

In a recent issue of *Metropolitan Universities*, Nevin Brown states that the connections between urban/metropolitan universities and the public schools are “their most important interactions with the broader community” (Fall, 1994). If so, then the role of metropolitan universities in fostering community health is a close second. Metropolitan and urban universities have the capacity through a wide array of health related programs to directly affect the underlying conditions of community life. And, it should be noted, there is an important connection—evident in the research findings from urban school districts across the country—between community health and student achievement. The following articles explore some of the ways in which metropolitan universities are addressing the health needs of their communities and illustrate the potential for furthering these efforts.

How can metropolitan universities improve the overall health of their communities?

Educating health professionals to serve in the community, conducting research in areas relevant to community public health issues, establishing partnerships among health related organizations, adopting multidisciplinary approaches to health problems, offering continuing education for managers and executives in health industries, supporting the special needs of community health professionals, and facilitating the interaction among scientists and public policy makers for the purposes of applying basic research to practical problems, are among the topics discussed in this issue.

In his article, “Making a Difference: The Economic, Social, and Health Care Impact of Health Professions Schools in Metropolitan Universities,” Stephen Collier describes the broad impact of health professions schools on the urban and metropolitan community. He observes that schools of medicine, dentistry, public health, allied health, nursing, and other professions, not only educate individuals who are then more likely to remain in the community, conduct research that addresses community problems, and serve as the nucleus for community intervention programs, but also have a very significant impact on the economy of the metropolitan area. He concludes his article by offering us a vision of the emerging role of metropolitan universities in health related areas.

Two major public health issues affecting urban/metropolitan areas are the frighteningly high incidence of injury and the dramatic increase in incidence of AIDS/HIV among urban women and children. In their article, “Public Health Enemy Number One: Injury in America,” Allen Bolton, Paul Boumbulian, and Ron Anderson describe both the dimensions of the problem, including the staggering costs to society as a result of injuries, and, also, the role that metropolitan universities can play in

reducing injury rates in their communities. According to these authors, current research in injury prevention indicates that, to be effective, the problem must be addressed at the local level and by using a multidisciplinary approach. They describe in detail the necessary features of a community-based injury prevention program and the role metropolitan universities can play in supporting such efforts—not the least of which involves building the right kinds of partnerships to identify and solve injury problems in the community.

A second public health issue of growing importance in urban/metropolitan areas involves women and children with AIDS. “Women and Children with AIDS: A Public Health Challenge” outlines the rapid increase in the numbers of women and children with AIDS over the past five years—pointing in particular to the fact that 84 percent of reported cases of AIDS are in large metropolitan areas of 400,000 population or more. As the author points out, in 1993, HIV infection was the leading cause of death nationally among women 25 to 44 years of age and the seventh leading cause of death among children one to four years of age. Because most pediatric cases of AIDS are a result of perinatal transmission of the virus, the success of Protocol 076 in treating perinatal HIV in pregnant women has generated considerable debate about AIDS policy. Nora Kizer Bell argues for the importance of the role of metropolitan universities in shaping health policy, in helping to develop successful AIDS education programs, and in advocating for appropriate clinical interventions.

Multidisciplinary approaches to complex health issues like injury and AIDS are not easy to mount. The organizational structures and traditions of most research universities make it particularly difficult for faculty from different disciplines to work together. Many metropolitan universities have academic health centers. For the reasons stated above, it is now more important than ever to develop effective and symbiotic relationships between the faculties of general academic institutions and health science centers. “In the Interest of Community Health: Building Relationships between Metropolitan Universities and Academic Health Centers” describes the challenges and opportunities inherent in establishing such collaborative ventures. The authors, Daniel Johnson, Susan Eve, and Stanley Ingman, use the University of North Texas and the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth as a case study. In order to establish a public health program to serve the North Texas region, the two separate institutions had to develop an overall structure to support it, as well as a set of guidelines, policies, and procedures that would facilitate the use of the appropriate faculty at both institutions, at the same time preserving the autonomy of each and their separate institutional cultures. The North Texas experience raises many of the generic issues common to building collaborative educational and research programs as well as service activities.

While organizational issues can stand in the way of developing essential health

related degree programs, lately, many state supported institutions are experiencing shrinking budgets. In his article, "Initiation of an M.P.H. Degree Program," Edward Peeples describes the creation of a particularly important health related degree program during fiscally difficult times at Virginia Commonwealth University. "Population medicine" is the focus of the M.P.H. and embodies a unique perspective: broad spectrum prevention—a particularly important approach to urban health. His account of how the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health managed to launch a new program under the prevailing circumstances and the university's determination to support it speaks to the seriousness with which VCU regards its urban mission.

The area of continuing education is not new to metropolitan universities. In fact, it is becoming increasingly important. Of particular relevance to the topic at hand is the development of educational programs for managers and executives in the health industry. The challenge is twofold: first, the health environment is constantly changing and so it is difficult to determine what to teach and, second, institutions will need to take advantage of telecommunications technologies if they intend to reach out to busy executives. Thomas Wan and Dolores Clement in their article, "Health Care Executive Education: A Brief Report," describe an innovative program at Virginia Commonwealth University that addresses these challenges

The final contribution to this issue on the topic of environmental health demonstrates how effective communication with community leaders and public officials is extremely important if faculty and administrators of metropolitan universities are to succeed in accomplishing their unique mission. In "High Energy Physics and Environmental Health: A Research Note by a Metropolitan University Physicist," Donald Wold describes the complexity of the interactions that occur when questions of environmental health and public policy are raised. Dr. Wold is a physicist at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock whose work in high energy physics is likely to form the basis for a resource recovery project that will evaluate, test, and demonstrate technologies for reclaiming clean, useable water from the Chamberlain Creek barite pit.

