn Alexander a *Demonstration School* that would "maximize student achievement and provide a rigorous clinical setting for the professional growth and development of pre-service and in-service teachers.

Every semester, 10 Penn pre-professional students from the Graduate School of Education and two School of Social Work interns are placed at the school for practicum experiences. The school reflects the diversity of the surrounding communities, educating a student body of 81% minority and 25% international students. The University of Pennsylvania's operating subsidy keeps class sizes small. 70% of primary grad students demonstrate proficiency in reading and math on standardized tests and the school district recognized one of the Head Start teachers as Outstanding Early Educator of the Year for 2003-2004. In addition to the development of the Penn Alexander School, the University committed to provide services to three other public schools in the area and expand Penn's Center for Community Partnerships' University-Assisted Community School Program.

Source: West Philadelphia Initiatives: A Case Study in Urban Revitalization by John Kromer and Lucy Kerman (pgs 44-49)

Capacity Building

Throughout all joint activities between a community and an institution of higher education, capacity building is a critical component. According to Allan Formicola of Columbia University and the New York City focus group, if institutions don't use their knowledge to build capacity, they haven't helped the community as much as possible. Capacity building provides communities with the ability to manage neighborhood projects on their own. This process develops community leaders, and people become educated through the experience.

Likewise, universities should consider internal capacity building to make themselves better partners. Institutions of higher education work on academic calendars and often community work is set aside during the summer months. In thinking about partnering with the community and how this work might manifest itself, one question for institutions of higher education to consider is: how can universities change internally to ensure they maintain their commitments to their neighborhoods?

CHARACTERISTICS OF REAL PARTNERSHIPS

The previous section highlighted manifestations of partnerships in practice, demonstrating that results can be achieved through collaboration and that overcoming the "town versus gown" relationships between universities and residents is a realistic objective. But, partnerships are not easy to create and even harder to sustain. There is no "right" approach or cookie cutter process that will work in every community or for every institution. Communities and universities have unique characteristics unto themselves and relationships between institutions and their surrounding neighborhoods are often rooted in deep history. The following discussion provides insights into common features embodied by partnerships that work. Yet, partnerships that cannot yet put a check next to each characteristic on the list are still valuable. Interaction between institutions of higher



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education and communities is complex and it takes a great deal of time and effort by many stakeholders to develop a working relationship.

According to the research conducted by the Marga team and the results of the focus groups, we have developed a list of five common characteristics of “real” partnerships, including (1) mutuality, (2) impact/measurable change, (3) sustainability; (4) inclusion/communication; and (5) institutionalization.

➤ Mutuality

Mutuality refers to the mutually beneficial opportunities available to both institutions of higher education and their communities through engagement and joint activities. Service learning programs are seen as mutually beneficial, bringing both services to the communities in areas of need as well as a hands-on educational experience for the students. Mutuality does not necessarily mean that all stakeholders will reap the same benefits; one member of the group may benefit more than the others, yet the partnership can still have value. In essence, reciprocity is absolutely critical.

➤ Impact/Measurable Change

Real partnerships have demonstrable results and can point to improvements in communities and to universities as a result of partnership and dialogue. Often the major community-based results are realized over time, but partnerships can have immediate impacts on the lives of neighborhood residents. To ensure partnerships truly benefit communities, focus group participants agreed that they should have an intentional focus to maintain the direction of partnerships and programs. So, first and foremost, partnerships should have clearly defined short and long term goals. And, partners cannot simply be meeting for meeting's sake; involved parties should be committed to collaboration and making actual change. Some successful partnerships have instituted recognition systems that celebrate successes within the community

to increase the level of commitment and interest in the work.

UMass Boston - Women in Community Development

Women in Community Development is a Boston based collaborative, started at UMass Boston, that provides access for low income women to higher education. Established in 1997 by UMass Boston, Project Hope, the College of Public and Community Service, and the Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development, the program started as a research project by a member of the UMass faculty. Since then, the program has evolved into a channel through which low-income and homeless women can earn a college degree in human services and community development without student fees. This program has a direct impact on the community, graduating low-income women to go onto these fields with knowledge and experience. In addition, building the capacity of these individuals provides economic and community development, lifting women out of poverty. It also provides a hands-on research experience for UMass faculty and students.

