

Resilient Campuses — Resilient Cities: Tending to Vital Connections

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Introduction

The theme of the 2023 CUMU conference, held in Washington, D.C., in the fall of 2023, was “Resilient Campuses—Resilient Cities.” Contributions to this special conference issue of *Metropolitan Universities* journal explore this theme and include submissions from conference presenters.

The term resilience is complex. It has been associated with both individuals and institutions/communities, and with humans and non-human entities. The Oxford Dictionary defines "resilience" as the ability for both individuals and institutions/communities to "...withstand or recover quickly from difficulties." (Oxford University Press, 2022) We are familiar with personal associations like the resilient person who overcame illness, financial hardship, or tremendous loss. A person might also be resilient in spirit, implying that they do not give up easily despite the odds or that they bounce back even against the odds (Werner, 1989; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). This definition of resilience is associated with toughness and perseverance and is also referred to as psychological resilience (Werner, 1989; American Psychological Association, 2014). The question how this kind of resilience can be encouraged and supported is clearly relevant to urban universities and the communities they serve. Yet resilience also refers to "...the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape" (Oxford University Press, 2022). The term is, therefore, also associated with the elasticity and durability of non-human entities.

The CUMU conference theme refers to the human aspects of resilience both at the individual and the collective level, yet it also moves beyond to include more abstract associations of resilience.

This complex notion of resilience aligns with more recent usage of the term that implies a definition of community beyond humans. Ecological resilience, for example, refers to the capacity of an ecosystem to recover from disruption and shock events (Folke et al., 2004; Walker et al., 2004). When grasslands suffer from drought conditions, for example, resilient grassland ecosystems are better able to withstand the negative impact of the drought conditions and recover more quickly after the drought conditions subside (Voltaire et al., 2014; Tilam & Downing, 1994). These resilient grass ecosystems are typically characterized by more diversity and a greater variety of grasses. Similarly, resilience in soils implies that soil can remain healthy even when it experiences extreme shock events (Arthur et al., 2012). Climate resilience refers to the ability of an ecosystem to maintain a state of functionality, even when it suffers from detrimental climate events, and climate resilient ecosystems also recover more quickly from the negative impact of shock events like extreme heat, or erratic precipitation patterns resulting in flooding or droughts (Folke, 2014; IPCC, 2022).

Both the communal aspect of resilience and its environmental aspects came into focus when the Rockefeller Foundation launched its Resilient Cities initiative in 2013 (Rockefeller, 2013; Zebrowski, 2020). Urban resilience has been defined as "the ability of an urban system-and all its constituent socio-ecological and socio-technical networks across temporal and spatial scales-to maintain or rapidly return to desired functions in the face of a disturbance, to adapt to change, and to quickly transform systems that limit current or future adaptive capacity." (Meerow et al., 2016, pg. 39). The Rockefeller Foundation's Resilient Cities project was launched to help cities be intentional about building resilience to the growing economic, social, and environmental challenges cities face. The project sought to provide cities with the resources to develop a roadmap to resilience through four main initiatives: (1) financial and logistical guidance to establish the position of resilience officer within city governments; (2) expertise to support the development of robust, context-based, urban resilience strategies; (3) awareness of successful resilience solutions pioneered by private, public and non-profit sector organizations; and (4) networking support to establish a global community of resilient cities that can learn from and support each other. While the initial project concluded in 2019, it spawned a network of over 200 resilient cities whose members include resilience officers, researchers, and practitioners who continue to collaborate. The network defines resilience as "the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to survive, adapt and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience" (<https://resilientcitiesnetwork.org/what-is-urban-resilience/>).

This story of the evolving definition of resilience and its application to cities is reminiscent of the evolving story of CUMU and its focus on resilient campuses located in resilient cities.

Resilience and CUMU

Like the resilient cities network launched by the Rockefeller Foundation, the CUMU network of universities also focuses on the urban space. From its inception, CUMU recognized that college and university campuses that are located in a city or metropolitan area are shaped by and shape their often challenging economic, social, and environmental context conditions. As the interview with Barbara Holland, which can be found in this special issue, indicates, cities are special communities characterized by diversity, incongruence, contrasts, and disparities. Those committed to teaching, research, and service in an urban and metropolitan university know and appreciate the challenges and opportunities these characteristics of cities have to offer our campuses. For urban and metro universities, the campus and the city are, therefore, inseparably linked (Diner, 2017. Lipschitz et al., 2017; Leal Filho et al., 2022.) Urban universities thus seek transparent boundaries and are committed to interacting with their larger context environment, rather than closing themselves off from their surroundings.

The article by Henry Cunningham on the Scholar-Administrators and their leadership role focuses specifically on those administrators within the campus community who are tasked with intentionally liaising with local communities and their diverse stakeholders. This focus on the administrator is akin to the focus of the Resilient Cities initiative on resilience officers within city governments. Someone has to do the job of reminding the organization at large that context matters, and that consistent attention to the economic, social, and environmental issues facing today's cities is essential to the work of today's campuses.

