

Mutual Awareness, Mutual Respect: The Community and the University Interact

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Abstract

University-community partnerships can encounter problems because of differences between the two sides in perception, values, goals, and available resources, among other issues. This case study examines the results of the UIC Hiring and Purchasing Program, a project with the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) initiated by the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative. Its goals were to increase the employment prospects for community residents by affecting the university's hiring practices and business contract process. This project produced meager results because of the legal and bureaucratic complexity of university policies. Top administration officials at the university learned from these results and developed a more successful hiring project working with other community groups, applying a great deal more attention. The process illuminated what policies the partnership could reasonably expect to affect and the effort necessary to have an equitable relationship.

The development of partnerships between the university and the community has its share of opportunities and problems. Universities have centers and resources designed to do teaching, research, and service. As a corporate body, it also has institutional mechanisms for administrative decisions. Traditional university behavior often does these things without close contact with community groups or interests. Research and teaching are driven primarily by the respective needs and pedagogical methods of academic disciplines. Administrative decisions are usually determined by the internal mechanisms of the university hierarchy and institutional interests. Groups or interests outside the university, such as community organizations, find that it is difficult to affect the way university faculty, staff, and administration conduct their activities.

Community groups can have good information on the needs and interests of residents as they do organizing or service delivery. This work can be used to identify clear ways to do research, education, or service to help the community. Community groups also, too often,

lack the resources to pursue these aims to the fullest. True university-community partnerships can help match the available institutional resources of the university with the interests of the community to produce work in the public interest that has direct relevance to the broader community. This is done best when both sides understand the other's interests and the situation the other side is operating in, and respects the distinct goals the two sides have in pursuing projects.

This is a case study of one project done with the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) by a university-community partnership organization, the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative (UICNI). The project, the UIC Hiring and Purchasing Program, encountered various challenges in its operation. Issues included matching up the values and goals of one partner with those of other partners while facing the issue of opening up an institutional bureaucracy to the skill levels and social networks of underserved communities. Some of the university entities involved emphasized efficiency and professional criteria for human resource selection, and had a bureaucratic intransigence to change, which is not uncommon. Community groups valued community ties, equity, access, and opportunity for neighborhoods in close proximity to the university. While the UICNI project was unsuccessful in gaining its ultimate objectives (that is, setting up an ongoing process for the university to hire community residents and award purchasing contracts to community businesses), the case study offers lessons for pursuing this work and points to other tangible benefits of the relationship. The focus is on the relationship between the university and one of the community partners in UICNI, Renacer West Side Community Network.

UIC's Great Cities Program and UIC Neighborhoods Initiative

In the Great Cities program, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) oriented its focus on metropolitan issues as it defined its mission as an urban land grant institution—a commitment to use its teaching, research, and service programs to improve the quality of life in Chicago. This was developed by Chancellor James Stukel and his special assistant, Wim Wiewel, in 1993. Stukel is now President of the entire University of Illinois system and encouraged similar programs for the other campuses in the State system. Wiewel is now Dean of the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs (CUPPA) at UIC and oversees large parts of the Great Cities program.

To help fulfill the Great Cities objective, they created the UICNI in 1994. This is a community development program based on a partnership model between UIC and two nearby neighborhoods. The partnership serves as a facilitator between community organizations and university personnel, centers, or departments. It cuts across traditional divisions within the university, such as department and college lines, in developing projects (Wiewel and Broski, 1997, 1999). The two nearby neighborhoods are Pilsen and the Near West Side. Pilsen is the community due south of the university, home to about 50,000 people, mostly of Mexican heritage. The core part of the Near West Side area in UICNI's focus is the African-American area of about 10,000 people, west and northwest of the campus. This area includes major public housing developments, such as Henry Horner Homes, Rockwell Gardens, and the public housing complex comprising Jane Addams Homes, Robert H. Brooks Homes, Loomis Courts, and Grace Abbott Homes (collectively known as ABLA). More than 40 projects have been involved in the UICNI effort in the 2 neighborhoods.