To conclude, this issue of the journal provides a stimulating variety of topics and some promising ideas on how metropolitan universities can help address the health needs of their communities.

# **Metropolitan Universities: Who Are We?**

**We are located in or near the urban center of a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) with a population of at least 250,000.**

**We are universities, public and private, whose mission includes teaching, research, and professional service. We offer both graduate and undergraduate education in the liberal arts and two or more professional fields. The latter programs are strongly practice-oriented and make extensive use of clinical sites in the metropolitan area.**

**The majority of our students comes from our metropolitan regions. Our students are highly diverse in age, ethnic and racial identity, and socio-economic background, reflecting the demographic characteristics of their region. Many come to us by transfer from community colleges and other baccalaureate institutions, many are place-bound employees and commuters, and many require substantially longer than the traditional time to graduate, for financial and other personal reasons.**

**We are oriented toward and identify with our regions, proudly and by deliberate design. Our programs respond to regional needs while striving for national excellence.**

**We are strongly interactive. We are dedicated to serve as intellectual and creative resources to our metropolitan regions in order to contribute to their economic development, social health, and cultural vitality, through education, research, and professional outreach. We are committed to collaborate and cooperate with the many communities and clientele in our metropolitan regions and to help bridge the socio-economic, cultural, and political barriers among them.**

**We are shaping and adapting our own structures, policies, and practices to enhance our effectiveness as key institutions in the lives of our metropolitan regions and their citizens.**



## **A CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

### **for the Study of Urban and Metropolitan Universities**

The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities has established a fund to support projects designed to provide faculty, administrators, and public policymakers such as legislators, coordinating commissions, and accreditation associations with new tools and approaches for assessing the unique contributions, quality, impact, and productivity of urban and metropolitan universities.

The Coalition plans to support four projects with \$2,500 each. Preference will be given to proposals that offer evidence of matching funds. If the call for proposals generates enough interest and successful research products, the Coalition may fund additional rounds of projects.

Projects should be of a practical nature and short-term, requiring no more than nine months to complete. The work may be based on secondary sources. Each project should lead to a research report suitable for publication in the Coalition's journal, *Metropolitan Universities*. Reports may also be disseminated by the Coalition as part of a series of "occasional papers." In addition, the Coalition may establish an electronic bulletin board on which abstracts of research reports would be posted.

A Research Committee of the Coalition has identified a number of questions that are of immediate importance to those seeking to better understand the nature of urban and metropolitan universities. Proposals will be welcome for research projects that focus on aspects of these questions, or related issues of interest.

#### ***I. Access***

What predictors of future academic achievement are applicable to transfer students, part-time students, students from inadequate school systems, or returning students whose previous educational records reflect work done years ago? (Requirements for admission vs. assessment of entering competencies, or entering competencies as compared to entering needs/expectations?)

#### ***II. Educational Effectiveness***

Are there measures of educational effectiveness pertaining to persistence that are applicable to an institution where significant numbers of students interrupt their studies one or more times and attend multiple institutions for other than academic reasons?

What are the educational goals of students admitted to urban universities?

What affects their pattern of attendance? What factors cause people to build different patterns of persistence?

What experiences/assets do urban students bring to campus that make them take longer, exhibit different needs for support and assistance, or have different expectations/goals for their educational experience?

How can we assess persistence (continuing until a goal is met) as contrasted with retention (time to graduation)?

What are effective means to assess the short-term and long-term value of an undergraduate education from the perspective of graduates, employers, society?

How can we assess the value of education that does not culminate in a degree?

How do student characteristics affect the value of education?

Are there new patterns or packages of educational programs developing among community colleges, universities, proprietary schools and corporate training programs?

How can we measure the impacts of internships or community-based learning on student learning and competency; on work force readiness?

### ***III. Institutional Effectiveness***

What are appropriate measures of costs of institutions with older and part-time students?

What approaches can be used to estimate instructional costs of urban student populations other than FTE, which does not accurately reflect costs of part-timers ?

What support services are actually needed by these students?

What are the costs of increased campus use by the general public?

What staffing levels (student/faculty ratios or faculty/staff ratios) are appropriate to urban and metropolitan universities?

What is the most appropriate measure of external support, comparable from one institution to another, for an institution that receives support primarily from state and local grants and contracts, as well as from the resources gained through collaboration with other institutions or with corporations?

What are measures of productivity for interinstitutional collaborations and partnerships?

What measures of both individual faculty productivity and the productivity of groups of faculty are appropriate for metropolitan and urban universities where substantial numbers of faculty are likely to be involved in outreach and team-based interdisciplinary work?

What techniques exist for documenting and measuring the quality and impact of community-based scholarship conducted by faculty?

At institutions that have revised promotion and tenure guidelines to accommodate increased faculty activity in community-based scholarship, who is actually getting promoted and tenured?

What strategies exist for the recruitment and development of new faculty in the scholarly environments unique to urban and metropolitan universities?

### **To Submit a Proposal**

Those interested in participating in this competition should submit a proposal containing the following information:

- 1) Narrative description of the topic or issue to be addressed including (maximum of four pages): research questions; proposed methodology; significance of the questions to decision-makers; significance of the questions to build future research;
- 2) A plan of work (1 page)
- 3) Qualifications of the investigator(s) (1 page)
- 4) Budget and budget narrative, including details on matching funds (1 page)

**Proposals must be received no later than November 1, 1995, and sent to Dr. Barbara A. Holland, Executive Director of Community Relations, Portland State University, P.O. BOX 751 (OPR), Portland, Oregon, 97207-0751. If you have questions, please call (503) 725-4420 or fax (503) 725-4465. Notification of grant awards will occur by January 15, 1996. Completed research reports are expected by September 15, 1996.**