Jeremy Young focuses on the critical importance of diversity and its role in a thriving and stable democracy. Interestingly, the critical role diversity plays in both maintaining ecosystem health and in supporting the recovery of ecosystems after a shock event is well-documented (Tilam & Downing, 1994). The benefits of diversity for ecosystems can therefore be an important reminder of our larger connectedness beyond our own campuses and cities. This is why the mission of focusing on our diverse city contexts is so important to society at large at the regional, national, and global levels (O'Hara, 1995).

The papers presented at the CUMU conference, that are featured in this special issue continue the themes of the three feature contributions. The article entitled *Finances and Future Health: Understanding Barriers to First-Generation Student Utilization of Federal Work-Study* by Anthony Dissen et al., examines the topic of financial literacy and the crucial role work-study programs play in advancing it. The findings presented in this article underscore the significant influence economic factors have on the resilience of individuals. It emphasizes the impact financial literacy can have in enhancing students' resilience, and enabling them to thrive academically and personally. The article argues that integrating financial education with the

practical work experience of work-study programs, offers a comprehensive approach to bolstering resilience and overall well-being. These findings provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to support student success.

Collier-Tenison et al. introduce a novel social work model in their article entitled *Student Support & Retention: College Specific Integration of Social Work Case Management in a Higher Education Setting*. Their model focuses on enhancing student support services in universities and linking them to the community at large. The model aims to strengthen collaborations between campuses and community partners, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive approach to addressing the academic and non-academic needs of students. By decentralizing student support services, this model promotes accessibility and resilience by establishing a supportive network that extends both across and beyond the boundaries of the campus community.

In their article *Learning through collaboration: Reflections on cultivating cross-institutional capacity for place-based community engagement*, Perrotti and colleagues provide an example of a multi-institutional collaboration that illustrates both the opportunities and challenges of working across local institutions in the same city or metro area. The article documents an inspiring journey of collaboration and community engagement, highlighting the efforts of three uniquely different institutions in Providence, Rhode Island, united by a shared mission. The three institutions explored ways to foster cross-institutional partnerships while emphasizing the importance of place-based and community-centric initiatives. By working together, the three institutions undertook an exciting experiment to redefine what community engagement can look like in their local context when it cultivates collaborations that are deeply rooted in the lived experiences of local students. The article demonstrates how cross-institutional collaborations that move from individual silos to a collaborative culture of shared resources and expertise can lead to more sustained, impactful, and transformative outcomes in higher education community engagement.

Brodie et al. provide an interesting example from Canada, entitled *Intersecting Assets: How Successful Community Engagement Built a Leading Social Procurement Program at York University*. Their case study of how procurement can serve to support local communities, their businesses, and their local workforce offers a roadmap for urban universities to leverage their resources to benefit their local communities in multiple ways. Beyond its obvious positive economic and social impact, the procurement initiative also leaves the door open to focusing expressly on the environmental impacts of procurement decisions and, thus, on the impact local campus decisions can have beyond human communities on our local, regional, and even global environment.

Michael Conteh's article *Evolving Dynamics of Higher Education Institutions and Their Cities* examines the role of urban universities as community anchors using two public and two private

institutions as examples: Rutgers University Newark, the University of Pretoria Mamelodi, the University of Pennsylvania, and Syracuse University. The article provides a more general review of how urban public and private universities can shape the development of their communities through thoughtful collaborations and community engagement efforts.

All five articles, as well as the three feature articles, provide strong examples of the varied definitions and common uses of the term resilience. This includes the psychological definition of resilience which focuses on the ability of individuals to adapt in the face of adverse conditions and hardship. It includes the bouncing back definition of resilience that focuses on transformation and adapting to new conditions as different needs come to the fore. It includes the urban definition of resilience that embraces the adaptive capacities of complex urban systems so that they can adjust and even thrive in the face of disruptive change. And it includes a nod to the infrastructure and ecosystems aspects of resilience, including the commitment to build the capacity of communities to better absorb stress and disruption without suffering systems failures.

The contributions in this special issue illustrate that change is inevitable and urban institutions of higher education have the opportunity to lead the way in developing the needed capacity to adapt to the ever-changing conditions urban communities face. It is this ability to adapt and even thrive in the face of hardship that is needed to build more resilient and thriving communities both on urban campuses and in the communities they serve. The contributions in this special issue highlight the innovative approaches urban institutions of higher learning are already taking to adapt and lead the way to fostering resilient and thriving communities. The key appears to be the willingness to collaborate across multiple boundaries and to recognize the interconnectedness between individuals and their communities, as well as between human and non-human communities. CUMU campuses have long demonstrated the awareness and willingness to build these kind of collaborations.

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