

Community Engagement— Energizing the University Commitment

**Eugene J. Monaco, Executive Director and Public Service
Professor, Professional Development Program**

The engaged university concept has taken on a new form as colleges across the country embark on ambitious community engagement plans that create dynamic collaborative relationships with the communities they serve, both locally and globally.

The engaged collaborative university is not a new concept; it can be traced back to the 1990s when the late, forward-thinking Ernest Boyer, former Chancellor of the State University of New York and President of the Carnegie Foundation, boldly suggested new roles for higher education with distinctively different missions. The new missions were to propel universities beyond their traditional comfort zones of academics to engage in research with a path to solutions more connected to real world problems within their communities. Early collaborative engagement programs had a narrower reach and focused on the improvement of “town-grown” relations, an approach that had limited social and economic impact.

Successful university engagement initiatives direct the academy’s intellectual resources toward real world, solution-orientated results that generate positive effects on current local, regional, and global challenges. This theory-to-practice approach, coupled with integrated community collaboration, is key to successful engagement programs regardless of their scope. These programs not only serve not only to enrich but also to enhance the learning and discovery functions of academic institutions but also to enhance the affected community’s capacity to solve existing problems.

Since the 1990s, engagement has taken on an even more expansive meaning. On many campuses outreach and engagement are no longer separate from academic life but instead are fully integrated into teaching and research activities of faculty,

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A Newsletter from the
Professional
Development Program,
Rockefeller College



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State University of New York



PDP employee Laurie Lieman accepts the University at Albany President’s Award for Exemplary Community Engagement as a member of the Committee on University and Community Relations (fifth from left).

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PDP Works in Partnership Between Agencies

Sherry M. Cleary, Executive Director, and Louisa Higgins, Senior Learning Specialist, New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, City University of NY

The New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (PDI), along with our colleagues at the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children (NYSAEYC), have had the privilege of partnering with the Professional Development Program (PDP) in doing some exciting work. Over the last five years, we have collaborated on a number of initiatives dedicated toward improving the quality of childcare in New York State. As partners, our shared goal is to help connect early childhood professionals with the high quality educational and professional development opportunities that they deserve: opportunities that promote career growth and allow them to create the best possible environments for young children.

PDP's leveraging of the Educational Incentive (Scholarship) Program, administered on behalf of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, has been an important incentive encouraging trainers to register with ASPIRE, New York State's Workforce Registry for Early Childhood Professionals and to pursue the Early Learning Trainer Credential. Last year served as a transition year, allowing trainers time to complete new requirements, and, effective January 1, 2014, only trainers with appropriate credentials verified by PDI and NYSAEYC are eligible to receive EIP scholarship dollars. The number of trainers registered with ASPIRE has grown significantly; there were nearly 500 trainers who were approved to teach coursework as of January 1, 2014.

Collaboration between agencies is not easy, but it is a critical component to building systems and creating change. Our collaboration has been successful because of the following:

Did you know?

Several studies identify five as the ideal team size. Teams of five support our ability to collaborate with others by supporting communication, trust, and memory. However, Appelo suggests the strongest teams are ones who are able to self-organize and naturally settle into a size that works for them.

We share core beliefs. Along with our funders and other partner agencies, we know the importance of the work of early childhood providers and practitioners. We also know how difficult their work is and how rarely their day-to-day work is recognized and rewarded.

We draw on our individual strengths. One of the many values of collaborating with other institutions is the opportunity to share resources. Very often those resources are people! Each participating organization brings to the table a track record of important work and a group of professionals with a diverse range of interests and skill sets.

We realize the importance of communication. Both internally and to those in the field, we know that our words and how we share them matters. It is crucial that everyone involved in our collaborative efforts is "on the same page." We've made it a priority to present clear, consistent information to the early childhood workforce, especially to those affected by the policy changes that our collaboration has successfully brought about.

Collaboration tends to be successful when the participants have a common goal. For us, and for you and those we might partner with, the goal is always to do what is best for children. **PDP**



“Collaboration between agencies is not easy, but it is a critical component to building systems and creating change.”



