

# The Use of an External Organization To Facilitate University-Community Partnerships

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## Abstract

*This article examines the renewed interest in university outreach from the perspective of emerging conceptual frameworks for organizing outreach administratively. The authors argue that an intermediary external organization through which outreach efforts can be channeled has the advantages of diminishing the inequalities between universities and community groups, of generating trust between communities and universities, and of producing a continuity of involvement that can overcome the limitations of academic schedules and changes in assignments within universities. Continuity of involvement also provides the availability of technical assistance over time, an important facet because most significant projects require extended implementation periods during which activity is sporadic. Political autonomy is an additional dimension in which external organizations are frequently less encumbered than universities. The organization and experience of the Atlanta COPC is examined as a case study in this approach to organizing outreach.*

Increasing numbers of U.S. colleges and universities engaged in community outreach during the past decade. There are numerous reasons to engage in outreach. Colleges and universities may be concerned with the nature of the neighborhoods surrounding the campus and want to address problems in proximate slum neighborhoods that may limit student enrollment. This was perhaps the initial motivation for community involvement by universities such as Marquette, Yale, Columbia, and the University of Chicago. These schools were worried that the neighborhoods surrounding them had deteriorated to such an extent that they had become a significant liability. Another rationale for community outreach is the academic benefit. Communities can provide material, ideas, and opportunities for both research and classroom activities. In fact, the literature on service learning suggests that students learn more through that process than from regular in-class lecturing.

An extensive study done by Michigan State University (1993) looks at community outreach as simply a different way of teaching and doing research.

To some extent, outreach is a natural tendency. It is difficult to imagine an institution of higher learning that is so isolated from its surroundings that it engages in no outreach. By their very nature, professional schools find it in their interest to have some involvement in the surrounding community. Schools of law and medicine have traditionally integrated community practice and education. In business schools, small business development centers allow faculty to consult with industry and provide internships for students. Schools of education need close connections with school systems because they provide practice teaching opportunities and opportunities for educational researchers to observe them. Public administration, planning, and policy schools have connections with governments because governments can obtain advice from them and because they need information from governments.

But there is another reason for community outreach that has nothing to do with the direct self-interest of universities but instead springs from the belief that institutions of higher learning have an obligation to use their resources and expertise to address social problems. There are many extensively cited books and reports that have challenged universities to help do the Nation's work (Bok, 1990; Boyer, 1987; Kerr, 1982). This call for college and university involvement in community service includes a challenge to help low-income, inner-city neighborhoods solve the problems associated with poverty.

Few universities have a long history of institutional involvement in this kind of outreach. Many of those that do have pursued outreach of this sort not out of altruistic motives but because they wanted to protect their physical investment. However, outreach to poor communities has recently been spurred on by new grant programs, such as HUD's Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) and Joint Community Development programs, the Department of Education's short-lived Urban Community Service Program, and a program recently initiated by the Fannie Mae Foundation.

The goal of all these programs is to encourage not just community outreach but the establishment of university-community relationships. But because of the newness of these kinds of outreach programs, little is known about the way partnerships between universities and poor communities actually function. Two journals recently dedicated entire issues to exploring the role of the university in establishing and maintaining these partnerships: *Metropolitan Universities Journal: An International Forum*, spring 1998 issue, and *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, summer 1998 issue. In addition, HUD (1995 and 1996) published two reports that describe the projects undertaken as part of the COPC program.

A crucial question is the effectiveness of these partnerships. This depends upon the kind of interaction that goes on between the universities and the communities and whether or not the partnership is sustained. The type of interaction and the sustainability of the partnership depend to a great extent upon the kind of organizational structure that is used to link the university and the community. The structure of these programs will be different from the structure of other kinds of outreach programs. First, poor communities do not have the kinds of financial resources that government and business have to engage faculty as consultants or to pay for research projects. Poor communities do not have the institutional links with universities that government and business have. Furthermore, the expertise of faculty and students needed for this kind of outreach program is not found in one department as it often is for other kinds of outreach. Finally, faculty are naturally inclined to study a community rather than work directly to improve it.

Another special challenge faced by this kind of outreach is the complexity of any effort to improve a community, especially a poor community. This means that the organizational structure of the program will have to foster workable relationships with multiple entities and institutions. Not only must the structure produce an effective, sustainable partnership between the university and the community, it must also create relationships between various institutions whose assistance is needed, it must establish some form of cooperation with local governments and governing political coalitions, and it must, of course, have the capacity to function within the university.

The Atlanta COPC involved two universities, Georgia Tech and Georgia State University, that formed a partnership with an existing organization, the Community Design Center of Atlanta (CDCA). CDCA was not a partner in the sense that the universities provided outreach projects to CDCA. Instead, CDCA functioned as an intermediary. It could serve this role by being external to any of the partners, but with representation of the various stakeholders in the shared enterprise. That representation provided a voice for the various interests, a platform to identify shared goals, a means to share and coordinate tasks, and a mechanism for resolving conflicts. Critical to a COPC effort, the intermediary role helped to provide a structural solution to the inherent power and resource imbalances between universities and poorer communities. The purpose of this paper is to place the Atlanta COPC approach within the framework of other structures used for university-community partnerships, describe Atlanta COPC activities and the role that CDCA played in bringing about and sustaining those activities, and provide an analysis of CDCA's contributions and remaining challenges.

