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Working Partnerships, Partnerships Working

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Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute

Interim Project Report – Group One

1. Project Title: Working Partnerships, Partnerships Working

2. Project Description

Involvement in community partnerships at Virginia Commonwealth University has its roots in the institution's history. The Medical College of Virginia, founded in 1838, and the Richmond Professional Institute, founded in 1917, both sought to extend knowledge into the community to change peoples' lives for the better. Today, the VCU campuses are even more entwined with the City of Richmond -- physically, and increasingly so as a partner in the economic and social challenges and opportunities facing the City.

In VCU's vision statement as noted in the *Strategic Plan for the Future of Virginia Commonwealth University, Phase II (March, 1998)*, one guiding principle is:

The University, inseparable from its urban environment, will use its partnership with the Richmond community to exercise VCU's expertise in addressing urban issues in the nation and the world.

VCU's mission statement asserts that:

VCU is a public, urban, research university, supported by Virginia to serve the people of the state and the nation..... The University also contributes its intellectual and creative expertise in the development of innovative approaches to meet the changing needs of our society.

During the inaugural session of the Grace Harris Leadership Institute, Dr. Eugene Trani claimed that one of the pressing challenges facing today's universities is the establishment of real partnerships that can make our communities better. This challenge is inextricably linked to VCU's unique vision and mission.

Group One has undertaken a project to explore the following questions. What is a true university-community partnership? What is the value of partnerships to the university's research, teaching, and service missions? What is the value of university partnerships to the community? What does it take for a partnership to work? And what are examples of working partnerships at VCU?

Project Vision: VCU will become a national model for the formation of democratic university-community partnerships that strive to make our communities better.

Project Mission: To define university-community partnerships and the strategies for establishing successful partnerships; and to identify existing university-community partnerships at VCU and describe them on a web-accessible database.

3. Background Information

After a review of the literature on university-community partnerships, the team constructed its own definition of a community partnership to direct this project.

Community partnerships are defined as those relationships with our communities that enable us to collectively identify common interests and concerns and to achieve mutually beneficial interactions. These relationships are built upon trust and open and honest communication and are aligned with the university's vision and mission.

There is a general assumption on campus that VCU is very involved with its community through the services of the hospital, the applied research and professional service of the faculty, and the community service of students through curricular and co-curricular activities. Yet, there is limited documentation of the extent of or the types of partnerships that exist. Nor is there good information on the impact of these partnerships on the community. There is also a general assumption that partnerships are good for the university – but just how and why has not been documented.

The team has mapped out a project that consists of: interviews with university leaders to ascertain the value of partnerships to the university; a survey of university departments to identify and describe existing community partnerships; an in-depth examination of 2 to 3 university-community partnerships that comply with the elements of a democratic partnership; and the creation of a web accessible database that catalogs existing university-community partnerships.

The anticipated outcome is a better understanding of our existing relationships with the community, and the identification of strategies for the development of successful university-community partnerships that would strengthen and encourage opportunities for scholarly growth and community development.

4. Project Details

Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 - To identify and catalogue VCU - community partnerships.

Objective #1.1 – To collect descriptive information on all current or recent university-community partnerships, including the health system.

Objective # 1.2 -To create an online searchable database as a clearinghouse of VCU - community partnerships for use by the university and the community.

Goal #2 – To provide a framework that supports mutually beneficial and sustained university-community partnerships.

Objective #2.1 – To conduct an in-depth assessment of selected VCU-community partnerships to determine how they have succeeded.

Objective #2.2 - To gather information on the value and operation of partnerships from key university administrators.

Objective #2.3 – To review the literature for the critical elements of university-community partnerships.

Objective #2.4 – To integrate the findings from the above objectives into a final report.

Goal #3 – To encourage the engagement of university departments and staff in community partnerships.

Objective #3.1 – To promote the availability of the database and the framework on university-community partnerships through the GEH Leadership Institute and the UniverCity News.

Target Population

The target groups for this project consist of participants in the data gathering phases and individuals and groups who will be able to use the data once available on the web and in a final report. The data will be collected from VCU administrators and community partners participating in the interviews, and faculty and staff who complete the surveys. We anticipate that the final report and database will be accessible to VCU faculty, staff and students who are interested in university-community partnerships. It will also be accessible to community groups and other universities with an interest in university-community partnerships.