PDP and UAlbany School of Public Health— Collaboration Yields Mutual Benefits

Rebecca Stanley
Manager, Instructional Technologies Unit
Professional Development Program

Over the past sixteen years, PDP has worked with many different agencies and organizations to develop online training. Experience has taught us that bringing these customers to the table as partners who collaborate in the development process saves time and resources; it also yields a better product. While PDP staff have the experience and the design and technical expertise to produce e-learning that is both graphically and instructionally engaging, the sponsor agency has unique insight into the culture and unique characteristics of the training audience. Combining these perspectives can result in dynamic, award-winning products and mutually beneficial relationships.

PDP's collaborative work with the UAlbany School of Public Health illustrates how effective these partnerships can be. In 1999, Dr. Carol Young, then Director of Continuing Education at the UAlbany School of Public Health (SPH), contacted us about partnering to develop online courses for a regional training center serving New York and New Jersey. Dr. Young encouraged PDP to find a creative way to teach Introduction to Public Health online. Numerous brainstorming sessions yielded an approach that places learners in a virtual office and uses simulated email messaging and videoconferencing to teach the basic principles and essential services of public health. When the course went live, it wasn't long before we discovered that it was being used and shared with others from well beyond the original two-state audience. Learners from every state and many foreign countries have since enrolled, and the course has found its way into several university programs. "The success of Orientation to Public Health opened our eyes to the power of well-designed online training," comments Dr. Young. "By partnering with PDP's team of graphic designers, programmers, and instructional designers, we were able to create a professional and appealing course that addressed a huge need in the public health community."

From that beginning, PDP has developed more than forty public health training courses. It has worked closely with the Center for Public Health Continuing Education and collaborated on online course development with other centers based at UAlbany SPH, including the Center for Public Health Preparedness and the New York-New Jersey Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Center. It has also worked on several projects funded

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Orientation to Public Health



Understanding Preconception Health: A Course for Community Health Workers



Detecting Bioterror: Public Health and Law Enforcement Join Forces to Fight Crime

Did you know?

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos uses the “two pizza” rule when developing teams. If the team needs more than two pizzas to be fed, then the team is too big. Large groups run the risk of “group think.” Instead of working with independent ideas when solving problems, they tend to agree with each other to maintain group harmony.

lifehacker.com/5965280/follow-jeff-bezos-two-pizza-rule-to-avoid-the-dangers-of-groupthink

PDP Participates in the Community Engagement Fair at UAlbany during Connect-to-Community Week

President Jones designated October 16-23, 2013, as Connect-to-Community Week—a time to encourage volunteerism, advance University-community partnerships, and increase student and faculty involvement in community-based learning and research. To kick off this weeklong celebration, a Community Engagement Fair was held on October 16th from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm in the Lecture Center Concourse. The fair hosted approximately 100 public and non-profit community partners who shared their community service and engaged learning opportunities, as well as programs on campus that take part in meaningful and impactful community-based work at UAlbany. Erika Leveillee, Jill Finnegan, Allison Sarnoff, and Laurie Lieman presented information on the many ways that PDP has had an impact.

Information was provided on the College Access Challenge Grant Project, which supports foster care youth to prepare for and attend college, along with the work PDP has done with the University Community Relations Committee on campus. The work of PDP's Community Outreach Group (COG) was also highlighted. **PDP**

Our most recent work includes:

When a local food pantry was destroyed, PDP donated 50 pounds of personal hygiene products collected from staff.

Over \$100 has been donated to the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern NY from recycling donated bottles.

Food items collected at one staff development event this past year netted 74 pounds of food donations for The Regional Food Bank of Northeastern NY.

PDP staff who travel regularly donate their hotel hygiene products to the (Community Outreach Group) COG for donation to local groups. We currently have 80 pounds of products for donation.

To help children in need, PDP collected enough food and snacks to fill 40 backpacks, and a \$120 cash donation was made to The Regional Food Bank of Northeastern NY Backpack Program.

When hurricane Irene hit Schoharie County, PDP held a fundraiser raffle. Items were purchased, donated, or made by PDP staff to help others. The efforts raised approximately \$550 for the Schoharie County Community Action Program and \$550 for the Animal Shelter of Schoharie Valley.

This past holiday season, the COG created care packages to be given to University at Albany students who don't receive packages from home. Through food and monetary donations from PDP staff, combined with tote bags from Rockefeller College and bedding and towel sets from the University Auxiliary Services at Albany (UAS) and their partner Residence Hall Linens, we were able to brighten the holidays for 20 very thankful students.



