

The Impact of an Urban University on Community Development

George Hampton and David Higham

Historically, the contributions of institutions of higher education to their host cities or regions followed closely to that of their traditional services. These activities include:

- programs of **advanced instruction** which help to insure that the area economies have sufficient numbers of trained professionals;
- application of campus **research initiatives** to address local or regional needs; and the
- development of collegiate **public service** programs to address specific community concerns and to help promote dialogue between the campus and the community.

All of these activities form essential missions of institutions of higher learning, and are perceived by the public accordingly.

Increasingly, however, colleges are becoming involved in community development initiatives that have not been traditionally considered within their realm. Urban universities, especially, are recognizing that they must *directly* intervene to stem the decline of the neighborhoods that surround them.

In addition to moral challenges that enhance the will of urban colleges and universities to improve the conditions of their host communities, they are also spurred to action through *enlightened self-interest*. University participation in a community's development can provide a catalyst for:

- improving the city's **physical characteristics**;
- help promote effective **land use policies for economic revitalization**;
- develop **neighborhood amenities**;
- attract residents with **discretionary incomes**;
- economic impact through **resident employment programs**; and
- enhance the **educational preparedness** of urban youth.

By recognizing the inter-dependence between the university and the city, and creating momentum for environmental change, university participation in a community's development can effect a city's most urgent problems; promote positive community images, favorably impact university recruitment of students, faculty and staff; and

enlarge the potential for future student applicant groups that will be characterized increasingly by ethnic and racial diversity.

This paper reviews the roles assumed by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in advancing urban development goals at its multiple campuses.

Introduction

When in 1970, the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) opened its doors in Newark, its full intention was to provide the benefits and privileges of having high quality medical education for New Jersey residents, available right within the state. However, 29 years have elapsed, and today's reality is that UMDNJ has become much more than a traditional academic medical institution. In recognizing the needs of the state's diverse communities, it has moved outside the parameters of its original role of providing education and health, and has taken the lead in initiating revitalization programs which have helped to train, employ, house, and protect thousands of New Jersey residents.

Was it by chance or design, that a university of the health sciences became a leader in planning and redeveloping urban areas? Perhaps the answer is, "It was both." When the University moved to Newark's Central Ward, much of the area was still bearing the scars of urban disturbances that had besieged it in the late 1960's. Incongruously, the new facility was surrounded by a landscape which had decaying housing, prevalent poverty and poor public health.

In providing health care services to the public, the University's doctors, nurses and staff found themselves at the end stages of a pernicious disease: social and economic decay. The healing staff of the medical school was frustrated at being at the end of a vicious cycle: treating only symptoms and often, being unable to prevent illness. This was because the causes of illness were not health-related, but were attributable to existent environmental conditions such as homelessness, unemployment, and poverty. Recognizing that to truly improve the health condition of the community these social ills would have to be addressed, the University made a conscious decision to become involved in changing the environment. This change necessitated a redefinition and expansion of UMDNJ; what was, and what its new mission was to be.

In redefining the University's role, the first important step taken was at the governing board level. The mission statement was expanded and new provisions were included: *service to our host communities and the entire state; and improve the health and the quality of life of the citizens of New Jersey and society at large.* This change in venue was spearheaded by the University's executive management whom worked to: coalesce the other higher education institutions of the city; transmit the

message to the University's leadership, faculty, and staff; incorporate development and redevelopment goals in the University's short and long-range planning goals; and create a department of Urban and Community Development to coordinate program development and implementation.

With the location of three of its major campuses in New Jersey cities, UMDNJ is investing substantially in the revitalization of Newark, New Brunswick, Camden and their outlying areas. The University's investment encompasses an enormous financial contribution and commitment to the health care of the state's urban and rural impoverished. In addition, UMDNJ has viewed its mission broadly and has intervened directly, through employment, pre-college education, housing and economic development initiatives, to stem the decline of neighborhoods. Each of the UMDNJ campuses, contribute to their respective neighborhoods and communities in unique ways. The development of University facilities, and concentration of health care, education and service programs on the campuses provide critical anchors for urban revitalization.

