



Wendy B. Young

Communities are increasingly calling upon universities to extend their resources so as to engage actively in the community's revitalization. The long term viability of both the university and its community relies on an equal status partnership to direct education and research efforts toward current and future needs. This is necessary to ensure that the community flourishes and can continue thereby to support the university. Examples from the Great Cities Initiative of the University of Illinois at Chicago describe the importance and difficulties of these partnership endeavors.

University-Community Partnerships — Why Bother?

Universities are being called upon to extend their traditional missions of education and research by actively participating in the revitalization of their home cities and states. Local governments, taxpayers, community organizations, and everyday citizens nowadays look to their institutions of higher learning to apply their resources directly toward solving social and economic problems. This places academics in an uncomfortable position, because it seems to violate some of our most cherished practices. Academe's tradition to "observe with some distance and objectivity" must be completely abandoned and replaced with something closer to "actively participate with complete immersion."

So why bother? After all, a university need not form partnerships with its community to carry out its traditional mission. If, for instance, the university's goal is to alert external audiences to potential solutions to urban problems, a partnership is not necessary and may even work against the goal. A university that works directly with the community could find itself holding the bag if these proposed solutions fail. The traditional town-gown relationship, by contrast,

allows the university to deliver the message and then comfortably get on with its other affairs. Nor does a university need to form equitable partnerships to acquire external learning laboratory experiences for its students. Agriculture, art, architecture, business, education, engineering, health sciences, law, and social work programs contract with agencies, firms, hospitals, and schools for student practicum experiences without forming partnerships that require the university to contribute jointly to the goals of the learning site.

Why Bother?

So why should a university contemplate jumping into this swamp? Because partnerships still have unique potential for helping the university and the community accomplish their primary goals. A university's goal of improving the quality of life and achieving high quality research, education and service can be enhanced by working directly with affected communities in a relationship of shared authority and responsibility and mutual respect for each other's expertise. Several universities are finding, for example, that their direct partnerships with primary and secondary schools have the greatest potential for reducing freshman attrition and the proportion of college freshmen requiring remedial courses.

Beyond the mission of the traditional land-grant university to help in vitalizing the agricultural society surrounding it, land-grant university campuses in urban settings such as the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) can legitimately be expected to engage in vitalizing the urban society surrounding it and on which it relies. Public universities are learning that a strong interdependence between itself and its local society will improve the potential survival of both social structures. Private universities have the opportunity to define their social networks in accordance with their primary mission, but they too must actively engage in an equitable partnership with these chosen social structures to maintain the vitality of both. This article focuses on the need for metropolitan universities to engage actively with their urban surroundings to engender mutual success and longevity.

Following are some more specific reasons why metropolitan universities should engage in partnerships with their urban community:

To overcome our own ignorance: University faculty do not have the solutions for the problems of rejuvenating urban areas. But they can offer suggestions and a rigorous method of testing their efficacy. Community partners can offer a realistic understanding of the problems and explore sugges-

tions on a trial-and-error basis. By working together, new ideas will emerge, be tried out, fail or succeed, and generate a forum for continuing to look for new ideas.

Knowing the science, however, is not enough to turn around the complex interweaving conditions that are causing the decline of urban quality of life: unemployment, teenage pregnancy, drugs, AIDS, inadequate housing, poor public transportation routes, school dropouts, unimmunized children, abuse, and single parent homes, to name a few. As an example, a successful workfare program to increase the long-term employment in communities with very high unemployment and welfare rates would require strong business-university-community partnerships to provide permanent jobs, job ready training and job socialization, primary health care for whole families to reduce absenteeism and unwanted pregnancies, safe and convenient transportation, adequate housing, and child care services. Putting all these services into a targeted community in a coordinated and useful manner requires a partnership.

To focus additional minds on urban problems, even if some of those minds lack formal academic training. Identifying the root causes of problems and potential solutions can emerge from university-community partnerships in ways that are not possible through objective observation from a distance. Answers can come from collective thinking in a group dynamic that provokes new thoughts and forces us to use new ways of viewing and defining the nature of the problems. Where such collective engagement occurs, groups have been able to transcend the temptation toward quick fixes and search for new integrated solutions tailored to enrich the unique natural characteristics of each community.

To provide a reality check for our ideas. Many faculty who engage in social research and service have read about, listened to, or been a part of projects that did not achieve their objectives because of a failure to understand the beliefs and behaviors of the people who were supposed to benefit. Long after these projects were shelved, new gaps in reality continue to be discovered that, if known at the time, might have enhanced the likelihood of finding a strategy to improve needy communities.

To diminish our deserved reputation as exploiters. A university's surrounding community may have reason to be skeptical about the commitment of the university toward the community's rejuvenation. Events that occurred in the past remain alive and fuel the skepticism. Some residents of the neigh-

borhoods surrounding the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) suspect that our major interest in their communities is to find people who need health care so desperately that they will expose themselves to tests and treatments that are needed only for our research or educational purposes. UIC's neighbors also remember that much of an immigrant community, which included Jane Addams' Hull House, was bulldozed to make room for part of our campus. These are difficult images to erase.

To ensure the long-term viability of the university. We are not going to get many future students from an impoverished, illiterate, crime-ridden, unemployed, homeless community. Nor can the funds to operate a university be generated from failing communities.

What Does It Take to Become a Partner?

