CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION AS A CONTEXT FOR UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

James M. Frabutt

Catholic universities and colleges are committed to enhancing the quality of life both within and beyond the boundaries of campus. Intrinsic to the very nature and identity of a Catholic university, as articulated in Ex Corde Ecclesiae, is the "...advancement of human dignity and of a cultural heritage through research, teaching, and various services offered to the local, national, and international communities." Moreover, according to Ex Corde Ecclesiae, part of the mission of service to Church and society is relating "...especially to the academic, cultural, and scientific world of the region in which it is located." When these components of identity are coupled with Catholic higher education’s long-standing devotion to social justice and to “serving society and all its parts,” the critical foundation to support university-community partnerships is clearly in place. Catholic institutional mission and values provide an essential context for an ongoing commitment to the work of campus-community collaborations.”

Copyright © 2003 by Information Age Publishing, Inc.
All rights of reproduction in any form reserved.
fact, Caldwell, Domhidy, Homan, & Garazini noted that "Catholic institutions have unique contributions to make in these collaborative processes because their explicitly value-centered education provides a tradition within which to engage the challenges of collaboration."

HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS FOR UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

University-community partnerships, while resurfacing with renewed vigor, are not wholly new incarnations. Rather, they represent universities' return to their roots in terms of addressing complex societal issues. Universities have survived for nearly a millennium by being responsive to change. University roles and activities have been adapted and modified as a function of society's needs. For example, although the nineteenth-century German university served as the model for American research universities, in which the focus was on independent scholars devoted to decontextualized knowledge, this value has been challenged more recently. Lerner and Simon contend that universities "are currently engaged in discussions about the existence and validity of decontextualized knowledge, and about the legitimacy of the disciplinary and sociocultural isolation associated with such knowledge."

Indeed, there is historical evidence that universities have been responsive to the communities in which they exist and the challenges facing the local populace. The Morrill Act of 1862, later referred to as the Land Grant College Act, placed "service to society" at the heart of the university mission. Harkavy commented that "University presidents of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries worked to develop the American research university into a major national institution capable of meeting the needs of a rapidly changing and increasingly complex society." The president of Stanford University declared in 1903 that the twentieth century university movement must be "toward reality and practicality." Dating back to the turn of the twentieth century, universities (e.g., Johns Hopkins, Columbia, The University of Chicago) and progressive academics viewed the city as their arena for study and action. These urban centers provided the context in which practical knowledge and expertise could be brought to bear on significant issues of the day such as immigration, industrialization, and urbanization.

A MODEL OF ENGAGEMENT

In the contemporary milieu, emerging university-community partnerships are conceptualized as vehicles to bring both university and community expertise to bear in novel ways upon the theory-research-practice-policy mechanism. Importantly, in the execution of university-community part-
nerships, a distinct ethos has emerged for drawing upon the strengths of both parties. Specifically, to better meet the needs of broader society, universities have been called to move beyond outreach and service to a model of engagement. Holland described the engaged institution as

"...committed to direct interaction with external constituencies and communities through the mutually-beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, expertise, and information. These interactions enrich and expand the learning and discovery functions of the academic institution while also enhancing community capacity. The work of the engaged campus is responsive to community-identified needs, opportunities, and goals in ways that are appropriate to the campus' mission and academic strengths. The interaction also builds greater public understanding of the role of the campus as a knowledge asset and resource."^{13}

Whereas outreach and service connote unidirectional relationships in which the university's expertise and knowledge are transferred to key community constituents, the notion of engagement, as depicted in Figure 1, demands bi-directional relationships, reciprocity, and mutual respect between institutions of higher learning and the communities they serve.^{14} A model of engagement must necessarily be built upon "...a shared understanding of the differing, yet interconnected, missions of universities and community settings."^{15} Furthermore, a recognition of what universities can offer communities, and vice versa, is essential (see Table 1).^{16}

![Diagram](image)

