



THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Celebrating
10 Years

1994–2004

Community
Outreach
Partnership
Centers



PD&R

U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development
Office of Policy Development
and Research

*T*he *Power of Partnership* is a special anniversary report from the Office of University Partnerships commemorating 10 years of Community Outreach Partnership Centers. This report celebrates the power of campus-community partnerships to revitalize local communities, empower individuals, and set the standard for community development activities nationwide.

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Foreword

*I*t is with great pride—and a spirit of celebration—that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) looks back on a decade of fruitful collaboration with colleges and universities around the country. Through the Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) program, institutions of higher education have played a unique and increasingly powerful role in revitalizing local communities and helping HUD fulfill its mission.

During the past 10 years, HUD and its educational partners have experienced firsthand the “power of partnership,” which is the theme of this anniversary publication. By collaborating with neighborhood residents, local organizations, government officials, and other stakeholders, COPC grantees have helped to improve their communities, empower residents and the organizations that serve them, and strengthen relationships between campus and community. At the same time, COPCs have helped their respective colleges and universities improve the quality of the education they offer to all students and the hands-on training they provide to those who, upon graduation, will spearhead local community-building initiatives. HUD and its Office of University Partnerships (OUP) are honored to be part of the growing community engagement movement and to provide COPC grantees with financial support, technical assistance, and the opportunity to network with others who are striving to reach the same goals.

This spring, hundreds of colleges and universities took advantage of one such networking opportunity by sending representatives to a celebratory conference marking the 10th anniversary of OUP and COPC. This well-attended gathering illustrated in a concrete way just how much OUP has grown since it was established in 1994. Conference participants represented a wide variety of educational institutions, from research universities to community colleges. These grantees now participate in eight grant programs that OUP administers. They also serve an increasingly diverse population—including African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians—through increasingly sophisticated partnership activities.

HUD congratulates OUP and its grantees on their great accomplishments. With this anniversary publication, we also are pleased to honor the COPC program in a special way. COPC grantees were the pioneers who helped HUD become an active facilitator of community partnerships. In particular, we honor the individuals, from all walks of life, who have been instrumental in making COPC such a success at the local level. Without the commitment of these individuals and others like them, OUP would never have accomplished as much as it has during the past 10 years. With their continuing enthusiasm and support, we are confident that COPC will accomplish even more in its second decade of community engagement.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Darlene F. Williams".

Dr. Darlene F. Williams
General Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Policy Development and Research

Contents

Foreword	iii
The Power of Partnership	7
1 Empowering Local Communities	
Introduction: Victor Rubin	17
Part I: Empowering Local Residents	
University of Illinois at Springfield	20
University of Nebraska Omaha	22
Santa Ana College	24
Claremont Graduate University	26
Robert Morris University	28
Part II: Empowering Local Organizations	
Virginia Commonwealth University	32
University of Delaware	34
Mercer University	36
Wright State University	38
2 Improving Local Communities	
Introduction: David Cox	45
University of North Carolina at Greensboro	48
Texas A&M University	50
University of Minnesota	52
University of Memphis	54
3 Improving the Quality of Education	
Introduction: Ira Harkavy	61
Butler University	64
University of Massachusetts Lowell	66
Morehead State University	68
University of Pennsylvania	70

4	Helping HUD Fulfill Its Mission	
	Introduction: Armand Carriere	77
	University of Pittsburgh	80
	University of Texas Pan American	82
	Rutgers University	84
5	Improving Relations Between Campus and Community	
	Introduction: Marcia Feld	89
	University of Wisconsin Parkside	92
	University of Rhode Island	94
	University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee	96
	Indiana University-Purdue University	98
	Conclusion	103
	Appendix	106
	COPC Grantees: 1994–2003	
	Office of University Partnerships Staff	

The Power of Partnership

Introduction by Barbara Holland, Ph.D.

Dr. Barbara Holland is director of the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, a project funded by the Learn and Serve America of the Corporation for National and Community Service. She joined the clearinghouse in April 2002 after an appointment as the director of the Office of University Partnerships (OUP) at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Holland also serves as a senior scholar with the Center for Service and Learning at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, adjunct professor at the University of Western Sydney in Australia, and executive editor of Metropolitan Universities journal.



Dr. Holland

The last decade has opened an era of new, more purposeful efforts to create constructive, mutually beneficial, and enduring interactions between communities and their academic institutions. HUD and its Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) program have played a major role in those efforts.

