



# **Achieving Authentic Community-Higher Education Partnerships**

*By Mobilizing a National Network of  
Experienced Community Partners*



# Community Partner Summit: April 2006

Wingspread Conference Center, Racine, WI

**Purpose:** To advance authentic community-higher education partnerships by mobilizing a network of experienced community partners

**Sponsors:** Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, WK Kellogg Foundation, Johnson Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies

**Supporters:** Community-Based Public Health Caucus of the American Public Health Association, the National Community-Based Organization Network and the National Community Committee of the CDC Prevention Research Centers Program.



# Premises

*“We are here because we are passionate about these partnerships, but they are not working.”*

~ Ira SenGupta, Cross Cultural Health Care Program  
Seattle, WA



# Premises

1. Partnerships between communities and higher educational institutions as a strategy for social change are gaining recognition and momentum
2. Despite being formed with the best of intentions, authentic partnerships are very difficult to achieve and are not the norm
3. While academic partners have extensively documented their experiences and lessons learned, the voices of community partners are largely missing
4. If true partnerships are to be achieved, community partners must harness their own experiences, lessons learned, and collective wisdom into an organized effort



# Summit Agenda

What is the Current Reality of Community-Higher Education Partnerships?

- What's Working and Why?
- What's Not Working and Why?
- What's Holding Us Back?

What is our Vision for the Future of Community-Higher Education Partnerships?

- What Do We Mean by “Authentic” Partnerships?

How Can Community-Higher Education Partnerships More Fully Realize their Potential?

- What are our “Big Ideas” and Recommendations?

Where Do We Go From Here?



# Participants

\* denotes planning committee member

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**John Caranto**, Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team, Los Angeles, CA

**Vince Crisostomo**, GUAM HIV/AIDS Network Project, Arlington, VA

\***Mrs. E. Hill De Loney**, Flint Odyssey House, Inc. Health Awareness Center, Flint, MI

\***Elmer Freeman**, Center for Community Health Education Research and Service,  
Boston, MA

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**Susan Gust**, GRASS Routes, Minneapolis, MN

**Loretta Jones**, Healthy African American Families, Los Angeles, CA

**Lissette M. Lahoz**, Latinos for Healthy Communities, Allentown, PA

**Daniella S. Levine**, Human Services Coalition of Dade County, Inc., Miami, FL

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# Participants

\* denotes planning committee member

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**Ann-Gel Palermo**, Harlem Community & Academic Partnership, New York, NY

**Alice Park**, Urban Indian Health Institute, Seattle Indian Health Board, Seattle, WA

\***Gerry Roll**, Hazard Perry County Community Ministries, Inc., Hazard, KY

**Lola Sablan Santos**, Guam Communications Network, Long Beach, CA

**Ira SenGupta**, Cross Cultural Health Care Program, Seattle, WA

**Douglas Taylor**, Southeast Community Research Center, Atlanta, GA

**Pearlie M. Toliver**, Branch Banking and Trust Co., Macon, GA

\***Mrs. Lucille Webb**, Strengthening the Black Family, Inc., Raleigh, NC

**Eve Wenger**, Pocono Healthy Communities Alliance, Stroudsburg, PA

**Noelle Wiggins**, Community Capacitation Center, Multnomah County Health Department, Portland, OR

\***Vickie Ybarra**, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, Yakima, WA



# Community-Campus Partnerships

## *The Current Reality*

*“There is a lack of understanding within universities about what they’re doing and why. This one office in our university has changed its names 3 times since 1995. First it was community service, then service-learning, and now civic engagement. Civic engagement is a pretty word and concept, but there is a disconnect between the university view of what “engagement” means and how the community views it. The university thinks that anything outside the walls is engagement.”*

~ Pearlle Toliver, Branch Banking and Trust Company, Macon, GA



# Community-Campus Partnerships

## *The Current Reality*

- Community engagement “buzz” in higher ed and funders
- Predominant model is not a partnership
- Benefit of partnering with higher ed is not readily apparent to many communities – yet there can be many benefits
- Relationship between community and campus partners is largely based on individuals and not institutionalized
- Community groups sometimes lose community ties and legitimacy over time when they partner with higher ed
- Assumption that community needs the academy to have legitimate conversations and that academic knowledge has greater value than community knowledge



# Community-Campus Partnerships

## *The Current Reality*

- Playing field between community & campus is not level
- Building community capacity through strong community-based organizations is not often an explicit goal
- Funders are investing in these partnerships - some are beginning to “get” what authentic partnerships involve
- Significant differences between mature & early partnerships
- Significant ongoing challenges, but communities keep at this work “because we know there can be benefits and because we want to protect our communities.”