The history of university-community relations in Chicago, and with UIC in particular, was often marked by conflict and hostility. The UIC staff that put together the Great Cities program used concepts of university-community collaboration that were developed by

practitioners in Chicago and used existing relationships between UIC personnel and community groups. While there were some good relationships supporting the establishment of a broader partnership, there still were important factions in the community that focused on conflict with the university and used that to dismiss any joint efforts. An essential component of developing UICNI, then, was to bring both university and community people to the table as early as possible to shape research, teaching, and service projects. This allowed some time for developing the trusting relationships that are necessary in an ongoing basis, rather than simply in response to a proposal deadline. Both sides gain from their experience, and develop their capacity and their perspective in the process (Mayfield, Hellwig and Banks, 1999; Nyden and Wiewel, 1992; Nyden, Figert, Shibley and Burrows, 1997; Mayfield, 1999).

The university made a long-term commitment to support UICNI with State funds for staff, office expenses, and resources to develop projects. UICNI was awarded major grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to fund a series of projects in the neighborhoods, first from the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) and then from the short-lived Joint Community Development program.

UIC Hiring and Purchasing Project

The program funding allowed UICNI to develop collaborative projects of interest to community and university partners. One of UICNI's goals was to find a way to employ more residents of the Near West Side and Pilsen and to involve businesses from these areas as contractors for goods and services. Some of the community partners emphasized this issue from the start of their involvement. The university participants in UICNI supported the effort, both because of its key importance to the community partners and because it offered the opportunity to support coalition building across the two neighborhoods and the two racial and ethnic groups.

University personnel and community-based organizations (CBOs) staff formed a working group in December 1994 and developed the Hiring and Purchasing Program. One of the key community advocates was Renacer West Side Community Network, Inc., a community-based nonprofit organization founded in 1995 by Edgar P. Lucas, Jr., and Rod Farrar. Among other activities, Renacer's work includes basic skills assessment, job placement, economic development, and technical assistance to community organizations and commercial businesses. Lucas was an early participant in the planning of Great Cities and UICNI. He was a member of the planning committee for UICNI and has served on its steering committee from the beginning. He also had a close relationship with Marty Adams, the coordinator for UICNI from 1995–97.

The lead agency in Pilsen was Eighteenth Street Development Corporation (ESDC), an organization for business and commercial development along the main retail district of the Latino community. Other community groups also participated in the meetings, such as The Resurrection Project. UIC participation included Joseph Persky of the economics department, John Betancur of CUPPA, and others who were sympathetic to the issues raised by the community partners.

The group based its program on the concept that UIC's commitment to its surrounding neighborhoods should extend beyond academic programs to the actual operations of the university, and help people and businesses in the target neighborhoods gain access to staff employment and purchasing contracts. UIC, including the UIC Hospital, is the 13th largest employer in the Chicago metropolitan area, with 11,000 employees on its payroll. One objective was to develop a program into a self-sustained flow of hiring and purchasing between the university and the community areas. The group hoped that awarding more

UIC purchasing contracts to area businesses would have a multiplier effect with local businesses expanding their markets and hiring additional neighborhood people in the private sector.

It was quickly decided that the group should not do research studies of the neighborhoods because much of the information was already available from past work done by both the university and the community. They focused instead on gathering information from the university system itself. At the time, the key problem was seen as one of simply uncovering the hiring and purchasing patterns of the university and developing a program to channel applicants into those patterns (Lieber and Pinsker, 1998).

