

University Education for Community Change:

**A Vital Strategy for Progress on Poverty,
Race and Community-Building**

By Andrew Mott

Community Learning Partnership

The Community Learning Partnership explores ways of building a stronger infrastructure for learning in the field of community and social change. It works to expand writing, research, evaluation, teaching, training and learning opportunities which give grassroots community groups and their supporters easier access to helpful and provocative lessons from the extraordinary efforts and experience of their peers.

*Community Learning Partnership
Andrew Mott, Director
1301 Connecticut Ave. NW
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036
202/822-6006
www.communitylearningproject.org*

COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

expanding education for community change

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Introduction to Second Edition

When this report was published two years ago, it hit a responsive chord in the United States and internationally. Comments on the report and our experience since its publication have shown the pattern it described to be universal.

There are three interwoven strands in that pattern. First, in the US and throughout the world, there is a desperate shortage of people who are expert at bringing poor people together to build strong organizations and movements for tackling the immense issues they face daily – society’s most fundamental issues of entrenched poverty, prejudice, and people being left behind.

Second, domestically and internationally, pitifully few colleges or universities have created educational programs to address that often crippling “pipeline” crisis. This difficult work is left almost entirely to nonprofits.

Third, the university educational programs which do help people learn how to be effective community change agents suffer from being isolated, marginalized, and held back from developing the breadth and depth which would maximize their value. This pattern is as common in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe as in the United States.

The people who have pioneered important programs in the emerging academic field we call Community Change Studies deserve enormous credit. They have struggled against great odds, meeting resistance from traditional educators who look askance at multidisciplinary practice-based education. They have also faced skepticism from grassroots groups which are not convinced that academics can help them tackle the tough practical challenges of preparing people for careers in community and social change.

These pioneering efforts include impressive examples of the pay-off which can result when practitioners and academics work together to create learning opportunities for the community organizers, developers and leaders who are sorely needed throughout the world. These

programs are of incalculable value in helping the next generation learn how to play these roles with skill, broad knowledge, and sophisticated strategies. They thus contribute greatly to the success of efforts to involve grassroots people as leaders in transforming their own communities and expanding opportunities.

Since writing the report, the Community Learning Partnership has had an opportunity to concentrate heavily on these issues with others in the US and internationally. This experience has surfaced important additional examples of highly creative Community Change Education programs which are tailored to meet local needs. As with the programs profiled in this report, they vary tremendously, from mid-career Masters programs in Tanzania and rural Uganda to organizing apprenticeship programs and new courses on community organizing and civic education in the US. Collectively they offer valuable lessons for us all.

Recent experience has fortified our earlier conclusions on the urgent need to develop concerted strategies for strengthening current Community Change educational programs and establishing new ones. In the US it is also providing us with exciting opportunities to work with others in creating new programs which focus specifically on educating people of color and others from low-income and working-class neighborhoods for important roles as community leaders and change agents.

As a result, the Community Learning Partnership is now pursuing a three-part strategy for expanding University Education for Community Change. This strategy includes –

1. Developing and enriching pilot educational programs which are tailored to provide young and midcareer people with new opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills, effectiveness and impact as organizers and leaders of community and social change efforts;
2. Developing new ways of encouraging others to learn from these programs and to launch new initiatives which respond to local needs

and opportunities for expanded education and training for community change agents; and

3. Developing new networks to enable now isolated academics and practitioners to learn from and collaborate with each other in building this important new field of study.

Some of this work has been focused internationally, bringing together leaders in the field of Community Change Studies for peer learning and collaboration across the globe. Through the International Working Group on University Education for Community Change, a number of us are collaborating to provide educators and activists from different countries with new opportunities to learn from the highly creative programs which are emerging in different parts of the world. Our goals are to help them use this knowledge to broaden current programs and develop new ones, while also helping generate the recognition and resources their programs need to expand and succeed.

Through this international collaboration we are learning that we share a common vision of the key components and values for any program of Community Change Studies. This

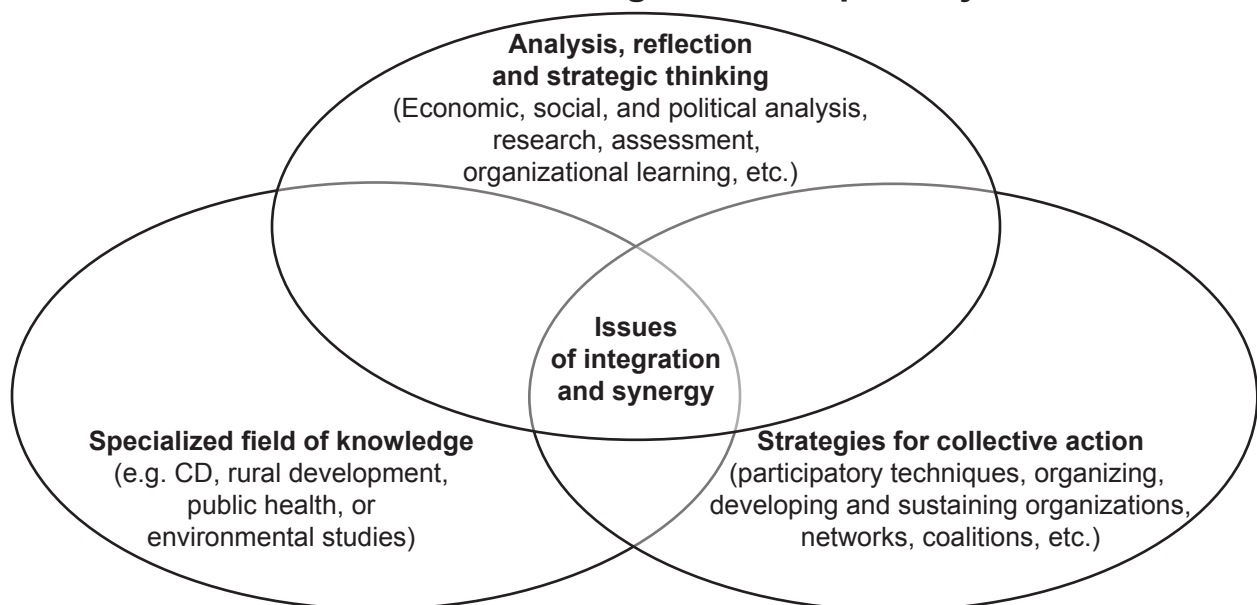
vision is remarkably similar despite the rich variations in our programs, each of which is deeply grounded in local needs and circumstances.

A number of key concepts and strategies have emerged as we have combined on-the-ground program development with exploring theory and practice. These should be useful to others who share our interest in expanding education and training for people seeking to create significant community and social change.

One central point of consensus emerged during a two-day meeting at New York University. All the participants agreed that three areas of study should be combined in education and training programs on community change so students have the full range of knowledge and skills they will need. These are depicted in the Venn diagram below. They include mastery of –

- the tools of collective action – getting people involved and participating, organizing them for action, and helping them build movements and organizations through which they can have a growing impact;

Areas of Knowledge and Competency



- strategic thinking, analysis and reflection (or STAR) – helping people understand the environments in which they are working, including analyzing trends, power, and potential allies, and developing their skills in strategy and reflection so they can become increasingly effective; and
- knowledge of the specific issue(s) they are most concerned about, including understanding the root causes, current policies, how decisions are made, and alternative strategies for creating significant change.

The values and vision behind community change work are also consistent from country to country. They provide a guiding framework which underpins all our thinking and planning. The principal values which unite us are –

- a bedrock commitment to democracy, to strengthening democratic practice, and to helping ordinary people create social and community change from the bottom-up; and
- an equally strong commitment to justice and to helping community leaders and grassroots organizations and movements build the strength, vision, and practical programs and policies which are needed to significantly reduce poverty, discrimination and exclusion.

Members of the Working Group are candid in acknowledging that most of their own programs do not yet offer this breadth. Instead they focus on developing only one or two of these forms of expertise. One key reason is that -- because the importance of Community Change Education is not yet widely recognized -- they find it extremely difficult to garner the resources and bring together the faculty and practitioners needed to broaden their programs to offer a full range of courses and field experience.

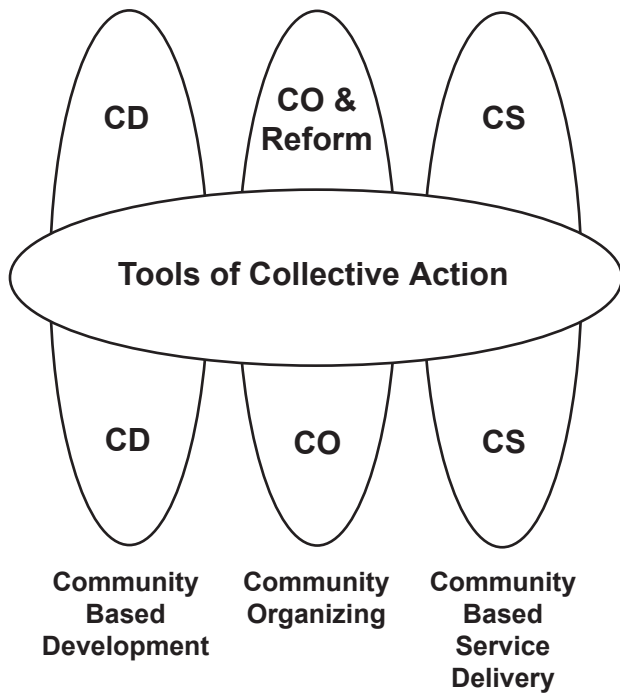
Despite this reality, the Working Group's members strongly desires to achieve that balance and richness in their own curricula and

in programs which are developed in the future. We find that Community Change Studies is most successful when it combines these three key elements in an integrated program within a framework which reflects the strong common values and vision which are central to community change.

We have fleshed out each of these three areas of competency. The tables at the end of this introduction highlight the full set of skills and knowledge which are needed by people who are seeking substantial improvements in their communities and major policy and institutional reforms.

The Partnership sees knowledge of the “tools of collective action” as being fundamental to any significant change strategy. Democratic change requires the involvement of large numbers of people in setting the agenda, taking the leadership, and making major decisions. Creating this level of involvement requires skill in fostering people's participation and channeling it into action.

How deep must a person's collective action skills and knowledge be? That depends upon the roles he/she plays and the strategies their organizations follow. Professional “organizers” organizing large numbers of people to build power and press major institutions for reforms need extensive skills in every aspect of collective action, including leadership development and sophisticated campaign strategy development. Those who concentrate instead on service delivery or community development programs or on community change education need a basic grounding in participatory techniques to ensure their approach is democratic and their programs are responsive to community needs, accountable to the people they serve, and successful in accessing resources from recalcitrant public agencies or other institutions. The following diagram illustrates the different levels of depth of knowledge of the “tools of collective action” which are required by different types of community workers – developers, organizers and service providers.



In addition, there is unanimity about the importance of incorporating three ways of learning into each curriculum. Together they reinforce each other, deepening a student's mastery of the subject and his/her ability to apply their new knowledge and skills in their community work. As illustrated below, these three techniques for learning are –

- reading and classroom work, including attention to theory and to learning from the experience of others;
- experiential education through field work with expert mentoring; and
- a strong emphasis on disciplined reflection which deepens each student's learning from both theory and practice.

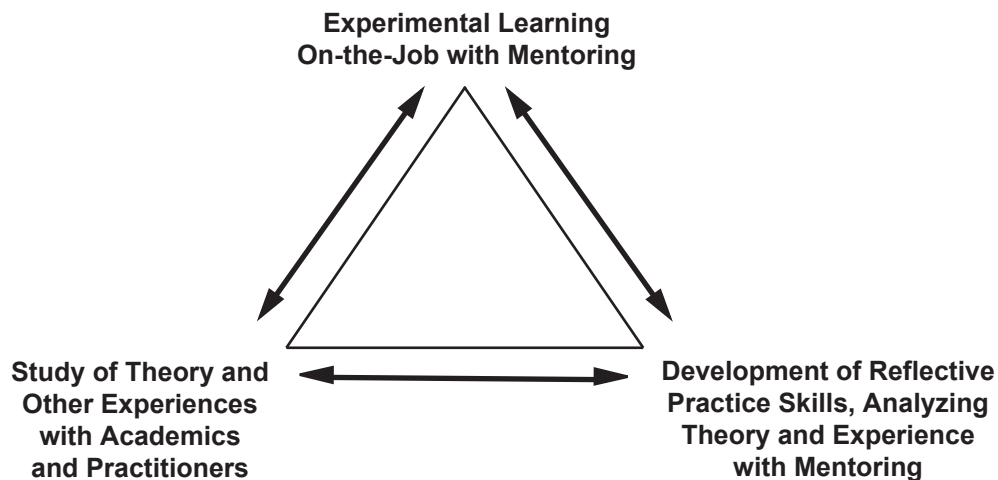
Cooperative educational approaches which combine study, work and reflection are particularly powerful. Highly realistic situations create great opportunities for people to test the theory and ideas they gain from reading, research, and discussion. And "academic" programs enable practitioners to go beyond the immediate issues they face to analyze their

historical context, examine root causes and the roles various institutions play, and learn about the widely varying, often highly creative strategies which others have pursued in addressing those issues.

Experienced practitioners clearly have important roles to play as educators, bringing great knowledge and skills to teaching in this field. However, their full involvement in university programs is still rare. While some college programs involve practitioners as formal adjunct faculty-members, or in co-teaching with regular faculty, or as guest lecturers or "community scholars", there are tremendous barriers to involving practitioners in these ways. Unlike medicine and other fields in which "clinical" professors are understood to be essential, community change educators teach in academic departments which are leary of being too practice-based. Their reward systems are usually biased against faculty-members who stress field work, multidisciplinary studies, or community service rather than research, and promotions are contingent upon success in publishing heavily researched and highly academic articles in prestigious journals.

Academics can make tremendous contributions in developing people's knowledge and skills related to community and social change. In particular, experts in learning techniques and in developing people's analytic and strategic capacities can add greatly to the depth of the understanding, thinking and learning skills of their students, be they traditional students or activists, organizers, developers, researchers, or otherwise engaged in bringing about social change.

Furthermore, anchoring practitioner education in colleges and universities can add greatly to its credibility and enables practitioners to earn credentials and the concomitant respect and influence. Other advantages of higher educational institutions? Their unparalleled access to young people and to special funding



streams from government and philanthropy for tuition subsidies, scholarships, program development and other purposes.

Leading nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations have, of course, created their own training programs, many of which are of exceptional quality. In the US, for example, some national community organizing networks offer 2, 5, 10 or 20 day training programs on organizing, plus additional in-service education. There also are nonprofit-run certificate programs in community economic development (as well as university degree programs) in that field. To date, however, none of these nonprofit-initiated programs offer their students college credit – an especially significant benefit for people who, because of income or other barriers, have not had an opportunity to earn academic credentials which can help them in their careers. Furthermore, these nonprofit training programs are starved for resources: unlike college-based programs they do not have access to streams of government funding for tuition, scholarships, stipends or seed money.

Practitioners feel the pipeline crisis acutely. Many see the need to design dramatically new pathways into organizing and for “continuing education” programs to enable practitioners to gain the knowledge, practical experience, and academic credentials which will help them increase their impact. The Community Learning Partnership therefore is working with

community organizers, nonprofit leaders and academics in several American cities to build new partnerships between the nonprofit and academic sectors to tap into the talent and resources each sector offers, creating ambitious new educational programs which respond to the talent crisis.

Another key concept which is emerging from the Partnership’s work is the need to create lifelong learning opportunities in the field of community change. Because of the complexity of the challenges which poor and excluded people face and the barriers to significant social change, change agents need access to additional training, education, and assistance at different points in their careers. This starts with making young people aware that they can have careers in which they are paid to tackle issues of poverty, discrimination, and community development, while also creating new educational pathways into those careers. It includes opening up learning opportunities in high schools, community colleges, and universities to provide the combination of “hard” skills, theoretical understanding, and competencies in strategic thinking, analysis and research skills which effective organizers need. And it includes opportunities for midcareer education when people are at important junctures, especially when they need the stimulus of being with peers, teachers and trainers, focusing on challenging issues they face, being

Matrix on Lifelong Learning

	Tools of collective action	Strategic thinking, analysis, reflection	Issue expertise
Grassroots training			
Certificate or AA			
4 year BA			
Postgraduate			
Midcareer			

exposed to new ideas, analyses, and strategies which are new to them, and preparing for the next stages in their careers.

Pioneers in Community Change Education therefore have developed specific programs which are geared to be helpful at different points in people's careers. The following chart illustrates the continuum of lifelong learning in community change studies.

In our work in the US, the Learning Partnership has identified four major sources of potential candidates for careers in community change. These are depicted in the chart below.

At the Partnership, we have chosen not to focus on recent college graduates at this point but instead to concentrate on the other three talent pools. We have made this choice so we can focus heavily on the fundamental problem which gravely weakens community organizing and change work in the United States today –

the shortage of people of color and low-income people as organizers and community change agents.

This shortage now feeds on itself in a vicious cycle. On the race issue, for example, because there are few organizers of color, there are relatively few minority candidates for advancement to positions as executive directors, consultants, and trainers. This pattern contributes to the perception among many minorities that the community organizing field is dominated by whites. This in turn reduces organizing's ability to attract people of color into organizing and community change work.

To help break this cycle, we are concentrating on two approaches.

First, we are focusing on creating programs for new organizers and leaders, especially people of color and people from low-income and working class neighborhoods. The goal of these programs is to address directly the often crippling shortage of community organizers

Sources of Students

<p>1. Youth in Low-Income Neighborhoods –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Especially people of color, including kids not now college-bound • Showing interest in and potential for organizing 	<p>2. Community Leaders –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Especially people of color • With experience in organizing, being a leader, sharing power • Showing potential to be organizers
<p>3. University Students –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing interest and potential but without access to educational pathway on community organizing and social change 	<p>4. Early and Midcareer Organizers –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At critical point in careers and needing chance to reflect, learn, look ahead

and change agents who – because they have directly experienced poverty and exclusion -- are particularly well-equipped to lead and organize efforts to change these conditions. The programs therefore include –

- targeted recruitment efforts through a system of “spotters” in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color;
- curricula which address issues of identity, race, class and gender as well as the combination of practical experience and knowledge-building which organizers need;
- pathways which start with practical training outside university walls and morph into college degree programs linked to continuing on-the-job experience with organizing campaigns;
- programs which allow a person to earn credentials as they advance, proceeding step by step from credit for individual courses to a college certificate, AA, BA and advanced degrees; and
- a combination of stipends or salaries and low or free tuition to make the education affordable.

To make these programs sustainable and able to move to scale, CLP and its local partners are leveraging the impact of their private funding by designing programs which take full advantage

of existing flows of government funds. These include –

- youth employment stipends;
- subsidized tuitions in state and local institutions of higher education;
- federal stipends through VISTA and other Americorps programs; and
- the \$4725 those programs grant to their graduates for education.

Most of these resources are, of course, not available to stand-alone nonprofit training programs.

Second, we are beginning to work with others in the US to address the need for intensive midcareer education for organizers. Our shared goal is to reduce the rapid turnover which is now hemorrhaging community change work. We believe that midcareer seminars and educational programs can reduce turnover substantially if they are designed specifically to address staff burnout and discouragement, providing them with a respite from their normal pressures and an opportunity for renewal. These programs should provide people who already have 5, 10 or more years of experience with opportunities for reflection, peer learning and support, intellectual stimulation, and renewal of their vision and sense of vocation. They also should enable participants to develop new skills and strategies, prepare them-

History, theory and values	Where are you in your journey as an organizer? What do you want from this learning community? Identity, satisfaction and frustration, thinking ahead to the next challenge	History of social movements and organizationbuilding in the city and the US	Values, theory and vision behind organizing, community change and community development efforts; different schools of thought on building organizations, coalitions, etc
	Balancing work and your personal lives, family, friends, etc.		

selves for growing management and leadership responsibilities, and earn a graduate certificate or degree. Involving academics who are grounded in community work as well as leading organizers and community change leaders from the US and overseas would add greatly to the appeal and stimulation midcareer programs can offer.

In early planning for one possible midcareer program in the US, we developed the following matrix to illustrate the mix of courses we were considering. This listing provides an example

of the stimulating combination of learning topics which could be included in a new Master's level program in Community Change Studies.