The Atlanta COPC approach is not unique, for example, Pratt Institute used a similar model. However, we know of no discussion of this approach in the literature. The purpose of this article is to explore the Atlanta COPC approach as a model for community outreach.

## Models of Community Outreach and Partnership

Checkoway (1997) identified four different kinds of administrative structures that research universities can employ to organize their community outreach activities. Though Checkoway looks at outreach in a broader context than just outreach to poor communities, his four models provide a good starting point for analyzing the outreach programs for these communities. Checkoway's four models are:

- The outreach function centralized at the president or vice-president level.
- The outreach function decentralized among academic units.
- Incorporating outreach into existing institutional units whose activities cut across the whole university.
- Using existing institutional structures to provide both incentives for faculty to engage in outreach and guidance for the outreach activity.

Each of these organizational models has its inherent advantages and disadvantages for creating university-community partnerships.

A good example of the first model is the outreach program at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). The project was organized in the Office of the Special Assistant to the Chancellor for the Great Cities Program. One advantage of having outreach centralized at this level is that it clearly signifies how much importance the university, or at least the administration, places on outreach. Wiewel and Lieber (1998) argue that putting the office under the Chancellor gave the UIC project a clear campuswide status. Faculty saw

participation as providing potential institutional benefits, and outside agencies, both the partners and funders, valued dealing with a high-level institutional representative. However, this kind of top-down structure also poses some risks. Some faculty may decline to participate because of the administration's involvement. Wiewel and Lieber (1998) note that it was important at UIC for the director to avoid the appearance of giving top-down directives. It is also possible that an administration will use a centralized program for its own purposes rather than for promoting university-community partnerships. A centralized program may result in outreach activities being tightly controlled rather than facilitated, and this might result in outreach activities being limited. Finally, if a centralized program is established to promote outreach generally, community service may be stressed less than other outreach activities. Central administration may be tempted to give community service less emphasis because it is harder to promote than other forms of outreach, and also because there is less external funding available for broad-based efforts at community involvement than there is for specific projects that provide technical assistance to governments, businesses, and school systems.

Decentralized outreach programs have the advantage of reflecting the decentralized nature of universities. However, this approach presents its own problems. There is no reason to believe that individual faculty members or individual departments will take up the cause of community involvement without acknowledgment and support from the administration. Another problem with decentralized outreach is that community outreach is interdisciplinary in nature, and community outreach programs must therefore cross departmental and college boundaries. This is difficult to do in a decentralized environment without strong support and incentives from inside the university or external funding from outside the university.

One way to cut across institutional boundaries is the third organizational model Checkoway discusses—incorporating outreach into existing institutional units. The University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum serves as a good example of a structure of this type. The forum is a consortium of five local colleges and universities based at the Institute of Urban and Regional Development of the University of California at Berkeley. Established in 1986, the forum has sponsored applied research on local issues by faculty and graduate students as well as convened leadership to respond to community outreach opportunities.

While this third option decentralizes outreach, it also overcomes the problems inherent in decentralization because the program is administered by someone in a position of authority. The program director represents the university in an official capacity and serves as a clearinghouse for requests for assistance. The challenge in this kind of administrative structure is finding the center or program in the university that can take on community outreach as a mission. Another challenge is finding or creating a center that can work across the entire university. A community outreach project housed in a center can become self-contained, either by choice or because of difficulties crossing college boundaries. If this happens, the program will not engage faculty from throughout the university, and the program can end up being one-dimensional.

In model four, instead of directly administering outreach projects, the central outreach office merely promotes, assists, and encourages faculty to engage in outreach through their own courses or as research. This is essentially the kind of outreach program established by Michigan State University (MSU). Instead of forming a partnership with specific communities like UIC did, MSU adopted certain target issues and encouraged faculty through initiation grants to form community partnerships. This outreach model combines the existing administrative structure with what an economist would call a "market solution" to institutionalizing outreach. The central administration provides incentives,

financial and otherwise, for individual departments or faculty to engage in outreach, but does so without the bureaucratic infrastructure of an outreach office.

Checkoway suggests that no single structure fits all universities (Checkoway, 1997). However, given the nature of the university and the needs of community outreach, we believe a centralized structure, either model one or three, is the preferred approach. The primary goal of community outreach is to form an enduring university-community partnership, and it is unlikely that a decentralized outreach program will result in such a partnership. Within the university there must be an institutional voice for community outreach that promotes and coordinates the effort. Individual faculty or departments can develop relationships with a community or community organization. But establishing effective, long-lasting partnerships requires more than the involvement of individual faculty members. One problem with a decentralized model is that “lone rangers” acting in the name of the university can damage the fragile partnerships that have been built up. There is a need to ensure that faculty and students are properly prepared for working in the community. Faculty who are new to the city but interested in engaging in community outreach may need assistance in establishing community contacts and discerning political structures. If the community outreach effort is decentralized, faculty may have a hard time identifying community representatives and developing the kind of trust and relationships required for successful outreach ventures. The decentralized model also fails to account for the multi-dimensional nature of community outreach. Faculty engaged in community outreach quickly learn that the community will request assistance beyond the expertise and the available resources of a single faculty member or department. If the faculty member wants to be responsive, he or she will have to be able to identify and recruit others on campus who can address the expressed community needs. Doing this successfully is difficult in a decentralized model.

