Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship

September 2013

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Partnership Process Guidelines: Social Work Perspectives on Creating and Sustaining Real-World University-Community Partnerships

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Abstract

The authors, representing community practitioners, faculty, students, and administration, collaborated to produce guidelines for university-community partnerships that reflect social work's commitment to social justice in practice, education, and research. The respective experiences and voices of the authors contribute to a wider perspective on the explicit social justice implications of partnership formation for community-based participatory research, which is a vision shared by many disciplines. These guidelines introduce a communication outline that may augment the creation and maintenance of thriving university-community partnerships across multiple disciplines that promote social justice.

Introduction

Embedded within the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics is a proactive challenge to promote social and economic justice focused on vulnerable and oppressed groups. The language of this code specifies that socially just social work services insure equal access, equality of opportunities and equal participation in decisions (http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp, retrieved January 22, 2011). Many social workers become acquainted early on with Rawls' (1971) writings that highlight social justice as an underlying ideal for societal decisions regarding the distribution of resources in fair and equitable ways, including both the principles of liberty and difference. Specifically, it is Rawls' principle of difference around which many progressive models of distributive social justice emerge and impact participatory research: unavoidable inequities in social and economic resources should be arranged so that they are of greatest benefit to the most disadvantaged groups; offices and positions must be egalitarian, open to everyone to allow a fair equality of opportunity (Rawls, 1971). Applying Rawls' principles to our work in creating and sustaining partnerships requires an ongoing assessment of the available resources and a thorough understanding of the means and processes through which these resources are shared, and the processes through which these resources are shared, negotiated, and renegotiated through the life of the partnership. Galambos (2008) outlines the ways in which these philosophical principles of social justice may be advanced within social work education, including the domains of libertarian, communitarian, distributive, utilitarian justice, and egalitarian justice. In her argument, it is not one principle or form of social justice that guides the social work profession, but rather the need for educated discourse regarding the ways in which these philosophical principles may be differentially embraced in order to maximize social justice opportunities within social work education, practice, and research.

The active promotion of social and economic justice underlies engagement in activities such as community-based participatory research (CBPR). Often, these partnerships intentionally engage historically disenfranchised communities and the agencies that provide services and advocacy for underserved groups. Likewise, a growing literature base has emerged, emphasizing the interconnections among education, practice, and social justice promotion within the field of social work (Nadel, Majewski, & Cosetti, 2007; Soska & Johnson Butterfield, 2004). However, even amid the opportunities presented by university-community partnerships and interdisciplinary CBPR initiatives, diverse stakeholder groups may differ in their expectations, capacities, challenges, as well as institutional and situational power differentials that emerge in real-world engagement.

The foundation of community-based research, as well as service-learning, is the university-community partnership. The purpose of this article is to utilize the voices of several key stakeholder groups among differing organizational structures to discuss the ways in which key tenets of the social work profession, including social justice, will enhance the partnership process. Through exemplars and partnership process guidelines, we intend to expand the multi-stakeholder dialogues

that can promote more equitable and sustainable community-university partnerships.

The literature around university-community partnerships has experienced a boom in recent years. Several authors have discussed and illustrated this growing trend, including Butin, 2005; Maurrasse, 2001; Nadel, Majewski, and Sullivan-Cosetti; and Soska and Johnson Butterfield, 2004. Amid case studies and model partnership programs written by a predominantly academic audience, there is a need for a wider lens on how these partnerships are perceived by multiple stakeholder groups. The unique contribution of this article is the coming together of multiple stakeholders with the specific intention to reflect on our respective past partnership experiences in light of the philosophical underpinnings of social work and social justice. It is noteworthy that we each bring separate experiences to this discussion, as our past and current partnerships are not with each other. Building on our joint reflections, the authors of this manuscript have engaged in an iterative collaboration via multiple dialogues and discussions to produce Partnership Process Guidelines. The guidelines serve to offer practical recommendations which infuse these philosophical foundations into areas of communication essential to the creation and maintenance of thriving university-community partnerships, the foundation for community-based participatory research that are relevant from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

