

Building Tomorrow's Higher Education: Leadership, Partnerships, and Communities

Sandra Haynes, Paula M. Krebs,
Julie Buehler, and Clarenda M. Phillips

Abstract

Four members of the ACE Fellows Program class of 2010–2011 share the results of their fellowship projects, all of which were based at urban universities. The projects addressed partnerships between the universities and their urban communities in different contexts, including the creation of college-town developments, establishing a center for urban water stewardship, facilitating reverse-transfer with local community colleges, and setting up and cultivating partnerships with local businesses.

The ACE Fellows Program, the nation's oldest leadership development program in higher education, seeks to develop the leadership abilities of individuals who have the capacity to rise to senior-level leadership in colleges and universities, and who, through their leadership roles, will shape the effectiveness, innovation, and future direction of higher education. In addition to its focus on preparing tomorrow's leaders for higher education, the ACE Fellows Program also shares CUMU's commitment to the social responsibilities our institutions have to the future of our communities and to understanding the potential of new ways to use resources and partnerships.

Building on work they have done as part of the formal Fellows program curriculum as well as through individual projects and research, the four authors (who were ACE Fellows during the academic year 2010–2011), describe ways in which their fellowship work is informing their institutions' efforts to collaborate in and around their communities to design and implement initiatives addressing problems and creating opportunities for university-community interaction. Each of these ACE Fellows pursued a fellowship project that came directly out of her institution's urban identity, and this paper shares their reflections on those projects.

One World, One Water Center for Urban Water Education and Stewardship at Metropolitan State College of Denver

Sandra Haynes

Approximately four years ago, Metropolitan State College of Denver was selected to be the recipient of a sculpture titled, *One World, One Water*. The benefactor, a noted

local philanthropist and conservationist, stipulated that the sculpture be used for educational purposes. Not having programs that focused on water and only two courses devoted to the topic presented a challenge to the institution and provided for an excellent opportunity for an ACE Fellowship project.

In order to establish the institution's proper role in water education, two criteria needed to be met: establish the need for water education, and create a program that was not duplicated by the State of Colorado and fit with Metro State's mission.

The first task of establishing the need for water education was not difficult. Water is a central issue in Colorado, which is home to the headwaters of five primary rivers—the Arkansas, Colorado, South Platte, Rio Grande, and White/Yampa. Hydrologic forecasts predict a protracted drought in the Southwest imposing even greater demands on an already over-allocated Colorado River. Explosive residential development along the Front Range is rapidly depleting the Denver basin's aquifers. Furthermore, proposed inter-basin water transfer projects require expensive capital investment and carry unknown long-term environmental costs.

Once the need was firmly established, determining a niche for Metropolitan State College of Denver in water education quickly followed. In Denver's urban environment, water stewardship and sustainability is an especially important and responsible education topic. Metro State is uniquely positioned to offer a water curriculum that promotes water stewardship and sustainability for our region. The college offers what no other higher education institution in Colorado can: an urban campus adjacent to a major headwater river, the South Platte; a focus on educating underserved/disadvantaged populations; and graduates who largely stay in Colorado and the Denver Metro area, thereby empowering and affecting regional change. Hence, Metro State's vision is an educated, empowered, solution-oriented Colorado citizenry that protects and preserves our precious water resources. To fulfill this vision, Metro State will create the One World, One Water Center for Urban Water Education and Stewardship to develop urban water stewards from diverse backgrounds and a wide range of disciplines.

The One World, One Water Center will have three major functions designed to deepen students' understanding of water as a critical resource that must be sustained and conserved for all: 1) to offer an interdisciplinary water studies minor to complement a wide variety of majors; 2) to provide enriching co-curricular activities; and 3) to enhance water stewardship on and beyond campus by promoting effective use of our water resources.

