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The University and Community Development:
A Common Cause

Creating genuine partnerships between urban/metropolitan universities and their surrounding communities is a matter of self-interest for the academic institutions. Without a reversal in urban fortunes, their own survival is in danger. The commitment to access, traditionally found at most urban universities, is only one dimension of collaboration. It needs to be enhanced by full participation of the universities in community development as corporate citizens. These partnerships are most effective when they involve mediating institutions rather than having the university act as a direct service provider.

Shared Problems

The contemporary city faces a difficult future as retreat, retrenchment, and "realism" characterize the application of public resources to community needs. The urban agenda is confronted by a combination of rapid decentralization of jobs and residence, an anti-urban bias, an over-identification of social pathology with city life, and nearly two decades of governmental retreat from addressing deep seated inequalities of region, race and class. In short, cities and their neighborhoods find themselves increasingly at risk; at risk of fiscal bankruptcy, delegitimization, heightened social conflict, and a recurring downward cycle of disinvestment and community despair. As they have looked for both resources and allies, they have turned to the institutions of higher education in their environs.

Simultaneously, higher education has been grappling with its own difficulties, as a parallel retreat from government funding of higher education has led to budgetary freezes, programmatic cutbacks, and renewed calls for "lean and mean" institutions. The results are an era of downsizing and a questioning of the "fit" of university activities such as urban outreach and part-

nership activities with central academic goals.

I would argue that current debates about the future of higher education are largely defensive, and focus inward, when we should more appropriately be about the business of developing outward strategic alliances and collaborative interests with other institutions and groups in our immediate organizational environments. The atmosphere interferes with this direction. Schools seek to justify each category of cost with specific revenue generating activities and/or customer driven demands. While calls for cost effectiveness are not bad in themselves, urban institutions must be especially assertive in incorporating their community context and relationships into their mission or goals statements if they are to transform these discussions.

In our recent past, universities and colleges, when pressed, have taken either a "charitable" or a laboratory approach to their communities. Institutions of higher education have typically treated some form of public charitable activity as a necessary expense of community relations, especially where community scholarships, adopt-a-school campaigns, habitat projects and other such efforts ease town-gown conflicts. Alternatively, they have viewed their surrounding communities as objects of investigation, specimens of quasi-anthropological interest, from which institutional and personal reputations can be extracted, with little being returned in kind. It is unusual for schools to see communities as true partners in joint revitalization efforts.

Yet, urban colleges and universities, despite rhetoric to the contrary, are neither ivory towers nor charitable institutions, but organizations vital to their communities, as educators, employers, cultural centers, and engines of economic development. Metropolitan and urban universities, having addressed issues of access and public responsibility in their previous development, must also act as corporate citizens (Bok, 1982), collaborating in the efforts to revitalize and renew metropolitan areas and defining their academic mission and content in such a way as to encourage this participation (Hackney, 1994.) This is a matter of self-interest because they have a stake in the city's future, which will be written with these institutions as major actors in the drama. To talk of a new partnership of urban communities with urban universities in a climate of downsizing and declining resources might seem perverse, if not hopelessly utopian. Yet I feel that there are good reasons to expect just such a partnership, out of recognition of a "common cause."

Like many of their non-urban sister institutions, urban and metropolitan universities are engaged in a process of social and organizational change. As

pressures for accountability have increased, debates over teaching, faculty roles and rewards, and indeed, the central activities of higher education have emerged. Many of these discussions have focused on the enthronement of the post World War II "research" university at the top of the academic hierarchy. Several critics have argued that this hierarchy encourages unrealistic development paths for many colleges and universities, contributes to the devaluation of classroom education in many undergraduate schools, and reduces multiple forms of scholarship to the single model of scientific productivity (Boyer, 1990, Boyer and Hechinger, 1981). Earlier, anticipating the metropolitan university model, Lynton and Elman (1987) have called for development of an externally oriented, extended university and a broader definition of scholarship. Today most colleges and universities find themselves caught between their historical/traditional role as a resource apart from the community, and an emerging argument that the future revitalization of both university and community are inevitably interlinked. Metropolitan universities are keenly sensitive to this dilemma (Hathaway et al, 1995). It is rare, however, for them to express the issue as one involving a conjoined future, as this calls the role of the isolated academy into direct question. As we shall see, the social crisis of the 1960s generated one such advance, laying the groundwork for many urban and metropolitan campuses. The choices made by universities in metropolitan areas in the urban transformation of the past three decades have spread across a continuum from those institutions that are in the city but not "of" it, to those seeking innovative ways to involve themselves with the ongoing efforts to make the city more livable. Within this latter category, there is a further issue, namely the extent to which a metropolitan university seeks to integrate its academic mission with its location.