During the spring of 1995 the faculty members of the working group established contacts with the office of human resources and learned about the hiring process at UIC. In meetings with Judson Mitchell, then Associate Vice Chancellor of Human Resources, they learned that although UIC was a major Chicago employer, the actual number of job openings available to community residents each month was quite modest. Not counting academic appointments and nonacademic professionals, UIC hired about 50 to 70 people per month in entry-level positions. These jobs, Mitchell indicated, were highly competitive, and were not bureaucratically centralized; different university units had significant control of the process. One key issue is that as a State university, most of these permanent, full-time jobs fall under the civil service system. An applicant must take the required exam and score high enough to be on the short lists for interviews. From the beginning, Mitchell encouraged the working group to emphasize temporary jobs that could be obtained without civil service examinations, but which can only last for 3 months.

Mitchell gave the group data from his office that underscored the competitive and somewhat closed nature of university hiring, which was analyzed by the faculty members. While many of the jobs do not require more than a high school education on paper, the competitive nature of the applicants showed successful job holders held more than the minimum requirements. More than two-thirds of all civil service jobs go to applicants with at least some college training, and only 2 percent of new hires lack a high school degree. One-third of all jobs go to individuals who have previously worked at UIC, usually in temporary jobs that do not require civil service qualification. Of those hired, 50 percent learn of job openings from an existing employee. Only 7 percent of those hired are walk-ins without previous employment at the university (Betancur and Persky, 1998).

The working group questioned the realistic need for some of the apparent obstacles to hiring. The civil service tests themselves were critiqued for what they really measure, the extent to which they favored people with higher education training, and so on. It was clear to community members that the system discouraged applicants unless they were coached heavily through the process.

Mitchell responded that human resources did not totally control the system; as a State institution, UIC civil service requirements had to meet State laws and rules. His department did not entirely control the naming of candidates to positions, either. They offered the project's applicants the same help they would give any applicant, making information available and providing assistance in the technical details of the process. However, the distinct hiring units (such as the hospital) had much flexibility and could identify their own candidates and assist them in the process. The community groups felt candidates from the target neighborhoods would clearly need training for the tests and assistance in figuring out the system. Even then, passing scores could leave prospective employees on a waiting list for a long time without becoming an actual candidate for a permanent position.

Given these realities, the group set what they considered modest goals for the program: to hire 15 neighborhood residents a year for 2 years, as well as to increase UIC's purchasing from neighborhood businesses with 9 new purchasing contracts. The Chancellor gave his support for these outcomes.

Although the group felt they had developed a good idea of the problems inherent in gaining their objectives, it proved to be an even more difficult process as they tried to implement it. The community groups discovered in the early stages of their programs that, in practice, most civil service jobs go to applicants with perfect or near perfect scores on the exams.

Renacer and ESDC were funded in 1996 to help channel community residents into the system, receiving \$12,500 to assist in recruitment and vendor identification in their respective communities. Lucas estimated that given the problem of his constituency—underserved, low-income residents with low levels of formal education—and the high achievement requirements of the civil service system, he would have to prepare 100 people to get 15 qualified applicants. Renacer agreed to train 100 residents for the civil service exam and refer them to UIC's human resources.

Lucas represents Renacer in several collaborative settings on the West Side of Chicago, including West Side Consortium, a coalition and community network of 24 nonprofits, service agencies, and community organizations; Unity West, a coalition of 16 service agencies, community organizations, and nonprofits; and 3 of the local Empowerment Zone Task Force groups, the Federal program increasing aid to selected low-income urban areas. He used his community connections to recruit people for the UIC job application process.

Lucas set up a series of 3-hour workshops to prepare the first set of people for the exam. He obtained sample civil service tests from the public library and tested 15 applicants. Six participants needed extensive help with the tests. Finding the weakest scores in math skills and reading comprehension, Lucas set up workshops to increase participants' skills in these areas. He held coaching sessions on specific job categories and replicated the test-taking environment with repeated drills. Lucas then referred 13 of the participants to UIC's human resources to take the exam.