1. Water studies minor: The center will develop and implement a new, highly interactive and project-based/holistically-focused hybrid water studies minor. The curriculum will be designed to facilitate education of students from a wide range of disciplines (e.g., English, music, industrial design, technical communication, human services, journalism, business, art, etc.) by introducing them to the importance of

water resources and stewardship via academic and community engagement. Participation in water-related community outreach efforts corresponds to Metro State's "urban land grant mission." These experiential learning opportunities—be they internships, service learning, or volunteer contributions—will connect Metro State students to existing agencies and activities such as the Colorado Foundation for Water Education, Project WET, and others focused on such issues as urban waterway restoration, education, hydro-philanthropy efforts, water law, conflict resolution, stream reclamation, conservation, etc. In addition, water studies students would be required to complete a senior thesis/capstone project with a focus on water stewardship that demonstrates their grasp of water conservation as well as their discipline-specific methodologies.

Metro State's faculty has expertise in hydrology, water law, history, economics, politics, and conflict resolution and negotiation. The center coordinator will collaborate with other academic institutions, including Colorado State University, and leading water organizations to augment the curriculum with the technical and scientific aspects of water resources. Over time, water-related curricula will likely be revised and implemented as deemed appropriate. The water studies minor acknowledges the research strengths of other academic institutions and leverages Metro State's strengths which lay in our teaching mission, our diverse student body, and our urban location and proximity to the South Platte. We will reinforce the work of the water resource scientists and technicians with Metro State graduates whose majors are informed by a deeper understanding of water sustainability and conservation and who can thereby affect change in their chosen professions and communities.

2. Enriching co-curricular activities: Water studies students will be required to attend a One World, One Water monthly dialogue (seminar, colloquium, or workshop) on the Auraria campus and other locations around the state to expose enrolled students to "real life" impacts of water resources in Colorado via conversations with those stakeholders directly affected by and involved with water policy. Leaders in the field also will be guest lecturers and the public will be invited to attend these presentations as appropriate. Face-to-face meetings will be essential for students to facilitate their understanding of the issues and to practice their conflict resolution skills.
3. Enhance water stewardship on and beyond campus by promoting effective use of water resources: The creation of the center would not only help immerse the 24,000 Metro State students in water issues, but also would create visibility and education about water stewardship for the students at CCD and UCD who share the Auraria campus and thus reach a total of more than 45,000 college students. This year alone, the campus is already invested in water conservation as evidenced by replacing toilets and sink faucets with low-flow devices in partnership with Denver Water and a project retrofitting showers in the physical education/events center. It is estimated that the campus will realize an annual savings of over 4.3 million gallons of water annually, representing approximately 7 percent of overall campus usage. The center, named after the *One World, One Water* sculpture to be installed at Metro State in

2012, will leverage the sculpture location as a focal point for water education and awareness-raising activities.

After presenting this proposal to our benefactor and several of her advisers, Metropolitan State College of Denver was given a gift of \$1,000,000 over five years, to help fund the project.

Reverse-Transfer Pilot Program for University of Massachusetts with Massasoit Community College

Paula M. Krebs

Many students who transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions do so before completing an associate's degree, and, often, courses that would have counted toward the two-year degree do not transfer to the four-year institution. Consequently, most students end up spending much longer than four years in the classroom to earn a four-year degree, and many do not finish at all.

Reverse-transfer programs allow students who transfer to a bachelor's degree-granting institution before they finish their associate's degree to transfer courses from the four-year school back to the two-year school to earn a degree. The University of Massachusetts Boston and Massasoit Community College have recently established a reverse-transfer program based on landmark work being done between El Paso Community College and the University of Texas El Paso where the effects of attaining an associate's degree are magnified for an ethnic minority population for whom the associate's degree is often the first college degree in a family. The new agreement at the University of Massachusetts Boston means that MCC students who transfer to UMass Boston can finish up their Massasoit associate's degree while taking classes at UMass Boston. A student enrolled in UMass Boston with only four or five courses remaining in the associate's program at Massasoit can now take those classes at the four-year institution, transfer the credits back to MCC, and graduate with an associate's degree without affecting progress toward their bachelor's.

