GREATER REWARDS

BRANCING OUT, DIGGING IN:
UC-COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS
CREATE A MORE VIBRANT FUTURE
A word from UC President Gregory H. Williams

“Inspired giving” is the first thought that came to mind when I heard about the Harriette R. Williams Downey Fund Collaborations. The grants that funded these partnerships between community organizations and the University of Cincinnati challenged all involved to think differently about the nature of true partnership—and our region will be the better for their efforts.

The funding for these collaborations was allocated to the partners by the Niehoff family—Buck, Patti, and Peter—after much discussion on how best to honor the memory of Patti’s parents, James R. Williams and Harriette R. Williams Downey. Over a distinguished career that included ownership of the Western and Southern Life Insurance Company and the Cincinnati Reds, Mr. Williams achieved great financial success, and the Harriette R. Williams Downey Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation is a part of the couple’s joint legacy left in trust to our community. But it is the Niehoffs’ inspired management of that trust that stimulated the partnerships that are chronicled in this report.

Rather than simply award unrestricted gifts to the organizations included here, the Niehoffs challenged them to connect with the University of Cincinnati and together, build collaborations that would be richer because of shared interests and a wide range of capabilities around the table. The Niehoffs understood that building partnerships is hard work, perhaps especially with large, bureaucratic organizations like universities, and they recognized that the grants would create a powerful incentive to stay at the table until a substantive, reciprocal relationship developed.

The results are remarkable by any measure; in fact, some of the partnerships have the potential to be national models—both for what they have taught us about collaboration and for the new learning that has come from working together in innovative ways. Because of the Niehoff’s foresight, young children will reconnect with the wonder of the natural world, students will learn more easily because of improved teaching methods and expand their world-views by immersion in another culture, and people with diabetes may avoid the complications that come from poorly managed disease. There’s much more to the story and you can read about it here.

I join the eight community organizations and our own Niehoff Urban Studio in our expression of profound thanks to the Niehoff family.

The Harriette R. Williams Downey Fund is managed by the Greater Cincinnati Foundation. Special thanks are due to James D. Huizenga, Director of Community Investment Grantmaking Services, who provided support for the grant proposal process throughout the five-year term.
Partnering for a Better Cincinnati

In 2004, Buck and Patti Niehoff challenged the University of Cincinnati to develop groundbreaking partnerships that would work toward a better future for Greater Cincinnati.

They provided $2.15 million in grants to support collaborations with eight different non-profit organizations, most of which had a direct connection to the Niehoffs, and UC’s Niehoff Urban Studio. The grants were funded from the Harriette R. Williams Downey Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation. Patti Niehoff’s mother established the fund.

“One goal was to get people thinking about partnerships generally, and once they realized they could work with a different organization and do it successfully and beneficially, that it would cause them to think about other partnerships.”

— Buck Niehoff

Niehoff offers a little about the University of Cincinnati. He is a member of the Board of Trustees, a 1972 graduate of the College of Law, co-chair of the $1 billion Proudly Cincinnati fund-raising campaign and served as chairman of the search committee that hired new UC President Gregory H. Williams last fall.

He is just as involved in the community, having served on the boards of more than 20 organizations.

While volunteering, he observed that non-profit groups often looked at each other as competition, almost isolating themselves from one another.

“Our second goal was to break down some of the silos within the community,” Niehoff says.

The Niehoffs set a five-year period for the organizations and their UC partners to submit proposals for the funds earmarked for them. Buck Niehoff says they understood that good partnerships take time to develop and need time to evolve.

In several instances, the project that was ultimately proposed was dramatically different from the original idea. In some cases, their partnership flourished. In others, the relationship was more one-sided. The Niehoffs anticipated that. They just wanted to get the ball rolling, so to speak.

“Absolutely we’re very pleased with the results,” Buck Niehoff says. “One goal was to get people thinking about partnerships generally, and once they realized they could work with a different organization and do it successfully and beneficially, that it would cause them to think about other partnerships.”

Niehoff knows a little about the Greater Cincinnati Foundation. Patti Niehoff’s mother established the fund. “Different organizations working together can be far more successful than organizations working independently of one another,” Buck Niehoff says. “That was our big goal.”