## External Outreach Centers

The Atlanta COPC involved a partnership between two universities, Georgia Tech and Georgia State University. This partnership then formed a tripartite partnership with an existing organization, the Community Design Center of Atlanta (CDCA), that, although structurally and financially independent, was closely tied to one of the universities in the COPC and to many of the communities that were the focus of the COPC project. This three-part partnership was the vehicle for attempting to establish partnerships with the community and for undertaking several COPC projects. Thus the Atlanta COPC was not an “in-house” program, nor did it rely on an external organization that it controlled. The role of an external organization as an intermediary between the university and the community has a number of important advantages. First of all, a partnership between a university and community is inherently a partnership between unequals (Folkman, Percy, and Rai, 1998). The university approaches the partnership with its own agenda and its position of prestige, privilege, and authority. Feld (1998) observes that urban universities often encounter hostility from community groups that fear universities expanding into their neighborhoods and communities fatigued at being the subject of yet another study. To form a true partnership, the university must approach the community as an equal and be willing to share control of the projects (Ramaley, 1998). An intermediary will strive to make the partnership an equal one and to ensure that control of the projects is shared.

For a partnership to be truly successful, not only must both parties share equal power, but each party must also view the partnership as beneficial. This means that the university has to be flexible and acknowledge that not everything it may want to do will be valued by the community (Michigan State University, 1993). A third-party intermediary can facilitate negotiations between the university and community so that the interests of both are served

in a balanced way. Another problem inherent in university-community partnerships is that they function in an environment in which there is no clear authority. It is crucial, therefore, that both parties trust one another (Wiewel and Lieber, 1998). Trying to create trust is especially problematic when the outreach effort is directed at poor, inner-city communities. Indigenous leadership is often leery of offers from universities that in the past have either neglected their communities or simply used them as research laboratories. Since a third-party intermediary will have a closer relationship with the community than the university does, will be more familiar with that community, and will have a smaller and less intimidating office than a large university complex, the intermediary can help the university win the trust of the community and overcome its suspicions and hesitations.

Continuous involvement is another important feature of successful outreach programs. Rubin (1998) has posited that “continuity of involvement is important to both the community and the university.” Continuity is important because changes may occur within communities and within universities. The needs of a community may change, community leadership may change, the outreach goals of the university may change, and the faculty involved in outreach may change. The continuous involvement of a community outreach program ensures that the partnership will continue despite changes. An intermediary is better able to provide this continuity than an outreach program located within a university. Because of its independence, it will be less affected by changes within a university than an on-campus outreach program and less susceptible to the disruptions caused by changes within a community.

Rubin (1998) has also observed that changing circumstances and evolving community development may mean that the role of a university in certain outreach projects must change over time. This is also true of communities. As new problems arise, as communities focus on new issues, and as new opportunities arise, both partners must make the necessary adjustments. Each time a project is undertaken, the partners must decide what to do, who has responsibility for different tasks, and how to acquire resources. These decisions may require that changes be made in the partnership. In their description of the Neighborhood Initiative program established by UIC, Wiewel and Leiber (1998) observe that the success of the projects undertaken by the program depended on the ability of the partners to negotiate their positions in the planning stages and their willingness to adapt to the specific demands of each project. A third-party intermediary is an especially good vehicle for facilitating these kinds of negotiations. Because of its independent status, it can help both partners reach the kind of cooperative decisions that are needed to reshape the partnership for each new project.

A third-party intermediary can also help a university-community partnership overcome the constraints of rigid academic schedules. Agreements can be reached with the intermediary to close out incomplete projects and provide the ongoing technical assistance most projects require or could benefit from. The availability of a professional who will complete a report or finalize negotiations with a community group after the semester ends and the students have left avoids the *hit-and-run* syndrome that has offended so many communities that have been objects of university studies. The kind of continuous technical assistance an intermediary can provide conforms much more readily to the requirements of real-world projects than do academic schedules. There may be unanticipated midstream crises or opportunities that university schedules have difficulty accommodating. A financial institution may add stipulations, a funding agency may take an additional month to review an application, delays may trigger deadlines for other parties in complex deals. Progress toward completing real projects is frequently not linear. Setbacks are often followed by more setbacks before advances are made. Sometimes a political problem within a community group threatens a student project. An intermediary is better able to deal with

these problems than an on-campus outreach program. An intermediary has more flexibility to restructure a project to provide time for the community to resolve political conflict, and it can help students restructure their efforts so they can still accomplish their academic objectives and provide the community with a useful product. This flexibility increases the likelihood that projects will be completed and be successful.

## The Community Design Center of Atlanta and the Community Outreach Partnership Center

An example of a community outreach agency that is affiliated with a university but external to that university is the Community Design Center of Atlanta (CDCA). CDCA provides technical assistance to low-income neighborhoods and nonprofit community development corporations (CDCs) in community organization and development, neighborhood planning, architectural design and cost estimation, grant writing, real estate finance, project development, and development approvals. CDCA also conducts policy research on issues affecting low-income communities. In its COPC partnership, CDCA staff suggested potential projects, provided university faculty with introductions and entrée to community groups, helped negotiate and design specific projects, partnered on projects, advised on other projects, housed and supervised interns and graduate assistants, co-taught practicum courses in urban planning, played a central role in completing student-based projects, and provided follow-on technical assistance to many of the community groups the COPC engaged.

