

HUD'S University Partnerships:

HUD Shapes a New Role as Partner with Universities in Rebuilding Urban America

The American city today contains at once the glories and the horrors of contemporary life, the highest achievements in science, the arts, business, and other fields that our society attains, and the thriving drug markets and killing zones that even police have come to fear. Many urban universities and colleges throughout the country know these conditions well, contributing strongly to the former and suffering the latter.

These schools are located near or are otherwise affected by one of the more significant and persistent problems in this society: the chronically distressed, increasingly dangerous, and seemingly discarded neighborhoods that can be found in virtually all urban centers. These are the neighborhoods of hopelessness and despair, where poverty, ill health, and crime combine with broken families, high unemployment, and a disintegrated social structure.

Scores of universities and colleges are now moving to do something about this situation, using resources that are right in their own backyard. These schools are forming partnerships with local govern-

ment, businesses, civic clubs and nonprofit agencies, community-based organizations, and citizen groups to launch multidisciplinary programs to rebuild neighborhoods. The institutions of higher learning contribute knowledge of state-of-the-art approaches and best practice in program design and implementation, high expertise in obtaining key information to support decisionmaking, access to critical disciplines throughout the school, students ready to pitch in and work, and political power and prestige. That's a lot to bring to the table, along with the readiness of many schools to contribute these resources to a partnership.

How HUD embarked on a vigorous program to support these activities is instructive. In 1994, Secretary Henry G. Cisneros, a noted scholar and student of urban affairs, directed the HUD Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), which I head, to explore the possibility of encouraging departmental support of university work in neighborhood action programs. The Secretary told us to bring together all the HUD programs we had that involved institutions of higher learning — one had existed for twenty-five years — and join them with new programs authorized by Congress. These programs were functioning, but staff were not informed about current issues in higher learning, did not follow the semester calendar, and were not especially sensitive to administrative and other needs of the schools.

The only exception to this assembly of programs was HUD's long-standing program to support Historic Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), which has been administered for many years by the Office of Community Planning and Development.

Bringing together existing and new programs opened exciting possibilities; universities have long supplied HUD with leadership, ideas, research, and technical assistance in the field. Now there was a chance for HUD to act as a catalyst to encourage urban department heads and faculty across the country to engage in community-building. Much to our surprise, and pleasantly so, the wave of proposals that soon arrived demonstrated substantial activity already under way in academe. Instead of the federal government being the catalyst, it quickly became clear that the department should support a movement already in motion. We quickly saw the potential of the partnerships. With this formative background, the Office of University Partnerships at HUD is now entering its second year of grantmaking. The sense of reality that we gained has guided our thinking about the office and the role that it ought to play both in the department, and with respect to the relation-

ship with universities and colleges. We found that the Secretary was right in his intuitive feeling that universities and communities have a critical set of relationships and that HUD can help to further those relationships; we learned, however, that HUD is not — and should not be — the leader in this common effort, in which schools and communities will lead.

We have learned a lot since then: that partnerships between universities and communities can be more highly productive, that they have great potential for the physical revitalization of communities. We have learned that interest and activity in this area are very high, but that universities are not connecting with each other as much as they might. A need exists not only for the collection and dissemination of best practices and replicable models, but also for a sharing of information, experiences, and expertise. We have come to believe that the Office of University Partnerships ought to expand its role in facilitating that interchange, and build on such mechanisms as Internet and other advanced communications technologies.

The University Partnership Initiative

HUD's University Partnership Initiative is intended to:

- Recognize, reward, and build upon proven examples of how universities can take an active part in the revitalization of their own communities;
- Help create the next generation of urban practitioners, community-builders, and scholars; and
- Help grantees link up with each other, and any university or college to link up with HUD and other federal agencies to reach
- HUD's goals for engaging institutions of higher learning in community-building.

In metropolitan areas all over the United States, institutions of higher learning are fashioning partnerships and undertaking initiatives that are likely to work in turning distressed communities toward participation in mainstream economic life. Faculty, students, and administrators from these schools are joining with local participants to:

- Raise security and lower the risk of crime in an effort to attract new businesses and jobs;
- Start training programs to prepare local residents for today's jobs in other area industries that need workers; and

- Link schools with work opportunities, recognizing the need for good health, affordable housing, and transportation from home to job.

These activities take faculty members beyond their traditional roles as teacher, researcher, and evaluator. The activities also exemplify the contemporary multidisciplinary approach to problem solving.