“I believe that there is incredible talent and expertise among the people at the university,” Niehoff says. “The first goal was to get some of those people out from behind the walls of academia and into the community, sharing some of their knowledge and skills and expertise.”

Niehoff is a member of the Board of Trustees, a 1972 graduate of the College of Law, co-chair of the $1 billion Proudly Cincinnati fund-raising campaign and served as chairman of the search committee that hired new UC.

In 2004, Buck and Patti Niehoff challenged the University of Cincinnati to develop groundbreaking partnerships that would work toward a better future for Greater Cincinnati.

They provided $2.15 million in grants to support collaborations with eight different non-profit organizations, most of which had a direct connection to the Niehoffs, and UC’s Niehoff Urban Studio. The grants were funded from the Harriette R. Williams Downey Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation. Patti Niehoff’s mother established the fund.

“One goal was to get people thinking about partnerships generally, and once they realized they could work with a different organization and do it successfully and beneficially, that it would cause them to think about other partnerships.”

— Buck Niehoff

Niehoff knows a little about the Greater Cincinnati Foundation. Patti Niehoff’s mother established the fund. “Different organizations working together can be far more successful than organizations working independently of one another,” Buck Niehoff says. “That was our big goal.”

“I believe that there is incredible talent and expertise among the people at the university,” Niehoff says. “The first goal was to get some of those people out from behind the walls of academia and into the community, sharing some of their knowledge and skills and expertise.”

Niehoff is a member of the Board of Trustees, a 1972 graduate of the College of Law, co-chair of the $1 billion Proudly Cincinnati fund-raising campaign and served as chairman of the search committee that hired new UC.
In 2005, child advocacy expert Richard Louv came out with a national best-selling book called “Last Child in the Woods,” which addresses the lack of connection between this generation’s children and nature. Louv cites research that focuses on exposure to nature as a vital part of childhood development.

It is with Louv’s inspiration that Cincinnati Nature Center and the University of Cincinnati have embarked on a rich collaboration that has extended to other community partners and prompted funding from resources beyond the Downey Fund grant.

Not only is their Cincinnati Playscape Initiative project an example of how wide reaching collaborations can become, it is also a great study in the evolution of a partnership.

How so?

Like many collaborations, this one finished with a different idea than it started with. The original project between the Nature Center and UC fell apart after 2½ years, when both parties realized they were heading down a path that was not mutually beneficial.

When it was time to start over, Bill Hopple, executive director of Cincinnati Nature Center, was connected with Larry Johnson, dean of UC’s College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services. They ended up talking about early childhood education. That led to the involvement of Dr. Vicki Carr, associate professor of early childhood education and director of UC’s Arlitt Child and Family Research and Education Center.

In February 2006, Louv was invited to visit the Nature Center. The dialogue led to the playscapes concept — an attempt to reconnect children with nature. Playscapes are unstructured play areas that can lead to better self-esteem, creativity, motor skills, fitness, and academic performance, as well as potentially relieve symptoms of ADHD, according to Louv’s book. They encourage water play, digging in the dirt, climbing, building and exploration along natural paths and surfaces. The design is focused on what is called “open-ended creative play,” with nature as the focus, not human-made elements.

As part of this initiative, there will be:
1. A 1.5-acre playscape at Cincinnati Nature Center that will be the largest playscape at a nature center in the country. Hopple says he hopes building will take place this summer, and looks for a spring 2011 opening.
2. A quarter-acre playscape on UC’s campus outside of French Hall. It’s a smaller-scale project but with the same design principles as at Cincinnati Nature Center. This will be fenced in, but open to the public, and a spring 2011 opening is planned as well.
Robin Moore, professor of landscape architecture at North Carolina State who has more than 25 years experience designing natural play spaces for children, was engaged as an instructor and consultant for the professional development and play-scape design. The Niehoff Urban Studio contributed to the UC design process and site selection.

“I would say this is the most in-depth partnership we’ve ever engaged in,” Hopple says. “It really did fire on all cylinders for both parties.”