# Community-Campus Partnerships *What's Working*

*“We had heard horror stories about universities being there just for the money. My experience has been that the university was there for the community, to share knowledge, not to empower per se. The university wanted the knowledge gained would be given to others. We have had a long history of working together. We decided to focus on a new opportunity, and decided that this time the community would be a major decision maker in the process of project design. Our role as a co-applicant was as a facilitator to get the community involved, the women directly affected.”*

~ Lola Sablos Santos, Guam Communications Network, Long Beach, CA



# Community-Campus Partnerships *What's Working*

- Strong relationships: trust, honesty, transparency, respect
- Mutual benefit of all partners
- Shared ownership of partnership, its projects and products
- Clear roles and expectations of all partners
- Support from funding agency that understands how authentic partnerships are developed and sustained
- Community partners valued/compensated for expertise
- Community and academic partners gain transferable skills
- Community peer networks for mentoring, learning and sharing of best practices



# Community-Campus Partnerships

## *What's Not Working*

*“Many communities start getting into doing this kind of research with academics because the funding is there. But oftentimes, before any common ground is established through someone who can serve as a bridge/translator between both sides, the study moves forward and the community is left with a different understanding of what was supposed to happen.”*

~Vince Crisostomo, GUAM HIV/AIDS Network Project/Pacific Island Jurisdictions AIDS Action Group, Arlington, VA



# Community-Campus Partnerships

## *What's Not Working*

- No community engagement as proposal is developed
- Inequitable distribution of power and resources
- Decisions made “behind closed doors”
- Grants require community, but funding goes to institution
- Lack of partner commitment to the community’s future
- Researchers not community or culturally competent
- No guidelines for funders and peer reviewers
- No planning for sustainability, no exit strategy
- Community lacks infrastructure to fully engage
- Presumption that communities speak with one voice
- Presumption that service-learning and CBPR are same



# Framework for Authentic Partnerships

## 1. Quality processes

*“We are not just talking about a process that involves partners. There needs to be a process of shared decision making.”*

~ Ella Greene-Moton, Flint, MI

Relationship focused...open, honest and respectful...trust-building...acknowledging of history...committed to mutual learning...sharing credit



# Framework for Authentic Partnerships

## 2. Meaningful outcomes that are tangible and relevant to communities

*“OK, we can work together on community-based participatory research, but only if you support our kids in the pipeline. Bring them to campus for programs, teach them skills they use to be more marketable, give them academic credit.”*

~ Vickie Ybarra, Toppenish, WA

Eliminating health disparities...affordable housing...education, economic development...



# Framework for Authentic Partnerships

## 3. Transformation at multiple levels

*“We build social capital when we’re doing this work. We don’t often talk about that.”*

~ Douglas Taylor, Atlanta, GA

- Personal transformation, including self reflection and heightened political consciousness
- Institutional transformation, including changing policies and systems
- Community transformation, including community capacity building
- Transformation of science and knowledge, including how knowledge is generated, used and valued and what constitutes “evidence”
- Political transformation, including social justice



# Conclusions

1. Community-higher education partnerships are vehicles for social change
2. There can be tangible benefits for all partners involved
3. The predominant partnerships observed are not authentic
4. Relationships between campus & community are rarely equal
5. Relationships are largely based on individuals and are not institutionalized



# Conclusions

6. Community capacity building is often not a major priority of community-higher education partnerships
7. Most community-higher education partnership initiatives not designed to equalize power differentials
8. Many communities do not have the time, resources, or access to knowledge about how to participate in these partnerships on their own terms
9. Community partners are learning from each other and becoming more sophisticated, resulting in the increased ability to develop and assert equal partnerships



# Recommendations

1. Community partners have the responsibility to share their collective wisdom and knowledge
2. Community involvement and capacity building is needed at the local, regional, and national levels
3. Community partners should develop principles of participation to clarify terms of engagement and expectations
4. Community partners must familiarize themselves with the culture and daily realities of their academic partners, and vice versa



# Recommendations

5. Community partners must work together with academic partners/allies to change the culture of higher education into one that values and supports communities as equal partners
6. Community partners must work together with academic partners/allies to elevate credibility and recognition for their life/work experience and context/environment
7. Funding agencies need to reexamine funding priorities, processes and decisions
8. Community partners should form collective body to increase capacity through mentoring, networking and advocacy



# Recommendations

*“We need to shape ourselves as a counterbalance to existing forces. This is about community reasserting itself in these partnerships.”*

~ Daniela Levine, Human Services Coalition of Dade County, Miami, FL



# Questions & Reflections

What intrigued you?

What surprised you?

How might you apply this information?

How can/do you engage communities as partners?

How can/do you build community capacity?

What are the barriers and facilitators?

What can we do individually and collectively?



# Workgroups

Mentoring Workgroup

Policy Workgroup

Inventory Workgroup

Report Workgroup



# Dissemination & Replication

## Presentations

- Community-Campus Partnerships for Health – May 2006
- National Association of Community Health Centers – August 2006
- National Asian and Pacific Islander Health Forum – September 2006
- Michigan State University – September 2006
- Loma Linda University – September 2006
- International Service-Learning Research Conference – Oct. 2006
- Center for Border Health Research – October 2006
- American Public Health Association – November 2006
- Department of Health Services Seminar – December 2006

## Regional Community Partner Summits



# Products & Resources

- Community Partner Summit Website
- Executive Summary
- Poster Presentation
- Slide Presentations
- Community Case Stories
- Community Partner Listserv
- And More to Come...



# For More Information

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