



# UIC Neighborhoods *Initiative*

Building Partnerships for Stronger Communities and a Stronger University

Summer 2000

The University of Illinois at Chicago

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## Program Gives Urban Developers a Solid Base

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When former state senator Jesus Garcia took over as executive director of Little Village Community Development Corporation in 1998, he assumed he would end up learning the ropes as he went along, much the same as most community development practitioners. And that wasn't exactly a comforting feeling.

But relief came when he learned about the Urban Developers Program (UDP), a one-year certificate program designed to build the capacity of community-based developers through both theoretical instruction and exposure to practical experiences of urban developers. Students who complete the program receive a certificate in urban development.

"We really get into the nuts and bolts," says Kate Pravera, director of professional education at the Great Cities Institute, which co-sponsors UDP along with the Chicago Rehab Network and UIC's College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs.

Pravera says most community developers learn through on-the-job experience, which is a "highly inefficient way to build a knowledge base. We provide students an opportunity to reflect on their experience while adding new skills and knowledge."

UDP consists of six courses taught by senior community development practitioners, UIC Urban Planning and Policy faculty and professional staff from UIC's Great Cities Institute and the Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood Improvement. The courses are offered over a one-year period (August-July) and include a one-week intensive seminar on the tools of real estate development; housing and community development policy; development finance; organizational essentials; development process; and property management, asset management and resident issues. In addition, students who have a bachelor's degree may be able to apply courses toward UIC's master's in urban planning and policy degree.

That option, along with the opportunity for practical experience, appealed to Garcia. "I thought UDP would provide some very hands-on training in the most important areas of community development, especially how to develop affordable housing," he explains.

Garcia says UDP has been invaluable, particularly because it has given him the chance to learn from seasoned community developers. "The knowledge and experience of practitioners who are or have been involved in community development work...they have a wealth of experience and knowledge about the field that you probably wouldn't learn through traditional instruction."

In addition, Garcia says UDP has given him a "running start" in his job. "It's being proactive on the learning and practicing end of things," he says. "I'm learning things that probably would have taken a lot more time to learn and, more importantly, to implement."

#### *UDP Admission Criteria*

- \*Employment/involvement in community development
- \*Likelihood of completing the program
- \*Ability to successfully perform graduate work
- \*Identification of an appropriate community development project

For more information or an application, contact the Chicago Rehab Network at 312/663-3936. Information also is available at [www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci/programs/profed/udp](http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci/programs/profed/udp)

## **Grant will Make Clinic More Accessible to Low-Income Residents**

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Mile Square Family Health Center, a City of Chicago-owned, UIC-operated health center on Chicago's West Side, has received a \$1.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The grant will enable Mile Square to make primary health care more accessible to residents of Chicago's Near West Side, East and

West Garfield Park, and West Haven communities, all of which are low-income areas and include several public housing developments.

Henry Taylor, the center's executive director, says the funding will help Mile Square better serve the entire community. "Mile Square is providing

more than care for the physical body. Our facility is about providing care and social support for the entire family," he explains.

But some residents have been unable to get the care they need because the center and its satellite clinics, which are staffed by UIC health professionals, have been limited to operating during hours when many residents work. However, the grant will help pay salaries for personnel to staff the center during the evenings and on Saturdays, thereby meeting the needs of working community members.

Additionally, the grant will help extend the clinic's services beyond

primary care. New programs planned include a comprehensive adolescent healthcare program, which will focus on reducing infant mortality and teen pregnancy; an African-American male health clinic that also will provide parenting, health education and job information services; and a senior citizen clinic that will provide psychosocial and nutritional counseling, and podiatry and pharmacy services.

Mile Square also will use part of the grant to work with community organizations and other area health care institutions to develop primary care programs that directly benefit public housing residents.

## **DeNardo Aims to Make UIH A Hospital for the Community**

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For John DeNardo, running a hospital is a lot like putting together a puzzle. "All the pieces are on the table, but you have to ask yourself, do you have the vision and the desire to make it come together?" he explains.

DeNardo, whose career spans 27 years at Chicago-area VA hospitals, certainly has a vision. Since he assumed executive directorship of University of Illinois Hospital in February, he has been focusing on his goal of making UIH "a provider of choice and an employer of choice."

"University of Illinois Hospital is one of the city's best-kept secrets," says DeNardo, himself a graduate of UIC's College of Pharmacy. "As a university hospital, we're pretty easily seen as a referral site, but we need to be seen as a neighborhood resource, not only for trauma, but also for routine care."

The key to making UIH more of a community hospital, according to DeNardo, is making it more accessible. From ongoing renovations to make patient rooms and hospital units more cheerful, to improving hospital switchboard response to incoming calls, to hiring more Spanish-speaking staff

and providing hospital marketing and patient-information materials in Spanish, DeNardo is determined to make UIH a patient-centered facility.

In addition, the former director of both Hines VA Hospital and the West Side VA Medical Center wants to make the hospital a desired place of employment for both current and prospective staff. He points to an impending shortage of health care workers as baby boomers advance toward retirement, along with an increasing need for a more sophisticated level of care, particularly from technical health professionals. "It's critical that we examine what we need to do to develop our staff, while at the same time making this an enjoyable place to work," DeNardo states.

DeNardo's approach for meeting this goal is hands-on. For example, DeNardo has been walking the hospital's corridors, talking directly to hospital staff.

"We've been getting staff input, talking to staff about what we need to do to make us an employer of choice," he says."

As for turning around last year's second-quarter, \$8 million deficit, DeNardo believes the key is creating a hospital that both patients and employees want to come to. "What will really turn us around is not getting rid of staff, but having patients want to use us. You balance the budget by having an

effective, well-functioning organization," he asserts.

DeNardo's hands-on approach extends to the ways he assesses the hospital's success in meeting these goals. For one, he makes sure to read all letters that come across his desk from patients. "We need to look at how many we get, both good and bad, about the hospital," he says. In addition, he plans to implement routine patient-satisfaction surveys. "Patients have a choice, and if we don't treat them the way they want to be treated, why should they use us?"