Illinois Campus Compact is a coalition of colleges and universities committed to advancing the public purpose of higher education by cultivating civic skills and learning, integrating community engagement with teaching and research, and building campus-community partnerships throughout Illinois.

www.IllinoisCampusCompact.org | (312) 362-1271 |

America’s Urban Campus is a group of 20 of Chicago’s largest not-for-profit higher education institutions, representing over 224,000 students with the mission to enhance the image of Chicago as a global destination for higher education and to improve the lives of its citizens by drawing on the collective strengths of its member institutions.

www.AmericasUrbanCampus.org | (312) 362-1178 |

The Asset Based Community Development Institute (ABCD) of DePaul University is at the center of a large and growing movement that considers local assets as the primary building blocks of sustainable community development. Building on the skills of residents, the power of associations, and the supportive functions of institutions, asset-based community development draws upon existing community strengths to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future.

www.abcdinstitute.org | (773) 325-8344 |

The University of Illinois at Chicago is an acclaimed research institutions with 15 colleges dedicated to the discovery and distribution of knowledge. The UIC Office of Public and Government Affairs is focused on establishing strong relationships with outside constituencies and a building broad understanding of the many ways in which UIC contributes to society.

pga.UIC.edu

The University of Chicago’s Office of Civic Engagement is an anchor for local neighborhoods and a global center for education, research and innovation. It leads the University of Chicago’s efforts to partner within our communities to share talents, information and resources to have a positive impact in Chicago that can be spread to cities and around the world.

www.civicengagement.uchicago.edu
Illinois Campus Compact (ILCC) hosted the Campus Meets Community Workshop in partnership with America’s Urban Campus, the Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD), the Office of Civic Engagement at University of Chicago, and the University of Illinois at Chicago. The workshop brought together leaders from campuses and communities to discuss the current state of campus-community partnerships to address challenges and learn from successful relationships.

**THE EVENT**

On March 5th, community partners from around the Chicago gathered in UIC’s Student Center East. With hands full of coffee and an eagerness to discuss higher education partnerships they listened to the first speaker, Susana Vasquez, the Associate Vice President of the Office of Engagement at University of Chicago. Susana spoke about the importance of creating collaborations and shared important tips on healthy campus/community partnerships that she learned through her career in community development. Below is her slide that lists some of these tips.

Community Partners were asked to seat themselves at tables without others from their organizations. This allowed for many different voices at each table. Along with community partners there was also an ILCC AmeriCorps VISTA at each table that facilitated the discussion. These facilitators asked each person to introduce themselves, their organization, and a brief description of their partnership with higher education institutions. They were then asked to identify successes and challenges in these partnerships. This morning session was only community partners so that it could be a place that they could speak freely about their challenges.

**AT THE END OF THE DAY . . .**

- Start with your mission, values, and where you want to go, aim for mutual benefit.
- If there is not a shared purpose, there won’t be a reciprocal partnership.
- Value what you bring to the table. Your local knowledge, your constituency.
- Don’t be afraid to make a demand. Value your time.
- Build relational power. Use your power.
- University faculty, students and staff are human beings too.
Once they finished answering question in small groups, Terry Bergdall facilitated a large group discussion. He asked similar questions, and people shared with the entire group of community partners. Many community partner members talked about the fact that these partnerships allow them assets and experiences that they would not be able to get in other partnerships. One community based organization was able to use space from a university for their meetings, an otherwise unaffordable venture. Another individual described the irreplaceable graduate student that worked for them whom brought knowledge and software resources. Others spoke about the capacity they were able to build by having a stream of willing volunteers available from the university.

After discussing these relationships, the workshop was joined by Higher Education Staff and Faculty. This is when Dr. Kwang-Wu Kim took to the podium. Dr. Kim, the president of Columbia College, passionately spoke to the group about how he has got to where he is now. Dr. Kim was not shy to address the challenges outside entities faced when working with universities. He lit up the room and his words nodded heads when he spoke about the need for universities to put resources toward civic engagement efforts. Dr. Kim also spoke enthusiastically about the lessons higher education had to learn from community partners.
Community partners and higher education staff were able to attend a breakout workshop in each session.

**Asset Mapping**
Presenter: Terry Bergdall  
*ABCD Institute*  
Cardinal Room  
This session engaged participants in an experiential application of identifying and utilizing six types of assets found in communities.

**Reciprocal Storytelling**
Moderator: Matthew Swinehart  
Panelists: Adrian Bitton  
*Leadership Development and Community Engagement at Northwestern University*  
Kayla Furjanic  
*Cradles to Crayons Chicago*  
Mary Beth Schroeder  
*Evanston Community Foundation*  
Fort Dearborn Room  
The organizers and beneficiaries of Northwestern’s Dance Marathon to learn how they elevated their massage through collaborative storytelling.

**Working with Students 101**
Presenter: Andy Larson  
*North Park University*  
Fort Dearborn Room  
The audience learned student engagement strategies from one of the leaders of North Park’s successful Catalyst 606 program, which introduces students to the concept of a community classroom.