Source:
<http://www.nmefdn.org/uimages/documents/Grassroots%20to%20Graduation%20Report.pdf>

➤ Sustainability

Often, partnerships emerge out of a university or college's need to engage a community partner in an activity due to a funding or grant requirement. Yet, the most meaningful programs, partnerships, and communication between institutions of higher education and their surrounding environs are sustainable over the long term. According to focus group participants representing institutions of higher education, it is essential to be up front with community partners, indicating that the institution is prepared to engage in a long term commitment and, despite the fact that certain activities may end, the partnership will continue. Deep rooted relationships create the bedrock through which many different types of projects can emerge. “Partnerships come first, then programs.”



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To achieve sustainability, community stakeholders should be represented at the table from day one, demonstrating a commitment to the community voice from the onset of the partnership. Sustainability also depends on the depth of support within the institution as well as consistent funding that leads to sustainability and a focus on building the capacity of both the institution and the community to collaborate. Finally, a common objective for the partnership is essential, but to achieve sustainability, all stakeholders should be flexible and willing to adapt to changing circumstances to overcome inevitable obstacles and challenges.

- **Inclusion/Communication**
Representing and including university and community stakeholders as integral voices of partnerships is an important function that ensures buy-in and commitment.

"The one consistent thing for partnerships is being there – and being there over time."

**Melvin B. Hill,
University of Georgia**

Successful partnerships and initiatives include residents as part of the decision-making process to ensure that projects meet the actual community wants and needs. It is important to share feedback every step of the way and to ensure that ideas stem from within the

community as often as the institution. Community organizations that are involved from the planning stages assist with implementation and ongoing communication. The most successful partnerships involve multiple cultures and generations, providing a breadth of opinion. And, partnerships seem to accomplish more when there is a dedicated focus on knowledge transfer. Focus group participants in California recommended facilitating this knowledge transfer through mutual training programs that teach both communities and institutions how to navigate through existing politics towards collaboration. In addition, new partnerships should remember that shared governance can be difficult when institutions are faced with a community without obvious leadership.

Policy Action Research Group - PRAG

The Policy Action Research Group in Chicago, IL brings together 4 universities and 15 community-building organizations to support community research projects. Each project has two paid coordinators on staff, one from a university and one from a community organization. In 1997, PRAG coordinated a joint project between DePaul University and the Humbolt Park Development Council on black churches and community development. The research idea originated within the community and the university and community partners collaborated on every decision. Community leaders helped DePaul researchers realize the importance of personal contact with pastors to gather the most useful information. The final report was developed in a joint meeting. Like this specific project, everything from representation on PRAG's governing body to credit for the work is shared equally by the universities and communities involved.

Source: HUD's Office of University Partnership's Website: www.oup.org/news/08_2000_09_2.html

- **Institutionalization**
Through our work, Marga has discovered that partnerships that have secured the buy-in and support of top-level administrators within the college or university are more successful in both the short and long terms. Programs initiated through these partnerships apply to the institution's broader mission, philosophy, academics, and research. Public support by senior officials and Boards of Trustees enhances engagement even further and increases the credibility of partnership initiatives.

In addition, institutionalization also uplifts faculty work that benefits the community; these efforts should be treated as equal measures to a faculty member's teaching and research successes. According to focus group participant, Jacqueline Mandych of Trinity College, institutions of higher education should strive to achieve multiple layers of buy-in to ensure the long term sustainability of partnerships. These layers help to mitigate the impacts of changes higher up in the administration and maintain the strong partnerships on the ground.



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Portland State University - Doctrina Urbi Serviat

The mission of Portland State University, "doctrina urbi serviat" or "let knowledge serve the city" drives not only the initiatives of the office of Community-University Partnerships, but also underlying commitment to community development shared by all within the University. The University holds faculty engagement in high esteem and evaluates faculty for tenure, promotion and compensation based on their "scholarship of community outreach." This mission and commitment reflects positively on the institution within the community and increases the credibility of university outreach initiatives.

Source: "University Education for Community Change: A Vital Strategy for Progress on Poverty, Race and Community-Building" by Andrew Mott and The Portland State University Website: <http://www.pdx.edu/mission.html>

Although all of these ingredients are important elements of success, even partnerships that have demonstrated results have not achieved each to their fullest potential. According to the California focus group, the most important ingredients for a budding partnership are mutuality and trust. Institutions cannot approach collaborative efforts from an altruistic perspective; this simply does not last, especially through leadership change. Institutions can be self-interested and should expect to gain from partnership as much as the community. But, the university should also be another seat at the table - one voice among many toward a common objective. Partnerships should seek to enrich both the institution and the community simultaneously.

University/community partnerships have the enormous potential to change the face of communities and the lives of residents while enhancing the academic experiences of students and faculty alike. Many existing partnerships have recognized the power in union and understand that when "real" partnerships are formed, there is opportunity for real community gain.

