

Tensions in Community Building: Community Development Policy and Community Engagement Pedagogy at the University of Cincinnati

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A description of the relationship between the University of Cincinnati and its abutting neighborhoods can be told as two stories. The first is a narrative connected to the physical plant of the institution, its real estate development ventures and its impact on surrounding areas. This description revolves around institutional imperialism and self-preservation. The second story is about the nature of engagement that has occurred between the faculty and students of the institution and the surrounding communities. This tale illustrates a history of neglect and irrelevance. This is the story of every big urban university. Yet, the value in its retelling is the shift in position and policy that has occurred at the University of Cincinnati over the last decade that has the potential to interweave these two separate and often estranged plot lines into an integrated and transformational university-community relationship.

The University and Community Development

The University of Cincinnati was established as a City University in 1819 and occupied several small footprints in the central urban basin of Cincinnati until it took its present site on the hilltop above. At that time the nascent

campus, following the Beaux Arts model, was envisioned as a bucolic academy in a park, literally and figuratively, within what became public parkland. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, municipal cessations of parkland permitted campus expansion to the north and east into an area that would soon occupy fully half of the previous park area and, with purchased land the campus would, eventually make up a super-block within an already dense residential part of the center city.

In the mid-20th century dramatic shifts in urban form and function were occurring in the center city of Cincinnati which heavily impacted the hilltop district around the University. This coincided with the same period when national trends in the post-war growth of higher education stretched the capacity of programs and facilities on campus.

Historic trends

Massive structural changes proposed for the central urban basin of Cincinnati were framed by the Metropolitan Master Plan of 1948. These included two initiatives that would impact housing patterns throughout the city and region. The first was a proposed limited access

regional and national highway system that was intended to link the city with the region, but required space within an already super-dense basin area. The second was a clearance program designed to rid the urban core of blight, to provide sanitary housing opportunities in public housing, as well as to provide space for already constrained light industrial-commercial uses. Together, these displaced more than 66,000 residents, or nearly 15 percent of the population of the city, and along with other historic pressures, contributed to a massive migration and turnover of households within the hilltop area surrounding the University. While the impact of these plans was anticipated and was accommodated in the 1948 and coordinated follow-up plans (1950-60 Corryville-Avondale Plan of the Model Cities Program) with specific policy measures for housing, failure in implementation caused the creation of the "Second Ghetto" in the neighborhoods to the east of the rapidly growing campus. (Casey-Leininger 1993)

Observant University campus planners, struggling to accommodate growth in enrollments and facilities demands, used this planning process to inject aggressive land-use and transportation proposals into the Avondale-Corryville Plan. These measures included merging with an adjacent hospital complex (now known as east campus), increasing the University footprint into abutting residential districts, and advocating for new traffic arterials to connect the expanding commuter campus, then isolated, within the dense residential fabric. This strategy, realized in the 1960's, was essentially defensive in nature, and served to create a two super-block campus divided from the surrounding neighborhood by high speed roadways. At a time when pressure on inner-city housing supply was the greatest, through its expansion, the University and affiliated institutions removed nearly 500 residential buildings (Scheer-Russell 2000), further

destabilizing the already fragile adjacent community of Corryville. And so the relationship between the University and the community settled into an uncomfortable divide supported by segregationist ideals of the 1948 Metropolitan Master Plan (p.10) and institutional isolationism.

Campus and Community Development in the 21st Century

The two campus super-blocks of the University are surrounded most closely by the communities of Corryville, Clifton Heights-University Heights-Fairview or CUF, and Avondale. During the cold-war like atmosphere that existed between the university and the community, after university expansion during the 1960's, community leadership gained adequate strength to contain institutional activities to within the superblocks of campus. Without the option of spilling over its new boundaries and faced with continued demand for facilities expansion, available space on campus was quickly filled and in 1990 the University embarked on a new master plan that would densify campus with new buildings consisting of three million square feet including structured parking to replace surface lots and a system of green space to hold the chaotic campus together.

