

Netter Center Timeline: Milestones, 1981 to 2024

1981

- Penn Program for Public Service Summer Internship begins, involving a select group of undergraduates in local internships, a research seminar taught by historians Ira Harkavy and Lee Benson, and a common residential experience.

1983

- Office of Community-Oriented Policy Studies (OCOPS) is created by Penn School of Arts and Sciences, and Harkavy is named director.

1984

- Undergraduate in Public Service Summer Internship focuses her research paper on West Philadelphia schools, and significant interest of other interns in her topic leads Benson and Harkavy to focus their seminars on West Philadelphia, particularly its public schools.

1985

- Harkavy, Benson, and Penn President Sheldon Hackney teach first Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) course.
- The West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC) begins as a youth corps model for university-assisted community revitalization in West Philadelphia, based on the proposal of four students in the course cotaught by Benson, Harkavy, and Hackney. Work begins at Bryant Elementary School.

1986

- WEPIC programs expand to West Philadelphia High School and Lea Elementary School.

1987

- US Department of Labor supports WEPIC program involving high school students in housing construction and neighborhood improvement as a national Youth Employment and Demonstration Project.
- WEPIC programs expand to Turner Middle School, which serves as the flagship for many years under leadership of teacher partner Marie Bogle.
- Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development (PHENND) is cofounded by Benson and Harkavy at Penn with partners at two other local universities, Temple and La Salle.

1988

- Penn Program for Public Service (PPPS) is formed by the School of Arts and Sciences, replacing OCOPS.
- The German Marshall Fund of the United States supports PPPS staff and teachers working with WEPIC, and local policymakers to travel to Sweden, West Germany, France, and Great Britain to discuss innovations in school-based training and community revitalization programs. Five cases, including WEPIC, are featured in a book called *School Works: Reinventing Public Schools to Create the Workforce of the Future* (Brookings Institution, 1989).

1989

- WEPIC school-based programs expand, and Turner and West Philadelphia High School are named “University-Assisted Community Schools” (UACS).

- State funding is added to local and federal monies to develop UACS, initiating an approach that integrates funding streams across all levels of government with private and university sources to support university-community-school partnerships.
- *Universities and Community Schools* journal helps to establish a network of academics and practitioners working to increase the contributions universities make to the development and effectiveness of community schools.

1990

- During the kickoff of Penn's 250th Anniversary celebration, Penn President Sheldon Hackney proposes a universitywide center for community partnerships.
- WEPIC serves as a model for Learn and Serve America's higher-education component, a program under the National and Community Service Act of 1990.

1991

- Professor Francis (Frank) Johnston converts his anthropology course to ABCS; he and his students lay the foundation for school-based health and nutrition programming called the Turner Nutritional Awareness Program.

1992

- The Center for Community Partnerships (now known as the Netter Center) is established as a universitywide center, and Harkavy is appointed as founding director.
- Community Advisory Board of the Center is formed, followed by a Faculty Advisory Board.

1993

- With a planning grant from the Wallace Foundation (then the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund), the Center develops a strategy for WEPIC Replication, to support other colleges and universities in adapting its UACS model.

1994

- Judith Rodin becomes Penn president, increases the university's focus on improving West Philadelphia, and highlights ABCS as a core component of undergraduate education.
- First implementation grant is awarded for WEPIC Replication, which funds three replication sites for initial three years.

1995

- Turner Nutritional Awareness Program evolves to become the Urban Nutrition Initiative (later the Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative, or AUNI).
- Harkavy is contributor to the essay *The University and the Urban Challenge* by US Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros, indicating the necessity for colleges and universities to contribute to cities as "great anchoring institutions" with "formidable intellectual and economic resources."

1996

- Twenty ABCS courses are taught, engaging approximately five hundred Penn students in the community.
- The Office of University Partnerships through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds the Center as a Community Outreach Partnership Center.
- Center for Community Partnerships establishes an associate director position to lead Penn Volunteers in Public Service (Penn VIPS), providing a vehicle for staff, faculty, alumni, and West Philadelphia residents to work together on community service activities and events.

1997

- Harkavy cofounds the Coalition for Community Schools and is named chair (position held until 2012).

1998

- Jessie Ball duPont Fund supports work with communities of faith in West Philadelphia, leading to long-term partnerships with faith-based communities and religious leaders.
- With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Center initiates the Nonprofit Institute, offering free workshops for members of local nonprofits and faith-based communities.
- Grants from the Wallace Foundation and the Corporation for National Community Service's Learn and Service America program expand WEPIC Replication, with twenty-three UACS programs funded across the country through 2004.

1999

- The Center helps create the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy to work in collaboration with the Council of Europe; Harkavy initially becomes co-chair and soon after chair.
- Undergraduate proposal in Benson and Harkavy's seminar leads to creation of the Foundation Community Arts Initiative, now known as the Rotunda, which hosts performances and community events on 40th Street.
- Access Science (now Moelis Access Science) launches with initial funding from the National Science Foundation.

2000

- The Center receives the Best Practices/Outstanding Achievement Award from HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research.
- National Advisory Board is formed.
- The Mott Foundation funds the Center to work with seventy-five sites on higher education-community-school partnerships.
- Program to Bridge the Digital Divide is developed by a Penn engineering student to recycle and refurbish old university computers as well as provide computer skills training to the community.

2001

- Student Advisory Board is formed.

2002

- Thirty-eight ABCS courses engage approximately nine hundred Penn students in the community.

2003

- The National Academies awards the W. T. Grant Foundation Youth Development Prize to the UACS program for the outstanding, high-quality, evidence-based collaborative that generates significant advances in knowledge while increasing opportunities for young people.
- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation cites Urban Nutrition Initiative as one of four promising models for improving health and nutrition among US children.

