



UIC Neighborhoods Initiative

Building Partnerships for Stronger Communities and a Stronger University

Fall 2000

The University of Illinois at Chicago

UICNI Restructures, Looks Ahead

As we approach Fall 2000, UIC Neighborhoods Initiative (UICNI) embarks on its seventh year. UICNI has gone through several stages in its development: its founding, implementation of its program and consolidation, and now, a restructuring.

The birth of UICNI rested on a foundation already in place: the many outstanding community organizations and institutions on the Near West Side and in Pilsen; the various community work and research by UIC's School of Public Health, School of Art and Architecture, Center for Urban Economic Development, and other units and colleges; UIC's institutional commitment; and the clearly defined vision of Wim Wiewel, Lauri Alpern, Pat Wright, Marty Adams and community partners, which resulted in solid community and university partnerships.

Shortly after its founding, UICNI obtained funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development through two consecutive grants: the Community Outreach Partnership Centers and the Joint Community Development. These grants enabled UICNI to implement projects and develop and consolidate partnerships that developed trust, understanding and enduring bonds between UICNI and its community partners. These grants also brought previously scattered and diverse projects together under the umbrella of UICNI. As a result, the projects became more coordinated and developed, and benefited from the shared experiences of those involved. In addition, stronger working relationships developed between various community and university personnel.

Through this experience, UICNI was able to acquire new knowledge and share it with other universities nationally and internationally, via articles written by Wim Wiewel, David Broski, Loomis Mayfield, Ismael Guerrero, Edgar Lucas and Mike Lieber. In addition, evaluations conducted by Mike Lieber and Eve Pinsker were invaluable assets. As a result, UICNI developed a national reputation as a trailblazer in and model for university/community partnership development.

We are now preparing for a post-HUD-funded period. We have begun this process by developing a new strategic plan. This past year, we revised our mission, developed new goals and reorganized UICNI. We developed a new steering committee by bringing in new partners, thereby revitalizing our partnerships. In addition, the UICNI staff has been restructured.

Dr. Cynthia Barnes Boyd is UICNI's new director, in addition to her new appointment as assistant dean for Community Health Outreach, and I have accepted the position of coordinator of UICNI.

We have come full circle from where we started but now stand at a much higher level. However, we cannot be content with our accomplishments; we must use them to push ahead and reach new heights. At our upcoming retreat in late August, we will discuss how we can deepen our relationships and widen our community partnerships; appraise our best projects and develop them; bring together the scattered service learning and community building projects, strengthen them, and develop new ones; and consider developing UICNI outposts or offices in target communities. We have an exciting program year ahead of us, along with a strong steering committee. Working together, we can look forward to the program's expansion.

New Leadership in Place at UICNI

Exciting and significant changes in leadership signal the beginning of the seventh year of the University of Illinois Neighborhood Initiative (UICNI). Beginning July 1, Dr. Cynthia Barnes-Boyd assumed responsibilities as the new director of UICNI, and Mr. Atanacio Gonzalez has been elevated to the post of initiative coordinator.

In announcing their appointments, David Perry, director of the Great Cities Institute, said, "The two defining characteristics of both these appointees can be summed up in the words leadership and experience." Wim Weiwel, project principal investigator and newly appointed dean of the UIC College of Business Administration, concurred: "We are quite fortunate that Cynthia's and Nacho's expertise and experience complement each other so well. They will greatly enhance the remarkable work that UICNI continues to do."



As director of UICNI, Dr. Barnes-Boyd (Cee) takes over a partnership between UIC and neighborhood organizations that is designed to better use the resources of the university to strengthen the quality of life of residents, businesses and academics. She brings a wealth of university and policy experience to this task, with a distinguished record in public health and extensive

Nacho Gonzalez

experience working in partnership with community organizations. Barnes-Boyd holds both a bachelor's and master's degree in nursing from UIC, and a Ph.D. in nursing science.

From 1997 to 2000, Barnes-Boyd was special assistant to the UIC Vice Chancellor for Health Services and director of Community Health. Prior to that, she served as executive director of UIC's Mile Square Health Center from 1991-1997. In short, she brings a special combination of lengthy and well-respected work with the community and an equally active and visible career of academic partnerships and research. Among her many awards, Barnes-Boyd is the recipient of the Women in History Award from the Chicago Urban League and the National Woman's Hook-up.