This article further explores this question, and suggests ways in which higher education might generate a new urban role for itself, as well as enriching the educational process taking place within its walls.

The Emergence of Urban/Metropolitan Universities

The concept of a metropolitan or urban college or university, engaged with its surrounding community, has emerged within a difficult context. "They were charged with responding to local needs at precisely the same time that local areas were undergoing unprecedented, and often perilous, transformations" (Brownell, 1995). The first projects and definitions of urban/metropolitan universities emerged within the urban renewal efforts of the 1950s,

followed, in turn, by the urban revitalization efforts after the riots of the 1960s, community access efforts of the 1970s, and the urban land grant models of the 1980s. More recently, efforts at forging a "metropolitan university" perspective have begun to explore the implications of restructuring curricula, administrative practices, and faculty reward systems for the survival and revitalization of urban places (Lynton, 1995; Johnson and Bell, 1995).

To some extent, this focus of the discussion may unintentionally do harm to an even older model of urban higher education that emphasized providing simple access to higher education to working class and inner city communities. This emphasis, which characterized, e.g., City College of New York, Temple University, Wayne State University, and Northeastern University, represented a significant break with the past. The issue of access—central to these schools from their very inception—emerged again as a significant aspect of urban university development during the 1960s and 1970s, and remains significant today. Indeed, as cities began to wrestle with the twin impacts of rapid decentralization and urban unrest in the 1960s, a new impetus contributed to the emergence of an access and community oriented school —the establishment of new urban universities, usually as branches of state universities or systems, as part of the city "rescue package" developed by many state legislatures (Grobman, 1988).

But the issue of access is but one aspect of the ways in which urban schools have engaged themselves with the problems and issues facing their surrounding communities. The variety of ways in which schools have addressed these issues reflects local context as well as the overarching debate over the very future of cities.

The Shifting Context of Urban Higher Education

The interplay of urban change and the emergence of a metropolitan university mirrors the shifting place of the "urban" in American politics. In the immediate era after World War II, much domestic policy had a distinctly schizophrenic quality regarding city life. While massive attempts were made to purge older industrial cities of their slum housing, significant financial incentives were being provided to both builders and home owners alike to move out of the city to the suburbs, with the added proviso of limiting these opportunities to whites only, and predominantly to white collar households. Universities and colleges who participated in urban renewal projects were seen, in the expansive era of urban renewal, basically through the end of the

1950s, as part of the coalition for progress that would help anchor a city's renewed growth and prosperity. At the same time, the demography of the baby boom would guarantee that most of the pressures for admission to these schools would increasingly come from suburban households.

As the national interest in urban renewal faded during the last years of the Eisenhower presidency, and as the domestic agenda shifted emphasis to a war on poverty and a battle for civil rights, public sector investment in cities declined somewhat, and left most renewal agendas delayed, if not shelved. Later in the decade, this unfinished agenda was pointed to by those seeking to explain the riots and the civil unrest of the 1960s as a case of heightened expectations, in which the contrast between relatively elite institutions and ghetto housing and businesses were used to powerful dramatic effect.

The sheer magnitude of the riots, both within cities and in the country as a whole, challenged the institutional core of the country. Government, economic leaders, churches, and schools all began to discuss ways to reverse the movement from cities, symbolic and residential. Universities were turned to in much the same way in which they had been in wartime—to provide research based answers to address a national crisis. Given that one aspect of the post-riot public agenda was a reawakening of concern for city neighborhoods and the redirection of poverty funds into urban revitalization, it was not surprising to see state legislatures identify "urban" campuses within state systems that would be charged with meeting the urban crisis in terms of both knowledge to inform public policy and increased opportunities for inner city students. In this way, many of these schools were created explicitly in the image of the research university, often citing the land grant model in support of applied research (Berube, 1978; Grobman, 1988).

The centrality of the urban agenda in government domestic spending was thus a key force in the development of a major group of urban universities. With the close of the 1960's, many of these schools felt the increased pressures accompanying political change. The domestic politics of the Nixon era both demonized and effectively constrained urban initiatives, institutionalizing the growing aversion to urban aid while firmly cementing the symbolic equation of cities with pathological problems on the other. Public housing, welfare, and urban block grants were all significantly curtailed, and authority over many forms of aid passed into the hands of state legislators and governors rather than to city hall. Perhaps most significantly, the political rhetoric of support for the poor was undermined by explicitly racial appeals to white

ethnic communities for political support, combined with a "bootstrap" approach to anti-poverty assistance, celebrating the virtues associated with individual initiative rather than government assistance.