Total cost of the Playscape Initiative will be somewhere around $1.3 million. The Downey grant of $150,000 paid for the design of the playscapes by Moore, the training of local designers interested in building natural play sites for children and speakers for public lectures. The Nature Center playscape will be named for Marge and Charles Schott thanks to a gift from their family foundation.

Carr and Hopple have collaborated to secure money from other grants and private fund-raising, including $340,000 from PNC Bank and its “Grow Up Great with Science” program.

“The Downey grant was the seed for all of this,” Hopple says. Carr and Hopple have applied for participation in the Children and Nature Action Forum being hosted by the World Forum in October and Hopple will present in August at the annual Meeting of the Association of Nature Center Administrators.

Perhaps Cincinnati will serve as a model for other cities.

“One of the key pieces to the success of this collaboration is that before we ever met, Vicki Carr understood the importance of nature to child development,” Hopple says. “So when we came together, we almost immediately saw the expertise that each other had.”

Carr has, in fact, developed an online class for undergraduate or graduate students called “Romancing Nature With Young Children.”

She also is collaborating with Bill Creasey, chief naturalist at Cincinnati Nature Center, on a book on children and nature.

“It’s been nothing but positive,” Carr says of the overall collaboration. “We’re looking out for one another. We help each other with funding.”

“All of these other projects have arisen from our partnership. It’s just evolved very smoothly, very naturally. We have a great relationship.”

“I would say this is the most in-depth partnership we’ve ever engaged in. It really did fire on all cylinders for both parties.”

— Bill Hopple
In classrooms across our city and throughout the country, there is a wide range of student learning skills, from students who are identified as gifted to students with learning disabilities.

Preparing teachers of today and tomorrow to meet the needs of all students, regardless of their abilities, is at the heart of a wide-ranging collaboration between the University of Cincinnati and Springer School and Center.

Those involved have learned the power of partnering general educators and special educators so they can share knowledge, experiences and work together to discover the best ways of reaching every student.

“We're preparing teachers to deal with the diverse learning issues in their classrooms,” says Barbara Hunter, director of Springer, which provides unique curriculum and a nurturing environment for students with learning disabilities. “Teachers have an immense challenge on their plates.”

Hunter has worked closely over the last five-plus years with Chet Laine and Stephen Kroeger from UC’s School of Education. Laine is an associate professor in the Literacy and Secondary Education Program. Kroeger is an assistant professor who coordinates the Special Education program. Karen Troup, field coordinator for special education, and Karen Haring, field coordinator for middle and secondary students, work as key personnel making the many links between the university and schools possible.

With the Downey Fund grant, the group has developed a program they call “C4C” — Collaborating for Collaboration. The “4” also stands for what Hunter calls the “Big Four learning systems.” That refers to attention, memory, language and the ordering system which includes temporal/sequential and spacial ordering.

“Those are the underpinnings of all learning,” she says.

With the grant, Hunter says, Springer wanted to figure out how to provide the greatest benefit to the community. Partnering with UC’s College of Education seemed like a natural fit.

The dynamics were good and there were several important perspectives at the table. Springer’s expertise is in teaching children with language-based learning disabilities; co-teaching is a staple there. UC brought a general education point of view and content knowledge and research and development of how co-teaching models enhance learning. There was dialogue about what teachers today face in meeting the needs of gifted students as well as students who struggle with the general curriculum.

UC and the Springer School partnership allows for teachers and students at both schools to work together to improve teaching students of all abilities.
Among the collaboration’s successes:

- **Three days of in-service training** for teachers are held over three months in the fall, typically at Springer. Participants are selected from local junior highs, middle schools and high schools. These teachers and experienced student teachers come together and learn co-teaching skills and strategies from UC and Springer staff members. The sessions will take place for the fourth year in 2010. Twenty school districts have more than benefitted from this program. “For the community at large this is a powerful model,” Hunter says.