At the same time, perhaps with attention to the reality of being politically landlocked by the abutting communities and fiscally landlocked by land costs, the University chose to radically alter its approach to community relations by attempting to forge a common agenda with community leadership. Both the University and the communities suffered from declining social and physical conditions in the areas around campus. For the university, which must compete for enrollments in a new cash-strapped business model and which seeks to shift from a commuter to a residential campus, attractive housing opportunities and liveability within the surrounding communities are essential for continued growth. Additional

institutional support space is also desirable for the University, but this is sought through partnership opportunities rather than through campus expansion. So evolved a strategy to address the "second-ring" development of the institution (McGirr et al. 2003). In 1995 UC tested a collaborative relationship with the community through a land-swap involving recreational space that was traded by the community to UC in exchange for financing the construction of a recreation center elsewhere in the neighborhood. Following the success of this effort UC embarked on a global strategy of collaboration with area communities and institutions.

UC formed a non-profit development corporation called the Uptown Consortium (UpCo), with three hospitals and the Cincinnati Zoo, all residing within the university area, now known as "Uptown". In turn, the Uptown Consortium, working with select community members, framed a strategic development plan calling for a broad range of interventions including transportation, economic development, safety, services and housing (HRA 2004). The bricks and mortar of this plan translated into 2000-3000 new units of student housing, 1000 new/rehab units of non-student housing, and 400,000 s.f. of new/rehab retail and business space. With these goals and some funding from its new institutional partners, UC worked with community councils and business associations to establish and fund five new autonomous community development corporations that would have access to financing from a \$75 million loan pool from the University endowment to spur \$1.2 billion in specific project development. Six project areas were identified in three neighborhoods and urban design plans were outlined for each. Within these areas, six projects have been realized in this time which include a 710 bed student residence complex with structured parking (Stratford Heights), 40 apartments for medical residents and staff (Bellevue Gardens), 286 units of condominiums and apartment with

75,000 s.f. commercial space (Stetson Square), a 505 bed student residence with 40,000 s.f. of retail built on air-rights over a 1600 space parking garage (Calhoun Street Marketplace North), the redevelopment of a church into retail space (Urban Outfitters), and the redevelopment of a social club into retail and classroom space (Turner Center). (Romanos et al. 2006)

Only an internal university fiscal crisis interrupted plans for continued development as proposed. UC was forced to pull back operating funding for the Community Development Corporations. At the same time, economic proforma developed to finance the most ambitious projects were found to be weak enough to hold would-be developers at bay. Today UC's efforts in collaboration are judged to be modestly successful. The availability of off-campus student beds, market rate apartments, and home ownership opportunities has been enhanced, and new or rehabbed commercial space has been brought on-line. However, occupancy rates for the new living space are low and most commercial space remains unfilled with high rental rates to blame in both cases. (Romanos et al. 2006) Some controversy exists over the urban design and architectural quality of the projects and few deny the self-serving nature of the new offerings. It is too early to judge the overall benefit to the community through environmental and economic enhancement, but this prospect seems likely in the long term.

THE UNIVERSITY IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement through University-Community Partnerships is a broad term that calls for clarification as applied to UC program activities. Themes include the role of the engagement activity in creating knowledge in pure or applied form and whether and how this knowledge is applied to solve community problems for mutual benefit (Romanos et al. 2006). Based on his own literature review,

Mayhar Arefi describes four models of engagement activity: the Entrepreneurial University Model which organizes education and business goals; the Engaged University Model which connects teaching, research and service activities but with an emphasis on education above community intervention; the Social Venture Partnership Model which seeks to address issues in a systematic and comprehensive way but in parity with its community partners; and the Civic Engagement Model which envisions university activity as directed toward not only understanding the issues in partnership with the community, but solving local problems while creating frameworks outside the institution to sustain those solutions. In his recent report by the University of Cincinnati School of Planning, Arefi further categorizes activities into four areas: generation of knowledge without application; collaborative studies with the community and with application of knowledge; community involvement by the university members provided as a service activity; and area redevelopment involving real estate (Romanos et al. 2006).

For the purposes of this paper, UC "program engagement" indicates a collaboration with the community that extends beyond observation, research, or the extraction of information to benefit the pedagogical activity or non-local research dissemination. Program community engagement considered here is not designed to benefit large scale business interests but may be of use to it. Program engagement does not involve real estate development which has been exclusively conceived and implemented by discreet UC administrative offices as described above.

Past efforts in community engagement

In regard to the program engagement that faculty and students of UC experience with the surrounding and nearby communities, historical documentation and quantification are

difficult. By nature faculty, and students, operate independently and often do not accumulate and share information and outcomes of community engagement activities. Limiting this review of engagement activity to the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning (DAAP) and allied units, no curriculum or pedagogical structure has historically existed to support community engagement, with the notable exceptions of the cooperative education program and individual strategic research partnerships with industry which are not considered here.