CDCA was created over a 4-year period from 1974–77 by faculty and students in the graduate city planning program at Georgia Tech. It was structured, however, as a separate 501(c)(3) center external to Georgia Tech. It receives its core funding from the city of Atlanta and additional funding from multiple other sources. It is governed by a board of directors with 11 members. A six-member majority consists of representatives of low-income community groups, primarily but not exclusively neighborhood organizations. Originally, the other five seats were filled by a Georgia Tech faculty member who co-founded the center, a representative from the city of Atlanta, two representatives from local chapters of planning and architectural professional organizations, and the regional director of the Community Services Administration, which at the time provided substantial funding. Over time, community representatives have been recruited from the lead citizen representatives of the most active neighborhood groups and CDCs. The board has taken care to seek politically astute and engaged residents. At the same time, to avoid identification with particular city hall political factions, community representatives who clearly intend to run for the city council have not been recruited. Officers on the board follow a pattern wherein the president has always been a community representative. Georgia Tech faculty have served as vice president and as treasurer. The current vice president is a community representative. Professional organization interest waned and the open noncommunity seat has been filled at various times by faculty from Morehouse College, Spelman College, Georgia State, and Emory who were actively engaged in community work.

Georgia Tech had both positive and negative reasons for adopting an arms-length relationship with the Center. The affirmative rationale was its recognition that a community-controlled organization had greater potential than did a university-controlled organization for building acceptance and trust in low-income communities and would be less susceptible to criticism as an intruder into poor neighborhoods. But the negative dimensions of the school's initial posture were its low regard for community service, its reluctance to commit resources to community service, and its trepidation over involvement in the political issues surrounding race and poverty.

The formation of the three-way COPC partnership between Georgia State University, Georgia Tech, and CDCA in 1995 was spurred by a new ethos of collaboration within the Georgia University System, by the opportunity to build on the well-established relationships CDCA had with communities, and by the fact that the two universities have different and somewhat complementary strengths. Georgia State has strengths in criminal justice, education, business, and a range of social science analytical capacities. Georgia Tech has strengths in neighborhood and urban planning, real estate and economic development, brownfields redevelopment, architecture, and geographic information systems. The COPC proposal offered a much broader array of resources than either school could offer individually and consequently a wide range of issues relating to poor communities: education, crime, housing, economic development, brownfields, real estate, and redevelopment. Thirteen of 18 COPC projects involved collaboration between at least 1 of the universities and CDCA.

Rubin, Fleming, and Innes (1998) describe how COPCs throughout the country have adopted a variety of approaches in organizing their community partnerships geographically. The approaches include concentrating on a single neighborhood, on sections of cities, on an entire city, and even on a region. The Atlanta COPC chose to focus on 12 different geographic areas. The reason for this is that the Atlanta COPC sought partnerships with neighborhoods and community groups that already displayed some capacity for solving problems, neighborhoods and community groups that were either already acting or preparing to act on their own behalf. Because these neighborhoods and community groups were dispersed geographically, the Atlanta COPC program consisted of a large number of relatively small, distinct projects.

## The Impact of the COPC/CDCA Partnership on Community Development

We turn to a discussion of the activities of the Atlanta COPC and how CDCA assisted these efforts. The Atlanta COPC has been reasonably successful at assisting in generating an array of community projects. Much of its focus in pursuing these projects has been either to help create new community organizations/institutions or to assist newly formed groups in taking their first action steps. In East Point, Georgia, a small city of 30,000 on Atlanta's southern border, the first black woman to be elected as a mayor in Georgia had fostered the organization of the residents of the Carver-Washington Homes public housing development into a self-governing residents association. The Atlanta COPC helped this newly formed association plan and execute its first project. It also provided assistance to new organizations when it created a peer-to-peer training program in which the staff of established CDCs served as mentors and resource people for the staff of newly formed CDCs. It undertook a similar project in the English Avenue neighborhood, where a neighborhood organization and CDC that the Community Design Center had recently helped form had matured to the point that they were ready to attempt an infill housing development project.

Two criminal justice initiatives targeted embryonic efforts to link projected shifts in Atlanta's organization of police services to community policing with expanded community capacities to collaborate with police and to monitor, report, discourage, and combat crime. When the Atlanta Project Grady Cluster, the proposed partner in the Citizen Academies criminal justice project, ceased to exist, the Atlanta COPC maintained its commitment to the geographic area by replacing the Grady Cluster with the Bedford Pines Village Residents Association, which represented the interests of the residents of a large, scattered-site Section 8 development.



The institutional change/institutional development emphasis of the Atlanta COPC was also evident in projects in which it assisted organizations in their efforts to undertake changes and improvements. It offered a rental management workshop for the boards and staffs of Atlanta area CDCs that focused on alternative approaches to property management and also tried to diffuse tensions between citywide and community-based nonprofits and explored the possibility of joint venture projects between individual nonprofits. It also assisted neighborhood-based CDCs by developing architectural adaptive reuse plans for adapting for other uses public schools that were scheduled to be closed. The Atlanta COPC also tried to expand the activities of the Atlanta Fulton County Land Bank Authority (LBA). It underwrote an effort to extend LBA capacities to areas previously unserved outside the city, and inside the city it organized four projects designed to increase the number of tax-delinquent properties redeveloped by CDCs. As a result of these efforts, two neighborhoods agreed to participate in schemes for infill housing development. In each of the first 2 years of COPC, 15 neighborhoods were supplied with analyses of development opportunities using tax-delinquent property, and a COPC brownfields redevelopment plan for a former industrial transportation artery in the central city relied heavily on tax-delinquent property in its recommendations.