**FIGURE 1**
A Model of Engagement for University-Community Partnerships.
TABLE 1
Bi-Directional Relationship between Universities and Communities, Ebata (1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Universities Can Do For Communities</th>
<th>What Communities Can Do For Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;Trigger or enhance ongoing collabora-</td>
<td>• Provide research sites or access to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tive efforts</td>
<td>research participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;Assist with needs assessment, pro-</td>
<td>• Assist in the development of meth-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gram development, and evaluation</td>
<td>ods and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;Provide policy analysis and educa-</td>
<td>• Provide opportunities for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tion</td>
<td>in the field for students and faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;Provide education and training</td>
<td>• Provide instructors with applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide community representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on promotion and tenure commit-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tees, departmental advisory boards,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and institutional review boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide incentives or supports for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>doing applied collaborative work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support collaborative research and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>outreach efforts by advocating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>changes in university priorities and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>faculty reward systems that would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>promote such efforts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Engaged scholarship represents an approach differing profoundly from that of academic scholarship, as it requires a culture that is conducive to scholarly activity such that the application of knowledge interacts with practice in such a dynamic way that new insights enlighten theory and practice. Lerner and Simon conceptualized the new American university as a wellspring to "...generate, transmit, preserve, or apply knowledge to address societal problems, as these problems are defined in concert with community collaborators." Boyer added that the new American college should take "...special pride in its capacity to connect thought to action, theory to practice." Some institutions have already embarked upon fulfilling this vision. The next two sections draw upon multiple case studies in order to provide an overview of the critical elements of university-community partnerships, as well as the barriers and challenges facing these emerging entities.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

A key component of a university-community partnership is collaboration. Over the last decade, collaborative structures have been invoked more frequently as innovative approaches to addressing critical social problems,
especially the well-being of children, families, and the communities in which they live have been developed. Collaboration, defined as a process that leads to the attainment of goals that cannot be achieved effectively by any one agent, leads to partnerships that are often mutually beneficial to the parties involved. This is especially so when the participants bring cultural sensitivity, trust, mutual respect, and commitment to the emerging relationship. However, a collaborative structure and the processes that emerge from it may not always be optimal. Examples of genuinely positive collaborative outcomes do exist, but it is common to hear stories of slow or negligible process. We have tagged this phenomenon ‘collaborative inertia’ and have contrasted it with the desired outcome of ‘collaborative advantage,’ in which something is achieved that could not have been achieved without the collaboration.

So how do partners in coalitions achieve “collaborative advantage”? Mattessich and Monsey and others have outlined the key factors influencing effective collaboration. In particular, drawing upon a review of eigh-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>History of collaboration or cooperation in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborative group seen as a leader in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political/social climate favorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Mutual respect, understanding, and trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate cross-section of members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members see collaboration as in their self-interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Structure</td>
<td>Members share a stake in both the process and the outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple layers of decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of clear roles and policy guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Open and frequent communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Established informal and formal communication links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Concrete, attainable goals and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unique purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Sufficient funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skilled convener</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
teen carefully screened research studies, their report indicates 19 factors
across six categories that influence the success of collaborations (see Table
2). Collaborative partners must strive to achieve realistic goals, employ
open exchange of information, and bring flexibility and adaptability to the
table.25 Viable collaborations most often result from the considerable
time, effort, and trust invested and nurtured by the parties involved.26
Moving beyond general factors that influence the success of collabora-
tive structures, several authors have described guidelines and steps to fol-
low in implementing collaborative university-community efforts. For
example, drawing on their experience in developing university partners-
ships with community programs, Denner and colleagues devised eleven
guidelines for building sound partnerships (see Table 3).27 Groark and
McCall articulated numerous guidelines for successful collaborations.28
First, they cited the centrality of the attitudes that both researchers and
community members bring to the collaboration, noting that each party
must be respectful of the skills and purpose of the other. Project selection
is a critical first step. The project should be meaningful and relevant to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steps for building university-community partnerships, Denner et al. (1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Steps for Building University-Community Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make goals explicit: University and community partners must clarify what they want to accomplish and be prepared for goals to change as staff and other resources and priorities shift.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choose a program and develop relationships: Listen to program staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choose your primary contacts: Some partners are more closely connected to a program than others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop a common language: Informal interactions help establish common ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn about the program’s history with research: Some communities have had negative experiences with researchers in the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Define roles in the partnership: Identifying the decision-makers is crucial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do research with theoretical and social relevance: Research questions must be relevant to both the program/community and theoretical and policy debates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have an early success: Begin with a simple task that is useful and can be readily accomplished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collect data together: Find ways for collaborative team members to be involved in data collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make findings accessible: All parties have access to research summaries, while individual-level data are kept confidential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Produce products for multiple stakeholders: Tangible products include data, findings, and the infrastructure to support ongoing research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
both sides and have the potential to provide valuable and timely information. Linking key players and other stakeholders is one avenue for gaining collaborative opportunities and for ensuring that the proposed project/initiative/research will have relevance to the community. It is important to have a liaison person, perhaps in the role of project director or project coordinator, to facilitate cooperative linkages between university and community. Determining what partners will comprise the collaborative team must attempt to balance individuals with “...research knowledge, content knowledge, service techniques, administrative and management experience, and influence with funders and gatekeepers.”