A Statewide System Serving New Jersey

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) is a statewide system of health sciences education, biomedical research, patient care and community service. In its 29-year history, UMDNJ has undergone remarkable growth and development and is now the largest free-standing health sciences university in the country. The University has more than 6,000 students and house officers in its educational programs and over 2,000 scientists and health care professionals on its faculty.

Founded in 1970 to consolidate New Jersey's health professions education institutions, UMDNJ has eight schools on five campuses and a network of nearly 200 affiliates spanning the state. Each of the University's four main campuses comprise an academic medical center with a medical school, a core teaching hospital, a variety of additional health professions schools, health delivery and service programs, and centers of research. UMDNJ also includes University Behavioral HealthCare that operates major mental health centers in Newark and Piscataway, and satellite facilities across the state. In 1994 UMDNJ established University Health Plans Inc. as the only managed care organization in the state owned solely by an academic health care institution.

The University Campuses

The University is located on four main campuses and a branch campus in five key locations in the State. The University owns and operates a total of 37 buildings with approximately five million square feet of space.

- In Newark, five of the University's eight schools and University Hospital occupy a 64-acre campus of thirteen buildings with a total of 3.4 million square feet. The campus is located within the city's central and west wards, and is at the center of Newark's developing University Heights district located immediately west of the city's business center.
- The Central New Jersey campus, with facilities in Piscataway and New Brunswick, occupies a total of 71 acres with 18 buildings and a total of over 1.2 million square feet of space. The Piscataway facilities are located adjacent to Rutgers University, while the New Brunswick facilities are adjacent to the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital and form an urban campus close to the downtown business district.
- The Stratford campus is situated on 32 acres with 3 buildings and a total of almost 230,000 square feet of space. The campus is located next to Kennedy Memorial Hospitals-University Medical Center.
- The Camden campus occupies 1.8 acres with three buildings and a total of 111,000 square feet of space. The campus is located in an urban residential neighborhood adjacent to Cooper Hospital/University Medical Center and the Coriell Institute for Medical Research.
- The Scotch Plains branch campus is located on the campus of Union County College.

The University's Mission

The University's development has been guided by a four-part mission statement that dedicates UMDNJ to the pursuit of excellence in:

- the undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate and continuing education of health professionals and scientists;
- the conduct of basic biomedical, psychosocial, clinical and public health research;
- health promotion, disease prevention and the delivery of health care; and
- service to our host communities and the entire state.

Revitalizing the State's Urban Centers

University programs that provide a statewide system of health professions education, patient care, basic and clinical research and community service represent both a statewide resource and a substantial investment in infrastructure and human resources. These resources exert an enormous impact on improving the lives of residents of our host municipalities, those who live in nearby urban communities, and residents throughout the state who benefit from University outreach or satellite programs, and affiliated activities of UMDNJ.

The University consciously chose to locate three of its campuses within the major cities of Camden, New Brunswick and Newark. These cities and the state's other urban areas have significant health care, educational, employment, economic and social development needs. Meeting the unique needs and challenges in our urban areas has been a pivotal part of the University throughout its development. While many universities of the health sciences provide community health care only as a by-product of their educational programs, UMDNJ has embraced the needed mission of filling the gaps in the State's health care delivery system. Through its healthcare units, the University sponsors one of the nation's largest and most comprehensive statewide program of health services for medically needy people.

UMDNJ is also an important contributor to the economic development of the communities that host its campuses, satellite facilities and programs. As UMDNJ attracts revenues from a broad financial base, it has a catalytic effect on investment patterns and neighborhood development, and extends its involvement in the educational needs of elementary and high school students. University investments in the health, well-being and education of urban residents contribute directly to the economic growth and development of our communities and create an environment that is more attractive to private investment.

The University's contribution to the revitalization of the state's urban areas extends across its four-part mission of health care, education, research and service. Among these contributions are:

- The UMDNJ-University Hospital in Newark is the state's largest provider of charity care services to uninsured populations. Statewide, University health care units provided \$92 million in charity care services in fiscal year 1998.
- University Hospital's primary and specialty care services in Newark respond effectively to an urban population with unique and unusually difficult health care and related socio-cultural needs.
- University Behavioral HealthCare, with major facilities in Newark and Piscataway, and satellite programs in Trenton and many other communities, provides

prevention and wellness programs for more than 20,000 persons annually in every age group.

