



Community Partner Peer Mentoring

June 4, 2007

INTRODUCTION

The Engaged Institutions Initiative (EII) Conference Teleconference, *Community Partner Peer Mentoring*, was designed specifically for community members who have participated in EII activities as individuals or representatives from grassroots or community-based organizations. The call aim was to provide a supportive atmosphere for networking and exploring effective strategies for working with academic partners. The call was moderated by CCPH consultants Ella Greene-Moton, Susan Gust and Andrea Corage Baden. CCPH consultants Elmer Freeman joined the moderators in planning for the call. For the teleconference agenda and planner biographies, please visit our website at www.ccpb.info.

BACKGROUND

1. COMMUNITY-CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS FOR HEALTH (CCPH)

Moderator: Ella Greene-Moton

Founded in 1996, CCPH is organized to foster partnerships between communities and higher educational institutions that build on each other's strengths and roles as change agents for improving health professions and education, civic responsibility and the overall health of communities. CCPH is the administrating organization for the Engaged Institutions Initiative. For more information on CCPH, please visit our website at www.ccpb.info.

2. ENGAGED INSTITUTIONS INITIATIVE (EII)

Moderator: Ella Greene-Moton

Funded by the WK Kellogg Foundation on their 75th Anniversary, the Engaged Institutions Initiative was aimed at developing the capacity of schools and programs of public health to engage with communities around reducing racial and ethnic health disparities. This teleconference was part of a series offered to EII as part of Initiative activities. For more information about the Kellogg Engaged Institutions Initiative, please visit <http://depts.washington.edu/ccpb/engaged-inst.html>.

3. COMMUNITY PARTNER SUMMIT (CPS)

Moderator: Susan Gust

Held at the Wingspread Conference Center, Wisconsin in 2006, the Community Partner Summit brought together community partners from around the country to share their experiences engaging with academic institutions. The conference was funded by the

The Engaged Institutions Initiative (EII) supports sustained efforts by schools and graduate programs of public health to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in partnership with communities. It is coordinated by Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) with core funding from the WK Kellogg Foundation. For more information, visit www.ccpb.info

Kellogg Foundation as a “companion” initiative to the Engaged Institutions Initiative. Following is a brief summary of topics discussed at the conference.

(For more information on the Community Partner Summit, check out the website at <http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/cps.html> . The site includes an executive summary of the Summit, community case stories of their experiences working with academic partners, and the Summit poster presented at last year's American Public Health Association Conference.)

Qualities of Authentic Partnerships

- Authentic partners talk not just about the work but what model the work is done in (e.g., model of shared power, social change) and that time must be devoted to developing that model.
- Authentic partnerships are based on individual relationships
- Authentic partnerships exhibit trust, honest, transparency, and a mutual benefit recognized by both the university and community.
- Authentic partnerships create a space where community partners are valued and compensated for their expertise.
- Authentic partnerships are not practiced widely and not understood well, particularly on the institution level.

Barriers to Authentic Partnerships

- Communities are not compensated. Rather the funding goes mainly to the institution, not the community partner organizations.
- Limited trust.
- The power structure is not considered
- Universities expect communities to speak in one voice, even though communities are made up of much diversity.

Community-Academic Partnerships are Important

- The partnership is one place where communities can hold universities (particularly public universities) accountable for sharing knowledge and resources that benefit communities.
- Sharing knowledge and information is a way communities can become healthy, empowered and come into their own.

DISCUSSION

Moderator: Ella Greene-Moton

Partnerships as social change – how to create change within the university

- Keep pressure on the university from community partners and other university “patrons” to pursue institutional change.
- Present the university with practical strategies for change.
- Frame change in regard to how it will positively affect the university. Need to identify those issues that an administrator will likely value, such as patron support.

- There needs to be frank and clear conversations around negotiable and non-negotiable issues, partnership expectations, where partners mesh and where they don't, so that the partnership can come up with viable action plan for working together.
- Capitalize on partnership successes, community need, external venues (e.g., the media), etc when building your case for institutional change.
- Institutional change is paramount for community-academic partnerships to be successful. Patience is required though, as the change process will not happen overnight.

Pursuing discussions around allocations of resources – how to start

- Begin with relationship building. One group started by creating opportunities for interacting in social situations in the community or academic institution. They also jointly engage in a planning session to explore collaboration benefits for each party.
- Topics for partnership discussions can include allocation of resources, allocation of power, impact of a partnership project on the community's or academic's status (among their peers and evaluators), and anticipated co-learning experiences.
- One coalition started their partnership dialogue by bringing academics into the community to discuss how to create an office for interns, faculty, located in the community. It's important to impress upon academic that just like there are expenses for universities, there are expenses for communities as well. Include community costs in grants. For example, if the community provides space for interns, etc, could the university grant cover some of the office costs and/or staffing. Ask how the university is going to embellish the community. It can't just be about the university or the PI. This type of frank discussion means the community needs to be open to the university needs as well.
- While it can be uncomfortable to talk about money and resource allocation, the sooner partners can have these conversations, the better in the long run. As a motivator for discussing things up front, communities might want to share prior experiences where these issues were not attended to in a satisfactory manner.
- It's important to document agreements in writing such as contracts, memorandum of understandings (see RESOURCES below for examples), etc. This is a way to create a formalized structure in the partnership.
- Communities have concerns about the historic power imbalance with academics. This can occur even under the best intentions when for instance academics view themselves as exclusively possessing the intellectual and material resources for the partnership and/or are motivated by the need to secure grants or promotion and tenure. Fortunately, examples now exist from which communities can learn to negotiate for parity from the start. As part of this, communities need to recognize the resources they're contributing to the partnership.

Entering and exiting a partnership

- Not all situations are amiable to partnership. It's OK to decline a partnership opportunity if it does not serve your organization's needs.
- Have discussions about when to end the partnership. If initially project based, will the partnership end with the project or will it continue or reconvene around other issues?