CHALLENGES

Although we can find some examples of strong, results-driven partnerships, institutions and communities alike face numerous challenges in actually getting to the point when their partnerships are in fact real and meaningful. Colleges and universities provide valuable resources. But, how can communities effectively tap into these resources? How can the use of these resources for the greater social good be woven into the overall missions of institutions to meet the needs of residents and community-based organizations? In this section, we identify the challenges that face both sides in developing real partnerships.

Funding

One of the most common issues facing university/community partnerships is funding. The staff at Marga Incorporated visited one Historically Black College in Louisiana facing problems related to a lack of funding. The institution had secured strong buy-in from local partners and established a progressive and inclusive community building process through the use of grant funds. For two years, the institution had been a leader in organizing a task force of local community representatives from the surrounding community, suffering from poverty and disinvestment. Residents showed enthusiasm for the community development strategy, jointly established. But, due to a lack of new funding, momentum is slowing down. The institution and the task force have been unable to follow through on a number of community initiatives and partners have begun to lose interest and faith in the movement. This lack of funding is not only thwarting community development and progress, but is also leading to a reduction in the credibility of the task force.

In addition, partnerships often emerge as a result of a grant to the institution. A number of grant programs require that institutions of higher education work with members of the community to achieve certain objectives. However, the partnerships that come out of these situations are often not lasting or sustained as community voices were



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not a part of the process from the onset and there is not long-term commitment to a community development strategy.

Despite an increase in identifiable funding sources for university/community partnerships, resources remain limited as a whole. Flexible, diverse, long-term funds are particularly elusive even though they are most likely to produce concrete results. Within colleges and universities, few resources are dedicated to the development and sustenance of university/community partnerships. For many cash-strapped community organizations, these institutional resources play an important role in collaboratives. Institutions of higher education will increasingly be required to look to alternative funding sources, such as alumni and endowment funds to sustain partnerships.

Another critical component of a partnership is an ability to leverage resources from many different sources, both cash and in kind. As available resources become scarcer, partnerships may draw upon the resources and expertise of stakeholders at the table to stretch dollars further and make even deeper impacts. Clark University in Worcester, MA is an excellent example of leveraging resources for community gain. In the 1980s, Clark developed a partnership with SEEDCO, recognizing the importance of revitalizing the distressed community surrounding the university. The University offered \$47,000 of initial funding to begin economic development projects. After Clark's initial investment, banks began to invest, the project received a \$2 million U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant, and the project has attracted additional support from local foundations and corporations. Over the course of the past twenty years, this Clark's initial sum has been leveraged to create a project with resources totaling over \$100 million. In this case, the university provided credibility and acted as a catalyst for new investment.¹ We are also beginning to see the emergence of large gifts from alumni designated to community partnerships and civic engagement. Gifts from Jonathan Tisch to Tufts University and from Kenneth Cole to Emory University are notable examples.

¹ Example taken from "University-Community Partnerships: 2006 Worcester Speaker Series." Available: www.margainc.com

Distrust between Institutions and Communities

For a variety of reasons, institutions of higher education have made their share of enemies in neighborhoods surrounding their campuses. As neighborhoods began to decline economically and socially, many institutions built physical walls around their campuses to separate themselves from the communities around them. Campus construction and real estate development projects have displaced local residents and changed the face of some neighborhoods. Institutions of higher education and communities are rooted in a shared history that in some cases has bred mistrust and suspicion. These issues, among others, have led to a widespread misgivings and skepticism by both institutions and communities, making partnership development and collaboration difficult.

Cultural Differences

Institutions of higher education have distinct operating procedures and management styles that are often exceptionally different from those of the community-based organizations and leaders in their neighborhoods. A preliminary question that must be addressed by any university-community partnership is: how should we develop goals that are based on principles to overcome our individual and distinct values and missions? Almost all collaborations are affected by the complexities of universities and the distinctions between the individual stakeholders' interests to the detriment of partnership goals and objectives. Decentralized decision-making, the academic calendar, flexible faculty schedules, and other characteristics of a college or university challenge university/community partnerships. Colleges and universities function with many relatively autonomous units; navigating the maze of these institutions can be a challenge for community partners. At the same time, communities have leaders, political cycles, existing collaboratives, and agreements, which are not always understood by colleges and universities interested in facilitating partnerships.



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Power Imbalances & Overburden

Colleges and universities generally have greater resources and influence than their community partners. As a result, institutions of higher education often initiate and drive the terms of partnerships. Faculty members have been treated as “experts” who can bring answers. The lack of discussion regarding issues of power, race, class, and culture breeds anger and resentment on both sides, diminishing the potential of long-term positive outcomes.