Community engagement is not an entirely new concept for American colleges and universities. Many have enjoyed positive relations with their neighbors for hundreds of years, encouraged by such initiatives as the Morrill Act of 1862, which established land-grant colleges; the settlement house movement, launched by Smith College in Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1887; and the national Cooperative Extension system, which was created in 1914 (Carriere 2004). Beyond these specific initiatives, higher education has always served social purposes in both explicit and implicit ways. Over the centuries, the entire nation has benefited from expanded access to postsecondary education, preparation of a qualified workforce in a changing economy, development of new knowledge and innovations, and rich cultural programming—all of which arose consequentially from the standard teaching and research roles of the academy. Until recently, however, these general societal impacts rarely reflected any consideration of the community's interests or preferences.

The university as ivory tower, walled away from societal realities, began to change when the 1960s brought forth a renewed interest in the role that higher education could play in addressing social and community objectives. Responding to students' calls for more socially relevant education, colleges and universities turned their attention to the neighborhoods in which they resided. Fittingly, many of these early engagement programs were grassroots and



collaborative in nature. The Campus Outreach Opportunity League began engaging students, for example, after Harvard graduate Wayne Meisel took a 1,500-mile walk along the East Coast to advocate for student involvement in service initiatives. Campus Compact, established by a coalition of university presidents in 1985, set student involvement in service activities as its top priority. The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities was formed in 1989 as an affiliate group of universities that defined themselves by the interactive relationships they had with their cities. These and other organizations recognized that higher education needed to renew its contract

with society by fostering service learning for students and community work by faculty. To facilitate this new engagement role, academic leaders and organizations advocated for the development of federal programs that would encourage higher education and communities to work together. As a result, Congress enacted the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and in 1992, passed the Community Outreach Partnership Act, which authorized \$7.5 million to establish the COPC program. These Acts gave colleges and universities the tools to carry out teaching, research and outreach activities that addressed urban problems. Significantly, COPC required that grantees take a partnership approach to these activities. Applicants were required to demonstrate how their COPC grants would create new and enhance existing community partnerships that were structured to meet community-identified needs (Carriere 2004).

From its beginning, the COPC program contributed in a powerful way to a rapid expansion of interest in civic engagement on a national level. As a result, we know much more about community engagement and partnerships today than we did in 1994 when the first COPC grants were awarded. We have learned that community engagement is beneficial to all partners because it enhances student learning, and research; increases a community's access to the knowledge assets of a university; and honors the inherent assets and expertise present in every neighborhood. Through active documentation of COPC outcomes, we have also been able to identify the core characteristics of effective partnerships and the strategies for building and strengthening those partnerships.

The COPC program is rigorous in its assessment of applicants' commitment to true collaboration between campus and community. As a result, winning a COPC grant has become a prestigious recognition of an institution's progress toward developing a sustainable commitment to civic engagement. HUD's commitment to actively convening and supporting COPC grantees has promoted learning and exchange, and has contributed to a growing body of literature that is accelerating the transformation of higher education and town-grown relationships. Clearly, this relatively modest grant program has made tremendous strides in changing higher education from an academic culture handcuffed by outmoded and isolating traditions into a force for societal change and public good. Many people thought this was impossible.

From its beginning, the COPC program contributed in a powerful way to a rapid expansion of interest in civic engagement on a national level.

In addition to boosting the nation's interest in community engagement, COPC has had a significantly personal impact on those who have been involved in it. Through its efforts to empower and improve local communities, and enhance the quality of education that institutions of higher education offer, COPC has literally changed the lives of neighborhood residents, students, faculty, local government officials, and the dedicated people who direct and work in community-based organizations. Consider, for example, these powerful stories, which appear later in this anniversary publication:

- ◆ The Hispanic mothers in California who received the support they needed to pursue college degrees while participating in an applied research project aimed at finding ways to help even more women.
- ◆ The anthropology professor in West Philadelphia whose urban health initiative has changed nutrition-related habits in city schools while at the same time rejuvenating his own teaching and providing his students with an unparalleled opportunity to put theory into practice.
- ◆ The city official in Rhode Island who relied on a university to do what his city did not have the resources to do: build the capacity of local residents so they could reverse their neighborhood's steady decline.
- ◆ The community activists in Indianapolis who transformed years of neighborhood animosity toward their local university into a pragmatic strategy to put that institution's resources to work for residents.
- ◆ The graduate student in Illinois whose social work internships gave her the skills and confidence she needed to establish a civic association that is working to rid her own neighborhood of crime and drugs.

