

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 opportunities and 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 8 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, for which the nation's public urban research universities are a significant national asset:

- ♦ Urban secondary schools experience 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 are uniquely positioned with a broad range of skills and resources – physical, intellectual, human, technological, and social – to engage these urban challenges.

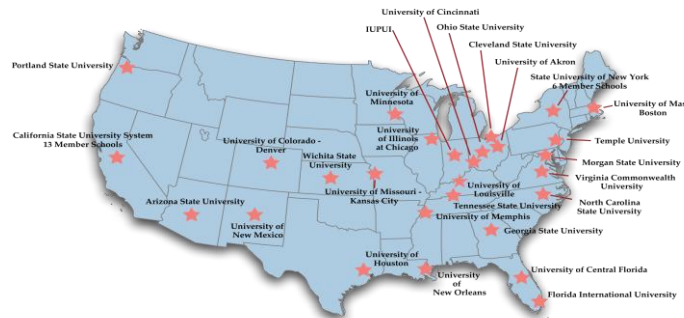
A Vital Partnership: Great Cities, Great Universities

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

Working together - through a memorandum of understanding -- the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities' (APLU) new, soon to be established, Commission on Urban Initiatives are convening a broad cross-section of their leadership to further 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 leverage the full potential of the nation's public urban research universities, we need to work together to scale-up and extend 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.



Member institutions include: Arizona State University; California State University (13 Member CSU Schools - *California State University, Dominguez Hill; California State University, East Bay; California State University, Fresno; California State University, Fullerton; California State University, Long Beach; California State University, Los Angeles; California State University, Northridge; California State University, Sacramento; California State University, San Bernardino; California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; San Diego State University; San Francisco State University; San José State University*); 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 (6 Member SUNY Schools - *Stony Brook University; University at Albany; University at Buffalo; 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 Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Virginia Commonwealth University; Wichita State University.

USU Initiatives

The USU agenda focuses on three crucial areas ("strands"):

- ♦ **Education Pipeline/Urban Educator Corps** - creating a competitive workforce (Chair: Nancy L. Zimpher, Chancellor, State University of New York)
- ♦ **Strengthening Communities** - building strong communities (Co-Chairs: Luis Proenza, President, University of Akron and Wim Wiewel, President, Portland State University)
- ♦ **Urban Health** - improving the health of a diverse population (Chair: M. Roy Wilson, Chancellor, Emeritus, University of Colorado Denver)

USU Initiatives

Education Pipeline/Urban Educator Corps: Creating a Competitive Workforce

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 and developmental 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 and maximize local and regional economic growth.

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, evidence-based foundation for the universities' work in cities.
2. Advocate federal policies to stimulate effective partnerships and deploy 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 workforce to meet the needs of a diverse population.
4. Coalesce the leadership of public urban research universities around a common agenda and provide a toolset of evidence-based “best practices” within the three initiatives.
5. Enlist additional 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 and working with other national organizations to achieve this 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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