CBPR Partnerships as a Mechanism for Social Justice

Community based participatory research may be viewed as an important mechanism accentuating social work's professional commitment to social justice and creating opportunities for active engagement with traditionally under-represented communities to address a social problem or concern. The appeal of creating thriving university-community partnerships is the anticipated mutual benefit to faculty, students, and community agencies through service-learning, infrastructure and capacity building, translating practice to research, and likewise real-world practice-informing research choices (Fogel, 2006; Nadel et al., 2007; Rogge & Rocha, 2005). However, a comprehensive understanding of the process of partnership development, especially from multiple stakeholder perspectives, has been less frequently described in the literature (Primavera, 2004; Sandy & Holland, 2006). Gelmon, Holland, Seifer, Shinnamon, and Connors (1998) assert that their study on mutuality in partnerships is one of few examinations of the community experience, and that future work around the processes associated with university-community partnerships ought to be formulated in such a way that captures these voices. In their study on service-learning partnerships, Sandy and Holland (2006) conclude that community partners desire a relationship that is more reciprocal in nature and recognizes the community stakeholder group's distinctive, but sometimes overlooked, contributions. Extending from Rawls' social justice principles, key stakeholder groups within university-community partnerships have both a right to the same basic liberties of participation in creating and sustaining the partnership, as well as the opportunity to proactively address existing inequalities of decision-making power or resources brought to the table at all phases of the collaborative process.

Two specific models of university-community partnerships underscore our multi-stakeholder discussion and guidelines. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) focus on the relational aspects of partnership development within the context of interpersonal theory and its practice implications. In this model, there is thoughtful consideration regarding the nuances of communication, ongoing assessment of mutuality in both the process and outcomes of the relationship, as well as the realization that in a working partnership, there will be both interdependency between the partners and, hopefully, a transformation from individual to partner-developed goals, expectations, and outcomes (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). This relational perspective compliments the interdisciplinary collaboration model described in a case study by Amey and Brown (2005) that reinforces the processes and stages of ongoing collaboration as essential to nurturing a thriving university-community partnership over time. In this model, the partnership is conceptualized as moving from a "top down" expert model to a co-existing parallel and facilitative model and finally transforming into an integrative, collaborative process model.

Partnership Process Guideline Methodology

The Partnership Process Guidelines (Table 1) were developed with the objective of viewing university-community partnerships through multiple stakeholder perspectives, each of whom brings a different set of needs, resources, challenges, and expectations as well as variable levels of power. Egalitarian voicing of perspectives

Table 1. Partnership Process Guidelines

These guidelines are drawn from both scholarly literature and interpersonal models of partnership development (i.e., Amey & Brown, 2005; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002) and the lived experiences of faculty, community organization, student, and academic administration professionals. The guidelines offer a way to focus on the process of partnership formation and maintenance between the university and the community as a way to promote thriving partnerships and minimize hurdles "down the road" when engaging in activities such as community-based research and service-learning. Ultimately, we assert that maintaining a thriving community-university partnership is an investment of time and resources among all stakeholders centering around several key aspects of communication:

Communicating Around Mission
- Establish mutual mission recognition as a priority in relationship development.
- Share a written mission statement and open conversation around varied personal, professional, and organizational missions.
- Recognize and be open about conflicts that arise when personal mission and the partnership's ultimate goals conflict with the role of "organizational ambassadors."
- Find common words and themes within respective mission statements that constitute a common language for the partnership.
- Form and build a relationship that is focused on supporting each other's missions and identifying a common goal from the partnership.
- Recognize and respect the differences in missions and discuss ways that these differences may be complementary and/or conflicted.

Communicating Around Research Ethics and Participant Perspectives
- Acknowledge the agency's central commitment to protect its clients and staff.
- Integrate trainings for agency staff around research ethics and additional human subjects protections as a part of both pre-research activities and on an ongoing basis throughout the partnership.
- Know the perspective and mandates of the Institutional Review Board(s) governing research protection that may differ from the agency's usual practices.
- Discuss perceived power differentials openly. This includes decision-making processes & ultimate authority, intellectual property, and equal distribution of human and fiscal resources.
- Converse openly about perceived differences and similarities in race, ethnicity, age, social class and sexual orientation between the University, community agency staff, and consumers with regard for promoting social justice.
- Advocate for institutional and organizational responsiveness to addressing human subject protection and research integrity.
- Involve all partners in responding to concerns of the Institutional Review Board and advocating for solutions that maximize protections for all participants.
- Discuss ownership of data and other ultimate products of the collaboration.

