



Engaged Colleges Are Central to Strong Communities

UMass-Lowell Works to Retain Community Knowledge

“We are determined to develop a repository of community knowledge that is available to researchers and local organizations,” states Dr. Linda Silka, university professor for outreach at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell (UMass-Lowell). With the help of a COPC New Directions grant, the school is continuing to work on existing programs that strengthen the community-university partnerships throughout the Lowell area, with a special emphasis on the Enterprise Community census tract areas. The COPC is working with local partners in various forums to ensure that the research topics and the knowledge gained reflect the area’s needs and are available for its continued development.

Lowell has a diverse population and is the second largest home in the United States for Cambodian immigrants, making the area a valuable study area for researchers. “We want to ensure that the research and knowledge gained from the community stays in the community,” states Silka. To accomplish that goal, the UMass-Lowell COPC is working with local partners to identify

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New Directions Grants Enhance Community Programs

The nation’s colleges and universities are a tremendous resource for the country and the communities they serve. Through the Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) program, HUD’s Office of University Partnerships provides economic and program support to spread the knowledge, creativity, and strength of institutions of higher learning in their local communities. The COPC New Directions grants provide eligible schools an opportunity to build upon its existing COPC program and develop new activities designed to meet the community’s needs. The University of North Texas (UNT) is striving to expand crucial afterschool programs and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) is providing opportunities for students and community-based organizations to build and enhance their skills. Both schools received \$150,000 New Directions grants to help them accomplish their goals.

The Center for Public Service at UNT in Denton, Texas, is using its COPC New Directions grant to continue and enhance its existing outreach programs. Working in South East and South West Denton, two of the most distressed neighborhoods in the city, the COPC has linked its efforts with the Denton Housing Authority and the Denton Affordable Housing Corporation to provide vital afterschool programs for local

children and skill-building opportunities for area adults.

“We are redefining afterschool programs in our community and are striving to ensure that all children have a place in the city’s community centers,” states Dr. Stan Ingman, director of the COPC program at UNT. To accomplish this, Dr. Ingman, UNT work-study students, and local partners designed innovative programs and activities that keep the children engaged and achieve measurable results for the partners. “One of our main goals is to help increase the state standardized test scores in our local schools by ensuring that the children have the homework and mentoring support that they need,” adds Ingman.

Some of the significant afterschool programs include expanding the community music and art programs for local youth. “The music and art programs allow the children to create something that is unique, help them build self-confidence, and display their skills to the broader community,” states Melissa Morehead, project director of the Phoenix Community Program. The center occupies the entire first floor of the Phoenix Apartment complex—a local public housing facility—and serves more than 50 children, ages 4 through 12, each day. “For each work-study student that we

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what research needs to occur and how that knowledge can best be used within the community. Organizations like the Lowell Teen Coalition-United Teen Equality Center (UTEC) are continually asked to participate in research projects that drain its resources. The school is working to archive the results of previous research, making that information available to anyone who needs it, and allowing UTEC to continue its work. "We enjoy working with our research partners and hope that the archived research results will help current and future researchers and community organizations with their work," states Gregg Croteau, executive director of UTEC and member of UMass-Lowell's COPC advisory board.

The New Directions grant is building upon four main areas: strengthening community-university partnerships on the environment and health, strengthening community-university partnerships on youth issues, strengthening capacity for planning, and dissemination and outreach to multiple groups. To accomplish these goals the COPC is working through formal and informal mechanisms. The formal activities include the University in the City Scholars, community forums, and breakfast events that bring together community and university partners in the area of youth, the environment, health and housing, and cable and other dissemination media aimed at increasing the knowledge of partnership activities.

One of the significant projects in the past year was a research project designed to formulate an understanding of the effect of budget cutbacks within Lowell's youth service agencies. A team of graduate students worked with local youth to design a research project that would identify how the city's budget cuts were affecting the local youth organizations and provide a youth perspective about the impact on their community. "Involving the local youth in the process was a tremendous success," relates Silka.

"Reports are good but reports do not do enough," states Silka. To ensure that the information is passed on to individuals and groups who can take action, COPC held a

community breakfast to distribute the report and present a video developed by the research team. The video is being broadcast on the local cable access network and city officials are starting to refer to the report at various meetings about the state of the budget.

With the help of the New Directions grant and the dedication of faculty, administration, and community organizations, the center conceived and formed an advisory board that represents the community to the university administration. "There is currently a similar board that exists to represent industry's needs," Silka notes.

