

Final Report

UMass Lowell

**Task Force on a
Strategic Plan for
Community-University
Partnerships**

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I. TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Chair: Linda Silka, Special Assistant to the Provost for Community Partnerships

Diana Archibald	English
Lenore Azaroff	Work Environment
Stephanie Chalupka	Nursing
Nicole Champagne	Health Education
Donn Clark	Engineering
Nina Coppens	Psychology
Alan Doerr	Mathematics
John Duffy	Engineering
Matthew Eynon	University Advancement
Jeff Gerson	Political Science
Gena Greher	Music
Anita Greenwood	Graduate School of Education
Ann Marie Hurley	Faculty Senate
Jacqueline Moloney	Continuing Studies & Corporate Education
Paul Marion	Office of the Provost
Fred Martin	Computer Science
Paul Morse	The New England Consortium
Phil Moss	Regional Economic & Social Development
Peter O'Connell	Tsongas Industrial History Center
Robert Parkin	Faculty Union
April Pattavina	Criminal Justice
Diana Prideaux-Brune	Facilities
Kay Roberts	Music
Steve Tello	Continuing Studies & Corporate Education
Robin Toof	Center for Family, Work and Community
Kathy Verreault	College of Management
John Warner	Green Chemistry
Patricia Yates	Career Services

Assisting: Patty Coffey, Project Associate
 Dane Netherton, Contributing Editor

II. CHARGES TO THE TASK FORCE

UMass Lowell characterizes itself as an “engaged” University in the tradition of agricultural land grant colleges, which use a complex web of county agents, producer and consumer cooperatives, and Grange organizations to organize needs assessments, conduct University research and field testing, and rapidly disseminate new agricultural practices. But, the creation of equivalent structures that connect a regional urban University to community and corporate partnerships is in earlier stages. In recognition of the importance of these partnerships and the need for the University to review its policies, processes, and funding of partnerships, Chancellor William T. Hogan formed in July 2004 a Community-University Partnerships Task Force to examine ways of fostering community engagement. The Task Force was asked to:

- Examine the kinds of models in place on campus and the ways these could serve as examples for others
- Examine the ways that partnerships could be most effectively targeted to promote the development of the regional economy, environment, and quality of life
- Examine ways to integrate partnerships with the University’s research agenda to lead to the development of high-quality, interdisciplinary models and publications
- Examine the ways that community-university partnerships could advance recruitment of high-quality students and promote their education and intellectual development
- Identify the most promising focus areas for investments in community-university partnerships
- Identify ways that current community-university capabilities and accomplishments be more broadly recognized and respected at local, regional, national, and international levels
- Examine whether new faculty and staff have special needs to enable them to form community partnerships and how such needs might be addressed
- Recommend ways to improve the number, quality level and success rates of proposals for external support for community-university partnerships
- Identify the primary administrative, management, and workload barriers to developing community-university partnerships, and recommend ways to overcome these barriers
- Identify gaps and inadequacies in the University’s partnership infrastructure and recommend ways these gaps could be bridged

These charges underscore the value placed on community-university relations to this campus. The Task Force membership includes a diverse cross-section of the campus’s administrative and academic units, chosen for their engagement in and experience with community-university partnerships. Their leadership is responsible, in part, for UMass Lowell’s growing reputation for partnerships with and outreach to the community. Their successes include:

- The University's Francis College of Engineering is one of only a handful of engineering schools in the country to be awarded NSF funding to have core engineering courses include service-learning. UML is the only engineering program planning to have every student in all undergraduate programs take at least one service-learning courses every semester
- Our Green Chemistry initiative is widely recognized in national publications for innovative approaches to the redesign of common uses of chemicals in manufacturing and elsewhere
- UMass Lowell's approach to community partnerships has been the recipient of awards and commendations from groups such as U.S. Housing and Urban Development and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
- The Tsongas Industrial History Center is a national model for how universities and national parks can collaborate to use the community as an experiential classroom (the Tsongas Center serves nearly 65,000 K-12 teachers and students and college students) each year
- UMass Lowell's graduate program in Community Social Psychology has established long-term partnerships with dozens of social service agencies and youth-serving agencies
- The Music Department's String Project is increasingly recognized for its innovations in overcoming the long-standing problem of providing diverse youth with classical music training
- UMass Lowell's Division of Corporate and Continuing Education is a leader in delivering online courses for students and corporate clients
- Computer Science's Community Software Lab is finding fresh ways to develop web interfaces and enhance web access for groups and organizations throughout the region
- Through The New England Consortium (TNEC), UMass Lowell staff members are changing the ways that occupational health and safety is addressed through multi year training collaborations involving diverse groups of community partners

The range of disciplines and departments excelling at community outreach is reflected in recipients of the University of Massachusetts President's Award for Professional Service: Stephanie Chalupka (Nursing), Donn Clark (Engineering), Bob Farrant (Regional Economic and Social Development), Ken Geiser (Work Environment), Joyce Gibson (Education), Ann Marie Hurley (Mathematical Sciences), Linda Silka (Regional Economic and Social Development), and Craig Slatin (Community Health and Sustainability).

III. INTRODUCTION

UMass Lowell has always been a practical school, focused on the real world, and this focus on practicality has always entailed partnership. Both of the institutions that merged in 1975 to form The University of Lowell conducted some of their most important work through community-university partnerships. Early in its history, Lowell Normal School partnered with Lowell’s Bartlett School, a relationship that made practical instruction of teachers possible while providing excellent education for Lowell youth. Its other predecessor institution, Lowell Textile School, was founded by James T. Smith, who believed that New England’s textile industry could only be saved through constant research and innovation, which could only be accomplished through partnerships between the Lowell Textile School and the textile industry.