- The University's health professions schools on each campus sponsor hundreds of prevention and treatment programs to address health needs that disproportionately impact the state's urban areas and other underserved populations. Many of these community-oriented programs provide specific clinical services, while others target defined population groups such as church congregations or entire neighborhoods to improve access to primary and preventive health care.
- The University focuses on securing external funding for research initiatives that have particular relevance to New Jersey and its urban areas, such as AIDS, lead poisoning, sickle cell disease, cancer, tuberculosis, diabetes, asthma, dental disease, mental illness and environmental health. The UMDNJ Minority Health Council was recently awarded the University Medal for outstanding leadership in providing research, education and service to our State.
- The University has developed a comprehensive educational pipeline that nurtures our students and potential students throughout their educational life to become practicing health care professionals, teachers and researchers in the community.

In addition, University investment in infrastructure and human resources of its host campus cities provides direct economic benefits to the revitalization of these areas, and attracts additional investments. Direct investments include:

- University employment of substantial numbers of urban residents.
- University purchase of millions of dollars worth of goods and services from local businesses that operate in the same cities as its campuses, and from businesses in the surrounding communities.
- Discretionary spending by University faculty, staff and students that help attract or expand businesses that operate near the UMDNJ campuses.
- Program, facility and supporting infrastructure development that provides a critical mass for the attraction of new housing, commercial growth, and neighborhood amenities to the areas surrounding the University campuses. Partnerships formed between the community and the University promote and monitor various community development initiatives to address area-wide needs and concerns.

Several specific University initiatives impact positively on urban revitalization. These include:

The University as Partner to Urban Education

The UMDNJ Student Pipeline

The quality and number of health care professionals that are available to serve a particular community have a tremendous impact on its quality of life and the health status enjoyed by its residents. Because many UMDNJ students receive their education and clinical training in urban areas, they have greater opportunity to observe urban health needs and greater incentives to practice in an urban community.

The University, however, has long recognized that the continuous recruitment, retention and graduation of minority and other disadvantaged students is critical to insuring that our state and especially our urban centers have an adequate supply of health care professionals.

As the ethnic and racial diversity of our state and nation increases, higher education institutions have a self-interested and moral obligation to recruit and graduate students that reflect these new demographics. Increasing the diversity of students that are steered toward higher education increases the likelihood that they will return (or remain) in home communities upon graduation and contribute toward their revitalization. For UMDNJ, making inner city youth aware of the many opportunities in the health care fields, and increasing their inclination and tools to pursue these career paths is critical to raising their representation within the health care professions and impacting the health status of our urban areas.

It is for these reasons that UMDNJ, at each of its campus locations, has made a major commitment to working with local schools. Currently UMDNJ's academic units have more than 60 programs that nurture students as early as the Kindergarten years through their educational life to become practicing health care professionals, teachers and researchers in the community.

This educational pipeline is successful because UMDNJ works with local high schools, middle schools, and grade schools as well as community organizations to recognize talented youth and work with them throughout their young years to encourage their interest in the health professions. Other pipeline programs help prepare undergraduate college students to prepare for careers in the health professions.

Many University schools provide on-campus summer internships and recreational activities including labs, field trips, lectures with physicians and nurses, and visits to hospital wards and community health centers. Other kinds of programs include apprenticeship programs, urban scholar programs, an "Hispanic Center of Excellence",

“tot” programs, and “big-brother-big sister” programs which develop minority students and expose them to the sciences and emphasize responsible behaviors. All programs serve to mentor, develop, prepare, and teach students skills which enhance their academic, personal, professional and social abilities; all needed criteria to produce caring, intelligent, successful, community-oriented, practicing health care professionals. Most programs are specifically targeted to recruit and retain minority students.

Recently the University implemented several initiatives to further the development of the *Dr. Charles E. Brimm Medical Arts High School*, located in Camden. The goal of this public high school is to provide a comprehensive education which focuses on the full range of health care careers. Students are motivated to acquire the skills and experiences necessary to successfully enter a college or other professional school or to pursue an entry-level position in the health care work force. The University has formed a partnership with the school that includes the donation of textbooks, equipment, and other educational materials; making library resources accessible to student groups, guest lectures and field exposures, and the placement of students in summer jobs relevant to their educational interests. As a partner to the School's development from its first inception, the University family not only congratulated the Brimm School's first graduating class in 1998, but also cheered when every graduate went on to college.