A Shift in Emphasis

Nevertheless, the momentum that began with the establishment of urban campuses continued, but with a significant, if somewhat subtle, difference. Many of the institutions that developed in reaction to the upheavals of the 1960s had an explicit involvement in rebuilding the city, although often without carryover benefits for the neighborhoods in which they were located, but the language of the 1970s stressed access and equal opportunity for individuals as the central goals of higher education. While increased access for both poor people and minority group members had always been included as a part of the mission of urban colleges and universities, the growth in prominence of this particular component, coupled with the decline of the social change agenda, shifted attention away from community context and on to individual students. At the same time, a critical separation was maintained between the interests of the academic institution and those of the community. In a cynical sense, one could argue that the growth of public support for urban colleges and universities via programs of increased access made state legislators look as if they were paying attention to the cities, even while they were essentially replacing older residential and commercial buildings with new, tax-free developments—often without recognizing the increased costs entailed in running the buildings after they were built. The urban agenda continued to decline in importance after Nixon left office. While the Carter administration paid greater attention to urban and neighborhood issues, they did so against a fundamental backdrop of what we might today call "communitarianism"—a philosophy that largely eschews massive public sector intervention in favor of community based development.

Systematic attention to urban higher education was limited to discussions that involved the fledgling Department of Education. Borrowing from the fact that many of the branch campuses in urban settings emerged from the state college/university systems, a "land-grant" model began to emerge, in which the mobilization of community services, instead of agricultural agents, was seen as the potentially unique province of the urban university (Berube, 1978).

While enabling legislation defining and establishing this type of institution

was passed soon after Ronald Reagan had become president, limited appropriations to Title XI of the Education Act, as it was originally called, did not occur until late in the Bush administration—more than a decade later. The first demonstration projects were funded in 1992 under the newly named Urban Community Service Grant Program. Funded activities include neighborhood planning efforts, housing rehabilitation, urban gardening, labor force retraining, community health, and a wide variety of other strategies by which institutional resources were leveraged toward community development issues. The Department of Housing and Urban Development has also begun to support university-community partnerships. Secretary Cisneros has argued that one of the tasks facing higher education, and particularly urban schools, is to help reshape the city so that it retakes its position as the "driving force in the economic, social and cultural life of the nation." (Cisneros, 1995). Assistant Secretary Michael Stegman, in another article in this issue, describes how HUD has re-oriented funds to create the University Partnership Initiative for both planning and service delivery, and lists a number of grants that have been made to encourage urban colleges and universities to develop a distinctly urban character to their operations.

A Growing Sense of Mission

To a significant extent, these issues were supported and energized by the development of interest groups within urban institutions that sought a sense of identity, common interests, and a recognition from both the higher education community and the public that their schools had unique problems and issues confronting them. Four initiatives in particular were important in developing and maintaining a conception of the urban mission.

In the early 1980s, 13 more historically urban oriented schools formed a group known as the Urban 13, a name that has stuck although the number of participants has since grown. Members of the Urban 13 are both traditional universities as well as newer ones that are adapting some institutional model —land grant, research, or teaching focused—to the realities of changing neighborhoods, student bodies, or both. They have been instrumental in demonstrating the ways in which a variety of discipline-based research and teaching efforts can be used as part of urban revitalization efforts, and they continue to offer important collaborative links in developing new programs for urban universities (Elliott, 1994).

As newer urban campuses developed, a group of centers involved with

urban outreach developed in 1970, calling themselves the Consortium of University Institutes of Urban Affairs (CUIUA), and later (1984) changing their name to the Urban Affairs Association. Originally, this group linked government and community representatives with faculty and researchers at university centers designed to provide either technical assistance or a research center or both. As the group matured, and as the national urban agenda shifted, the group became more like a traditional academic organization, while maintaining a significant niche for outreach efforts. This group provides an academic standing for urban studies/urban affairs programs with a more applied bent than is usually found within traditional academic units.

In 1989, a number of presidents of urban and metropolitan universities created an informal group to further the interests of their institutions. This has since evolved into the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, with close to fifty members, that is making significant efforts toward the creation of a new identity for urban universities—one that reflects both inner city universities as well as the institutions serving the new urban areas reflected in the metropolitan areas of cities (Lynton, 1995; Johnson and Bell, 1995). The Coalition sponsors this journal, *Metropolitan Universities*, now in its sixth year of quarterly publication, as well as an annual national conference, the fourth of which will take place in June 1995.

Most recently, both the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, as well as the American Association of State Colleges and Universities—the major legislative and interest group organizations of most urban universities—which had developed independent offices dealing with the concerns of urban schools, have created a joint effort to enhance the discussion of urban university needs.