Communicating Around Roles and Resources
- Ask the "big three" questions: What does each partner bring? What does each partner want? What does each partner need?
- Take stock of what is still needed to accomplish the intended goal of the partnership. Focus on how to go about getting that together and identify who will take on what roles.
- Focus on the people at the table, as well as the organizations represented by these individuals.
- Recognize that a lasting university-community partnership will be about an established relationship between organizations, not just individuals.

Communicating Around Timelines and Priorities
- Identify the timelines of all stakeholders (faculty, community need/demand, organizational mandates, staff needs, student needs, funding agency needs).
- Allow all stakeholders in the partnership to discuss their expectations about each other's roles in achieving timelines and establishing priorities.
- Articulate desirable, as well as acceptable, time-frame parameters.
- Be aware of, and communicate, time-line trends (i.e. how long an IRB application takes to process, the turn-around time for funding agencies).
- Keep timelines and priorities as an ongoing conversation, but one grounded in the other areas of mission, ethics, and roles/resources.

Building University-Community Partnership Into Social Work Education
- Affirm the mutual benefit to all partners in nurturing the next generation of high quality social work practitioners, researchers, administrators, and scholars.
- Establish a regular faculty presence in organizations where students undertake research or service-learning activities to build relationship continuity; the student, the advisor, and the agency should all be at the table together from the beginning.
- Offer research methods course content that discusses the process of establishing and maintaining university-community partnerships and practice-based research as a component of social work research methods, including critical discourse around the strengths and limitation of this approach.
- Initiate practice class discussions about being a practitioner in a research environment, and engaging in research that enhances one's practice.
- Involve undergraduate and graduate field students in university-community partnership discussions and ask for student input regarding ways to enhance existing relationships.
- Facilitate dialogue with doctoral students involved with community-based research to proactively discuss potential role conflicts and their own process of building a thriving community-university partnership that will extend beyond their doctoral program.
- Ensure that faculty carefully consider where students "are at" in terms of learning needs in order to inform their own pedagogical approach.

during the process of guideline development was approached through a social justice lens.

The authors of the guidelines include a community agency staff member overseeing research and evaluation within her agency, a tenure-track faculty member engaged in a CPBR partnership during her early career, a doctoral student engaged in community-based research assistantships, a doctoral student focused on the substantive inquiry area of university-community partnership, and an associate dean for community engagement within a School of Social Work. This iterative process took place via in-person meetings, telephone conferences, and email exchanges over several months. While we had a goal to produce a defined product, we also openly acknowledged

transformative growth in our individual and collective approaches to partnerships designed to foster CBPR projects through the process of these open dialogues.

We began the process by reviewing the literature, previously summarized, which was compared and contrasted with our own individual experiences. We then engaged in an open dialogue about the specific differences in our expectations and experiences that emerged. Ultimately, we drafted, refined, and finalized a document based on specific communication themes which cut across our varied experiences. The guidelines reflect process, relational, and social justice promotion steps in creating and sustaining a thriving partnership. Similarly, each stakeholder group voices an individual perspective in this article which augments the collaborative Partnership Process Guidelines we developed.

Community Organizational Perspectives

For a community-based organization providing direct services, collaboration with the academic institution has many potential benefits. The opportunity to partner with faculty can offer intellectual stimulation and build research infrastructure by providing critical guidance for data analysis, offering expertise on program evaluation, enhancing the ability to obtain funding, and supporting the training of staff in relevant areas. Student projects can provide extra staff to a grassroots agency and can serve as a natural channel for the partnership itself (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Foreman Kready, 2011). Many community organizations consider the training of students an important aspect of their overall mission statement, ensuring that future practitioners have had some relevant, real-world experience. These students may also serve as a potential applicant pool for the agency.