A common mission, refined through discussions of group values and vision, serves as a foundation for the collaborative team to work together in a proactive, rather than a reactive, crisis-oriented manner. High-quality leadership, featuring fairness and an ability to motivate stakeholders is indispensable for a successful collaboration. Lastly, time and resources must be devoted to monitoring progress of the collaboration, with attention to stakeholders’ roles, performance, and advances made in reaching both short- and long-term goals.

BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Harkavy observed that making the case for the promise and potential of university-community partnerships is easy to do; “the hard thing is to figure out how to do it. The hardest thing of all, of course, is to actually get it done.” Just as research has articulated pathways to successful partnerships, attention has likewise been devoted to barriers and challenges in developing university community partnerships (see Table 1).

One frequently cited challenge is inherent in the department and disciplinary divisions that are a part of the university institutional structure, leading to the observation that while “communities have problems, universities have departments.” For example, a scholar studying adolescent risk behavior lamented the categorical approach of separate programs and specialized researchers: “Universities perpetuate this situation by departmentalizing knowledge into separate disciplines such as psychology, social work, public health, education, educational psychology, and so forth; and the learned journals follow suit. As a result, we have carved up our adolescents into many disconnected pieces, often losing sight of the personhood we claim to care so much about...” Despite the specialized, and sometimes insular, research foci on the university campus, “…most pressing questions of society do not fit nicely into single disciplines.” In the words of the Kellogg Commission Report, the perception is that “despite the resources and expertise available on our campuses, our institutions are not
### TABLE 4
Barriers and Challenges to Developing University-Community Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier/Challenge</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unclear Boundaries</td>
<td>• Since partnerships may cloud the distinction between a research effort and a community-based program, difficulty arises when mutual roles are poorly defined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disparate Goals</td>
<td>• There is a need to mesh the researchers' and community members' goals, and to define what is to be accomplished at the outset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>• The joint parties bring attitudes to the collaboration, based on past interactions and experience, that reflect different values, purposes, and reward structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>• Multiple parties have a stake in university-community partnerships, including university-based students, faculty, and administrators, and community-based agency personnel, funders, boards of directors, policymakers, and the media. The input and influence of these multiple stakeholders must be balanced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance and Suspicion</td>
<td>• Both parties may experience frustration if views are not heard and respected. Research and evaluation may be perceived only as methods to reveal program weaknesses and inadequacies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The &quot;Imperfect Laboratory&quot;</td>
<td>• University-community partnerships and the resulting research efforts will not typically be tightly controlled and purely experimental. A balance between this experimental ideal and research in applied, ecologically valid settings is critical.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

well organized to bring them to bear on local problems in a coherent way. In sum, the first hurdle for university-community partnerships is to overcome disciplinary boundaries and to focus on developing a shared vision, language, and strategic problem-solving approaches.

Though collaborative relationships can promise mutual benefits, communities sometimes fail to recognize this reciprocity in partnering with a research university. This difficulty in achieving reciprocity may result from a history of public frustration with the unresponsiveness of the university institution. As Caldwell et al. mentioned, a track record of purely research-driven projects creates a perception that the university is always taking from the community and not giving anything back. When long-term relationships and commitment of resources are absent, the com-
munity may feel victimized by what has been termed "drive-by research."\textsuperscript{39} As a result, a preeminent challenge inherent in university-community collaboration is gaining legitimate entry into a community. Research is suspect, especially in communities of color, where deficit models may have oftentimes been employed. Consequently, in some cases a trusting relationship needs to built from the ground up.