ESDC started later than Renacer and after a significant change in the university situation. In December 1996 the University entered a hiring freeze due to layoffs at the UIC Hospital. This problem was exacerbated in 1999 when the UIC Hospital announced it had larger budget shortfalls than anticipated due to the decline in Medicare payments to teaching hospitals, and it announced more extensive layoffs (10 percent by the end of the year). The human resources department informed the working group that displaced workers had first priority to be relocated within the university system over new hires, further hampering the opportunities for anyone coming through the UICNI project. Nevertheless, ESDC referred seven applicants for the test.

The results of the efforts of both Renacer and ESDC were disappointing. Three of the 20 applicants received temporary positions in Parking Services, and 2 of those were laid off after 6 weeks. Ultimately, only 2 community residents referred by the UICNI project were hired to permanent jobs—10 percent of the original 20 referrals, a figure remarkably close to the 7-percent figure found by Betancur and Persky (1998) for new hires in the university system.

The working group was also interested in gaining purchasing contracts between the university and businesses from Pilsen and the Near West Side. These efforts fared little better than those focused on hiring. A series of meetings between community representatives and UIC administrators concerned with purchasing produced a sense that this process was simpler than hiring and could be dealt with more easily. The purchasing office channeled the working group's community representatives into existing programs for minority contracting. The community groups felt they could access this system fairly easily, and the faculty and UICNI partners in the Hiring and Purchasing group dropped out of involvement in the issue.

However, as the community partners pursued their objectives, it became clear that this issue was more complex once the group looked beyond the surface. As with hiring at the university, the decisionmaking structure for purchasing is highly decentralized. UIC's program to promote minority business involvement acted only as a broker between potential contractors and various university agencies. The university had a list of 17,000 vendors to draw on.

Additional issues became clear as groups tried to work within the system. Purchases under \$25,000 dollars were often controlled by units of the university. Units could request the help of the purchasing office or operate on their own. They had established contacts over the years and tended to deal with people they knew. Purchasing agents in these units talked to each other and learned about other vendors in the network through referrals from each other (Betancur and Persky, 1998).

In practice, this meant vendors turned to established partners. Breaking into the system was difficult, particularly for small vendors. They had to understand the system and engage in intensive efforts to reach out to the multiple purchasing agents and become part of the network. A lot of effort would have to be expended by small vendors to break into the system. In addition, once a contract was signed and products were delivered, there was often a long delay before a check was produced out of the university bureaucracy, a key problem for small vendors with a tight cash flow.

Ozie Williams, purchasing agent for UIC, offered to hold workshops at ESDC for interested Near West Side and Pilsen companies to orient companies on the university requirements in purchasing and to shepherd the companies through the process of obtaining certification from the State of Illinois. ESDC and Renacer developed thorough listings of vendors in their communities and submitted them to the purchasing office. The office put them on mailing lists to notify them of bids or other requests.

ESDC prepared 10 Pilsen businesses to gain certification and participate in the process, and these businesses attended the university's annual Minority Business Fair. However, there were no new contracts awarded to any of the new participants. The experience indicated the importance of personal contact and having an established reputation within the university system to produce contracts to vendors, leaving newcomers at a decided disadvantage.

For contracts on the Near West Side, the coalition of businesses is the Industrial Council of Northwest Chicago (ICNC). ICNC consists of 250 companies, many of which produce goods and services usable by UIC. However, ICNC has had previous experiences trying to deal with the bureaucracy at UIC, such as the certification paperwork and the delay in payment due to the university and State vouchering system. They also recognized the amount of time and work needed to establish the personal contacts with the individual purchase agents of the various units. ICNC was reluctant to expend much energy in the process and participated at a minimal level.

