

# Challenges of Institutional Outreach: A COPC Example

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## Abstract

*The Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) experience at The Ohio State University (OSU) provided insight into the necessity of institutional change as well as valuable lessons for other actions necessary for development of effective theory-based outreach and partnership strategies within a large research university. The OSU COPC effort departed from usual university and community program approaches, opening new possibilities for building partnering capacity within the university and in the neighborhood.*

*The OSU-COPC reflects a community partnership effort that broke down very soon after award of the grant. Several factors in transforming the partnership into successful cooperation are described, including the unique set of circumstances of this project, faculty flexibility in reevaluating and revising programs, backing from the university administration and the COPC program, flexibility on the part of community partners, and persistence by all partners to form an equal partnership. Lessons learned as a result of conflict and its resolution are presented—the most striking of which is that university structure and resources are necessary but not sufficient for successful partnerships.*

This article presents an overview of the university environment, changes in institutional structures, commentary on partnership formation, analysis of conflict and resolution strategies, and reflections on lessons learned from this experience. The article seeks to increase understanding of why conflict occurs in a partnership despite efforts by one of the partners to provide a supportive, institutional environment and resources. The narrative describing the development of the COPC demonstrates clearly the dimension of structural support as a necessary-but-not-sufficient condition for successful partnerships and the importance of attention to process in creating partnership.

The COPC history at OSU reflects a partnership effort with local community groups that broke down early in the process after award of the grant. Several factors in transforming the partnership into successful cooperation are described, including the unique set of circumstances of this project, faculty flexibility in reevaluating and revising programs,

backing from the university administration and the COPC program, flexibility on the part of community partners, and persistence by all parties to form an equal partnership. The partnership history is critically reviewed using theoretical constructs from organization theory and social change. These constructs are used to identify and reflect upon the COPC program challenges in light of the community's and university's history and culture.

## The Environment for Outreach: University and Community Context

Current discussion in higher education focuses on the changing environment in which universities operate and their response to change. The environment is one of less governmental support, increased industry contracting, increased questioning of academia's purpose, and demand for greater accountability. Funding of public higher education has been challenged for its lack of emphasis on high-quality teaching and inadequate preparation of a labor force. Public higher education has been criticized for a failure to confront critical social issues, develop students' citizenship skills, and address research ethics. In response, leaders in higher education have called for an increased emphasis on teaching, a focus on problems and issues important for societal well-being, and a more inclusive view of scholarship that goes beyond traditional basic research (Schon, 1995).

The discussion within The Ohio State University is no exception. Former President E. Gordon Gee challenged administrative and faculty leaders to actively seek opportunities for outreach to confront problems facing business and social communities: "If we are to be a leading University of the 21st century, we must create a living partnership with business, industry, and the community.... [T]he true measure of our greatness will be if people believe in their hearts and minds that we make an impact on their lives." (Gee, 1997.) The current university agenda under the leadership of President William Kirwan continues to include an emphasis on outreach and engagement addressing important social, economic, and cultural problems in addition to enrichment of academic excellence, commitment to diversity, and increased quality and status of undergraduate education (Bhaerman, 1998).

This emphasis takes place within a university context that emphasizes a national and international research agenda and strong engagement with industry and government. The university context includes an historical emphasis upon training students to be productive contributors in a variety of capacities to the economic and governance sectors of society, using a classical model of land grant education to produce experts in a subject area. This historical setting, the current pressures on the university, and the size of the university combine to provide significant challenges to changing the university context to address local issues.

The increased attention to outreach and engagement in its own neighborhood also is part of a national pattern. A number of other urban universities have initiated efforts to create partnerships with their surrounding communities. The efforts at OSU were intensified by a heightened university awareness of the negative image of the surrounding neighborhood and the role of the university as a neighbor. The university district, located just to the east, and both north and south of the university, included approximately 1,500 acres and nearly 46,000 residents in 1990. The district had significantly higher rates of unemployment and crime than citywide averages, excessive density (and commensurate lack of green space), and significantly depressed rates of homeownership (about 11 percent). Due to the neighborhood decline, population actually decreased from 1980–90, with many students moving to other neighborhoods several miles from the university. The out-migration of students living in the densely populated neighborhoods proximate to

the university was associated with increased crime rates, substandard housing, and general neighborhood decline.

The revitalization effort also was driven by university dissatisfaction with the south campus area, located directly across the street from the southeastern corner of the university. This area included many bars that drew large numbers of students and citizens from central Ohio. The large numbers of patrons and visitors to this area, combined with excessive alcohol consumption, required a regular police presence to direct pedestrians and traffic. Irregular student “celebrations” led to occasional incidents of property destruction by individuals and groups, garnering the university unfavorable local and national media attention.