These efforts have been instrumental in developing a broad rubric for the discussions of urban issues by linking them to the broader metropolitan university concept. These groups have been instrumental in helping develop and define the approaches being used in both the Department of Education and HUD's urban university programs, and shape much of the discourse in higher education over the special role that metropolitan universities are expected to play.

An Emerging Sense of Context

As we face a new political agenda that forces issues of self-sufficiency upon both higher education and the cities, the issue of university-community

cooperation acquires increased importance. It is important that universities not lose sight of an important, persistent reality. In each of the efforts noted, from urban renewal to community partnerships, the essential power and asset relationships have been essentially asymmetrically: communities are largely viewed as being "in need"; in turn, they are provided for by an asset-rich (comparatively) college or university. This creates a relationship that, in times of institutional largesse, can be seen as charity, and in times of fiscal crisis, unimportant to the institution. It is not surprising to see communities approach such a relationship with suspicion, nor to see institutions of higher education questioning the imposition of yet another set of performance guidelines.

It is vital for both universities and communities to grasp the nature of community development, on the one hand, and of the social context of institutions of higher education on the other. Communities develop self-sufficiency as they are successful in amassing a resource base and a sense of mutual ties that result in residents bonding with a location and, essentially, resisting the larger urban forces that impact on individual households. In this framework, community can not be instilled, but instead must be cultivated and supported—both by the individuals and the institutions that constitute it. Urban neighborhoods, those examples of community that are celebrated by Saul Alinsky, Jane Jacobs, Milton Kotler, Richard Suttles, and Herbert Gans, are not just a group of individuals sharing an ethnic or class heritage, but a group of households that have an economic, political, and institutional infrastructure helping them define and live out their day to day lives.

In this context, higher education is a potential resource for community development. It is not an abstract form of the "general good" that we should be addressing, but the specific needs of neighborhoods and communities that form the location and context of colleges and universities. Apart from our general commitment to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, our institutions of higher education are fiscally vulnerable corporations dependent upon a continuous recruitment process for students, with a growing demand for demonstrated effects. I maintain that it is long past time to begin a process of consciously discussing, debating, and articulating the ways in which urban institutions can work with their neighbors—particularly given the shared risks in our future.

It is not as if urban/metropolitan colleges and universities have shirked these efforts. As this discussion suggests, they have been addressing parts of

this mission for several decades—and if one counts the University of Chicago's pioneering work in urban research, for the greater part of a century. These efforts represent a continuum of institutional involvement with communities, from demonstration projects of limited numbers of departments and schools, to wholesale institutional commitments. A scan of successful community-higher education partnerships brings out two essential points: that higher education and communities are increasingly grappling with the definition and implications of acting in their own self-interests with respect to one another; and that urban colleges and universities are ill-suited to being direct service providers to communities and often need to develop mediating institutions/ groups to function effectively within communities. The goal here is to develop a sense of what Ruch and Trani (1995) have called "mutual interactions."

The Need for Mediating Entities

There exist many examples of urban universities trying to have an impact on their surrounding communities. However, many continue to operate from an asymmetrical position. Very few programs begin with the question: what are the needs of a community as seen by the community? There is a naive approach to this issue, one that would have the community creating a set of demands, with the university or college negotiating an arrangement. I do not call for a return to this approach. My point is rather this: institutions of higher education, while not absolutely tied to their physical location, will find a more productive response from their neighbors if they begin by recognizing themselves as self-interested organizations that lack the *droit de seigneur* too often assumed by cloistered institutions.

One of the most significant barriers to effective partnerships is the goal-oriented behavior of colleges and universities (assuming that internal resistance to community engagement can be limited or overcome), and the more diffuse nature of community organization (Ruch and Trani, 1995). Urban communities contain a large number of existing organizations, each with their own interests, and each having a different agenda with an institution of higher education. To be effective, urban colleges and universities need to spend time encouraging and facilitating the development of mediating entities or institutions in the community, such as the West Philadelphia Partnership and WEPIC, in the University of Pennsylvania example.

I raise this issue from points of both principle and practicality. If we grant

that the survival and revitalization of the city/metropolitan area are important preconditions to the well-being of the metropolitan university, then some form of good faith partnership is, I would argue, a necessity and not a luxury. I am, to some extent, asserting a Lockean principle of a renegotiated social contract as a basis for these efforts. The alternative, continuing to serve in the mold of a quasi-welfare state, dispensing an insufficient number of services, denies both the dignity of the communities we seek to assist and the perilous state many of them confront—a state that far exceeds the capacity of any given university to remedy.