- **As a result of learning about the co-teaching model**, Laine and Kroeger teamed up last winter at UC to co-teach secondary methods of English language. They worked with 20 prospective high school English teachers with a fresh curriculum in which the students would witness co-teaching at work. For the professors, it was more challenging and time-consuming but also more rewarding. “It was wonderful experience,” Laine says, “and an eye-opening experience. I think I’m a pretty good teacher and I’ve been preparing English teachers for many decades. The quality of work the students produced as a result of us working together, particularly with the insights Steve brought to these students, was really extraordinary.” This past winter quarter, there were five pairs co-teaching. “This is the kind of future we see, teachers working together,” Laine says.

As an extension of what has already taken place, next fall UC is going to place prospective special education teachers and prospective high school teachers at nearby Hughes High School, where the UC students will work with individual Hughes students who seek additional support.

Laine and Kroeger will co-teach the UC students, who will get to know the Hughes students, parents and guardians and develop a plan to help them progress academically.

In many ways, this collaboration is exactly what Buck and Patti Niehoff hoped for when awarding the Downey grants. There is a strong, ongoing relationship between Springer and UC with regular dialogue. Both continue to learn from each other and the collaboration has led to better training for more teachers in the community.

“It is such a valuable resource; we do need to be looking at sustainability,” Hunter says. “That is something we look forward to: Seeing how this can live on when the grant runs out. It is so powerful.”

Meanwhile, both sides agree it’s been a smooth, ego-free partnership. “We’ve tried things that didn’t work — and laughed about it and made changes,” Laine says. “But none of it would have occurred if not for Downey.”

“It really has evolved into a beautiful relationship,” Hunter says. “We are the quintessential collaborative team. We listen to each other. We are mutually respectful of each other’s position. All of the players who came to the table just were the perfect players.”
UC students help Museum Center record Ohio River Valley history

Project: The curation and digitizing of library, archival resources and artifacts for Cincinnati Museum Center. The goal is to create a web-based education module about Ohio River Valley history, focusing on the transformation of the central riverfront corridor that includes Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. The “web exhibit” will be a research resource available to the community about the natural history, science and cultural aspects of the region.

Downey Funding: $150,000

Collaboration: The Downey Fund grant has supported the work of several University of Cincinnati students, who are helping to curate historical and geological material.

Three UC history students have worked with Scott Gampfer, director of history collections & preservation for Cincinnati Museum Center. Two researched the Museum Center’s existing collection and identified resources relating to the Ohio River Valley corridor, recommending items to be scanned. Another student then started working on the digitizing — scanning photos and providing metadata. Two more UC students, who are studying geology, have been working with Brenda Hanke, curator of invertebrate paleontology at the Museum Center. They, too, have been working to get images ready for the online education module.

“Any partnership that strengthens UC and the Museum Center’s relationship is fantastic,” Hanke says. “The students get experience in curation and photography, which is good for their resumes. We benefit because they’re helping us identify and photograph useful specimens and optics.”

Which isn’t as easy as it sounds.

“I know it sounds really simple to take pictures of things, but I’ve been learning the best ways to photograph fossils; you want to make sure certain characteristics are visible on the photos,” says UC student Julia Wise, who is working on a second bachelor’s degree, in geology. “I’m taking invertebrate paleontology (at UC), talking about the fossils in the classroom and then being able to come in and see them.”

Not only has the project been mutually beneficial for the students and the Museum Center, but it’s really a community-based initiative that will eventually benefit the public with its research and education online program.

About Cincinnati Museum Center:
Housed in the iconic Union Terminal, Cincinnati Museum Center includes the Omnimax Theater, Cincinnati History Museum, the Cincinnati Historical Society Library, the Duke Energy Children’s Museum and the Museum of Natural History and Science.
Nourse Collection cataloging at Mercantile gets needed boost

Project: Cataloging and digitizing the Elizabeth Nourse Collection at the Mercantile Library. The collection, which includes sketchbooks, artwork, clothing, letters, scrapbooks, photographs and memorabilia, was donated to the Mercantile by Harriette Williams Downey. Nourse (1859-1938) was a respected portrait and landscape artist from Cincinnati. The Mercantile also used a portion of the Downey Fund money to match a Library Services and Technology Act state grant and fund the digitizing of the entire Mercantile catalogue so it can be available online. This project is ongoing with the University of Cincinnati Libraries.