Trends and challenges affecting community and social change	Class, race, gender, age in the US; addressing issues of bias and institutional behavior	Demographic and public policy changes and their implications for community groups in the city; challenges of working across race, class, gender and age lines	Growth, gentrification, and urban trends and their implications for grassroots groups
	Globalization and the relative decline of the US economy – implications for city neighborhoods	The changing role of government, including the reduction in social programs, and its implications	Current philanthropic trends and their impact on organizing and issues of poverty and race

Trends and challenges affecting possibilities and strategies for progress	Advanced organizing and leadership development	Coalition-building and partnership strategies	Building solid, sustainable organizations; management for midcareer organizers
	Developing staff; creating a learning community	Preparing for the long haul and continually rejuvenating your career in community change	Fundraising and financial planning

Skill-building	Option 1: Participatory and action research; citizen monitoring and accountability	Option 2: Advanced use of technology	Option 3: Strategic communications
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Issue knowledge	<p>Independent study on moving to scale and creating reforms on specific issues you work on (eg. Jobs, housing, youth development)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understanding root causes of the issue, the broad policy issues, and the roles of key institutions and actors - becoming familiar with different strategies others have used - developing vision and direction for longer-term work on the issue
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	First Semester	Second Semester	Third Semester	Fourth Semester
Residencies	A B	C D	E F	G H
History, theory and values	History of social movements and CO in the US	Values and theory behind organizing and social change efforts	Challenges to democracy and strategies for rejuvenation	Thesis or Practicum
Trends and challenges affecting community and social change	Class, race, gender, age in the US Challenges presented by ecological crisis	Demographic and social changes 101 Globalization, shifts in global political and economic power structures	Demographic and social changes 102 Collaborative inquiry on particular challenges in the US	

The Work Ahead

In 2009 the International Working Group will publish a book on the current state of the art in Community Change Studies globally. Drawing from our international research and dialogue and our concentrated work in the US, it will set forth a plan for developing this field of studies over the next 10-20 years. Central to this plan will be the launching of an ongoing international network, with sub-networks in Latin America and other regions as well as increased networking within the US. It will include plans for creating ongoing opportunities for peer learning and collaboration on common issues and on systematically growing this emerging field of study.

At the same time the Community Learning Partnership will continue working with others to expand Community Change Studies in the United States. If the US is to successfully address poverty and race and to strengthen both our democracy and our communities, we must greatly increase the number of community change agents with the skills and sophistication to work with local people on these tough challenges. This will require that we create new partnerships and educational pathways, supported with significant new private and public funding and the best talent we can marshal from the practitioner and academic worlds.

We are finding the cross-fertilization of ideas and approaches between US and international initiatives to be of tremendous value. It enriches thinking in both spheres, exposing all of us to an exceptionally broad range of experience and creative strategies. It also gives us new perspective on how our individual work fits into a broader worldwide process of knowledge-building on how best to foster democratic change and greater social justice wherever we live and work.

Main Areas of Competency for Community Change Studies

1. Tools of collective action

- Skills in eliciting participation
- Bringing people together to participate
- Developing consensus
- Community organizing
- Developing leadership
- Moving people into action
- Developing programs
- Building coalitions, alliances and partnerships
- Building broader efforts and movements
- Using different strategies for impact – services, development, advocacy, etc.
- Developing accountable, sustainable organizations
- “Managing”, starting with being systematic, leading teams, And then developing advanced management and leadership skills

2. Strategic thinking, analysis, and reflection (STAR)

- Self-awareness and identity
- Understanding culture, race, class, gender, etc.
- Centering your work in community values
- Understanding the environment in which you work, power analysis, economics, social structure, culture
- Reflective practice
- Strategic thinking, planning
- Action research, especially PAR and Citizen Monitoring
- Evaluation and organizational learning

3. Issue expertise (e.g. public health, women's issues, community development)

- Understanding the immediate issue or project
- Understanding its root causes
- Understanding any underlying policy issues
- Understanding how decisions are made, who makes them, and what points of intervention exist
- Identifying potential partners and allies
- Being equipped with the facts and technical analysis needed
- Developing vision and direction for achieving growing, longer-term success on the issue

Foreword

Like many others who have worked on issues of poverty, race, and community and social change, I have become increasingly concerned about the future of this important work. At a time when the political and economic environments are particularly challenging, there is a dangerous shortage of people who are fully prepared for the tough but absolutely essential work of leading the grassroots organizations which both strengthen America's low-income communities and expand opportunities for people our society often leaves behind.

Because of the enormous immediate challenges low-income organizations face, few nonprofits and funders have set aside time and resources to educate and develop the next generation of leaders for these vital social and community change efforts. Understandably, we have focused on the urgent work which must be done immediately, helping people tackle issues which are central to revitalizing communities and expanding opportunities. The unfortunate result – **we have invested too little in developing sufficient numbers of people with the vision, breadth of knowledge, commitment and skills needed to tackle the enormous issues which low-income communities and people of color face in America today.**

In thinking about this massive challenge, I have often wondered why universities do not play a more significant role. If poverty, race and community are such central issues for our society, why don't institutions of higher education develop programs to educate people for careers as leaders and supporters of community change efforts? How much potential do universities have for preparing people for these careers? If the potential is great, what should be done to ramp up university-based programs so they educate more young people for careers in community change and help mid-career people hone their skills and broaden their knowledge so they can increase their impact?

Thinking back on my own early career, I have often been puzzled and frustrated by the fact that fewer than a handful of American universities offer the kind of interdisciplinary program mixing classroom work and experience at the community level which was offered forty years ago in Iran when several of us taught courses in "National Development" at Pahlavi University, preparing students for careers in rural development.

In the intervening years since Iran, I have devoted my career to providing advice and assistance to organizations through which poor people represent their interests on issues which concern them. Working directly with grassroots groups, overseeing a far flung program of technical assistance and policy support for hundreds of such organizations, and working in policy circles, I have become even more convinced that it is essential to foster the development of democratic community organizations. These groups give poor people and people of color a voice and real influence in their own communities and in the arenas where government, the private sector, and major nonprofit institutions make decisions which powerfully impact their lives.

I have also been reminded frequently of the difficulty of organizing communities, especially disadvantaged ones, and bringing about significant change against great odds and the opposition of powerful defenders of the status quo. This work takes great skill, knowledge, and analytic and strategic strengths, as well as commitment, creativity, courage, and openness to learning. It is unconscionable that America's well-endowed and powerful institutions of higher education have, by and large, ignored the challenge of helping prepare the leaders and organizers which these communities, and America as a whole, need so badly.

With support from a grant to Community Catalyst by the Community and Resource Development Program of the Ford Foundation, I have had the great privilege of devoting concentrated time to exploring these questions.

To get a clearer sense of the current status of university-based programs which relate to community change, I interviewed over sixty people, most of them in universities throughout the US, and reviewed curricula, course materials, books and articles. This report reviews what I have learned during this brief but stimulating scan, and highlights the conclusions I have drawn from it. It includes recommendations on practical steps which would substantially increase the relevance and impact of American universities in opening up new opportunities for communities of color and low-income people.

In thinking through what kinds of leaders are needed, we must start with a theory of change, a theory of how social and community change can happen on issues of poverty, race, and community improvement, and what background and skills leaders need to lead that process of change. The theory which underlies this report has several elements –

- Low-income communities must be the prime movers in order to ensure that the change reflects their needs and priorities;
- They must build their own effective organizations to represent their interests, and they must hold those organizations accountable;
- They cannot achieve success on their own but need the power and influence of allies, partners and coalitions;
- Their success requires broad knowledge and analytical skills, expertise in involving people and developing leaders, a long-range vision and sophisticated strategy;
- It also requires that people be organized to build real power as there will be great resistance to change and they will need to win the competition for resources and policy reforms which will benefit disadvantaged communities; this will require community organizing and the building of alliances and coalitions;

- These challenges require leaders and organizers with remarkably broad backgrounds and a variety of forms of expertise;
- While people can learn and develop all these capacities through experience, trial and error, they will develop far more quickly if they have an opportunity to learn through a combination of structured learning opportunities, practice and critical reflection; and
- University-based programs can be one important route for developing these leaders, but those programs must be reshaped to accomplish this specific purpose, and they must involve practitioners as well as academics in teaching so they can offer the combination of knowledge, skills, and vision which are needed to have an impact on the fundamental issues which face our societies.

I am deeply grateful to Mil Duncan, former Director of the Ford Foundation's Community and Resource Development Unit, and Miguel Garcia, Acting Deputy Director of that Unit, for their generous support and strong encouragement for this work. I also would like to thank Annemarie Ewing for her editing help, Margaux O'Malley for layout and design, Kate Villers, Rob Restuccia, and Rosemarie Boardman of Community Catalyst for making this work possible.

– Andrew Mott, May 2005

Chapter I: The Growing Challenge

Poverty, race, and strengthening the social fabric by strengthening community institutions – there is broad agreement that these are central issues for the United States. Poverty is growing as increasing numbers of people are being left behind by our economy, our educational institutions, and our traditional system for providing social mobility. Race relations are becoming more complex as our nation becomes far more multicultural and issues of racial justice and racial tensions simmer. Our social fabric and democratic institutions are under strain, as concern grows about the extent to which our community institutions have the strength, openness and leadership to bring and hold people together, creating the webs of close ties, common values, helping relationships and democratic traditions which are so important to successful communities.

There is also broad agreement that community organizations of various types must be central to any strategy for addressing the interlocked issues of poverty, race, and social fabric. In this era of government retrenchment it is clear that the public sector will not take the lead in addressing these issues. Nor are large nonprofit institutions well-suited for this task, as they typically work area-wide and must balance many interests and activities rather than focus on particular communities. And the traditional civic concerns and leadership of local business are being weakened as mergers and globalization reduce the number of hometown corporations and local corporate leaders.

There is no choice: Leadership on poverty and race therefore must come from the community itself. Well-led, truly community-based organizations can become uniquely knowledgeable about the community's needs, skilled at involving large numbers of volunteers to work on priority issues, and effective in ensuring that new resources, partnerships, policies and programs are developed to strengthen the community. They also can become vital bridges

for linking people together across racial and economic lines to address issues of race and poverty.

Strong, well-led community organizations are therefore essential to the success of other partners in the process of community change. Without effective systems for involving community residents, efforts to reform public education, increase public safety, or transform the lives and attitudes of community residents will fail. So will initiatives which are designed to improve housing and sustain it over the long-run, or to prepare hard-to-employ people for lives of work and a chance to move up. All these reforms require changes in people's attitudes and the development of systems which are sensitive to a community's unique opportunities, are "owned" by those they are serving, and enlist strong neighborhood backing.

There is growing recognition of these lessons in major public and private institutions. Many police departments, public health and mental health professionals, experts in youth and family development, workforce development specialists, and foundations creating "comprehensive community initiatives," for example, have concluded that they must work through community-based organizations if they are to achieve their goals.

As agreement has grown on the central importance of grassroots groups, there has been very substantial investment in those organizations. Foundations, churches, corporations, government agencies, and others have invested billions of dollars in community organizing, community development and community-building. Low-income people, especially people of color, have invested huge amounts of volunteer time in building organizations through which they work to change their communities and public policies for the better.

The need for grassroots organizations and well-trained people to lead them is certain to increase. As new immigrant groups settle into the United States and as the working poor, people of color, young people and the elderly grow in relation to the rest of the population,

Strong, well-led community organizations are essential to the success of other partners in the process of community change.

they will need to band together on the particular issues they face. They will need formal and informal groups through which they can join with their peers, represent their interests, meet their immediate needs, and increasingly serve as partial substitutes for the government agencies which are shrinking as the social safety net weakens. People will therefore be strongly motivated to create a new generation of self-help and mutual help organizations, drawing on the unique American traditions of self-reliance, the building of strong voluntary associations, and vital support for those associations by private philanthropy.

Reliance on grassroots groups will grow as tax cuts, military expenditures, the shaky economy, and conservative social and fiscal policies further reduce support for social programs. Poverty will increase dramatically: government cutbacks are reducing services and income transfer programs, and low-income people of all races are facing growing barriers to advancement because, while the need for a well-educated workforce is growing, they typically face poor schools, the digital divide, and increasingly unaffordable higher education. The gap between rich and poor will widen rapidly unless the political and fiscal situations change dramatically. Because poor people cannot count on the public or private sector or large nonprofits to take the lead in changing this situation, there will be a growing need for strong nonprofits which represent and serve poor and working people.

There is by now a rich body of experience with different strategies for strengthening low-income communities. These include community organizing, community development, and approaches to reforming the public and private sector policies which have such an impact on neighborhoods and on each person's chance to

get ahead.¹ **There is much to learn, and it is essential that people who lead these vital efforts have opportunities to learn from the experience of their predecessors and peers. Informed with this knowledge, they will have a far greater chance of succeeding in bringing about significant social and community change.**

The Crisis in Leadership

Despite the growing consensus on the critical importance of grassroots organizations, and despite this major investment and growth, the field of community change faces a mounting crisis of leadership. There is a severe shortage of people who are fully prepared for key positions in the field – whether leading grassroots groups or providing vital support to them from other sectors. The infrastructure for learning is still pitifully weak, with people expected to learn on the job, through trial and error, with little access to the lessons others have learned in tackling similar challenges. Nonprofits typically are so overstretched that few can either hire people as apprentices to their top leaders or invest significantly in other forms of training and mentoring.

To build a strong community-based sector which fully responds to these needs, **far greater priority must be given to developing a pipeline which can generate the skilled leadership community groups will need. It will be particularly important that growing numbers of young people from immigrant populations and other families of color be prepared for challenging jobs in community-based nonprofits**, as their backgrounds give them unique advantages for understanding and leading their communities. Their backgrounds also increase the likelihood they will

¹For the purposes of this paper, “community development corporations” are defined as nonprofit organizations which create and manage housing and/or economic development programs. “Community organizing groups” are those which stress organizing a mass-based constituency and building power for collective action and advocacy, rather than running their own programs. “Community change” is the process of engaging people in reforming broad policies and systems and changing the behavior of major public and private institutions with the goal of increasing opportunities for low-income people and other disadvantaged groups.

There is much to learn, and it is essential that people who lead these vital efforts have opportunities for learning from the experience of their predecessors and peers.

make long-term rather than fleeting commitments to the neighborhoods and people who most need their help.

Community change is, in short, a tough and demanding job requiring a broad background, analytic and strategic skills, and practical experience in understanding and motivating people and moving them into action on strategies which will lead to growing success. It is a tremendously challenging – and exciting – responsibility, at least as complex as any other profession. Like other professions, it requires extensive preparation, well beyond what people can learn on a job without a serious educational component, mentoring and guidance.

This challenge is greatly heightened by the major leadership transition now underway. Many grassroots groups and support organizations are now going through a wrenching generational change. Organizers and leaders who emerged from the activism of the 1960s – a unique period in American history when the civil rights, Chicano, antipoverty, and women’s movements stimulated a surge of community organizing, alternative social service and community development efforts – are now retiring or otherwise stepping out of management roles, leaving leadership positions vacant.

In many ways this transition is healthy, bringing new energies and ideas to the work. But the trend also has great dangers. The older generation is often passing the torch to people who are 25 or 30 years younger because there is a “missing generation” of people who would now be 40-55. When that generation was young, few entry-level jobs were available as grassroots groups were reducing their budgets in the face of a poor economy, backlash against the activism of the 1960s, and reduced philanthropic giving and government support. Furthermore, those who found jobs with community groups often found their path to advancement blocked as founders stayed on and budgets remained static. Many therefore moved to jobs with greater upward mobility –

politics and government, other nonprofits with higher salaries and benefits, foundations, and corporations and banks concerned about their affirmative action and community reinvestment obligations. This brain drain has left many groups with such a large generational gap that they now have no choice but to shift to much younger leadership as their founders move on.

Second, as the variety of approaches to community change has multiplied, most people have been forced to specialize in just one somewhat narrow aspect of the work. They have specialized in housing development, or anticrime efforts, or health care, or tenant organizing, with relatively few people having an opportunity to broaden their knowledge and analytic skills beyond what they learn in carrying out their particular duties.

This is unfortunate as it is increasingly clear that the highly complex work of community change requires a mix of approaches – community organizing, community development, coalition-building and policy advocacy among others. It is also apparent that communities require multi-issue, increasingly comprehensive strategies rather than concentrating on a single issue. You cannot, for example, solve the housing problem without addressing issues of jobs and income, schools, public services, safety, and public and private investment in the neighborhood as a whole. Furthermore, those issues require working at the citywide, metropolitan and statewide levels as well as locally, a challenge which requires strong political skills and alliances.

Third, **the shortage is especially great among people of color** whose leadership is essential because communities of color are disproportionately poor, neglected and cut off from opportunities. Educational gaps, stubborn patterns of white dominance in key institutions, and the appeal of jobs offering greater security and upward mobility continue to limit the number of people of color in grassroots leadership positions.

There is a severe shortage of people who are fully prepared for key positions in the field.

The Need for Action

The success of this transition depends in large part upon whether there is a significant expansion of programs to prepare two cohorts of professionals to lead community change efforts.

For the long-run there must be great expansion of *programs to prepare college-age young people for work in community organizing, community development and social change organizations, and then link them to careers in that field* so they can lead community change efforts in ten or twenty years. It is especially important to support programs which attract people from communities in distress as those students start with both a deep understanding of those communities and a greater likelihood they will make long-term commitments to them.

For the short-run, considering the massive leadership transition already underway, immediate attention must be given to *mid-career programs which broaden the knowledge and deepen the skills of already experienced practitioners.* They soon will be assuming broad-gauged responsibilities which require that they master issues and adopt strategies which are now foreign to their experience. Their ability to make this transition successfully will determine the future success of grassroots efforts to bring about substantial social and community change.

It is therefore crucial that steps be taken to help prepare both age groups for their new challenges. It is time for making judicious investments to reinforce good programs which are already underway and help them expand their impact. **In addition to providing direct support for prototype educational programs for young and mid-career people, efforts to *build and strengthen networks through which now-isolated academic programs and practitioners can work together to refine and expand their current educational and training programs would contribute significantly*** to mutual learning and mutual support across institutions and disciplines.

That strategy underlies this scan of the current state of university education related to careers in community change.

Background on This Search for Solutions

This scan focuses on the preparation of people for careers leading and supporting community change efforts. Their role may be to lead community organizing, community development or community-driven coalitional efforts to influence policies, or to work on those issues from within government, major nonprofits, philanthropy or business. Whichever role they play, they will need to develop extensive knowledge and skills with which to foster significant change in low-income communities and expand opportunities for poor people and people of color. This requires that they develop –

- broad knowledge of the interrelated issues poor people and their neighborhoods face;
- an understanding of how major public and private institutions relate to those communities and how they might be reformed and strengthened;
- strong analytic skills;
- a strong sense of strategy and skills for leading change within an organization, a community, and its environment;
- expertise in involving community residents and developing their capacity to analyze the issues they face; and
- skills in building strong organizations to represent low-income communities and become full partners in decisions which will determine their future.

In addition, community change agents need in depth knowledge of the particular specialty they will concentrate on most, such as housing and community development, workforce and economic development, community organizing, or community planning.

As the variety of approaches to community change has multiplied, most people have been forced to specialize in just one somewhat narrow aspect of the work.

The Role of Universities

Why focus on universities as potential help for this alarming shortage of practitioners? Aren't universities so removed from the realities of low-income communities and the practical difficulties of running complex organizations that they are incapable of educating people for community change work? Doesn't their entire reward system militate against the kind of multifaceted, multidisciplinary knowledge and skill-building which is needed?

It is clear that universities are not the only answer to the crisis. There is great potential in building up the nonprofit sector's capacity to provide much more extensive training and mentoring, building on the expertise and systems which are already in place. But they cannot handle the crisis by themselves as they have strict limits in their access to resources, their access to young people, and the range of their expertise.

Against this backdrop, as part of a broader strategy for responding to the crisis of leadership, there are four reasons for focusing on universities.

First, **universities are the best point of contact with the young generation which the community change movement desperately needs.** There are currently over fifteen million students in institutions of higher education. Because of their tuitions and proximity community colleges, state universities, and commuter colleges are particularly good places for reaching people of color and low-income students who might devote their lives to this work if they were influenced by experiences and a curriculum which drew them into this fascinating and challenging field. However, there are many students at elite universities – whites and people of color, people from middle-class backgrounds as well as low-income – who can make enormous contributions to the movement, and there are many examples of pro-

grams in those universities which offer courses and service opportunities which provide invaluable backgrounds.

Second, it is by now abundantly clear that **nonprofits will never get the resources which are needed for the intensive, long-term educational programs which are needed.** In the community change world, it is extraordinarily difficult to attract funding for more than a three or five day training program. A few organizations are funded to offer three or four weeks of training over a year, usually coupled with a research or action project related to the trainee's daily responsibilities. Some community organizing networks provide three or four months of training through workshops and experience working on an organizing campaign. Most groups have no choice but to hire the best people they can find and train them on-the-job.

Third, while the vast majority of universities offer few courses which are directly relevant to community change work, **universities do have great potential as sources of education and training for this field. This has been demonstrated by the best programs which already exist on different campuses.** Those programs illustrate how much can be gained by drawing on universities' enormous resources for teaching, research, and partnerships with communities. They can reach undergraduates, regular postgraduate students, and – as they do in other professions – mid-career professionals. And they have prestige, stability and continuity which are particularly appealing to people who are interested in career development and upward mobility.