The social movements of the 1960s fomented interest in the role higher education can play in addressing societal needs. For many reasons, UMass Lowell has made substantial efforts to increase its partnerships with the community wherever possible, particularly after it joined the University of Massachusetts system in 1991. The new University of Massachusetts Lowell adopted a new mission statement that strengthened its focus on the “real world”:

The mission and major purposes of the University of Massachusetts Lowell are to provide to students an affordable education of high quality and to focus some of its scholarship and public service on assisting sustainable regional economic and social development. (Chapter 75A, Massachusetts General Laws)

UMass Lowell has carried out its mission in part through complex and ongoing partnerships with corporations and non-profit organizations in Lowell and in northeastern Massachusetts. These partnerships include shared planning and financing of “bricks and mortar” projects such as the Tsongas Arena, partnerships with the Lowell Schools to create the Lowell Plan for Educational Excellence, and partnerships with many city departments including those focused on health, neighborhoods, police, and planning. Cultural events such as the Lowell Folk Festival reflect these strong collaborations. All of these efforts have involved rigorous attention to the University’s many roles in, responsibilities to, and impacts upon the region.

Chains of Community Connections

Partnerships with community and corporate partners produce new and innovative “chains of connectivity” in which UML departments work with one another and with partners in new ways. Consider the lengthy and unexpected chains of connections reflected in the UMass Lowell community-university partnerships. Many villages in Ancash Province Peru have partnered with the College of Engineering’s Center for Sustainable Energy and UML students to install solar water pumps, water distribution systems, transceiver radios and antennas, solar radio and lighting, photoelectric panels and batteries for school laptop computers, and aquaculture systems. The

Assistive Technology Courses

Sometimes the individual partner changes but the underlying themes of partnership remains the same. In courses on Assistive Technology, students in engineering learn to apply engineering principles to the challenges faced by one or more “clients”. Each semester students work with different clients (such as individuals who are wheelchair bound) to identify ways in which technology can be used to solve the problems of daily living faced by the client. The next semester students might work with different clients but they continue to address similar questions about the uses to which engineering can be put.

College of Engineering also facilitates service-learning opportunities in Lowell, and a graduate student from College of Engineering and the UMass Agricultural Extension designed a garden project in partnership with the Whistler House Museum. Whistler House boardmember Nancy Donahue has partnered with the University on a variety of projects. The Office of University Advancement asked Ms. Donahue and her husband to sponsor the UMass Lowell Center for the Arts’ Discovery Series. The Discovery Series, in partnership with regional schools, affords the opportunity for primary school students to see performances and interact with the performers. Public schools throughout Massachusetts partner with UMass Lowell’s Tsongas Industrial History Center to educate children about their industrial heritage. The Tsongas Industrial History Center partnered with the Department of Work Environment’s Lowell Center for Sustainable Production to host an international conference on the Precautionary Principle. The Department of Work Environment partners with a wide variety of community agencies. For its Sustainable Hospitals project, the Department’s Lowell Center for Sustainable Production worked with hospitals throughout the Merrimack Valley, and continues to provide information on how they can reduce risks associated with chemicals, practices and processes in the hospital working environment. Health care organizations, in turn, are worked with by the PHASE Interdisciplinary Health Disparities Research Partnership in order to identify occupational health risks. Area hospitals like Saints Memorial in Lowell partner with UMass Lowell’s Nursing Department to provide practica and preceptorships for nursing and physical therapy students. The Nursing Department, in cooperation with the Center for Family, Work and Community, partners with the Lowell Community Health Center, the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, the Lowell Visiting Nurses Association and Southeast Asian Advocates and Interpreters on a project to prevent and manage diabetes and cardiovascular disease among Cambodian elders. Lowell Community Health Center, in turn, partners with UMass Lowell English Department’s new Writing in the Community class to develop public relations materials. These same students are interviewing engineering students who have participated in the Village Empowerment Project to gather materials to study service learning at the University.