These and other stories illustrate the “real” power behind the COPC program. This power lies not only in grant funds and workplans, but also in mission statements and faculty rewards. Ultimately, it lies with the individuals, both on and off campus, who believe that teaching, learning, and research should have public consequences and are willing to invest their time and energy in collaborative efforts to bring about change in the academy and in communities. These individuals—the ones profiled here and the many others like them around the country—have made COPC what it is today. They are the ones who have



developed the models and set the examples as civic engagement leaders across the nation. Ultimately, they are the ones who will inspire others to take their places at the forefront of the community engagement movement.

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In creating COPC, HUD had an unabashed and bold objective: to transform higher education.

Assessing Our Progress: The Engaged Institution

In creating COPC, HUD had an unabashed and bold objective: to transform higher education. Despite the successes of the past 10 years, the Department and its educational and community partners have completed only the first of many steps that will be necessary to bring the scholarship of engagement into the academy and make it an integral part of the value structure and culture of postsecondary education in this country. Tremendous progress has been made over the past 10 years; for many institutions, however, institutionalization remains a challenge.

What should we expect from colleges and universities as they consider how their knowledge and economic assets might have a positive effect beyond campus boundaries? The COPC experience has taught us about the characteristics that epitomize an engaged college or university, characteristics that can help us overcome the academic and operational traditions that divide us from our communities. Although we still face many challenges in fully adopting these characteristics, COPC provides many examples of achievement, proving that the hard work of institutional change brings real rewards to campus and community.

First and foremost, an engaged campus needs to clarify the role of engagement in its mission. Every institution has a civic mission but because every college and university has a different purpose, history, and capacity, each must first articulate its specific and distinctive commitment to community engagement, then align faculty work and student learning experiences to match that mission.

Engagement also requires the institution to involve the community in its academic work by designing a deliberate, intentional, and consistent approach to partnerships. This purposeful and authentic brand of civic engagement also must be linked to every dimension of campus life and decisions, including issues of local employment, purchasing, and property development. New policies and infrastructure will be necessary to promote, support, and reward this engagement, not only by creating a system of faculty rewards, but also by organizing strategies and units to support the labor-intensive nature of this work. In the most successful examples, institutional engagement has top-down

and bottom-up support, particularly for interdisciplinary work that aligns the academic organization with the complex nature of community issues.

Finally, the engaged campus must commit itself to a continuous process that assesses the progress of engagement within the distinct contexts and expectations of faculty, students, and community. This assessment helps to document the impact of partnership work, ensure equity and reciprocity, and build the case for further collaboration and support.





Assessing Our Progress: The Nature of Partnerships

How well do our colleges and universities embody these characteristics? I would suggest that we have made a very good start, but there is much more work to be done. Specifically, campus-community partnerships continue to have difficulties in areas that relate to relationship building. Old habits of positioning the campus as expert and the community as laboratory are hard to break.

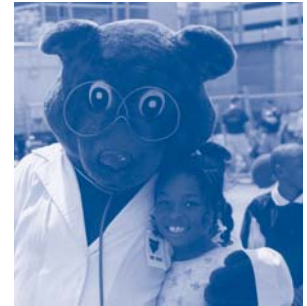
COPC experiences teach us that partnerships will be difficult to implement and sustain unless the partnership reflects candidly on the motivations, goals, and expectations of each partner; articulates the historic tensions that might exist between campus and community; and develops a new understanding of each partner's interests, capacities, and limitations. These steps will help ensure that the partnership leads to mutual benefits, respect, equity, and reciprocity.

The diverse goals that participants bring to a partnership often make the work of engagement quite complex. Faculty, for example, want to help their students achieve learning objectives and develop a sense of civic and social responsibility. They want to develop lines of research that enrich the intellectual foundations of their discipline and share that knowledge in ways that respond to community objectives for building capacity. Students want to survive the semester, get good grades, learn more about themselves and others, and feel they are making a difference. They also want to explore career options, learn by doing, and understand their own values and ambitions as citizens in a democratic society. The community wants to build capacity to improve conditions and pursue opportunities. Community partners want to serve more clients, design more effective programs, raise more funds, and generate more support. They want to enhance their own wisdom and expertise by collaborating with others who respectfully bring other types of knowledge to a partnership.