From a more practical view, the voices of a community will be many, varied, and at odds with each other on some issues. The university can, and many do, play contending parties off against each other. But others have found that an investment of time and resources in fostering community development helps create a more coherent community voice. At the University of Pennsylvania, the West Philadelphia Partnership dates back, in one form or another, to the physical revitalization efforts of the 1960s that both created much of University City and facilitated housing and community revitalization in residential areas surrounding the university. The university has long been involved with the partnership in both financial and human terms, so that it does not control but partners with community organizations and institutions. Current efforts to engage in large-scale community change efforts are premised on the success of the partnership in bringing the voices of the community to the table, and in delimiting the university's role in these efforts.

This approach tends to fly in the face of a major administrative goal: to control environmental uncertainty. It suggests that neighborhoods will mobilize against the institution in such a way that financial and other interests may be threatened. Given the fractious relationships between many urban institutions and their neighborhoods, this is not difficult to understand. But my point rests on a different premise entirely: the future of urban higher education is inevitably linked to the success of their surrounding neighborhoods in evidencing a sense of real community.

Attempts at community revitalization will generate conflicts based on a perceived paternalism unless they are done in a partnership arrangement—one that is not seen as benefiting a particular group, organization, politician, or institution in the neighborhood. In many ways, this is an idealized state of affairs. Public institutions often do not have the freedom to decide on their partners. They lack the ability to tell a given source of demands no, even if

the demand being made is either short sighted or shifts institutional priorities. Private institutions without significant endowments have a difficult time imagining resource allocation toward such ends, preferring a lower profile of limited faculty and student involvement. Those with extensive resources may not be governed by boards with a long-term time frame. On the other side, communities are often so fragmented that institutions do not have the time to wait for a coordinated response. And frankly, developing trust across a series of long-term divisions is frequently too daunting a task to allow for such an approach.

Issues Confronting Metropolitan Universities

As colleges and universities that are located in urban centers continue to wrestle with their future roles within their community, they will bump against many of the issues discussed in this article. If these colleges and universities are to function in a collaborative fashion within their community, they must, I feel, be able to address the following questions:

• Has the school identified its own self interest with respect to it community location? In particular, has it come to a recognition that its own future is intertwined with the community's? For many schools, this is a difficult, sometimes threatening, issue. As pressure increases for schools to specifically define their mission, and to develop a strategy that will enable them to address pressures for accountability, this will be an inherent part of their response.

• Has the academic side of the university engaged in the discussion of the ways in which the scholarship of applied fields can be rewarded and integrated into the curriculum? A continuing risk run by faculty and departments is that in responding to community needs, they violate the inherent roles and rewards built into a traditional campus environment. While there are many ways in which this issue can be addressed without confronting it directly, it is refreshing to hear that several of the schools noted above have begun to wrestle with this in a more systematic fashion.

• Are there mediating institutions present within the community, or has the university/college developed a plan to develop these? One of the persistent problems faced by urban universities is the issue of whom to deal with within the community. Tom Wolfe cast a jaundiced eye on the institutional responses of the late 1960s and early 1970s, but his satirical views did not address the central substantive problem of how an asymmetrical relationship can be changed. It seems that several schools have developed strong rela-

tionships with mediating institutions/organizations—community development vehicles charged with developing a consensual perspective on development—that merit careful attention for future models of university community partnerships. These groups appear to facilitate the process of finding "common cause," while also serving as a vehicle for implementation of partnership projects.

It is important for us to recognize that urban and metropolitan universities are simultaneously beset by problems of mission and/or market niche, pressures to improve "productivity," and their community context. Creating mutual interactions, partnerships, and other joint efforts with mediating structures in the community—organizations whose first interest is the community itself—offer real opportunities for metropolitan universities to address a host of related issues, such as the new scholarship of service, ways of expanding the audiences for higher education services in the community, and alternative sources of revenues supporting the university.

• Is there a fundamental appreciation, from the university's side, that the community brings assets to the table? Is there a corresponding recognition from the community that universities and colleges are, essentially, land-rich and cash poor? A significant point of friction between higher education institutions lies in their mutual stereotypes of each other: while communities view universities as insulated and uncaring, many in the university view urban communities as problematic deficits drawing resources away from higher education. There is enough evidence in both places for these stereotypes to remain fixed. It is particularly vital that urban institutions recognize the essential truth, argued by John McKnight (1995), that communities all have assets on which to build revitalization efforts. It is the job of our urban and metropolitan universities to take the lead in doing this, thereby developing a renewed and redefined mission for themselves.

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