Faculty at the DAAP School of Architecture and Interior Design (SAID) are just beginning to form coordinated interest groups under its new Director who is committed to the concept and practice. Many DAAP faculty are oriented toward service and engagement activities through their research and teaching interests. Several outstanding examples of individual and program engagement activity have been accomplished in DAAP, especially from the School of Planning (SOP). In the 1960's faculty members, such as Harris Forusz, who began his career in the SAID and later taught in the SOP provided key community plans for several neighborhoods including Over-The-Rhine (OTR) in the city basin (Miller 1998) His work in OTR was funded through the federal Model Cities program. Later he formed a student-faculty partnership called Adventure Playgrounds aimed at improving the formative experiences of inner-city youth. The pattern of his work in engagement is typical of many faculty who organize engagement activities around their teaching assignments, volunteer student interests, or the availability of funding support.

Federal and state funding for technical outreach services by universities emerged in the mid- 80's. In Ohio, the Urban University Program (UUP) funded a Community Design Center at DAAP organized by Forusz which exists today. In 1990, the Institute for Community Partnerships was created in the College of Education, also with UUP funding to

support faculty applied research in solving urban problems ranging from physical to social issues. A Center for Community Engagement was initiated by the University Vice President of Student Affairs to coordinate the individual student efforts across campus that served area non-profit human service and community development efforts. UC's experience in community engagement either through activism, curriculum, or research has followed an ad-hoc pattern with little or no support from academic or administrative leadership. In DAAP most documented engagement work occurred in communities further afield from campus rather than in abutting neighborhoods. On occasion faculty members or centers would be contracted by the city or a business association to conduct professional or service studies (Probst/Born/Miller-Corryville Plan, Gosling/Russell Clifton Plan) Perhaps, only one UC research center study has been conducted in association with the UC real estate development described above (Vredveld/Rexhausen-Calhoun Economic Impact Study). In short the university administration's efforts in community development have been historically separated from the university's academic efforts in community engagement.

Current work in Community Engagement

The arrival of University President Nancy Zimpher in 2003 brought a new focus in a sweeping academic plan that featured community engagement as a keystone for "defining a new urban research University". Entitled UC 21, for 21st century, the plan identified five goals, among which "Forge Key Relationships and Partnerships" boldly pronounced UC's future as an "engaged" university (UC 21 2003).

In the previous five years, as the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Zimpher had led the staff and faculty in a effort entitled "The Milwaukee Idea", which galvanized an already engaged university for a

role in service and collaboration meant to "transform" the university while supporting the "urban renaissance of Milwaukee" (Percy 2006). Accordingly, once at UC, Zimpher set out to understand and coordinate existing university engagement efforts. Through the UC 21 budgeting process UC funded a "Center for the City" (CFC) which would function as the front door for engagement and service inquiries from the community at large to UC. Zimpher established a Vice President for Community Relations in her cabinet and a university-wide Community Engagement Council (CEC) was created. The CEC convened faculty and administrators involved with working in the community and the CFC documented existing efforts in a "Community Connections Database" and subsequently modestly funded new initiatives. Based on the current level of community engagement UC was recently included in the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification with 76 other US institutions. Of course, within this new framework, community engagement initiatives continued to be pursued by faculty and administrators, such as the faculty led Participatory Action Research Center (Brydon-Miller) and the administrative Center for Community Engagement's new service learning curriculum effort with a new Director of Academic Community Partnerships (Hearn). Today we find documentation of hundreds of pre-existing and new efforts in community engagement and service at UC which are just beginning to be coordinated with each other.

Central administrative efforts, led by Zimpher, are clearly pushing UC toward a "Civic Engagement Model" for University-Community partnerships. She seeks coordination and comprehensiveness of academic/research activities that result in powerful and lasting impact. In her own words she lauds engagement work of both UW-M and UC but viewed "these myriad projects (as) 'boutique' in nature; many small projects do not always

scale up to solutions with holistic impact” (Percy 2006). Consequently, certain central administrative efforts are now geared toward coordination, with possible future incentives for collaborative alignments between activities that can ultimately be rewarded by implementation with community partners for sustainable outcomes.