One clear measure of the vitality of the Atlanta COPC is that after only 3 years of existence it has become an active participant in the city's community-based and community-oriented institutions. Building on the trust and confidence established by CDCA, it has established itself as a recognized resource for CDCs and low-income neighborhood groups. Its activities and its account of those activities in its newsletter and in its periodic reports to the Atlanta Housing Forum have resulted in its being included in the Forum's annual assessment of housing and the progress of community development. The Atlanta Housing Association of Neighborhood Based Developers (AHAND), the umbrella association of Atlanta CDCs, turned to COPC for technical assistance in analyzing the extent to which the current city administration had lived up to campaign promises regarding the distribution of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and for analytical help in preparing comments on the State of Georgia Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Allocation Plan.

Following these activities, AHAND and COPC prepared joint proposals for funding AHAND staff and COPC technical assistance. The commissioner and the staff of the city of Atlanta's Department of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Conservation regularly consult with COPC senior staff regarding neighborhood and community development issues. Individual CDCs and the Atlanta Empowerment Zone (EZ) have availed themselves of the expertise of COPC staff regarding manufactured housing in both their independent and mutual efforts to develop manufactured housing within the EZ. The director of the EZ also approached COPC staff about conducting an updated needs analysis for the Zone and to organize an ongoing evaluation program. When the Enterprise Foundation and Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnerships convened technical assistance providers and funders of CDCs to explore the desirability and feasibility of forming an Atlanta Funders Alliance, the Atlanta COPC was invited to participate. As these discussions have progressed toward the eventual formation of an alliance, COPC staff have played an active role in shaping the precepts upon which the Atlanta Alliance for Community Development Investment is based. It is too early to tell what the specific impacts of the alliance will be, but one early byproduct is coordination of proposed CDC training efforts between COPC, Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnerships, and the city of Atlanta.

Another example of COPC's involvement in the city's network of community institutions is its collaboration with The Atlanta Project (TAP), an organization created by former

President Jimmy Carter. Part of the basic concept of TAP was to mobilize voluntary and other resources of large institutions to assist poor communities in their redevelopment efforts. The Atlanta COPC supported this undertaking in various ways. COPC joined with TAP to conduct an analysis of discrimination in mortgage lending practices in the Tri-Cities area south of Atlanta. It also joined with TAP in a community policing project in a low-income community near the downtown area that TAP referred to as the Grady Cluster. COPC and TAP assisted the community in promoting community policing by monitoring and mapping reported crime. COPC also assisted TAP in creating a direct-instruction reading curriculum at one of the Grady Cluster's elementary schools, and this curriculum was then extended to several other schools. In four other TAP clusters, COPC supported TAP's efforts to have student interns supplement TAP staff in assisting community-based organizations.

The persistent, continuous involvement that external outreach centers bring to community development projects is one of the main reasons why the Atlanta COPC has become an effective presence in local government redevelopment policy. An example of this kind of involvement is the assistance COPC gave to the city of East Point in its efforts to affiliate with LBA. At first, COPC staff had to explain the land bank concept to the mayor and gain her support. This required 4 months of meetings, and the process was interrupted several times when both LBA and East Point had to deal with more pressing issues. Once COPC gained the mayor's support, COPC staff and interns analyzed the tax-delinquent property in the city. Putting together this analysis took 4 more months. Subsequent dissemination of the analyses enlightened the city council, the bureaucracy, and several metro area nonprofits. Redevelopment of two formerly tax-delinquent properties by those nonprofits offended some council members who opposed low- or moderate-income housing on those sites. Having previously established the limit of COPC assistance as being the provision of factual analysis/information and alternative legal forms of organization/affiliation, COPC staff retired to the sidelines while LBA staff, the mayor, and council resolved the politics of whether East Point would affiliate with LBA. After the council rejected affiliation, COPC staff were twice requested to present their analyses to East Point personnel, but since then a lull in activity has extended for more than a year. In the interim, the adjacent city of College Park negotiated and signed the first intergovernmental affiliate agreement with LBA using the East Point draft agreement as a model. Both the mayor of East Point and LBA staff intend to revive the issue at a later date. When they do, COPC staff will be ready once again to provide technical analysis and suggestions for organizational structures. At this juncture, the city of College Park has acquired a substantial new redevelopment tool, and constituency favoring a more active redevelopment policy has been established in East Point.

## CDCA Contributions

A major reason for COPC's effectiveness is the partnership it formed with CDCA. Over time, CDCA's relative autonomy from both Georgia Tech and city of Atlanta administrative direction enhanced the organization's capacity to develop mutually respectful relations with low-income neighborhoods and community groups. CDCA is generally regarded as an advocate for the interests of the groups with which it works. Substantial trust has developed with many groups based a succession of projects over a 20-year period. Partnering with CDCA enabled the universities to bring their expertise and efforts to communities without the skepticism that frequently attends unilateral university efforts. When university faculty have accompanied CDCA senior staff to community meetings for needs or project solicitations or proposal preparation, neighborhood representatives and CDC staff have had enough confidence in CDCA's endorsement and participation that

they have generally been accepting and have weighed issues on their merits without requiring a testing or courtship period. Prior CDCA relationships provided platforms for the Carver-Washington public housing project, the East Point LBA project, the rental management workshop, the adaptive reuse plans for public schools, the infill housing plans, and the AHAND request for analysis of city CDBG support for housing, and the AHAND request for technical assistance in comments on the LIHTC State Allocation Plan.