Hard Lessons and Success of a Sort

By early 1997 both university and community partners in the working group had learned hard lessons about operating in the university bureaucracy. The community partners, in particular, were demoralized by their experience. Lucas said that the university process seemed design to weed people out, while the community's intention was to be inclusive of previously excluded groups. The project's analysis of the university system emphasized that the complexity of the process was a big obstacle, influencing the size of the goals they set for the program. They came to realize that to reach even modest goals would require enormous effort on the part of the participants. Even with a stated commitment from UIC administration to this program, community partners felt they were undifferentiated from the mass of applicants trying to gain employment or contracts. While the group has continued to meet episodically since then, it has not made any more progress.

Some problems inherent to the program were beyond the participants' control. In hiring, UIC is a State institution, and the State civil service system requires certain processes. Even with the support of the UIC Chancellor, there was only so much administrators, with the best of intentions, could do to help the project meet its goals. Attempts to train participants to go through the system yielded some results, but would require much larger resources and a much longer timeframe before permanent jobs can be gained. A multiyear process, getting larger numbers of workers into temporary jobs and trying to guide them into permanent jobs, would probably require the consistent position of a full-time mentor, a resource the project did not have available. The hospital layoffs and their effects on the hiring system for UIC were also out of the hands of the project.

The working group faculty and UICNI staff were sympathetic to the interests of the community, and they were chagrined over the inability of their institution to follow through. However, they were also the ones with the least influence over the administrative process. The professionals involved in human resources and purchasing were the ones with the knowledge about how to get through the system, but this was just one small project compared to their overall duties. They operated in a diligent and professional way with all the applicants referred to them, but gave no special help to the applicants referred by the UICNI project—precisely the objective way they felt they were supposed to do their job. The working group itself should have at least involved someone with technical experience in the administrative issues to mentor the applicants better, rather than rely on periodic meetings with the University administrators in charge of those areas.

The experience of UIC in a separate minority hiring proposal is instructive on the difficulties of the system. The university acquired 40 acres of land south of the campus in 1993 and 1994, expanding toward Pilsen. Latino leaders expressed concern about possible spillover gentrification from the developments the university plans for the area. In November 1997 Chancellor David Broski, who replaced Stukel, announced publicly a plan to improve relations with Pilsen area leaders by promising an increase in Latino hiring and purchasing contracts over the next 5 years. It did not specify the community Latinos would come from, but the institutions involved were based mostly in Pilsen and represented mainstream interests, such as the Mexican-American Chamber of Commerce and locally elected officials. ESDC, as a smaller community group, was not part of the agreement.

Partly because of the change in administration, the new Chancellor's staff was not familiar with the UICNI Hiring and Purchasing Project and developed this initiative on its own. Going even further than the stated commitment to goals that Stukel had done with the UICNI project, the Chancellor's office sent out a press release on the signed agreement between the Chancellor and the Latino groups. However, the University of Illinois Board

of Trustees refused to approve the deal, citing Federal employment laws and court decisions striking down quotas. It did pass a resolution to seek “an understanding that satisfies mutual goals” without violating laws (Lydersen, 1998; quote in Pitt, 1998; Washburn, 1997). This shows that even when the top administration of the University forcefully supported an effort, it was waylaid by the difficulty in dealing with the legal requirements of hiring, even before any referrals or hiring took place.

As this issue of the Latino hiring agreement became public, Wiewel arranged a meeting between the Chancellor’s people involved in the issue and members of the Hiring and Purchasing working group. The group reported their findings about the complexity and basic issues related to changing the hiring practices (Betancur and Persky, 1998). In particular, they emphasized that consistent, sustained effort from the top of the administration was necessary to develop the avenues for hiring and the necessity of some process to overcome the hurdle of the civil service test. A program of training underserved community residents in test taking, such as done by Renacer, would delay even the application for jobs by months. Job applicants would then be on a long waiting list where, as the earlier analysis and UICNI’s experience indicated, only as few as 7 to 10 percent might eventually get permanent jobs.