“PDP’s accomplishments have helped government at the local, regional and state levels as well as many not-for-profits achieve positive outcomes.”

—Eugene Monaco

Erika Leveillee, Allison Sarnoff, and Jill Finnegan during UAlbany's Connect-to-Community Week

staff, and administrators. Additionally, current engagement practices stress active student involvement at all levels. For example strong service learning programs that combine academic theory with practical real-life experience provide students with a broader and deeper understanding of course content and foster civic engagement. Such an approach sharpens students' insights into themselves and their place in the community. Today, university engagement programs extend well beyond service learning and integrate into the core mission of the institution, more broadly affecting regional, national, and global communities.

Over the past several years the University at Albany has strongly recommitted itself to engagement by providing effective community programs that have had impact at many levels and geographic locations. Examples of the many collaborative and engaged initiatives underway across the campus include the impact the Liberty Partnerships Program has had on middle and high school students at risk of leaving school, the role played by the University in helping regional small businesses, nonprofit organizations, underserved communities and individuals to navigate the complexities of the Affordable Care Act, and the positive outcomes of the recent series of workshops offered collaboratively by Rockefeller College, the School of Public Health and the School of Social Welfare to assist the nonprofit sector. The University at Albany's continued

commitment to engagement was given additional support in September 2013, when President Robert Jones, in his inaugural address, vigorously reinforced the importance of engagement by stating that the University would “deepen its engagement with the Capital Region, New York State and the world, forging partnerships to solve society's most pressing issues.”

The Professional Development Program has a rich history of fostering engagement through the programs it has developed and delivered in collaboration with its many partners within the University, as well as its alliances with other academic institutions and not-for-profits. PDP's accomplishments have helped government at the local, regional and state levels as well as many not-for-profits achieve positive outcomes. This issue of the Communiqué highlights examples of the collaborative initiatives that have led PDP to be at the forefront of promoting and implementing civic, economic, and social engagement for those who work in and with the public sector. **PDP**



Eugene J. Monaco

PDP to Support Rockefeller College Grant Award to Advance Online and Blended Learning

Recently, Rockefeller College was awarded a grant from the University's Office of the Provost to expand online education opportunities for students. By working collaboratively with the Professional Development Program, the College will undertake this initiative and achieve the goal of expanding their online education offerings and broadening the teaching experience of doctoral students in several ways.

During the 2014 spring semester, Amira Jadoon, a second year political science doctoral student, will gain experience from PDP's Instructional Technologies and Audio Visual

Departments. Ms. Jadoon will learn by doing as she assists PDP staff with faculty online learning initiatives and e-learning assessments. Following this semester of e-learning immersion, she will then assist Rockefeller College faculty to launch their online learning courses. PDP staff will provide expert technical assistance to faculty and Amira as needed.

Also, during the academic year, PDP will conduct a series of development workshops for faculty, staff, and students. These development workshops will cover the topics of authoring systems, Web casting, gaming and simulations, video integration, content editing, audio and video, best practices for online learning, and evaluation of online learning.

This grant is a prime example of the way in which collaboration among PDP, faculty, and students fosters the real world experience of applying theory to practice. **PDP**



Amira Jadoon

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Did you know?

Workplace design plays a role in how well teams function. An open workplace design supports social interactions. Unassigned workspaces designed around employees' activities, including collaboration, learning, and focused work, make it easy for teams to access the type of workspace that best suits their needs.

[blogs.hbr.org/2012/04/
better-teamwork-through-office](http://blogs.hbr.org/2012/04/better-teamwork-through-office)

PDP and UAlbany School of Public Health—Collaboration Yields Mutual Benefits

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by the New York State Department of Health. According to Assistant Director Lindsay Ruland, “Our partnership with PDP has helped us to maintain an ‘edge’ in the online learning environment and has helped to qualify us as one of the ‘front runners’ in the field of public health training. Considered an extension of our Center, PDP has provided us with expertise in online instructional design and development that we are not able to currently support in our staffing plans. This has enabled us to develop high-quality training and contributes to the overall mission of our Center, which is to

provide exemplary education and training for the public health workforce.”

Our work with the School of Public Health is some of the best we’ve done. They have trusted and encouraged us to try new and creative approaches to online delivery, and allowed us access to their expertise, which has yielded some great courses. Close collaboration has been a key driver of our success and will continue to characterize our work with all of our partners. **PDP**

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