

COPC Central

Engaged Universities Are Central to Strong Communities

Office of University Partnerships

HUD, ED Work To Strengthen the University/Community/School Connection

By developing dynamic partnerships to educate youth, HUD, local communities, and their college and university neighbors are serving as powerful engines to revitalize neighborhood schools.

Andrew Cuomo
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

A January conference hosted by HUD and the U.S. Department of Education (ED) identified the creation of partnerships between colleges and universities and inner-city schools as a key strategy for revitalizing the Nation's distressed, low-income communities. Twenty-two Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) grantees were among the 120 attendees at the Washington, D.C., meeting—an audience that also included representatives of community groups, national education organizations, and HUD and ED staff.

The stakes are high, Assistant Secretary of Education Gerald N. Tirozzi told the conference. "President Clinton's national crusade for education to prepare America for the 21st century means moving all students, from the primary grades through adulthood, toward educational excellence," he said. But achievement scores are lagging for many children, he warned, particularly those who live in distressed inner-city neighborhoods.

"It is clear," said Tirozzi, "that our education objectives cannot be achieved in communities eroded by poverty, joblessness, and crime." Tirozzi regards HUD as an "obvious partner" in this effort. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley also spoke at the forum.

Since 1994, HUD's Office of University Partnerships has been encouraging colleges and universities to become active in community building. More than one-half of the 76 grantees in its COPC program work with K-12 schools, illustrating the importance of the three-way partnership between universities, schools, and communities. Through its Title XI program, the Department of Education has encouraged similar partnerships to further local education reform. The January meeting, the first joint HUD/ED conference ever held, was a step toward bringing these parallel agendas—community building and educational reform—into closer linkage. Participants helped identify directions and activities the two agencies could take to further mesh these angles.

Attendees discussed what is required for school/community/university partnerships to excel; identified the institutional, cultural, and financial barriers these partnerships encounter; and traded strategies on how to overcome these constraints. Donna Rodrigues, principal of University Park Campus School in Worcester, Massachusetts, and Barbara Ortega, assistant principal of the Cesar E. Chavez Community School in Phoenix, Arizona, provided a local school perspective on how these partnerships work.

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COPC Supports Summer Enrichment Programs

In the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., faculty and students at George Mason University (GMU) have been working with Arlington County school and recreation staff to establish summer enrichment programs for students of a nearby elementary school, many of whom are from immigrant families. Camp Alpha Adventure, the cooperative education/recreation program, has been so successful—serving more children with less money—that local funding sources took over its sole support after only two years of operation.

With help from the Urban Alternative Program, which operates the GMU COPC, Glencarlyn Elementary School teachers and Arlington County Recreation Department staff provide interactive learning and recreational activities to local youth. Glencarlyn and the county's recreation department had previously offered separate summer programs, but GMU faculty worked with community teachers and staff to

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U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development



Office of Policy Development
and Research

Merrimack College Fights High Dropout Rates in Local School System

Spurred to action by the alarmingly high dropout rate for high school students in Lawrence, Massachusetts, the Urban Resource Institute at Merrimack College is working with the local school system and teachers to help area grade school, junior high, and high school students navigate around obstacles in the education system. Four Merrimack programs, all funded in part through the COPC grant program, provide a range of assistance to students, including career counseling, science enrichment, college preparation, and mentoring.

"If you look at the dropout statistics, you see that kids often drop out of school when they are going through a transition, such as from junior high to high school," says Scott Gage, director of Precollegiate Programs for the Merrimack College Urban Resource Institute (MCURI). "These programs try to eliminate barriers that kids face in moving to the next step in the education system."

Through MCURI's Focus in Transition program, about 20 Merrimack students work with approximately 100 junior high school students who are preparing for the transition to high school. College students can choose to enter into a two-year contract to mentor teens or to help with existing afterschool programs. Mentors help with homework and plan activities centered on career awareness. For one such activity, a Merrimack physics professor was recruited to teach lessons on aeronautics by building and testing paper airplanes.

For six years Merrimack's Resources to Accelerated Integrated Science Education (RAISE) has been stimulating interest in the sciences among fourth, fifth, and sixth graders who are preparing to make the transition to junior high. About 90 elementary school faculty have been trained in teaching through experiments in an Eisenhower Foundation-supported program. Once trained, teachers may borrow science equipment from the college. RAISE hosts a free, one-week science camp, run jointly by school teachers and college faculty, for about 50 children. Elementary teachers praise the

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USD Faculty and Students Carry Out Service Learning in Local Schools

Service learning, which combines community service with classroom training and theory, has been an integral part of academic life at the University of San Diego (USD) for the past four years. USD has incorporated service learning into more than 70 courses and trained 40 faculty members in the approach. Now, through its COPC program, USD has joined forces with local schools and community groups to create a community-wide service-learning network in San Diego's multiethnic Linda Vista community.

