



Guest Editor's Comments

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Guest Editors' Comments

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The concepts of university-community partnership and collaboration continue as an important focus for professional development in social work and related fields. The role of higher education institutions in supporting capacity building through such partnerships and collaborations has engaged social work and many other disciplines in fostering community, organizational, and professional development that enhances the ability of communities, agencies, and individuals to address real and pressing social issues. Ideally, this community outreach and civic engagement work advances both the community and educational missions. Our intent in developing this special issue of *Professional Development* is to call attention to the range of university-community collaborations in schools of social work and other disciplines and to provide an opportunity to share best practices and experiences in formulating, conducting and evaluating this partnership work in terms of its impact on community, organizational, and professional development.

With the growing work of such initiatives as Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) grants supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and other Office of University Partnership grants, community problem-solving and capacity building have been demonstrated through the application of university knowledge and resources. Long-standing initiatives, such as Campus Compact and the National Corporation for Community Service, have also nurtured and sustained collaborations among higher education institutions and communities and community-based organizations. Professional disciplines, such as social work, have a legacy of community and organizational collaboration in support of community service through professional education. Schools of urban affairs have, likewise, fostered strong educational programs that place a priority on partnership between the academy and the community.

Professional programs in public health, health related disciplines, and medicine have, more recently, established important connections of community health and wellness to community development. Initiatives, such as Campus Community Partnerships for Health, are strengthening both teaching and applied research through efforts that collaboratively promote community health and wellness. Currently, capacity building collaborations under the new faith-based initiatives, such as the Compassion Capital Fund, have linked university-based technical assistance providers to faith and community-based organizations in need of organizational and leadership development. This community outreach and civic engagement work of applying university knowledge and resources is spreading both nationally and internationally, and the dissemination of information is crossing borders and oceans in building a common examination of and dialogue on university-community partnerships.

While a core of this journal is on continuing social work education, this special issue casts a wider net over many disciplines and higher education settings. It remains, however, that the social work educational emphasis on the importance of "the person in the environment" (Council on Social Work Education) is critical to the concepts of collaboration and development underscored in this issue. The development of any individual, any professional, is interdependent on an environment that is significantly influenced by organizations and communities, and efforts to build organizational and community capacity are cornerstones for individual and professional development.

This special issue draws from many national, as well as international, programs and models of university-community collaboration for capacity building. It also draws on the inter-connection among individual, organizational, and community development that enhances our capacity to understand and

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