In establishing these relationships, the principles of CBPR (Israel et al., 2003) are useful to consider. These now well-regarded principles contain language that reflects the philosophical foundations of distributive and egalitarian justice described by Rawls (1971). Most notably, the guidelines stress that participation as equal partners where the needs of the agency and the academy are mutually balanced is a necessary foundation on which to build a thriving (and socially just) partnership. For example, many agency staff are intimidated by the thought of research and may have a very different—and mistaken—perception of what will be required in the conduct of

research. They may also be overburdened with the provision of direct services and may not respond enthusiastically to additional obligations. Reaching a mutual solution such as identifying a staff member who can serve as a "research navigator" may bring the two systems together and translate the language of research to direct service staff and share the concerns of front line staff. While a seemingly simple concept, successful communication between the two systems can determine—or undermine—the success of the entire partnership.

Respect for differing organizational cultures is another important component of successful collaboration. One of the pedagogical considerations mentioned by the faculty and student participants in this collaboration was the importance of teaching about research process rather than a focus on simply applying research results. University members likewise need to learn the process of earning the trust of agency staff—at all levels—by taking the time and patience to learn about the working environment and expectations of staff and respecting the knowledge base or "street credibility" of front line staff. Relationship building takes time and ideally, should be done before the need for a grant submission or student placement. Here again, identifying one key person to help navigate the agency can be invaluable. For example, one community-based organization had a relationship with a clinical psychologist at a local university for five full years when a community-based participatory proposal was announced by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Because of the well-established relationship and the strong trust the faculty member had built with staff over several years of relationship development and mutual knowledge-building, the grant was quickly written and has received a very good, potentially fundable, score.

The most effective learning experiences for students in the agency are to be embedded in an existing relationship between the faculty person and the agency. While students do perform essential tasks for the agency, the organizational mission is to provide direct services, not educate students, and this must be carefully considered during the process of collaboration. Often, student requirements must be fit into the academic year but the dynamic environment of direct service can make an unpredictable time frame for a student project. In one instance, a community-based organization spent the better part of the year helping a student respond to the Human

Subjects Review process; the time frame required for the Institutional Review Board review and the student's timeline differed, leaving little time for conducting the actual project. The result, sadly, was a diluted version of what could have been a very interesting study. Only when all parties take an active role in the student's progress and work together to balance their complementary goals will the student—and the partnership—succeed.

Open communication around issues of race and cultural competency are critical to the success of the collaborative partnership. Acknowledging the role that institutional racism and the historic conduct of research may play both the organization (and client) perceptions of research is crucial for establishing the trust necessary for a strong collaborative partnership; "Tuskegee" still exerts historical pain in the form of understandable, institutionalized distrust that can only be addressed if all stakeholders are willing to participate in the dialogue and discuss issues of racism, as well as privilege. This is also true of historical sexism, classism, and heterosexism as well. Partners must critically examine these issues at the outset of the relationship and be willing—and able—to continue this examination at different phases of the collaboration, whenever they arise. The communication should be sensitive, understanding, non-judgmental, and respect the differences of each culture. At times, this might require a formal structure within which to hold such a discussion that breaks down perceived power differentials between members of the community and members of the formal research team. For example, a meeting dedicated to the discussion of race in research, facilitated by a member of the community agency if possible, can provide an opportunity to offer differing perspectives and avoid misunderstandings or presumptions among participants.

Faculty Perspectives

From the academic faculty perspective, CBPR maximizes the potential for finding direct relevance from one's research within settings of practice or grassroots movements within the community. For many scholars, the notion of being "relevant" in one's research agenda is important to faculty identity, particularly faculty in the applied social sciences (Stoecker, 2003). An additional benefit to faculty involved in both research and teaching roles is the opportunity for irreplaceable hands-on student learning about the community engagement process, not only research methods

and outcomes of research.