The University as a Major Provider of Community Health

Many residents of the state's urban areas have inadequate access to health care due to a shortage of primary care practitioners in their area, barriers of culture and language, and inadequate public transportation options to access health services. The University's health care delivery units are forging partnerships and implementing programs to provide improved preventive and primary care services to the public.

Some of the most recent projects which have been developed include:

A Community Health Services Program that provides primary health care services to Camden and Newark residents at community-based sites.

The location of *community oral health, dental facilities* in various counties to provide services for the medically needy.

The recent expansion of the *Eric B. Chandler Health Center* to enlarge its comprehensive, family-oriented community health services for the greater New Brunswick community.

The development of the *Violence Institute of New Jersey at UMDNJ* which seeks to expand research, clinical service, professional and community education to address this major public health problem.

The University as a Major Economic Engine for the City

The concentration of University educational and health care services in many of New Jersey's largest cities provides a tremendous economic benefit to these localities. UMDNJ has major campuses in the urban communities of Newark, Camden, and New Brunswick/Piscataway; a suburban campus in Stratford (Camden County), a branch campus in Scotch Plains (Union County) and satellite facilities in Trenton and a number of other communities. The University's direct economic impact on these communities is substantial, and includes jobs for area residents, support of area businesses, and the generation of additional economic activity for community development.

As a statewide institution hosting several urban campuses, UMDNJ provides significant employment opportunities for city residents. Three-quarters of the University's 11,000 member workforce live in the urban counties of Camden, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Passaic, and Union. UMDNJ is Newark's second largest employer and provides jobs for 1,100 city residents and an annual payroll of over \$33 million. This workforce constitutes a substantial asset to the city's income and tax base, and represents an important anchor to the city's continued revitalization.

In Newark, the University has not only succeeded in providing jobs for residents of the city generally, but in providing employment for residents of the *immediate*, impoverished neighborhood in which the University is located. Approximately one-half of the Newark residents employed by the University live in the two City Wards where its campus is located.

The University provides substantial employment for residents of the nearby urban communities of East Orange, Irvington, Elizabeth and Jersey City; and for residents of its central New Jersey host communities of New Brunswick and Piscataway.

Urban residents employed by UMDNJ not only derive immediate economic benefits, but also have opportunities to participate in the University's workforce development programs. These programs provide opportunities for staff to add to their professional growth and training. Since their inception, staff development programs have benefited over 10,000 University employees. UMDNJ employs several thousand urban residents and the enhanced job skills and training opportunities that are made available to University staff directly strengthens the human resources of our cities.

UMDNJ promotes the vitality of area businesses. Aided by a very successful (set-aside) Special Vendor Program that seeks to connect the University's purchasing needs with small, minority and women businesses, UMDNJ annually buys many millions of dollars worth of goods and services from businesses that operate near the University's urban campuses. For example, in fiscal year 1997 UMDNJ purchased over \$7.25 million worth of goods and services from businesses located in Newark. University faculty, staff, students, and visitors to its campuses also patronize neighborhood businesses and help sustain and strengthen these important neighborhood anchors.

The aggregate effect of these activities (employment, institutional purchasing, and discretionary spending by the university community) creates a formidable university impact on a city's economy. This impact is magnified as the original expenditures are circulated and re-spent, generating additional wealth for the creation of jobs, businesses, and tax support.

University Facility Development: Investments to the Urban Infrastructure

Developers of inner city projects are more inclined to invest if they are able to locate near an existing critical mass of activity. In this way urban-based college campuses can act as powerful magnets for the attraction of housing, shops, restaurants, and other businesses.

To the extent that universities direct additional plans for facility construction and program expansion to inner city locations, employment and economic development impact on the community will be increased as well.

In recent years the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey has undertaken several initiatives to add to its urban infrastructure, with a concomitant impact on urban revitalization efforts.