Community Outreach Partnership Center Program

Congress established an outreach program in 1992 to tap university applied research and technical expertise for community rebuilding. HUD helps single schools and consortia set up centers on or nearby campus and form partnerships with local government, businesses, community-based organizations, foundations, nonprofit service providers, and other collaborators. The partnerships then mount intense, focused efforts to revitalize their communities.

Among the latest group of grantees, for example, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (with a grant of \$500,000) has joined with two historically black colleges, Miles College and Lawson State Community College, to launch a comprehensive effort to improve the quality of life in a distressed neighborhood, Titusville. The effort includes crime prevention, economic development, neighborhood revitalization, infrastructure rebuilding, community organizing, job training, and regrowth of recreation, culture, and the arts.

Marshall University (\$500,000) is working in six neighborhoods in its hometown of Huntington, West Virginia, which is one of HUD's Enterprise Communities. Activities include matching volunteers with skills needed in the community, drafting a plan to redevelop the central business district, identifying barriers to business development and expansion, evaluating current policing, and training community leaders.

The University of Illinois is working in East St. Louis, Illinois, another Enterprise Community, to expand planning and organization for community organizations in given neighborhoods; expand a neighborhood college for leaders of nonprofit agencies; establish neighborhood technical assistance center for community groups and small minority- and woman-owned businesses; and research ways to maximize housing and other opportunities in neighborhoods facing significant losses in population.

As a last example, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, in partnership

with Milwaukee Area Technical College, is focusing on two neighborhoods in the city's Enterprise Community. Activities include launching a long-term fundraising plan for a new community-wide economic development council; creating a resource center with resident-designed programs; providing housing design services; providing information to the Fair Lending Council to ascertain community credit needs; and creating a community fellows program with action learning laboratories designed and run by local residents for their own benefit and for the personal and professional development of volunteers and employees of neighborhood organizations.

In the first grant cycle, last fall, HUD awarded grants to 14 universities and colleges, with several more involved as partners in consortia. Grantees varied in size from large landgrant universities to small colleges, but most were located in urban centers. HUD awarded grants of up to \$580,000, distributed over two years, which the recipients usually matched.

In the second cycle, HUD encouraged the formation of consortia composed of universities, colleges and junior, technical, or community colleges. HUD wanted to extend its outreach to include such schools, and this method of doing so worked well.

PD&R is planning a large conference this fall to bring together partners involved in university-community collaborations schools, governments, neighborhood-based organizations, and private-sector interests. The conference will explore ways for universities to expand their community revitalization efforts.

For all practical purposes, this program is already self sustaining. Current grantees, for example, have secured financing commitments many times in excess of HUD funding as a result of receiving the grant. Not only can universities and colleges leverage financial support, but as conveners and collaborators, they can leverage tremendous intellectual resources. Scores of institutions are engaged in these activities without HUD's support, but HUD can nonetheless be useful in helping schools at the margin to form their centers and then attract funds from other sources.

Joint Community Development Center Program

The Secretary thinks that universities and colleges can add a great deal to the biggest, most powerful, and most popular HUD program: the \$4.6 billion Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The institutions bring unique assets to the CDBG program: skills and expertise not otherwise available to

CDBG grantees; students, who expand the range of participants; and significant financial resources, which most institutions of higher learning have.

Congress has provided the vehicle for this effort: the Joint Community Development Center program offers grants of up to \$3 million to institutions of higher learning to undertake special purpose activities under CDBG. The idea is to get universities and colleges involved with their local governments in tackling difficult tasks, such as building job training capacities in distressed neighborhoods and attracting new business there.

By the end of September, HUD will award \$12 million (in grants of \$2 million to \$3 million each) to four or five grantees to establish centers from which they will mount their community revitalization action programs.

HUD envisions university or college grantees that might collaborate with nonprofit community development corporations and for-profit lending firms. The collaboration would seek opportunities to strengthen the metropolitan or regional economy. The schools would train workers, industry councils would be approached to help find jobs, and business partners would take the lead in placing program graduates in work positions.

Another kind of approach would see a community college launching a business incubator with integral links to larger local universities, businesses, and government. The college would offer an associate degree curriculum that would tie students directly to the workforce needs of private sector partners. The universities would supply R&D, and other partners would chip in with various forms of support.