Of particular interest for this article is the effort to create a partnership with the neighborhood that lies just south and east of the campus. The neighborhood includes an area of about 0.4 square miles. The population was 5,464 in the 1990 census. Approximately 55 percent of the residents were Caucasian; 43 percent, African-American; and 2 percent, other racial identities. As of 1990 the homeownership rate was about 10 percent, and the vacancy rate was 16 percent. About half of all households were female-headed families, and 30 percent of the population above age 25 had a high school degree or equivalency. The 1990 census reported 17 percent of the civilian labor force in the two tracts to be unemployed. Just over half of the population in both tracts were reported to have incomes below the poverty level in 1989. Community transiency appears high, with only 26 percent of persons 5 years and older living in the same house in 1990 as in 1985. The overall demographic picture of the neighborhood was one of high transiency, unemployment, and poverty rates, and low educational attainment. However, the neighborhood also has an active neighborhood-based grassroots organization (NBO) and many neighborhood assets. These assets reflect the historical economic vitality, stability, and strength of the neighborhood that existed between 1920 and the 1970s, when socioeconomic indicators began to show declines.

Given space limitations, no explanation of the cause of the decline in the university neighborhoods is explored. However, in response to impact of the decline on the university and students living in the neighborhood, the university began to consider strategies directed toward revitalization of the district.

## The Environment for Change

Structural elements included in evaluation of university proposals for COPC grants include a supportive university environment and administrative structure, faculty commitment to community partnerships, and community willingness to collaborate. In this case, the university made a public commitment, through the establishment and financial support of structural entities and shifts in policy direction, to encourage and facilitate the formation of sustainable partnerships with university neighborhoods.

## Development of Institutional Structures

There is evidence at OSU that the emphasis on outreach and engagement with the community is more than rhetoric. An environment supportive of outreach has been created through formation of several structural entities, program activities, resources devoted to outreach, leadership development activities for training in outreach and engagement, and policies supportive of faculty involvement. The variety of structures and activities supporting outreach and community partnerships described below suggests that a number of building blocks for effective community partnerships are in place. Structural supports notwithstanding, the challenge remains to expand the number of faculty and graduate and

undergraduate students who are engaged in learning the approaches that support development of authentic partnerships, particularly with small, neighborhood-based groups.

One of the most significant commitments to change developed in response to an initiative of former OSU President Gee. In his 1995 address to the University Senate, President Gee called for change: “We must change the University culture... and lead an aggressive effort to rehabilitate the off-campus area, and make it more of a community for our University family and our neighbors.” (Gee, 1995.) President Gee’s initiative led to the establishment of a university-community committee that recommended the creation (in 1994) of a nonprofit corporation to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for revitalization of the university neighborhoods. The creation of Campus Partners was a watershed event for OSU in the evolution of community outreach. The primary agenda for Campus Partners was “... to actively promote projects and programs that can have an immediate positive impact on the neighborhoods.” (Campus Partners, 1996.)

Campus Partners’ initial activity was the development of the revitalization concept plan identifying priority needs and acceptable approaches to the revitalization effort. The plan, published in 1994, included 164 recommendations and received endorsement by community members, local civic and governmental entities, and the university. Physical improvements have been the most visible effort of university outreach. The initial work of Campus Partners concentrated primarily on public services, including trash removal, lighting, safety, street cleaning, code compliance, traffic patterns, and demolition of portions of the south campus area in anticipation of redevelopment on High Street, the main transportation and commercial corridor on the eastern border of the campus.

An indicator of the commitment to outreach is the OSU Board of Trustees’ pledge of up to \$28 million over a 5-year period to Campus Partners for redevelopment of university neighborhoods. The funds were allotted from the university endowment and unrestricted gifts and were intended to serve as a catalyst to other investors; to support projects of direct benefit to OSU students, faculty, and staff; and to improve the quality of life in the university district. Funds have been used to create a redevelopment plan, purchase commercial property (vacant lots and abandoned buildings) for development, subsidize purchase of homes by university faculty and staff, and support administrative and outreach efforts.

The importance of outreach from the university was underscored with the announcement of The President’s Council on Outreach and Engagement. The university president established this group in 1995 to provide support for outreach and engagement activities across the university. Its members are appointed by the president and represent 10 of the 17 colleges and 7 support units. The Council serves to increase legitimacy, visibility, and support for outreach and partnership formation.

A highly visible activity promoting outreach by faculty was a symposium sponsored by the President’s Council on Outreach and Engagement. University administration and faculty leaders met for a daylong discussion of the changing environment for higher education and the outreach process. The focus of the meeting was the importance of outreach and discussion of strategies for promoting outreach and engagement activities with an emphasis on outreach to all Ohioans, including the business community.