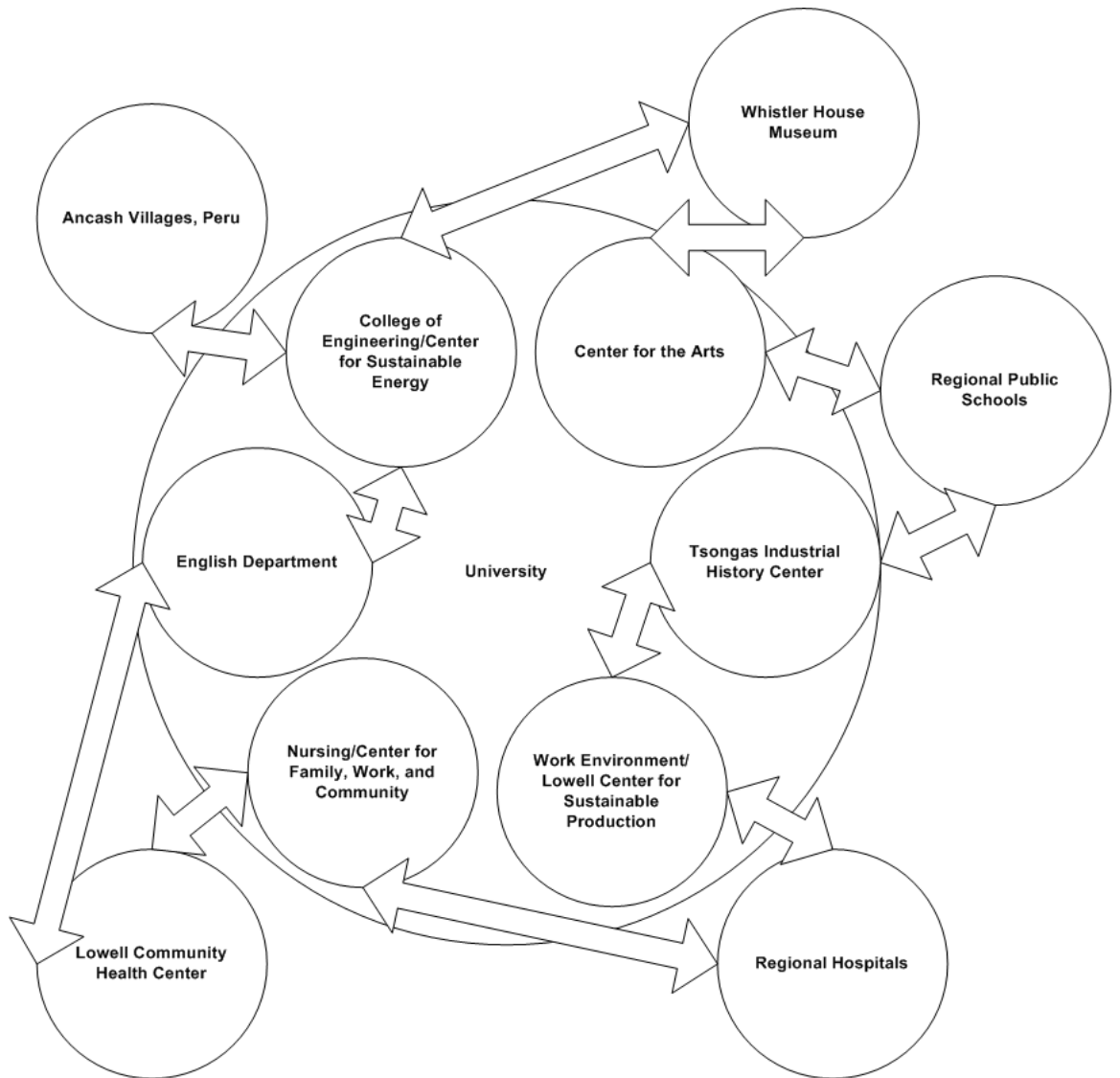
This chain of community-university partnerships (described above and illustrated below) could easily be lengthened and could take many different paths. It could start with a different set of issues or end in a different place. What is astonishing about the chain is how many times it goes through the

The New England Consortium (TNEC)

The region encompassed by particular partnerships varies greatly from partnership to partnership. Consider The New England Consortium. For nearly 17 years, TNEC's Hazardous Waste Worker Training has built long-term partnerships not just in north-eastern Mass., but throughout New England. All of New England has been the focus of this work because of the commonality of problems and issues throughout the region.

PHASE

Sometimes partnerships have interdisciplinarity and research at their core. PHASE is one such example. The PHASE research partnership brings together faculty and staff from many UML Departments to investigate health disparities among health care workers. Partners in the program include area hospitals and nursing homes.



University, across the University, and back out to the community. The University's policies encouraging partnerships affect the continuance of the chain at every other link, sometimes in several ways. And when University policy encourages interdisciplinary work (represented by relationship arrows inside the circle representing the University), it multiplies the number of potential community-university partnerships as well.

Innovation and the Importance of Partnerships

The University's commitment to assisting in the economic, educational, and social development of Lowell and the region is far from the only reason the University needs to strengthen its partnerships with the community. Just as vital is the link between partnership and innovation. Lacking significant natural resources, the Merrimack Valley is dependent upon a steady stream of innovations. Stronger partnerships with the community may lead directly to innovations that can help the University meet its mission to assist the development of the regional economy and society. A recent report by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD's *The*

Community Social Psychology Graduate Program

Few programs place community at their very core. The Graduate Program in Community Social Psychology is an important exception. All of the Program's courses in one way or another emphasize community and the building of partnerships between universities and communities. Students from throughout the United States as well as other countries now seek out this program to learn ways to solve common community problems by combining research and application. The impact of this program is reflected in the fact that many of the region's agencies are now led by its graduates.

Power of Partnership) urges universities to honor “the inherent assets and expertise present in every neighborhood,” so that innovative solutions to social problems can be more easily found.

Community-university partnerships are widely touted as ways that universities and communities can achieve positive ends, and such partnerships are at the heart of many attempts by universities to become more involved in their surrounding communities. The ease of maintaining partnerships and having them result in unambiguous “goods” have often been treated as a given. Partnerships, when examined more closely, turn out not to mirror the simple positive rhetoric that so often marks their advocacy. In fact these partnerships are often paradoxical in process, dynamics, and outcomes. Contradictory claims are juxtaposed that raise questions about partnerships: Are these activities peripheral to the academic endeavor or at the very heart? Do these activities represent a useful approach because they are robust, easy to create and fit with faculty roles? Or, do they draw faculty into unfamiliar terrain that fragments the professorate and diverts attention from the knowledge generation function of universities?

Partnerships are working intellectual projects for universities. Attempts to bring universities and communities together around a research and social action agenda create unexpected paradoxes. As a consequence, community-university partnerships remain rich areas for learning as well as doing.

