



Engaged Universities Are Central to Strong Communities

Technology Builds Communities, Brightens Futures

Technology is not only equipping people for the 21st century, but enhancing their daily lives in many ways. By improving business efficiency, helping children to learn, building the capacity of community organizations, developing innovative housing technologies, or providing access to community resources, technology directly or indirectly affects most people. With the assistance of Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPCs), low-income communities are tapping into vast resources that already exist or are being developed at universities, and universities are helping to build healthy and vibrant communities nationwide.

With the built-in resources of universities at their disposal, COPCs are helping to brighten the future of the residents of distressed communities—creating opportunities to develop the skills needed for today's jobs and to meet the demands of the future marketplace. Through a wide array of COPC initiatives, university students and faculty are transferring their knowledge about technology and information to communities that desperately seek this knowledge. Residents are accessing the computer technology

provided by COPCs through a variety of means. Universities are developing technology centers that enable area residents to have access to computers, become computer literate, learn marketable computer skills, and tap into a wide array of online resources. Universities are helping to train people in office software and effective ways to use the Internet to search for employment and assisting youth with educational and academic resources on the Internet.

Minority entrepreneurs are also using universities' resources through COPC initiatives. Universities are opening their computer laboratories to local businesses, providing access to computer technology and software that they otherwise might not have had. Along the way, the universities are developing important relationships with local businesses and economic development agencies.

COPC-based initiatives are also assisting community organizations, businesses, and residents in computer mapping, database development, and building Web pages. Universities are training community organizations to use geographical information system (GIS) technology and mapping software to

produce useful information tools that can help organizations visualize community needs and ways to address those needs. Other universities are cataloging the assets of surrounding communities in an effort to develop databases that are easily accessible to and user friendly for the community and that will help communities identify and implement needed programs. ■

"We're using the newest technology to help find solutions to some of the oldest problems facing America's communities."

Andrew Cuomo
Secretary, U.S. Department
of Housing and Urban Development

TECHNOLOGY BOOSTS COMMUNITY CAPACITY

COPC programs all over the country are using computer technology to boost community access to information. Through COPC initiatives, community organizations, businesses, and residents are expanding their knowledge of computers by developing neighborhood maps using geographical information system (GIS) technology, building Web pages, and obtaining up-to-date information on community resources and services.

New mapping technology at the Center for Family Work and Community at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell enables community organizations to think more strategically about their efforts. Training for community leaders sponsored by the city of Lowell's Neighborhoods Division and the university sparked the idea of having students from a graduate mapping class work with community organizations to produce useful information tools. In the first year, students helped the Parks and Conservation Trust map the health of area trees, developed a database to monitor local business growth and hiring practices, and mapped clients for a homeownership counseling service. They also helped the United Way to assess community needs and develop efficient means to address those needs. The university plans to offer the community mapping course every year because of the benefits to both students and the community. The students learned practical uses for their GIS skills, and the community organizations developed new research tools.

Databases such as the one described above can provide extensive catalogs of resources. Several other COPCs and their partners have begun to use databases to gather and disseminate information in their communities. In Flint, Michigan, North

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TECHNOLOGY BOOSTS

Flint residents are cataloging the community's resources with the assistance of the University of Michigan-Flint. North Flint 21st Century Community started gathering information on community assets as a part of its strategic plan. By working with the university, all of the community's physical assets such as the locations of businesses, churches, houses, and parks, as well as resources on daycare, elder care, and tutoring, are being identified. Community participants are able to access the information at the COPC office and will be responsible for maintaining the database once it is complete.

In another database initiative, Fitchburg State College students and community leaders are developing two community databases. The first database tracks Twin Cities Community Development Corporation's (CDC's) clients, including the type of assistance provided and the status of the client's business. It also monitors the performance of the CDC's microenterprise program. The system's effective design has caused the State's Micro-Enterprise Coalition to consider adopting the software for statewide use. For the second database, students are developing a comprehensive informational referral service called Info-Link that connects residents in need with the appropriate community and health services. Info-Link will provide comprehensive information to health and human services professionals for client referrals. University students can also access the database to locate health service internships and volunteer opportunities. The Fitchburg State College COPC hopes to publish the database online for public use.