This was more than an academic exercise for discussing the system. The administration had to soft pedal the Latino hiring agreement, because of the public notoriety and the involvement of the State system’s Board of Trustees. However, in a separate effort, the top administration was interested in using this information to develop a project targeted at another group of low-income community residents concerned about the university’s south campus development. The public housing project in closest proximity to the university is ABLA Homes, with African-American residents, south of campus. The top university administration made commitments to the ABLA Residents’ Council to help develop the social infrastructure for the underserved community. This group, as with the groups UICNI partnered with, had a keen interest in university jobs for their constituents.

The top administration used the experience of UICNI’s project to fashion a workable program, the ABLA Learner Trainer Program. Top administrators kept in touch with the human resources department to emphasize the importance of this effort. It allocated 16 slots for ABLA residents to take entry-level jobs as trainees for 6 months. After that, they could be hired in their positions and have the normal 3-month probationary period. The important distinction from the normal process was that job placement was dependent on learning the position as trainees, not on a civil service exam. Thirteen of the original applicants have entered the probationary stage of the program (an 80-percent placement rate).

This was success of a sort for the UICNI project. The experience of the Hiring and Purchasing Project provided information on how to devise a successful effort to get low-income community residents into a track for entry-level university jobs. But as important as this is, it has its own problems. The administration saw that the effort required to get the handful of applicants access took a lot of administrative attention. Partly because of this cost, the program may not be continued in an ongoing basis. While 13 applicants are on the verge of decent jobs at the university, it is not a self-sustained process as hoped for in the original UICNI project.

Another issue for the UICNI partners is that while it is helping people who are neighbors to UIC and are in the broader UICNI-targeted geographic area, it is not geared toward the specific communities or the main community partners who started with the UICNI project. This was true also with the Latino hiring agreement, which did not include the

Pilsen groups involved with UICNI. This reflects the somewhat different purposes of the top administration and their different connections with larger, more mainstream groups, while UICNI is focused on community-based grassroots groups. The partners in the UICNI project, unfortunately, saw that they expended a great deal of time and effort in the process but reaped none of the rewards.

Participants from both sides learned how important such outcomes were relative to their different positions. One view from the administration side was that the few positions and contracts could only be a drop in the bucket, considering the depth of problems in the target neighborhoods. The university had only 50 to 70 new hires a month available to the typical community resident *before* hiring cutbacks due to the budget issues of the hospital. Because UIC is a regional university with applicants from across the metropolitan area, administrators were not too concerned about which community applicants came from. Affirmative action goals were met with new hires of people from minority groups, regardless of the community in which they lived.

But to the community groups involved in the partnership process, even a small number of hires held great importance. Delivering on the positions would have reflected the means for area families to have economic stability, which was important in and of itself. In addition, the positions and contracts would have meant a greater legitimacy for the community groups in the UICNI partnership. Any positions and contracts produced would represent outcomes for the groups to show the community they could deliver some goods. Not fulfilling this goal meant community critics of university involvement could point to the failure as evidence of ill will on the part of the university, rather than as a case study in bureaucratic policies.

Despite the ultimate failure of the specific UICNI project, some important things were gained. Community and university partners came to realize how difficult the issue was to solve, and the level of commitment needed to change the situation. It taught both sides about what to realistically expect out of certain kinds of projects. Hiring and purchasing practices at the university were both complex and difficult to affect from the working group's position. It would have required sustained, committed resolution from the top levels of the university to affect the situation.

The process of developing the project where community partners saw some parts of the university were sympathetic with their goals (particularly the individual faculty and the UICNI staff) helped develop and strengthen that relationship. They saw more clearly that the university is not a unified entity but, like any large institution, has various components that do not always work hand-in-glove. This helped the community groups understand in what ways faculty can be beneficial. While faculty may be sympathetic, they have little influence on administrative decisions such as hiring. Faculty involvement is more appropriate in the areas they are most active in and have more authority over, such as their personal research projects working in collaboration with community groups, or their own courses where they can establish the curriculum and desired outcomes.

