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Helping HUD Fulfill Its Mission



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INTRODUCTION

By Armand W. Carriere

Armand W. Carriere is Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for University Partnerships at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Carriere has worked at HUD for approximately 16 years and has directed HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP) since March 2003. He resides in Washington, D.C., with his wife of 31 years and several cats.



Armand Carriere

From the beginning, Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) grants have been viewed as seed money that would enable a college or university to initiate or enhance an engagement strategy with a local community. An institution's staying power would not depend on a series of entitlement-like grants from OUP but on its ability to establish itself as an independent, self-sustaining participant in the work of community revitalization.

A confluence of events over the past 10 years has helped COPC grantees become just such community partners. As a result, the COPC program has grown in stature within the world of higher education and, at the same time, it has earned an impressive reputation within HUD. Some of the events that brought about COPC's rise in status are HUD-specific, while others are more societal in nature.

Within HUD, the mid to late 1990s saw a dramatic change in staffing patterns. This change was particularly evident in the field offices, which began to create and fill a new position called Community Builder. While the merits of this staffing plan and its resultant impact on the Department can be debated, many of the newly minted Community Builders actively sought new partners for HUD's portfolio of programs. Around this time, COPC was achieving critical mass, with grantees surfacing in all regions of the country. It seemed only natural that colleges and universities with active COPC programs would capture the attention of these Community Builders and become HUD partners at the local level.

My arrival at OUP in the late 1990s coincided with this revamped staffing plan in the field. The timing was good. I had spent 8 years in HUD's field office in Philadelphia and had an appreciation and knowledge of field operations. This knowledge, plus the value and strength of the COPC program, made it relatively easy to market COPC and its potential to offices throughout the Department. As OUP has matured, support from successive administrations has strengthened it. This support continues to help us get the message out to the rest of HUD that OUP programs, particularly COPC, can be a great resource in local communities.

While HUD was experiencing this increased awareness and appreciation of COPC, colleges and universities were taking on more active roles in their communities. Schools like Trinity College, Portland State University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Memphis, and many others were becoming actively involved in community revitalization and were raising the profile of campus engagement. COPC was coming of age and that enabled many other colleges to join this movement. Simultaneously, the service learning movement was gathering steam, pushed ahead by departments within the National Corporation for Community and National Service and Campus Compact. As these organizations encouraged institutions of higher education (IHEs) to incorporate a service component into their curricula, the COPC program was surfacing as a potential funding source for these efforts.



With the world of higher education changing and HUD staff becoming proactively involved with a widening array of community partners, the benefits of increased collaboration seemed clear to all. Colleges and universities began looking to HUD's other programs, eager to contribute in a significant way to fulfilling the Department's mission to low-income citizens in our nation's communities. And HUD's mainstream programs began to recognize that these new academic partners brought to the table technical expertise as well as a sincere commitment to and a successful history of community engagement.

Subsequently, COPCs have become directly involved in HUD housing voucher programs, HOPE VI activities, housing counseling efforts, and numerous other

activities. IHEs are working with HUD to conduct research and economic development activities. They are also playing an active role in helping communities assess their needs and develop Consolidated Plans. Leadership development programs sponsored by COPC grantees have trained community leaders, who in turn play key roles in developing housing and economic development plans for their communities. Much of this effort has been funded by HUD mainstream programs.



The future is indeed bright for a continuing relationship between HUD and IHEs. Colleges and universities are becoming anchor institutions in their communities and are collaborating with the private and public sectors to make tremendous economic impacts. Models for this kind of collaboration have been with us for years. The Route 128 complex outside of Boston, Massachusetts, the Research Triangle of central North Carolina, and California's Silicon Valley are all examples of what happens when IHEs work with community partners for the ultimate benefit of large segments of our population. As we look to the future, we will see more and more institutions actively seeking to play a major role in community and economic development. HUD staff, within and outside of OUP, will help facilitate this engagement as we build upon earlier successes.

COPC has helped colleges and universities, with all their attendant resources, establish their place at the table. In the next 10 years, as these institutions continue to collaborate with mainstream HUD programs, their role as effective partners and technical resources in community revitalization will be assured. ■

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University of Pittsburgh

Professor Helps Residents Evaluate HOPE VI



Dr. Yamatani

By the time surveyors started knocking on doors at Pittsburgh's Oak Hill Apartments in 2001, residents were already fully invested in the evaluation process that was taking place. The surveyors, who asked residents how they liked their newly constructed HOPE VI housing project, were Oak Hill neighbors. The questions they asked had already been reviewed by apartment residents and other community stakeholders.