Fourth, **this generation of students has a strong orientation to service which is causing universities to give new attention to community needs.** Again and again people interviewed for this scan remarked on how anxious young people are to provide services to people who need help. Cynical about politics, skeptical about major reforms happening in their lifetimes, many are excited by opportunities for community service. This has fueled

For the long-run there must be great expansion of programs to prepare college-age young people for work in social change organizations.

the “service learning movement” which over 900 university presidents have endorsed and which, despite its weakness on most campuses, does have great potential as a focal point for educating people about community change.

Some educators like former Harvard President Derek Bok see a new emphasis on participation and civic values as an important counterweight to market forces as decisions are made concerning university curricula. Bok, for example, is deeply concerned about how university education is increasingly “market-driven” rather than oriented toward the common good, and very committed to efforts to increase the emphasis on service and civic engagement.

This scan of university programs related to community change looks very broadly at the wide variety of programs which currently exist. It attempts to grasp the entire picture and to understand broad trends and patterns while learning of especially promising prototypes. This exploratory paper seeks to identify opportunities for relatively modest investments which could make a substantial difference over time. Investments in good programs which need greater stability and some chance to grow; investments in new programs which hold great promises; investments in helping key people network with others who are struggling with similar issues and are isolated from peers and other experiences; investments which will lead to incremental gains and, over time, to a gradual strengthening of university-based education for people working in the field of community change.

Universities – The Broad Landscape

In general, there is a somewhat surprising number of university programs which provide some courses related to community change. However, these programs are isolated from each other, usually on the margins of a university, and vulnerable to

changes in leadership, institutional politics or the loss of vital outside funding. Most focus on only one or two aspects of community work, but a few are broader and more geared to give people a fuller background for working in low income neighborhoods. Collectively they give a glimpse of the potential and possible scope of more thorough curricula for college-age students and mid-career practitioners.

Several patterns are clear from this scan.

First, **the gulf between practitioners and academics is even wider than generally acknowledged.** Even among those who share a strong common commitment to grassroots community organizations as key institutions for addressing issues of class and race, there is little contact between practitioners and academics. They live in parallel universes, participating in different meetings and conferences, rarely reading the same materials, and not even knowing each other’s names. It is rare for research and other materials to be shared across these lines despite the fact that both universes conduct extensive research on community issues. Despite talk of “partnerships” there are relatively few examples of close collaboration between academics and community leaders, even on research on community issues and student placement – two issues on which they have potentially strong common interests.

Universities are in general heavily biased against experiential education and skill-building, viewing them as somehow being inferior and contrary to the traditions set by research universities (despite adoption of clinical models in such other graduate institutions as medical and dental schools and some business and law schools). Even when there are field placements with community groups, the obstacles to having practitioners co-teach with academics are immense. Those which have introduced co-teaching have often reversed themselves when their leadership changes and a new dean or chairman reintroduces a more “academic” approach.

Immediate attention must be given to mid-career programs which broaden the knowledge and deepen the skills of already experienced practitioners.

Second, **many of the most interesting programs have emerged in non-elite institutions.** Most are located in less well-known institutions, including community and commuter colleges and the less prestigious branches of state university systems. These institutions suffer less than elite universities from overwhelming pressures to ape the major research universities by publishing pathfinding research studies in academic journals. Their faculty members are often more free to create the practice-based and interdisciplinary approaches and university/community partnerships which are central to community work. They also are more entrepreneurial and accustomed to responding to markets for specialized education and training and offering courses at times and on terms which are attractive to adult learners.

Third, **university norms usually limit programs to a single discipline such as planning or social work or public health.** Because of the “tyranny of the disciplines,” promotion is dependent upon a teacher’s academic achievement in his or her field. They seek tenure in a single discipline, and earn it through conducting research which meets that field’s standards and is published in journals grounded in that discipline. This militates against cross-disciplinary work – an approach which is essential to researching or working on multifaceted issues in complex communities. As a result, very few university programs have a truly multidisciplinary approach despite the need to use techniques from different disciplines to analyze and address the complex and interrelated issues of poverty, race, community and public policy.

Fourth, **there are tremendous problems of isolation and lack of communication and sharing among university programs related to community work.** Interviews with over fifty people in universities revealed the extent to which they see themselves as on the mar-

gins of their own institutions and isolated from others trying to teach and involve students in community change studies.² Again and again interviewees expressed their desire for information about other college-based programs related to community change.

One factor contributing to the isolation of community-oriented university programs is that they are scattered in so many different places within institutions. In many universities, a thorough review of the course catalog reveals a surprising number of courses relevant to low-income communities, but they are in different departments and not linked. The undergraduate pattern is often a crazyquilt of courses in such departments as sociology, social psychology, political science, urban studies or anthropology. Similarly postgraduate courses are in schools of social work, urban studies, planning, public policy or public service, divinity, law, public health, sociology, economics and regional economic development, and leadership studies. To add to the complexity quite often some of the most relevant courses and research are concentrated in a “center” which is related to one or more departments.

Needless to say, this scattering of programs aggravates their isolation. Faculty-members often are unaware of other courses which also focus on low-income communities, especially those in different departments or based at a center with little visibility. **Students have no way of knowing that, with careful planning or guidance, they could piece together a series of courses which would give them quite a strong background for community work.**

There are also few opportunities for faculty to interact with people teaching similar courses in other universities. Because the major professional associations are dominated by traditional academic interests, their conferences,

²This sense of being marginalized is not confined to the United States. At a recent conference at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex (IDS), there was a consensus among academics who teach “participation” and community-oriented courses in seventeen countries that they all – including IDS – were working on the margins of their universities and feeling isolated and vulnerable.

Efforts to build and strengthen networks through which now-isolated academic programs and practitioners can work together would contribute significantly.

materials and working groups stress highly “academic” topics and research with little emphasis on community service. They seldom provide fora which help faculty deeply involved in community studies to learn from each other and explore common issues and strategies. In some disciplines like social work and planning, however, there are smaller formal or informal associations which provide opportunities for like-minded faculty to learn and support each other’s efforts. Unfortunately, these associations typically lack the resources to be robust sources of help on curricular development and the development of strategies for growing the field.

With all these gaps, it is easy to understand why there is no forum for bringing together faculty from different disciplines and different campuses to discuss how they might collaborate to develop the emerging field of community change studies. There are few opportunities for them to explore how they might work together to expand teaching, research and community work which is –

- Linked to real partnerships with community people and the organizations and institutions which represent and serve them;
- Participatory and designed to strengthen communities and community leadership, building on the assets which already exist;
- Multidisciplinary in analyzing and responding to community conditions and needs;
- Grounded in both theory and practice; and
- Designed to develop the students’ knowledge base, analytical capacities and practical and process skills by using theoretical and experiential teaching methods, practitioners as well as academics as teachers, and participatory action approaches to research.

A fifth factor is also extremely important. **The programs which exist are highly vulnerable.** Their future often depends upon their ability to attract sufficient “soft money” from

outside the university to justify their existence. When that funding dries up, the programs typically shrink or die.

The future of these programs also often depends upon the leadership of one or two people who have carved out space for their programs over a lengthy period of time. In some cases these are tenured professors who use the security of their tenure to free themselves for community work and community-oriented teaching, but who have not institutionalized their work to ensure it will continue after they retire. Since many of these professors are veterans of the 1960s, they are now retiring without assurance their legacies will continue. While there are outstanding instances of a university president, dean or chairperson of a department giving priority to community-based service learning, there are countless examples of failure to institutionalize these efforts so they last beyond that person’s leadership. As a result many such initiatives have been swept away by a successor who returns the school to more traditional academic priorities.

Why do people teaching these community-oriented subjects feel marginalized? In contrast to the 1960s, when students joined with the civil rights, antipoverty and other movements to press universities to meet community needs, the reward system for university faculty now is even more heavily dominated by the priority on research and publishing. In the interviews one professor after another reported that teaching is valued less than research, and that work benefiting the community gets little credit when decisions are made on promotion, tenure, and budgets. With universities suffering from tight budgets and cutbacks in personnel, teaching staff are pressed to concentrate on what’s most essential to their careers, leaving little time for serving the community.

Four Responses to the Crisis

This scan began with interviews of a cross-section of about twenty people to learn from their experience and their views concerning the potential for university-based

Universities are the best point of contact with the young generation which the community change movement desperately needs.

education for people leading and supporting community change efforts. These initial interviewees included directors of community organizing groups and CDCs as well as academics. The interviews provided the basis for developing initial conclusions concerning the types of interventions which would be most useful in expanding educational and training programs for community change agents. These ideas were then tested and refined through additional research and interviews.

The interviews surfaced many ideas, of course, but there was broad agreement on three important points of intervention.

First, in preparing for the future, **there is great potential in building upon the current remarkably strong interest in service learning and expanding civic engagement to foster development of undergraduate curricula which introduce students to the field of social and community change.**

Second, throughout the interviews it was apparent that **now-isolated programs would benefit greatly from being more closely linked to experience elsewhere.** In speaking with people on more than forty campuses, it was abundantly clear that much could be gained by increasing contact among people who teach similar courses or engage in quite similar research and service projects. One element of an overall program for supporting the expansion of community change education would be to provide funds to expand the networks which currently link people within a single discipline.

Third, exciting new programs are emerging which deserve support because of their pioneering approaches. These include new programs entrusted by practitioners and involving community colleges and other flexible institutions in offering entry-level education and field placement.

Fourth, to begin meeting the immediate need to strengthen the skills and knowledge of people who are now assuming responsibility for leading community change organizations, there

was broad agreement on the **great value of creating Master's-level programs for mid-career people, and that those programs should be multidisciplinary and geared specifically to strengthen people's ability to lead community change efforts.** To maximize their practical usefulness, they must involve experiential as well as academic learning. This is facilitated when a faculty includes practitioners as adjuncts.

Conclusion

Over the last four decades, as America has struggled with issues of poverty, race and opportunity, there has been a growing consensus about the central importance of strong and creative grassroots community organizations. They bring low-income people together to address issues which matter to them and their neighbors. They create new ties among neighbors, build social capital, and strengthen neighborhoods. They develop leadership, build self-reliance and skills, and represent the interests of people who would otherwise be marginalized and ignored. And many are important vehicles for delivering responsive services and launching important community development projects.

If these groups are to grow and be sustained so they can handle all these crucial responsibilities, high priority must be given to supporting university-based efforts to prepare the next generation of leaders and top staff for grassroots organizations and the networks and institutions which are critical to their growth and success. This is a central challenge for foundations and other funders, for top staff of community groups, for support organizations and for other leaders in the field.

Chapter II: Undergraduate Level Education

To expand the pool of talented people who are ready to lead community-based organizations, we must create new ways to reach, prepare and recruit young people in colleges and universities. That's where fully 29% of America's youth – including the most upwardly mobile people of color and large numbers of students of all races who are committed to community service and greater equity in our society – complete their education and make career decisions. It is a talent pool which must be tapped to address the leadership crisis in the field of community change.

The very good news is that **there is considerable ferment on the campuses these days with many students heavily committed to service.** 73% of college students volunteer for service, showing commitment and energy which can represent a huge resource for organizations that are working to improve opportunities for poor people and people of color. This will, however, require a far more concerted effort to channel these energies into curricula which familiarize students with issues of poverty, race and community-building so they have a base of knowledge and experience which enables them to choose careers in community organizing, community development and community change.

Much of the student ferment has centered on the “service learning” movement – which provides opportunities for college students to provide direct services to people who need them. Sometimes this service experience has a serious learning component and is linked to courses, peer group meetings, and mentoring which enable students to reflect on their experience and study the issues on which they are working. Some programs go farther and give students an opportunity to see that the field of community organization and development exists, experience its exciting potential in providing opportunities for lifetimes of service, and begin learning lessons, approaches and skills which prepare them for possible careers in the field. They offer field placements, mentoring, closely related classwork, small groups within

which to reflect on the links between theory and practice, and participatory research or other experiential learning opportunities which supplement coursework with real life experiences with grassroots organizations. Several offer courses specifically on community organizations and community organizing. **There is great potential in expanding upon those service learning programs by providing a more robust education on community change.**

The Current Status of Undergraduate Education on Community Change

What is the situation today concerning undergraduate education related to community change?

There are fewer than a handful of undergraduate programs which are specifically designed to prepare people for careers at the community level. These are based in institutions which recruit directly from low-income communities and involve academics and practitioners in preparing young people for lives of service in those communities.

At many other institutions there are courses scattered in different departments which can be pieced together and linked to on-site experience to give students a significant grounding in community work. However, this requires both a highly motivated and self-directed student and a rare guidance counselor who can help students find these scattered courses.

Undergraduate Programs Designed Specifically to Prepare Students for Community Change Work

Only rarely does an institution of higher education design a curriculum specifically to provide students with the knowledge and experience they need to address issues of poverty, race, and social and community change.

There is great potential in expanding upon those service learning programs by providing a more robust education on community change.

One outstanding exception to this – which has been supported by the Ford Foundation and others – is based at a community college on the edge of south central Los Angeles. For two decades Los Angeles Trade Tech has offered a two year Associate of Arts degree in Community Economic Development. The program is designed specifically to attract people of color from low-income neighborhoods, many of whom are already working with grassroots groups or other employers.

Denise Fairchild, who led the team designing the curriculum and has directed the program since its creation, saw **students who came from backgrounds of poverty as essential community leaders for the future**. She viewed them as having the **advantages of having directly experienced poverty and racism, understanding low-income communities, being able to become important role models for others in such communities, and being more likely than other students to make long-term commitments to careers in community change**. She started with the conviction that it is especially important to give these young people of color opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills for careers working with community development corporations and other grassroots community groups.

The AA program started as a vocational program rather than as the first step in a longer academic program. It was to prepare people for jobs or strengthen the skills of people already working, not to prepare them to go on to four-year institutions for further study. The program therefore has devoted relatively little time to theory-based courses. Instead it developed a series of competencies in such practical areas as real estate and economic development, financial and personnel management, and community organizing. This is changing as more AA students show their interest in being prepared for transfer to four-year col-

leges, many of which will not give credit for the more vocationally oriented courses at LA Trade Tech.

Approximately fifteen students enroll each year in the AA Program. They spend up to 40 hours per week in internships, rotating through three or four organizations or government agencies to get different experiences and perspectives. These assignments are often done in conjunction with the Community Development Technologies Center, the independent nonprofit which Ms. Fairchild and her associates established to provide faculty for LA Tech and to provide planning, technical assistance and program development services in low-income communities in the metro area.³

In order to establish the AA program at LA Tech, Ms. Fairchild had to gain approval from the California State Curriculum Committee. This official approval made it possible for LA Tech and other community colleges in California's state system to offer the program. The approved curriculum includes introductory courses on community planning, real estate development, project financing, nonprofit management, and community organizing. The faculty is largely composed of practitioners whose courses are grounded in reality and aimed at developing practical skills.

Despite the program's strengths and official clearance for replication in the California State system, it has not yet been replicated either in California or elsewhere. PolicyLink's Victor Rubin – who had extensive experience with university-community partnerships during his time directing HUD's Office of University Community Partnerships – attempted to replicate the program at Peralta College. However, this did not come to fruition, in large part because the effort was initiated from outside the college and lacked a strong champion on the faculty.⁴

³For other examples of nonprofits which provide opportunities for experiential education and service to university students, see other parts of this report on the Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development and the Social Work Community Outreach Center at Maryland.

⁴Recently people inside Peralta have shown new interest in possibly replicating the Los Angeles program, including programs emerging in Connecticut and elsewhere.

Only rarely does an institution of higher education design a curriculum specifically to provide students with the knowledge and experience they need to address issues of poverty, race, and social and community change.

Several others have consulted with Ms. Fairchild about replicating the program, but none has moved forward. This history illustrates how difficult replication is, as the model at LA Tech emerged from a unique history under a leader with the vision, credibility, skills, background, and access to support from key funders to convince a community college to adopt the program.

A much older and larger program was based at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. This program was established in the 1970s as a special initiative to provide higher education to students of color and others who were already working in neighborhood-based organizations or interested in doing so. At its height it had over 800 undergraduate students and 250 grad students. Most students came from working class and low-income backgrounds and either had begun or were considering careers in community planning and development, community organizing or social services for low-income communities.

Operating as a “college within the college”, **UMass Boston’s College for Public and Community Service operated a four year Bachelor’s degree program and several Master’s level programs as well. All were oriented toward public interest work.**

Undergraduates majoring in Community Planning had to learn how to conduct needs and resource assessments, community impact assessments and program evaluations as well as to help with planning, strategy and proposal development. They could concentrate in any of six areas, including Community Studies, Organizing, Legal Advocacy, and Management. Other CPCS students can major in Criminal Justice, Gerontology, Human Services, Labor Studies, or Legal Education.

Several key elements of the CPCS design made it remarkably effective in attracting and educating students from lower-income backgrounds –

- The College for Public and Community Service was originally based in a building

Participatory Research and Learning at UMass Boston

A UMass Boston faculty-member’s work with homeless women provides a dramatic illustration of using participatory action research to educate students. She began working with six homeless women on the issues they were most concerned about, documenting how they were treated by shelters and other service providers. They became informal principal investigators, completing 150 interviews with homeless women and learning research and community organizing skills on the job. To guide and support the project their faculty supervisor created a steering committee of formerly homeless women and representatives of groups concerned with homelessness, poverty, and domestic violence who committed themselves to collaborating in seeking policy changes and to consult directly with homeless women in their decision-making processes.

The evaluation elicited women’s insights into how their homelessness could have been prevented, what their situations were before they became homeless, and whether they knew their housing rights. They then publicized survey findings, went to policy-makers and led successful campaigns to influence state policies and programs. The professor then helped the six women enroll in CPCS and pursue bachelor’s degrees in community planning and advocacy, with free tuition, a stipend and reimbursement for child care and transportation. They were given course credit for their experiential learning conducting the research.

In empowerment terms, the development of the six women investigators has been called “phenomenal.” All have done well in school, all have new jobs, all have joined boards of non-profits, and all are confident public speakers and advocates for changes in public policy to benefit the homeless. The University of Massachusetts built from this success to create a special program called Women in Community Development to educate and support low-income women in community development work.

The program sees students who came from backgrounds of poverty as essential community leaders for the future.

downtown, separate from the rest of the University and near low-income neighborhoods and the community organizations where many of its early students worked;

- It was designed specifically to encourage people to continue in or prepare for community and public service careers (and to discourage a brain drain from this field);
- It actively recruited people from nonprofits and neighborhoods, many of whom are considerably older than the average college freshman;
- For many years, CCPS had a policy of open enrollment to reduce the barriers to enrolling for people who had low marks in high school or on college board exams;
- It gave maximum credit for people's past experience and for experiential learning generally, either on the job or through other real life experiences;
- Practitioners as well as regular faculty taught courses, thus increasing students' exposure to learning from people who are on the front lines bringing about positive change in low-income communities; and
- Courses used participatory action research, participatory planning, internships with community groups, and other techniques to give students direct experience working with people in low-income neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, after more than three decades, the College was gutted. Budget cuts and a conservative state administration are taking their toll. Essential services were eliminated, enrollment dropped, the college refocused on attracting international students, and faculty members left or were forced out. Tragically, this exemplary program no longer survives.

This is doubly unfortunate in that no other university in the country offers a four year education which comes close to equaling UMass Boston's comprehensive approach to recruiting and educating students for careers in community service.

There are many lessons from the UMass experience. On the positive side, **it shows it is possible to create a program which primarily recruits and educates people from disadvantaged backgrounds so they are well equipped to lead positive change efforts in their own neighborhoods and similar communities.** It demonstrates the effectiveness of special measures for recruitment, combining theoretical and experiential education, involving both academics and practitioners, and gearing an overall program to careers in community service.

However, **it also vividly illustrates the vulnerability of such programs.** They have difficulty surviving through changes in institutional leadership and budget crises because they lack the backing which is automatic for traditional academic programs and seldom have the visibility, credibility, backing and constituency they need when they are challenged. Their isolation and lack of recognition by outsiders in the academic world or organized alumni or community constituencies increase their vulnerability.

It is noteworthy that both these programs were completely unique and largely unknown. While both are ambitious, well-designed, proven programs which train the community change leaders of tomorrow, neither is widely recognized or supported, and neither has been replicated.⁵ The Community Learning Partnership has therefore dedicated itself to replicating these programs and pioneering new ones.

⁵In a parallel development, the community organizing group ACORN has adopted several schools in New York City and incorporated many elements in its curriculum to educate its students about their community, the problems and institutions it faces, and strategies for bringing about change, especially through community organizing, advocacy and development. For details, see ACORN's web-site at www.acorn.org.

It gives maximum credit for people's past experience and for experiential learning generally, either on the job or through other real life experiences.

Other Exemplary Undergraduate Courses and Placements

One striking finding from the research is that there are a surprising number of creative undergraduate courses and placement opportunities which individual faculty members have developed on issues related to social and community change. At institutions as diverse as Sarah Lawrence and Connecticut College, Metro State and Portland State, Harvard and Cornell, Loyola and the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Southern California and UCLA, faculty have developed courses which expose students to a combination of readings, instruction, and on-the-ground experience which introduces them to social issues and strategies for bringing about significant community or policy change.