Methods

The primary methods for accomplishing the goals and objectives of this project are:

- The distribution of a survey to university departments to gather descriptive information on existing university-community partnerships. This survey will be disseminated with a cover letter from Dr. Trani asking Deans and members of the President's Council to assist with the distribution of the survey and its timely completion. (see Attachment A)
- The completion of one-on-one interviews with university administrators using a set of four questions developed by the team. (see Attachment B)
- The selection of two or three university-community partnerships that comply with the team's definition of a university-community partnership. These selections will be based upon the information from the completed surveys and the interviews with university administrators. The team will conduct follow-up interviews with the VCU

and community partners in these partnerships to gather more detailed information about their function as a partnership and their accomplishments.

- The review of database formats at other universities that could serve as a model for a VCU community partnership database that is web accessible.

5. Available Resources within the University/Health System

Team One Members:

Robert Higgins, Associate Professor and Chair, Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery
Catherine Howard, Associate Professor Department of Psychology and Director, Office of Community Programs

Njeri Jackson, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, and Director African America Studies

Nancy Scott, Assistant Dean and Director of Out of State Recruitment, School of the Arts

Veronica Shuford, Assistant Professor and Director of Academic Technology, School of Pharmacy

A project work plan was developed with assignments delegated to each team member (see Attachment C), including assignments of interviews with university administrators. Team members have assumed responsibility for the majority of the project's tasks. Dr. Trani's office has assisted with the writing of a cover letter for the survey and its distribution. Ms. Tish Colvin in the Office of Community Programs will assist with the data base development for the completed surveys.

6. Implementation Plan

The implementation plan is described in Attachment C as our Team's workplan. The goal is to have all phases completed by November 2001. As of this report, the majority of the interviews with university administrators has been completed, the survey and the letter from Dr. Trani has been distributed, and a review has been conducted of directories and web accessible databases of university - community partnerships.

7. Evaluation Plan

It is anticipated that this project will result in a database that will be accessible to the university and the larger community. The database will describe VCU-community projects and will provide information on the strategies or "best practices" for establishing effective university-community partnerships based upon the information gathered by the team. The database will be tested for its "user-friendliness" by requesting Grace Harris Leadership Scholars to access it and provide their feedback.

Attachment A



Survey of Community Partnerships

This form will be used to create a database of community partnerships that exist at Virginia Commonwealth University and the VCU Health System. Please distribute the form to the person responsible for the community partnership or project. Return the form to Catherine Howard, Ph.D., Director, Office of Community Programs, Box 842041 before August 15, 2001.

Last Name:	First Name:	Title:
School:		Department:
P.O. Box		
Phone:		Fax:
E-mail:		Project Web Address:
Project Title:		
Community Partners:		
1. What was the community-identified need that the partnership addressed (check all that apply)?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Culture <input type="checkbox"/> Athletics and Recreation <input type="checkbox"/> Business and Management <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering, Science, Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental and Natural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Family, Children, Youth <input type="checkbox"/> Health <input type="checkbox"/> Housing <input type="checkbox"/> Politics and Government <input type="checkbox"/> Social Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ _____	
2. Briefly describe the nature of your project and its objectives.		

3. What other VCU academic departments or units were involved?
4. Did the project involve the following: (check all that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching activities in the classroom (VCU Students) <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching activities outside the classroom (VCU Students) <input type="checkbox"/> Research activities <input type="checkbox"/> Service activities
5. What was the most significant accomplishment of this partnership?
6. What were the major challenges?

Please return the completed form to the address below before August 15, 2001:

Catherine Howard, Ph.D.
 Director, Office of Community Programs
 P.O. Box 842041
 Richmond, VA 23284-2041
 Fax: 828-8172
 E-mail: choward@vcu.edu



Grace E. Harris Leadership Development Program
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Attachment B

University Administrators Participating in Interviews

Eugene Trani, President
Virginia Commonwealth University

Roderick McDavis, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
Virginia Commonwealth University

Peter Wyeth, Vice President for Advancement
Virginia Commonwealth University

Sue Ann Messmer, Vice President of University Outreach
Virginia Commonwealth University

Paul Timmreck, Senior Vice President of Finance and Administration
Virginia Commonwealth University

Grace E. Harris, Distinguished Professor
Virginia Commonwealth University

Don Gehring, Vice President of Government and Community Relations
Virginia Commonwealth University

Sheldon Retchin, Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
VCU Health System

Donna Katen Bahensky, Executive Vice President, Clinical Operations and COO
MCV Hospitals and Clinics

Marsha Torr, Vice President for Research
Virginia Commonwealth University

Frank Baskind, Dean, School of Social Work
Virginia Commonwealth University

Eddie Moore, President
Virginia State University

