

# Community Partner Views on:

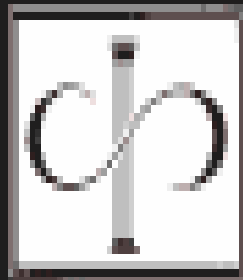
- Questions to ask in entering community-university partnerships
- Assessing the benefits, costs, and risks of partnerships
- The importance of *parity* in partnerships
- Partnership process and project issues
- What needs to be in place before you start a partnership
- core elements of good partnerships

# **BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH COLLEGE CAMPUSES: COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES**

by Sally Leiderman, Andrew Furco,  
Jennifer Zapf and Megan Goss



A Publication of the Consortium for the  
Advancement of Private Higher Education's  
Engaging Communities and Campuses  
Grant Program



THE COUNCIL OF  
INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

# Community Perspectives Study

- Data were collected from 19 leaders within community organizations partnering with 13 private colleges and universities in the “Engaging Communities and Campuses Program”
- Data was collected in a two-day summit in which community partners were asked to discuss their partnering experiences, the challenges of partnering, and ways to generate more successful partnerships

# Three Issues Community Partners Felt Must be Fully Addressed

- how community partners weigh the **costs and benefits of partnering** with higher education institutions
- the influence of **parity** on community members' attitudes toward their campus partners
- the importance of follow-through for **building sustainable partnerships**

# Questions for Community Partners Considering Participation in a Community/Campus Partnership:

- How well does this participation align with our broader goals for partnering with campuses?
- To what extent will these activities contribute to achieving our organization's mission, or improving outcomes for the constituencies to we hold ourselves accountable?

- What is the risk or potential harm of engagement, in terms of our organization's credibility, ability to produce high-quality services and products, and our ability to maintain respectful and trusting relationships with community residents?
- What are the actual and opportunity costs of participation in terms of time, money, redirected staff resources and foregone relationships, activities, and opportunities?

# What do Community Partners See as the Benefits of Partnering with Colleges and Universities?

- further advancement of the community organization's mission
- new perspectives and insights sparked by interaction with students, faculty members, and other campus partners
- access to knowledge and research on campus, and from campus partners

- expanded resource base
- grant opportunities
- credibility for their own efforts among the other benefits of affiliating with an institution of higher education
- exposure to the possibility of higher education (through interaction with students and campuses)

# Benefits of Partnership to Colleges and Universities:

- further advancement of a campus's civic mission
- growth in student understanding and potential for informed citizenship
- opportunities to learn new skills and acquire new tools
- in the long run, increased civic action by students as they become adults.

# Risks and Costs to Community of Partnering with Universities

- the community partner is lending its credibility within a community to the campus
- the time it takes to create work, supervise volunteers, or participate in research
- the opportunity cost of not doing funded or billable work using the same staff resources
- the time lost that could be spent working with other constituencies (a board, donors, or other partners)

- loss of organizational identity and privacy
- the “irritation factor,” when organizational staff members are not treated as experts and peers by campus partners and students, and when parity is not demonstrated in the way things are planned and decisions are made

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PARITY

*For community partners, issues of parity—actual and perceived—are always part of a partnership, even if they are not addressed overtly.*

*Community partners particularly value campus partners who recognize and address these issues.*

# What are the Indicators of Parity?

- campus and community partners are interested in creating long-term relationships to produce meaningful change in community outcomes
- there are processes and staff that distribute authority and funds across community and campus partners
- there are issue or advocacy alliances, including the willingness of a campus to “step-up” in settings other than the partnership in support of a community driven agenda
- there is a welcoming of community partners onto campus in roles normally reserved for faculty members, such as co-teaching, curriculum design,

# Factors that Influence Community Partner Decisions to Enter a Partnership:

- ***Established infrastructure.*** The presence of, for example, a coordinating entity and sufficient staffing to handle the scope and scale of the community engagement work.
- ***Administrative buy-in and support.*** The level of sustained administrative interest and visible leadership in community engagement

- ***History of town/gown relationship.*** The quality of prior experiences in working with the local higher education community
- ***Trust and accountability.*** Whether or not partners have discussed and begun to work through issues of mutual trust and ongoing accountability
- ***Clear goals and expectations.*** Clear expectations about who will prepare students (and faculty members) for community engagement activities

# What are the Core Elements of Effective Partnerships?

- there is a set of mutually determined goals and processes, including processes to select and train people who will come into contact with a community organization or community residents
- resources, rewards, and risks are shared among all partners

- the established roles and responsibilities are based on each partner's particular capacities and resources
- the partnership is built on membership parity that acknowledges and respects the expertise and experience of each community partner, faculty member, and staff participant
- there are sufficient benefits (short or longterm) to each partner to justify the costs, level of effort, and potential risks of participation

- the members of the partnership have a shared vision that is built on genuine excitement and passion for the issues at hand
- there is a system of accountability that covers responsibility for carrying out jointly determined plans, ensuring that high-quality work is produced
- the members of the partnership are committed to ensuring that each partnership member benefits from his or her participation

**Community Involvement in  
Partnerships with Educational  
Institutions, Medical Centers, and  
Utility Companies**

**by Karen Fulbright-Anderson, Patrician  
Auspos, and Andrea Anderson**

**paper prepared by the Aspen Institute Roundtable  
on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for the  
Annie Casey Foundation, January 2001**

# Purpose

- to document and assess the experiences of *communities* that participate in community-university, medical, public utility partnerships
- using community-based organizations as principal data source (32 CBO directors; organizations involved in community improvement or revitalization)

# Reported benefits of Partnerships

- access to technical skills and information
- services of students and faculty of professional schools
- inclusion on advisory committees at the anchor institution
- shared decision-making and goal setting, mandate or mission to address problems identified, and formal structure for on-going problem-solving and action
- empowerment/capacity building model