A third entity formed to emphasize outreach is OSU CARES (Community Access to Resources and Educational Services), a program of the university president and OSU Extension to facilitate formation of teams to address problems facing Ohio residents.

OSU CARES' mission is to link the existing work of OSU Extension in agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer science, 4H, and community development with other academic units of the university and the community.

In addition to the formal structure initiated by the Board of Trustees, a grassroots effort by faculty interested in the human side of university revitalization developed. A group of faculty committed to development of authentic partnerships with university neighborhoods formed Campus Collaborative in 1995. There were no appointments by central administration and no funding for proposed programs—just a group of faculty, students, and staff committed to a vision of a university district more connected to the teaching and learning activities of the university. The group initially developed recommendations for work in five areas: faculty participation, health and well-being, economic environment, students' quality of life, and stronger schools (see Exhibit 1).

## Exhibit 1

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### Campus Collaborative Mission

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- To integrate the academic work of faculty, staff, and students into the Campus Partners project to revitalize University neighborhoods, especially in the areas of faculty participation, health and well-being, economic environment, students' quality of life, and stronger schools.
  - To create a model for university-community partnerships by expanding opportunities for collaborative community-based teaching, learning, and inquiry by residents.
  - To build on community assets by making the resources of the University available to the larger community.
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The initial work of Campus Collaborative was funded by several colleges, departments, and offices in the form of faculty time, assignment of graduate associates, and direct funding.<sup>1</sup> After the first year of operation, the university allocated \$50,000 to be used for seed grants to encourage faculty projects in the university neighborhoods. In 1996 the university pledged a total of \$500,000 over a 5-year period to support the seed grant program and related administrative and program development costs of the Collaborative. As of August 1998, three rounds of grants had been funded, resulting in approximately 30 faculty-initiated projects ranging from encouraging participation in the arts by area youth to providing education on taking care of pets. In addition, the Campus Collaborative attracted \$1,015,000 in grants and contracts and \$710,000 in current and deferred development fund contributions.

Campus Collaborative is currently a consortium of 41 academic and administrative units and 6 community partners. Campus Collaborative has assumed a leadership role in fostering activities to ensure engagement of faculty and students in the revitalization of the university district. The Collaborative facilitates and promotes individual and interdisciplinary faculty projects supportive of service learning and cooperative ventures. The Collaborative's most visible projects are the annual University/Community Forum, which examines aspects of living and learning in the university neighborhoods, and the Seed Grant funding.

## Challenges to a Successful Partnership

### University Promotion and Tenure Rules

Despite these steps by the university to foster faculty participation in partnerships, challenges to these activities remained. Faculty are necessarily concerned with, and their choice of projects guided by, the university policy on promotion and tenure. Just as at many other large universities, issues surrounding the inclusion of outreach in evaluation for promotion and tenure at a large research university are complex. On the one hand, university administration, including the president, provost, and president of the board of trustees, issued statements supporting the need for outreach and engagement with community and business groups. In 1995 former OSU President Gee called for a reward structure supporting outreach and teaching. "The challenge, then, is to devise a reward structure that acknowledges our participation in learning, wherever that takes place. If we find appropriate incentives for excellence in learning, we will renew our commitment to the core values of this land-grant university." (Gee, 1995.) The following year, the president reiterated this challenge: "We must reward service and make engagement a priority because it is our mission, our obligation, a standard of greatness... and our future depends on it." (Bhaerman, 1996.) Support for increased emphasis on outreach was echoed by the university trustees. "... through the research and scholarly activity of our faculty, we create the knowledge the people, organizations, and businesses of Ohio need. What we do makes a difference.... We have an obligation to share our expertise." (Shumate, 1997.)

The reality of departmental promotion and tenure (P&T) documents was not as clear as the administrative vision. One faculty group commented on the importance of outreach in the tenure and promotion decision ("Ohio State University," 1997):

The Faculty Senate ... gave authority to Departments to change P&T criteria, which would allow them to increase emphasis upon O&E (Outreach and Engagement) but departments throughout the university apparently did not believe that the Senate was truly giving departments this authority. As a consequence, departments reissued their P&T criteria without increasing O&E's importance. With the official barrier to changing P&T eliminated, now the barrier is the perception that the departments have not really been given authority, and a strong norm in academia that research is the measure of quality in an academic. It was agreed that the faculty themselves were their own worst enemy, in that they would continue to seek the prestige of publishing and obtaining a strong reputation in the academic community as researchers, and would not embrace change which they believed as good, but which would bring question upon their reputations. This dynamic of resistance to O&E and service was seen as amenable to change over time, as faculty increased their courage to move forward to a new balance of research, teaching, and O&E.