Sarah Lawrence, for example, created a new Institute for Policy Alternatives with the central goal of –

“Educat(ing) engaged students by establishing links between faculty scholarship, teaching, and participants in social movements that attempt to expand participation by ordinary citizens. The initiatives will provide a forum for interaction and creative thinking about goals and policy alternatives among students, faculty, activists and working class and poor residents of our region.”

Building on Sarah Lawrence's tradition of **interdisciplinary studies and independent inquiry rather than academic majors**, students learn through the Institute while working

with community groups and faculty on such issues as immigrant rights and tenant organizing.

In its Urban Studies program, Loyola University in Chicago emphasizes **community-based research** as a strategy for teaching undergrads and graduate students skills and knowledge which help them understand low-income communities and the forces behind their evolution, assess opportunities and challenges which are facing particular neighborhoods, and develop experience in working with grassroots leaders and organizations. Working with faculty members from sociology and other departments, students provide direct help to community groups which ask the University for research and technical help on community issues or broader concerns. Loyola has institutionalized this capacity by working with other universities to create a Policy Research Action Group which responds to requests from a variety of groups throughout metropolitan Chicago.

As a matter of policy Loyola will not conduct neighborhood research without a **partnership with community people**, and it emphasizes participatory approaches to research so that low-income people are directly involved in choosing issues to be studied and then in the research and analysis itself. For example, Loyola worked with the Organization of the NorthEast on a study of lessons from community struggles to preserve affordable housing in Chicago's uptown, with STRIVE on a **participatory evaluation** of its training program, and with Bethel New Life to document the impact of its community development work in West Garfield Park.

“Let Knowledge Serve the City” at Portland State

Under the leadership of former President Judith Ramaley, Portland State University in Oregon developed a remarkable commitment to working with local communities. Under the motto “Let Knowledge Serve the City” the University recast its entire general education program to include ethical and social responsibility goals. It evaluates its faculty for tenure, promotion and compensation in part on their “scholarship of community outreach”, thus turning the reward system into a major force for supporting community groups and addressing social needs, including through service learning and a new program which is structured to emphasize civic involvement from freshman seminars through to capstone projects for seniors.

It is possible to create a program which primarily recruits and educates people from disadvantaged backgrounds so they are well equipped to lead positive change efforts in their own neighborhoods and similar communities.

There are dozens of examples of university/community partnerships, some of which are supported by the federal government's COPC program for support to Community Outreach Partnership Centers. Others which focus on issues of civic values and citizen engagement are described in *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* by Tom Ehrlich, former President of the University of Indiana. Both the COPC program and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching where Ehrlich is a Senior Scholar periodically convene representatives of university programs for peer learning and discussion of common issues and concerns. Nevertheless, there still are few opportunities for exchange and network-building, limiting opportunities for peer learning, collaboration and raising the visibility and credibility of university partnerships with community groups.

The Service Learning Movement and Preparation for Community Change Work

The "service learning movement" has grown enormously over the last decade. It is a response to this generation of students' strong interest in community service as well as deep concern among university leaders about student cynicism about the value of voting and participating in our nation's civic life and politics. More than 1100 university presidents have joined Campus Compact to support the growth of service learning on campuses throughout the country.

Does service learning provide an opportunity to prepare large numbers of students for careers as community organizers, developers and change agents? Does its combination of direct service to low-income people and related studies provide the stimulus, knowledge, and experience which people need to become community workers?

The answer varies from campus to campus. It is clear from interviews with college faculty members and leaders in the service learning movement that **most "service learning" programs offer little "learning" in connection with their volunteer experiences.** Most programs simply provide volunteer opportunities for college students whose learning is limited to what they gain on the job. These institutions offer no courses linked to the community service experience.

At other colleges, however, faculty members link courses on issues like education or public health to placing students with organizations which are addressing those issues locally. Students thus have an opportunity to contrast what they learn on the ground and in class, mixing experiential and academic education in ways which can greatly deepen their thinking and understanding. They may also meet frequently with others involved in service learning for structured reflection on what they are learning about the issues and about working with community-based nonprofits.

One reason for service learning's impressive growth is that many in this student generation have strong social consciences and see direct

An Example of Moral and Civic Learning at California State at Monterey Bay

The California State University at Monterey Bay adopted a vision statement declaring that "the campus will be distinctive in serving the diverse people of California, especially the working class and historically undereducated and low income population."

One of its university learning requirements relates to moral and civic learning, addressing such topics as democratic participation, community participation, culture and equity. The guidelines for culture and equity, for example, require that students be able to "analyze and describe the concepts of power relations, equity, and social justice" and "plan personal and institutional strategies/processes to promote equity and social justice" – a remarkable requirement for a university program.

Such programs have difficulty surviving changes in institutional leadership and budget crises.

service as the best outlet for this commitment. In contrast to the 60s generation, they are pessimistic about the possibility of major social and institutional reform during their lifetimes and cynical about politics as a way of bringing about change. They therefore act out their commitment to making the world a better place by volunteering in record numbers.

Colleges have responded in different ways. Many have established centers to help students find placements with local nonprofits where they can tutor or mentor children, help the elderly, or work on a community improvement project. An early pioneer in helping students find good opportunities for volunteering, Stanford University – not commonly seen as a center of activism – places hundreds of students each year through its Haas Center for Public Service. While most of these are strictly opportunities for service, others are linked directly to one of over 30 service learning courses offered by different departments – including even engineering – at Stanford.

Several universities have taken “service learning” considerably farther. The most fully developed offer students a combination of (1) volunteer experience on the ground with (2) opportunities to study the issues they are working on and (3) the chance to reflect on their experience doing community work. Campus Compact, the national alliance of over 900 university presidents who have pledged their support for service learning, actively encourages its members to make these connections. It provides extensive teaching materials and seminars to help faculty incorporate service learning in the courses they teach in fields as diverse as economics and philosophy. Nevertheless it is clear that the great majority of service learning programs are still not very serious about “learning.”

One example of a broader, more thought through approach to service learning is Northwestern University. With leadership from Jody Kretzman and Dan Lewis, two pioneers in urban community development and asset-

building, it created a minor in service learning several years ago. It goes well beyond most service learning programs in offering an integrated approach to service learning with four components. First, Northwestern offers several courses which relate directly to students’ service experiences. While many of these courses were already included in the curriculum, others were added to supplement those courses. Second, the University provides each student with mentors and weekly small group seminars where students can reflect with their peers and faculty on their experience and the issues they are facing. Third, Northwestern provides students with guidance in selecting other courses which are relevant to their interests and service experience. Finally, students can “minor” in service learning, earning a certificate which affirms that they have participated in this integrated program.

Some academic programs link service learning with “civic engagement”, responding to the strong concern university presidents reflected in signing the Campus Compact on encouraging young people to become involved in civic life. They reflect growing worry that our democracy is threatened by cynicism about politics and government and prospects for building a better society. University leaders know that many young people stay away from politics and civic life because they are pessimistic about their voice being heard and their ability to achieve substantial reforms. They therefore have shaped their service learning programs to encourage students to learn about public issues and become involved in addressing them. A few of these programs are particularly outstanding models.

Drawing from Roman Catholic social teachings Notre Dame strongly emphasizes social justice, seeking –

“to cultivate in its students not only an appreciation for the great achievements of human beings but also a disciplined sensibility to the poverty, injustice, and oppression which burden the lives of so many. The aim is to create a sense

Community-based research is an excellent strategy for teaching undergrads and graduate students skills and knowledge.

of human solidarity and concern for the common good that will bear fruit as learning becomes service to justice.”

Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island is ambitious and unique in two ways. First, Providence offers a major in service learning – the only such concentration in the country. Second, it requires that every student in the College be involved in service learning before they graduate. Its goal is to instill a service orientation throughout the entire student body by exposing all students to service opportunities and courses linking their service experience to study. It sees these goals as important to society and as a way of distinguishing Providence’s educational programs from other colleges.

None of these service learning programs, however, is geared specifically to preparing people for careers in community change, and many of them have no “change” focus at all. However, the strongest ones provide a good base for developing an undergraduate major or minor in community change studies as they combine rigorous coursework, experiential learning in the community, and reflection and mentoring.

Placements, and the Relationship Between the University and the Community

One central problem for service learning is the difficult relationship between universities and their neighbors. Universities are focused internally on their students, faculty, facilities and programs. Many have little interest in their neighbors except when they stand in the path of university expansion or threaten the campus in some way. Furthermore, their power, resources and influence usually dwarf those of their neighbors, making any relationship uneasy.

Some critics of service learning therefore argue for major changes in the relationship between academic institutions and their neighboring organizations before these programs can

be effective. Dick Cone, the former director of USC’s Joint Education Project, for example, raises serious issues about “hit and run” assistance from students. He and others point to many placements as poor matches, made without sufficient concern about whether students would bring useful skills to the nonprofits and whether there would be sufficient continuity in the students’ assistance to be really helpful. They point to the off-and-on nature of when students are available to help and to the frequent turnover among student volunteers as presenting major obstacles. They are also critical of many academic colleagues as not being well informed about the groups where students are placed, their needs and priorities, and the extent to which the placements will be satisfactory to either the group or the student.

Some universities are overcoming these problems through more careful and intensive leadership. MIT’s planning school, for example, develops long-term contracts with specific community groups, often for as many as five years. These contracts identify a series of projects on which the groups want assistance, assuring them that students will be carefully matched with those opportunities and that faculty will also be involved. They make sure that new students are available as their predecessors move on, and are fully briefed on the organization, its needs, and the work to be done.

Cone advocates “inreach” rather than outreach from the universities. He believes there is such a strong inherent power imbalance between any major educational institution and a small nonprofit that the usual “outreach” process should be reversed. Rather than a university deciding what it needs and can offer, Cone advocates that funders first help grassroots groups (1) decide what help they need from students and faculty, and (2) get funding for tuition or contracts which enable them to reach into a university (or other institution if that would be more useful) for that specific help.

Most “service learning” programs offer little “learning” in connection with their volunteer experiences.

Informal “inreach” programs are, in fact, quite common. Some result when strong grassroots groups see a need for assistance from a particular faculty member as they analyze or tackle an issue. Others emerge when a professor or instructor has the sensitivity and background to build a real partnership with a nonprofit, and then shapes service learning in response to that organization’s needs and priorities and its ability to provide a good learning experience for students.

Growing Concern About Civic Engagement and Democracy – Its Relationship to Preparing People for Community Change Work

Because of concern about the need to revive civic engagement and rejuvenate our democratic institutions and activist traditions, some academics and Campus Compact are interested in helping students take another step in their service learning experience. For example, Campus Compact sometimes speaks of “service politics” as they work with students who want to **expand their learning to include action and analysis of the root causes of poverty, discrimination, and other issues which they confront in their studies and volunteering.** They work with student groups on several campuses which are **developing campaigns on social, economic and political issues which concern students.** Each spring Campus Compact runs a Raise Your Voice campaign, supporting student groups on 250 campuses as they hold town hall meetings and otherwise make their opinions known on issues ranging from hunger and homelessness to the Iraq war.

In a remarkable experiment Tufts University has introduced an ambitious program for infusing the entire institution – post-graduate as well as undergraduate – with an emphasis on developing students’ commitment and skill in civic engagement. With backing from the last two University Presidents, a “virtual college” within the university has

coordinated a series of measures to prepare every Tufts graduate to participate in their communities. The Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service is a college without walls with no faculty or students of its own, but with a substantial budget for stimulating courses and student experiences which “teach activism, active citizenship, and foster debate and inquiry at the university.”⁶ The University has formally adopted a **goal of having all Tufts graduates live lives of civic engagement,** eventually serving as employees or board members of nonprofits, being in electoral politics or other government service, or, as professionals, working with a keen sense of civic obligation and public service.

Tufts follows an “infusion” strategy which has several components, each of which is backed with funding from a grant of \$10 million in flexible support for civic engagement activities. The multifaceted strategy includes:

- financial support for faculty who modify existing courses to include attention to current social problems, analysis of their root causes, assessment of the key tools of civic engagement needed to tackle those root causes effectively, and development of the civic skills needed to bring about change;
- financing for new courses which faculty members develop to address civic engagement issues in these ways;
- support for undergraduate groups which add civic engagement to their programs and “offer systematic, high quality programs to critically examine the root causes and public policy implications of the issue, and to teach advocacy and give them experience using those techniques;”⁷ and
- awards to give high visibility to students who exemplify high standards of civic engagement and service through their volunteer work.

⁶Interview with Rob Hollister, Dean, Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, Tufts University

⁷Hollister

Several universities have taken service learning considerably farther.

As this new emphasis grows in visibility and recognition, it will give Tufts a competitive advantage in attracting applicants who are interested in civic and social issues. This, in turn, will lead to a student body which is increasingly involved in civic life and community.

Undergraduate Programs Which Focus on Neighboring Communities

The University of Pennsylvania has a very different approach to undergraduate studies related to poverty, race and community. It has focused on its adjacent neighborhoods and, over two decades, developed more than fifty courses for undergraduate and graduate students which relate to one or another aspect of these low-income communities.

These courses are not seen as creating an educational track to prepare people for working for or with low-income community organizations. That has not been a priority at Penn.⁸ Instead they are viewed as distinct courses which enable students and faculty to focus on the adjacent neighborhoods to learn about a wide variety of subjects (e.g. the religions of West Philadelphia), while creating more positive relationships between the university and its neighbors.

In addition, Penn offers several sets of services to adjacent communities through partnerships with schools and other key institutions. Many of these are part of WEPIC, the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps, a partnership in which the University plays a leading role in providing services to local schools and groups. It is the largest university/community partnership in the country, involving large numbers of students and community people with the school system and nonprofits in efforts to improve education and services in West Philadelphia. It has also been an effective

strategy for enhancing the Penn's relationship with its low-income neighbors and reducing "town/gown" friction.

While Penn offers a course in Community Organizing: History and Theory, it is not connected to field work and experience, and the overall curriculum does not stress participation by residents and the development of community groups as critical approaches to approaching community issues.

Occidental College in Los Angeles is in the early stages of devising new courses and focusing on building partnerships with its neighboring community. Its Center for Community-Based Learning, which is directed by Maria Avila who was trained by the IAF as a community organizer, is spearheading this effort. Ms. Avila stresses "community based learning" instead of "service learning." She argues that learning can and should happen in reciprocal relationships with community groups, not just one-way relationships of service. For example, instead of assuming that the college should mentor local teachers, she structured a more reciprocal relationship where the faculty learned from teachers about the common issues they face, and then entered a dialogue about how best to address those issues. Similarly Ms. Avila sees community groups as being able to help educate students and vice versa.⁹

The Community Outreach Partnership Center program and sister programs of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development have supported dozens of partnerships across the country. These have often benefited local communities, but they have seldom been seen as part of the academic side of their host universities or had any impact on the curricula, according to Armand Carriere, former Director of the COPC program.¹⁰

⁸Interview with Ira Harkavy, Director of Office of Community Partnerships, University of Pennsylvania

⁹Interview with Maria Avila and Professor Peter Dreier, Occidental University

¹⁰Interview with Armand Carriere, Director, Office of Campus-Community Partnerships, US Department of Housing and Urban Development

None of these service learning programs, however, is geared specifically to preparing people for careers in community change.

Instead they are seen as helping bridge the town/gown divide and providing needed services to low-income neighborhoods.

Undergraduate Programs Which Focus on Community Organizing and Organizational Development

Several colleges offer one or more undergraduate courses directly related to community organizing and building grassroots organizations. These are, however, remarkably rare. Few have, in fact, developed any new courses to help students prepare for this work, and those which link courses to service usually focus on the issues which are being addressed (e.g. public health or education) and not on the organizations which exist in those communities or the ways those groups can be built, staffed, and supported.

Exceptions to this general rule are often lodged in such undergraduate areas of concentration as social work and sociology. At Trinity College in Hartford, for example, undergraduates could take courses in community organizing and organizational development, and link these courses to field work, thus benefiting from both theoretical and experiential education through real service learning.¹¹

Another exception to this rule is Harvard College. Undergraduates at Harvard College can join graduate students at the Kennedy School and other postgraduate students from Harvard and other nearby universities, as well as community organizers and other practitioners from outside academe, for a course in community organizing. That course is taught by Marshall Ganz, an Associate Professor at the Kennedy School and former Director of Organizing for the United Farmworkers Union.

Ganz's course interweaves theoretical and experiential education seamlessly. It includes extensive readings from such intellectual and philosophical leaders as Plato, deTocqueville and Arendt, and such community organizing

pioneers as Alinsky, Ross, Chavez and Wiley. Ganz involves students in devising and launching organizing campaigns around issues the students select as they work with existing groups or create new ones to pursue systemic change. Recent field experiences included organizing residents of subsidized housing, organizing non-unionized university employees and launching a campaign to reverse current Presbyterian church policy concerning the ordination of gays and lesbians.

The entire course is designed like a training program for organizers in the "real world." Students are screened to identify those who have the passion and motivation to be good organizers. Each section leader is trained to give special attention to particularly promising potential organizers as the course proceeds. The curriculum includes education on such key organizing techniques as conducting "one on one" interviews to surface people's concerns, create relationships and identify potential leaders and bringing people together to discuss the issues they share and plan campaigns to address them.¹²

Students develop their skills in critical reflection and strengthen their practice by reflecting weekly on-line on their organizing experiences and discuss these issues with their peers and section leaders during weekly seminars. They also share their victories and defeats, looking for constructive feedback from which they can learn. Like real community organizers, they learn and are toughened through forthright critiques by their peers and instructors. These include sharper criticism than is common in the academic world but which organizers (and law professors) have found to be effective in pushing people to strengthen their analysis, planning and actions. Students end each year with a thorough assessment of their experience and learning.

¹¹Interview with Alta Lash, former Director, Trinity Center for Neighborhoods. With a change in presidents, these initiatives were eliminated.

¹²Interview with Associate Professor Marshall Ganz

MIT's planning school develops long-term contracts with specific community groups.

This course is now being replicated at Wellesley, Spring Hill College, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and Providence College. Ganz wants to see it replicated, with appropriate adjustments, at many other colleges across the country. He therefore has developed unusually detailed course materials and made them accessible to others on the web. Ganz also has given special attention to selecting and training his Teaching Assistants so they will be fully prepared to teach the course elsewhere in the future, and has created a list serve linking his former students together to stimulate continuing interest in organizing.

Other colleges offer courses in community organizing to undergraduates, perhaps in sociology, social work or urban studies programs. Randy Stoecker at the University of Wisconsin hosts the www.comm.org web site which features the course outlines for several different undergraduate courses in organizing, helping faculty identify topics and readings which may be useful when they plan their own courses.

Conclusion on the Potential for Developing Community Change Studies for Undergraduates

As this survey illustrates, scattered throughout the U.S. there is quite a rich panoply of university courses and programs which relate to America's low-income neighborhoods, people of color, and others who are often left behind. While many of these are isolated and vulnerable, **the best of them provide students with some of the knowledge and skills they will need for careers in social and community change. If these courses and best practices were co-located in a coherent curriculum, they would provide a particularly strong background for that work.**

Considering the students' strong interest in service, the colleges' concern about the need for greater civic engagement and a rejuvenation of our democratic institutions, and the crying need for talented leadership for the next generation of community

change organizations, it is a particularly good time to consider what steps could be taken to ratchet up the level of undergraduate programs. The unifying goal should be to equip an increasing number of college students with the inspiration, academic knowledge, analytic skills, initial experience and practical help to be good candidates for jobs in community change.

Developing a Model Community Studies Curriculum

What should an undergraduate major or minor in community studies include? What course of study and experience would best enable students to understand how poverty and race play out in America's neighborhoods and the broader public and private sector arenas? How can they learn how people experiencing poverty and racism can, with their allies, most effectively counter discrimination and injustice and promote greater opportunity?

During the scan of current university-based programs and interviews with academics and practitioners, five key components for such a program emerged.

First, to be of maximum value a **program should make meaningful links between service and learning** – combining experience on the ground in disadvantaged communities, reflection on that experience, and rigorous study of the issues such communities face. This study should include analysis of the root causes of those problems as well as exploration of how they might be tackled most effectively.

Second, to prepare students to understand the deeper issues they will encounter in low-income community work, the program should include serious **study of issues of race, class, opportunity and democratic participation** in America. The prisms of economics, social psychology, sociology, political science, and the history of social movements and change in the US all can give students new and enlightening perspectives on these issues.

Because of concern about the need for reviving and rejuvenating our democratic institutions, some expand their learning to include action as well as analysis.

Third, a program should teach students **how to analyze neighborhoods and their residents and institutions as well as the broader demographic, economic, social and political trends** which influence them. This will give them knowledge and skills which would be invaluable in future work on community issues. It would also provide them with a uniquely well-grounded and insightful understanding of how academic disciplines like economics, sociology, and political science can be applied in the “real world.”