Miskovic and Hoop (2006) poignantly illustrate the learning inherent in community-based research that ultimately may lead to social change; the critical pedagogy described is difficult to teach in a traditional classroom setting, but affords students the opportunity to engage in projects that advance the intersections among social work practice, research methods, and proactive promotion of social justice. As the authors also point out, academic freedom may be advanced when students are afforded the opportunity to explore social justice collaboratively with the community in an engaged process of social change. Another important pedagogical consideration is teaching about research process rather than simply outcomes. As stated by Primavera (2004), "To avoid the wasteful trapping of an ahistorical, decontextualized approach to community problems and to truly make our work available for replication, it is important that we communicate to others not only what we do but how we do it" (p. 182). If we desire to teach authentically about issues of issue of power, culture, and privilege that emerge in the process of creating and sustaining partnerships with historically disadvantaged communities, this critical perspective is vital. Students need to observe and discuss processes of community engagement that work well, as well as those that are struggling. For example, a faculty member may introduce critical dialogue in a program evaluation around a "stuck point" such as who ultimately owns the data or whether to approach an agency regarding IRB approval and formal consent procedures for a program evaluation activity that the agency wants for internal use but the faculty member may wish to write up for publication. In both cases, there are differential needs and expectations between the agency and the faculty member that are affected by power, whether real or perceived. When we engage students in an active discourse and learning process, the doors to critical and open dialogue about difficult issues of social justice and divergent stakeholder needs emerge for the next generation of social work practitioners and scholars. Students can be empowered to have a voice for their own learning needs as well as infusing ideas and perspectives that can help transform the university-community partnership process.

Faculty members are often engaged in multiple roles with multiple stakeholders simultaneously. For example, one project may provide opportunity to initiate critical discourse with students about

their observations of institutional power, social class, or racism, actively engage with community partners about their own perceptions and experiences, and negotiate with administration about competing demands between faculty time and community needs. The faculty member may be in a liaison position, perhaps even brokering and advocating between the concerns of the community and the concerns of academia. The faculty member has the ability to be keenly aware of power dynamics when they first emerge, and may take on the responsibility of bringing these observations to the table so that open dialogue can take place around issues such as historical, institutionalized racism, or ongoing social and political inequities in distribution of resources.

The Partnership Process Guidelines reflect the faculty member's stance of trying to be authentic in a desire to have research make a difference in the lives of people and organizations along with the desire to make an impact on her or his area of scholarly expertise. Designing and advocating for overlapping tasks that can balance and integrate the faculty member's roles with research, scholarship, and teaching can be a part of the partnership discussion as a way to assert the faculty member's desire to balance required scholarship and job performance with a desire to benefit the community. The faculty member's challenge is not to precariously stand with one foot in each side of the university-community partnership, but to embrace a role as a bridge to open communication, giving voice to the situations and experiences in which she or he feels pressure to join with one side or the other in various aspects of the partnership so that the system's communication is enhanced through the process.

Student Perspectives

University-community partnerships provide excellent opportunities for students to engage with course content through real-world illustrations and physical and intellectual connections among students, community, and interdisciplinary research teams. The literature asserts that students may be missing out on key aspects of learning without a focus on the real-world applications of course content (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Foreman Kready, 2011; Nadel, Majewski, & Sullivan-Cosetti, 2007). Illustrations from and involvement with partnerships are important strategies for reconnecting student learning with critical thinking and application of course material. Wallace (2000) posits that educational alienation exists in areas where students often experience missed connections; at the top of this list of critical areas is alienation from the community. This assessment of educational alienation is consistent with the literature on the consequences of approaching higher education from a compartmentalized fashion.

Marullo and Edwards (2000) argue that the banking model of higher education has taken over as the leading modality in many educational frameworks. This process is characterized as being mechanistic and robotic in nature such that students are trained to "borrow" information from textbooks and instructors, "withdraw" what is needed at the given time with a sense of immediate gratification, and simply "deposit" a restated version of this information without any "investment" or application outside of the context of the course assignment (Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Wallace, 2000). The end result is students' perceptions of the classroom and higher education in general as a place where critical thinking and application are irrelevant. Through critical discourse in the classroom, the lived experiences of faculty members and community members engaged in partnerships can be used to catapult student learning.