This was apparent in comparison with other successful partnership projects that showed community groups they could benefit by continuing in the UICNI partnership—projects that were more in line with traditional duties and responsibilities of faculty. Faculty more sympathetic to community issues used their authority to have more collaborative and equitable relations with community groups, in a conference, a class, and technical assistance.

For example, Lucas points out his fruitful participation in the Chicago delegation of 30 people organized by UIC's Great Cities staff to attend the United Nations Conference

on Human Settlements in Istanbul, Turkey. UIC received a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to pay for all participants' passage. Sixteen members of the delegation were from community and nonprofit groups and the rest were from universities or government agencies. The Chicago delegation facilitated workshops on issues affecting domestic and Third World nations. This gave Lucas access to government, foundation, and community leaders at the national and international levels. Lucas followed up this conference with a continued relationship with government representatives from Namibia, exchanging information on housing.

Another UICNI project, the Neighborhoods Nonprofit Network (NNNet), was able to deliver technical assistance to community groups. This is a partnership between UIC, the Information Technology Resource Center (a local service agency to nonprofits), the Donors Forum of Chicago (a nonprofit membership organization of Chicago area grantmakers), and 50 community-based organizations in Pilsen and the Near West Side.

The purpose of NNNet is to improve the quality of life in urban neighborhoods by strengthening the communication and information linkages among local community organizations, the university, ordinary citizens, foundation and corporate donors, and nonprofit organizations. Fifty community groups, including Renacer, received e-mail accounts and training by university personnel in computer programs and Internet access. The university manages a listserv for community discussion and offers assistance on Web pages. Several of the groups received computers and software from the university for working with community residents. Amoco and the university donated some used computer equipment, which was upgraded by UIC graduate students and given to several community groups, including Renacer. NNNet was originally funded by a grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Since that grant ended, the project manager, Al Schorsch, assistant dean at CUPPA, has continued to help groups with training and access by cobbling together resources from university sources. UICNI and CUPPA continue to fund graduate assistants to provide the software and training for community groups to keep their access to the Internet. This also formed the basis for different efforts in proposals to Federal agencies to further this work. While the proposals were not awarded grants, the proposed budgets included resources for community groups, not just funding for university personnel and centers.

Renacer participated in two other projects with Howard Ehrman of UIC's School of Public Health that also received substantial support from the university. With faculty from anthropology and geography, they developed a project to give community groups training and access to using the GIS technology system for community-oriented planning in the areas of health, the environment, and sustainable development. The GIS project received \$11,500 in 1 year—\$7,500 from a Great Cities Seed Fund grant and an additional \$4,000 from the UICNI State budget. For the spring 1999 semester, Ehrman and Lucas developed a Popular Education class and used information from the GIS project to teach other community leaders about planning for sustainable development. Nine thousand dollars in university money supported the class, including stipends for community leaders who taught some of the classes.

Pilsen groups who were disappointed about the lack of progress—such as ESDC and The Resurrection Project (TRP)—were also involved with the Istanbul conference and NNNet. In addition, ESDC and TRP were directly involved in several other projects of the Great Cities program (on TRP's involvement, see Wiewel and Guerrero, 1997; Kordesh, 2000).

Involvement in other projects does not ease the frustration over the hiring and purchasing issues at the university but can help groups to see that they are still gaining benefits from a university-community partnership.

The experience of Renacer and UICNI in this project clearly indicates the importance of time and sustained effort in building a good relationship that is essential for developing projects and continuing projects when they run into problems. A better understanding of the problems a collaboration will encounter in a specific project will help alert both sides to the degree of effort they will have to make to pursue their goals. Each side also needs to understand exactly how important the goals are to each other and to respect their importance.

Authors

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This research was originally presented at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's conference on Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) in East St. Louis, Illinois, September 25, 1998. The authors would like to thank David Cox, Wim Wiewel, Joe Persky, John Betancur, and participants in the COPC conference for their comments on this analysis.

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