How can we build a truly reciprocal partnership with such divergent goals? The answer is simple but not easy to implement. Effective partnerships must operate as true learning communities. Partnerships are exchange relationships, and the coin of exchange is knowledge. In such partnerships, every member is learning, teaching, contributing, and discovering; all forms of expertise are valued. All the partners recognize that they have divergent goals, but they also understand that by combining their different strengths, each of their

needs will be met. Clearly, it is not enough for a group of campus and community representatives to simply state that they are partners and then strike out to do an activity together. Instead:

- 1. Partners must jointly explore their separate and common goals and interests.** The rules that govern campus-community partnerships must be explicit and should lead to the development of a formal, mutually rewarding agenda that identifies where separate interests can be satisfied through shared action.
- 2. Each partner must understand the capacity, resources, and expected contribution of every other partner.** Part of being a good partner is being clear about your own limitations and respecting the assets and limitations expressed by others. After all, partners work together because each brings unique skills to an endeavor.
- 3. Effective partnerships must identify opportunities for early success.** Success—defined and measured in both institutional and community terms—comes through careful planning of project activities and components and the development of realistic objectives. Early successes are occasions to celebrate collective effort and to build trust.
- 4. The focus of partnership interaction should be on the relationship itself and not only on a set of tasks.** Like social relationships, the best partnerships begin with partners listening to and learning about each other, and discovering how their differences and similarities can help them appreciate each other. This hard work of listening and learning in relationships never ends. Without it, we cannot advance to a sustained reciprocal relationship that builds community capacity over time.
- 5. The partnership design must ensure shared control of partnership directions.** Intentional and formal construction of the project team and/or an advisory group can ensure that all voices are involved in planning and decisionmaking, and that communication channels remain open. To create such a culture of shared power is extremely challenging and time consuming, and requires major changes in the attitudes and practices of academic institutions that must learn to listen, share, and respect other sources of knowledge. The best partnerships use formal structures and processes to document and preserve fair exchange.
- 6. The partners must make a commitment to continuous assessment of the partnership relationship itself.** Too often, assessment is something done at the end of a program and, thus, does nothing to build a future agenda or improve partners' work. When implemented from the beginning, assessment that involves all partners creates trust, generates new lines of work and funding, and keeps shared goals and expectations visible to all. In this way, we build sustained relationships that respect the needs and interests of all partners, and we use assessment as a constant tool for reflecting on our contributions and benefits. This builds deeper and more authentic reciprocity.



Next Steps

Although COPC is a relatively modest program in scale, its impact on the nation over the past 10 years has been large. As a result of its successes, community engagement work is making a difference for students, faculty, and communities, and improving relationships between campuses and the neighborhoods they call home. Yet public stereotypes of higher education as an enclave for intellectuals and disaffected students still persist. Not every institution has articulated a civic mission, developed a philosophy of partnerships that ensures true reciprocity with the community, or created internal policies that encourage and reward engaged teaching and research.

During the next 10 years, we must take new approaches to enhancing and sustaining the scholarship of engagement and mutually beneficial partnerships. First, we must continue to pay attention to the nature of our relationships with partners and concentrate on infusing each of those relationships with trust, reciprocity, respect, and equity. Second, we need to promote an active national agenda of research on the impacts of engaged scholarship and partnerships on community capacity, faculty performance, and student learning outcomes. Finally, we need to spread the word about the power of partnerships and civic engagement to strengthen our economy and our democratic fabric.

As the contents of this anniversary publication illustrate very well, we have many stories to tell about how the scholarship of engagement can change lives, campuses, and communities. We must tell these stories more often and more powerfully, using evidence to make our case, so we will be able to grow a new generation of teachers, faculty, and community stakeholders who will expand the scholarship of engagement. Only then can we ensure the renewal of the social contract that recognizes higher education as an invaluable and effective force for the general public good. ■

Selected Readings

Carriere, Armand. "The Federal Role in University-Community Partnerships." *Creating A New Kind of University*. Percy, Stephen L., Nancy L. Zimpher, and Mary Jane Brukardt, eds. Massachusetts: Anker Publishing Company. Forthcoming.

Ross, Lynn Michelle. 2002. "American Higher Education and Community Engagement: A Historical Perspective." Introduction to *Lasting Engagement: Building and Sustaining a Commitment to Community Outreach, Development, and Collaboration*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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