COPC resources are not only being used to develop databases but are also assisting community organizations, businesses, and residents to gain a better understanding of the Internet. At the University of Massachusetts-Boston, community organizations are learning to develop Web pages through peer-to-peer workshops sponsored by the COPC. At the workshops, community groups and businesses that have successfully used Internet resources teach these skills to others. Some community organizations are boosting neighborhood enterprises by advertising local businesses on their Web sites. For many businesses, the community Web page is their first opportunity to advertise on the Internet. COPCs at the University of Michigan-Flint and the University of Nebraska at Omaha are also providing access to Web page development training and assistance as well as hosting community sites on their Web pages. These COPC initiatives are building community capacity by connecting businesses, organizations, and residents to information technology that was previously out of reach.

For more information, contact Dr. Linda Silka, Director, Center for Family, Work, and Community, The University of Massachusetts-Lowell, (978) 934-4675; Dr. Kristen D. Skivington, Director, Center for University Partnerships, University of Michigan-Flint, (810) 767-7182; Nikki Brownell, Project Manager, Community Outreach Partnership, Fitchburg State College, (978) 665-3377; Claudia Greene, Director, The Mauricia Gaston Institute of Latino Community Development and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts-Boston, (617) 287-5790; Sarah Wood, Community Outreach Partnership, University of Nebraska at Omaha, (402) 554-3914. ■

Connecting Distressed Communities to Computer Technology

Few computer resources exist in low-income, distressed neighborhoods. As a result, poor communities are often isolated from the technology-dependent world around them. Because many residents lack the computer skills required by today's workplace, they may also find themselves locked out of the increasingly technology-dependent jobs of the future.

Communities are addressing this need by enlisting local colleges and universities to make computer technology and computer skills more accessible to low-income neighborhood residents and businesses. With the technology already present and the resources to train people available, many universities are answering the call to better serve their low-income neighbors.

Technology centers in two Santa Ana, California, neighborhoods are preparing

community residents for jobs and improving students' academic achievement. Sponsored by the COPC at Santa Ana College (SAC) and the University of California-Irvine (UCI), the new centers serve Warwick Square, a large, recently revitalized, 500-unit apartment community; and the Delhi community, a densely populated 12-block area of approximately 500 older housing units. Thanks to a \$15,000 grant and hardware donations from the Microsoft Corporation, residents are improving their computer skills with access to six computers and the Internet at each center.

Area adults seeking employment are increasing their computer knowledge through several technology center initiatives. Faculty from SAC and UCI provide English as a Second Language and adult basic education computer classes.



COPC Central is a free quarterly publication prepared by the University Partnerships Clearinghouse, the information service sponsored by HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP). COPC Central highlights the contributions of universities and colleges to local community revitalization efforts. You may contact the University Partnerships Clearinghouse at P.O. Box 6091, Rockville, MD 20849, (800) 245-2691, (fax) (301) 519-5767. See the Office of University Partnerships on the World Wide Web at <http://www.oup.org>.

Residents looking for jobs receive assistance in conducting Internet job searches and preparing resumes. Residents attending the area's community college can use the lab to practice their computer skills.

Another service offered at the center builds school-age children's knowledge of computers while assisting them with their homework. Computer science majors from SAC and UCI teach the children to use educational software and academic resources on the Internet to complete their schoolwork. "Participants' teachers have seen an immediate improvement in the students' homework and the students are showing more interest in their education as a result of the program," commented Lilia Powell, COPC director at SAC.

Working with area schools, the COPC at Brooklyn College is also building the computer skills of neighborhood youth. The first initiative resulted from a partnership with Brooklyn's Board of Education and provides many students' only experience with computers during the school year. In the 5-year-old Project PEACE (Promoting Education and Community Empowerment), Brooklyn College students taking conflict resolution classes put their classroom experience to work, tutoring approximately 90 students in 4 Brooklyn high schools on the issues of violence prevention and multiculturalism using English composition. Tutored students use the computer facilities of the learning center to produce essays, poems, and short plays, which are published in the biannual *PEACE Journal*.