In Newark the University made a major investment to renovate the Dr. Stanley S. Bergen, Jr. building, a 17-story structure originally constructed in 1955 as the Newark City Hospital. This phased project modernized the facility for use as an academic/administration building, and is benefiting area students by expanding educational programs in nursing and in allied health.

In New Brunswick, the UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School has enhanced the city's role as a major state resource for health profession's education, research and clinical care. Recent additions to the city include the opening of the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, a clinical academic building, and a larger facility to house the Chandler Health Center.

In 1998 construction was completed on another addition to New Brunswick's central business district that provided office space for the relocation of several hundred UMDNJ administrative staff. Many of the staff affected by this move were relocated from suburban (off-campus) space to this center city location. This increased University presence in downtown New Brunswick is having a positive effect on the city's continued revitalization.

In Trenton, UMDNJ worked with city and county authorities to construct an addiction science center within one of the city's highest priority development areas.

Universities as Convenors of Neighborhood Development Strategies

The mere presence of a university is no guarantee that other forms of economic development will automatically seek to locate near it. Sometimes coordinated, collective activities need to be taken to overcome barriers to investment and attract compatible development to even the strongest institutionally anchored neighborhoods. Newark's University Heights neighborhood offers such an example.

Co-existing with four college campuses (boosting 40,000 students, faculty and staff) and many other anchors such as a county government complex and three hospitals, the surrounding University Heights neighborhood was desperately poor, blighted, without a supermarket and other basic neighborhood services.

The universities (working cooperatively as the Council for Higher Education in Newark -- CHEN), recognized the lack of restaurants, suitable housing for employees and other amenities were obstacles when trying to attract students and faculty to the area. The neighborhood's poverty rate, illiteracy, crime, weed-filled lots and other ills provided a disheartening contrast to the university campuses.

Disinvestment had left abundant vacant land on the periphery of the university campuses. The challenge was to develop these areas to serve the needs of both the day-time workforce and neighborhood residents, increase area job opportunities, and generally improve the neighborhood.

Over a two-year period, the universities worked collectively with community residents and representatives of other neighborhood anchors to produce a development plan for the area. State government provided important seed grant support for a process to encourage and channel community participation in this development initiative. Media attention began to focus more on the neighborhood's potential for development. Private developer interest was peaked and eventually major investments were made. The universities coordinated the neighborhood's anchors in this process, provided technical support to developers and assisted community organizations to monitor and effect the outcomes of the development.

Today, regional highway signs direct commuters to Newark's University Heights Neighborhood. In the heart of the neighborhood, replacing land that was generally vacant and garbage strewn, is the 900 unit Society Hill town house complex, built by New Jersey's largest homebuilder. This complex is situated between the university campuses and completes an eye-pleasing development corridor linking the campuses.

The University Heights development process has spurred the construction of additional housing for low and moderate-income home buyers. A 66-unit condominium complex was developed through the University Heights Neighborhood Development Corporation, a non-profit corporation created by CHEN and governed by university and community representatives. Potential homeowners were assisted through an interest-free revolving loan fund established at CHEN by the Amelior Foundation.

Commercial development has also been attracted to the neighborhood, providing needed services and jobs for area residents. One of Pathmark's most successful supermarkets is now located across the street from the UMDNJ campus. This major food market is the first to serve the University Heights area in over twenty years. In addition, other strip malls, including one hosting a new Rite-Aid pharmacy as the anchor tenant, have opened close to the new housing and the university campuses. A new Loew's Cinema Multiplex also now serves the neighborhood, again representing the first theater of its kind in the area in over twenty years.

This first phase of University Heights redevelopment, largely undertaken by volunteer staff at the universities acting as technical advisors and cheerleaders, has succeeded in causing the revitalization of city blocks which largely abut the campus borders. What were once mostly vacant, weedy lots are now well-built and attractive townhomes with a scattering of small shops and luncheonettes. In essence, this first phase of University Heights redevelopment has created a "town within a town" exhibiting attractive curbside appearances and establishing a resident population with disposable incomes important to the area's economic development.

While this first phase has begun to revitalize a small core area adding income to the neighborhood's base, the majority of the neighborhood has not yet experienced direct project benefits. For the most part neighborhood residents, with few skills and education, exist with incomes well-below average, and reside in old housing stock in need of upkeep and repair, on neighborhood streets in want of sidewalks, curbs and other improvements. Few retail stores are in the area. Most important, apart from employment offered largely by the universities and hospitals, commerce has not been attracted which offers the neighborhood a *sustaining economic base for long-term development*.