Part of an effective approach to partnerships includes returning to our knowledge base, testing the usefulness of that knowledge base, reflecting on its implications, and then reshaping the knowledge base as a result of shortfalls observed through the partnership process.

Attempts to prescribe what should be done in forms of partnership are premature and short-sighted. Rather than making this prescriptive and rule-governed, we should attend to the contradictions and use this as an opportunity to explore puzzles that get to the core of academic concerns. Partnerships are tied to fundamentally unresolved issues about the goals of higher education: how new goals develop or emerge from our history, what kinds of training future scholars should receive as society and universities change, and how universities go about generating knowledge. “Social problem solving is not a process of applying knowledge as much as a process of probing what to do in the presence of ignorance.” (Lindholm, 1990). Partnerships force universities to confront these issues.

Ultimately, partnerships directly address one of the central paradoxes in the social sciences – how we will use our knowledge and the degree to which it can be useful. Peter O’Connell and Elizabeth Hoermann (Educational Partnerships in the National Partnership) describe the initial period of collaboration as “intense cauldrons of creativity” that includes confusion about terminology, issues of trust, control, and communication and – when a partnership like the UML-Lowell National Park partnership to create the Tsongas Center far exceeded expectations-by a sense of shared triumph and collegiality. Their study suggests that partnerships succeed when the partners take time to clarify roles and reduce confusion because confusion and conflict interfere

Regional Economic and Social Development Graduate Program

Sometimes students are the focus of partnerships. The Graduate Program in Regional Economic and Social Development received funding from US Housing and Urban Development to develop a HUD Fellows Program by which students during their graduate school tenure learn their craft in partner community agencies. The Department provides training and technical assistance to these students over and above their usual coursework and partners agencies receive resources that otherwise would not be available.

with creativity.

O’Connell and Hoermann found that in several of their cases, partnerships flourished initially because of the energy of the beginning innovation and grant funding only to founder under the burden of sustaining an ongoing partnership. They note that different kinds of partnership leadership may be required in the start-up phase than in the later phases.

In this report, we identify the twin needs of communication and technical assistance that can minimize the friction and maximize the creativity in initiating and sustaining partnerships.

IV. CHARACTERISTIC PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout this report, we make reference to the terms ‘community,’ ‘university,’ and ‘partnership.’ Here we provide some guidance as to how we have used these terms throughout our discussions and in this report.

Which ‘community’ is being referred to in community-university partnerships?

As a publicly funded campus, UMass Lowell is especially committed to improving the quality of life and educational and social sustainability of this community and this geographic region, but in doing so, it seeks to develop models that can contribute to the quality of life in any community or region. UML partners locally but applies lessons globally. And, conversely, it partners globally to bring lessons home to our community.

Although most community-university partnerships will include a local or regional partner, some communities of partnership are defined not by geography but by people working on a common issue (community crime, environmental justice, culture or ethnic interests, or a new technology). Any given partnership needs to define what it means by “community” and structure its work accordingly.

What do we mean by ‘university’ in community-university partnerships?

At first blush, we all know what “University” means, but community partners report finding us a mystifyingly complex organization. Sometimes they find they are partnering with an individual faculty member, but think they have the commitment of the whole “University.” The University partners with communities through its formal administrative structure and staff, through its colleges and departments, through the research and teaching interests of individual faculty, through its Centers and through its student organizations. Each “University” representative needs to define for its community partners their scope, expertise and authority to represent the University.

What do we mean by ‘partnership’ in community-university partnerships?

By “partnership” we mean a sustained, cooperative relationship in which the University representative or entity and the community partner have a shared stake in the success of the collaborative relationship. Each has decision-making power, each contributes time and resources.

Cultural and Educational Partnerships in Lowell and the Region

The University, through the Athletic Department, Graduate School of Education, College of Engineering, the Music Department, and Centers support a number of ongoing partnerships with organizations in Lowell and the region that create opportunities for K-12 students to participate in University activities, support cultural programming for Lowell’s ethnic and cultural organizations, and help make Lowell an attractive city to live and work in and to be a regional sports, culture and tourist destination.

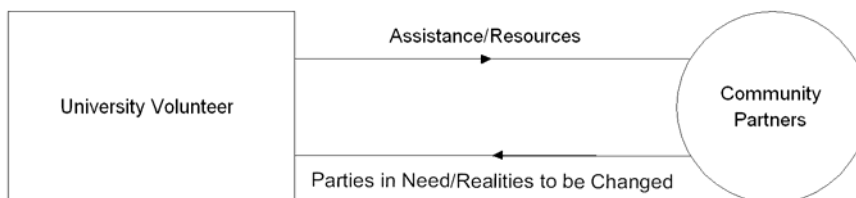
Although some service-learning partnerships are anchored in a single course that might be taught only once a year, the relationship between the department or faculty member and the community partner picks up again the next time the course is taught.

But not every service-learning or grants-funded research project develops into a partnership because they are time-limited, discrete relationships that may or may not be designed to be sustained. The Task Force encountered stories in which one partner thought they were involved in a “partnership” only to learn that the other partner intended it only as a short-term “project” with the attendant frustrations accompanying such discoveries.

