

Universities and Cities: A Call to Action

Over the past five years, the leaders of the nation's public urban research universities have convened in historic numbers to articulate a vision for how higher education can respond to the challenges facing America's cities and metropolitan regions. Never before has this agenda had greater urgency for our nation. Demographic changes within the United States have been dramatic, with nearly eight in 10 Americans now living in cities. According to the Brookings Institution, while the top 100 metropolitan areas make up only 12% of the land mass, they produce fully 75% of the gross domestic product, generate 78% of competitive patents, and account for 68% of the nation's jobs. Increasingly, the prosperity of our cities and metro areas is inextricably linked to our national prosperity.

Importance of Urban Serving Universities

A Congressional report by the U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor, reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, underscored some of the challenges unique to cities:

- ♦ Urban secondary schools have a higher dropout rate than the national average, and urban elementary and secondary students typically score below state and national averages on academic performance exams. Urban schools often encounter teacher shortages in high-need subject areas such as mathematics and science. Particular neighborhoods are stricken with poverty and struggle to attract businesses and services. A greater percentage of their citizens are uninsured or underinsured.
- ♦ As "anchor institutions" for our nation's cities, urban research universities possess a broad range of skills and resources – physical, intellectual, human, technological, and social – to engage these urban challenges.

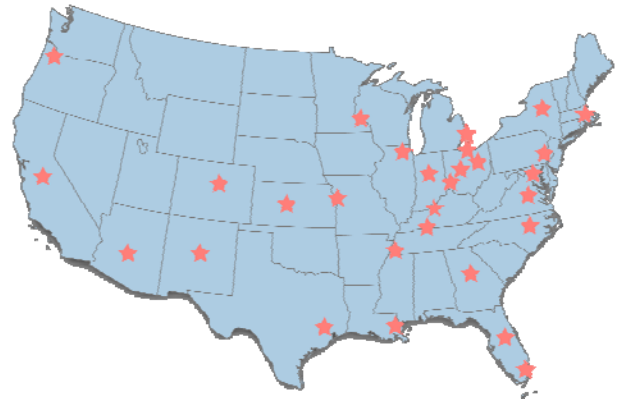
A Vital Partnership: Great Cities, Great Universities

To address these challenges, presidents and chancellors of public urban research universities are calling upon one another – and the nation – to escalate urban university engagement, and to do so with the clarity of purpose that has characterized large-scale efforts within higher education in the past.

Working together, the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities' (APLU) Commission on Urban Initiatives (CUI) have convened a cross-section of their leadership to articulate an urban action agenda, and to determine what is needed to get it done. It is clear that innovation exists among our institutions. Yet if we are to achieve the full potential of the nation's public urban research universities, we need to work together in a focused way to scale up and extend these successful models and track our progress over time.

USU Member Institutions

USU members are public urban research universities that are located in some of the nation's largest metropolitan areas. The 46-member institutions are providing innovative solutions to the challenges their cities face. Each USU member is working on critical issues and developing support for its community.



Member institutions include: Arizona State University; California State University System (Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Fresno, Fullerton, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Northridge, San Bernardino, Cal State Polytechnic U., Pomona, Sacramento State U., San Diego State U., San Francisco State U., San Jose State U.); Cleveland State University; Florida International University; Georgia State University; Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis; Morgan State University; North Carolina State University; The Ohio State University; Portland State University; The State University of New York System (University of Albany, University of Buffalo, Stony Brook University, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, SUNY Upstate Medical University); Temple University; Tennessee State University; University of Akron; University of Central Florida; University of Cincinnati; University of Colorado Denver; University of Houston; University of Illinois at Chicago; University of Louisville; University of Massachusetts Boston; University of Memphis; University of Minnesota; University of Missouri-Kansas City; University of New Mexico; University of New Orleans; Virginia Commonwealth University; Wayne State University; Wichita State University.

USU Initiatives

The USU agenda focuses on three crucial areas (also known as programmatic strands):

- ♦ **Education Pipeline/Urban Educator Corps** – Chair: Nancy L. Zimpher, Chancellor, SUNY System
- ♦ **Strengthening Communities** – Co-Chairs: Luis Proenza, President, U. of Akron and Wim Wiewel, President, PSU
- ♦ **Urban Health** – Chair: M. Roy Wilson, Chancellor Emeritus, UC Denver and Senior Scholar, Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC)

USU Initiatives

Education Pipeline/Urban Educator Corps: Creating a Competitive Workforce

Also known as the Education Pipeline/Urban Educator Corps, this initiative commits public urban research universities to strengthening the education pipeline within cities. This initiative has three arms: restructuring teacher preparation to increase the number of high quality “urban-ready” teachers, with emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; improving student access, learning, retention, and graduation rates, and extending successful large-scale partnerships, locally and nationally, that deliver high-quality educational experiences to all students from cradle to career.

Strengthening Communities: Building Strong Communities

Recognizing the significant accomplishments and potential of public urban research universities to drive economic and community development, this initiative seeks to scale up innovative efforts and make them the norm for America’s cities. The three arms of the initiative focus on revitalizing urban neighborhoods; creating innovative urban environments and strengthening industry clusters in metropolitan areas, and applying research to deploy and enhance the capacity of universities, local governments, and urban communities to solve key urban challenges.

Urban Health: Improving the Health of a Diverse Population

This initiative seeks to ameliorate the pervasive health disparities that result, in part, from an insufficient and ethnically imbalanced health workforce, a particularly acute problem within our growing and diverse urban and metropolitan centers. Through three specific interventions, the nation’s public urban research universities aim to increase the numbers, diversity, and cultural competence of the urban health workforce.

USU Strategies

To implement the above initiatives, the USU and its partners have set in place the following strategies:

1. Collect and analyze data across a network of public urban research institutions to create a reliable, factual foundation for the universities' work in cities.
2. Advocate for Federal policies and programs to stimulate effective partnerships and build the capacity of public urban research universities to fuel the development of the nation's cities and metro regions.
3. Identify, expand, and replicate – through a more defined APLU/USU joint urban initiative, with partner organizations – innovative models of university-community partnerships across U.S. cities, focusing on creating a competitive urban workforce, stimulating economic growth and urban renewal, and ensuring the health of a diverse population.
4. Coalesce the leadership of public urban research universities around a common agenda and provide a toolset of “best practices” within the three initiatives.
5. Enlist additional public urban research universities and partners in our national effort.

USU: A Unique Capacity

The USU offers a unique perspective, capacity, and responsibility to galvanize the nation. As a network of public research universities anchored in cities and metro regions, we are committed to a shared national agenda. Yet the nature of our institutions is distinctly local. In addition to the public leadership role in cities, USU institutions have a close relationship to urban students and their communities and directly impact the local urban workforce.

For More Information:

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