Other central administrative efforts are geared toward “transforming” the institution from the inside out through program and curriculum change as articulated in the sweeping UC 21 academic plan and its “Forge Key Relationships and Partnerships” goal (UC 21). Curriculum development is the purview of the academic departments, and it remains to be seen whether the “engagement” initiative will be institutionalized and made manifest in curriculum or the, even more arcane, faculty reappointment, promotion, and tenure criteria.

The presence of Presidential interest is beginning to have an impact on the hitherto separate worlds of UC community real estate redevelopment and UC program engagement in academic/research activities. This is occurring within the work of the Uptown Consortium through placement participation of UC faculty and staff among the various community based subcommittees of the Consortium which address Safety, Community Development, and Neighborhood Services. UC members have both direct and indirect impact on Consortium decision making and, at the minimum, expose UC members to the community development events that are unfolding around them. Additionally, the Consortium has begun to commission technical and research work by units of UC in criminal justice (Eck), real estate development (Vredveld) and the planning research (Russell).

Since her arrival Zimpher has consistently used her presidential clout as the head of the region’s largest employer, to place herself and other UC members in the center of the unfolding effort of Cincinnati to revitalize itself.

She chairs the Uptown Consortium, but also presides on the Boards of the city’s most powerful leadership groups including the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation. She has placed top administrators and faculty on a number of citywide improvement efforts and civic boards. While the city power elite have always embraced UC’s top administrator, it is doing so now with the urgency of a community in crisis. One understands why her experience with the “Milwaukee Idea” endeared her to city leadership which recognized the value that UC represented to the community at large. CEOs for Cities well articulated the potential that Universities could have in leveraging urban economic revitalization in a number of areas including as a purchaser, employer, real estate developer, incubator, advisor, and workforce developer. (ICIC 2001). This view of the value of the academy to the city goes back as far as forty years and is captured in the book titles such as “The Urban University and the Future of Our Cities” (Koltsche, 1966) or “The University and The Urban Crisis” (Mitchell 1974) to which UC’s own President Warren Bennis contributed his inaugural address of 1971, “Great Expectations”.

The DAAP Community Design Center and the Niehoff Urban Studio

While the nature of community-university engagement may have become more visible in recent years (Boyer Carnegie Report 1990, Kellogg Foundation Report 2000) the inclination to collaborate and provide technical services has consistently been popular within the design and planning disciplines. The concept of institutional assistance to local communities had been broached as early as 1862 when land-grant universities were mandated to provide technical services to the surrounding community as a condition of their establishment (Fisher 2004). A century later, universities were moved to engage with the community to address pressing issues related to a variety of national and international

problems including civil rights and were again provided incentives to do so through federal funding for programs. This was a fertile period in which campus activism fueled an interest in public issues and social change (Fisher 2004). And it was at this time that Whitney M. Young, Jr, President of the American Institute of Architects, called for the profession of architecture to engage with communities to address physical and social problems. At the one hundredth convention of the AIA, according to Rex Curry, the concept of university-based Community Design Centers was conceived (Curry 2004).

Community Design Centers were established as early as 1963 (Pratt – PICCED). Today more than 40 exist as university affiliated entities, with many more as stand-alone non-profit organizations (ACSA 2000). The UC Community Design Center was established in 1986 within the School of Planning through a State grant funding applied research at Ohio urban universities. Since that time the CDC has often been located off-campus within its partner communities, providing technical architectural, urban planning, graphic design, industrial design, community art, community organizing and research services in response to requests from the communities, the interests of participating faculty, and availability of funding sources for specific projects. While the CDC has relied solely on the participation of paid and student volunteer workers, teaching activities were only a small part of center work and the mission and function of the CDC was unrelated to College or School curriculum.

Project selection for the CDC stemmed from needs identified by the community that required technical assistance and promised to provide a didactic experience for the participating students as well as an outcome that would innovate in the problem area. Between 1998 and 2002 community based projects were concentrated in one neighborhood and addressing a variety of social issues that included education (Schools

as Centers for Community Learning), affordable housing (St Anthony Village), community development (the OTR Comprehensive Plan), community art and at-risk youth job training (Art in the Market), among others. Focusing work in one community allowed a strong relationship to develop between the university participants and the neighborhood and functioned to grow a knowledge base useful for enhancing the effectiveness of subsequent projects. Yet, while contributing on the local level, the CDC operated entirely outside any relationship with its own College's school curricula and therefore without any opportunity to institutionalize the community engagement lessons learned. In an effort to "effect change from the bottom-up" a proposal was put forward to develop a community based environmental art course within the DAAP School of Art to complement the activities of the existing CDC Art in the Market youth job training program. This course was later formally integrated into the school curriculum and a new art education faculty member was hired who specialized in community based engagements, and who later adopted the Art in the Market program which continues to the present.