# Process Concerns

- direct or indirect involvement of upper management from anchor institutions important
- institutionalized commitment necessary
- relationships with those who control the resources
- funding must allow sufficient space and time to engage the community adequately
- different cultures and resources can present challenges to development and maintenance of productive partnerships
  - often have unpleasant history
  - need significant investment in trust building before the “real work” can begin

# Process concerns, cont.

- problems when not on the same timetable
- slow pace of moving programs through university bureaucracy in face of community sense of urgency
- importance of being explicit about expectations of partnership, vigilant in managing expectations, and skilled in handling conflicts
- difficulties with power differences
  - community organizing can help level the playing field
  - bring other community groups into the partnership
  - diversify resources so not so reliant on funds from anchor institution

# Types of Projects Undertaken

- Partnership must have a substantive plan and specific activities around which to build a relationship (beyond “capacity building” and “community building”)
- Types of projects undertaken included
  - improved access to health care
  - increased educational opportunities
  - addressed neighborhood safety issues
  - improve neighborhood retail markets, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for residents

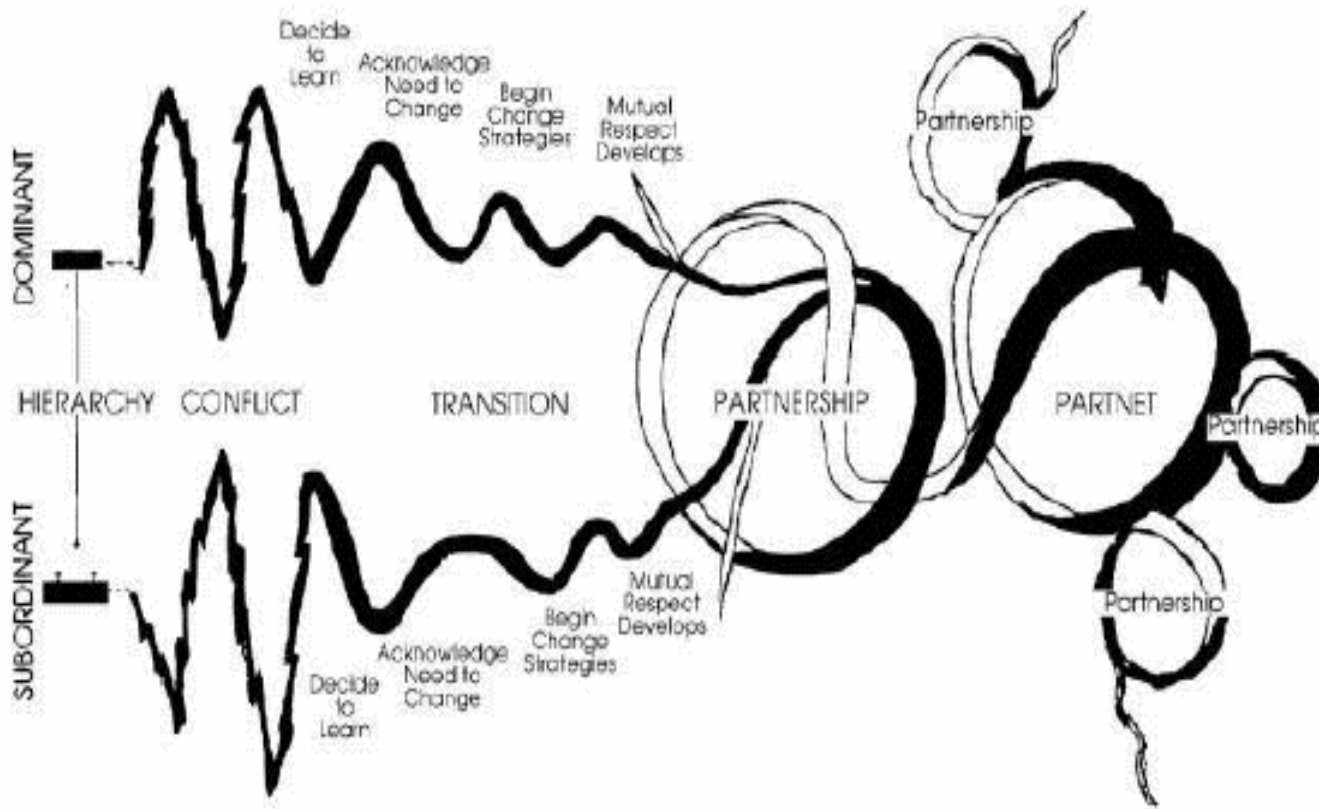
# Limitations of Partnerships

- concern about the sustainability of a partnership when it was dependent on individuals and not “institutionalized”
- difficulty in sustaining partnership without having targeted, on-going funding (COPC grant funded university work raised this concern)
- difficulty getting anchor institutions to alter their internal operational practices in ways that can benefit community development

Fulbright-Anderson, Karen, Patrician Auspos, and Andrea Anderson, *Community Involvement in Partnerships with Educational Institutions, Medical Centers, and Utility Companies*, paper prepared by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for the Annie Casey Foundation, January 2001

Leiderman, Sally, Andrew Furco, Jennifer Zapf, Megan Goss, 2003. *Building Partnerships with College Campuses: Community Perspectives*, Washington, DC: Council of Independent Colleges: Consortium for the Advancement of Private Education's Engaging Communities and Campuses Grant Program

Nye, Nancy, and Richard Schramm, 2001. *Building Higher Education-Community Development Corporation Partnerships*, Washington, DC: HUD Office of University Partnerships



*Figure 2 – From Hierarchy to Partnership/Partnet*

Source: Kellogg Partnerships Report (2000)