2004

- In her inaugural address, President Amy Gutmann proposes the "Penn Compact," with local engagement as a central tenet, to propel the university forward in its core endeavors of teaching, research, and service.

2005

- Campus Compact recognizes Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative as one of eight exemplary Campus Community Partnerships in the United States.
- Penn, represented by the Center, is one of a select group of institutions, and the only private research university, invited to help pilot the Carnegie Foundation's new Community Engagement Classification.
- The International Consortium and the Council of Europe host the first Global Forum in Strasbourg on "Higher Education for Democratic Culture, Citizenship, Human Rights and Sustainability."

2007

- The Center is renamed the Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships in recognition of an extraordinarily generous commitment from Penn parents and supporters, Barbara Netter and Edward Netter (C53).
- Community School National Award for Excellence is presented to Sayre High School and Netter Center partners by the Coalition for Community Schools.
- Three Netter Center colleagues author *Dewey's Dream: Universities and Democracies in an Age of Education Reform*.

2008

- University of Oklahoma–Tulsa is selected to develop the first regional training center on UACS.
- Netter Center publishes *Anchor Institutions Toolkit: A Guide for Neighborhood Revitalization*.
- Penn receives the Presidential Award in the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

2009

- The Anchors Institutions Task Force (AITF) is created following a report by a committee chaired by Harkavy to the Secretary of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and committee members ask Harkavy to serve as AITF chair.
- Penn ties for number-one "Best Neighbor" University by the national *Saviors of Our Cities: Survey of Best College and University Civic Partnerships*.

2010

- Netter Center plays catalytic role in University City District's development of the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative, which connects local residents to jobs at anchor institutions in University City.

2011

- Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis is selected to develop the second regional training center on UACS.

2012

- Emerson Fellows program is created, engaging recent Penn graduates in policy and practice to advance UACS.
- Young Quakers Community Athletics program launches as a partnership between the Netter Center, Penn Athletics, and local schools.
- Penn receives second Presidential Award of the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll in the focus area of Summer Learning.

2013

- “August Wilson and Beyond” ABCS course taught by Herman Beavers and Suzana Berger begins in partnership with the West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance (WPCA)—Paul Robeson House and Museum, a Netter Center partner since WPCA’s founding in 1984.

2014

- University of Connecticut is selected to develop the third regional training center on UACS.

2015

- National University-Assisted Community Schools Network is formed in collaboration with the Coalition for Community Schools to share resources and best practices to advance UACS policy and practice.
- Penn receives the 2015 Carnegie Foundation’s Community Engagement Classification—after receiving the classification originally in 2006—based on its examples of institutionalized practices of community engagement that showed alignment among mission, culture, leadership, resources, and practices.

2016

- Inaugural Netter Center Faculty–Community Partnership Award is presented.

2017

- Seven Netter Center colleagues author *Knowledge for Social Change: Bacon, Dewey and the Revolutionary Transformation of Research Universities in the Twenty-First Century*.
- University of California–Los Angeles is selected to develop the fourth regional training center on UACS.

2018

- Penn Leads the Vote (PLTV)—a student-run, nonpartisan program that increases voter engagement and voting while advancing Penn’s role of supporting the democratic and civic engagement of Penn students—is reestablished in 2018 as part of the Netter Center.

2019

- Inaugural cohort of the Provost’s Graduate Academic Engagement Fellowship at the Netter Center (PGAEF@NC), a two-year fellowship designed to support graduate students whose work centers on ABCS and other forms of community-engaged scholarship, as well as to elevate the education and training of the next generation of academics, begins.
- First jointly sponsored Provost–Netter Center Faculty–Community Partnership Award is presented.

2020

- Binghamton University is selected to develop fifth regional training center on UACS.
- Partnership is launched with Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and its Healthier Together Initiative to develop a place-based comprehensive approach to social, emotional, and mental wellness in UACS.
- Netter Center Anti-Racism Working Group is created, composed of staff and members of the Center’s community and student advisory boards.
- Report of the ad hoc ABCS Faculty Committee for the Provost of the University of Pennsylvania is produced to help advance ABCS research, teaching, and learning.

2021

- Provost's Graduate Community-Engaged Research Mentorship (PGCERM) is created to introduce and engage more graduate students and faculty in community-engaged scholarship.

2022

- Sixth Global Forum is hosted in Dublin on "Higher Education Leadership for Democracy, Sustainability, and Social Justice" by the Global Cooperation for the Democratic Mission of Higher Education, composed of the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility, and Democracy (housed at the Center); the Council of Europe; the International Association of Universities; and the Organization of American States.
- Report of the ad hoc Faculty Committee on community-engaged scholarship for the Provost is produced, providing a definition of community-engaged scholarship at and for Penn.

2023

- Thirtieth Anniversary culminating events are hosted in the community and on campus, including Alumni Symposium on Community-Engaged Scholarship.
- Duke University, North Carolina Central University, and East Carolina University are selected as the site of the sixth regional training center on UACS.
- New strategic framework, *In Principle and Practice*, emphasizes Penn's core principles of being an anchored and engaged university and highlights goals to foster service-minded leadership and deepen engagement with West Philadelphia neighbors.
- Provost's Advisory Committee on Community Engaged Scholarship is appointed to advise the Provost's Office on how to further advance community-engaged scholarship at Penn.

2024

- Eighty-two ABCS courses are taught, engaging approximately 1,950 Penn students, in addition to more than 425 work-study students and interns and approximately 400 regular volunteers, with West Philadelphia partners through the Netter Center.
- Anonymous endowment establishes the faculty director as a permanent position to be known as the Barbara and Edward Netter Director of the Netter Center.