Also, activities and projects that do not incorporate community needs from the onset can overburden organizations. Service-learning activities that place students in the community for credit can be especially time-consuming for community-based organizations. Sometimes these activities can be more of a burden than a benefit for communities. Groups often spend as much time attending to students as they do actually benefiting from their involvement in projects or activities. If community needs and capacities are not taken into account at the onset, this burden can lead to partnership difficulties.

Institutional Buy-In and Support for Community-Based Initiatives

The most successful community development or engagement activities tend to have the commitment and support of top level

administrators within the college or university. In many institutions of higher education, the commitment to and energy for partnerships resides within a few people. In some cases, a single member of the faculty or administration may serve as the internal champion for partnerships, which means collaboration could collapse upon his or her departure or retirement. The inability to institutionalize partnerships into colleges and universities remains one of the most significant obstacles facing the field. One or two people, no matter how

passionate, will likely fail to produce long-term institutional commitment to community partnerships. To develop greater buy-in, strategies are needed to bring the various departments

and administrators within an institution together to create greater internal coordination and to institutionalize these efforts. Also, faculty dedicated to partnerships and community service can become entangled or their efforts can be thwarted by state- and institutional-level policies. The expectations for faculty members at many colleges and universities remain within the boundaries of teaching and research. Teachers are rarely rewarded for their work in the community. To bring institutionalization to a higher level, teaching and research should weld with service to encourage and recognize the importance of community partnerships.

Richard M. Eberst - 2004 Ehrlich Faculty Award for Service-Learning Recipient

Dr. Richard M. Eberst, a member of the Health Sciences and Human Ecology Department at California State University in San Bernardino, is the 2004 recipient of the Ehrlich Faculty Award for Service Learning for his focus on community partnerships and his role in shaping the university's strategic plan to include long-term community engagement. His goal as the director of the new office of Community-University Partnerships and as the founding director of the Office of Service Learning is to help improve the quality of life and health of the community surrounding the university as well as to provide students with experiences that will fully engage them in learning. Dr. Eberst received the Ehrlich Award, given out annually by Campus Compact, base on his “substantial vision as to how and where service-learning can be institutionalized in higher education.”

Source: Campus Compact Website
<http://www.compact.org/ccawards/ehrllichaward/ehrllichaward2004-recipient.html>

HOW TO

Strategies and processes to assist both institutions of higher education and

“Our neighborhoods are within walking distance of the University Center and Georgia State University” But, the universities aren't interested in working with us...we've been surveyed to death. There is an invisible wall around a university; they are self contained. Yet, they use our resources. It doesn't click that they are as much a part of our community as we are.”

Peggy Harper,
Atlanta Resident



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communities are essential to partnership building. This section outlines some steps that can be taken in order to embark on university-community collaboration that will lead to a real partnership.

Identify Points of Entry

To overcome the cultural differences outlined in the previous section, some institutions have created central offices that coordinate community outreach, which serve as good points of entry or a channel to connect university resources to community concerns. Faculty, administrators, and student groups should be strategically attached to these centralized points of entry to raise the importance of partnerships internally and within various divisions of the college or university.

For some institutions entry points are offices of community and government affairs, external relations, service-learning, or community outreach.

Residents of the community and neighborhood organizations should also seek out the individuals within the institution committed to improving local conditions. Asking community groups, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to help identify entry points often generates a relatively accurate list of potential partners.

Create a Community Coalition

How do we begin new partnerships that heighten higher education's attention on community priorities? How do we establish an institutional commitment? Local organizations and residents should seek out opportunities to be proactive, finding community affairs officers, faculty, and administrators to propose mutually beneficial partnerships that address common priorities. This results in both community and institutional representatives designing the parameters, goals, and results of a partnership at the outset, which helps establish trust and clear channels of communication.

Also, forming a coalition within the community first, then collectively approaching the university can be a powerful way to start discussions. Since poor relationships with

community leaders can negatively impact student and faculty recruitment and morale, fundraising, and public image, communities are able to strategically leverage this interdependency to make it work for their interests.

Identify Areas of Mutual Gain

Honest and consistent communication between communities and institutions of higher education can increase the chances that partnerships will achieve mutual gain for all stakeholders. Although all involved will have specific self interests, voicing these interests from the beginning and arriving at common areas of interest will help to build a healthy, trustful, and respectful dialogue that effectively achieves mutually beneficial outcomes. It is important for partners to know each other well - how and why they operate; what aspirations drive them; what they want to accomplish. All of this information helps to manage expectations and increase the likelihood of setting a common vision for the partnership.