Downey Funding: $150,000

Collaboration: Sandra Geiser, a UC graduate student, was brought in to work on archiving and preserving the materials while she pursues a third master’s degree, and she continues to work for the library on this project. Kevin Grace, UC’s archivist, has served as general advisor on the preservation of the Nourse materials, many of which are fragile.

“We are not an art museum, so we lacked experience handling the kind of artifacts we had been given,” said Albert Pyle, executive director of the Mercantile Library. “We needed advice on how to preserve everything. We needed supervision on making sure we were cataloguing them correctly, and Kevin provided that expertise.”

Without the UC partnership and Downey grant, Pyle said, “The stack of (Nourse’s) notebooks would still be sitting in a trunk uncatalogued.”

Geiser, who has a certificate in museum studies, is now in her fifth year of working at the Mercantile Library, and Grace continues to provide support when needed. “We have the feeling that we can pick up and call anytime,” Pyle said.

The Mercantile has established the Niehoff Center for Elizabeth Nourse, an area where the collection of materials can be studied. Geiser has the sketchbooks on an accessible database so they can be viewed on a computer. That’s important because the sketchbooks are too fragile to be handled.

“The revelation for us at the Mercantile has been learning the great range of the UC Libraries and the hugely impressive skills of Dean Montavon’s staff,” Pyle said, referring to Dean and University Librarian Victoria A. Montavon. “The relationship with the department has been genuinely collegial.”

About the Mercantile Library: The non-profit membership library is celebrating its 175th anniversary in 2010. It is funded by membership subscriptions, private gifts and an endowment fund. The Mercantile, on Walnut Street downtown, is the oldest library in Cincinnati.
Communities benefit from partnerships

Project: UC students are working on multiple projects with the studio, which engages the community in urban problem solving. The grant is part of the overall operating expenses for graduate assistant scholarships, materials and staffing.

Downey Funding: $500,000

Collaboration: While the Niehoff Urban Studio is a part of UC, it was selected to receive a grant because it consistently collaborates with hundreds of community members. The students take part in a unique and innovative off-campus classroom studying and experiencing first-hand urban issues relevant to the city in what can best be described as a joint lecture/lab course. As many as 40 graduate and advanced undergraduate students participate each quarter.

Over the course of seven years, 400 students have participated in approximately 180 projects and more than 40 events. Students have worked with almost 70 community groups.

“What we do that’s different from a standard class is we engage with community members on projects that are specific to their communities and then provide continuity of service after the quarter has ended,” says Frank Russell, assistant professor in the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning and director of the studio. “Students work with them on visioning for specific design or implementation. The partnerships are with many different organizations.”

The studio has worked with community groups mainly concentrated in Over-The-Rhine and Uptown, as well as with the City of Cincinnati. The studio work is organized by a two-year thematic focus, which has included “Food and Urban Quality of Life,” “The Over-The-Rhine Project,” “Uptown Housing and Community Development” and “Great Streets and Gateways.”

A small sampling of Niehoff Studio projects includes —

• Storefront design and execution for Venice Pizza, an Over-The-Rhine based job training program.
• Conceptual solutions to public transit and transit-oriented development in Over-the-Rhine and Uptown.
• Conceptual solutions to housing, urban design and community development in Clifton Heights for university-affiliated senior living.

Russell, who coordinates the program, team teaches with faculty from the School of Architecture department at UC and the School of Planning and others.

The studio’s work for Venice Pizza was featured in a UC ad.

About the Niehoff Urban Studio: Created to propose solutions to urban issues in communities. UC students and faculty and community members participate in events, classes, exhibits and symposia that explore urban issues. The studio is located in the historic Turner Building in Corryville.
Project includes work with Children’s Home

Project: “Exposure,” a social justice photography program that includes outreach to at-risk children locally, nationally and internationally, a photography curriculum, a visiting artists series and a book that includes students’ photos.

Downey Funding: $250,000
Collaboration: Partnership began with Carole Lichty-Smith, Fine Arts Department chair at CCD and Jane Alden Stevens, professor of Fine Arts, Mark Harris, director of the School of Art, and Flavia Bastos, associate professor in the School of Art at UC.