Following and in alignment with this, a community based Studio concept was modeled by the CDC in partnership with the School of Planning (SOP) and School of Architecture and Interior Design (SAID). This community engagement initiative emerged in 2001-02 just prior to Zimpher's tenure and was named the "Niehoff Urban Studio" after the primary donor, who also served on the UC Board of Trustees. The Niehoff Urban Studio is a program of DAAP and is an off-campus studio primarily involving architecture and planning faculty and students and occasionally students of diverse disciplines such as anthropology, economics, engineering, and geography. The intention of the studio is to provide a place for university-led, but community-driven study and discussion of urban issues for the benefit of Cincinnati and

other urban centers. The studio is located off-campus where University and non-university participants can come to participate in educational classes, events, symposia, and exhibits that explore these urban issues. The work of the studio is intended to have a tangible impact on the urban problems under consideration and contribute to the body of knowledge of research in this area.

The Studio is administered by the CDC and is conducted in partnership with the DAAP SAID and the SOP. The Dean of the College has direct oversight under a University-wide Provostal committee composed of other Deans and senior central administrators. Faculty of both schools team teach the studio each quarter with the Director of the CDC. Studio content is organized around biennial themes and community stakeholders collaborate to identify and set studio problems for each quarter. The studio is offered as an elective to both undergraduates and graduates, but is not yet integrated into any curriculum as a regular or required community-based learning experience.

The Community Design Center continues to provide technical design and planning services to the community but often provides service as a foundation to or extension of Niehoff studio academic work. Over the course of 12 academic quarters, the Studio has involved more than 500 students and faculty with eighty community based organizations and the CDC has completed ten related technical assistance projects.

The objectives of the studio are to conduct research on urban issues relevant to application to community problems; to apply this research through planning strategies and design interventions to address specific issues; to promote community development and student service-learning through engagement with community stakeholders for envisioning proposals and interventions that can have a timely and tangible impact; and to provide,

through the work of the studio, as well as through public presentations, exhibits, and symposia, a forum for the discussion of urban planning, design, and quality of life issues for the urban center.

In the spring of 2007, through a central administrative directive, the CDC/Niehoff Studio was relocated to the Uptown neighborhood of Corryville, which is a blighted area abutting campus. Its prior experience in engagement and visioning work in the basin neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine, contributed to the notion that all available and effective university technical and curricular resources should be focused on the challenged area immediately around the University campus. Quarter long interdisciplinary studios continue to explore concepts with community stakeholders within a two year thematic focus on "Housing and Community Development". Technical work of the CDC is funded by and connected directly to the project priorities of the Uptown Consortium. The Director of the CDC is integrated into the leadership structure of the Consortium as the Chair of its Community Development Committee.

At this moment the CDC/Niehoff Studio is in a position link the two poles of UC engagement activity, hitherto separate: university program engagement activities (research, technical assistance) and its now related curriculum (service learning and studio pedagogy) can be linked to university community development through real estate activity, now primarily orchestrated by the Uptown Consortium. Until this time, UC top level central administration offices responsible for the expansive area real estate redevelopment efforts have kept UC's academic, research, and technical assistance resources at arms length. Today, through community engagement work, pedagogical activities within the academy finally have the capacity to influence real estate development activities without.

There is much to be written about the conflicts and opportunities created by this potential interweaving of community development policy and institutional pedagogy. Of course this position promises many opportunities for new and productive engagement, but not without peril. By design, this gives the CDC/Niehoff many masters, each with possibly diverse agendas. These are: the community itself as the basis of project activity, but not made up of a singular mind or body; the Uptown Consortium, while independent and composed of community advisors, is chaired and funded by UC and its partner Uptown institutions and is charged with real estate and community development; UC's central administration, organized in part to pursue development interests for the benefit of the institution in the surrounding area and otherwise to manage and institutionalize the UC 21 academic plan; the Faculty of the College and other units who uphold the university's pedagogical mission and their own relevant research interests; the funders of the program who expect certain outcomes as a product of their generosity; and finally, perhaps the most important participant, the students, who seek meaningful educational opportunities in alignment with their expectations. This begs the question of how this program can function among these potentially competing interests and meet the needs of its various constituencies.