Cynthia Barnes-Boyd

The appointment of Atanacio "Nacho" Gonzalez to the post of UICNI coordinator represents a clear recognition of his substantial experience in community organizing, urban planning and the methodologies of popular education. Gonzalez divides his time between UICNI and the UIC Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement. A faculty fellow of the Great Cities Institute, Gonzalez holds a master's in urban planning and policy from UIC and received a B.A. from California State University at Los Angeles.

Prior to accepting the post of UICNI coordinator, Gonzalez served for two years as the program's co-coordinator. He facilitated the strategic planning process for the organization and helped bring about change in the community-university focus. He was attracted to UICNI because its partnership model extended the process of community development he had helped establish over the course of his career directing regional and national community development programs, as well as during his tenure as a community-organizing trainer and consultant. Gonzalez was the 1996 recipient of the Robert Mier Memorial Scholarship, which annually recognizes an outstanding urban planning graduate student.

Barnes-Boyd and Gonzalez will work closely with a newly reconstituted UICNI Steering Committee, composed of representatives from UIC and community groups such as the Eighteenth Street Development Corporation, the Near West Side Community Development Corporation, The Resurrection Project and the Renacer West Side Community Network.

Barnes-Boyd and Gonzalez invite you to contact them at 312-996-8700 or by e-mail at cBoyd@uic.edu and nacho@uic.edu.

High School Students Have High-Velocity Summer

Acquiring new perspectives was the agenda for 14 freshmen and sophomores from Benito Juarez High School in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood as they participated in High Velocity, UIC's Science and Health Summer Program.

The High Velocity curriculum was designed to increase students' understanding of proactive learning, lifetime learning and personal growth. The program focused on the fields of science, medicine and computers, and also required intensive writing and reading.

"By engaging students in different, exciting and challenging academic environments and projects, we hoped to teach them more about their own abilities in applied contexts, teach new and useful academic skills...and increase their potentials for a bright future in the academic world and career of their choice," explains High Velocity program coordinator Daniel Gonzalez.

For five weeks, the students attended special classes at UIC four days a week during the morning hours. Each student was required to complete two projects. One project involved using a software program to create virtual classroom technology inventions that would help solve a specific problem. For example, one student invented a car air filter that eliminates air pollution and cuts down on exhaust fumes.

The second project required the students to compile a research report on HIV and AIDS. The report included information on sex education, prevention, women and HIV/AIDS, and HIV/AIDS research.

All projects were posted on the program's website (www.uic.edu/depts/engl/hvsp). In addition, rather than receiving grades for their work, the students evaluated each others' projects and posted their comments on the website.

After morning classes, the students headed back to Juarez for afternoon jobs arranged through Mayor Richard Daley's Summer Youth Initiative. Jobs included organizing books in the school library and learning printmaking techniques. The students also enjoyed field trips to the Museum of Science and Industry and UIC Hospital, where they discussed medical careers with a physician and medical students.

The High Velocity program was a collaborative effort that included the following community organizations and UIC departments and colleges: LARES; Hispanic Center for Excellence; School of Medicine's Urban Health Program; College of Education; Department of English; SCAILAB Computer Center; Great Cities Institute and Chancellor's Committee on Status of Latinos.

Commercial Development Projects Help Revitalize Two Chicago Neighborhoods

Two underserved Chicago neighborhoods, the Near West Side and Pilsen, are slated to benefit from commercial development projects aimed at enhancing and revitalizing the areas. In addition to providing both areas with much-needed services, the projects aim to create jobs for residents.

On the Near West Side, groundbreaking for a Walgreen's shopping and business complex is slated for August 2000. The complex is the result of efforts by UIC, the City of Chicago and the Near West Side Community Development Corporation (NWSCDC) to provide the community with services it has been lacking.

Similarly, a partnership between UIC, the 18th Street Development Corporation and the City of Chicago plans to redevelop Thalia Hall, a historic landmark building in Pilsen. The 40,000 square-foot structure is expected to include retail shops, a neighborhood heritage center, and residential units.

The project is being funded partially by a Joint Community Development/Department of Housing and Urban Development Grant. Additional funding will be provided by the Empowerment Zone, and the balance is expected to be raised from other public and conventional sources.