\textbf{UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AT THREE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES}

The vision of engagement—of linking educational institutions in relevant and timely ways with societal needs—has been realized by many public and Catholic institutions of higher learning. For illustrative purposes, three examples of university-community partnerships are described here: the Boston College Center for Child, Family and Community Partnerships, the Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame, and Saint Louis University's Neighbor-to-Neighbor community partnership.

The Boston College Center for Child, Family and Community Partnerships, located in the Lynch School of Education, was established in the early 1990s "...to foster comprehensive university-community initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for children and families in Metropolitan Boston."\textsuperscript{39} The interdisciplinary Center draws on faculty from all the professional schools on campus such as the Nursing and Law Schools and the Graduate School of Social Work. Under the aegis of the Center, community practitioners, researchers, and students work collaboratively to generate new knowledge, and improve practice with and service to children and families. Moreover, as a result of this process a new cadre of trained professionals emerges. Specific projects operated through the Center include a Juvenile Rights Advocacy Project, Tools for Tomorrow (a classroom-based strategy to assist urban students in making the transition from high school to work), and the Gardner Extended Services School Project, which offers a comprehensive after-school program integrating academic instruction with opportunities for enrichment, career development and family support services.

The mission of the Center for Social Concerns, established in 1983 at the University of Notre Dame, is to create formative educational and service opportunities in collaboration with diverse partners, calling all to action for a more just and human world. The Center for Social Concerns has pioneered interdisciplinary, community-based, service learning opportunities for students. For example, the Center works with Community-Based Learning Coordinators (CBLCs) in local partner agencies. Through this model, CBLCs arrange and supervise student placements, serve as a resource to students, and contribute to the ongoing develop-
ment of course-related learning opportunities. Through the Summer Service Learning Program, the Center integrates service, academic study, and partnerships with sites providing health care, domestic violence prevention, shelter, youth services, and education. From 1980 to 1999, over 2,000 students participated in summer service learning initiatives at national and international sites. The Center also supports community-based research efforts by providing course development grants to faculty, offering competitive grants for faculty-student-community member partnerships, and providing an annual faculty award to recognize engaged, application scholarship. Center faculty have recently engaged in scholarship related to two lines of inquiry: a) the relationship between religious commitment and prosocial behavior and b) defining the characteristics and correlates of students who choose to be summer service learning participants.

The Neighbor-to-Neighbor community partnership at Saint Louis University has been described as "...an attempt to live out the 'faith that does justice' through structures and processes that encourage reflection on the experiences shared among students, faculty, and community." Neighbor-to-Neighbor is a collaborative effort between Saint Louis University, Wyman Elementary School, Stevens Middle Community Education Center, and Blumeyer Village Public Housing. The partnership, funded through the University Community Service Program (UCS) of the United States Department of Education, is a mechanism to increase community capacity by building upon the assets and skills of low-income communities. According to Neighbor-to-Neighbor's project description, specific objectives of the partnership are to:

a. enhance the mechanism for collaboration among urban schools, university, and families;
b. enhance the service component of the academic experience for university students providing services;
c. develop a continuum of services for at-risk children in order to enhance their educational and developmental needs; and
d. provide resources and support services to families which will empower families and strengthen the community.

Multiple units within Saint Louis University have had involvement in the program: Communication Sciences and Disorders, Counseling and Family Therapy; Educational Studies, Law School, Psychology, Public Health, Public Policy Studies, Social Services, Small Business Development Center, and the Community Outreach Center. Through its ongoing efforts and initiatives the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program continually "...builds on the premise that the university and the community are interdependent and our relationships are best built on a sense of mutuality."
CONCLUSION

This chapter has synthesized relevant research and thinking on the context, definition, and execution of university-community partnerships; two concrete examples of university-community partnerships at Catholic universities were presented. The distinctive identity of Catholic universities and colleges, infused as it is with an unwavering devotion to social justice, make for fertile ground to support foster, develop, and sustain viable university-community partnerships.

NOTES


31. I. Harkavy, "Historical Evolution of University-Community Partnerships," *3*.


REFERENCES


