



September 8, 2009

The Honorable Shaun Donovan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Donovan:

As the Administration begins to develop its fiscal year 2011 budget for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), we the undersigned organizations urge you to identify the Office of University Partnerships (OUP) as a budget priority.

As you are aware, at the request of the HUD transition team, the Penn Institute for Urban Research assembled ten task forces of more than 50 policy experts to offer important advice on how HUD should approach today's urban challenges. The resulting *Retooling HUD for a Catalytic Federal Government: A Report to Secretary Shaun Donovan* contains a number of recommendations for the agency, including strategies to invest in university-community partnerships.

Institutions of higher education are uniquely positioned with a broad range of skills and resources - intellectual, human, technological, and social - to help lead the revitalization of America's communities, cities, and metropolitan areas. When an entire university is engaged, enormous progress can be made improving the communities in which they are located.

In the past, HUD played a catalytic role in encouraging universities to engage and invest in university-community partnerships, most notably through the Community Outreach Partnerships Centers (COPC) program, created under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-550). Since its inception, more than 180 colleges and universities received COPC grants. It is the only federal program that developed a formal and systemic way for institutions of higher education to expand new and existing partnerships to address community needs. COPC grants were highly sought after by colleges and universities. There were typically eight times as many applicants as available awards. The program also produced successful outcomes by improving and empowering local communities as well as improving relations between campuses and communities. In addition grant recipients were able to leverage federal dollars on a 1 to 4 ratio.

One of the recommendations from the *Retooling HUD* report is to enhance OUP. Specifically, this entails reinvigorating and funding the existing COPC program. At the same time, it also calls for expanding OUP's mission to include programs like an Urban

The Honorable Shaun Donovan

September 8, 2009

Page Two

Grant program (modeled after the Land, Sea, Space, and Sun Grant programs), research in community engagement, and training practitioners.

We urge the Administration to incorporate these recommendations into its fiscal year 2011 budget priorities. This recommendation aligns closely with the key principles of the Administration's urban agenda: supporting cross-cutting plans, emphasizing regional approaches, and promoting inclusive growth.

We greatly appreciate the Administration's vision and leadership in urban and metropolitan issues. We look forward to continuing to working with you on elevating the role of anchor institutions in building successful communities and local and regional economies.

Sincerely,



Nancy Zimpher
Chair, Coalition of Urban
Serving Universities
Chancellor, State University of New York



Steve Diner
President, Coalition of Urban
and Metropolitan Universities
Chancellor, Rutgers University, Newark