Based on interest shown in applications for these grants, HUD strongly expects the centers to remain in business for years to come. The HUD grants last from two to five years, and awards were made partly on the basis of applications that showed a strong likelihood of long-term sustainability.

Preparing Urban Scholars and Community Development Leaders

Metropolitan development in the future, at the regional, city, and neighborhood levels, will require the services of talented, highly trained individuals with wide vision and keen appreciation for the role of private enterprise in generating economic activity. Yet a shortage exists of precisely these kinds of people. Rebuilding distressed communities will require men and women who understand how to raise funds from multiple sources, how to layer subsidies, how to obtain HUD-owned properties or those available through fore-

closures or bankruptcies.

Unlike many of their predecessors, who focused on the role of government in urban development, the front-line community rebuilders of tomorrow must meet different if equally high standards. The metropolitan planners, program designers, governors of community-based organizations, and others in the process of community-rebuilding must be skilled in:

- Building successful collaborations of federal, state, and local governments; businesses; private foundations and nonprofit agencies; and education, health, and recreation managers;
- Leveraging funds in innovative ways from disparate sources, and gaining commitments of local businesses to sustain rebuilding efforts; and
- Working effectively with a wide range of political and social interest groups and the media to ensure that the message of rebuilding is communicated successfully.

HUD has long been committed to preparing the next generation of leaders both in urban scholarship and community development. The department created its first program in this area a quarter-century ago, and now adds two more important initiatives to support schools and students in relevant pursuits.

Community Development Work Study Program

Minority and economically disadvantaged students are severely underrepresented in professional fields associated with community development. To help remedy this situation, and to draw on the enormous talents and energies of young men and women who may come from the very neighborhoods that need rebuilding, HUD operates the oldest of the grant programs in the University Partnerships cluster, the Work Study Program, now in its twenty-fifth year. With annual funding of \$3 million, HUD funds approximately 100 new students each year so that they can pursue graduate work in housing, economic revitalization, and other critical aspects of rebuilding neighborhoods and communities. A few undergraduates participate and are paid a stipend of up to \$9,000 a year, which HUD pays to the university on behalf of the student.

Most students entering this program come from neighborhoods characterized by high levels of poverty and predominantly minority populations.

They exhibit outstanding academic abilities and skills and have prepared themselves for professional careers in public service, community development, and allied fields but lack the resources to enter the right kinds of programs. HUD's Community Development Work Study Program gives them that opportunity.

This program is a key means for American society to produce the next generation of community-development professionals, and it is paying off handsomely. "Graduates" of work study can be found in planning offices of municipal governments, leadership positions in community-based organizations, and important posts in state and county governments. While in their work-study activities, incidentally, these students also provide direct benefits to their communities by working in community-based organizations and serving as interns in local government agencies. Thus, many of them come from that same community, perform their work-study there, and then go to work there on a permanent basis.

In the Washington, D.C., area, for example, graduates of the program run by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (WashCOG), a frequent recipient of program funds now include the administrative services director and a policy analyst in the D.C. government; a planner in the Fairfax, Virginia, Department of Comprehensive Planning; a community development construction specialist in the City of Takoma Park, Maryland; and a human services planner in WashCOG.

Doctoral Dissertation Research

Scholarship can undergird public policy with sound concepts and valuable lessons from the past. To ensure a steady stream of well-trained academic and public policy scholars, PD&R has initiated a program that competitively awards up to fifteen dissertation grants to eligible candidates in accredited schools each year. The grants enable the students to complete their research and dissertations on housing and urban development subjects. The grants are for \$15,000 for unrestricted use.

The grants are intended to attract top-flight students into the housing and urban development fields, stimulate imaginative research and creative thinking by fresh, young intellects, and provide a venue for new scholars to share research findings.

Now in its second year, the dissertation research program has already underwritten work by 30 doctoral candidates. Their research covers a wide

range of subjects of interest to public policymakers and private business and nonprofit leaders. For example, a student at the State University of New York is examining the roles of individual experience and social policy in creating barriers and opportunities for homeless populations. Another student at Pennsylvania State University is analyzing the impact of state designed enterprise zones on local employment, income, and poverty trends. And a student at Howard University is examining the underlying factors of “hard to reach” welfare clients and their participation in self-sufficiency programs.

Community Renaissance Fellow Program

People working in community transformation now look at problem solving in the most comprehensive terms. The days of focusing just on bricks-and-mortar approaches are gone, at least in cutting-edge operations. Community renewal is now viewed in terms of comprehensive approaches that embrace housing, health, education, crime reduction, and job training and job creation, etc.

