

# university-community partnership

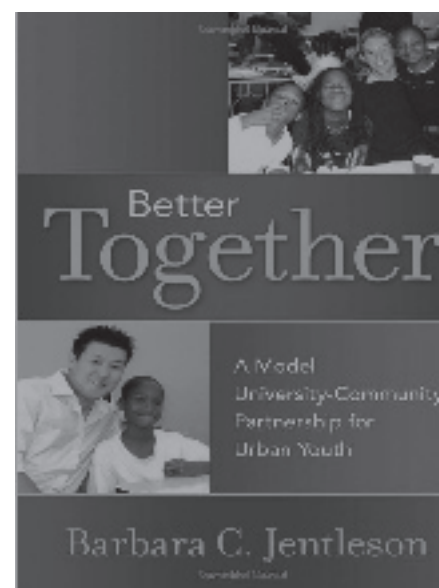
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**Jentleson, B.C. (2011). *Better together: A model university-community partnership for urban youth*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.**

In the face of unsuccessful educational reform efforts aimed at closing the achievement gap and of urban universities' urgent desire to address distressing conditions in their host communities, interest has focused on university and community partnerships. Barbara Jentleson's book *Better Together: A Model University-Community Partnership for Urban Youth* shows that such collaborations are characterized by complex challenges as well as diverse benefits. University-community partnerships require strategic planning, flexibility, and a collaborative vision.

*Better Together* examines in depth the first decade of the Duke-Durham Neighborhood Partnership (DDNP), focusing on its involvement with six community-based afterschool programs sponsored by Duke's Project HOPE (Holistic Opportunities Plan for Enrichment). The primary aim of Project HOPE was to provide academic support to Durham's low-income minority youth. Jentleson's mixed-method approach combined case studies; interviews with community and university leaders; and perspectives from college students, teachers, and project staff to answer the book's central question:

"How do university and community partners develop a mutually beneficial relationship?" Jentleson's close account of this collaboration describes the learning process that unfolded both for Duke University project staff and students and for the staff of the community-based organizations.



The book's five chapters describe the common challenges facing university-community partnerships, outline strategies for managing these issues, highlight the lessons learned through Project HOPE, and describe how these lessons can apply to other programs. The opening chapter chronicles the history of university-community partnerships, describing our nation's earliest vision that universities would "improve the quality of life in American cities" (p. 6). In addition, this chapter explores the development and scope of the DDNP and of Project HOPE. Jentleson details the individual stories of the DDNP neighborhoods to highlight the complexity and diversity of issues facing university and community partners. As the reader learns about the unique and shared challenges facing each community—access to medical services, affordable housing, crime, rental housing being taken over by student housing—it becomes clear that Duke University will itself receive a solid education from its surrounding neighborhoods.

After providing this context of Project HOPE and the DDNP, Jentleson presents a historical overview of after-school programs that focuses on their impact on youth, their role during out-of-school time, and obstacles to implementation and sustainability. The "lessons learned" from advances and challenges in afterschool programming become a guiding framework for the diverse issues that often arise in community-university collaborations.

Jentleson then examines the multiple learning communities that developed out of Project HOPE's emphasis on service learning and civic engagement. The diverse voices of Durham community youth, university students, public school staff, university faculty and staff, and community partners enable the reader to envision the broad spectrum of learning opportunities that characterized the partnership.

With a deeper understanding of the dynamics of community-university partnerships, Jentleson shifts focus to issues of data ownership, use, sharing, and feedback. Chapter 4 examines how university and community partners participating in Project HOPE created a sturdy and sustainable data evaluation framework that allowed for ongoing data monitoring and evaluation.

The final chapter of the book reviews the results of the first decade of the DDNP in the three key areas of intended impact: academic and youth development, neighborhood stabilization, and university impacts. Jentleson balances her discussion of benefits to the Durham community and to Duke University with a frank description of the challenges facing university-community partnerships in developing quality afterschool programs in ur-

ban communities. She concludes with a focus on future directions and on the importance of strategic planning, stressing that the dialogue between community and university partners needs to be sustained and expanded.

Potential audiences for this book include youth practitioners and leaders, university educators, and community organization staff—with or without experience in community-university partnership. Jentleson systematically and articulately outlines a replicable model for successful university-community partnership aimed at transforming the learning and non-academic outcomes of minority youth. Graduate students in education are another audience who may benefit from Jentleson's careful and comprehensive analysis of the transformative potential of community-university partnerships.

Although the book is well written, well structured, and comprehensive, some sections can be a bit dense. Historical descriptions heavy on dates and names distract the reader from the central findings and strategies relevant to building sustained community-university partnerships. Nonetheless, this book is a valuable contribution to the field and an excellent resource on how educators and community organizers can combine their resources to effect positive changes in our nation's youth.