A number of residents who answered the door-to-door survey were former residents of Allequippa Terrace, Pittsburgh's largest public housing development. Through HUD's HOPE VI grant program, Allequippa Terrace was demolished between 1996 and 1999. Since then, its 82-acre site has been transformed into a mixed-income, HOPE VI residential redevelopment called Oak Hill.

Public housing authorities (PHAs) have been using HUD's HOPE VI grants since 1993 to revitalize the nation's most severely distressed public housing facilities and communities. In exchange, PHAs are required to perform an evaluation to ensure that each project is successful in achieving the grant program's major goals. Dr. Hide Yamatani, associate dean for research at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Social Work, coordinated the evaluation that took place at Oak Hill.

Yamatani's research plan went beyond the traditional survey methodology in which researchers develop questions and residents answer them. Instead, his plan gave residents, city officials, developers, and other community stakeholders a significant role in developing survey questions, collecting data, and producing the final report. By making the research study a collaborate effort, Yamatani says he was able to gather accurate and useful information to help determine resident satisfaction and project success.

Yamatani became aware of the opportunity to evaluate the Oak Hill HOPE VI Initiative through his involvement with the University of Pittsburgh's COPC, which had been working closely with the residents council at Allequippa Terrace since 2000. He saw the evaluation project as a way to use his experience in conducting large-scale, community-based studies. That experience has included more than 30 large-scale research studies in distressed communities over the past 20 years.

Yamatani is critical of the traditional top-down approach to research, which puts principal researchers completely in charge of the research questions, methodology, data collection, and report production.

“My personal belief is that university researchers can gain a vast amount of knowledge by working collaboratively with community residents,” he says. “Only then can researchers gain insight as to why their previous solitary research may have been meaningless and useless for distressed communities. When researchers practice participatory research studies, the types of findings one can generate are much more attuned to addressing community issues and concerns.”

Gathering Information at Oak Hill

In evaluating the Oak Hill HOPE VI initiative, Yamatani set out to determine how well the project improved the living conditions of its public housing residents, whether it revitalized the public housing project site and contributed to the improvement of the surrounding neighborhood, and whether it provided housing that would avoid or decrease the concentration of very low-income families. Through every step of the evaluation process, Yamatani worked closely with individuals who were most directly affected by the HOPE VI project. For example, the survey instrument was reviewed by representatives of the city of Pittsburgh; the Allequippa Terrace Residents Council; Housing Outreach Unlimited, a local community service provider; Beacon/Corcoran Jennison, the building contractor; and the COPC. In addition, several HOPE VI residents participated in a focus group and pretest session that helped Yamatani refine the survey questions.

Community stakeholders also helped to review, modify, and approve the final report. Research data collected during the evaluation is now jointly owned by the housing community and the University of Pittsburgh. The community has the option of hiring its own consultant to review the statistical syntax and conclusions and to generate additional findings. Community members can also use the research findings to guide neighborhood decisionmaking.

Resident Participation

Providing community members with such a large role in designing the study was a pragmatic decision on Yamatani’s part. The participation of community residents helped improve the results, he says. “I was able to gather useful information and generate answers to the right questions,” says Yamatani. “As a researcher, I only hoped to uncover true and accurate information regarding the status and profile of HOPE VI residents in Oak Hill.”

Before the door-to-door visits began, University of Pittsburgh staff members trained seven resident surveyors, some of whom had no prior survey experience. During the training, residents learned the basic rules of data collection, quality assurance, and scientific integrity. They then proceeded to interview the heads of more than 60 percent of the households in the HOPE VI neighborhood. Participants were selected and interviewed at random.

As a result of the survey, the housing development now has an accurate profile of HOPE VI residents in Oak Hill and has been able to determine that the overwhelming majority of residents are satisfied with their revitalized neighborhood. In addition, the survey gave residents the opportunity to voice their opinions on the future of the neighborhood.