The effort at OSU to change promotion and tenure criteria to include rewards for outreach and engagement is problematic. The preceding summary of faculty discussion of changes in criteria provides insight into the confusion over the reality of the rules. Further, faculty are likely to be concerned about meeting expectations for academic credentials at other institutions with mixed emphases on outreach and engagement.

Although the question of consideration of scholarship demonstrated through outreach and engagement in the promotion and tenure was not a central issue to the COPC at OSU, the discussion is included for several reasons. The recognition by university administration of a more complete view of scholarship provided support for participation in a COPC project. Faculty who heard the administration message believed their work would be

viewed as worthy scholarship and as complementary of the university direction and so were less reluctant to devote considerable portions of their time and effort to an outreach project.

In this case, university members of the COPC team were tenured faculty or research or administrative staff. However, conflict between the administration's message and the faculty interpretation became apparent when one of the team members submitted a dossier for promotion. The promotion was supported at the department level and endorsed by the department chair. The college committee, however, voted against the promotion, stating that the recent accomplishments associated with the COPC project were deemed as service, not scholarship. Thus the record of research was judged as not meeting the criteria for excellence. In the end, the college dean supported the case on the grounds that the work met the test of worthy scholarship and provided a strong contribution to the mission of the department and the college. The promotion was subsequently approved at the university level. This case demonstrated clearly the conflict between rhetoric and the reality of measures of scholarship in a research university.

### **Differences in Size, Culture, and Process**

The groups that joined to form the community outreach partnership center were faculty from a large university who were accustomed to high levels of bureaucracy, staff from a neighborhood social service agency (SSA) who were somewhat accustomed to hierarchical levels of decisionmaking, and a representative (president) from a neighborhood-based organization (NBO) whose operation was more dependent on the actions of one leader. The SSA was formed in 1898 in a neighborhood south of the university district. Staff from the SSA agreed to participate in the projects proposed for the COPC, including initiatives to strengthen existing job-readiness and community connectivity programs and to develop new initiatives for job creation.

The NBO was a recently formed neighborhood group. Although the creation of the NBO was supported by the SSA, the two groups had not always agreed on approaches to dealing with community issues. Despite the differences between the two community groups, the OSU COPC team believed that both should be included in the proposed project.

The strategy used to write the proposal was a discussion of possibilities first by the group of university faculty and then by faculty and representatives from community groups and agencies. Following discussion and agreement on general content in the large group, university faculty were assigned to work with community partners to draft the individual sections of the proposal. The university faculty believed the process of using subcommittees to draft portions of a larger product, an accepted practice in academia, to be an appropriate and efficient means of completing the task. SSA staff participated in conceptualizing the overall project and gave full support to the proposal. The NBO president did not attend any meetings of the entire group, but met twice in private with two representatives of the larger OSU group to plan one component of the grant, the Enterprise Greenhouse. The Enterprise Greenhouse is a resource to assist community residents in starting small businesses in the neighborhood. It proposed provision of inexpensive office space, shared support staff, office equipment and training in office skills. The plans for that component of the COPC proposal were discussed in the smaller group and incorporated into the grant application, which was approved in an early draft form by the NBO president. Thus the final grant application was perceived by university personnel to have been developed with ample opportunity and input from the appropriate application partners.

The proposal to establish a Community Outreach Partnership Center was submitted in July 1996. The local name for the COPC was Universities in Neighborhoods (UIN). The proposal contained four components: job-readiness training, family and housing stability, the Enterprise Greenhouse, and a dialogue bridge. OSU was notified in September 1996 that the grant had been funded. Shortly after notification of the grant award, open conflict among participants ensued. A timeline highlighting selected aspects of the conflict is shown in Exhibit 2.

## Exhibit 2

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### Timeline of Formative Activities of OSU's Universities in Neighborhoods (UIN) COPC