Building trust takes considerable time and effort (Folkman, Percy, and Rai, 1998; Wiewel and Lieber, 1998), and the kind of relationships CDCA has already established have allowed COPC to devote its time and energy to specific project work that it would otherwise have had to spend on building these relationships by itself.

Another important advantage the Atlanta COPC has derived from its partnership with CDCA is the experience CDCA has gained over the years in its dealings with neighborhoods and community groups. CDCA has in-depth knowledge of the communities it has worked with. It knows the recent accomplishments and capacities of most CDCs. It understands the varying depth and character of connections between CDCs and their neighborhoods and the particular strategies that CDCs and neighborhoods are pursuing. It knows who the significant political actors are in various neighborhoods and is aware of their tendencies and idiosyncrasies. It knows what kind of standing various community groups have with funding agencies and intermediaries. It understands the local political landscape, including the relations between city government and particular CDCs and neighborhoods, the factions that exist in the neighborhoods and what their strengths are, and where political landmines exist. And finally, CDCA has extensive knowledge of local institutions and has extensive contacts with them. CDCA experience and knowledge manifested itself in multiple specific roles ranging from technical assistance and advice to helping select more effective CDCs and agencies (interns), to intern, to oversee graduate assistants (East Point public housing, East Point LBA, mortgage lending analysis), to partner (rental management workshop, AHAND/CDBG analysis, school adaptive reuse plans), to team leader (LBA, comments on LIHTC, infill housing, TAP mortgage lending analysis, peer-to-peer training). CDCA has a separate seat on the board of the Alliance for Community Development Investment and the universities together have a seat.

CDCA and the CDCA/COPC collaboration have also shown the capacity to adjust to the changing needs of communities. That is another of the strengths of independent outreach centers. The best example of this is the involvement with the Peoplestown community, a low-income black neighborhood adjacent to the downtown area. In the 1960s, the city used urban renewal funding to tear down a portion of the neighborhood and build a baseball stadium on the cleared site. In 1990, when Atlanta won the bid for the 1996 Summer Olympics, the governing coalition decided to build the Olympic stadium next to the existing stadium, which was to be demolished after the Games. When the site for the new stadium was announced, Peoplestown representatives objected. At different stages in the evolution of the fight over the stadium, Peoplestown requested technical analyses of noise and other environmental impact of both stadiums, stadium traffic, transportation and parking analyses, assessments of tax-delinquent property, housing condition surveys, development options for vacant land and substandard housing, strategic plans for controlling land use along neighborhood borders, labor force skills analyses and recommendations for expanding employment, analyses and recommendations regarding commercial development potential, social service analyses, pro forma for specific real estate development proposals, architectural assistance on multiple development proposals, assessments and technical assistance regarding plans prepared by the city and the Corporation for Olympic Development in Atlanta, database management, construction management, compilation of

a neighborhood history, and media and public relations advice. The Atlanta COPC and CDCA were able to provide many of the particular types of expertise to honor these requests and were able to network to find most of the skills beyond the COPC's capacities.

COPC has also brought a wide range of skills to other community development projects: management skills, teaching and research skills, geographic information systems skills, and a knowledge of criminal justice and community policing strategies. It also demonstrated an ability to play multiple roles. It has engaged in community organizing, mobilized volunteers, written proposals, and started new initiatives in a variety of contexts. Multifaceted involvement is not something that has been forced on COPC by the requirements of different projects. It is the fundamental strategy in starting new initiatives or in partnering at a significant moment in the evolution of an existing organization's development.

One of the lessons COPC has learned is that communities have varying capacities to utilize university outreach assistance. At one end of the spectrum was what happened in East Point. Despite the mayor's support for the Land Bank project, the city council rejected the project and the assistance COPC had provided. Similarly, the Capital View neighborhood has struggled in its efforts to implement development plans prepared by COPC. But other communities have been successful in using COPC assistance. A neighborhood organization in the English Avenue community has undertaken several complicated development projects and has requested COPC's help in crafting more projects. The Peopletown Revitalization Corporation has acquired both tax credits and funding from the Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program for its latest development project. The Carver-Washington Residents Association has successfully operated a computer literacy program with college student volunteers, and COPC staff successfully introduced a reading curriculum—the Teaching All Children to Read project—into an Atlanta Project Cluster elementary school. This has led to an expansion of the program to other schools.

## Unsolved Problems

There are some problems with community outreach efforts that the Atlanta COPC has not yet solved. One of these is the racial imbalance of the partnership. Although most of the staff of CDCA is black, and although teams of students from Georgia Tech and Georgia State are racially integrated, most faculty and the executive director of CDCA are white. There were early efforts to form partnerships with the Historically Black Colleges in the Atlanta University complex, but these efforts were not successful. This racial imbalance is a problem because almost all the poor neighborhoods the COPC/CDCA partnership has worked with are predominantly black. In spite of the fact that CDCA and the Atlanta COPC have built trusting relationships with almost all of the neighborhood residents they have worked with, there is a palpable difference in the levels of interaction between university partners and community representatives when there is a significant black presence in university team leadership. More questions are asked, more community people are engaged, and more enthusiasm is expressed. Trying to achieve racial balance remains one of the Atlanta COPC's priorities.