Throughout its six months of deliberations, the Task Force examined partnership characteristics and found many ways to categorize partnerships: by intent, by goal, by educational focus, and by duration. In all of these cases we found community-university partnerships to be exchange relationships in which at least one party is in the community and at least one is affiliated with the University. The parties exchange resources to obtain resources that they lack. Typically—indeed, in all of the examples offered as models by the Task Force—the University enters the partnership to work on problems that are in need of solutions, serve people in need of help, find people who can create stimulating service-learning experiences, and draw on the expertise of organizations and the data they can provide to help answer research questions. Thus stated, the types of partnerships described below exemplify four different types of community-university partnerships. These can be identified by what is exchanged in the partnering relationship. Although they do not represent all of the possible types of partnerships, these four examples illustrate possibilities well worth replicating and expanding. For other examples, please see the sidebars.

Volunteerism—The Community Software Lab (CSL)

The Community Software Lab (CSL) uses the talents of students in Computer Science to assist regional nonprofit organizations and their associates (more information may be found at <http://thecsl.org/>). In this model of partnership, students use their academic skills in volunteer capacities, contributing to a cause or help people, animals, or the environment. The community partner identifies the groups or individuals in need of help or assistance. The relationship is depicted below.



CSL provides free email, web hosting, and other Internet services. CSL also provides technology consulting and develops custom software as inexpensively as possible. Work for CSL is done on a purely volunteer basis, unconnected to a specific computer science course. The CSL was formed by nonprofit Lowell Telecommunications Inc working with a computer science student, Dan

Regional Development and Training Modules

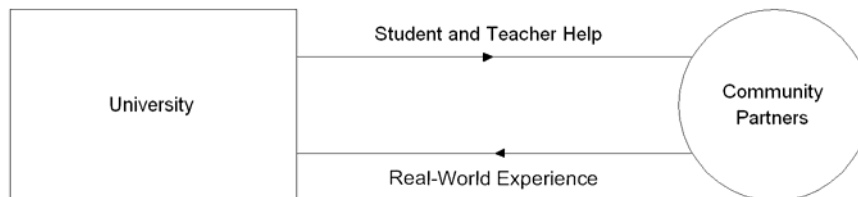
The partnership model closest to the traditional land grant model involves a cluster of community partners working with a University Center that involves dissemination of University expertise (“training”) to clients in the field and the expertise of the field to inform additional University scholarship. Some examples come from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, the Center for Field Services and Studies, the TURI re-grant project, and the TNEC Hazardous Waste Training Program.

MacNeil, who has dedicated much of his adult life to community service. Dan has been able to gain advice from senior Computer Science faculty, participation from like-minded students, and key resources from the university (space for donated computer equipment, and the use of the university's existing internet).

The Task Force saw the Community Software Lab as a good model because it uses minimal (and replicable) resources to meet a pressing need in the community. With its favorable attitudes toward such endeavors, UMass Lowell was a supportive place to incubate this project. The CSL has been so successful that the Community Software Lab has established nonprofit status for the project. This type of partnership helps support service endeavors until they become self sustaining.

Service Learning—Writing in the Community

Writing in the Community (course # 42.406 and 42.506 in the English Dept.) is a service learning capstone course that provides opportunities for students to meet learning objectives for their field through engagement in community service, applying knowledge of writing gained in the classroom to the world outside the classroom. Students are placed (according to their interests and career goals) with local nonprofit organizations for the semester. Students work with their community partners to design writing projects to meet the real writing needs of the nonprofit with which they are working. Past work has included everything from grant applications and press releases to organizational histories and fundraising letters. Classroom time is spent learning advanced writing techniques and revising student work in peer workshops. The course also requires a reflective essay and a public group presentation on the semester's partnership experience. Students benefit from the hands on experience they gain in writing for a "real" audience for a "real" purpose with "real" consequences. They use their hard won knowledge from their years in the classroom and apply it to help meet urgent needs in the community. Through this scenario, students hone their writing skills and become much better prepared for the next step in their career. Students also have the chance to make lasting connections and effect positive change in our community. The “real” purposes and “real” consequences can only be supplied through partnerships with the community (see diagram below).



Research Partnership—COBWEB

The Brazilian Immigrant Worker Project (COBWEB) examines hazards affecting Brazilian workers in the Boston region. This partnership involves the University’s Work Environment

Toxic Use Reduction Institute (TURI)
 Each year the Institute supports community projects to raise awareness and develop strategies to reduce the use of toxics in municipalities, schools, households and small businesses. Now in its tenth year, the Toxics Use Reduction Networking (TURN) Grant Program has funded 67 partnership projects that serve as examples for other communities. The many unique partnerships forged through TURN help sustain efforts and continually spread toxics use reduction concepts to new audiences. This year's five projects include promoting the use of green cleaners in Boston schools; promoting healthy cosmetology through a model vocational school salon and alternatives analysis with Vietnamese nail salon workers; and raising awareness about watershed impacts of pesticide use and alternatives.

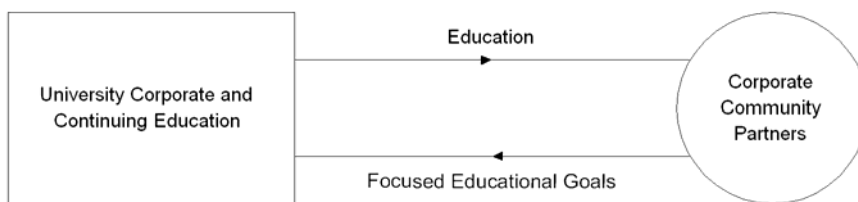
Department, and Center for Family, Work, and Community with community partners including the Brazilian Immigrant Center, Allston, Brighton and Lowell Health Centers, and the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH). The active involvement of immigrant youth as a catalyst for change is a vital component of this project. COBWEB seeks effective community based intervention approaches for occupational health. The project also hopes to develop new knowledge about institutionalizing partnerships for communication among academic institutions, health care facilities, and community groups, (see diagram below).