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- September 20, 1996:** Universities in Neighborhoods COPC funded for a 3-year project.
- October 1, 1996:** Initial meeting of OSU principal investigators (PIs). Discussed need to establish Planning Committees for each of the four components. Community partners would be invited to next meeting.
- October 17, 1996:** Initial meeting of PIs and community partners (NBO invited but unable to attend). Each representative talked about his/her contribution to the project, concerns with project time and commitments, linkages with ongoing programs. Concerns from NBO were brought by one of the PIs, including use of funds and identification and labeling of community residents.
- October 28, 1996:** Meeting of UIN project director and representatives from NBO. NBO disagreed with COPC dollars going to OSU. Requested \$110,000 for nonrestricted funds for NBO. Listed mistakes in grant proposal and stated that NBO did not endorse, support, or agree to the application.
- Meeting of PIs to discuss concerns raised by NBO at a meeting earlier the same day. NBO concerns: NBO not adequately consulted about content of the proposal, factual errors in the proposal, and grant does not address needs of NBO. OSU PIs believed grant development was based on relationships/plans developed in the Campus Partners process and on conversations about ideas for development of Enterprise Greenhouse. NBO was invited to all grant-writing meetings but no representative attended. University administrators (at level of dean and vice president) were informed and consulted.
- November 25, 1996:** UIN meeting with representation from NBO. Discussion of need for more complete knowledge of community resources, development of Web page, asset survey, community involvement in implementation of the grant, implementation of the dialogue bridge, and the need to develop descriptive piece to describe the work of the grant.
- December 18, 1996:** UIN staff meeting; reports from project components; plans for community meeting.
- January 14, 1997:** UIN staff meeting; reports from project components; plans for community meeting.
- February 4, 1997:** NBO letter to project administrator (handed to graduate associate at UIN staff meeting on February 5.) NBO identified issues of concern: content of a second grant received by OSU faculty in collaboration with SSA and focusing on Weinland Park neighborhood; concern that NBO was not involved in the project; and demand that COPC work be stopped pending February 20 community meeting. Agreed to arrangements for February 20 meeting.
- February 5, 1997:** UIN staff meeting; planning for February 20 community meeting.



- February 20, 1997:** Community meeting held to elicit community concerns and ideas. Nominal group technique poorly received by participants, perceived to be duplicative of NBO planning meetings.
- February 25, 1997:** NBO sent letter to U.S. Senator objecting to HUD grant and claiming that misrepresentation of NBO involvement in the proposal was sufficient to have led to improper award of grant.
- March 12, 1997:** Meeting with PIs and OSU administration, followed by a period of many meetings within OSU and between OSU administration and NBO. OSU administration have telephone conversations with NBO leadership.
- March 14, 1997:** OSU response to U.S. Senator.
- March 18, 1997:** UIN staff meeting; relationship with NBO discussed; results of community meeting discussed; implications for program direction. OSU administrators meet with NBO board and agree to indefinitely put work on hold.
- May 5, 1997:** OSU administrators/NBO hold conversations about how to put the grant initiative back on track.
- May 15, 1997:** OSU administrators attend NBO board of directors meeting.
- July 7, 1997:** Letter from NBO stating intent to resume participation in the grant planning and implementation process.
- July 31, 1997:** Excerpt from report to HUD: "...discussions with NBO, a key community partner, have delayed implementation of most of the project because working on that relationship is critical to this project and any future work in this community. The favorable dimension of that situation is that we are still in dialogue and believe that we will soon have a stronger working relationship that will allow us to move forward in a way that will have more lasting effects. Given that this process has already taken over 8 months, we anticipate the need for an extension."
- August 5, 1997:** OSU administrator/PI/NBO come to agreement on a plan for the grant programs; four task groups; elimination of plan for Dialogue Bridge.
- August 6, 1997:** Memo from OSU administrator to all partners asking for approval of interim report to HUD and draft of letter listing grant task groups.
- August 8, 1997:** Memo from OSU administrator to NBO summarizing agreement on work plan.
- November 3, 1997:** Memo from OSU administrator listing results of negotiations with community. Agreement to focus on five programs—communication, Enterprise Greenhouse, family/housing stability, job training, and evaluation.  
HUD site visit planning meeting for all partners.
- November 10, 1997:** HUD site visit.
- December 15, 1997:** Letter from OSU administrator with report of site visit. Excerpt from HUD letter: If I have a major concern, it is that the low-income residents of the neighborhood do not seem to be directly involved in planning and implementation of the grant. I would suggest that these individuals need to become more involved in the process, particularly those living in Section 8 housing. I hope that OSU will find a way to have more visible representation of the low-income residents in the next 2 years of the grant activity.
- January 13, 1998:** UIN staff meeting for all partners.
- March 9, 1998:** UIN staff meeting for all partners.
- June 15, 1998:** UIN staff meeting. New convener, nominated by NBO president, unanimously selected.

## Analysis of Conflict

Concepts from cultural anthropology may be used to gain insight into the belief systems that fostered the differences in perspective of the COPC partners. Kempton, Boster, and Hartley (1995) state that cultural anthropology examines the meaning and prevalence of beliefs in order to understand beliefs of individuals and cultures. We observe three major cultures in this collaboration: small community organizations, represented by the subculture of the NBO; social service agencies, represented by the subculture of the SSA; and universities, represented by OSU; and, in a further subculture, the HUD COPC team.

