

Aligning the Metropolitan University with Business, Government, and the Nonprofit Sectors

Guest Editors: John D. Welty and Lynnette Zelezny

The 16th annual Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities conference was hosted by California State University, Fresno in October 2010. It was an honor to welcome over 225 participants to the Fresno State campus for this dynamic conference, which featured keynote speaker Richard Florida and more than 170 presentations from 50 organizations representing diverse academic, business, government, and nonprofit institutions.

The framework of the conference theme, *Aligning the Metropolitan University with Business, Government, and the Nonprofit Sectors*, was inspired by a model of civic transformation developed by the Fresno Business Council, which includes three interdependent spheres: economic development, infrastructure development, and human development. A broad range of papers was presented through the lens of this model, which led to rich discussions about the role of urban and metropolitan universities as essential partners in the successful urban mission; selected papers are published in this issue of *Metropolitan Universities*.

Highlights of Featured Plenary Presentations

Doug Henton, a consultant to the California Economic Strategy Panel, spoke about the key role of colleges and universities as regional stewards to create economic development.

Heather McLeod Grant, author of *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High Impact Nonprofits*, addressed social entrepreneurship and the need to create networked universities that strategically link with highly effective nonprofit institutions in a shared urban mission.

Richard Florida, urban theorist and author of *The Rise of the Creative Class, Who's Your City?* and *The Great Reset*, presented the keynote address on the essential role of universities as partners in urban development, especially in technology innovation, talent creation, and social tolerance.

N. Eugene Walls, from the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver, received the Ernest Lynton Award for Scholarship and Engagement presented by Michael Lynton, CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment. Walls' research addressed advancing social justice through community engagement.

Congressman Chaka Fattah (D-PA), Chairman of the Congressional Urban Caucus, spoke with CUMU presidents and senior university leaders via videoconference from Washington, DC. He urged urban universities to focus on scholarship, sustainability, and self-sufficiency in order to meet the social, economic, and environmental challenges we face as a nation.

Mike King, Vice President of Global Education at IBM, demonstrated smarter futuristic technology to support synergies in urban innovation and educational delivery.

Conference Papers

In his 2010 Presidential Address at the annual meeting Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities conference, Steven Diner, Chancellor of Rutgers University-Newark in New Jersey, shared his expertise as an urban historian and how history has shaped the urban mission and the role of the urban university as a valuable community resource.

A unique model of service-learning across the disciplines was presented in “The Eco-village Experience at California State University, Fresno: An Integrated Approach to Service Learning” by Yupeng Luo, Lloyd Crask, Arthur Dyson, Manoochehr Zoghi, and Brad Hyatt. Construction engineers, interior designers, and architects collaborated in a pilot program to construct emergency housing for the homeless in Fresno, California.

“The Urban Mission: Linking Fresno State and the Community,” by Natalie Culver-Dockins, Mary Ann McCarthy, Amy Brogan, Kent Karsevar, Janell Tatsumura, Jenny Whyte, and R. Sandie Woods, described a model that serves as a framework for connecting the university mission and goals with its city’s mission and goals. This paper gave a comprehensive overview of the impact of this model across the institution and the community.

David Schechter, Ellen Junn and Kimberly Cole provided a useful review of literature on community engagement and partnerships to frame their analysis of one of Fresno’s early and major partnerships with a specific neighborhood. The focus on a particular community led to deeper relationships with the community that ultimately involved many different departments across the university and created a foundation for trust with the city. Leadership and attention to relationships were at the center of this successful case.

Pamela Lane-Garon from the Kremen School of Education and Human Development at California State University, Fresno shared her expertise on mentored peer mediation in the urban environment. Her paper, “Lowell Revitalization: One Student Conflict Manager at a Time,” described an effective model of conflict resolution in high poverty urban neighborhoods.

“Innovative Degree Programs Matched to City Strengths,” by Uday Sukhatme from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, detailed the effectiveness of a

recent strategic university initiative. Research, International, Service learning, and Experiential learning (RISE) successfully promoted a plethora of new degree programs and impressive educational outcomes at IUPUI, which has been recognized as a premier engaged university.

Exemplifying community-focused scholarship, Jessyna McDonald presented a model for Communities of Practice in the Aging Network (COPAN) in her paper “Engaging the University in Building Communities of Practice for Aging in Place.” The model is designed to improve outcomes for the elderly while also enhancing student learning experiences. She is the Executive Director of the institute of Gerontology at the University of District Columbia’s Institute of Gerontology.

Also presented in this issue, though they are not papers from the conference, are two interesting articles that take different angles to consider the impact of community engagement on the academic institution and communities. The first is a description of an innovative interinstitutional collaboration in Southern Maine. “The Downtown Education Collaborative: A New Model for Collaborative Community Engagement” by Michelle Vasquez Jacobus, Maryli Tiemann, and Erin Reed, describes a strategic partnership between academic institutions and community organizations to advance community service learning across the disciplines. The second article is an essay by Gregory Plagens and Kenneth Stapleton exploring how social capital theory may help colleges and universities increase their impact on neighborhoods near campuses.

Conference Reflections

We were proud to coordinate the 16th annual CUMU conference on the west coast and to highlight the unique demographics and cultural diversity of the California Central Valley. Our mayor, the Honorable Ashley Swearingin, an alumna of Fresno State, shared, with transparency, facts about the serious economic and social challenges we face in Fresno. Yet, despite these challenges she noted examples of dramatic steps in the transformation of Fresno due to effective partnerships between the university, business, government, and nonprofit sectors. The Showcase Bus Tour, hosted by Mayor Swearingin and Craig Scharton, Director of Downtown Revitalization in Fresno, highlighted numerous urban renewal projects in the Lowell district. We were also pleased to introduce a Fresno author and engaged civic leader, Richard Johanson, whose book offers a perspective on the role of leadership in community transformation. All conference participants received a complimentary copy of his book, *A Passion for Stewardship*.

Continuing with tradition, the 2nd annual Lunch Forum for Provosts and Deans, which focused on the *Promotion and Tenure Issues at Engaged Universities* was convened. We also added a new event, an afternoon reception sponsored by the American Council of Education, which provided a venue for prospective ACE fellows and mentors to dialogue.

Finally, it was a privilege to showcase the Fresno State campus as the site of the 16th annual conference, especially: the Henry Madden Library, the largest library in the California State University system; the Fresno State Winery; and the Save Mart Event Center. We also offered five tours for conference participants, which included two bus tours and three walking tours: Showcase Bus Tour of Lowell/Downtown Revitalization; Campus Partnership Bus Tour of Stone Soup Community Center; Tour of the Henry Madden Library; Tour of the Fresno State campus; and Tour of University High on the Fresno State campus. More importantly, we were pleased to feature our exceptional faculty and students for their work as engaged scholars, artists, leaders, and award-winning winemakers.

Thanks to all of the CUMU conference presenters and participants. We hope that you enjoyed the conference and our warm hospitable culture at Fresno State.

Plan to attend the 17th annual CUMU conference, *Creating Tomorrow's Future Today*, which will be hosted by Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) October 9–11, 2011, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

“It is time to turn our efforts as individuals, as government, as a society, to putting the necessary pieces into place for a vibrant, prosperous future” (Florida 2010, 187).

Acknowledgments

We are indebted to our sponsors, who made the 16th annual Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities conference a great success:

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Reference

Florida, R. 2010. *The Great Reset*. New York: Harper Collins.

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