Another type of research partnership exchanges research results/findings with resources (usually financial, but sometimes also in the form of materials or equipment necessary to complete a research project) and a problem that needs to be solved. Many of the University's partnerships entail the same contribution by its community partners.

Custom Course Design - Continuing Studies & Corporate Education (CSCE)

Continuing Studies & Corporate Education (CSCE) supports educational partnerships and opportunities between the University and community members from across the region and country. These partnerships typically involve significant collaboration between faculty, academic departments, and community organizations. Working in collaboration with academic departments and community and corporate members, CSCE staff help match the academic interests and programs with students and their respective organizations. CSCE manages the many administrative and logistical issues required to offer onsite and online programs to students and organizations around the world, allowing faculty and academic departments to focus on curriculum and teaching; while community organizations work with faculty to map curriculum to their unique needs (see diagram below).



Although many university courses adapt according to the demands of the "real world," Continuing Education courses are often designed specifically for the needs of particular organizations. In return for financial resources, Corporate and Continuing Education enters into partnerships with

Center for Field Services and Studies (CFSS)

The Young Scholars Program brings 200 Lawrence students to the UML campus for academics, internships, and a recreational program for a 6-week summer program.

The staff at the **Tsongas Industrial History Center** is teaching an online course for graduate credit to National Park Service Rangers from Virginia to Maine to help them develop strategic education plans to expand their school programming and educational partnerships. The Rangers draw on the experience of UML's Graduate School of Education and Lowell National Historic Park in forming and sustaining an educational partnership and in working closely with teachers and schools.

area organizations to provide focused courses that its partners can not or do not wish to provide on their own.

These diagrams of exchange relationships vastly oversimplify the gains to be made by both parties. Task Force members have been quick to point out that they often reap benefits they did not initially expect, and that it is these additional benefits that have kept them pursuing partnerships despite the difficulty of doing so.

V. BARRIERS TO PARTNERSHIP

The Task Force was confronted with many stories of the challenges of doing effective community outreach. These examples were instructive because they suggest the many obstacles that remain if UMass Lowell is to become an institution that values and supports community outreach and partnerships.

Student Challenges and Concerns:

- The relevance of service-learning and partnerships to the core curricula in their major
- Scheduling time for off-campus assignments
- Many work at least half time in addition to attending school, and thus hesitate to participate in projects and courses that appear more time-consuming than a "regular" class
- The steps to forming volunteer clubs are difficult, since there is no process in place to help create relationships with community partners

Faculty and Staff Challenges and Concerns:

- Finding partners can be difficult and labor intensive
- Locating funding sources to sustain successful partnerships can be difficult
- Locating funding sources that will support innovative outreach ideas can be difficult
- Partnership and outreach work can be time-consuming
- The logistics of partnerships/integration can be difficult
- When community-university partnerships are built into a course, the workload often seems higher than in a traditional classroom
- The University sends conflicting and inconsistent messages, which vary across different departments, about the importance and value of community outreach and involvement¹

¹ We want to say at the outset that guidelines for promotion and tenure are the province of the collective bargaining agreement negotiated between the union and the administration. The thoughts of members of the Task Force on promotion and tenure guidelines should in no way be construed as suggestions for change in the process of collective bargaining or the role and responsibility of the union in that process. Rather this is a synthesis of inputs from a large number of faculty for consideration. The issues we raise require further discussion among

Community Challenges and Concerns:

- Involving students or university teams for a single semester is a challenge
- It is difficult to know where to start in forming a relationship with the University
- Attempts to partner with students and faculty are not always successful and are time consuming

faculty, either in union meetings, faculty senate meetings, or in groups of faculty brought together for other reasons.

Briefly, the points raised in Task Force discussions included the following. Many faculty involved in this Task Force felt that the university is interested in strengthening and expanding activities that involve community-university partnerships, and that many faculty members share this interest. Faculty efforts to form and work on community partnerships as part of research, teaching and service therefore should be recognized and supported by the university. Currently, the relevance and potential importance of such work to a faculty career at UMass Lowell is not communicated well to faculty, in particular to junior faculty.

All faculty, and particularly junior faculty must attend carefully to their professional careers. Faculty should never be encouraged to act in anyway that does not further, or might even be detrimental, to their careers and their likelihood of tenure and promotion. Therefore if furthering community-university partnerships is to be an objective of the university, we need to be more explicit about how these activities count in the reward structure.

No one on the Task Force expressed the opinion that research, teaching, or service involving community-university partnerships should be considered more important than traditional research teaching and service. Nor should all faculty be expected to take on activities that promote community partnerships. It was pointed out that faculty should not pay a price for engaging in activities, particularly research, that involves community partnerships, but finds its outlet outside of traditional academic journals. Standards of quality and publication need to be applied to any form of research. It will be a challenge to judge the quality of non-traditional research, but it is one that the faculty community should take on.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

BASED ON THE FACT-FINDING DESCRIBED ABOVE, THE TASK FORCE GENERATED A SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING UMASS LOWELL’S COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS. IN THE NEXT SECTION THESE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE OUTLINED.

