

Elements of Success of Community University Partnership
From *Straight A's: Evaluating the Success of Community/University Development Partnerships*; by Ken Reardon; *Communities and Banking*, Summer 2005

- 1) Partnerships that do not allow both parties to achieve their institutional self interest do not survive. Both the community and the university must be clear about their respective institutional self interests and comparable benefits for both the academic and the community partners must be gained.
- 2) Successful partnerships require significant executive leadership and also visible support from the university president, the mayor, the chamber of commerce director, respective members of the labor community and the elders from the from the community's major religious denominations.
- 3) Skilled staff who can understand both the nature of higher education politics and the fundamentals of community organizing are critical. "Organizational boundary crossers" in particular seem to play a pivotal role. These individuals occupy key leadership positions within their own organizations but also understand the history, culture and operation of their partner organizations.
- 4) Successful partnerships develop slowly, and significant time is required to move from the initial relationship-building stage to the program-building stage, often five to ten years. The case studies confirm the wisdom of Henry Mintzberg's ready, fire, aim approach to organizational change, which stresses the importance of small victories in building the momentum required to sustain systemic reform efforts.
- 5) Finally, the willingness of both the community and campus leaders to reflect upon, learn from, and adjust to challenges and mistakes appears to be a central requirement of successful partnership.

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Three categories of community/university partnerships

➤ **Paternalistic Theory-Testing Partnerships**

Local communities used as laboratories to test hypotheses regarding the operation of the local economy.

➤ **Professional Expertise Partnerships**

Campuses are committed to solving the problems identified by their local communities, but their solutions involve little community participation and generate few skill-building opportunities for local residents.

➤ **Empowerment Capacity-Building Partnerships**

Campuses involve local leaders as equal partners in each step of the revitalization process: problem identification to project implementation to program evaluation. Typically, participatory action research, or learning-by-doing methods serve as the foundation of this approach. These methods promote strategies that encourage outside investment while enhancing the internal capacity of community-based organizations.