In working out the details of the new arrangement, both institutions found that they needed to rely heavily on advising to make the program work; advisors at both institutions have to make students aware of the possibility of reverse-transfer so students can make the best course choices from the start. Advisors at the community colleges and the four-year colleges to which they send students have to communicate with each other, share their degree requirements, and coordinate their efforts. At the Texas institutions, the ability of both sides to manage degree audits electronically helps the process run smoothly. Of course, few paired institutions have the resources to automate the credit transfer process completely. However, the University of Massachusetts Boston was already working on electronic transfer of transcripts from its community college partners. The next logical step was, of course, to transfer the transcripts the other way as well – from UMass Boston to Massasoit.

A reverse-transfer program can work even with paper transcripts, however. The four-year institution must simply establish procedures to pull transcripts automatically for students who transfer in with the requisite number of credits in residence at the community college (30 in Massachusetts, 15 in Texas). Once the transcripts are pulled, UMass Boston asks each student who might be eligible for reverse-transfer to give permission to have the transcript sent to the two-year institution for review. At Massasoit, the registrar's office goes over each transcript individually, matching up UMass Boston courses with MCC requirements, to see whether a student qualifies for an associate's degree automatically or to see what courses need to be taken.

Reverse-transfer is a straightforward process of primarily matching up degree requirements. Successful implementation for the long run will depend on good communication between the two-year and the four-year institutions' advising staff. However, it's clearly worth the effort involved. With a fully operational reverse-transfer system in place, graduation rates will go up at the community colleges and retention rates will go up at the four-year colleges and universities, as students see themselves making progress toward degrees. The transfer students at the four-year colleges will be earning a valuable credential for the job market, and they will recognize their steps along the way to the bachelor's degree; it might not seem like such a long road once it's marked with a solid halfway point—an associate's degree.

Advantages to the four-year institution include strengthened retention rates for students who have been awarded the associate's degree (University of Texas El Paso reports a 7 percent rise in transfer student retention since instituting the program) and a strengthened relationship with the community college, whose graduation rates would rise as a result of the program. Should the pilot program in Boston prove successful and be expanded, other community colleges in the area would see the advantage of sending their strongest students to UMass Boston earlier, knowing that the student would remain eligible for an associate's degree even while pursuing their bachelor's at UMass Boston. The other primary partner community colleges in the Boston area also have expressed enthusiasm about establishing reverse-transfer agreements with UMass Boston.

The pilot project did reveal a few spots that needed attention for the process to run smoothly—course requirements at MCC that did not have clear equivalents at UMass Boston, for example. But both sides have begun to work out equivalencies so that UMass Boston courses can meet the requirements. In addition, the schools are identifying barriers and work-arounds, discovering which majors are not practical candidates for reverse-transfer for total lack of equivalencies, which requirements are unique to the community college (such as the MCC Computer Keyboarding qualification), and whether those requirements remain important to the community college.

The next steps in the process are to track the progress of the reverse-transfer students to determine the effect on retention at UMass Boston, and, in tandem with the UMass Boston Academic Advising Office, for each community college to design a checklist of course equivalencies so that UMass Boston advisors can facilitate the attainment of

the associate's degree. One intriguing issue that has been raised in the discussions around reverse-transfer has been the possibility of even closer partnerships between the community colleges and the university in the design of majors. Many possibilities for collaboration open up once the community colleges see the university courses as potentially part of the community college curriculum. What if community colleges could offer degrees that actually depended on courses that they could not teach but their partner four-year institution could? What if community colleges offered majors that relied on the student spending his or her last semester at the four-year institution and then transferring those credits back to complete the associate's degree? Once reverse-transfer opens up as a possibility, both higher education institutions can start thinking in even bigger ways about the partnership possibilities.

The benefits of reverse-transfer are clear: higher graduation rates at community colleges, increased lifetime earnings for students who attain associate's degrees, potential increased retention at UMass Boston (especially among students for whom the associate's is the first degree in the family), more loyalty, and better partnership relationships between community colleges and UMass Boston. The campus is looking forward to extending the reverse-transfer agreement to all the community colleges in the Boston area and to seeing what new opportunities open up as a result.