Use Existing Building Blocks for Partnership

UMass Lowell has institutions and staff members in place that are currently responsible for facilitating community-university partnerships and have identified some of the barriers described earlier. The Task Force recommends that these resources continue to be developed so that UMass Lowell’s community partnerships can be strengthened and enhanced.

1. **Community Relations Director, Office of the Provost:** The University has long enjoyed the assistance of a Community Relations Director operating out of the Office of the Provost. The extensive knowledge of local events, politics, and leaders in this office makes this a valuable starting point when searching for partnership opportunities. Paul Marion currently serves in this position.
2. **The Office of Community Service:** This office, in operation until the 2004/2005 academic year, has been phased out. UML should ensure that the responsibilities previously carried out by the Office of Community Service are continued under the new structures recommended in this report.
3. **Special Assistant to the Provost for Community Partnerships:** The Special Assistant chairs this Task Force. In addition, the responsibilities of the Special Assistant include reporting to the Provost on emerging partnership opportunities and challenges, and providing support to university administrators, faculty, staff, and students on establishing and sustaining partnerships. Dr. Linda Silka currently serves in this position.
4. **Information Clearinghouse:** Over the last six months, the University has undertaken to create UMass Lowell’s first Information Clearinghouse for Community Partnerships. The Information Clearinghouse is intended to serve as a “friendly face” for the community, making UMass Lowell resources more accessible. The primary focus of the Clearinghouse will be to help potential partners locate one another. The Clearinghouse will assist outside partners in identifying which UMass Lowell courses have projects, service learning, practicum, or internship possibilities. It will also assist UMass Lowell students, staff, and faculty in identifying community partners who have projects that provide interesting growth opportunities for our students, staff, and faculty.

Information Clearinghouse priority will be given to:

- Partnerships that link to the university’s knowledge and problem solving focus

- Partnership opportunities that link to UMass Lowell strengths and the mission
- Partnerships related to signature outreach areas designated by the Community-University Advisory Board (see description of Advisory Board below)
- Partnerships involving interdisciplinary teams of students, staff, or faculty
- Partnerships that call for innovation on the part of all partners
- Partnerships that focus on improving themselves over time

The Information Clearinghouse will be evaluated annually by the Community-University Advisory Board to assess: The number of new partnerships created, the number of courses involving a partnership component, the number of interdisciplinary partnerships, the number of students involved in community-university partnerships, satisfaction of community partners, students, staff, and faculty with partnerships and the number and quality of available partnership opportunities, the amount of time and effort needed to establish partnerships, and the quantity and quality of publicity obtained for community-university partnerships.

5. **The Community-University Advisory Board:** The UMass Lowell Community-University Advisory Board, created under the auspices of the UMass Lowell Provost's Office, parallels the University's Industrial Advisory Board. The Community-University Advisory Board is an evolution of earlier broad based advisory groups begun and nurtured under US HUD funding to assist UMass Lowell in developing partnership capacity that reflects community needs and concerns. The Task Force recommends the continuation of this board and that efforts be directed at ensuring that the board includes regional representation and is broad based in the groups it represents.
6. **The Communications and Marketing Office:** In the past this Office has communicated with a broad cross-section of the community through its Community Newsletter. The Task Force recommends that consideration be given to resuming this publication. Both print and electronic forms of communication should be considered.
7. **Centers and Institutes:** Various Interdisciplinary Centers bring together university personnel with many community partners. These efforts should be continued and greater efforts should be made to disseminate the lessons of these Centers.

Create the Council on Community-University Partnerships

Because so many of the proposed recommendations require the active participation of a group or position dedicated to partnerships and outreach at a very high level in the University hierarchy, the Task Force strongly urges the formation of a Council on Community-University Partnerships (alternative title: Community Partnership Council), initiated with a \$250,000 annual budget to support initial staffing, small grants, workshops, technical assistance, and other partnership

building activities. *Recommendations for other administrative units are listed separately below the outline of the proposed council.*

STRUCTURE

The Council on Community-University Partnerships would consist of approximately fifteen members including administrators, faculty, staff, and students chosen for their interest and involvement in community partnerships. Councilors would serve two-year terms, although half of the first appointed councilors should be allowed to serve three-year terms to ensure continuity. At least two faculty council members should be chosen from untenured faculty. At least two councilors should be chosen from University staff. At least one councilor should represent student organizations. The Council should consider the creation of disciplinary advisory subgroups within the council, especially those related to the signature areas (see Appendix) advocated by the Community-University Advisory Board.

CHARGES

The Council should be charged with working to (a) improve communications about partnerships within the university as well as to the community, (b) ensure that technical assistance is available to those interested in building and strengthening partnerships, (c) improve university incentives to partner with community groups, and (d) reduce administrative barriers to community-university partnerships. The Council should look to existing resources such as the Center for Family, Work, and Community for assistance in grant writing, conflict resolution, decision-making structure, strategies for surveying, and convening community-university partnerships or to the Graduate School of Education and Center for Field Services and Studies for assistance in partnering with schools on research, teaching, and grant development relating to curriculum, teacher, and leadership professional development or education reform.