The next stage of development in University Heights, in the form of creating a Science Park, is based on harnessing science and technology as a force for urban and regional economic development. Urban science parks build upon the existing strengths of universities and hospitals to overcome the negative factors that inhibit the redevelopment of urban areas. Science parks provide the environment for partnerships to develop between universities, industry and government. The sharing of new scientific and physical facilities in close proximity to university-based research can result in significant technology transfer. The linking of promising research to commercialization will be a catalyst for the continued revitalization of Newark, and enhance regional economic growth.

The University Heights Science Park (UHSP) is a collaborative venture between Newark's higher education institutions, the City and Community of Newark, and private industry. It is designed as a 50 acre, mixed-use, science and technology park in the city's Central Ward, adjacent to the Park's four higher education sponsors. When fully developed, the Science Park will generate \$300 million of construction, 5,000 direct and indirect construction jobs, 6,600 direct and indirect permanent jobs with an annual payroll of \$275 million, and \$4 million of new real estate taxes.

The first two Science Park buildings were completed in the Fall of 1996 providing administrative space for Park offices, industrial liaison laboratories for the New Jersey Center for Biomaterials and Medical Devices, and 30,000 square feet of business incubation space that is home to seventeen technology start-up companies. Although all technology companies are welcome in Science Park, recruiting is focused on four technology clusters, reflecting the research strengths of the sponsoring universities: Biosciences and Biotechnology; Information and Communications Technology; Environmental and Energy Technology; and Advanced Manufacturing Technology.

An anchor project for the Science Park, the *International Center for Public Health*, is planned and largely funded. This new science facility will create a world class public health complex resulting in significant benefits for the residents of Newark and New Jersey. Among many benefits, the Center will establish New Jersey as a prestigious national and world leader in infectious disease research and treatment, significantly improve the health of Newark and New Jersey residents, attract other technology businesses to the Park and to New Jersey, bring well-paying jobs back to Newark, and provide education and mentorship programs for urban and minority youth.

Education is an important part of the comprehensive Science Park Master Plan, along with the provision of affordable housing, ancillary retail development, and day care services to compliment the neighborhood's economic development. A science and technology high school is being planned jointly by UHSP and the Newark School District. Its adjacency to Science Park will permit close relationships with the universities and with the Park's technology companies.

Conclusion

Universities and colleges represent enormous resources for the betterment of our urban communities. As large economic entities, they supply jobs, business contracts, and other investments that add tremendous income to the local economy. University sponsored public service programs broadens the institution's mission by addressing specific conditions that impede the community's development. Pre-college programs extend the university's educational mission to impact the community's larger educational needs and form a student feeder pipeline between the community and university. The concentration of university programs, activities, and facilities at an urban location can be a powerful magnet for the attraction of housing, shops, restaurants, and technology-based development anxious to benefit from close proximity to a university campus.

A university need not commit large resources to attract compatible development to its environs. Considering the University Heights experience, the CHEN institutions did not directly contribute large sums of funding to develop the housing, the shops and the other investments. Rather, these development projects were financed by a combination of investors, mostly private. The college and universities that make up CHEN, instead, supplied a vision, planning and marketing skills, and community/political savvy. In this way the CHEN institutions enticed developers to take a second (or first) look at the neighborhood and to make investments based on sound business decisions.

Because the monetary investment required from a college is relatively small, all colleges have the potential to impact their communities in ways similar to the University Heights experience. Critical mass development in a neighborhood is dependent only on the ability of the stakeholders to convince as many other developers as possible to make targeted investments.

Some members of the community will continue to question the role of the university in neighborhood development. Colleges must recognize the diversity of views that often exist within a single community, and initiate strategies that will bring dissenting voices into the process.

Indeed the continual give and take between town and gown can lead to better policy making, and faster implementation once decisions are reached, *if* issues that are important to the community are addressed before hand. Working with the community on large projects like University Heights takes an enormous amount of time and commitment on the part of the college. Many obstacles will be presented, but none that outweigh the rewards.