Building a Positive Community-Academic Partnership Learning Exchange in West Baltimore

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**INTRODUCTION**

Community-academic partnerships (CAPs) have evolved as a transdisciplinary approach to address and reduce health disparities.¹ ³ These partnerships are intended to bring together the various stakeholders from the local communities (e.g. community members, public schools, local businesses) and academic communities (e.g. faculty, staff, students) to share power, establish trust, foster co-learning, enhance strengths and resources, build community capacity, address community-identified health needs.¹ ³ The President of the University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB), Dr. Jay P. Perman, ranks Community engagement in West Baltimore as a high priority and has worked to develop initiatives and infrastructure (e.g. The Community Engagement Center (CEC) that build trusting relationships between the school and surrounding communities. The proposed project was designed to build upon these initiatives by developing a novel program to support learning exchange between the school and surrounding communities to ultimately improve the quality for all.

**METHODS**

- Held 2 interest meetings:
  - UMB Community Engagement Center (CEC)
  - Local Retirement community
- Conducted 3 focus-group interviews
  - Community-focused group
  - Faculty-focused group
  - Combined Community-Faculty focus group.
- Topic guide was used to facilitate discussion and perspectives on factors contributing to barriers to health and community-academic relationships were reported.²

**RESULTS**

Outcomes: The focus groups are currently being transcribed, but here are a few key comments below.

Community focus group:
"Every aspect of the community that the University is involved in, they need to have people involved who live in that community. Their voices need to be heard and incorporated into what they are doing. "Partnerships can start by tackling some of the most glaring imperfections that just don't have to be."

Faculty comment from combined focus-group:
"It's paradoxical that we have this University with all these resources, but we don't know how to share it [with the community]."

**CONCLUSIONS**

- The findings from the focus groups demonstrate that both UMB faculty and community members are interested in understanding the values and the potential benefits of establishing a co-learning experience.
- Four major themes emerged from the discussions that will need to be addressed prior to developing the novel program:
  - Better understanding and awareness of diverse communities
  - Building Trust
  - Establish value of co-teaching
  - Time & funding
- Our findings from the current pilot study are being used to pursue other modes of funding (e.g. NIEHS) to expand the community academic partnership.

**REFERENCES**


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