Within these broad categories, the Task Force recommends the following specific measures to the Council:

To Inform Potential Partners about Opportunities, Strategies and Resources Available for Community Partnerships, the Council should

- Work with the Information Clearinghouse and other campus administrative units to create a knowledge base of community-university partnership information on current and past efforts, best practices, community partners and partnership interests, and campus resources available to support community partnerships. The Council should also collect examples of faculty and staff publications and externally funded projects focusing in whole or part on community partnerships and outreach and would distribute this information to Deans and Department Chairs
- Encourage the University to offer training in community-university partnerships. Workshops

could be offered by faculty and/or staff already involved in community-university partnerships

- Work with the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center and the Office of Research Administration to ensure that orientation provides information on community-university partnerships verbally and in the Faculty Handbook
- Highlight interdisciplinary community-university partnerships work in the Shuttle and other University publications
- Establish intranet communication so faculty can learn more about existing interdisciplinary partnerships
- Work with the Office of Public Affairs, Communications and Marketing, and the Information Clearinghouse to help “brand” UMass Lowell as an institution that provides education and values promoting real-world experience and to track the effectiveness of publicizing community-university partnership activity throughout the region
- Report annually in collaboration with the Community-University Advisory Board in the Chancellor’s Blue Book on the status of community-university partnerships and related programs and projects

To Reach Out and Listen to Potential Community Partners, the Council Should

- Use Communications & Marketing Office to publicize community-university partnership events or projects on an on-going basis via paid advertising in regional media outlets
- Work toward coordinating a virtual gateway to make outreach easier to plan and implement (would house information on how to link with the University's faculty, staff and students, fill out a request for partnership).
- Identify and publicize interdisciplinary opportunities such as the signature outreach areas as suggested by the Community-University Advisory Board and add new ones
- Work to coordinate and increase official university participation and representation in regional organizations (e.g. MVEDC, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments)
- Work with the Community-University Advisory Board to consider additional structured methods of listening to various constituencies in the region and to broaden its constituency

To Build University Incentives for Community-University Partnerships, the Council Should

- Establish a grant program to provide marketing, staff and research support to faculty engaged in community-university partnerships. The Council would review grant proposals to support community-university partnerships and would also review the grantee’s partnership report

- Oversee the Public Service Endowment grants
- Consider grant programs specifically designated for interdisciplinary community-university partnerships, (perhaps building on the Committee on Industrial Theory and Assessment model), including seed and start-up grants and capacity building/sustaining grants
- Plan an annual awards ceremony for at least ten community-university partnership categories: untenured faculty, senior faculty, staff, undergraduate student, graduate student, interdisciplinary center, interdisciplinary (non-center), departmental, and collegiate
- Establish an Innovation Award to be awarded annually to teams that have creatively addressed a challenge that arose from linking community-university partnerships to university teaching and research goals

To Work to Build Resources to Support and Sustain Community-University Partnerships, the Council Should

- Work with the Center for Family, Work, and Community to build resources to support and sustain partnerships
- Work with the Information Clearinghouse to build resources to support and sustain partnerships

To Lower Administrative Barriers to Partnering, the Council Should

- Work in collaboration with the Committee of Federated Centers and Institutes (CFCI) to decrease or eliminate administrative barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration, such as inability to split overhead
- Work with the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to update human subjects review to accommodate the needs of community-based and/or participatory research practices and speed processing. Also, work with and increase support to the IRB

Recommendations to Other Campus Administrative Units

- The University should seek new or existing physical space to coordinate outreach efforts as described in this report that might include meeting rooms, a publications library, classrooms for staff/community/faculty trainings, etc. The physical space should include an “office” that is conveniently located for both campus and community partners and that is open at times that meet the needs of both groups.
- The Web Office should establish a clear link to "community" on the UMass Lowell website home page
- The other campus councils (Teaching, Learning and Research as Scholarship, Diversity, Economic Development) should be charged with working with the Council on Community-

University Partnerships to ensure that all Councils focus adequate attention to how their missions can be better met through attending to community partnerships and outreach

- The Office of Research Administration should work with the Council on Community-University Partnerships to track appropriate indicators on community outreach and partnership and compare with those of appropriate peer institutions
- Each department should be encouraged to establish a community-university partnerships liaison to serve 2-year term. The liaison would be responsible for gathering information on partnerships within the department and helping the Chair to develop a plan to increase community-university partnerships, which would be forwarded to the Dean of the College or Division
- Each college is encouraged to incorporate plans for increasing community-university partnerships into their annual strategic plan
- The importance and value of community outreach and involvement should be discussed among faculty, either in union meetings, faculty senate meetings, or in groups of faculty brought together for other reasons (see footnote one)
- The Office of Research Administration and the Committee of Federated Centers and Institutes should work with the Council on Community-University Partnerships to find ways to decrease or eliminate administrative barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly the inability to split administrative overhead of grants
- The Institutional Review Board should work with the Council on Community-University Partnerships to accommodate the needs of community-based and/or participatory research practices and to speed processing of waivers and approvals

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VIII. APPENDIX

Initial “Signature” Outreach Areas Identified by the Community University Advisory Board

The Community University Advisory Board has begun to identify areas in which community leaders see the need for university engagement to address particularly pressing or important problems and topics. Their suggestions for possible areas for collaboration include those listed below. Detailed examples of steps UML Staff have already taken in these areas can be found at <http://www.uml.edu/centers/cfwc/> (click on the link that scrolls across the page).

- 1. Working Together to Make Lowell a Math Mecca**
- 2. Reinventing the Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy**
- 3. Strengthening the Environment, Environmental Health, and Health**
- 4. ‘Crime and Public Safety’ as an Emerging Issue of Economic Development Issue and Diversity**
- 5. Community Redesign and Revitalization**
- 6. The Immigrant Experience**
- 7. Improving the Prospects for Youth**
- 8. Meeting the Needs of Elders and Drawing on Their Strengths**