Through a professional internship program, where UC students work with CCD students on publications, exhibitions and their relationship with the Children’s Home of Cincinnati, which provides services for children with social, behavioral or learning challenges. CCD students have created a photography outreach program with Children’s Home students. “The idea is to teach them about photography in exchange for letting us photograph them and do portraits and personal stories,” Lichty-Smith says.

CCD students have found common ground with children from different backgrounds. “I get so connected with the kids I talk to,” senior Dawn Johnsen says. “I love getting to know them and being part of something they look forward to.”

Students have also taken trips to Mexico, Costa Rica and Africa to photograph and work with orphanages and abandoned children.

A private school in New York has used the Exposure program model in its curriculum. An article on Exposure appeared in the Photo Imaging Educators Association Journal, an international publication. And Lichty-Smith has spoken about the program at international conferences.

“It’s actually worked out wonderfully,” Lichty-Smith says of the collaboration. “It’s one of those projects we hope has a legacy and keeps going. I think pieces do have sustainability.”

About Cincinnati Country Day: A 62-acre campus in Indian Hill is home to this independent co-ed school for children ages 18 months to 18 years.

The Seven Hills School

Students experience Chinese culture first-hand

Project: Seven Hills rising seniors receive rich language and cultural experiences during a 2½-week summer trip to Beijing and Xi’an, China. This is not a typical sightseeing adventure; this is about experiencing the culture.

Downey Funding: $250,000
Collaboration: Seven Hills teacher Bob Turansky works with Ryan Meyer, exchange program manager at UC, to plan this experience and the preparation. The Downey grant helps subsidize the trip. After the academic year ends in June, students who are selected take a two-week course that covers Mandarin, Chinese culture and history (Seven Hills has recently added Mandarin to its language curriculum). In addition to seeing the Great Wall of China and Tiananmen Square, students receive exposure to Chinese culture, from dance and acrobatics to calligraphy and tai chi. Seven Hills students stay at a university in Xi’an and interact with the students there. “We did not want to approach it as tourists, but rather as travelers,” Turansky says. “We wanted an immersion to the degree possible in 2½ weeks.” Turansky calls the ongoing partnership a great success from Seven Hills perspective. Some students who have graduated have gone on to major or minor in Chinese language in college. “It sounds corny, but I think in certain cases it was indeed a life-changing experience for some of the kids,” Turansky says.

About Seven Hills School: Serving students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12, it’s the largest independent, non-church affiliated school in Ohio.
Web site to help patients manage diabetes

**Project:** Creating what could serve as a national model, this collaboration is developing a web-based diabetes management program available for VNA home health patients. Patients will log on and provide baseline information about their diabetes. They will be able to chart a range of blood sugars or lab values, track progress toward their goals and enter meal-plan information and have the number of carbohydrates provided. There will also be educational components about foot care and activity levels. The web site will help individuals better self-manage the disease, which has been demonstrated to improve outcomes.

**Downey Funding:** $300,000.

**Collaboration:** Another idea was pursued for four years by the VNA and UC Diabetes Center, but it fell through in 2009. This web-based program came about after a starting-over point last fall. “Our collaboration has been steadfast; it was just how we were going to utilize the money,” says Valerie Landell, executive vice president of clinical services for the Visiting Nurses Association. “We believe this is very exciting because it will be a sustainable project. We also believe there’s nothing else like this in the country.”

Landell has worked the past five years with Barbara Ramlo-Halsted, director of the UC Diabetes Center. The goal is to have the site launched by July 1, 2010. “We’re excited to partner with the VNA to serve patients who would normally not be able to access our resources as home-bound patients,” Ramlo-Halsted says. “Having a home healthcare nurse involved will give patients the chance to be guided through the process of assessing and using the Web site — making it a much more effective tool for self-directed care.”