Perhaps recognized as one of the most common forms of community engagement and critical pedagogy approaches, the inquiry strategies indicative of service-learning courses are distinctive due to the unique component of reflexive learning where students can integrate learning in community context as well as through analysis and application to academic learning (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004). We suggest that faculty "borrow" pedagogical strategies from this approach and engage their own intellectual creativity in order to develop learning environments that encourage relevance and critical thought. Specific strategies include the use of a critical pedagogy to utilize the faculty role as facilitator and co-learner toward the goal of developing student critical thinking skills; the incorporation of speakers to broaden the reach of community voice; the introduction of case studies from partnership activities; and the inclusion of pertinent (and recent) research illustrations and hands-on opportunities to work with the community.

Likewise, we assert that community-based research initiatives provide excellent opportunities for the infusion of material gleaned from partnerships. We suggest that community-based

research content be woven throughout the research curriculum in order to ground course material in real-world examples that will frame class discourse around critical social justice issues. When encouraging students to engage in community-based research as a part of a course, faculty should take an active role in helping navigate some potential roadblocks to success. One specific example is the possible conflict between the academic timeline and that of the community partner. Students have a priority of producing a paper, while line staff rightfully prioritize client crises ahead of student projects. Through dialogue, a balance needs to be struck between faculty expectations, student time in completing assignments, and fitting a project into the daily demands of agency business. One helpful faculty role may be to serve as mentors who model the qualities of a collaborative working relationship that students may aspire to develop in their own work with community partners.

University-community partnership does not need to be limited to the classroom setting and can be an exceptional enhancement to the student experience in undergraduate and graduate level programs including internship/externship, field practicum, independent study, and dissertation research. Quality partnership development takes time. Instead of being pessimistic about the time constraint issues or focusing on less than successful experiences of past students, faculty and students may collectively engage in discussions about a project that demonstrates a goodness of fit with the needs of the student and the community stakeholders. Specific examples include the development of "backup plans" for anticipated differences in timelines or grouping students into multi-person research teams to make the process more manageable while not compromising the quality of the experience or overall expectation. Using this approach, the faculty member is mentoring the student by modeling an optimistic and solution-focused approach in such a way that provides for a challenging as well as supportive learning environment. Additionally, students in professions such as social work, nursing, counseling, and education are often in the process of shifting from clinician/practitioner to researcher. Students may desire to work with an agency where they previously were an intern or employee, but attention should be given to the need to openly communicate about and redefine the student role from one of supervisee, manager, or service provider to one of collaborator, researcher, or consultant.

It would be indicative of a commodity model of education to view students as the "revolving door" members of research teams. We recommend instead that students involved in university-community partnerships be viewed as participatory stakeholders. A good place to begin would be for all stakeholder groups to brainstorm and take into account the possible roadblocks that may be experienced by students involved with various stages of the project. Combining this awareness with the use of critical pedagogy and the infusion of university-community partnership content across the curriculum will provide campus and community partners with a space for dialogue in which all stakeholders, including students, are vital partners with an equal voice.

Administrative Perspectives

In order to be successful in establishing university-community partnerships, it is imperative that there is evidence of philosophical buy-in, as well as fiscal and human resource support for these initiatives from administration, starting at the university level. Although it is unlikely that any university would explicitly say that they don't want faculty to be engaged in developing community partnerships, the reality is that some institutional requirements unintentionally become barriers to these relationships actually developing; this is particularly true in the case of formal guidelines around workload, promotion, and tenure (Foreman Kready, 2011). The administrative perspective offers concrete examples of ways in which one university strives to overcome barriers to engagement.

Conceptual support to the development of these partnerships includes integration of university-community partnership language into part of their mission statement as an authentic expression of their identity and commitment. For example, as stated in the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Strategic Plan: "Great universities are characterized by a strong sense of community. Staff, administrators and faculty working together with a unified sense of purpose and a shared vision for the University will engage the community" (VCU 2020 Strategic Plan, 2006).