**Beyond the Usual Suspects**
Moderator: Byron Terry  
Panelists: Paul Coffey  
*School of the Art Institute Chicago*  
Robert Seiser  
*SENCER Center for Innovation and Roosevelt University*  
Betsi Burns  
*Learning Support and Academic Success at Loyola University*  
White Oak Room  
College and University campuses are brimming with potential community collaborators. Panelists described new strategies for finding partnerships in places we often overlook.

**Why Research?**
Presenter: Teresa Cordova,  
*Great Cities Institute*  
White Oak Room  
Teresa Cordova presented sustainable strategies for community-based research, which offers opportunities for growth to both nonprofits and higher education institutions.
CHALLENGES

The goal of the day was to find ways that we can improve partnerships with community based organizations and higher education institutions. In the process of development we must identify what needs to improved.

1. CONTINUITY

Some of the first challenges brought to the surface were challenges revolving around time and consistency within partnerships.

- A challenge that was repeated throughout the morning session revolved around the schedule of higher education. Staff said that often it is hard to keep students longer than a few months because their schedule changes each semester. This turn around leads to the overuse of organizational resources because new students need to be trained.

- Consistency is also an issue while one student or class may be great partners, that is not guaranteed when the next class begins.

- Because of the tight schedule that universities and colleges are on with breaks, and exams, often community based organizations have to change aspects of their schedule to accommodate partnerships. Another aspect of this is that during breaks – especially long breaks like the summer – the higher education institution can be a black hole of communication. This has many effects on organizations, as they have to plan around these times.
2. COMMUNICATION

A lot of the issues with developing partnerships start with issues in communication between community organizations and higher education staff.

• For someone looking on the outside in, a university can seem like an impenetrable organization. With all the many offices, centers, and colleges that some universities have, it is hard to understand who one should contact to begin a partnership. Navigating a university or college can prove to be almost impossible. This is a challenge the organization has to address, even before creating a partnership.

• Once relationships are built, there are still some communication challenges between community based organizations (CBO) and higher education institutions. CBO’s talked about how it was hard to stay on the university’s radar. If a relationship was created with one faculty member or one office, CBO’s fear that a change in leadership or a lost grant could end the partnership.

• CBOs also addressed the differences in vocabulary. If a volunteer opportunity was instead called an internship, it brought a different type of student interest. CBO’s were also interested in understanding how to help students get course credit, how they could support the student’s learning process, and how they could assess and access any research that comes out of the partnership.

3. RESOURCES

A topic that was brought up with both higher education staff and community organizations, was the allocation of resources and its role in these partnerships.

• It is clear that community based organizations value research and value the university partnerships that lead to research. But there are still parts of research tactics that need to be improved. Community organizations admitted that those they served were treated more as subjects rather than people. They felt like they were giving up time to be part of the research, but getting nothing in return including resources, publications, or acknowledgments.

• Universities often flood CBO’s with helpful students, but they do not always acknowledge that this can be a drain on partners they are trying to help. As mentioned, turn around for students is quick because their schedules change so often. This means that organizations have to use their time and resources to train and prepare students.

“It was valuable to hear stories of success from other organizations. It was also validating to hear that other organizations are going through similar challenges as my organization.”
NEXT STEPS

The conversations sparked by Campus Meets Community need to continue to happen. This workshop was just the beginning of the work we can accomplish. What was abundantly evident is that community partners and higher education practitioners strongly believe in the power of collaboration. It is imperative for healthy communities that higher education institutions and anchoring community organizations work together to strengthen ties.

The work now for Illinois Campus Compact and our convening partners is three fold.

1. Continue to host and refine opportunities for open communication between higher education and our partners in the community. To accomplish this we will:
   • Make Campus Meets Community at least a yearly gathering to bring together different aspects of the community
   • Create more in-depth gatherings that address specific topics (examples: nonprofits interested in university research, STEM service learning, Arts in the community, etc.) with likeminded organizations already working in the field.

2. Support community partners as they explore their opportunities to collaborate with higher education.
   • Create series of webinars that address issues brought up in the workshop (Attracting student volunteers, writing intern descriptions, community partners as educators)
   • Provide more opportunities for community partners to find inroads to higher education partners (internship opportunities, days of service, etc.)

3. Encourage higher education professionals to share best practices of mutually beneficial partnerships and creating reciprocal collaboration.
   • Advocate and promote America’s Urban Campus’ heat map of higher education engagement around Chicago as a tool for understanding the breadth of work happening in the city
   • Foster opportunities for sharing information through online platforms and in-person discussions on successful partnership models.

To accomplish these goals, ILCC will bring together an advisory committee made up of community partners and higher education professionals.
Thank you!

Thank you to all of the institutions and organizations present at the workshop. Without your support and ideas, we could not sustain these important partnerships.

An extra special thank you to the AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers for their help in facilitating conversation.