Fourth, it should include **study of the roles and functioning of community-based nonprofits, the broader nonprofit sector, and the public and for-profit sectors** on these issues. Students should emerge from this analysis understanding the different strategies which social groups use to bring about change at the community and societal levels, including the roles of movements, formal and informal organizations and megainstitutions. Since a central goal of this new field of study will be to familiarize students with career opportunities in community change, it will be especially important that – through on-site experience, exposure to social change leaders and other practitioners, readings and lectures – they gain a realistic picture of how community groups function and the particular challenges and opportunities they face. They should also understand how people with careers in the public, for profit and larger nonprofit sectors can play important roles in promoting community change and development.

Fifth, in addition to guidance for students as they negotiate the maze of relevant courses which are scattered throughout a university, there should be **extensive assistance for graduates as they seek jobs or opportunities for postgraduate study** which further prepare them for community change work.¹³

No institution of higher learning currently offers such a strong, coherent, multidisciplinary background in community

studies, incorporating all five elements of a model program. However, the scan revealed that there is fertile ground for more comprehensive community studies programs. It also identified the seeds of model courses, excellent field placement strategies, and effective approaches to the practical issues of coordination, teaching and mentoring.

Moving Forward on Undergraduate Education

There are several alternative strategies for bringing these different approaches together and growing increasingly robust and productive programs to broaden student interest in and preparation for careers in community organizing and development.

1. A Concerted “Networking” Strategy

A “networking” approach could support the creation of learning communities linking academics who teach courses related to community change and engage in related research and assistance to grassroots groups. The goals would be to help them learn from their peers and use that learning to strengthen their own programs and gradually broaden them so they offer students a more multifaceted background in community studies, closer to the five-point model set forth above.

It would be particularly useful if a learning community strategy developed three sets of linkages. The first, and easiest to accomplish, would be to strengthen communications and sharing among people in the **same discipline**, e.g. undergraduate social work faculty-members.

The second would be to **include practitioners** with the academics so that theory and practice are brought together across the usual “town/gown” gulf. This would enrich teaching and research by grounding them more firmly in

¹³There is a great need for stronger job placement services as well as a solid entry route into MA programs which build on students’ undergraduate experience.

Programs critically examine the root causes and public policy implications of the issues, and teach advocacy.

reality, while also informing practice with the new insights which come with greater understanding of useful concepts and theory.

The third linkage would be **across disciplines**. This is against the grain in most universities, as the entire reward system usually revolves around separate academic disciplines – appointment, supervision, course and research assignments, opportunities to publish, speaking and consulting opportunities, promotion, and tenure. Rewards for collaborating across these lines are rare. In fact, because it may take time away from work in the department, narrowly defined, such collaboration frequently is a negative.

Nevertheless it is abundantly clear that many different disciplines can contribute to an understanding of communities, how they function, and how to bring about progress, and that the most helpful curriculum therefore must be multidisciplinary. Furthermore, though it is seldom recognized, academics who are teaching community-oriented courses have a strong self-interest in overcoming these divisions: it is clear that the constituency for all such teaching and service would be much stronger if it were united across disciplinary lines and there were growing recognition of the already quite impressive aggregate scale and scope of university-based community studies programs.

2. Expand Current Programs

A second strategy would be to **select one or more institutions which already have many of the ingredients for a full-scale community studies program and provide them with resources to fill the gaps and expand their programs**. These could then serve as models for other universities. This strategy would be enhanced if it included an active program for disseminating lessons from these models and seeding similar efforts at a second set of institutions.

The AA degree which LA Trade Tech offers in Community Economic Development provides such a model for the

community college world. There is great potential for replicating this pioneering program which is almost unique in its focus on reaching and educating poor and working class people of color for increasing responsibilities in community-based organizations. Also promising is the potential of complementing this program in Community Economic Development with similar AA programs in Community Organizing and Community Change or Community-Based Service Delivery.

Community colleges are of great importance. Forty percent of all university students are now enrolled in community colleges – about six million students. Many of them come from low-income backgrounds and/or are people of color. **Funding and other resources should be targeted on a strategy for starting AA programs in community change and development at other community colleges, and then linking it with entry into four year institutions** for students who want further education and experience. That approach has added potential in California where the AA program is already accredited statewide by the state university system.

3. Create New Prototype AA and BA Community Change Studies Programs

A third strategy would be to fund the planning and creation of new community college and four-year college programs designed to produce the organizers, developers and service providers low-income communities sorely need.

A useful element in such a strategy would be funding the development of **model undergraduate curricula for AA and BA degrees in community change studies**. This strategy could be done by funding a multidisciplinary team of academics and practitioners to design a program which has all five components of the comprehensive undergraduate program described above. They could draw from their different disciplines and experiences to design that curriculum, develop required and optional courses, identify case studies and reading materials. They could also think through

Learning can and should happen in reciprocal relationships with community groups, not just one-way relationships of service.

alternative approaches to field placements and experiential learning including service, participatory research, and other models.

Such a strategy should include concerted efforts to encourage two- and four- year colleges to adopt all or parts of the model curriculum. This should include approaching administrators concerned about civic engagement and service learning, faculty teaching community-oriented courses in different academic disciplines, and people involved in university/community partnerships to interest them in building on their current work to offer more far-reaching and comprehensive approaches. Such an effort should enlist the involvement of such important potential allies as the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Campus Compact, and other academic associations, including the informal and formal networks linking community-oriented academics in social work, planning, applied sociology and other disciplines.

High priority should be given to funding the creation of new programs in Community Change Studies at the AA and BA levels. If these were based in state institutions of higher education, they could offer relatively low

tuitions. As degree programs they could also offer Pell scholarship grants and other financial aid, an advantage which is not available to nonprofit training programs.

Starting them in community colleges would give them unique access to low-income and working-class students as well as students of color – a great asset in this field. Furthermore, with their tradition of working closely with industry in designing educational programs community colleges care accustomed to partnering with outside practitioners. They are therefore great potential partners for nonprofits which are committed to expanding Community Change Education: they know how to partner with outsiders who have great knowledge and expertise but need partners who can collaborate in creating degree-granting programs which involve both academics and practitioners in teaching students.

Chapter III: Postgraduate Education

At one level, the scholarship of engagement means connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers, and to our cities....Campuses would be viewed by both students and professors not as isolated islands, but as staging grounds for action.

– Ernest L. Boyer¹⁴

L **Leading a multifaceted organization committed to community change is enormously challenging.** It requires a remarkable range of skills. A leader must be skilled in motivating people and getting them to work together, analyze complex problems, devise creative solutions, and develop strategies for making significant gains with very limited resources. This requires wide-ranging knowledge of low-income communities and how they work, the economic, social, cultural, and political trends which influence them, and the issues and opportunities they face. It also demands strong skills in planning, management, and leading change. It's a tall order.

Most people who move into leadership positions as executive directors of community organizing groups, CDCs, or comprehensive community initiatives have had few opportunities to develop such a broad base of knowledge and skills. Many come instead from organizations or positions where they have specialized on one or two issues like housing or jobs. Others may have worked on several issues but had little management training. Few have an educational background which provides them with the knowledge base and analytical skills they need to analyze the deeper trends which – because they powerfully impact their communities – they must understand so they can help their organizations cope with a rapidly changing world.

This situation is aggravated by the dearth of opportunities for mid-career education for front-line directors. While they may find useful workshops or one or two courses on some aspect of management or fundraising, neither the nonprofit nor the aca-

demic world offers in depth education on the issues which directors must master to maximize their chances for success.¹⁵

This lack of mid-career education has severe consequences for funders as well as for community groups and the low-income people they represent. **The current crisis in talent makes it imperative that foundations, community groups, support organizations and networks concerned about poverty give new priority to fostering the growth of graduate programs. These programs should draw from the many disciplines which collectively can give people the breadth of knowledge and skills they need to tackle the interrelated issues of poverty, race, organization-building and community change.**

Research and interviews for this scan revealed that, while there are many postgraduate programs which provide students with pieces of an education for community change work, there are only two or three postgraduate programs which attempt to meet this need fully.

Leaders of community organizing groups, broad-gauged CDCs, comprehensive community initiatives and such other broad neighborhood transformation initiatives as the recent Empowerment Zone program would greatly benefit from a mid-career Master's level program designed specifically to meet their educational needs. In particular, such a curriculum should develop a student's core competencies in –

- Addressing issues of both *people and place*, and of *race, income and gender*;

¹⁴1996 Speech by Ernest Boyer, former President, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

¹⁵Some exceptions to this general rule are discussed below.

The current crisis in talent makes it imperative that foundations, community groups, support organizations and networks concerned about poverty give new priority to fostering the growth of graduate programs.

- *Being people-centered*, focusing on the involvement, development and transformation of the community's residents and leaders as the prime movers in community change;
- Organizing and involving the community through participatory processes, understanding residents, their culture and circumstances, and their forms of self-organization, and developing community leaders and ongoing vehicles through which they can influence their environment and expand their opportunities;
- *Being community-focused*, evaluating a community's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities within an analytic framework which includes assessing the economic, social, cultural, and political trends which impact that community;
- Developing ongoing comprehensive planning processes in the community, including practical strategies for garnering the neighborhood support, resources, alliances and partnerships needed to bring about significant change;
- *Developing change leaders and organizations* by helping them study approaches to leading change within an organization and in its relations with other institutions, while building skills in planning, leadership education, board and constituency development, staff development, and participatory budgeting, monitoring and evaluation; and
- *Influencing policies* of public agencies and major private sector institutions through a combination of organizing, advocacy, partnership and inside/outside strategies.

Programs at Southern New Hampshire University and Antioch as well as the Metropolitan Autonomous University in Mexico City and the Institute of Development Studies

at the University of Sussex in England share common elements which are critical to a mid-career program. All four programs are –

- *Part-time and "nonresidential"*, requiring only periodic short periods of residence on campus so that full-time people from significant distances can participate;
- *Both "academic" and experiential*, building knowledge, theory and analytic skills as well as practical experience; and
- *Multidisciplinary*, drawing from the special strengths of a broad range of academic disciplines as well as the knowledge of local leaders, organizational development specialists and other practitioners.

One Vision – An Innovative Program in Mexico

The Metropolitan Autonomous University in Mexico City (UAM) demonstrates the potential of a mid-career program for practitioners. Its MA in Rural Development includes several excellent features which merit consideration if new programs are designed to meet the growing US need for mid-career education for community change agents.¹⁶

UAM has offered this Master's program for over twenty-five years. It was designed for mid-career people working on rural economic development, public health, education, or other issues throughout Mexico who could benefit from advanced education concentrating on the challenges of bringing about substantial change in rural areas. While assuming that MA candidates would already have degrees and experience in particular specialties like rural education, the program's designers developed the academic program to provide mid-career people with a **firm intellectual and practical grounding on how to use grassroots, "bot-**

¹⁶This profile is based on a site visit to UAM, UAM materials and interviews with faculty and students in Mexico City.

Leaders of community initiatives would greatly benefit from a mid-career Master's level program designed specifically to meet their educational needs.

tom-up” community development approaches to make greater gains on the issues they are addressing.

Students apply for this program from all over Mexico. The government provides free tuition for a one-year certificate program, a two-year Master's, or a full Ph.D. program. The three programs are fully integrated so that lower level classes lead into more advanced MA courses. Students use their own funds, scholarships or special grants to cover the travel and living costs incurred from spending every fifth week on campus. Since the students remain employed, some find their employers willing to cover these costs.

The curriculum proceeds in stages, starting with readings, research, and discussions concerning **Mexico's peasant population which is at the core of the program's “bottom-up” community development approach** to rural change. For three months students study peasant life and conditions, read extensively, conduct research and interviews in villages, and reflect on their experience. They interact with sociologists, economists, agronomists and other academics as well as practitioners who serve as adjunct faculty or workshop leaders.

When the students gather on campus, they work and learn in small groups for four days and then spend Fridays in cross-group dialogue. While everyone reads the same materials, each small group takes a different perspective on those readings. For example, while one group analyzes peasants in relation to the land or the broader economy, another assesses how rural people traditionally organize themselves and what new forms of organization are emerging. Yet another group will discuss peasants and their culture. Friday's joint discussion allows students to compare what they have learned using different perspectives, a particularly stimulating approach to cross-disciplinary learning.

Students also study the process of change in order to become more effective change agents themselves. Since each student wants to increase his/her ability to improve rural

education or public health, for example, each benefits greatly from learning how to assess the economic and political situations they face and alternative ways of altering those situations. Therefore, several months are devoted to providing students with the academic background and skills they need to analyze the economic, cultural, social and political situations in their home provinces and how they affect the issues on which they work. For example, in preparing to conduct social and cultural audits, students read extensively from sociologists and observers of rural life and institutions, are trained in interviewing people, and learn how to conduct a “power analysis” of their political environment. They devote one month to each audit, preparing analyses and written products for discussion with faculty and their peers. They then proceed to audit the next facet of their environment.

This experience prepares students to choose a practicum on a local issue or project on which the student wishes to make significant progress. For example, a public health specialist may choose a project she wants to expedite by developing a more sophisticated analysis of the obstacles to progress, potential allies and the best strategies for enlisting their support. Her practicum then consists of conducting that analysis, testing new strategies in action, assessing progress and drawing lessons from that experience.

More than twenty classes of students have received MA degrees from UAM, with recent classes averaging 25-30 students per year. Unfortunately, UAM has had no funds to evaluate its impact over time, or even funds with which to track its alumni informally through periodic meetings and on-line contact. It therefore is impossible to evaluate fully its impact in particular states or departments or in the overall field of rural development in Mexico. However, it seems highly likely that UAM's influence through its more than 300 graduates has been substantial, and that it would have been amplified had there been outside support for maintaining an ongoing network of mutual support and learning.

Mexico's peasant population is at the core of the program's "bottom-up" community development approach to rural change.

One intriguing aspect of UAM's approach is that they have avoided the pitfall of limiting themselves to one school of thought concerning how change happens. Using American terms, they do not stress "development" or "organizing", "advocacy" or "service delivery." They do not restrict their students to people who work in the nonprofit sector, or the community-based nonprofit subcategory of that sector, or in government agencies or support institutions. Instead they recruit from all those sectors with the understanding that all are essential to bringing about major change in how low-income people live and the opportunities they enjoy.

Furthermore, the program does not limit itself to one discipline like public health, education or economic development. Instead it is based on the supposition that all these approaches are part of a more comprehensive strategy for rural development and transformation. **It concentrates on the change process itself.**

The curriculum is based firmly on two fundamental principles. **First is the principle that lasting change must start with the people themselves**, who they are, how they are organized, what they see as their challenges and opportunities, and how they can participate in shaping their future.¹⁷ The second tenet is that, **whatever your role in the change process, a structured educational opportunity can help you build the knowledge base, conceptual understanding, and analytic, practical and participatory skills to be a more effective change agent.**

Another strength of UAM's program is its integration of the certificate, Master's and Ph.D. programs. This enables people to enroll for whatever level of education they need while maintaining the flexibility to decide later to continue their advanced education to the next level.

A New International Initiative on Participation, Development and Social Change:

The Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex in England recently launched a **mid-career Master's in Participation, Power and Social Change** and has enrolled students from five continents.

Sussex is a "red brick" university, high quality but not prestigious, with a long tradition of educating people for overseas development work through its Institute for Development Studies (IDS). **IDS's new MA stresses participatory processes of development and social change.** It is designed for people working full-time who want a Master's level program through which they can study and practice ways of increasing the participation and influence of often voiceless people in the development process. Students spend two ten-week summers in residence at IDS for classes, intensive reading and research.

The first residential period prepares students for their work over the fifteen month MA program. It introduces them to key concepts and links theory with practice through case studies and discussion. The first residential term also introduces students to **methods and skills for participatory learning and assessment (PLA), facilitation, organizational development, participatory monitoring and evaluation, critical thinking and communication.** Students are prepared to analyze the organizational context of their own work situations or other situations they may encounter, to assess governance, accountability and participation issues, and to develop participatory processes to foster learning and development.

Students conclude this initial phase by devoting considerable time to developing individual learning plans for applying the theoretical concepts they are learning. They identify the concepts and techniques they will test

¹⁷In Paolo Freire's phrase they must become subjects instead of objects of history.

One intriguing aspect of UAM's approach is that they have avoided the pitfall of limiting themselves to one school of thought concerning how change happens.

in action and the central question they will explore when they return home. This includes their vision for social change, why they have structured their project in a particular way, and how they will measure whether their intervention is actually making a difference.

During the ten months between terms at the University, **students apply the participatory skills and techniques they have learned in concrete situations they face on the job.** They file quarterly reports on their experience, including personal reflections and a description of shifts in their thinking and practice. At midpoint they gathered in South Africa for a week during which each student made a 30-minute presentation on his/her experience and learning and joined others in small groups for critical reflection.

Throughout the ten months all students keep learning journals which they e-mail to their supervisors at IDS. Their supervisors are in touch with them frequently, helping them solve problems like being stymied from innovating by bureaucracies or politics. Academic supervisors also help students think through how to apply concepts and techniques for bringing about change which they learned at Sussex or developed on their own. Students are encouraged to create local learning groups to share experience and reflections with their local peers.

The final residential term is devoted to preparing a reflective essay distilling experience and lessons and a portfolio collection of evidence demonstrating what has resulted from their applying their individual learning plans in practice. Students make presentations on the basis of these papers, while also choosing among courses which either concentrate on issues many face in their own countries such as government decentralization or conflict or deepen their knowledge of particular learning techniques.¹⁸

What is the Status of Mid-career Education on Community Change in the US?

For twenty-five years Southern New Hampshire University has offered the only Master's level program in community economic development which is available to students from all parts of the US. It has pioneered in teaching people who work full-time for CDCs or other nonprofits or are otherwise engaged in supporting community development work. The Pratt Institute's planning degree and a now-dormant diploma program at the University of Illinois at Chicago have also offered postgraduate education to people working in community development, but those programs have been geared to reach only local students.

University-based training programs for mid-career professionals have had an extraordinarily difficult time raising foundation support. SNHU's program is almost entirely supported with fees, Pratt's mid-career training program was dropped when foundation support dried up, and Tufts' highly valued summer program for CDC staff and other nonprofits disappeared years ago because of funding problems.

In the **US, no graduate school currently offers a multidisciplinary Master's level education for mid-career people who wish to strengthen their knowledge and skills in subjects related to community organizing and community and social change** as distinguished from housing and economic development. This leaves large numbers of community organizers and people engaged in grassroots efforts to change public policies and reform institutions without postgraduate programs geared to meet their particular needs. This is an extraordinarily serious problem considering the enormous challenges and the great importance of organizing poor

¹⁸Interviews with Dr. John Gaventa, Senior Fellow, Participation Group, IDS, University of Sussex, and Dr. Peter Taylor, Coordinator, MA in Participation, Development and Social Change

Whatever your role in the change process, a structured educational opportunity can help you build the knowledge base, conceptual understanding, and analytic, practical and participatory skills to be a more effective change agent.

people and people of color into strong, representative organizations through which they can persuade government agencies, the private sector and major nonprofits to allocate resources and adopt policies to rejuvenate their communities and create new opportunities for people now being left behind.

Fortunately, this scan reveals that **there are many postgraduate programs which offer courses and even specialized tracks which can be of great value to people working on the front lines of community change.** Some planning and social work schools, for example, have strong tracks in community planning or community organization with field placements and practicums. Other graduate schools offer excellent individual courses in community organizing, leadership development, community-based planning, community-based social service delivery, and community involvement in public school reform. There are also equally good courses in nonprofit management, budgeting and finance and on the substance of the housing, jobs and other issues low-income communities and people of color face.

The problem is that these courses are scattered over different graduate schools in different institutions. They are not built around a single graduate school or center in coherent programs of study and practice. There are two reasons for this. First, no university other than Southern New Hampshire has decided to establish a graduate program focused on the professional challenge of addressing issues of race, poverty, community, and building grassroots nonprofit organizations. Second, the “tyranny of the disciplines” makes it extremely difficult for academics to pull together a multidisciplinary curriculum and faculty on *any* subject, let alone the neglected field of community organizing and development.

There are strong advantages to interdisciplinary approaches but they are rare. Because communities face many complex and interrelated issues, broad community change

requires a mix of strategies. To be fully prepared for this work, people need wide-ranging knowledge of several key issue areas and an extensive array of analytic and practical skills. They also require a firm grounding in the building of community-based organizations and institutions.

Programs attempting to meet this challenge go directly against the grain in most graduate schools. Those schools were created specifically to educate students and conduct research in a *single* academic discipline, and their reward systems are geared to supporting development of in depth expertise in that discipline.

