



[(Comm)unity + University]
Comm+University

Comm+University
A Fiscally Sponsor Program
of
Strong City Baltimore
3503 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218

What is Comm+University?

Comm+University is a community-based program with interest in higher education's role in community outreach/engagement/development. It seeks to decrease the gap between college campuses and the communities they serve through enhancing the input and impact of community voice in how community engagement happens at the university level. Through research, mission analysis, infrastructure and capacity development, advocacy, and training. Lastly, Comm+University seeks to assist the urban area university in operations within a social justice lens when strategically planning community engagement.

Simply,...What is Comm+University?

Comm+University is university and community connection program that seeks to decreasing the distance (physical and conceptual) between university and community through dialogue about community engagement between all stakeholders (college student, faculty staff, and community youth, members, leadership) and after action to build a stronger and whole Baltimore Community.

We simply seeks to:

Understand Community Needs

Understand Community Resources

Understand University needs surrounding Community engagement

Understand University Resources

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In hope of seeing university led community engagement be more of a socially just collaborative process, inclusive of local community voice in the strategic planning and execution.

Ultimately, resulting in universities and communities using their creative energies to develop innovative approaches to community development.

Objectives

- To create a space where universities and communities can use their creative energies to develop innovative approaches to community engagement/development
- To help the community and the university jointly identify issues, assess assets and needs and develop strategies to mobilize resources to transform communities
- Serve population nearest to campuses - community members living within a 5-10 block radius of a university campus
- Provide dialogue based peer education between members of the university and members of the community
- Seeks to enhance the community engagement mission of the university through the inclusion of community
- To identify and hold space inside of the University setting that is accessible to surrounding community



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Why is this needed in Baltimore?

Baltimore has an interesting intersection between community needs, collegiate related resources and leadership potential of all stakeholders.

A TALE OF TWO COMMUNITIES

The University Community

Baltimore is a thriving Colligate city that house 13 institutions of higher learning. All Colleges and Universities in the Baltimore Metropolitan Area have intentional parts of their strategic plans that address Community Engagement through service learning and bettering community through engagement and service. The level of community engagement varies from Institution and Institutional type. Several institutions have departments such as The Shriver Center at University of Maryland Baltimore County, The Office of Community Affairs at Johns Hopkins University, The Community Engagement Center at The University of Maryland Baltimore and The Center for Community Service and Justice at Loyola University of Maryland that have infrastructure and staff that address community engagement intentionally year round. Where several others have less institutionalize ways of addressing community engagement and more aspirational goals stated in their university Strategic Plans, Missions, and Values. As Higher Education service learning and community engagement literature warns institutions, that practice 'drive by' outreach, outreach uninformed of culture and social just and outreach based on the interest of the university and its constituents only is not sustainable and tend to be of more harm to the communities they desire to help.

The Greater Baltimore Community

Baltimore is also the home of many contemporary and historic civic and social leaders. There is and has been movement in Baltimore that promotes civic engagement and leadership of its community members, students and young professionals, seeking to build the city of Baltimore into a strong and thriving community. A number of programs exist to support local projects designed to address problems in Baltimore's under-served communities and needs areas. Some programs such as LeaderShape hosted by Baltimore Collegetown, The GIVE program by Business Volunteers Maryland, Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program hosted by Johns Hopkins, The Elevation Awards and Fellowship hosted by Baltimore Corps and The Baltimore Community Fellow hosted by Open Society Institute -Baltimore are a few actively mobilizing leaders to engage.

THE MEETING POINT

As two communities mobilized to engage in civic action, it only make sense to ensure universities and communities are collaborating in engagement with shared understandings and values sets (Appendix 1). Where many rising leaders have had lived experiences in Baltimore either as lifelong residents and/or current and former students who fell in love with the city there is a draw for engagement in Baltimore that is uniquely woven in the fabric of the city. Both the University Community and the Greater Baltimore Community are part of the landscape of Baltimore, have equal worth, and input that can build a greater and stronger Baltimore with shared values and understandings. Comm+University looks to enhance the input and impact of community voice in how community engagement happens at the university level.



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Appendix 1

Campus Compact Benchmarks for Campus/Community Partnerships

This model emerged from a 1998 Wingspread gathering that used a competitive process to select eight teams as exemplary campus/community partnerships. Organized by Campus Compact and sponsored by the Corporation for National Service, the meeting challenged the teams of administrators, faculty, students and community partners to “examine the anatomy of campus/community collaborations” (Campus Compact, 2000, p. 1). From this work emerged a set of eight essential features, or benchmarks, organized into three stages of relationship development. Interestingly, the group felt strongly that their focus needed to be on how this model would help colleges and universities overcome the many obstacles of integrating “public service”¹ into academic work. “[...]he cooperative, collaborative model is not native to the university. Campuses are more likely to think of themselves as curators of knowledge rather than as students with much to learn from their neighbors” (p. 3). They were quite correct, given the continuing wide use of this report today across many types of institutions seeking to improve their partnership relationships and strengthen their commitment to engaged scholarship across the disciplines. The following is a brief listing of the benchmarks. The Campus Compact booklet describes each in detail and offers useful examples from experience in the field.

Campus Compact Benchmarks for Campus/Community Partnerships (Campus Compact, 2000, pp. 5-7):

Stage I: Designing the Partnership Genuine democratic partnerships are:

- Founded on a shared vision and clearly articulated values.
- Beneficial to partnering institutions.

Stage II: Building Collaborative Relationships Genuine democratic partnerships that build strong collaborative relationships are:

- Composed of interpersonal relationships based on trust and mutual respect.
- Multi-dimensional: They involve the participation of multiple sectors that act in service of a complex problem.
- Clearly organized and led with dynamism.

Stage III: Sustaining Partnerships over Time Genuine democratic partnerships that will be sustained over time are:

- Integrated into the mission and support systems of the partnering institutions.
- Sustained by a partnership process for communication, decision-making, and the initiation of change.
- Evaluated regularly with a focus on both methods and outcomes.