But a substantial shortage exists in human resources in expertise in designing and implementing these comprehensive approaches. Not one university in the country, to my knowledge, trains community-builders, seeks out visionaries, finds the people who understand the connections that work across many areas in the community, perhaps because it has not been the traditional task of higher education to identify tomorrow’s street-level entrepreneurs and community organizers, the men and women who intuitively spot opportunities for a locale, glue together the ingredients of a winning coalition, and produce outcomes that genuinely change the place for the better.

If it is not a traditional task of higher education, however, then it should become one in the near future. HUD wants to work with higher education institutions to train young professionals who have been working in housing, real estate, planning, social welfare, and other pursuits. In many cases, these young people already have advanced degrees in business, architecture, social services, or public administration; they are already launched in careers aimed at improving communities, but they have blinders on their eyes: they lack formal backgrounds or experience to work most effectively in comprehensive community building.

HUD wants to place sixty of these people with the most advanced community-transformation activities across the country, the places where radical transformation is taking place in public housing, in the most distressed com-

munities. We would like to place these people for two years at professional salaries to gain experience in community-building and transformation.

The program should have a central place to convene three or four times a year, and to bring in the best faculty and practitioners from across the country to increase participants' formal knowledge of law, finance, architecture, social welfare, and other subjects. The participants can also share experiences and take their new knowledge back to their sites.

This is another kind of partnerships that the department is contemplating with universities, foundations, local governments, and neighborhood organizations that are actually engaged in efforts to transform communities.

University-Community Partnerships Are Here to Stay

Activity in university partnerships aimed at community-rebuilding is now so widespread and well-rooted that it seems likely to continue. And it seems likely to have positive outcomes for both distressed neighborhoods and institutions of higher learning. Certainly HUD expects these results, and intends to maintain its support of the partnerships.

The Office of University Partnerships can provide support in three critical ways. First, it can supply catalyzing grant funds that will help universities and colleges to launch long-lasting initiatives in community rebuilding. This effort should add significantly to the resources the country is devoting to the renewal of the American urban center.

Second, the Office can continue programs to educate and train the next generation of urban scholars and community development leaders. These programs have already paid handsome dividends for the nation in terms of ensuring a steady flow of new talent and energy into the human capital required for community-building.

Third, the office can help grantees to link up with each other, and it can help all universities and colleges to link up with HUD and other federal agencies to reach HUD's goals for using institutions of higher learning. The office can act as a clearinghouse to ensure that current and potential partners know about each other's best practices and solutions to problems. It can widely disseminate the experiences of the core grantees. And it can help universities and colleges to understand HUD's program structure, and to locate federal resources available in other agencies for community rehabilitation projects. That is, the office can shepherd institutions through the federal process, a function that is likely to be particularly valuable in these times of such funda-

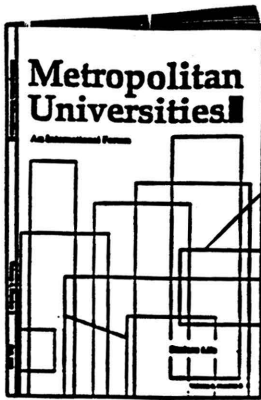
mental change in Washington.

For example, the office can help respond to requests such as the one we recently received from a university in the Midwest. In the university's neighborhood some distressed, vacant, multi-family housing insured and subsidized by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), is part of HUD. The school is considering the property for a dormitory, but has no idea who owns it or how to go about making an offer for it. The Office of University Partnerships can provide quick access to the FHA and its field office.

Outlook for the Initiative

HUD's Office of University Partnerships is now fully in business, and it fits well with Secretary Cisneros's plan to reinvent HUD into a slimmer, more streamlined organization that administers a few large, consolidated grant programs that are based on performance, rather than the current structure of more than sixty categorical programs. The Secretary's reinvention plan is gaining high marks on both sides of the aisle in Congress.

HUD's experience with university partnerships has already gone far in making it a better partner with schools, as part of Secretary Cisneros's larger goal of making HUD a better partner with urban America.



Metropolitan Universities

*The Quarterly Journal of
The Coalition of Urban
and Metropolitan Universities*

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**Published for the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities
by Towson State University and the University of Massachusetts at Boston
Business Office: 8000 York Road, Towson MD 21204. (410) 830-3468.**