In another COPC program, Brooklyn College students

volunteer to teach word-processing and desktop publishing skills to students of a Beacon school (a selective secondary school with a rigorous college preparatory curriculum infused with information technology and interdisciplinary programs) in Brooklyn's Sunset Park neighborhood. The program is carried out in partnership with Hispanic Young People's Alternatives and fosters the college students' sense of civic responsibility. Last summer, a group of 12- to 14-year-olds learned to use Microsoft Publisher, a desktop publishing program, to produce their own newsletter, *The Beacon Initiative*.

Computer skills are a necessity for youth but also for most businesses, and the COPC at Portland State University (PSU) operates a business outreach program for minority entrepreneurs in the distressed Albina community of Northeast Portland. Students and faculty from PSU's school of business use their expertise to provide assistance and long-term mentoring in partnership with local economic development agencies. The COPC computer lab gives Albina entrepreneurs access to computer technology and business software and offers both group and individual training. In 2 years of operation, the program has served more than 80 small businesses.

For more information, contact: Lilia M. Powell, COPC Director, Santa Ana College, (714) 564-6971; Nancy Romer, Director, Community Partnership for Research and Learning, Brooklyn College, (718) 951-5015; Alan Zieber, School of Business, Portland State University, (503) 725-3416. ■



COPC Web Sites

University of Nebraska at Omaha Community Outreach Partnership Center
(<http://cid.unomaha.edu/~wwwpa/copc/>)

This extensive Web page shows how COPC is extending the resources of the university to the community by detailing a wide array of activities. The COPC is focusing its efforts primarily in Omaha's EC.

Bay Area Community Outreach Partnership Center
(<http://www.iurd.ced.berkeley.edu/bacopc/>)

BACOPC is a consortium of the University of California-Berkeley, San Francisco State University, and Stanford University. BACOPC's extensive Web site describes the technical support for innovative urban development and housing initiatives that BACOPC provides.

University of Illinois-Chicago, UIC Neighborhoods Initiative
(<http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci/uicninit/uicninit/uni.html>)

The UIC Neighborhoods Initiative is a partnership between the University of Illinois-Chicago and organizations in two neighborhoods adjacent to the university: Pilsen and the Near West Side. The activities of the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative discussed on this Web site consist of multidisciplinary projects by university faculty, students, staff, and community institutions.

COPC Conference in East St. Louis in September 1998
(<http://www.imlab.uiuc.edu/eslarp/copc/index.htm>)

This Web page describes the 1998 Community Outreach Partnerships Centers Conference that took place September 24 and 25, 1998, in East St. Louis, Illinois.

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University of Texas-Austin Community Outreach Partnership
Center Program
(<http://www.utexas.edu/academic/uip/inside/projects/ncopc.html>)

This Web site describes the formation of the COPC through the Urban Issues Program and explains how its activities, in cooperation with local partners, address the needs of low-income communities along the Texas-Mexico border.

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Center for Urban Initiatives
and Research
(<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CUIR/2CommunityPartnerships/mcopc.html>)

The Milwaukee Community Outreach Partnership described on this Web site provides a variety of integrated interventions designed to revitalize neighborhoods within Milwaukee's inner city.

Santa Ana College's Community Outreach Partnership Center
(<http://www.rancho.cc.ca.us/home/saccopc/index.htm>)

This Web site describes the partnership between Santa Ana College and the University of California-Irvine and their collaboration with the city of Santa Ana, the Santa Ana Unified School District, and several community organizations.

Virginia Commonwealth University's Office of Community
Partnership
(<http://www.vcu.edu/ocp/>)

This Web site describes the partnership between Virginia Commonwealth University and its northern neighbor, the Carver community.

The University of Tennessee-Knoxville, Community Partnership
Center
(<http://www.ra.utk.edu/cpc/cpchud.htm>)

This Web site discusses CPC's activities in the five community-identified priorities areas: community and economic development, housing and homelessness, education and job training, public safety, and strengthening community involvement.

Ohio State University
(<http://www.osu.edu/campuscollab/copc.html>)

The COPC program described in this Web site researches community assets and needs. It offers programs and resources in four specific areas: job training, the Weinland Park Business and Entrepreneurship Center, family and housing stability, and communications.

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