The COPC advisory board includes community leaders and community representatives who are able to advocate for their diverse needs. "We tried to identify the emerging leaders in the community and sought ways to help them think critically about their current and future needs," relates Silka. One board member works for the Lowell Community Health Center to foster immigrant outreach programs with area organizations like the East West Health Center. Her participation on the board helps to ensure that she has access to the resources of the University's School of Health and Environment and that they are responsive to her constituents' needs.

Ensuring the successful development of emerging leaders in the community and extending the university's resources into the surrounding neighborhoods are a few of the benefits provided by the New Directions grants.

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VCU Promotes Affordable Housing and Builds Capacity in the Carver Neighborhood

“The challenge for us, under the New Directions grant, was how to attract new housing development and rehab the current stock while preserving the character of the Carver neighborhood,” states Dr. Catherine Howard, associate professor of psychology and director of Virginia Commonwealth University’s (VCU’s) Office of Community Programs.

The Carver-VCU Partnership began in 1996 in response to the city of Richmond’s concerns about high crime, blighted properties, and social concerns in the Carver neighborhood, adjoining VCU in downtown Richmond. During the COPC grant period, VCU police assumed jurisdiction of the neighborhood and the crime rate dropped.

“We’ve worked closely with the civic association to develop a master plan,” explains Howard. “We worked with seniors to develop programs. We worked with the elementary school. We did a lot of things to enhance and take care of some of those social concerns.”

Howard continues, “We formed a partnership with a community development corporation—Better Housing Coalition—that is now building 15 new

homes in a central parcel in the Carver neighborhood. Although it’s not part of our original plan, we’re now working with another CDC, Neighborhood Housing Services, which plans to build as many as 15 houses. Renovations also began recently on two large warehouses in the neighborhood that will result in 100 new apartments available in the fall of 2004.”

The community and housing development committee of the Carver-VCU Partnership meets bimonthly, according to Howard. At each meeting, developers come before the group to talk about their ideas for a piece of property in Carver. The committee scrutinizes the plans to ensure that they comply with the architectural integrity of the neighborhood and that the developer’s targeted clientele will be appropriate for the neighborhood.

To market affordable housing in the Carver neighborhood, VCU worked with the Alliance to Conserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods (ACORN), which promotes older neighborhoods within the city. VCU and ACORN developed a campaign called “Live Where You Work” to market Carver to VCU faculty and staff on the VCU Academic and Medical Center campuses. Last spring VCU offered a bus tour on two

consecutive Fridays for faculty and staff of each campus. “We provided lunch and drove the staff through the Carver neighborhood with an architectural resource expert who provided background about the neighborhood and promoted the historical significance and the quality of the homes.”

ACORN followed the bus tours with a Saturday event at Carver Elementary School called the Sell-a-Bration.

Developers of homes in Carver spoke about the houses and had renderings of proposed housing. Workshops were available on how to rehab a house—everything from refurbishing floors to choosing your paint colors to urban gardening.

“The workshops hoped to attract people who might be interested in buying a home in the city, so we encouraged the VCU staff who’d gone on the bus tours to come to the Sell-a-Bration to get additional information,” Howard said. “We offered a walking tour of Carver led by an individual who knows the historical details of the neighborhood. We were able to highlight the neighborhood’s unique features, its potential, and what a good deal these houses are.”

VCU plans to conduct bus tours again this spring with faculty from both campuses. Three of the houses under construction should be done by early spring and people will be able to tour the houses. Howard notes that future residents will probably be single professionals and young couples willing to live in the city. “We’re also finding that there are people, particularly African Americans, who left the neighborhood to pursue their education and work elsewhere, who are choosing to come back and buy in the neighborhood where they grew up.”

According to the housing coalition, single working mothers are purchasing most of the homes. Because the houses are available through the Better Housing Coalition and Neighborhood Housing Services, an excellent financing package is available that will make monthly mortgage costs as low as \$500 for houses valued at between \$120,000 and \$170,000.





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“The partnership with Carver and VCU has been excellent. They have helped us with a lot of design and marketing services and have helped us in developing a unique design for the neighborhood that fits architecturally,” notes T.K. Somanath, executive director of the Better Housing Coalition in Richmond. “This partnership has created opportunities for first-time homebuyers to purchase homes close to the downtown area at very affordable prices. These kinds of efforts by both VCU and Carver Partnership and public bodies like the city of Richmond and the housing authority has been very creative in leveraging resources from public/private sources.”