College Town Developments

Julie Buehler

This project was designed to explore collaborations between higher education leaders and developers to create and/or grow college towns. Most college town initiatives are located within walking distance to campus and are built to improve service offerings to campus and/or offer economic growth to the local community. College town developments can include retail stores; bars and restaurants; living quarters for faculty, staff, and students; performance space; and a growing number are now offering retirement facilities. In fact, over four hundred such campus-associated retirement facilities are currently underway in the United States.

College costs are rising, communities are suffering from poor economic conditions, and scrutiny about government support of higher education is gaining momentum. At the same time, for-profit education offerings are growing contributions in visible ways to communities by increasing tax payments. Nonprofit leaders need to find new ways to provide value and communicate their positive impact to the communities in which they operate.

College town developments may create a helpful financial option by providing communities a source of new revenue while increasing the availability of goods and services. Under a variety of financing plans and leasing agreements, even cash-strapped institutions can add services and improve local economic conditions by leveraging relationships with, and funding from, for-profit developers.

The University of Rochester (UR), is particularly interested in engaging the Rochester, New York, community in a college town development initiative. Over the past twenty years, the local economy has suffered significantly from the decline in area manufacturing, most notably from significant employment declines from the Eastman Kodak Company. The University of Rochester recently became the largest employer in the region and the sixth largest private employer in New York State. As such, the institution's new role in the local economy and community relations is being redefined and growing in significance. A college town development initiative could potentially enable UR to gain better services at the same time it invests in the campus neighborhood, and hopefully further building upon community relationships and goodwill.

Findings from this project include:

- No single way exists to start, estimate, and evaluate college town projects. Most institutions follow their established budget practices.
- The concept for a college town can be proposed from either a college or a developer.
- External consultants are often utilized to flesh out design options and costs and to assess potential economic impact.
- Successful college town efforts must involve early discussions and engagement with the local community and neighborhood groups. Needs and desires need to be fleshed out to make the new development a good fit for the specific environment.
- When new jobs are created or neighborhoods revitalized, grants and or tax breaks are often available to institutions. Local government entities can prove helpful in overcoming potential issues such as traffic changes required during the construction period.

College town development efforts are not challenge-free. Some examples of reported issues included mixed neighborhood reactions about development in general or the type of development, questions about the sustainability of local businesses outside of the college town area, inability of developers to fill cornerstone retail stores, difficulties with storefront vacancies over time, issues in handling student security/policy concerns off the main campus, complaints about the quality of residences, limited access to on-site campus services, and environmental challenges.

As of the date of this submission, UR has engaged a development partner and is in the planning stage of their college town development initiative and hopes to launch the project within the next few years. President Joel Seligman hailed the progress to date. "Our College Town project has tremendous potential, not only to enhance the quality of life for the university community, but also to serve as a catalyst for the continuing revitalization of the neighborhoods on both sides of the university." The current vision includes retail stores, office and residential space, a conference center, a YMCA site,

and a transit center. Local neighborhood groups and government agencies continue to serve as key partners on this important initiative.

Business and Collegiate Partnerships: Requirements for Engagement and Economic Development

Clarenda M. Phillips

Universities and the communities within which they exist have long been concerned about the impact they have on each other. While some have boasted of positive and healthy relationships, others have attempted to sustain tolerable associations with their neighbors. However, over the past decade, policy-makers and representatives from the public and private sectors have ramped up their efforts to create mutually beneficial partnerships between universities and their communities. In this “new normal” era, university-community partnerships are necessary to accomplish goals that are in the best interest of all.

University-community partnerships have the potential to increase economic development, create sustainable communities, and improve civic engagement. These partnerships can take the form of student volunteerism, service learning, service provision, applied research, workforce development, and economic development. Although partnership opportunities may appear limitless, the resources of prospective partners are not. Regardless of varying organizational size and capabilities, each organization must be allowed to contribute and benefit from the relationship. In order to sustain momentum and interest, short- and long-term goals must be established.