"Service learning addresses a real community need identified by the community, has an academic goal that ties in with what is going on in the classroom, and contains a component of reflection that helps the student do a synthesis between the activities and what is being learned in the class," explains Judy Rauner, director of the Office of Community Service-Learning at USD. The ultimate goal for service learning is to provide students with a better understanding of academic issues while instilling a sense of civic responsibility, she emphasizes.

Over the past year 16 local teachers and members of community organizations have come to USD to participate in two workshops on service-learning theory and practice. The workshops stressed the importance of school-community partnerships in carrying out service-learning projects, with community organizations playing a vital role in educating students about issues facing the community. A forum, the K-16 Service-Learning Advisory Committee, facilitates the exchange of ideas on service learning among USD, area schools, and community organizations. The committee will soon begin evaluation studies to determine the effect

of the service-learning program in the community.

USD students also work with area public schools on service-learning projects. Some participate in service-learning events with local school children, others carry out a short-term student practicum in a community classroom setting. Still others engage in service-learning projects resulting in semester-long partnerships with an elementary or high school class.

In one practicum, a high school social studies class began by writing poetry about trees, then studied the live oak, indigenous to San Diego, which has now become an endangered species. The class talked with representatives from a local foundation working to preserve this species and later planted trees in Tecolote Canyon, near the USD campus. Throughout the project students kept journals to reflect on their new knowledge and appreciation of the local ecology.

In another project, USD students in an environmental biology class worked with students at Twain Continuation School, a junior-senior high school with special programs for troubled youth. The USD students explained how nonnative plants escape from gardens into the wild and threaten the existence of some unique native plants. Then the entire group began a community service project in Tecolote Canyon to remove invasive plants and replant native varieties, followed by discussions that linked the observable struggle of the native vegetation to Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest.

For more information contact Judy Rauner, Director of the Office of Community-Service Learning, at (619) 260-4798.

OUP Welcomes New Director

The Office of University Partnerships is pleased to welcome David Cox as the new director of HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP). Dr. Cox is on a one-year leave of absence from the University of Memphis where he is a senior faculty member in the Department of Political Science and codirector of the university's Center for Urban Research and Extension. A native of Indiana, he was educated at

Ball State University (B.A.), the University of Queensland, Australia (M.A.), and Indiana University (Ph.D.).

Dr. Cox has served as principal investigator on grants from agencies including the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Mental Health, The Henry

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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.

COPC Builds on Penn's Tradition of Assisting Community Schools

When the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Community Partnerships received a COPC grant in 1996, the university already had considerable experience in working with public schools. Much of Penn's extensive development work in the surrounding West Philadelphia community was based in school partnerships. Penn has worked for more than a decade to assist local Philadelphia schools become *community schools*. In the words of Ira Harkavy, associate vice president and director of the Center for Community Partnerships, community schools go beyond the usual educational role to "function as the centers of services, engagement, and activity within their neighborhoods." University City High School, for example, which has worked with Penn the longest, includes community themes in its curriculum, engages its students in neighborhood service projects, and brings in community leaders to moderate classes.

Working with local schools and community groups in the West Philadelphia area, Penn has developed extensive service learning programs that engage young people in creative work designed to advance their skills and abilities through service to their school, families, and community. The university now coordinates a year-round effort that involves 10 neighborhood schools, hundreds of children, parents, and community members, and thousands of Penn students, faculty, and staff. COPC funds are used to expand the coordination of outreach efforts such as those listed below.

School-to-work programs. At University City High, COPC funds have helped expand school-to-work programs. This program gives more than 100 students a chance gain job skills and career knowledge while working as interns with local employers, particularly in higher education

and medical institutions. University City High School teachers, in partnership with staff at Penn's Morris Arboretum, also developed a program that attracted six community youth to arboriculture training in its first semester.

In a 1997 COPC summer program, students from Sulzburger Middle School, West Philadelphia High School, and University City High School received Private Industry Council stipends while they learned geographic information systems (GIS) mapping, Web site design, and writing skills. The students mapped the Walnut Hill neighborhood, block-by-block, indicating assets and liabilities. The Walnut Hill Community Neighborhood Association will use the maps for future planning projects and grant applications.