This poses a serious dilemma for people wanting to develop broad knowledge and skills so they can build community organizations with the vision, power and capacity to bring about significant change in their communities and in policy arenas. The silos of different graduate schools get in the way. There are virtually no structured interdisciplinary programs which help students prepare for community change work by packaging together courses from different graduate schools, independent study, extensive field experience, and a thesis or capstone project.

This chapter highlights in blue boxes exemplary courses and approaches which should be considered in designing a new multidisciplinary Master's program.

What Components Are Needed in a Mid-career Education?

It is imperative that steps be taken to rectify this situation. The stakes are enormous: grassroots community organizations are tackling many of the toughest issues our country faces, and they face a leadership crisis. One central response to this leadership crisis must be to invest in expanding mid-career educational programs to help today's leaders develop the knowledge and skills they need to build strong organizations and tackle tough issues.

The remainder of this chapter draws from the experience of programs designed specifically to train community development practitioners as well as schools of planning and urban studies, social work, public health, nonprofit management, sociology and social psychology, regional economics, leadership studies, political science, divinity, law, public service and administration. **The diversity of the strands which could be brought together would be a great strength for such a new Master's degree. Such an approach, however, would face numerous practical obstacles because so many institutions are highly compartmentalized in separate departments for each discipline.**

In moving forward, there is much to be gained from a "cherry-picking" strategy, selecting the best programs and techniques from different types of graduate schools to develop a multidisciplinary Master's in community change. **The remainder of this chapter briefly scans the current status of community-oriented education in different types of graduate schools and highlights in blue boxes exemplary courses and approaches which should be considered in designing a new multidisciplinary MA program.**

Each of the following sections begins by highlighting the features and courses which a particular field of studies offers to a postgraduate program for community change agents. There is great potential in drawing from these disparate disciplines in designing a graduate

program to provide people with the knowledge, experience and skills they need for this demanding work.

Highlights to Consider for Master's in Community Change –

- Mid-career education not requiring long residence
- Program developed for practitioners
- Students build strong peer networks
- Useful courses on –
 - Building Nonprofit Organizations
 - Nonprofit Management
 - Community Economic Development, Housing, Public Health, or another area requiring basic expertise
 - Community Organizing and Public Policy

A. Graduate Education for Community Development, Organizing and Broader Change

At the postgraduate as well as the undergraduate level, the few programs which have been designed specifically for current or future practitioners are most relevant to community developers, including those who staff or assist CDCs.

As noted above, the only Master's level community development studies program which draws students from all parts of the US is the Master's of Science in Community Economic Development program at Southern New Hampshire University. That 20-month program has many features which respond well to the realities and needs of its student body. Designed specifically for people who may have full-time jobs, it does not require long periods on campus. Instead it combines periodic classes on campus, ongoing distance learning and a practicum on a topic which the student is addressing through his or her job in the community development field.

The problem is that these courses are scattered over different graduate schools in different institutions.

The SNHU Master's program is designed to meet the specific needs of people in leadership positions in community-based organizations and the groups which assist them. It combines courses on management and planning with ones on real estate development, financing, and venture development – the sets of skills which are in greatest demand in CDCs. It includes a practicum which is related to each student's job responsibilities. Furthermore, several courses are taught by practitioners with extensive experience in developing and financing projects and dealing with the day-to-day challenges of management – people whom mid-career professionals find particularly useful as teachers and mentors. And the **students benefit greatly from being together on campus every few weeks when they can build strong, lasting networks of mutual learning and support with colleagues from other CDCs and allied institutions.** The SNHU program clearly merits replication in other universities so that its academic program becomes accessible to a great many more community development leaders.¹⁹

While the Southern New Hampshire program responds particularly well to the needs of economic and housing development specialists, it is designed for leaders of other community-based nonprofits as well. However, it is not intended to offer the wide array of courses which would help CDC leaders and others prepare to broaden their organizations' agendas to include such issues as education and youth development, health care, services for children and families, or sector-wide interventions, or to add extensive community organizing, leadership development or public policy strategies to their strategies to increase their impact.²⁰

The Pratt Institute's School of Architecture offers a Master's in Urban Planning which gives students from the New York region a

broad background for community development work. Geared for students who have full-time local jobs, Pratt's classes are at night or on weekends. Students can choose a concentration in Community Development which includes courses rarely offered by planning schools. Among the classes which are particularly helpful for those working in CDCs or closely related agencies are courses in economic development, community organizing, organizational development, and public policy.²¹

In addition, Pratt offers students a rare opportunity for intensive work on community-based planning and development projects through PICCED – the Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Design. PICCED is a highly respected technical assistance and training center which is associated with the university but legally independent. It has a history of over thirty-five years of providing outstanding neighborhood and regional planning and design assistance to CDCs, community organizing groups, neighborhood and tenant organizations and the City. Several staff-members teach planning at Pratt while they devote most of their time to working on community planning and development projects. This technical assistance center provides an excellent base for students to learn planning skills while gaining direct experience with the dynamics of working with community-based nonprofits – a combination which offers early- and mid-career students a unique opportunity to broaden their knowledge and skills.

In partnership with the Chicago Rehab Network, a coalition of CDCs, and other housing groups, the University of Illinois at Chicago offered a certificate program in Community Development for several years. This program was designed for mid-career practitioners in community development. When first created, it was based at Spertus College and granted an MA rather than a certificate, but the death of a key faculty-member led to its transfer to UIC

¹⁹This program is being launched in Florida in collaboration with the state CDC association, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and other state-based organizations.

²⁰There are no courses which focus on these issues, and the one class on community organizing is an elective.

²¹Interviews with Professor Ron Shiffman, Rex Curry, and current PICCED Director Brad Lander

The diversity of the strands which could be brought together would be a great strength for such a new Master's degree.

and conversion to a certificate program. It is currently dormant because of foundation cut-backs.²²

The UIC program **teamed academics and practitioners to teach** six courses, ranging from property management to public policy. There was a strong emphasis on neighborhood-based planning and development, including the building of CDCs and other grassroots groups. **A course on Organizational Development, for example, focused on community organizing, issues related to combining organizing and community development work, strategic planning and management issues for small nonprofits.** The course on Public Policy was equally practical, including study of such key issues as gentrification and the growing conversion of Section 8 and other federally subsidized projects to middle income use. It also covered important issues of strategy and built **skills in community organizing and advocacy.**

Concordia University in Montreal offers a Graduate Diploma in Community Economic Development rather than a Master's. It enrolls 20-25 students each year, and is offered in French one year, English the next, to attract students from both communities.

Concordia's program is interdisciplinary: faculty come from sociology, social work, economics, organizing, and policy backgrounds, and practitioners teach many courses. Although it is offered under the rubric of "community economic development", the program actually takes a broader view of community development – the development of a community's capacity to use various strategies and tools to address the issues it faces.

The Concordia program is designed to attract students who are working in a wide variety of nonprofit organizations including

community-based social services groups, CDCs and organizing groups like immigrant centers and unions. Its curriculum is thus aimed more broadly than the CD-oriented SNHU program, and includes courses on community organizing and public policy. For this reason, and because the program is for a shorter period, there is less emphasis on developing students' technical skills in development.²³

The faculty-members who originated the program chose the diploma route to expedite clearance by the university and have found this decision to be sound: Concordia's School of Community and Public Affairs has found practitioners and other students deeply interested in having the opportunity to study a variety of topics in depth, even without receiving a MA.²⁴ Furthermore **the diploma program has offered them the advantage of being able to enroll students who are not college graduates** – thus reaching practitioners who would be barred from a Master's program.

Concordia is now exploring the creation of a new MA program in participatory research and evaluation. This program would provide people in nonprofits with the extensive knowledge and skills they need to enter the growing number of community/university partnerships on an equal footing. They would promote the community's interests as research and evaluation topics are addressed.

Concordia requires all students to devote 6-8 hours per week for two terms working on a project. Most of these are carried out in grassroots settings, ranging this year from housing organizing to helping a Guatemalan village develop ecotourism. These field projects tie into a course which teaches them how to work on a project (setting goals, developing a strategic plan, etc.), provides opportunities for

²²Interviews with Joy Aruguete, Instructor at UIC and Chair, Chicago Rehab Network; Kevin Jackson, Executive Director of Chicago Rehab Network; Doug Gills, UIC faculty; and Wim Wievel, former Dean, Graduate School of Business Administration at University of Illinois at Chicago.

²³Interview with Professor Eric Shrage, Director, Graduate Diploma in Community Economic Development, Concordia University

²⁴Interview with Professor Lance Evoy, Institute in Management and Community Development, Concordia University

New university programs have emerged to teach about, research, and promote the strengthening of our democracy through the development of grassroots organizations and participation.

critical reflection in small groups, and requires a final paper synthesizing the student's experience and lessons from that experience.

B. Schools of Planning and Urban Studies

Planning schools vary greatly in the courses

Highlights to Consider for Master's in Community Change –

- Focused on place
- On-site work with community groups
- Useful courses on –
 - Physical Planning, Mapping and Geographic Information Systems
 - Housing
 - Economic and Social Planning
 - Participatory Planning
 - Participatory Research
 - Study of Roles of Public, Private and Nonprofit Sectors

es they offer and their areas of concentration. Some are housed in Schools of Architecture and thus heavily oriented toward physical planning. Those are particularly strong in educating students for careers in neighborhood and urban planning and urban design, including the use of GIS systems to map conditions and trends in ways which facilitate analysis and decision-making.

Others like Pratt also stress the social, economic and institutional sides of planning, including the different roles public, private and nonprofit organizations play in planning the future of a neighborhood, city or larger region. Issues of democratizing the planning process and involving the people who are most affected (e.g. neighborhood residents) in participatory planning processes inevitably arise in this context, and many planning schools include courses and placements to prepare students to staff these participatory processes and work with grassroots groups and CDCs.

Pratt also stresses community-based and participatory planning, with a special emphasis on students who are already working. The Institute draws from professionals throughout the area to teach many of its courses, and its full-time faculty is deeply involved in practice, working with CDCs and other community groups on neighborhood planning, development, and other projects. Pratt's four areas of concentration are community development planning, environmental planning, preservation planning and land use planning.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MIT combines the prestige of a nationally ranked university with a forty year commitment to community-based planning. It links urban and regional studies with urban planning, thus balancing its strengths in architecture and design with expertise on economic

Balancing Income Targeting and Poverty Deconcentration in Subsidized Housing: The Challenge of the Federal Section 8 Program

Michelle McDonough MCP '98

Michelle analyzed the impact of the repeal of Federal preferences for tenant selection in the project-based Section 8 program. She concluded that even where implementation is most successful, the pace of the desired change in the income mix of these projects will be slow due to the low natural turnover rate. Nevertheless, Michelle predicted a substantial loss number of units that would have been available for households experiencing the most severe housing problems. Her recommendations stressed that implementation should be context-specific and that HUD should consider vouchering out portions of the Section 8 units on a project-basis to create a more appropriate balance between income targeting and poverty deconcentration.²⁵

²⁵From course descriptions at MIT.

Students apply the participatory skills and techniques they have learned in concrete situations they face on the job.

and social planning issues. Several faculty members are deeply involved in working with community groups – ranging from CDCs to organizing groups and neighborhood associations – and the School’s organizational culture respects community work and activism on public policy issues. Its Housing Community and Economic Development (HCED) program group has “a commitment to social progress, a faculty working at the forefront of the field, and a student body committed to passionate involvement in complex urban issues.”

MIT’s planning curriculum provides students with multiple skills for their professional careers. These include the capacity to –

- analyze a city’s economic, social and political structures;
- learn about economic and workforce development, housing policy and development, and the building of social capital and networks; and
- develop skills in reflective practice.²⁶

HCED Master’s students can choose a housing or economic development track to deepen their knowledge of those fields. They also can take courses in other parts of MIT, Harvard or Tufts. The breadth of its program is illustrated by an example of how a recent student met her thesis requirement, summarized in the box on page 40.

In its most recent partnerships with communities, MIT has entered into **multiyear agreements with community groups** in which they detail the services which the groups need from students and faculty, and the commitments MIT makes regarding those needed services. This is designed to eliminate the problems which often plague “partnerships” – students cycling in and out of groups, often working on issues of their own choosing – and to provide continuing help on projects which the community groups select.

Cornell University

Similar traditions are strong at Cornell which offers students a choice of tracks including Land Use and Environmental Planning, and Economic and Community Development Planning. Several faculty members, including the most recent chairpersons of the department, are strongly committed to community-based and participatory approaches to planning and research. They require that students work extensively in the field, often in partnership with community-based organizations. They show their emphasis on community-based organizations and solution of urban issues in their materials:

“Our interests...We study and learn about cities and regions – the way they function (or don’t function) for the people who live and work in them. Since the world’s population is rapidly urbanizing, we need citizens and planning professionals with a sophisticated understanding of how and why cities and regions develop as they do.

“Our approach to teaching...We believe that learning in the classroom, in the laboratory or studio, and in the community contribute to an urbanist’s education. We provide opportunities to learn through internships and in hands-on workshops with real world clients as well as in the classroom. Two recent examples of student “off-campus” learning include participation in historic preservation activities on the famous Ellis Island in New York Harbor, and in an environmental justice workshop with planners in Harlem and the South Bronx in New York City, and the Ironbound section of Newark, New Jersey.”²⁷

²⁶Interview with Ceasar McDowell, former Director, Center for Reflective Community Practice, MIT

²⁷From MIT web-site

Students benefit greatly from being together on campus every few weeks when they can build strong, lasting networks of mutual learning and support with colleagues

University of California at Los Angeles

Until recently, UCLA had an unusually strong tradition of educating young people of color for careers in community planning and development. Many Los Angeles CDCs were staffed by recent graduates of UCLA's planning school, and several CD practitioners served as adjunct faculty. **The Community Fellows program brought low-income community leaders on campus to teach and study, and supported important participatory research and planning studies involving students, faculty and grassroots groups in unusually close and successful partnerships.**²⁸

For many years this emphasis had strong backing from the top ranks of the university as a response to community unrest and student pressure for the university to address the needs of Los Angeles' troubled neighborhoods. However, UCLA's story illustrates the vulnerability of university programs as well as their promise. As top leadership changed, and as a new Dean merged the planning school into a new School of Public Policy, there was a new emphasis on enhancing UCLA's academic reputation globally rather than stressing its service to Los Angeles. A stronger emphasis on research rather than service led to shrinking the adjunct faculty and outreach programs which had so distinguished UCLA as a strong partner with low-income communities. Today's academic program no longer is such a strong draw for people from low-income communities or others preparing for careers in community development and change.

Faculty members at other planning schools speak openly about the **vulnerability of their programs**. At Cornell, for example, planning school faculty recently had to mobilize alumni to fend off budget cuts which threatened to decimate key programs and even dismantle the planning school, leaving only a few of its courses remaining in the School of

Architecture or other departments.²⁹ Even at MIT where the Graduate School of Planning and Urban Studies is highly respected and apparently secure, faculty speak about how little others at MIT understand and value their work compared to work in the basic sciences, engineering and technology – the Institute's main emphasis.³⁰

It is worth noting that most planning schools have significantly narrowed their focus over the years. In the 1960s, when the civil rights and antipoverty movements combined with urban riots and student pressure, many planning schools became deeply involved with local community groups and progressive government officials in planning the revitalization of neighborhoods and other major community initiatives. Students were attracted to planning schools by their focus on cities and their neighborhoods and their broad approaches to planning encompassing economic and social as well as physical considerations. During that era of Model Cities, the war on poverty, and early federal support for CDCs, community groups often had the resources to bring in planners to work with the community in developing comprehensive neighborhood plans. However, as national concern with the future of cities, poverty, and neighborhoods waned, and as city government resources were reduced, the market for neighborhood planners and comprehensive planning also shrank. Planning schools have adjusted to the market by narrowing their curricula.

As the times have become more conservative, and government at all levels has reduced its social programs, "social planning" has disappeared as a field. Three decades ago, it was an area of specialization within many urban planning programs. It prepared professionals to analyze people's social needs, study the institutions and policies related to those needs,

²⁸Interviews with Gilda Haas, Mary Brooks, Allen Heskin, and other current and former UCLA faculty members

²⁹Interview with Professor Kenneth Reardon, Chairman, Department of Urban Planning, Cornell University

³⁰Interview with Professor Langley Keyes, MIT

Pratt offers students a rare opportunity for intensive work on community-based planning and development projects.

and prepare plans which nonprofits and government agencies used to address those needs. Social planners, for example, were trained to study such specific social groups as children, families, or the elderly, and such social needs as day care and health care, and to prepare the social components of a comprehensive plan for strengthening a community and revamping programs and policies.³¹

The Planners Network provides useful links among progressive planners, including academics, and the Association for Community Design provides a forum for community design centers. Their conferences and publications help people share experiences and lessons and explore pressing questions of mutual interest. Thus far, however, **these groups have not devoted much time to helping their members and others as they have developed their curricula and approaches to teaching, field placements, and career guidance. Expanded focus on these issues would be helpful** to people who now address those issues largely in isolation from their colleagues in other institutions and, equally importantly, from practitioners whose experience is invaluable and who can be of immense help in strengthening field placements and the students' search for jobs.

The disappearance of social planning as a field closely parallels what was, until recently, a real downtrend in the extent to which schools of social work stressed systemic responses to the problems people face, including the building of community-based programs and organizations. Instead they strongly emphasized preparing people for careers in counseling and helping individuals.

C. Schools of Social Work

Highlights to Consider for Master's in Community Change –

- Focus on people and groups
- On-site work with community groups
- Dual degree combining social work and urban planning – combining people and place
- Useful courses on –
 - Analysis of Social Problems and Programs
 - Community Organizing
 - Organizational Development
 - Community Process Skills
 - Race and Diversity

At several schools of social work there is a strong tradition of community organizing studies. This goes back to the days of Jane Addams and Hull House, an early example of social workers creating an institution in the community to address social conditions and build local leadership. Most social work schools offer graduate students a choice between concentrating on courses related to clinical practice or concentrating instead on community studies. Community studies is an area of concentration because local conditions – including the strength of the social fabric, helping systems and community institutions – have such an impact upon neighborhood residents, and reforms at the neighborhood or policy level so greatly influence people's social conditions.

As with other disciplines, social work schools change their emphases to meet market demand. During the period from the late '70s through the mid '90s, as interest in changing policies to address issues of poverty and race waned, many social work schools deemphasized or dropped their community studies track. They concentrated instead on preparing

³¹Interview with Professor John deMonchaux, former Chair of Urban Studies and Planning, MIT

The UIC program teamed academics and practitioners to teach.

people for clinical practice, usually in middle class and wealthier areas. In recent years, however, Maryland, Michigan and others see growing frustration with the limitations of “top down” approaches and a shift back to strong interest in community solutions to societal problems. This is reinforced by the large numbers of former VISTAs, Americorps and Peace Corps Volunteers who want to continue their commitment to community service.³² These universities therefore have strengthened their programs to respond to this growing demand.

University of Maryland

Michigan, Maryland, Pittsburgh, Berkeley, Hunter and North Carolina are among the schools of social work which currently offer strong concentrations in community studies. The University of Maryland, for example, created a unique organization – the Social Work Community Outreach Center – to operate as a social work agency within the School of Social Work. Like a teaching hospital within a medical school, or PICCED within Pratt, the Center provides students with excellent field placements and on-the-ground mentoring in low-income communities. Students devote fully 50% of their academic time to their field placements, and several courses and writing assignments relate directly to those placements.

The Outreach Center thus provides students with practical experience, knowledge and analytic skills which are useful for careers with community-based organizations and government. Operating as a technical assistance organization with long-term relationships with community groups, the Center assures groups they will have continuing staff assistance from graduate students with faculty guidance and back-up.

Ten University of Maryland faculty members teach in MACO, the Management and Community Organization track. They offer courses in community organizing, community economic development, social action and non-

profit management. Through the Outreach Center they mentor students working with refugee groups, an Indian Center, CDCs and neighborhood groups. Their projects range from creating a reverse commute program to organizing Hispanic parents in a high school and helping residents persuade the City to keep neighborhood libraries open. Much of their course work and writing is directly related to their field placements.

In the 1980s leaders in the community-oriented side of social work established an association through which they could meet periodically with their peers for mutual learning and support. ACOSA (the Association for Community Organization and Social Administration) also publishes a journal and makes annual awards to outstanding educators and their partners.

University of Michigan’s Joint Planning and Social Work Degree

Michigan offers a **joint MA in social work and urban and regional planning** which provides students with an unusually broad background for a career of bringing about change at the grassroots level. **This dual degree enables students to balance social work’s emphasis on “people” and community organizations and institutions with planning’s emphasis on “place” and physical and economic planning and development.** Some students supplement this with nonprofit management courses, and there are opportunities to take related courses in other departments.³³

In their Social Work courses, dual degree students usually major in Community Organization, taking such courses as “Organizing for Social and Political Action”, “Planning for Organizational and Community Change,” “Multicultural, Multilingual Organizing” and “Managing Projects and Organizational Change.” At the Planning School students can concentrate in Community Development and Housing to

³²Interview with Richard Cook, Director, Social Work Outreach Center, University of Maryland

³³Interview with Professor Barry Checkoway, University of Michigan School of Social Work and School of Urban Planning

Field projects tie into a course which teaches students how to work on a project, and provides opportunities for critical reflection in small groups.

prepare for “work with local residents, neighborhood and community organizations, community development corporations, nonprofit housing developers, public agencies, consulting firms, and other private sector agents in efforts to secure decent, affordable housing; improve job opportunities; increase safety; and restore or maintain community stability.”