Opportunity Greensboro is a business and collegiate partnership initiative of Action Greensboro which started in 2001 when six community foundations united to address the changing economy of the Greensboro, North Carolina area. Action Greensboro’s mission is to build a stronger economy through creativity and innovation with a current emphasis on four main areas: enhancing public schools; attracting, retaining, and engaging young professionals; revitalizing the center city; and leveraging the assets created by Greensboro’s seven colleges and universities. Opportunity Greensboro is the name given to that fourth area of emphasis. Launched in 2010, it is a partnership between the business community and the seven public, private, and community colleges in Greensboro.

The leadership of Opportunity Greensboro is comprised of fourteen business leaders and the seven college/university presidents. The focus is on identifying (and acting on) opportunities to transform the educational strengths and assets into commercial success with the goal of creating a competitive advantage for business growth and improving the livability of the city. Opportunity Greensboro offers a model for business-collegiate partnerships. In particular, the organization evidenced seven key

requirements for a successful partnership: communication, goals and outcomes, simplicity, synergy, organizational complementarity, resources, and visibility.

Communication. Although technology provides avenues for distance meetings, high-quality partnerships are developed through formal, face-to-face meetings where expectations are discussed, problems and solutions are identified, and goals and objectives are developed and assigned. One expectation established in Opportunity Greensboro's bimonthly meetings is that leadership team members cannot send a designee or representative; members must attend in person. This ensures that communication and assignments occur between team members with actual organizational authority. In discussing various roadblocks, team members briefly discuss the issues and then identify possible solutions with someone from the group taking responsibility for removing each roadblock. Before each meeting concludes, team members are assigned objectives or tasks to complete prior to the next meeting with the expectation that they will come prepared to share the results. This encourages accountability for consistent progress toward partnership goals.

Goals and Outcomes. Establishing partnership goals and outcomes is necessary so that the effectiveness of the partnership can be tracked over time, adjustments can be made, and accomplishments celebrated. Within the Opportunity Greensboro partnership, the team members identified seven broad goals based on the strengths of the colleges and universities. From these seven goals, they developed measurable outcomes for two areas: entrepreneurship and diversity. Each outcome listed under the two areas included a completion timeline, all pertinent resources, and the team members responsible.

Simplicity. Because productivity and efficiency are hallmarks of a successful partnership, all partners must operate with the same goals and objectives in mind. The large investment of resources (e.g., time, energy, and money) requires that partners identify ways to streamline processes and maximize impact. For these reasons, Opportunity Greensboro limits the bimonthly meetings to ninety minutes, which encourages partners to come to meetings prepared to be productive. Additionally, Opportunity Greensboro implements very few goals at a time. By keeping the processes simple, Opportunity Greensboro is able to measure and track its outcomes in a way that keeps all partners aware of the primary goal.

Synergy. Ideally all members of a partnership should be similar enough that synergy occurs easily. However, all partnerships much adopt an operating approach that reflects all members of the partnership. In the case of Opportunity Greensboro, a bridge was created between the business culture and the higher education culture. For example, because businesses usually work on faster timelines with the CEOs having the authority to enact decisions quickly and higher education institutions work on slower timelines to allow for shared governance, Opportunity Greensboro develops timelines that promote cooperation among all partners. Therefore, synergy is created by negotiating cultural differences and adopting practices that reflect group consensus.

Organizational Complementarity. A partnership should be mutually beneficial to all those involved. Organizational complementarity is created when all partners are treated as equals and when all partners agree that all other partners are necessary to accomplish the goals. Achieving organizational complementarity might have proved challenging for Opportunity Greensboro given the mix of partners (e.g., public and private higher education institutions, Fortune 500 corporations, and community foundations); however, the overall goal of improving Greensboro's livability allowed very different types of partners to unite with a recognition that they could accomplish more together than they could separately. The business community realized that it benefited from having the higher education institutions as partners, and the higher education institutions appreciated that the business community gave them a voice in developing solutions. To reflect this complementarity, when work groups are created within Opportunity Greensboro, there is equal representation from business leaders and higher education leaders.