Anyone deciding to undertake a university-community partnership should be prepared to expend a lot of effort and take a lot of risks. There are probably thousands of successful stories about university-community partnerships, and at least two dozen from UIC alone. Here are some suggestions, based on my experience in a partnership between UIC College of Nursing and the Midwest Community Council (MCC), a block club organization in the Chicago's East Garfield Park community, one of Chicago's poorest communities, just blocks west of our campus. The MCC and our College of Nursing operate a nursing center that provides primary care health services chiefly to young mothers, their children, and their grandparents.

Work with a community that has an organized voice.

A university is a very organized system and its partners should have a relatively high degree of organization. When an individual within the university negotiates with an individual within the community, both must be able to speak for their constituencies. As trust in each other builds, it should represent trust building between the university and the community.

When we first began working with MCC, its Executive Director told me, "One of our purposes as the organized voice of this community is to make sure that any strategies or projects operating in this community meet the needs of the community and do not exploit us for others' purposes." Without an organized voice such as MCC, the university could not be assured that approval really meant support.

University participants must be completely honest with the community.

A university representative must state at the onset what the community can expect and not expect of the university, and must receive the same information from the community participants.

After a year of discussions with the MCC Board, we attended a town meeting with about 80 residents. When no more residents had further questions of us, the MCC Executive Director said, "I've checked these folks out very carefully, and I can tell you that their hearts are in the right place. This can work."

University participants must be patient.

Traditional timetables and processes of universities and community organizations may be very different from what each is used to. We waited weeks for the MCC to conduct a marketing campaign it had agreed to do for our health fairs, even though we could have printed and distributed the material within a week. Why? Because no UIC-conducted marketing campaign would be as effective as one conducted by MCC. They know better than we how best to prepare a message for their community. UIC material would have been suspiciously commercial and flashy, while the MCC's material had a folksy look characteristic of their methods of communication and well known to their constituency.

Faculty must modify their stance as experts.

Faculty must be willing to serve more as brokers than experts, and they must acknowledge the expertise that lies within the community organizations. The organization may not have the answers, but it understands the nature of the problem better than we who do not live with it every day.

Our Nursing Center is located in a two-story house, owned by MCC, in the middle of a residential block. A shooting gallery for intravenous drug users operates in an abandoned building three doors away, and the nearest corner was cited in the *Chicago Tribune* as one of the city's "hot spots" for drug sales. Most of the residents on this block are senior citizens who have lived there for fifty years or more.

The building required substantial renovation. It would have been cheaper to negotiate for space elsewhere, but MCC wanted to use its own building and have the nursing center located in the center of the neighborhood. MCC

vetoed our plan to install security bars on the windows, because they believed this would signal that there was something worth stealing. And they didn't want to make people feel unwelcome. Instead, MCC installed a fire and security system with a controlled entrance, and assigned a senior citizen volunteer to control the entryway. A maintenance handyman works during operating hours; these two people are the Nursing Center's security and its advertising. They tell their church congregations and social groups about new programs and bring back suggestions for new health services.

The University's Role

UIC's dual role in the partnership is as a catalyst for change and as a student of change. It's up to the community to decide that change is in its best interest and that it can acquire the resources to make the change. Our goal as catalyst is to help the community preserve its strengths and identity while improving conditions and opportunities, and to reverse the overall deterioration of urban neighborhoods. For example, we help expand the community's potential resource network by introducing MCC to services and agencies it has not used in the past. As another example, upon learning of persistent levels of lead in MCC's child population, we sought to determine the lead source. One possibility raised by MCC was the popularity of vegetable gardening in what might be lead contaminated soil. MCC said they could assist in negotiating for vacant lots for community gardening. We gave MCC a contact person at the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service whose community gardening program tests the soil, replaces contaminated topsoil, and provides gardening programs.

Our goal as students is to provide learning experiences for our faculty and our current and future students — in this case in the emerging area of community-based practice, and in learning opportunities for health professions education. We're finding that an essential first step for any health profession school to effectively engage in community-based education and practice (a current initiative of several public and private funding agencies) is to build these types of partnerships with communities in need of primary care health services.

Conclusion

University-community partnerships offer great potential for improving the vitality of both partners. Communities have the opportunity to acquire the empowerment necessary to rejuvenate themselves. Universities have the opportunity to be active participants in a natural learning laboratory for its faculty and students, while improving its image with its neighbors. A stronger community will have a greater need for the major products of a university as it increases its capacity to produce college-bound children and adults. Partners in a successful university-community association never forget that the relationship itself is the goal. The partnership is about living together for the betterment of all.

Is your institution a metropolitan university?

If your university serves an urban/metropolitan region and subscribes to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities printed elsewhere in this issue, your administration should seriously consider joining the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities.

Historically, most universities have been associated with cities, but the relationship between "the town and the gown" has often been distant or abrasive. Today the metropolitan university cultivates a close relationship with the urban center and its suburbs, often serving as a catalyst for change and source of enlightened discussion. Leaders in government and business agree that education is the key to prosperity, and that metropolitan universities will be on the cutting edge of education not only for younger students, but also for those who must continually re-educate themselves to meet the challenges of the future.

The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities brings together institutions who share experiences and expertise to speak with a common voice on important social issues. A shared sense of mission is the driving force behind Coalition membership. However, the Coalition also offers a number of tangible benefits: ten free subscriptions to *Metropolitan Universities*, additional copies at special rates to distribute to boards and trustees, a newsletter on government and funding issues, a clearinghouse of innovative projects, reduced rates at Coalition conventions. . . .

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