In addition to having a strategic theme or mission statement promoting community partnerships, universities can also endeavor to make community collaboration or community engagement language a part of the institution's promotion and tenure policies, which begins to address the often disproportionate emphasis

between community-engaged research and traditional research activities. By institutionalizing this language, the establishment of these meaningful relationships can be recognized as a significant part of faculty scholarship, giving credence to both the academic and as well as the community partner. A phrase that has entered academic vernacular, community-engaged scholarship, attempts to broadly capture and formally recognize the community-based scholarly work of faculty from multiple disciplines; this may be operationalized by the institution and included as a form of scholarship recognized during promotion and tenure.

Importantly, building the capacity for university-community partnership also involves fiscal and human resource support. As an example of enacting this support, VCU developed a Division of Community Engagement, directed by a vice provost to promote and support all types of community partnerships. This office hired a community research liaison to serve as a conduit and advocate for faculty and their community partners. Also, the university, through the Division of Community Engagement, provides other incentives that support faculty community engagement: providing $100,000 annual university-community engagement grant opportunities (up to $20,000 per grant) along with a smaller community service associates awards program that rewards faculty for collaborative work with community partners.

In conjunction with the university initiatives, the School of Social Work has also increased its focus on community collaborations. Through a strategic planning process, the faculty identified the need to develop a center for practice, research, and community collaboration that focuses on social and economic justice as one of its themes. The dean also established an associate dean for community engagement position to develop and oversee all community-based research activities, to manage the continuing education program, to direct the field instruction department and to monitor all international activities for the school.

Probably one of the more critical roles that the associate dean has fulfilled at the school has been to help faculty interested in community-based initiatives navigate the university requirements for funded research. Providing administrative support in completing the sponsored programs forms, developing budgets, working with grants and contracts, guiding IRB applications, along with the coordinating faculty effort reporting with the school's financial department are all vital to promoting the development of university-community partnerships. These activities are not just tangibly helpful, but also promote social justice. Administrators must be advocates of distributive justice, insuring that the many levels of resources that have been historically "owned" by the university partner (i.e. payment, recognition, in-kind support, promotion) are distributed in the most equitable ways possible among stakeholder groups.

Implications

As defined first by Rawls (1971) and then applied to social work education by Galambos (2008), the tenet of distributive justice often forms the philosophical foundation of university-community partnerships. This is applicable not only to the overarching aims of the partnership around a common social problem, but also in the dynamics of the partnership itself. Community organizational staff, faculty, students, and administrators must become attuned to the nuanced ways in which distributive social justice operates within their partnerships on a daily basis, decision by decision.

Open and fluid communication is clearly a vital component of university-community partnership, promoting distributive social justice where the tangible and intangible resources associated with research (funding, human capital, intellectual property, publication, recognition, reputation) are brought to the table, discussed, and distributed equally among partners through a process of consensus over time. This process may be fraught with moments of impasse and power differentials that differ from traditional forms of research where the "principal investigator" under direction from her or his university administrator ultimately held the power and control within a research relationship. It is complicated work to address historical power and inequity, and it involves concerted effort to not slip into institutional habits of "the way things have always been done" that may inadvertently perpetuate a status quo of inequalities and power differentials. The critical pedagogy reflected by faculty and student perspectives echoes the community's vocalization that much can be learned by conversing about both what one hopes and expects as well as the realities of competing demands among stakeholder groups. In the guidelines we propose, there is no presumption of ultimate power: the process is to dialogue and reach consensus with all parties fully

aware of each other's perspectives, concerns, as well as hopeful expectations.

In conclusion, we offer our individual perspectives and collaboratively developed guidelines as a way to facilitate dialogues among multiple stakeholders that each of the authors of this manuscript realizes are vital to a thriving partnership. The unifying commitment to social justice by the authors' common backgrounds in the field of social work compels us to progressive action that builds strengths in both the community and the university partner to enhance their individual missions and goals, as well as achieve the objectives of their collaborative partnership. The Partnership Process Guidelines offers a starting point that can be the basis for future scholarship on the outcomes and social justice impact of the collaborative work that emerging as central in our discipline as well as others, and offers tangible evidence of our commitment to social justice.

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