Hoffer (1951) proffers an explanation of conflict between organizations based on variances in organizational beliefs and practices. Larger organizations tend to be bureaucratic. Decisionmaking in larger organizations requires extended interaction within the organization and may require long periods of time for action. Persons working within these organizations are accustomed to long meetings, extended periods of time between discussion and action, and complex review and approval processes required for some types of actions. The process is even more complex within the subculture of OSU, given its size (it is the second-largest single campus in the United States, and it has more than 4,000 faculty, nearly 50,000 students, and 14,000 classified civil service and professional staff on all campuses).

University faculty are accustomed to a modus operandi of lengthy meetings to conceptualize work and trusting details and final decisions to the discretion of a smaller group of faculty. If final review approval is desired, this is usually made explicit. In the absence of such a request, any differences are generally recognized to be amenable to discussion at a later date.

Hoffer notes that large institutions are frequently viewed by individuals and small organizations as resource-rich, powerful, nonresponsive, and potentially overwhelming partners. In contrast, Hoffer observes that small organizations often have severe resource constraints, including a small leadership core. Small organizations frequently form around ideas and a specific agenda. They may be highly dedicated to advancing that agenda through adversarial and confrontational methods. The small organization may develop a belief that it has the true view of the cause of a problem and what actions ought to be taken. Grassroots organizations are often led by those whose rhetoric reflects a polarized view of a problem and an “us” and “them” stance on issues. Such leadership may not be accustomed to working with large organizations and views their cultural behavior with suspicion.

Hoffer’s analysis appears to provide a basis for analyzing the conflict between the NBO and the university. As noted above, the NBO began as a small ultra-grassroots organization. As a small community organization, the NBO was open to leaders described by Hoffer as true believers. Such a leader tends to polarize situations, hold leadership closely, have a high degree of certainty that only they have the correct view, and view large organizations as part of the problem (Hoffer, 1951). In the conflict (outlined in Exhibit 2) between NBO and the University, a cultural conflict between two very different organizations is described. The NBO viewed OSU as a part of the problem, perceiving it as a large, self-absorbed institution that neither cared for the communities on its borders nor perceived the adverse impact it had on them. Further, the NBO saw the potential implementation of the project as a loss of neighborhood control. The possibility of activities being driven by OSU rather than by neighbors was a very real concern.

Cultural differences between the groups were evident in several ways. The subculture of the HUD COPC team at OSU was accustomed to collaborating within OSU, having

certain norms of behavior and expectations for partnerships. The norms included taking responsibility for communicating with colleagues on matters of common concern. The OSU subculture includes high connectivity through telephone, voice mail, e-mail, and fax. Another university norm is the occasional period of intense interchange necessary to make decisions and finalize documents. During the period immediately preceding the deadline for submitting the COPC proposal, members of the writing team exchanged drafts by e-mail and asked questions and made comments via telephone almost daily. The university culture also includes norms for meetings, including attending scheduled meetings or accepting the results of action taken in one's absence. In cases in which acceptance is too deleterious to individual or programmatic interests, the usual action is to engage colleagues to attempt to remedy such situations. In the absence of remedies, the ideal (not always met) is to accept consequences and to work for increased collaboration. Given these differences in cultures, the conflict between OSU and NBO appears to have been inevitable unless a strategy to avoid such conflict had been employed.

Reconstructing the details of the conflict is difficult, and a reconstruction with high specificity will not be attempted (except for the account provided in Exhibit 2). It must also be clearly stated that this analysis is made only from the perspective of the university. Community partners might well provide very different perceptions of events—their causes and their outcomes—as well as a contrasting characterization of their culture and that of the university.

This account seeks to highlight certain dynamics using Hoffer's approach. Given the university culture of communication and collaboration, the HUD COPC grant application process was relatively normal. It was rushed, but the content was based on conversations with community groups over a period of months prior to the submission. The OSU writing team sought to revise and extend content to fit the grant requirements. The OSU team launched the task with a tacit understanding of the writing/rewriting process—based on experience with university procedures and timeframes, familiarity with one another, and mutual trust—to create an acceptable final document. The final document was perceived by the university to have had full opportunity for input and support by partners.

During the writing process, the SSA attended meetings and participated in conceptual development. The NBO participated only through private meetings and discussed only the components of the grant of direct interest to its initiatives. Due to time constraints, the university submitted the proposal without sending the complete document to all partners for final approval. Following award of the grant, the NBO indicated its strong opposition to this practice and attacked the grant application for not including its input. Conflict between the NBO and the OSU team over errors and content of the proposal ensued. The university team responded by acknowledging mistakes to the NBO and trying to move forward.