“It’s our community,” says Louella Ellis, a former Allequippa Terrace Resident Council Board member who served as a community surveyor. “It’s nice to have say-so of what goes on in our neighborhood. I appreciate that we were included and that people want to hear our concerns and hopes for the future.”

For more information, contact Dr. Hide Yamatani at (412) 624–1573, e-mail hzy+@pitt.edu. To view the Oak Hill HOPE VI evaluation, visit www.pitt.edu/~copc/Hope6RPT.doc. ■

University of Texas Pan American

Homeownership Assistance Gives Family HOPE



The Garcia Family

Humberto and Grace Garcia have always wanted to own their own home. Although few homeownership opportunities exist for low-income families living along the Texas-Mexico border, they have never considered giving up on their homeownership dreams.

The Garcias had lived with Humberto's parents in LaVilla, Texas, for 6 years before moving to a two-bedroom, Section 8 subsidized apartment in Ed Couch, Texas. However, when Grace became pregnant with the couple's fourth child, that apartment proved to be less than adequate. Having seen Grace's brother buy a house, the Garcias knew it was possible to own their own home and they were anxious to do just that.

"Our rent was \$385 a month," remembers Grace Garcia. "And we realized that we were throwing our money away and could use this [money] to buy a house."

At the end of 1998, the Garcias were ready to act. They approached a local bank about a home loan and, to their surprise, were prequalified for the loan. Unfortunately, the quoted interest rate of 11 percent and the substantial upfront costs, all of which were nonrefundable, gave them pause. They decided to wait.

Shortly thereafter, both of the Garcias' employers told them about Project HOPE (Homeownership Partnership and Empowerment), a homebuyer education and counseling program sponsored by the University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) COPC. Neither of the Garcias was sure what kind of assistance the program provided, but they eagerly contacted the COPC office to find out if their family qualified for assistance.

"When I first met the Garcias, they seemed like many of the families we help," recalls Osvaldo Cardoza, COPC director at UTPA. "They didn't know about the homebuying process and how to get a loan. They really wanted to know how to do it. [Through our program] the Garcias picked up the knowledge they needed to be successful. We took them from knowing very little to owning a home."

During his first conversation with the Garcias, Cardoza encouraged the couple to attend a housing fair, cosponsored by Project HOPE, where they found out more about the homebuying process and the services available to them. The Garcias then attended one of Project HOPE's one-on-one housing counseling sessions, which are designed to help families determine what steps they need to take to qualify to buy a home. During the initial counseling session, staff gathered information on the Garcias' income and debts and talked to them about their homeownership goals.

“At the first meeting, we are really trying to figure out if the family can be qualified for a mortgage,” says Cardoza. “Some are ready, but others are not. The Garcias, though, were good candidates for enrolling in the [homebuyer] education classes and buying a home.”

The bilingual homebuyer education classes helped the Garcias become more comfortable with the homebuying process and the responsibilities of owning a home.

“The classes were great,” says Mrs Garcia. “We learned how to budget money and how not to overspend. We also learned why it is better to own your own home.” The four sessions also covered such topics as closing costs, home insurance, what to expect during the loan closing, the importance of paying the mortgage on time, and the importance of regular home maintenance.

The Garcias’ steady income and limited debt—and their willingness to attend the homebuyer course—helped them get a home loan through Amigos Del Valle (ADV), a local nonprofit that develops affordable housing and provides financial assistance to low-income homebuyers. ADV worked with the Garcias to complete the appropriate paperwork and locate a lot on which to build their home. The Garcias were approved for a primary mortgage loan through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development and for a second mortgage through ADV. The nonprofit also provided the Garcias with closing cost assistance. Now, the Garcias’ combined monthly payment on their 30-year mortgages is \$166.19 a month. Even with the cost of insurance and taxes, the couple’s housing costs are less than their rent had been.

Moving Into Their New Home

Construction on the Garcias’ 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom house took longer than expected, but the family finally moved in March 2000. Four years later, the Garcias still take great pride in their home. They have landscaped their yard and enjoy entertaining their extended family and friends there. Since the Garcia family has now grown to include five children, Grace and Humberto are thinking about using their new equity to add a new bedroom.

“It is so great to own our own home,” says Mrs. Garcia. “Going to Project HOPE gave us more encouragement and hope that we could make it work. We were very young when we bought our home. I was 24 and my husband was 22. But it is possible to buy a house at any age. Help is out there to make it possible.”