**About the Visiting Nurse Association:** This non-profit home-care agency serves an average of almost 1,300 patients each week throughout four counties in Ohio and eight in Kentucky.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

**Doctor’s research targets Leukemia-related therapies**

**Project:** Research by David A. Williams, MD, who was a UC faculty member and was working at Children’s Hospital Medical Center. He is now chief of the Division of Hematology/Oncology and director of Translational Research at Children’s Hospital Boston. His major research interests are in the study of blood stem cell biology, blood formation, leukemia and the treatment of genetic blood diseases using gene therapy.

**Downey Funding:** $150,000

**Collaboration:** The Downey Fund grant was a portion of funding made available to Williams to research continued development of new potential therapies for a form of leukemia termed chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML). “We, in collaboration with Dr. Yi Zheng at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, have continued to explore a ‘lead’ new compound that interrupts a signaling pathway we demonstrated to be critical to the survival of CML cells,” Williams said. “The compound we are testing interferes with a key ‘molecular switch’ that turns on the leukemia cell. This compound will not likely be used as a drug, but we believe this work could be used to derive additional compounds for this purpose. We continue to work with the LLS Research Portfolio Management team on an extension of the original project with this as a goal. The current plan is for this LLS team to facilitate additional compound development with Forma Therapeutics.”

**About The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society:** The voluntary health organization works to fund blood cancer research in hopes of curing leukemia, Hodgkin’s disease and myeloma. It is also involved in education and services for patients and their families.
Assessing the Collaborations from an Academic Perspective

From July to September 2009, UC doctoral candidate Andrea C. Burrows interviewed 30 participants involved in the nine Downey Fund collaborations. She shares some of her observations from those interactions.

Collaboration is an area of interest for my dissertation research. My goal is to become an expert on partnership negotiations in K-12 school settings. In this study, I used an appreciative inquiry method — a technique of asking questions that accentuates the positive — during data collection.

Instead of focusing on any one of the nine collaborations here, I offer an aggregate of findings, leaving specific examples for the individual summaries. Three overarching themes were identified in my data analysis: excellent elements, best practices and future recommendations.

Excellent elements
Learning, changes, rewards and sustainability were all what I term “excellent elements” of the collaborative projects. Participants spoke of learning in relation to themselves and their group’s mission.

Because of the collaborations, changes were abundant, both in programs and in people who were directly related to them. Rewards ranged from the personal satisfaction in creating a meaningful partnership to high community impact because of the scale of the project.

One of the most encouraging elements was the identification of the profound roots of sustainability — in new grants, for example — that have been growing and flourishing along with the collaborations.

Best practices
Best practices for the collaborations included a common focus, tentative roadmap, two-way communication, respect, interest and team effort.

For these nine collaborations a common focus or goal(s) was essential.

The projects that were able to set up a roadmap for the future using these goals were the most successful in moving forward. All participants expressed a keen interest in two-way communication where both parties could begin and contribute in discussions related to the collaboration.

Thriving collaborations had a foundation of mutual respect. Additionally, participants commonly referred to a high level of interest vested in the collaborative work as an essential best practice. All of these best practices culminated in a team effort.

When participants felt a focus, had a roadmap, expressed their praises or concerns freely, felt respected and invested effort on a meaningful topic, a true team collaborative endeavor resulted.

Future recommendations
Future recommendations would include time allotments, meeting plans, a point of contact, periodic checks, expectations and flexibility. Collaborations should allow time for initial adjustments, as most adjustment periods took

The following quotes are from Andrea C. Burrow’s interviews with Downey Fund participants.

EXCELLENT ELEMENTS
“When you take greater risks the rewards are greater.”
“We have all been changed because of this collaboration.”
“We seem to have nothing in common, but when (I) sit down and open up and they open up, (I) realize that there are different things in common that we do have.”

BEST PRACTICES
“Hands-on, face-to-face communication as often as possible.”
“Identify the specifics of the project, and make sure everyone has an equal share in the conversation.”
“You don’t want any successful sustainable collaboration to be dependent on one person. You need a lot of one-to-one relationships. If one person is out . . . (it) still continues.”