Resources. Every member of a partnership has a resource it can leverage. While some may have expertise and know-how, others may have the facilities or political connections needed to accomplish the objectives. In addition, financial resources are crucial to the success of a partnership. Within Opportunity Greensboro, every partner is expected to contribute resources. While the businesses may have more financial resources to contribute, the higher education institutions also are expected to contribute to the financial health of the partnership. The Opportunity Greensboro leadership acknowledges (with sensitivity) that all partners may not have the financial resources to be able to give equally because of organizational structure or size. However, partners are recognized for what other resources (e.g., facilities) they have to offer in addition to their financial commitment.

Visibility. In order to sustain momentum, all partnerships benefit from positive publicity. Positive publicity has the potential to garner buy-in from communities, especially when those communities are given opportunities to participate in the initiatives and programs of the partnership. In order to increase its visibility, Opportunity Greensboro hired a marketing consultant to develop its brand and logo. The Opportunity Greensboro logo can now be seen on regional billboards, participating partners' websites, and national and regional publications. Additionally, the young professionals network (SynerG) of Action Greensboro is designing a community-wide fitness event and fun run.

In sum, when it comes to business and collegiate partnerships, the key to effective collaborations is creating a context where businesses and universities can work together to solve common problems—problems that cannot be solved by one partner alone but require the cooperation of all parties to achieve success. Success is determined by the accomplishment of shared goals with all partners being equally valued for what they bring to the partnership.

Conclusion

ACE Fellows study many major higher education challenges and are granted access to a broad range of leaders to better understand ways those challenges are being addressed. The examples above provide a glimpse of how some leaders are using collaborations to achieve new results even during a tight economy. Across the different cases, common themes emerged: leaders defined and communicated their vision, collaborations extended beyond traditional boundaries to achieve new levels of success, and challenges were overcome with persistence and creativity. Perhaps the most important takeaways, as we consider the cases as a whole, are that collaborations can increase institutions' capacity when intentions are aligned and higher education leaders are open to new ways of working.

In all our Fellowship projects, we observed that through intentional partnerships, new levels of accomplishments can be achieved for the good of both higher education institutions and their communities.

Author Information

Sandra Haynes, PhD, has served as the Dean of Professional Studies at Metropolitan State College of Denver for the past seven years. She served as an ACE Fellow at Colorado State University in 2010–2011.

Paula M. Krebs is the Special Assistant to the President for External Relations at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, where she works on campus-community relations. She served as an ACE Fellow in the University of Massachusetts President's Office and on the university's Boston campus in 2010–2011.

Julie Buehler is Deputy Chief Information Officer at the University of Rochester where she regularly collaborates with the university community and business partners to develop strategies and implement organization-wide technology programs. She served as an ACE Fellow at Rochester Institute of Technology in 2010–2011.

Clarenda Phillips is the Chair of the Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminology at Morehead State University. She served as an ACE Fellow at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro in 2010–2011.

Sandra Haynes
School of Professional Studies
Metropolitan State College of Denver
Campus Box 8
P. O. Box 173662
Denver, CO 80220
E-mail: hayness@mscd.edu
Telephone: 303-556-2978
Fax: 303-556-2159

Paula M. Krebs
Special Assistant to the President for External Relations
Wheaton College
26 E. Main Street
Norton, MA 02766
E-mail: pkrebs@wheatonma.edu
Telephone: 508-286-3610
Fax: 508-286-8270

Julie Buehler
Deputy Chief Information Officer
University of Rochester
Taylor Hall, Room 20
P. O. Box 270197
Rochester, NY 14601
E-mail: julie.buehler@rochester.edu
Telephone: 585-273-4740

Clarenda Phillips
Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminology
Morehead State University
3670 Walden Drive
Lexington, KY 40517
E-mail: c.phillips@moreheadstate.edu
Telephone: 606-783-2434