The other focus of the New Directions grant involves building the capacity of the civic association and helping the neighborhood come to terms with its changing population. “We have a consultant who is working with the civic association executive team to help them reorganize their civic association. They’ve rewritten their bylaws and are doing some real leadership training,” Howard says. “The consultant is helping the association determine how they can welcome newcomers to the neighborhood and engage them on civic association committees.”

Howard notes that VCU feels it is important to have the consultant work with the association so that it can be a strong civic association and advocate for the community whether it be with VCU or the city of Richmond. “This process really is to empower the association and give them the capacity to continue to be a strong voice for the neighborhood,” Howard adds.

VCU will be working with Carver next spring to identify key long-term and new

residents throughout the neighborhood who could be trained in a community leadership model. “We’re hoping to get these individuals to do a community assessment of the needs of people in their immediate area and see how they can be an advocate for those needs to the civic association,” she explains.

“Participating residents will receive college credit. Those who don’t already have one will get a computer and Internet access. The idea is that these folks would form a neighborhood network, stay connected to each other, and receive information that they could disseminate to their neighbors.”

Under the COPC grant, VCU designated space in a new building adjoining Carver that has a computer lab and multipurpose room. VCU students tutor children in the afternoon and computer classes are available. “We’re trying to reach out to youth to see what they want and need,” Howard says. “Last Saturday they had their first hip-hop dance for community youth and 30 kids showed up, which was very impressive. We’re trying to make that space available to the community with programs they’re requesting.”

Many departments at VCU are involved in the Carver neighborhood and at Carver Elementary School, including the schools of nursing, dentistry, social work, psychology, art education, gerontology, therapeutic recreation, urban studies and planning, pharmacy, arts, and mass communications. The athletics department provided Carver youth 10 scholarships to its weeklong summer basketball camp last summer. The Office of Community Programs coordinates the activities of the various schools and departments.

“The Carver-VCU partnership began in

1996 and the president and provost at VCU have been behind this from the beginning,” Howard notes. “We have people who have been on the steering committee since 1996, which says a lot about the commitment and relationships that have developed over the years between our faculty and staff and the Carver residents.”

There are other signs of positive change in Carver. A Kroger’s grocery store—one of a handful of newly built urban Kroger’s in the country—just opened in the neighborhood. Lowes opened a large store last year, and a Starbucks and other small retailers are opening soon. Ukrops, a family-owned Richmond grocery, recently opened a store two blocks from Carver. Howard expects that the CDCs developing new homes in Carver will use these new amenities as a marketing tool to sell homes.

Howard expressed gratitude for the New Directions grant. “I think it’s the best money they [HUD] give out because it leverages so much additional funding. This funding also allows people to be creative and make things happen that would probably be much more difficult otherwise.”

For more information about the Carver-VCU Partnership, contact Dr. Catherine Howard, Director, Office of Community Programs, Virginia Commonwealth University, P.O. Box 843062, Richmond, VA, 23284; phone: (804) 828-8790, e-mail: choward@vcu.edu, www.vcu.edu/ocp/programs/carvervcu. *



provide, the center is able to allow eight additional children into the program,” states Ingman. The work-study students, many of whom are behavior analysis graduate students under the supervision of Dr. Jesus Rosales-Ruiz, interact with the children, help them with homework, and offer mentoring opportunities. The children gain skills through activities such as music, theater, computer, art, and athletics, and benefit from a new program run by behavior analysis graduate students called precision teaching. Precision teaching is a method for teaching fluency that combines accuracy and speed so that an individual may respond efficiently, according to Ingman.

Undergraduate work-study students from UNT’s music department, under the direction of Joseph Gomez, offer piano and guitar instruction for interested children. “The music program is very successful and it is a wonderful opportunity for the children to learn some basic music skills,” relates Ingman. The music program also provides the children an opportunity to perform in area festivals, at UNT, and at other special events.

To increase and retain teen attendance, the Phoenix Community Program, in partnership with UNT’s behavior analysis department, began offering dog-training classes to middle and high school students. The children are matched up with very friendly, untrained dogs and are taught the skills and techniques to modify the dogs’ behavior. Since then, a number of children and dogs have benefited from the positive techniques taught to change behavior.