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS
“Bumps are happy mistakes in a sense; without them we wouldn’t have made it to the next stage.”
“Someone needs to know how it all goes (from beginning to end) in terms of the (collaboration).”
“Collaborations, by their nature, are not seamless, and therefore it’s just not add water and get results. You have to figure a lot of relationship and organizational things out.”

continued on next page
INSIGHTS FOR BEST PRACTICES FOR COLLABORATION
1. Clear focus for the collaboration
2. Clear goals for the collaboration
3. Clear goals for each team and/or participant
4. Interest inventory from each participant
5. Roadmap or plan of action
6. Two-way communication encouraging listening
7. Two-way communication encouraging expression of ideas
8. Respect for all ideas
9. Respect for all participants
10. Intensive effort from each participant

Participants in the Downey Fund projects were surveyed on various aspects of their collaborations. Responses were self-reported.

**Community partners (5 — strongly agree to 1 — strongly disagree)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is beneficial</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does not allow me to express my opinions</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Has taught me something</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does not show respect</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Has set up a sustainable project</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Has not had an impact on me</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UC partners (5 — strongly agree to 1 — strongly disagree)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is beneficial</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does not allow me to express my opinions</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Has taught me something</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does not show respect</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Has set up a sustainable project</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Has not had an impact on me</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community and UC partners report:**

- Successful collaboration: 81%
- Personal gain from collaboration: 48%
- Relationships made the collaboration: 56%
- Sustainable collaboration: 57%

**Summary**

The interview data that I collected was rich with descriptions of each of these three thematic ideas.

The appreciative inquiry model allowed those participants interviewed to express excellent elements, best practices and future recommendations for collaborations. Interestingly, some of the strongest collaborations had to end the initial partner idea(s) and begin anew. Yet, the richest takeaway is that overall these nine collaborations are doing well.

For most of these collaborations the ties were strengthened between the partners, work vitality was increased between the community and university, and multiple branches were initiated for future projects in many different arenas.

There was also a collective appreciation for an assessment of best practices and an evaluation of the quality of the partnerships.
Afterword

Over the five-year period in which the Harriette R. Williams Downey Fund Collaborations developed, there were many great moments. But I’ll cite just one as an exemplar of the rich outcomes that have come from these groundbreaking partnerships inspired by the Niehoff family.

It occurred about halfway through the discussions between Springer School and Center and UC’s College of Education, Criminal Justice and Human Services. Professors Chet Laine and Steve Kroeger were in my office to update me on their progress and when I asked them how things were going, they said “We are practicing prophetic pedagogy.” In other words, what they were doing in partnership with Springer had the potential to reshape the art and science of teaching. Their enthusiasm for the work and their respect for what they were learning from the skilled educators at Springer was quite clear.

But it didn’t happen overnight. Like many of the partnerships described in this report, the early stages weren’t easy. It took a couple of years and many, many meetings to reach a point of shared interest and commitment to an innovative program benefiting young teachers.

Many of the community partners and UC faculty who have participated in the Downey Fund collaborations would agree that the hardest part of building a partnership is not creating the big idea—it’s building trust and shared commitment despite considerable challenges. It’s staying at the table even when the obstacles seem insurmountable. And it’s having the courage to know when an idea isn’t going to work and being willing to start anew.

It was the University of Cincinnati’s good fortune to partner with the outstanding non-profit organizations selected by the Niehoffs to receive Downey Fund grants. Beyond the immediate outcomes, we can see, as Andrea Burrows’ report suggests, the “roots of sustainability” in many of the collaborations. Perhaps more important, we have learned a lot about how to support and encourage the process of partnership with the larger community.

Mary Stagaman
Associate Vice President and Presidential Deputy for Community Engagement
University of Cincinnati

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all who contributed to the creation of this report, especially
Mary Brydon-Miller, Director, Action Research Center
Michael Perry, Writer and Editor
Beth Hess, Designer
Angela Klocke, Director, Creative Services
Karen Lisook, Program Director, External Relations
For information or additional copies of this report, please contact:

**Center for the City**  
University of Cincinnati  
PO Box 210634  
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0634  
Phone: 513.558.CITY  
Fax: 513.556.0509  
www.uc.edu/connect

The UC Center for the City serves as a portal for matching community needs to university resources and facilitates effective partnerships between UC and the community.