After the initial conflict over content and review was quelled, problems linked to the timing, style, and conduct of project management and oversight meetings arose. The initial meeting of the entire COPC team, including neighborhood and agency partners, was held at OSU during working hours. The NBO president, a self-employed businessperson, took time to attend the meeting. However, the time of the initial and subsequent meetings, the burden on the organization due to insufficient volunteer capacity to send representatives to meetings, and the location of the meetings reinforced the perception of OSU's insensitivity, size, and desire to control the planning and implementation.

The conduct of meetings inadvertently may have contributed to additional conflict. Meetings were called and coordinated by the grant administrator. This practice, normal in the

university culture, added to the perception that OSU sought to control the project. The meeting format emphasized reports from the administrator and team partners. This style resulted in university personnel dominating the meeting as they presented the results of their work. Such a format discouraged dialogue and thus reinforced perceptions of power residing in the university. Within the norms of the university, any significant problem that requires redress is expected to be raised by participants prior, during, or after meetings. However, the perception that the university had the power and did not care to engage in dialogue may have been created through the meeting format.

It is interesting to note the importance the university attaches to meetings. The university is accustomed to placing a high priority on formal notification and meetings. University culture values such events because they make extended discussions and general working agreements concrete and specific. The community organizations view meetings conducted in this manner as disrespectful of their time and a demonstration of large institutional power and insensitivity to inclusiveness.

When viewed through these dynamics, the NBO attack upon the university appears to make more sense. The university did make significant errors in the way it developed, processed, and implemented the proposal. In attempting to rectify this situation, the university response included a commitment by senior administrators to support the grant by meeting with the NBO, assuring it of OSU's concern and commitment. The conversations focused on specific efforts to be responsive to the community within the constraints of the grant. During the time of these conversations (about a 5-month period), work on the grant was suspended and NBO leaders and OSU administrators developed a new work plan within the bounds of the original proposal. OSU's efforts to address the NBO's perception of university dominance helped ameliorate the problem. Likewise, the increased effort of NBO members to adopt less of a "true believer" approach to leadership and less of a confrontational approach to problems contributed to a successful resolution. In addition, program leaders at HUD were supportive of OSU's efforts to develop a successful project.

## University Outreach in Practice: Lessons Learned

Reflection on the 2 years of a university-community partnership provides a number of lessons useful for future projects. Lessons include the necessity of strong university commitment to partnership projects as demonstrated by institutional structure to encourage and foster partnerships; the significance of the difference in cultures of a large research university, a community agency, and a community resident-based group; issues of control for the participating groups; problems associated with timely and useful communication between groups; and the importance of full participation and disclosure in all discussions and decisions with an emphasis on complete equity between all partners.

Support for community partnerships was provided by university administrators in the form of organizational structures created to foster outreach. Administrators also demonstrated willingness to participate in leadership roles in partnerships. Despite these positive steps, conflict developed within the COPC partnership. The university faculty learned that just having the structures in place to support partnerships was not adequate. Additional attention to the partnering process was required.

Part of developing an effective partnership is attention to differences in cultures of the partner organizations. The cultures in large and small organizations operate differently, as noted in the section on conflict analysis. University faculty are accustomed to long and numerous meetings with an emphasis on process and the expectation that action will occur only after careful examination and analysis of the problem at hand. In contrast,

community groups are more pressed to take action and produce results in a timely manner. If the community problem is drive-by shootings, the perception is that there is no time to study the problem for 6 months in order to take the most appropriate action. Thus community groups may perceive the university as ineffective and unable to tackle real-world problems in a timely manner. Conversely, the university group may perceive the community group as not adequately analyzing the problem.

Another element of willingness to commit time for meetings devoted to planning is the expectation that faculty will write proposals for external funding on a regular basis. Faculty are willing to invest in the process for the chance of reaping job-related rewards for grants awarded. The time in meetings and writing is seen as a necessary investment for reaping a potentially large return. Rewards for community organizations are only realized if the grant is awarded, and rewards are generally not received at the personal level.

OSU is a large, public university, and as such presents difficulties for cooperative ventures across departments and colleges. Due to the school's large size, faculty may not be aware of similar or complementary interests of colleagues in the building/college/department located next door. The structure offered by Campus Collaborative facilitated the removal of barriers to cooperative work. As a physical meeting place for faculty from more than 40 units on campus, Campus Collaborative offered a means for the exchange of ideas and development of trusting relationships. As an administrative entity with staffing provided by the Interprofessional Commission of Ohio, Campus Collaborative assisted with overcoming the bureaucratic hurdles to multidepartment grant writing. Campus Collaborative staff provided leadership and training in collaborative program development and assisted with grants administration and program management.

Sensitivity to differences in culture is a lesson to be learned for successful partnerships. Large-culture group members must be sensitive to differences, explain their usual ways of approaching jobs and the constraints under which they operate, invite smaller group partners to propose preferred working methods, and discuss ways to work together within those constraints.