The Phoenix Community Program offers English-as-a-Second Language classes for area adults. Each semester 24 adults attend English classes and receive tutoring for the GED test. In fall 2003 the program added a computer class for adults designed to help them acquire the basic technology skills necessary to succeed in the workforce.

The Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at UWM received a New Directions grant to create and implement new community revitalization initiatives in a central urban neighborhood in Milwaukee. The program works in neighborhoods that have experienced serious

challenges related to poverty, housing, crime, and other social and economic conditions. “We are directing our resources and expertise to help residents and community-based organizations acquire the skills, resources, training, and education that will increase their capacity to transform and revitalize their neighborhoods,” states Stephen Percy, project director of the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research.

The center and its community partners are engaged in a broad range of activities that are being enhanced by the New Directions grant. The school is working to create a housing and community development internship program that will provide service-learning opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students. “We are attracting students from across many disciplines,” explains Percy. Students from urban planning and urban studies are often interested in these opportunities but the program attracts students from the political science and business schools as well. The students who participate in the internship program work in organizations that serve the residents of the target neighborhood and they gain exposure to fair lending practices, housing creation and rehabilitation, homeownership, and community development.

Another significant center activity is the creation of a Neighborhood College that provides education, training, and technical assistance to both residents and grassroots organizations, and the development of an oral history project. During summer 2003 the center worked with the School of Architecture and Urban Planning to create and offer the Pre-Urban Planners Preparing

for Urban Problems initiative (PUPS for PUPS). The program provided neighborhood youth with planning skills that they directly apply to their neighborhood. “The city recently removed a section of freeway separating the downtown from adjacent neighborhoods. The PUPS for PUPS program engaged local youth to assess the area and develop recommendations for the future use of the property,” states Percy. The center also developed the Citizens Academy for Community Safety, through which residents learn about law enforcement and means to fight crime, and participate in criminal justice issues in their neighborhood.

The COPC grants are intended to respond to some of the greatest problems and concerns confronting neighborhoods across the country. The New Direction grants help to ensure that programs and activities currently in existence are allowed to continue and institutions of higher learning like UNT and UWM are able to expand their reach into the neighborhoods that can benefit most from their expertise as they strive to address social and economic concerns through resident-backed strategies to spur economic growth through COPC center outreach.

For additional information, contact Dr. Stan Ingman, director, Center for Public Service, University of North Texas, at (940) 565-2298 or e-mail ingman@scs.cmm.unt.edu, or contact Dr. Stephen Percy, Project Director, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, at (414) 229-5916 or e-mail: percy@uwm.edu. *

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COPC 2003 New Directions Grantees

Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) New Directions grantees use their funds to build upon their existing COPC programs and expand focus on issues such as healthcare and community development and revitalization. The following profiles summarize the types of activities that the 2003 grantees will undertake:

Butler University, Indiana, will use its \$150,000 COPC New Directions grant to expand the service delivery area of its Center for Citizenship and Community Change (CCC) and to further institutionalize the university's outreach to community partners. Specific activities include working in collaboration with leaders of the local youth center to develop multiple literacy programs and working with homeless service providers to explore the possibility of an education program.

Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), will use its \$150,000 COPC New Directions grant to extend the capacity of the IUPUI-WESCO

partnerships, addressing health promotion and housing accessibility. This includes six outreach initiatives, including nutrition education, a financial literacy workshop series, a predatory lending community forum, and an education campaign focused on predatory lending.

Valparaiso University, Indiana, will use its \$150,000 New Directions grant in Valparaiso's Hilltop neighborhood. It will focus on two major program areas, a proposition of a lead-based hazard program and financial literacy among neighborhood residents. These programs will provide educational awareness and knowledge and professional training.

University of Massachusetts, Boston, will use its \$150,000 New Directions grant to plan an environmental initiative in the Columbia Point community. This project will include capacity-building workshops for people who live, work, and learn at Columbia Point. The university will develop an onsite sustainable community resource center that will

serve as a vehicle for long-term university-community partnerships.

State University of New York at Cortland will use its \$150,000 New Directions grant to fund a project in East End, the highest need neighborhood in the city of Cortland. The project's goals are to expand and focus the network of partners and acquire the resources necessary to trigger a transformation in the physical, social, and economic character of this neighborhood.

At Wright State University, Ohio, the Townview Neighborhood and nine community partners will use the university's \$150,000 New Directions grant to extend best practices developed in the Summerbridge community to an older population in Townview. The programs are designed to connect the resources of public and nonprofit institutions to Townview and to improve community associations and individuals. *