Establish Shared Governance

Shared governance for any partnership can provide all stakeholders with the assurance that the partnership is working to meet their priorities and reflects their interests. Residents at the table provide communities with a significant voice and can help balance disparities in power and resources. Sharing decision-making and leadership within a partnership will ensure that each organization, institution, and individual involved is represented and a part of decision-making processes, increasing longevity and commitment.

Identify and Leverage Resources

Both institutions of higher education and community partners should work together to identify sources of funding to support community initiatives. Although many institutions have abundant resources for their internal activities, funding for community partnerships can often be difficult to secure.



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University/community partnerships should establish resource strategies at the outset to ensure that funding can be secured to maintain momentum and interest in the initiatives. Partnerships can also leverage off of all of the various resources brought to the table and, like Clark University, transform a small initial contribution into greater resources for the long term health of the partnership. Strong partnerships are not established overnight and especially not in response to available grant funding. Partnerships should be cultivated and maintained over time to ensure longevity and sustainability.

Visibility and Transparency

Residents and communities too often have no knowledge of what a college or university is doing within their neighborhood. The field of campus/community partnerships needs to have national and local promotion to educate the public about existing partnerships, their mutually beneficial impacts, and the potential for new initiatives. Partnership efforts should include learning and assessment activities and residents, university officials, and community groups should play an active role in the efforts, participating in identifying success and challenges to strengthen activities over time. Lessons learned should be disseminated and information should be shared to ensure community interests are kept at the forefront of collaboratives.

Establish Incentives

Once a certain degree of institutionalization is established, administrators and leaders within universities should establish incentives for students and faculty to increase involvement in community programs. Scholarships and fellowships can be created for outreach activities by drawing upon the increasing support and interest of alumni in community development initiatives. Also, the institution should strive to build a community network consisting of government agents, policy makers, and community leaders to connect faculty and students with activities and projects in the area. A positive consequence of institutionalization and incentives programs is

depth, meaning more individuals within the university are involved in community service and partnerships. As discussed previously, a major challenge for partnerships is that they rely on the dedication of only a few people within an institution. Incentives will lead more faculty and students to become involved, helping to achieve long term sustainability and buy-in.

CONCLUSION

According to Dr. Allan Formicola of Columbia University, "partnerships are messy." There is no right or wrong way to approach a partnership and partnerships in all shapes and sizes have value to both the institution and the community. Relationships take time to mature; trust can be difficult to build; success can be difficult to measure; communities can be hard to define; and, institutions have unique characteristics internally that make partnerships hard to manage. But, there are great, realizable benefits to all stakeholders and real partnerships can affect real change. The most important objective for any partnership is survival. There will inevitably be bumps along the road and partnerships with transform over time. But, a mutual commitment to long term success will help to ensure that partnerships enrich institutions and stakeholders.

We all must grapple with the tension between the demand for quick and measurable results and the time and attention required to achieve successful partnerships. Whenever there is success in partnerships, stakeholders have built trust and strengthened relationships over years; this trust-building process precedes any measurable results. Partnerships are investment and are vehicles that can lead to continuous improvements over time. However, such results cannot be achieved without the process through which real partnerships are constructed. The North American Trilateral Partnership (an international learning exchange between the University of Pennsylvania, Simon Fraser University in Canada, and IberoAmericano in Mexico) is one example of an



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effort to further clarify what it takes to forge real partnerships.

We need to leverage what we know about the success, pitfalls, and potential of partnerships to inform future partnerships. The Marga Method (a process developed by Marga Incorporated that is designed to assist universities and communities in the partnerships building process) is being continually refined with this knowledge in mind to provide guidance that can expedite partnership development. However, we must all acknowledge that this complicated work will always require significant investment in time. We also hope that financial investors will approach partnerships with focused patience, respecting requisite time and relationship building, but always with the expectation that partnerships will lead to stronger communities and simultaneous improvements in communities and institutions of higher education. The beauty of a successful partnership is that it continues to produce results.

This report is intended to be a resource and a guide for communities, institutions, and funders. The intention was to provide food for thought when embarking on a new partnership, improving an existing relationship, or deciding to fund a joint activity or program. As more information about these partnerships is shared among institutions and communities, even stronger models will be developed that can be adopted by new initiatives and joint activities. There is great potential for stronger relationships between universities and communities, and the sharing of resources and expertise can have a significant impact on students, faculty, residents, business, and institutions alike.

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