Their planning education includes extensive field work with community-based groups and learning techniques for analyzing neighborhoods, cities and regions and developing plans and programs for their future.

D. Sociology and Social Psychology

Highlights to Consider for Master’s in Community Change –

- Analysis of culture and issues of poverty, class, race, and the social psychology of race and prejudice
- Insight into informal and formal organizations and social movements
- Analysis of group formation and functioning
- Analysis of social trends and needs

Because issues of community, poverty and race relate to so many aspects of our society there are examples of courses on community organizing and development in many other types of graduate schools. Sociology was one of the first disciplines to concentrate on issues of poverty, race, community ties, and community organization. In bringing social science methods to the study of society, sociologists bring considerable insight into the functioning of informal and formal social groups. They develop expertise in analyzing how people relate to each other, find common interests, and organize themselves to accomplish tasks.³⁴

While most sociologists devote their careers to research, including important research on issues of poverty, race, and community, people who specialize in “applied sociology” are

often involved in the development of organizations and projects which address community or social issues or in their evaluation and improvement. Applied sociologists work on the full gamut of issues, from drugs to education, and also bring their skills to such issues as the solution of community level social problems and organizational management and change. Columbia Professor Sudhir Venkatesh, for instance, has used his sociological skills and techniques to provide **great insight into the informal organizations** which are so crucial to public housing residents – insight which can help inform local and national policy-makers as they address housing policy issues.

Like sociologists, some **social psychologists** teaching at both the graduate and undergraduate levels developed some of the first courses relevant to studying and changing low-income communities and the broader framework and norms in which those communities function. Their courses develop students’ ability to **analyze community trends and needs, the social psychology of race and prejudice, the culture of poverty, social movements, and group formation and functioning** as well as issues related to developing and sustaining representative community organizations.

Like urban planning and social work, the fields of sociology and social psychology have faced considerable challenges during this increasingly conservative era. Job opportunities for their graduates have shrunk as government interest in urban social problems has waned, and academic departments have been under pressure to adapt. At some universities, however, these trends have actually strengthened faculty who argue that sociology’s future lies in demonstrating how it can be applied in practical situations. The Society for Applied Sociology plays an important role linking these sociologists who are dedicated to using their skills and insight to provide solutions to social and organizational challenges.

³⁴Venkatesh, Sudhir Alladi. *American Project*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000

MIT has entered into multiyear agreements with community groups, designed to eliminate the problems which often plague “partnerships”.

E. Schools of Public Health

Highlights to Consider for Master’s in Community Change –

- Emphasis on link between community’s health and public health
- Community-focused
- Useful courses on –
 - Public Health and Environment
 - Participatory Action Research
 - Community Organizing and Education

Public health also has a strong tradition of emphasis on community and, often, community organizing. Epidemiologists and other public health experts concentrate on addressing preventive and other health issues at the community level through community education, community-based services, and community involvement. Whether the issue is HIV/AIDS, asthma, rat control, lead paint abatement or sanitation and sewers, public health experts focus their research, assistance and policy work on trying to change the community-wide practices which present a threat.

Public health specialists stress housing issues because of health concerns about unsafe and unsanitary conditions. Some tackle employment and economic issues because of their clear impact on health, while others emphasize the importance of education, day care and after-school programs in developing physically and mentally healthy young people. Some early American experiments in community organizing emanated from the public health field, including support for the development of cooperative and consumer-controlled health insurance plans in the 1930s and '40s. And the American Public Health Association

has long been community-oriented on issues of social policy because its members understand these links so well.

Harvard University

Harvard’s School of Public Health is an example of the tie between public health and a community organizing approach to change. It offers a course in community organizing which is taught by an adjunct faculty member who is an experienced organizer on health issues. The School’s policy courses also stress the importance of organizing the people who are most affected by a policy as well as broader coalitions which include service providers and other powerful allies. Berkeley, Michigan and others have a similar emphasis.³⁵

Vanderbilt University

Vanderbilt has stressed community-based efforts for many years. Vanderbilt’s Center for Health Services emerged out of student protests in the 1970s and has, over time, created 23 community clinics and a training program for maternal and child health workers, or *promotores*. It also created a program combining home-visits to high risk pregnant mothers with advocacy on their issues which has been replicated in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Kentucky and West Virginia. Nevertheless, the Center has not succeeded in influencing the curriculum itself.

Participatory Action Research is stressed by several schools of public health as a particularly good tool for addressing public health issues. Meredith Minkler of Berkeley, Nina Wallerstein of the University of New Mexico, Barbara Israel at Michigan and others have done remarkable work involving people who are affected by an issue in conducting research on that issue and then using their new knowledge as the basis for advocacy.³⁶ The federal govern-

³⁵Interview with Susan Sherry, Adjunct, Harvard School of Public Health

³⁶Participatory research and evaluation is also stressed by people in several schools of planning and in such disparate institutions as schools of nursing and education. Professor Kenneth Reardon of Cornell’s planning school recently found more than 130 colleges and universities offering education in participatory action research.

The Community Fellows program brought low-income community leaders to the campus to teach and study, and supported important participatory research and planning studies.

ment currently provides over \$20 million per year for Community Participation in Health Grants which support participatory research projects on public health issues throughout the country.³⁷

Some public health schools are linked with closely related fields like planning and service delivery. New York University, for instance, has grouped health policy, urban planning, public policy and public administration in the Wagner School of Public Service in order to facilitate collaboration and study across disciplines that are often divided.³⁸

F. Schools of Public Policy, Public Administration and Public Service

Highlights to Consider for Master's in Community Change –

- Some offer cross-disciplinary studies
- A few focus on the management needs of smaller nonprofits
- Useful courses on –
 - Public Policy Analysis
 - Nonprofit Management
 - Fundraising and Budgeting

A growing number of schools of public administration and management are developing special tracks on nonprofit management. However, these programs are seldom geared to prepare students for work in smaller, more grassroots nonprofits, and few are oriented to social and community change. They are designed instead to respond to the growing market for executives for such large nonprofit institutions as hospitals, libraries, and major service agencies.

The courses they offer nonprofit managers were often originally developed for public administrators. They may fit for managers of nonprofit institutions which resemble govern-

ment agencies in having large staffs, significant bureaucracies, well-established financial and management systems and procedures, and relatively constant budgets. They are not, however, so useful for people in much smaller organizations with minimal management staff, quite informal systems, and budgets which go up and down with the vicissitudes of foundation fundraising and other unpredictable factors. These managers must be far more entrepreneurial, versatile and quick to adapt to changing circumstances than administrators in larger management structures.

An example of how this plays out in university planning was furnished recently by the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy. Interested in attracting additional students, and cognizant of the large number of nonprofits based in the Washington metropolitan area, its Dean and faculty decided to explore creating a new track in their MA program to attract students from nonprofits. In thinking through a possible curriculum, they identified a series of courses already in the course catalogue and packaged them together as a draft curriculum. They then consulted with several nonprofit executives for their reactions on whether their plan would attract students from the nonprofit sector.

The logic behind their design was driven heavily by economic factors – their desire to expand their student body while limiting costs led them to stress using current faculty and courses to meet their new students' educational needs. This approach is understandable in an era of financial austerity and competition for students. However, while broadening the market for courses which are already offered can increase income while keeping costs constant, **this financial drive leaves little latitude for creating courses which meet the special needs of people managing small nonprofits, or for hiring**

³⁷Interview with Professor Meredith Minkler, University of California at Berkeley School of Public Health

³⁸Interview with Professor Sonia Ospina, Wagner School of Public Service, New York University

UCLA's story illustrates the vulnerability of university programs as well as their promise.

academics and/or practitioners with the specialized backgrounds needed to teach those courses.³⁹

This approach limits universities' ability to meet the very different needs of people managing small nonprofits, including –

- management of an organization with a minimal management staff;
- participatory processes of planning and budgeting;
- budgeting and financial management with unpredictable income;
- fundraising from foundations, the community and a variety of other sources;
- development of board leadership and board/staff relations;
- volunteer management and support;
- leadership in the community and advocacy on community and policy issues;
- development of working relationships and influence with the public and private sectors; and
- evaluation and organizational learning in the context of a small organization working for community change.

Furthermore, few schools of management or public administration address the social and ethical issues which motivate people in the field of social change. Quite frequently, they wind up diverting people from nonprofit to government or corporate careers. Recent statistics from the Kennedy School of Government illustrate this: while 33% of their students come from nonprofit backgrounds, only 22% of their graduates go on to work in nonprofits. As one faculty member observed, the Kennedy School is often referred

to as the “second best business school in Boston” because corporate recruiters are as active recruiting students from JFK as from Harvard’s Business School.⁴⁰

Another sign of the impact public policy and management schools often have on their students comes from a recent study of lead staff people in social change organizations in New York and Boston by Frances Kunreuther when she was at Harvard’s Hauser Center. On the basis of her interviews with two dozen people in small nonprofits, Kunreuther concluded that nonprofit management education often actually weakens students’ social motivation. She urged that new educational tracks be created specifically to meet the needs of people engaged in community or social change work.⁴¹

Executive directors and top staff people in community organizations desperately need extensive training in management.

They are responsible for managing highly complex organizations with inadequate budgets and staffing levels. They are accountable for their performance and management to their boards, their communities, private funders, and, quite often, government agencies. And yet most people who move into top management positions in grassroots nonprofits come from backgrounds in community organizing or specializing on a specific community program or issue area rather than from experience in management. It is a rare executive director who has any educational background or other formal training on the key management challenges he/she will face. The need for new opportunities for mid-career education to provide this background is clear and immediate.

The New School University offers a Master’s in Public Administration which is quite different. **The New School strongly emphasizes**

³⁹Interview with Dr. Susan Schwab, former Dean, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland

⁴⁰Interview with Associate Professor Marshall Ganz, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

⁴¹Kunreuther, Frances. *Generational Changes and Leadership: Implications For Social Change Organizations*, a paper prepared for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002.

At several schools of social work there is a strong tradition of community organizing studies.

advocacy and social change. Aida Rodriguez, past chair of Milano's nonprofit management program, says,

“The mission of our program is about empowering people to create social, economic, and political change, whatever they think that change should be. People come to our school because they deeply care about learning how to help their communities and the people who live in those communities.”

It includes such courses as “Managing for Social Impact” and “Advocacy, Public Policy, and Social Change.” The latter class is taught by Gara LaMarche, now President of Atlantic Philanthropics, and Michael Seltzer, a former Ford Foundation program officer. As part of their course work, many students conduct research and undertake other tasks for organizations that promote social change or provide services to the needy.

Carleton University in Ottawa has gone unusually far in creating cross-disciplinary curricula and research. It gathered together several disciplines under one Dean of Public Affairs and Management, including social sciences, social work, law, business, economics, public administration, and journalism. At the same time Carleton organized interdisciplinary research centers on such topics as Community Economic Development and The Voluntary Sector. **They grounded their teaching in practice as well as theory by recruiting practitioners to teach and stressing participatory research and field placements** with community organizations because “those on the margins ... seldom have all the resources they need to participate fully in university/community partnerships.”⁴²

G. Democracy, Participation, Civics and Political Science

Highlights to Consider for Master's in Community Change –

- Places community organizations within framework of efforts to strengthen democracy and participation
- Useful courses on –
 - Issues facing democracy in the US
 - Community Organizing
 - Participatory Techniques

Traditionally, political science and government studies focus on the public sector and government agencies, giving little attention to the role of nonprofits in addressing community and societal issues. Furthermore, **most strongly stress social science research methods and quantitative analysis, deemphasizing issues of leadership, creating and leading groups, and managing organizations and change processes. Few promote participatory approaches** for research, needs assessments, planning, and operating and evaluating programs.

However, as concern has grown about the decline in the number of Americans who vote or otherwise participate in politics, a number of new university programs have emerged to teach about, research, and promote the strengthening of our democracy through the development of grassroots organizations and participation. This movement parallels the growth of increasingly strong networks of community organizing groups which strongly emphasize their role as new vehicles for strengthening democracy by equipping ordinary people – including the poor and people of color – with the experience and skills to participate fully in public life.

These developments on campuses and in communities are complementary. Community groups have emerged to supplement government bodies in representing the interests of

⁴²Interview with Professor Ted Jackson, Carleton University

As with other disciplines, social work schools change their emphases to meet market demand.

people whose voice is seldom heard in political circles. They are therefore a key component for deepening democracy and should be seen as highly relevant to universities which are emphasizing democracy studies. However, so far there are few examples of universities developing new academic courses on community organizing and institution-building. Universities could use these courses as key components of future strategies, or focusing research, placements and partnerships on building stronger representative institutions and organizations in now marginalized, often powerless communities.

Nevertheless **there is considerable potential for developing courses on community organizing as an important strategy for engaging disadvantaged people in civic life.** This would build on strong intellectual roots in the United States, from Alexis de Tocqueville's emphasis on associations as being central to democracy in the US, through Hannah Arendt's observation about how democracy has weakened as the tradition of town meetings has waned, to neoconservative philosopher Peter Berger's emphasis on mediating structures as critical to empowering ordinary citizens vis-à-vis government, corporations and private sector institutions.

There are courses on community organizing in many colleges and universities. **One of the most exceptional is the course given at Harvard's Kennedy School** by Marshall Ganz, who is nationally known for his work as Director of Training for the United Farm Workers Union. It is described in Chapter II above and is designed specifically for replication at other universities.

Additionally, **Comm-org⁴³ offers curricular materials to anyone who subscribes to its list serve** and it also maintains a lively and useful dialogue among academics and practitioners interested in community organizing. **Its list serve also posts job openings** – a very useful service which gives college

students, faculty and grassroots groups an opportunity to match recent graduates with jobs.

H. Law Schools

Highlights to Consider for Master's in Community Change –

- Clinical work with local leaders and organizers on important legal issues
- Skills in advocacy and rights-based work
- Skills in public policy and legislative analysis
- Useful courses on –
 - Poverty law
 - Constitutional rights
 - Civil rights

Many law schools offer courses on poverty law, civil rights, and issues of participation in government, including clinical placements with nonprofit groups and others working on these issues. These build on the close ties between Legal Services attorneys, other public interest lawyers and low-income community groups. Grassroots organizations often have relied on legal-aid and pro bono attorneys to represent clients from their neighborhoods on issues ranging from immigration rights to housing. These ties were reinforced over the many years when the federal Legal Services Corporation fostered the development of strong client organizations and consumer leaders as partners with local attorneys on legal issues requiring strong community roots and/or advocacy.

The principal intersection between law schools and grassroots groups is through clinical programs which place law students with community-based groups and clinics. In Washington, DC, for example, George Washington places law students with Ayuda to work on immigration, domestic violence and illegal trafficking issues, while Georgetown

⁴³<http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/>

Like a teaching hospital within a medical school, or PICCED within Pratt, the Center provides students with excellent field placements and on-the-ground mentoring in low-income communities.

Law places students with the Employment Law Center to represent day laborers and others victimized by their employers.

For decades Yale Law School has **paired faculty and students in working with local leaders and organizers on important legal issues** like rights to federal entitlements and the rights of tenants facing displacement from public housing renovation. This experience gives students important insight into the dynamics of low-income communities and the organizations which represent them. It helps them see the attorney/client relationship in a new light as they learn how to work with organizations whose leaders need to be taken through a learning process concerning the legal issues involved in their situation, how they can advocate most effectively, how to document their case and decide what remedy to seek, and how to pursue solutions in the courts and through negotiation.

Nevertheless, few law schools offer courses which focus on neighborhood issues and organizations as such. Stanford Law School is among the exceptions. It offers a seminar in Community Action for Social and Economic Rights. This seminar includes a practicum doing human rights work as well as a background in social and economic rights, institutional transformation, global social movements, power, participation and democratic practices.

Some law professors introduce their students to participatory action research as a particularly effective technique for expanding their knowledge of legal issues. Professor Lucie White of Harvard Law School, for example, teaches courses on procedure, social welfare policy, and **community-based advocacy on gender, racial, and economic justice**. She has involved students in the "Kitchen Table Conversations" initiative, a project to enhance the political voice of very low-income

Cambridge women, as well as such projects as a ten-year ethnographic study looking into the lives and work of low income African-American women in a Project Head Start preschool.

Peru furnishes a fascinating example of the potential of building closer links between law school education and community work. In 1992, concerned about worsening social conditions and threats to human rights under a dictatorial regime, students at Catholic University Law School in Lima decided to offer legal advice and assistance by establishing a clinic in one of Lima's poor neighborhoods. This initiative was taken without backing from university faculty, but PROSODE grew from a student project to a partnership with some faculty to eventually becoming a formal course in the Law Faculty curriculum. It is carried out in coordination with the university department responsible for all university social outreach programmes to the community.

"PROSODE has today two groups of beneficiaries: students and the community. On one hand, students learn law in a different way, contrasting theory with the country's realities.... The activity in PROSODE gives social sensitivity to students and allows them to approach social problems from a legal perspective. On the other hand, the community benefits from our activities in many ways. We have developed different activities that allow the population to gain access to justice, get an education in human and civil rights, and build citizenship in an adverse context."⁴⁴

Over the years the program has expanded in scope and scale. There are now five community-based clinics where law students provide counsel with oversight and assistance from members of the law faculty. In addi-

⁴⁴Armas Alvarado, Henry. *Social Outreach of Law: Experiences from Linking Universities & Communities in Promoting Access to Justice in Peru*, 2003

This dual degree enables students to balance social work's emphasis on "people" and community organizations and institutions with planning's emphasis on "place."

tion, the students provide rights education classes in local high schools and training for "lay judges of justice" who provide mediation services in neighborhoods throughout Lima. The student-run radio station includes educational programs on people's rights as well as legal issues related to domestic violence and other key community problems. Finally, the students and faculty work with poor people and ordinary citizens to pursue legislative and other policy changes on legal issues which are important to them.

There is a strong interdisciplinary side to this ambitious series of programs in Lima. For example, in designing the rights education program for the schools and radio, students asked faculty from the psychology and communications departments to help them plan how to publicize the program and reach and teach people. They involved academics specializing in gender studies, public health, and other disciplines in the educational work and in developing strategies for winning reforms on issues where their specialized knowledge and connections were helpful.

I. Divinity Schools

Highlights to Consider for Master's in Community Change –

- Stress on values, connecting faith and action
- Useful courses on –
 - Urban Issues
 - Community Organizing
 - Race and class

There is a long history of strong ties between graduates of divinity schools and community organizations. Churches have, in fact, generated much of the staff and volunteer leadership for grassroots organizations since the 1960s. This stems from strong traditions throughout the faith community – the social

gospel movement among Protestants, the social teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, the strong liberal humanitarian traditions in Judaism and Unitarianism, and the crucial role of African American clergy in the civil rights movement and in Black communities today. In a study conducted a decade ago by the Center for Community Change, the Center found that religious institutions had provided critical leadership and financial support to virtually every one of the hundred grassroots organizations it surveyed.⁴⁵

Some divinity schools have developed courses responding to the social motivation which attracted many students to the ministry. Most of these offer courses related to the "church in the world" and the "urban ministry", including **classes on community organizing, analyzing and working in low income neighborhoods, and the theological basis for the social justice movement and community work**. Graduates have frequently gone on to become community organizers and directors of grassroots groups, or provided volunteer leadership to groups representing neighborhoods where they are pastors or priests.

However, in recent years many seminaries have deemphasized their urban ministry courses. As the mainline Protestant churches decline in membership and are under assault for being too "liberal", their theological schools are finding fewer students attracted to the ministry by their interest in social change and the urban ministry.

Professor Robert Linthicum, for example, laments that his students at Claremont Theological School have little interest in the churches' role in tackling social issues or supporting community-based groups in distressed neighborhoods.

⁴⁵The churches have been important and constant financial contributors as well as sources of talented leadership. For four decades the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, parallel giving programs in the mainline Protestant churches, and giving and membership dues from local congregations have been especially significant sources of support for community organizing throughout the U.S.

Sociology was one of the first disciplines to concentrate on issues of poverty, race, community ties, and community organization.

While this emphasis has weakened in mainstream churches, Linthicum sees signs that **some evangelical seminaries are beginning to stress issues of poverty and community action.** He points to Eastern University in Philadelphia as being a forerunner for other evangelical schools.

Eastern has established the Campolo School for Social Change which offers a joint degree in divinity and social change as well as MS and MBA degrees in Urban Economic Development. They stress community organizing as a key approach for bringing about economic change and require all students to take two courses in community organizing. Those courses are taught by Professor Linthicum, who is also a consultant to two of the largest national networks of community organizing groups.