A second lesson related to community partnerships relates to the desire for control. The potential for conflict between the different-sized groups is almost a given. Hoffer's thoughts on differences in organizations are instructive in this case. The small organization may be threatened by the perception of the powerful large organization and fearful of loss of control in their own neighborhood. The control issue is extremely complex and includes fear, uncertainty about differences in approach and even in vocabulary, and variations in individual personalities. One of the questions that the larger group must face is whether conflict is centered in personalities or in approach. In this case, the authority of the neighborhood-based group seemed to rest with the association president. The COPC team was unsure about the extent to which the president spoke for the total neighborhood.

Another issue of control is ownership of and access to resources. The small neighborhood-based organization may perceive that the larger organization controls an abundance of resources. Community-based groups viewed the university as a treasure trove of resources and questioned the need for grant dollars to be directed to the university. Certainly that perception is plausible when one reads the budget figures for the university or for one of its units. The reality is that resources may not be accessible by a particular group or at a specific time. For example, faculty committed to this project also may have been assigned significant teaching or administrative duties. Funds to provide assistance in fulfilling the totality of responsibilities are not present in the regular budget; thus, external funds may be necessary to cover those expenses.

Lessons were also learned about communication—methods, styles, and timing. During the grant writing process, communication was achieved through meetings, telephone calls, and faxes. Electronic mail was used within the university but was not available to community partners. The method used to prepare the proposal was whole group meetings to discuss ideas. Attendance by agency staff at these whole group meetings was irregular, and NBO community representatives did not attend any total group meetings.

The total group developed ideas for the proposal from previously submitted proposals and from the history of discussion surrounding the university neighborhood revitalization planning process. Development of program areas, writing of those sections, and responsibility for interacting with appropriate community partners were assigned to individual university faculty/staff. Individual sections were submitted to the proposal coordinator for assembly into a cohesive package. No mechanism for approval of each idea by the entire group was included, and the finished product was not reviewed by subgroups before submission. Again, the culture of the large university—that is, reliance and trust to carry out the plans of the group—prevailed in preparation of the grant. Faculty in the university culture also recognized that resource constraints and applicable rules and customs from funding agencies and within institutions frequently provide final determination of what is possible.

Upon reflection on the grant writing process, the need for improved communication is obvious. Meeting schedules and locations could have been varied to include late afternoon/early evening times and community locations. After award of the grant, that change was made. Meetings are now conducted in the neighborhood rather than at the university.

The importance of university investment in development of partnerships cannot be understated. In this case, the intervention of senior university administrators with community group leaders prevented complete derailment of the project. One-on-one meetings with administrators gave power to groups and demonstrated OSU's commitment to the project. University support was essential in this case due to breakdown of the partnership. The university faculty group had worked together in the Campus Collaborative and were committed to the human service aspects of university neighborhood development. Thus a self-selected group of faculty/staff who had successful prior experience in working together formed the COPC proposal writing team. Each member of the group had community experience, and each had experience in the specific neighborhood proposed for the project. Persistence on the part of the faculty group was demonstrated in several ways. First, the successful proposal was the second attempt by faculty at OSU to secure funding for a COPC in the university neighborhoods. The long-term effort to obtain funding for a COPC demonstrates the dedication of the faculty to the revitalization effort and to a vision of engaging the university in the life of the neighborhood.

A final lesson is the necessity of full participation by all partners. Successful partnerships require adequate time to discuss, review, and reflect on the ideas of each group. Equity may be reflected in decisions concerning meeting location and structure. Achieving an equitable partnership must be an intentional process on the part of all partners.

In summary, supportive institutional structure, commitment by organization leaders, and commitment of resources are necessary ingredients for successful partnership formation. These components are not sufficient, however. Successful partnerships require attention to process, sensitivity to cultural differences and expectations, trust, and continuing open communication. A process to demonstrate sensitivity, develop trust, and foster communication is an absolute requirement. The formation of community partnerships requires

serious commitment on the part of all participants. Each group must recognize that partnerships are time intensive and carry responsibility to each other as well as to the project. Success requires that relationships be firmly established, which may require regular attendance at community meetings over a prolonged period and frequent conversations to build understanding of cultural and programmatic differences. In short, process matters. That said, we would be remiss if we did not also say that process must focus on achievement of results. Ultimate success in partnerships depends on demonstrating to the community that results can be achieved through partnering and that the process is a worthwhile investment.

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## Notes

1. Faculty time from 41 units has been assigned to Campus Collaborative projects, amounting to 27 individuals and 3.8 full-time equivalent employees (FTE). Appointments of graduate associates to Campus Collaborative projects amount to 3.75 FTE.

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