As a Convener through place and structure

First and foremost the program can function to convene constituents. The studio occupies a "place" off-campus that can become the neutral turf, where the community and the university can convene and where administrators and faculty can come face to face. Current studio space is located in a building leased by UC, but owned and developed by the neighborhood Community Development Corporation. This space functions not only as a space for the Studio and Center, but also as an open meeting space for both university and community groups. And here,

the importance of creating a known destination is critical to gaining credibility and effectiveness in community engagement. In its previous location, in the basin of the center city, adjacency to one of the great "third places" (Oldenburg 1999), a coffee shop across the hall, supported the "place identity" of the studio which made the studio an even more attractive destination at the same time that it exposed the work of the students. This is not a small matter in the process of embedding the studio into the community. In addition it is important for the program to remain outside of the control of one academic school. The current program is a part of the College, but not a part of any individual school, and this permits parity between academic interests within DAAP. And while the College of DAAP is the lead unit, having a space outside of the College allows the program to be more attractive to disciplines of other Colleges. Of course, space or subject is sometimes not enough to attract broad interdisciplinary involvement and accordingly the program funds a faculty research and graduate assistantship in partnership with the humanities center of UC, the Taft Research Center. This will fund two humanities faculty and two graduate assistants per year to collaborate with program engagement activities. Funding is only the first step in engineering this relationship between diverse disciplines which requires significant restructuring in didactic methods to form functional partnerships.

As an Organizer through resources and energy

Convening diverse university factions is not enough, because "... American Universities are remarkably specialized and fragmented, internally and externally, ferociously competitive, filled with conflict, and astonishingly unintegrated..." (Percy 2006). Diverse disciplines operate with diverse world views which sometimes prevent mutually beneficial interaction. However, within the

context of community engagement, the disciplines have an obligation to adjust their approach to accommodate a meaningful and productive partnership, and most participating faculty are already inclined to do so. Secondly, within the universe of community engagement activity, the program can identify themes to permit the work of the collaborations to be organized into a comprehensible body of work. One component of this is the annual graphical report of the program which can be disseminated and utilized for action. At the minimum, these coherent themes can stimulate further faculty and student research, scholarship, and community action which it has been modestly effective in doing.

If the program can be organized from the outside in, it can also work the other way, acting with the community, to organize community functions. As an example the CDC/Niehoff facilitated the Over-The-Rhine Summit in the Fall of 2006 which brought together for the first time more than forty non-profits in the neighborhood to network and share knowledge. The event also served as a venue for a "state of the community" report from city officials and generated enough critical mass to warrant an address from the new Cincinnati City Manager.

As an Observer thorough expertise and impartiality

As long as the program can maintain a relationship of impartiality for all parties, the program can observe and provide information for the benefit of anyone. With the program now positioned in the same geographical area in which UC influences real estate redevelopment for its own interest, sustaining credibility may be challenging. The program can and should provide information and must do so in a completely transparent manner that does not shelter opposing interests. As the Director of DAAP SAID Michael Pride once put it, "everyone is a potential target" including entities that fund the program. Apropos of the

history of UC real estate redevelopment described above, a recent report on "Community Interactions and Collaborations" (Romanos et. al. 2006) commissioned by the UC President's office itself and conducted by the UC SOP challenged the prospects of development undertaken by UC through the Uptown Consortium. This included data which undermines absorption assumptions for commercial space taken in the development proforma as well as proving that the affordability index of new housing created is well above that of our target population, which includes UC and hospital employees.

The CDC/Niehoff program need not operate in the capacity of "advocate" for one interest or another to be effective. Rather the program can provide transparent research as envisioned in each partnership. This research and data is often unavailable from other sources. An example of this type of work, again in Over-The-Rhine, is the creation and maintenance of an on-going database to track the proportion of affordable to market rate housing in the community. Affordable housing advocates and gentrifiers have long been locked in a battle over the proportion best suited for an integrated neighborhood. A desirable proportion was negotiated and agreed to in the recent OTR Comprehensive Plan, but no means of monitoring the changing number exists. Since the city planning department has little credibility for either group, the affordable housing advocates in the community turned to the university to provide the data. Forthcoming results may be surprising, and disappointing for the affordable housing advocates, but must be as accurate as possible. In the same time period the program provided property survey information to the corporate controlled Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) for use in redevelopment for market rate home ownership opportunities. In effect the program is obliged to collaborate with opposing groups in the community.