Campolo Dean Caleb Rosado makes sure **courses change their students' analysis of poverty from looking at the individual to also looking at the institutional causes,** "following Catholic social theory pioneered by Dorothy Day", a striking connection between evangelical and Catholic social teaching.⁴⁶ According to Linthicum, Eastern's courses on economic development and other topics get at the heart of the issues – Why are people hungry? Is there systemic injustice? Is the problem with the systems, not with the poor?

J. Leadership Studies

Highlights to Consider for Master's in Community Change –

- Develops the students' knowledge and skills as change leaders
- Is for mid-career professionals
- Draws students from across the country
- Does not require long periods of residence
- Is multidisciplinary
- Uses participatory techniques in teaching
- Gives credit for experiential education
- Involves practitioners as well as academics as teachers and mentors⁴⁷

Leadership studies is a new academic field which is growing quite rapidly at the postgraduate level. It emerged from growing concern about the **need to prepare the next generation of leaders to provide the ethical and practical leadership which are needed** in all sectors of our society. Today virtually every university has at least one course in leadership studies and many offer minors in the subject.

Although there is a strong tradition of leadership development in community organizing, and a particularly rich history of popular education in Latin America and in such US social change organizations as the Highlander Center, there is little connection between university-based leadership studies and those more grassroots programs. University-based programs are instead heavily oriented toward educating leaders for our country's major institutions, including government. However, Jepson University in Richmond, the first institution to offer a major in leadership studies, includes a **course in leadership in social movements, community-based organizations, politics, and community problem-solving as well as internships with grassroots groups and discussions with community leaders.**⁴⁸

⁴⁶Interview with Dean Rosado

⁴⁷Interview with Professor Laurien Alexandre, Director, Antioch Ph.D. in Leadership and Change

⁴⁸Interview with Professor Richard Couto, Antioch Ph.D. in Leadership and Change

Peru furnishes a fascinating example of the potential of building closer links between law school education and community work.

Antioch University offers a mid-career Ph.D. in Leadership and Change program drawing students from across the US, ranging from Director of a small nonprofit to school superintendents and a Vice President of Boeing. Students are not expected to leave their jobs or spend long periods of time on campus. Instead, they meet for short residential sessions every three months at one of Antioch's several small campuses. The program is staffed by six full-time professors from different disciplines. With backgrounds in leadership, clinical psychology, social psychology, and management, they now work as an integrated team committed to combining the disciplines to enrich the students' education. It is noteworthy that the creativity and challenge of this approach enticed them away from various universities where they had higher salaries and tenure positions.

The program is “**competency-based**” rather than “**course-based**” – what matters is what you know, not how you learn it; you must demonstrate your mastery of the competency, not just have taken courses. In developing the curriculum, the faculty therefore first decided what they wanted students to know at the end of their education, and then designed backwards, allowing great flexibility so the competencies students have already learned experientially are given full credit.

Antioch's faculty believes that “leadership studies” should not be taught in the abstract but should instead be **connected to practice and particularly to how leaders themselves change and how they create organizational change**. Therefore students study, reflect on, and practice the process of leading change, mixing serious academic study of the great thinkers in the field with integrating and applying this knowledge. Adjuncts bring their experience and skills to particular students and studies, and third year students have mentors who are often practitioners, not academics. As part of the education, students work with their professors, mentors and advi-

sors to think through how they can tackle the organizational issues they face in their daily life.

Antioch **starts with the individual**. The first project on the research side of the curriculum is a reflective paper on a person's background in research, a self-assessment of his/her skills and needs, and a description of perplexing problems at work which they need to research and analyze. They then define what the research question will be and how it might be researched.

Despite its focus on each individual, the program **encourages collaborative learning on the theory that you cannot make significant change alone**. Antioch sees collaborative design, action and reflection as critical to the success of change efforts. Like IDS's international MA, the course of study teaches critical thinking, strategy, leading groups, conflict resolution, and ethics and values related to service to society.

K. Education

Highlights to Consider for Master's in Community Change –

- Emphasizes community participation
- Involves parents, community and students in reform

Education is another area of study with a strong historic emphasis on the importance of **community participation, including fostering growing involvement on crucial issues of reform by parents, the broader community and students themselves**. This emphasis goes back to John Dewey and has many proponents today.

There are five strong contemporary reasons why some schools of education are strongly committed to fostering greater community involvement on educational issues –

Participatory Action Research is stressed by several schools of public health as a particularly good tool for addressing public health issues.

- The need for greater parental involvement in creating a learning environment at home which reinforces classroom teaching;
- The need for community-based preschool, after-school and youth programs to provide additional learning opportunities for children;
- The need for strong community support for the school system and school budgets;
- The need for strong parent and community involvement in pressing for school reform, providing vital allies for reformers within the system who face major political, bureaucratic and financial obstacles to change; and
- The need to empower students and develop their leadership skills so they become more invested in their schools, more motivated to learn, and better able to provide additional pressure for reform.

It is no coincidence that an educator was the great pioneer in foundation circles in creating the first serious philanthropic program of support for community organizing, advocacy of systemic reform, and community control of public schools. While Ford's Vice President, Paul Ylvisaker launched the Gray Areas Program and many other pathfinding programs to foster community organizing and institution-building in the 1960s. He then took that same emphasis back into a university setting as Dean of Harvard's School of Education.

L. Economics

Highlights to Consider for Master's in Community Change –

- Allows students to analyze and plan economic development at various levels
- Emphasizes grassroots organizing and advocacy as well as development
- Is interdisciplinary

Some economics departments house community-oriented classes. The University of Massachusetts at Lowell, for example, offers an MA in Regional Economic and Social Development. This program provides students with skills in **analyzing and planning economic development** at the local, regional, and national level. In its emphasis on community-based planning, the Economics Department stresses the need for **grassroots organizing and advocacy as well as community economic development projects** to enable low-income neighborhoods and people of color to have a significant impact on regional patterns of economic development and employment.

UMass Lowell students are placed with community organizing groups like the Merrimack Valley Project as well as with CDCs and groups like Lawrence Community Works which combine organizing, community planning, and development. This enables them to learn from those organizations and develop the skills they will need to help such groups in the future as staff, technical assistance providers, or partners in the public or private sector.⁴⁹ Working with those organizing and advocacy groups familiarizes students with the techniques those organizations have found to be effective in influencing public policies, decisions by the private sector, and

⁴⁹Interview with Professor Chris Tilly, Chair, Department of Economics, University of Massachusetts at Lowell

It is no coincidence that an educator was the great pioneer in foundation circles in creating the first serious philanthropic program of support for community organizing and advocacy of systemic reform.

how key sectors of the local economy function so they are more beneficial to disadvantaged people.⁵⁰

The Economics Department at UMass Lowell is committed to **interdisciplinary studies**. It therefore draws on the fields of economics, history, political science, psychology, sociology, and urban planning. It prepares students for analyzing and acting on the social aspects of development, including **income distribution and workplace issues, and stresses the role of public policy, social action and social movements**. In another sign of its breadth, Lowell offers courses analyzing the impact of the globalization of economies, cultures, and ecosystems on communities.

Conclusion on Postgraduate Programs

This broad scan of postgraduate programs relevant to community organizing and social change reveals a far richer panoply of courses, research, student placements and partnerships than is commonly realized. This richness is usually hidden because such programs usually exist on the margins of universities, in scattered academic programs and centers focusing on poverty, race, community or a particular subject area.

These efforts are so isolated from each other and in so many academic nooks and crannies that their leaders know little or nothing about parallel initiatives in other academic disciplines or institutions. Needless to say, this fragmentation greatly limits opportunities for the people leading these efforts to learn from each other, share materials, or develop joint strategies for the future. Furthermore **this isolation increases**

the vulnerability of valuable university programs which have little backing from university administrators who are more concerned about traditional areas of study, responding to major new market opportunities, fundraising, institutional stability and prestige than about fostering reform and community-building.

The results are entirely predictable. Missed opportunities for learning. Exposure to the vicissitudes of university politics and economics. Little growth in interdisciplinary approaches to community studies. Infrequent teaming of academics and practitioners to educate mid-career people or the next generation of community change agents.

It is time to bring these academic initiatives out from the shadows, recognize their growing significance and potential, and provide them with the visibility, support and linkages they deserve and need.

The collective scope and scale of these many initiatives is impressive. They affect large numbers of students and involve substantial numbers of faculty-members. While most are small, limited to a single discipline, or not built on strong community partnerships, each has strengths and offers insights into what a more holistic, multidisciplinary curriculum could offer people in mid-career and younger students.

Furthermore, the fact that these initiatives have emerged in so many different departments demonstrates that people in an extraordinary range of disciplines are discovering the importance – as a practical necessity as well as for philosophical reasons – of teaching their students how to work with community residents to bring about positive change.

⁵⁰Organizing and advocacy groups can be especially effective in influencing economic and workforce development policies and programs which are geared to have a systemic impact on local economies, including sectoral intervention, industrial retention, employment linkage, and community benefits approaches. See series of reports by the Center for Community Change on these topics at www.communitychange.org. They also can have a great impact on housing. See *Moving to Scale in Improving America's Housing* at www.communitylearningproject.org.

Working with organizing and advocacy groups familiarizes students with the techniques those organizations have found to be effective.

Viewed collectively, these efforts therefore provide a far stronger base for moving community change studies to the next level than is generally recognized. **A great deal can be accomplished through a practical series of steps which, collectively, would advance the field significantly.** These steps include measures to –

- foster stronger links for mutual learning and support,
- increase the visibility of and appreciation for exemplary programs, and
- support emerging models of interdisciplinary study and fieldwork, including strong two-way community partnerships and the involvement of practitioners with academics in teaching.

These measures would not require great infusions of foundation support. In this era of limited resources, when it is extremely difficult to launch major new initiatives, a great deal can be accomplished through the judicious use of a series of relatively modest grants. These grants can be used to reinforce and expand efforts which are already under way, and whose leaders have demonstrated they have the vision, energy, resourcefulness, political skills and substance which are needed to make progress with limited resources.

Moving Forward on Postgraduate Education

There are four strategies which could open up new opportunities for midcareer professionals to gain the advanced education they need. Significant support for one or more of these strategies could contribute greatly to solving the serious leadership crisis which is facing the field of social and community change.

1. Support Networking Which Will Advance This Field of Study

A “networking and glue money approach” has great potential for strengthening community change studies, especially if it links educators and practitioners across international lines in a growing network for joint learning and action.

Now isolated people teaching community change studies in various disciplines could gain greatly from being linked with their peers in a growing network which enables them to learn from others’ experience and explore the challenges they face in, for example, working on an interdisciplinary basis, combining field and classroom studies, and involving practitioners in teaching. Peer learning through such an affinity group also would provide people with opportunities to work together to develop joint projects and strategies, such as collaborating in developing model curricula or taking joint action to raise the visibility of these important programs and increase support for them.

After the publication of the first edition of this study, the Ford Foundation provided a learning and planning grant to the International Working Group on University Education for Community Change, a group which emerged from discussion of the study. Its members are gaining greatly from the opportunity to learn from each other and to think through how an international network could help advance this field of studies while providing opportunities for peer learning and collaboration to its members.

A similar network would be of great value within the US. It would enable highly creative but isolated groups of academics and practitioners to learn from each other through a rich dialogue about the common challenges they face and the curricula, course materials, field experiences, and other approaches they are developing. Sharing ideas, experience, materials, and approaches could lead to significant strengthening of these programs and growing recognition of the contribution

A “seed money” strategy could be geared to promote replication of exemplary courses and approaches.

they can make in helping people tackle issues of poverty, race, community and democracy-building.

Establishing a peer learning network would be especially important at this point in history. In the US people committed to reform have been on the defensive, feeling beleaguered, “hunkering down”, running short of new ideas and inspiration, and thus apt to limit their vision of what is possible. The tendency among activists as well as academics in such an era is to stick to familiar approaches rather than to experiment with new ideas and more ambitious programs. This makes it especially important for academics as well as social change leaders to have new opportunities to learn about widely differing visions and strategies which can fortify them with new insights and ideas as they continue developing their own programs.

There are several elements which would enrich and increase the impact of this networking. The first would be to foster serious cross-disciplinary dialogue among academics who share a common commitment to education designed to address issues of poverty, race, and community and to reinvigorating democracy by ensuring that people of color have a “voice” as crucial decisions are made. **This process could explore what knowledge, tools and techniques the different disciplines have to offer practitioners, and vice versa. They could then concentrate on practical ways for building bridges across disciplinary lines** so that faculty, students and the communities themselves gain more from the breadth and richness of their potentially complementary approaches.

A second element of the networking would **add front-line practitioners and trainers to the dialogue and interaction.** This would help bridge the gap between academics and practitioners, familiarize them with each other’s experience and perspectives, and, in all likelihood, strengthen course offerings, placements, and partnerships. In particular, it could focus on such issues as –

- measures to increase the value of field experience to the students as well as the communities where they are placed,
- ways of involving social change leaders and other practitioners in the educational program, and
- approaches to participatory evaluation and research which can strengthen and inform social change groups and enable them to understand and increase their impact on important community and policy issues.

A third element in a network could focus on **strengthening links which already exist within particular disciplines.** In some disciplines such as urban planning and social work, there already are associations which offer annual conferences and other opportunities for exchange. In other areas such as community organizing and the urban ministry, list serves play a vital role in helping faculty and practitioners learn from each other as they develop materials, curricula, and participatory research efforts. These links and associations can help advance the field, but they are perennially short of resources with which to staff and enhance their efforts and place a new emphasis on curricular development and mid-career education. It would be useful to fortify the single-discipline networks which currently exist as well as to build such networks where they do not yet exist.

A “glue money” approach could be geared to promote replication of exemplary courses and approaches, such as: Marshall Ganz’ outstanding course in community organizing at the Kennedy School; courses on combining community organizing, community development and policy advocacy; and courses addressing the unique management challenges of leading and directing social change organizations. It could provide **limited funding to seed new courses and increase communication and coordination** among faculty-members teaching in the same institution so their courses could be threaded together to provide

Viewed collectively, these efforts provide a strong base for moving community change studies to the next level.

midcareer students with a relatively coherent and comprehensive program for building their knowledge and skills.

2. Create New Postgraduate Programs

Although no formal market study has been conducted, interviews and discussions with staff-members of community groups, community organizing groups, state and local coalitions and intermediaries make it clear that **there is a substantial demand for midcareer education in community change studies.**

Many factors converge to create this demand. The largest is the massive generational change which is just beginning to hit the nonprofit sector as leaders who came to this work in the 1960s retire. This shift places great demands on significantly younger, and often less experienced, people who will take their place.

Another critical factor is the great need to speed up the preparation and promotion of people of color into top leadership positions in organizations which were established specifically to give voice to people of color and others with lower-income backgrounds.

The process of developing a new midcareer program would be expedited by **concentrating on institutions which have demonstrated their openness to cross-disciplinary studies, midcareer education, experiential learning, the involvement of practitioners as adjuncts, real partnerships with communities, and recruitment of students from disadvantaged communities.** Most of these institutions are not as prestigious or as disdainful of “skill training” and service to the community as the major research universities, and their student bodies tend to have larger numbers of people of color, people with limited incomes, and midcareer students. Like Southern New Hampshire, they tend to be less well-known public universities, commuter colleges, community colleges and universities which emphasize continuing education and distance learning. It is noteworthy that many community-oriented programs which this scan

surveyed are based at such institutions as the University of Massachusetts at Boston and at Lowell, the Pratt Institute, Loyola University, North Park University, and the University of Illinois at Chicago, LA Trade Tech, Antioch, Eastern University and Providence College.

Outside the United States, UAM in Mexico City, IDS in Britain and Concordia University in Montreal furnish examples of such programs and are described earlier in this volume. Other exemplary programs include the MA in Community Economic Development offered at the Open University of Tanzania, and the MA in Visionary Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Human Rights and Gender offered by the nonprofit-created African Rural University in Uganda. .

As with community college and undergraduate programs, it will be **vital that the planning process for new midcareer programs involve practitioners and organizations representing the potential source of and market for students.** This will ensure that the courses are practical as well as educational, and that they are able to attract a steady flow of students over time.

3. Model Curriculum Development

A third strategy would be to support development of a model curriculum for a Master's program and then encourage universities to consider adopting all or parts of it.

Funding for involving academics from different disciplines plus practitioners in designing such a curriculum could encourage broader cross-disciplinary collaboration while concentrating on the tough practical task of thinking through the combination of courses, readings, research, field experience and mentoring which would be most helpful to midcareer people.

This approach has been followed in developing model curricula in other fields and then nurturing and supporting their replication. Ideally a model curriculum would focus on people and place, on issues of income and

It is time to bring these academic initiatives out from the shadows and provide them with the visibility, support and linkages they deserve.

race. It would draw from the strengths of the different disciplines which are highlighted in this paper, providing midcareer people with an opportunity to expand their knowledge, analytical capacity, and skills in involving people and developing leaders and organizations.

This would also serious attention to developing a strategy for promoting the curriculum on different campuses. This could dovetail well with a strategy for fostering greater dialogue among people who are already teaching courses which relate to community change and organizing within a single discipline and across disciplines.

4. A fourth option is a cooperative education model.

Professor Paul Osterman of MIT's Sloan School of Management and School of Planning and Urban Studies suggests a coop education model. From his base at MIT Osterman has worked extensively with community organizers and leaders associated with Ernesto Cortes and the Industrial Areas Foundation, providing them with training and assistance on issues of workforce and economic development. He firmly believes in the importance of giving organizers and directors easy access to courses taught by academics whose knowledge can enrich their thinking and enhance their skills.

However, despite his own prestigious position, Osterman believes that universities are so impervious to change and so opposed to interdisciplinary studies that the initiative must come from the outside and be free of academic politics. He therefore advocates having a nonprofit take the lead and involve potential students/practitioners in thinking through a curriculum to fit their needs, identify the best

potential teachers from different local academic institutions and nonprofits, and recruit them to volunteer their time. Osterman sees this approach as having great potential in offering community change agents a coherent program of appropriate courses. Unlike many others interviewed, he does not believe that the absence of the credential of a MA or university-backed certification would be a major drawback. That issue, and the feasibility of creating an ongoing program with few outside resources and no institutional base and backing, needs further exploration.¹²

Some institutions of higher education are far more flexible than the MITs of the world. Community colleges, colleges without walls, institutions with progressive or adult education roots and others are more flexible and more likely to be accomodating in working with practitioners to create curricula which meet the specific educational needs of community change agents. In these institutions, there are some academics who value the needs, views and highly developed knowledge of experienced practitioners and who are willing to cross disciplinary lines to learn, collaborate, and create new programs offering practitioner education. What they lack is the initial impetus and support which are needed to get such programs underway.

Conclusion:

Every day we see evidence of why it is essential to invest wisely and in new ways in developing the social change leaders of today and tomorrow. New public policies widen the gap between rich and poor and dismantle the funding programs upon

⁵¹Interview with Professor Paul Osterman, School of Planning and Urban Studies, MIT

⁵²Dick Cone, who developed pioneering programs of university/community partnerships and service learning at USC, shares Osterman's skepticism about programs which are designed within universities. He sees the power imbalance between universities and disadvantaged communities as being so great that "partnerships" are seldom equal, and the programs and courses which result rarely respond to the needs of community organizations. He advocates for a shift from "outreach" to "in-reach." Cone advocates switching to a system in which community groups and leaders control financial resources, perhaps as a scholarship fund, and use this position of strength to define their educational and assistance needs and negotiate with university people for that help. This approach would enable groups to approach people in any university department, school or center on the basis of their ability to respond to the communities' priorities instead of being limited to faculty associated with a university's formal outreach program.

The most important first step is to create a network – preferably international – which brings together academics and practitioners across disciplinary lines.

which community-based development and service delivery are based. Racial tensions and the potential for conflict grow daily as people compete for increasingly scarce job and affordable housing. Growing social problems tear at the social fabric and weaken community institutions, demonstrating dramatically the need for strong vehicles for involving community people in taking charge of their neighborhoods and persuading government and the private sector to provide the resources and partnerships which are needed to build and sustain stable, healthy communities.

While it is unconscionable that our institutions of higher learning are currently doing so little to help address this crisis, it is truly hopeful that there are so many scattered university programs which -- with vision, visibility, support and true partnerships with committed, experienced practitioners -- could grow exponentially in the years ahead, strengthening

grassroots-led efforts to bring about positive change in our nation's low income communities.

These efforts could do much to help solve the crisis of leadership in the field of community organizing and community change. They could greatly expand the usefulness of colleges and universities in providing midcareer people with the additional education and skills they need to lead organizations which are tackling our nation's greatest social problems. They also could strengthen such education at the community and four-year college level. A network of educators and practitioners who share this vision would be a natural base for launching initiatives to develop model curricula and address the other recommendations in this report.