For more information, contact Osvaldo G. Cardoza, University of Texas-Pan American, Community Outreach Partnership Center, 1201 West University Drive, Edinburg, TX 78539, phone (956) 292-7546, e-mail cardoza@panam.edu. ■

Rutgers University

Doctoral Student Learns From the Development of COPCs



Jennifer Altman

When Jennifer Altman decided to explore how and why community-university partnerships are formed, the Rutgers University doctoral student was combining two self-described loves—IHEs and urban communities. For more than 10 years, Altman’s academic and professional career had equipped her with a knowledge of university organization and priorities, and an understanding of the challenges facing low-income families and communities.

With two master’s degrees—one in urban sociology and another in public policy—Altman has worked as a welfare analyst in the New York City Office of Management and Budget and as a project director with the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers. When she began pursuing her doctorate at Rutgers’ Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Altman thought her studies would focus more on employment and welfare policy. However, she soon found that she was becoming more interested in how universities were marshalling their resources to improve the communities around them.

“I really learned more about community development during my doctoral program,” says Altman. “When it got to the point of developing my dissertation, my concerns had shifted. I wanted to work more on local issues.”

Taking a look at community-university partnerships provided Altman with the nexus for her dissertation, which is being supported by OUP’s Doctoral Dissertation Research Grants program. However, as she conducted her research, Altman says it was difficult to locate information on how and why certain partnerships developed. “I found lots of information on the activities,” she says. “But I couldn’t find out how the partnerships started, how they functioned, and how the programs got off the ground.”

Realizing that these questions could take her in many different directions, Altman worked closely with her advisor, Dr. Robert Lake, to focus her research. She finally decided to use her dissertation (titled *Matching University Resources to Community Need: Case Studies of University Community Partnerships*) to document the creation and implementation of four university-community partnerships in the Northeast. Altman was careful to choose institutions of differing sizes and types so she could better understand what factors affect community partnerships for large research universities, small private colleges, and regional institutions.

Each of Altman’s case studies considers who initiated a partnership (the university or the community), how the target neighborhood was chosen, how community needs were identified, and how university resources were identified and then matched to meet community needs. While Altman’s

research focused primarily on the university's role in partnership formation, she also interviewed community partners and reviewed program documentation at each school to fully understand program organization and development.

Findings

Altman's preliminary findings suggest that the difficulties partnerships face are often a result of the culture and priorities within the college or university. Differences in schools, such as how supportive an administration is, will affect the success of a partnership, she says, but other factors also come into play, including the degree to which the community is already organized.

"If a community is organized, [it] may have already done a needs assessment or maybe [a community] group developed a plan," says Altman. "The university's role in this case would be to help implement the plan." On the other hand, a community without a strong organization or group of organizations may require that the university work extensively with residents to identify needs, develop a plan, and create a structure through which it can work, she says.

Existing relationships between the university and influential community leaders can also affect whether and how quickly a partnership is formed, says Altman. In addition, university resources can help determine what activities take place through the partnership. For example, a community needs assessment may find that healthcare is severely lacking, says Altman. However, if university faculty and staff have limited expertise in healthcare, the partnership may focus instead on another area.

Just the Beginning

Altman's research is important because it has never been done before and because it takes a unique approach, says Lake, who is a professor at the Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research. "It is using an approach that isn't evaluative," he says. "It is looking at the process by which COPCs were organized. The point here is that the outcomes depend a lot on how the COPC was created." Lake notes that this type of information could have helped inform the creation of Rutgers' COPC. At the very least, he says, it would have made the university more aware of different ways to approach partnership development. Altman hopes other schools can use her research for this purpose.

"By coming out with some of these descriptions, I hope that it helps universities who are trying to figure out where to start," says Altman. "When I looked at the [existing] studies, generally they only provided information on the project details and the partnership outcomes and not the . . . issues grappled with in developing the partnership and properly matching resources to need."

Altman realizes that her research is just the beginning. She believes that there is more room to explore the organizational development of university-community partnerships so these partnerships can fulfill their potential in local communities. "I feel like there is so much potential for universities to play an important role in the community," she says. "I was excited to find out that universities are doing positive things through COPCs."

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