Another problem is the class antagonism that exists in many of the poor communities in which the Atlanta COPC has been involved. Whereas most of the low-income communities Atlanta COPC has worked with consist mostly of renters, their CDC boards of directors are often composed of homeowners, and these boards frequently focus their redevelopment efforts on increasing the number of owner-occupied units and reducing the number of renters in their neighborhoods. Based on the experience of CDCA in dealing with this problem, COPC has developed a twofold policy. It seeks partnerships with CDCs and neighborhood groups that are either representative of the demographic

composition of their communities or whose redevelopment efforts are in harmony with the composition of their communities. When the Atlanta COPC does engage a CDC or neighborhood group that is not representative of its community, the Atlanta COPC tries to persuade it to pursue redevelopment that does not adversely affect the interests of renters. The Atlanta COPC's primary argument emphasizes the humaneness of redevelopment that includes everyone. Its second line of argument is that market analyses generally show much greater demand for rental housing than ownership housing. So far, the Atlanta COPC has not enjoyed much success with these arguments. When a CDC or neighborhood group decides to pursue redevelopment that will damage renters' interests, the Atlanta COPC disengages from the project. It makes clear what its differences are in a professional recitation, and then it moves on to clients and partners whose fundamental policies it can agree with. This is not a satisfactory outcome, because it preserves integrity at the expense of separation. The COPC has made a few attempts to solve the problem by encouraging agencies and foundations that fund CDCs to incorporate a "representativeness criterion" in their grant requirements, but none of these organizations has responded to this suggestion. The COPC continues to seek new strategies and new learning on how to diffuse or supplant these damaging antagonisms.

A dimension of the Atlanta COPC's experience that did not function as intended is COPC's Community Advisory Committee. The committee is composed of senior COPC staff, representatives from community groups with whom COPC had projects, and senior administrators from Georgia Tech and GSU. Its dual purposes are to engage community representatives in COPC policy deliberations and to help strengthen the academic institutional status of the Atlanta COPC by giving senior university administrators a better understanding of COPC activities. After a few well-attended meetings in which there was lively dialogue about substantive issues, both attendance and enthusiasm dropped. The meetings seemed unnecessary to community representatives because, given the large number of discrete projects, they were already holding meetings with COPC faculty and staff regarding their separate projects. The important planning and coordination for each project was being done outside these larger meetings. The dispersal of COPC foci into multiple separate projects with limited common elements or overlaps in content made the advisory committee an unwieldy and, for some, an unnecessary forum. If institutionalization of the Atlanta COPC is achieved, a means to interest and recruit people concerned with the progressive strengthening of support for community development will have to be found.

## **Institutionalization of Community Outreach at Georgia Tech and Georgia State**

While much good was done as a result of the 3 years of COPC activity, the project would have to be declared a failure if the level of community outreach activity slides back to where it was prior to COPC. Mulhollan (1998) notes the large number of demonstration projects that never outlived their period of Federal funding or that were never duplicated elsewhere. This assessment needs to examine not only the impacts on the communities and community groups the COPC has worked with but also the impacts on Georgia Tech and Georgia State. One must examine the degree to which it has expanded the outreach capacities of both schools, and the degree to which it has affected the institutional status of community outreach at both schools. LeGates and Robinson (1998) have applied institutionalization theory to COPC projects, and their central theme is that institutionalizing community outreach is crucial to the success of outreach programs. Checkoway (1997) has argued that "service as scholarship is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that requires an appropriate institutional structure." Only if a university institutionalizes community outreach will it be able to provide continuous community involvement, and

continuity of involvement is necessary if communities are going to view a university as a reliable partner in community development efforts.

There are a number of obstacles to expanding and institutionalizing outreach activities at universities. Checkoway (1997) has identified some of the most important ones. First, there are the obstacles created by individuals: university presidents who do not have a commitment to community service, deans and department heads who do not look upon service as scholarship or who fail to establish procedures for evaluating service, and faculty who do not perceive service as comparable to research or teaching or who feel that there are no tangible rewards for service. Checkoway also identifies obstacles that are institutional in nature: presidents who are limited by organizational structure and context, deans and department heads who view fostering interaction as inimical to boosting the prestige of their own units, faculty who are acculturated to a diminished role for public service, and the absence of an explicitly sanctioned strategy or structure that promotes community outreach.

Finally, Checkoway argues that in the political economies in which universities function, private corporations, professional associations, and business groups possess and use their substantial economic and organizational resources to influence universities. Conversely, poor neighborhoods do not control comparable resources and rarely focus their energies on affecting university policies.

Wiewel and Lieber (1998) reinforce Checkoway in their categorization of obstacles. They add both nuance and substance, pointing out that the fiefdom structure of universities that leads to the college and departmental focus on the boosterism that Checkoway noted also leads to difficulties in knowing where within the university appropriate research, service, and special expertise are located. They also observed a skepticism on the part of faculty regarding the depth and longevity of new commitments by universities to neighborhoods.

In an observation applicable only to those service organizations that have evolved from dependence on extramural funding to the point where their universities devote significant real resources to their support, Wiewel and Lieber cite the competitive pressures within universities for internal funding as an obstacle. They further observe that new outreach activities may challenge established university practices or prerogatives, that the communities targeted by new outreach efforts may supplant those that previously had beneficial relationships with the university, that community service will be received more favorably by professional than nonprofessional disciplines, and that in relatively less well-established universities in urban cores there will likely be strong pressures to conform to traditional criteria for teaching and research. They point out that faculty may be skeptical regarding the depth and longevity of new outreach commitments by the university. Reardon (1998) makes the same observation that Checkoway does about faculty not receiving the same rewards for community service as they do for teaching and research. He also points out that if an outreach program expands and more communities compete for outreach services, the resources of the school for each new project diminish.