As an Arbitrator through planning and design

Where conflict exists between community agendas, university programs have an excellent opportunity to facilitate the resolution of differences. Again this becomes somewhat more difficult for the areas immediately surrounding campus. In OTR, a housing design studio was conducted as a means of negotiation between the aforementioned OTR Community Housing affordable housing advocates and 3CDC, a non-profit market rate developer. Three student projects were created for the Washington Park Housing District to address three levels of density and preservation strategies. While none of these schemes was chosen as definitive, the process of interaction allowed these two groups to share priorities. Today they are partnering on a redevelopment scheme for a portion of the district.

In the Uptown context, our program now finds an opportunity to arbitrate between the outcome of the real estate activity of the university and the real estate needs of the community. The recent UC SOP study (Romanos et al. 2006) uncovered an affordability gap in new housing created by UC and the Uptown Consortium. Long suspected and now proven, this gap is being addressed by local non-profits such as the Uptown Faith Based Community Development Group who have engaged with our program to research and vision affordable workforce housing. They use Studio work to solicit the Uptown Consortium for financial backing with some success.

As an Educator through mission and collaboration

Above all the program can function to educate all community collaborators as they, in turn, educate the university participants. This is the transformative exchange that Zimpher aims at. As Paulo Freire states:

“Authentic help means that all who are involved help each other, mutually, growing

together in common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform. Only through such praxis – in which those who help and those who are being helped help each other simultaneously- can the act of helping become free from the distortion in which the helper dominates the helped” (Freire 1996, Curry 2004).

These moments do occur, but sometimes more by accident than design. One such event happened through a gaming exercise organized between students and community stakeholders in OTR. The scenario was constructed to mirror the process involved with developing the OTR comprehensive plan. In a grossly generalized way twelve “lifestyles” and “interest groups” were identified among the OTR stakeholders, e.g. young African American male, senior citizen, private developer, etc. Each student team adopted one of these profiles and used it as a “lens” through which to identify problems and opportunities in the community. A community member who closely resembled each profile volunteered to educate each student group. After recording their agenda, profile groups were combined according to which were the least compatible and asked to negotiate a shared agenda. Students used this agenda to develop design proposals for the community. The process was extremely effective for the students, who became completely empathetic with their profile subject. The community participants used the experience to relive and reconsider the actual negotiations that occurred during the OTR plan. These community members, some sworn enemies, stood together as they reviewed the mock student negotiations on their behalf. All parties came away with a new appreciation for diverse worldviews that will affect their future actions.

Scope and limitations

Because the university and this program cannot be all things and it is critical to be transparent about these limitations to minimize

false expectations about what institutions can do. Of all the roles that this program could play within community engagements, acting as a Leader for community action is not one of them. Even though many community members, and now perhaps the city of Cincinnati, are grasping more than ever for an entity that can guide them forward, this is not this program's best role, even though leadership is what communities expect from universities (Gilderbloom 2005). Among other things, leadership calls for consistency and continuity, both of which university programs lack because of the transient nature of students and to some degree, faculty. Leadership calls for absolute ownership of the issues, which university participants cannot claim unless they are of the community itself. The leadership within the community must be controlled by those who benefit the most. As an asset, leadership capacity exists within the community and is more effective when mined and exploited by the stakeholders themselves (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993).

Conclusion

UC enjoys a unique moment in time where forces and missions may align to better serve itself and its community partners. The University may start to make its roles as educator, developer, and citizen co-dependent and transformational. We will start to realize the benefit of this alignment when we start seeing internal and external signs such as the curriculum reflecting community engagement objectives or university real estate development work reacting to academic research and scholarship. Twenty years is a realistic time frame to realize the benefits of today's efforts. And in this process the institution must be realistic and self-critical in its assessment of its situation to avoid the rhetoric of success without substance. Let us achieve what former UC President Warren Bennis did not when he overlooked the neighborhood clearance that his institution was engaging in during his tenure and wrote:

"I wonder how many of you sense the unique fortune UC enjoys in this city. So many universities now survive a situation of debilitating hostility with the communities that surround them. Our relationship with the Community is one of affection and mutual respect and from that we both reap enormous benefits" (Mitchell 1974).

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