Environmental education. Sulzburger students also studied water and overflow issues related to Mill Creek, a local river diverted into underground pipes in the 1880s. The middle school students are now incorporating neighborhood history and Mill Creek themes into the design of a proposed neighborhood miniature golf course.

In another COPC environmental initiative, Penn graduate students and University City High School students paired up last fall to study brownfield sites. They researched prior use of the properties, assessed the sites, and interviewed former owners and neighbors to document site histories. Students presented their findings to the Philadelphia Empowerment Zone advisory board to help the board create a reuse plan for each site.

For more information, contact Joann Weeks, associate director of the Penn Program for Public Service, at (215) 898-0240.

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HUD, ED Strengthen Connection

Universities bring not only the energy and skills of students and faculty to these partnerships, but also the capacity for research, William Apgar, director of Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, told the conference. "It is not simply what academics have to teach," he said, "but what we have to learn from a world of doers."

For more information or to receive a transcript from the joint HUD/ED forum, "Connecting Community Building and Education Reform: Effective School/Community/University Partnerships," January 8-9, 1998, contact Deborah Inman, director, National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, (202) 219-2032.

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Summer Enrichment Programs

design a new consolidated offering. In four, two-week sessions, Camp Alpha Adventure combines the two programs, emphasizing environmental studies and the arts. The camp's multicultural approach helps immigrant children feel more comfortable in their new country, while keeping them involved in learning and recreational activities throughout the summer.

Camp Alpha Adventure began in June 1996, with more than 150 children and a long waiting list. The program cost less than expected, so the founding partners were able to expand in 1997 to include an additional 50 children. The Greenbrier Learning Center, a local nonprofit organization that joined the partnership that year, helped Glencarlyn students build a pond in their school courtyard and study the ecology of an adjacent creek. The project allowed students to learn about the environment while improving their school grounds. The camp will continue in 1998 without COPC funds.

For more information, contact Todd Endo, the Urban Alternative Program, at (703) 845-1198.

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OUP Welcomes New Director

J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Kraft Foundation. From 1994-95, he served as principal investigator of a National Science Foundation partnership for minority scholastic achievement aimed at increasing the economic opportunities of African-American children in neighborhoods targeted for COPC activity. In 1995 the University of Memphis was awarded a COPC grant and, as coprincipal investigator, Dr. Cox implemented Maps to Success, a summer course at a Memphis high school in which students survey the streets and buildings to plot community assets on computerized data maps.

His experience at the University of Memphis as the coprincipal investigator for both the Community Development Work Study program and the COPC program, as well as his other work in creating university-community partnerships, will be valuable. Please welcome Dr. David Cox to his new position with OUP.

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Merrimack College

program, noting dramatic changes in the students' outlooks. Student participants now regularly purchase science-oriented books from their school book clubs, says Gage.

Another project—Merrimack's Women in Science program—involves working with about a dozen eighth grade girls to give them a sample of science applications with the goal of sparking their interest in science education. The eighth graders come to the Merrimack campus once a

month to work with science students and faculty in classrooms, in laboratories, and in the field.

Accept the Challenge, begun as an English enrichment program, has developed into a college preparation, career counseling, and scholarship program. Students who stick with the program through high school and are accepted at Merrimack receive a full, four-year scholarship to the school. More than 200 students have participated in Accept the Challenge, and

there are currently 25 program participants on scholarship at Merrimack. Eight former Accept the Challenge students now work as mentors through the Focus in Transition program, helping their middle school counterparts deal with some of the challenges that they once faced.

For more information contact Scott Gage, director of Precollegiate Programs for the Merrimack College Urban Resource Institute, at (508) 837-5468.

In partnership with Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, HUD is pleased to launch the Community Builders Fellowship program. The aim of the Community Builders Fellowship is to recruit and prepare a new generation of leaders—from diverse professions—who are committed to building a stronger, healthier American community.

To become a Community Builder you must have the know-how to help cities and towns access national assistance and cut through red tape. You must be able to help a community design an effective strategy to address a full range of needs—including housing, economic development, and homeownership. Those chosen will receive four weeks of training at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government during the two-year Fellowship. Fellows will serve on the front lines in one of 81 cities across the country—as HUD's front door—providing a critical point of contact for thousands of people who count on us. You will become the new face of HUD.

If you have the skills, the drive, and the desire to make a difference, you can become a Community Builder. To apply for a Community Builders Fellowship, call the information line at (800) 497-3823 or visit the HUD homepage at www.hud.gov. Application deadline is April 9, 1998.

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