The Atlanta COPC has made it possible to overcome some of the obstacles by giving community outreach at Georgia Tech and Georgia State increased institutional status. First, it has made it possible to cut through the barriers between departments at both schools and has made it easier to identify and bring together the different kinds of expertise at both universities that are needed for community service projects. Georgia State University created the Office of Community Outreach and Partnerships (OCOP) in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. The goal of this on-campus office is to expand the involvement of students and faculty in community outreach. One of its first steps was

to develop a generic academic course that has a significant community outreach component. Georgia Tech has also recently created an on-campus outreach center. Called the Initiative for Community Outreach, Research and Education (ICORE), its purpose is to foster an interdisciplinary program of research and development in the neighborhoods surrounding the school. Internal funding proposals have not been successful, but four ICORE proposals focused on environmental justice and community-based pollution prevention, have been funded for a total of just over \$200,000.

COPC has helped OCOB at Georgia State expand its outreach activities by involving it in COPC projects. The COPC staff played a key role in the recent decision to bring The Atlanta Project to Georgia State. This decision represents a major commitment on the part of Georgia State to expand its role in community outreach, and to do so in partnership with other schools. In its 8 years of existence, TAP has developed trust and relationships among inner-city neighborhoods and service providers. Thus TAP provides some of the advantages that CDCA provided but on a different dimension. COPC has also joined forces with ICORE at Georgia Tech. The co-director of COPC sits on the ICORE steering committee. The community partners that participated in putting together the ICORE proposals were two neighborhoods in which COPC provides technical assistance, and the COPC presence in these neighborhoods was instrumental in their being selected for these projects.

While COPC has helped Georgia Tech and Georgia State expand and institutionalize their outreach efforts, it has had a different impact on each school. Before its partnership with COPC, Georgia State engaged in substantial outreach but had limited institutional links with low-income communities. But with CDCA included in the COPC program, the school developed an institutional structure for establishing close relationships with these communities. At Georgia Tech, COPC has helped to change the attitudes of the administration. Before COPC the administration had mostly been indifferent to outreach efforts in poor neighborhoods. During one period the administration had actually been hostile to such efforts. During Atlanta's preparation for the 1996 Summer Olympics, the school was involved in building Olympic facilities on its campus. Because the administration felt that community outreach was a distraction and because Olympics planners and political leaders were in conflict with low-income neighborhoods over the construction of the Olympic stadium, the administration put pressure on faculty members engaged in outreach to low-income communities to stop or limit their activities regarding the stadium. Since then, a new group of administrators are more favorably disposed toward community outreach. Part of the reason for this is the influence of COPC. Another part of the reason is also a recent call by the chancellor of the Georgia University System for more cooperation between schools in the system. COPC provided Georgia Tech and Georgia State with an opportunity for the intra-university collaboration the chancellor sought.

Though COPC and the on-campus outreach offices at Georgia Tech and Georgia State have achieved universitywide cooperation for outreach projects at both schools, there remain other obstacles to giving community outreach at both universities greater institutional status. One of these is that there are no incentives at either school for faculty to get involved in community service. Neither school has community service as a criterion for promotion and tenure along with teaching, publishing, and research. Both universities still generally treat community outreach as an extraneous activity, although that is changing. Another serious obstacle to institutionalizing outreach at both schools is that there is no source of consistent funding for outreach projects. COPC staff and the faculty at both schools must constantly search for funding. Uncertainty of funding means that COPC and the outreach offices at the two schools cannot be counted on for consistent, reliable service. Furthermore, this constant search for funding means that the choice of projects that

are undertaken is largely determined by whatever kinds of projects are popular with funding agencies. The needs of communities can be overlooked if they do not require the kinds of projects that funding agencies are willing to underwrite. The marketplace for outreach funding controls much of what COPC and the two on-campus offices do. A more consistent source of funding is also needed because more and more communities are turning to the Atlanta COPC. Now that COPC has proven its value, communities are eager to have it assist them. Reliable funding is also needed for attracting faculty to community outreach activities, for creating community service courses, and for student internships. Reliable funding is crucial. Without it, community outreach will never have the resources, prestige, or vigor it needs to become a permanent, integral part of both universities.

## Future Expansion of the Atlanta COPC

The Atlanta COPC is broadening its scope and improving its effectiveness by establishing relationships with other colleges and universities in Atlanta, especially Emory University and the Historically Black Colleges in the Atlanta University Center. Early attempts to do this were not successful, but renewed efforts have engaged the presidents of the four major research universities (Clark Atlanta University, Emory, Georgia State, and Georgia Tech) in a consortium, the Atlanta Outreach Consortium (AOC). One AOC meeting has been held at which the presidents agreed to share information regarding community outreach activities and resources and to identify an outreach project in which all four schools would be engaged.

If this formal partnership is to succeed, a more formal administrative structure will have to be devised for this multiuniversity arrangement. Little has been written about possible organizational structures for multiuniversity partnerships. It is important to keep in mind that the role that CDCA has played in the COPC partnership has been a key element in its success. CDCA has been crucial in helping COPC staff and faculty establish and maintain close relationships with low-income communities. So it would be more useful if more universities joined the Atlanta COPC, including representatives from these schools on the CDCA board, and on certain standing committees. This would help these schools establish the same kind of working relationship with low-income communities that CDCA has helped Georgia Tech and Georgia State establish.

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