

# Effective Governance of a University as an Anchor Institution

## University of Pennsylvania as a Case Study

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In the United States, the concept of “anchor institutions” is increasingly used to understand and describe the role that place-based institutions, particularly institutions of higher education and medical centers (eds and meds), can play in developing successful communities and cities. This article explores the role of colleges and universities as anchor institutions, the type of governance needed to infuse local engagement into all aspects of the institution, the specific evolution of the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) as an anchor, and lessons learned along the way.

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For your convenience, all articles have already been organised by chapter and subchapter online at [www.lg-handbook.info](http://www.lg-handbook.info). This article, D 1-3, has been assigned to:

Chapter            D: Leading a Higher Education Institution: Issues, Tools, Practices  
Subchapter        1: Defining Profile, Institutional Mission and Goals

“The picture that emerges is one of a relationship in which the University and the City are important to one another. We stand on common ground, our futures very much intertwined.”

*Penn and Philadelphia: Common Ground,  
University of Pennsylvania Annual Report, 1987–88*

“At Penn, local engagement is one of the core tenets of the Penn Compact – Penn’s Strategic Vision for moving from excellence to eminence – and is an integral part of the University’s mission.”

*-Engaging Locally, University of Pennsylvania  
Financial Report, 2008–09*

## 1. Introduction

### 20-plus year trajectory

Recognizing and realizing its position as an anchor institution in West Philadelphia/Philadelphia did not come readily to the University of Pennsylvania. It has been a 20-plus year trajectory from President Sheldon Hackney’s initial acknowledgement in the 1987-88 Annual Report that the fate of Penn and the City were inextricably linked, to President Amy Gutmann’s full embrace of local engagement as “an integral part of the University’s mission.” As described in this article, civic engagement has increasingly moved from the periphery to the core of Penn’s work. It has required presidential, trustee, and faculty leadership;<sup>1</sup> integration of local engagement into the University’s academic mission, and its role as a corporate citizen;<sup>2</sup> development of democratic, mutually beneficial, mutually respectful partnerships with the community; and creation of organizational units and operational integration within the University to sustain the commitment over time.

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<sup>1</sup> At Penn, like many U.S. colleges and universities, the “board of trustees” is the governing body of the higher educational institution, and “faculty” is the teaching body. These terms are used several times throughout this article.

<sup>2</sup> The Corporate Citizen Research Unit (now Centre for Citizenship, Development and Human Rights) at Deakin University in Australia defined corporate citizenship: “Corporate Citizenship is a recognition that a business, corporation or business-like organisation, has social, cultural and environmental responsibilities to the community in which it seeks a licence to operate, as well as economic and financial ones to its shareholders or immediate stakeholders.” (Retrieved from <http://workfamily.sas.upenn.edu/glossary/c/corporate-citizenship-definitions>.)

## 2. Why Colleges and Universities as Anchor Institutions

For many American cities, deindustrialization and globalization have undermined their traditional manufacturing-based economies, leaving unemployment, poor schooling, and generational poverty in their place. Since the mid-1990s, there has been increasing recognition of the role that “eds and meds,” i.e. institutions of higher education and medical centers, play in the urban economy and the life of their cities generally (Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999). The concept of “anchor institutions” was first formally articulated in 2001 by the Aspen Institution Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives: “In this study, Fulbright-Anderson, Auspos and Anderson said ‘anchor institutions’ are central city institutions ‘that have a significant infrastructure investment in a specific community and are therefore unlikely to move.’ During the 2000s, the concept anchor institution emerged as a new paradigm for understanding the role that place-based institutions could play in building successful communities and local economies” (Taylor & Luter, 2013, pp. 3-4). The Anchor Institutions Task Force Report (2009) and the subsequent development of this group as a permanent organization has brought the concept of anchor institutions into national academic and policy discussions.

**Anchor institutions**

Community colleges, colleges, and universities (public as well as private) all play crucial, multi-faceted roles in their communities and surrounding regions as anchor institutions in the areas of education, research, service, housing and real estate development, employment, job training, purchasing, hiring, business and technological incubation, and cultural development. The 4,100 colleges and universities in the United States represent extraordinary concentrations of human and economic capital, with nearly four million employees, 21 million enrolled students, \$400 billion in endowments, and \$460 billion in annual economic activity (Snyder & Dillow, 2012). As “anchor institutions” they have the potential to be sources of stability and permanence in civic partnerships with government and the private sector to revitalize local communities. College and universities, of course, are much more than economic engines. They are first and foremost intellectual centers with enormous knowledge producing and problem-solving capabilities (Hodges & Dubb, 2012).

**Extraordinary concentrations of human and economic capital**

But why should higher education institutions serve as powerful collaborators in economic, educational, and civic renewal efforts? Colleges and universities are place-based institutions deeply affected by their local environment. The future of higher educational institutions and their communities and cities are indeed intertwined. As such, they have a strong economic stake in the health of their surrounding communities and – due to the scale and scope of their operations – the resources to make a genuine difference. Because they can make a difference in the lives of their neighbors, colleges and universities have a

**Place-based institutions**

### Enlightened self-interest

moral and ethical responsibility to contribute to the quality of life in their communities. Moreover, when institutions of higher education give very high priority to actively solving real-world problems in their local communities, a much greater likelihood exists that they will significantly advance learning, research, teaching, and service and thereby simultaneously reduce what Penn's founder Benjamin Franklin stigmatized in 1789 as "ancient Customs and Habitudes," that impede the development of mutually beneficial, higher education-community partnerships.<sup>3</sup> In addition, an engaged institution can benefit from an increased ability to recruit and retain outstanding faculty and students, enhanced global leadership, and a persuasive case for funding from donors, foundations, and governmental agencies. Simply put, higher education should understand more fully than ever that it is in its enlightened self-interest to be civically engaged with their local communities.<sup>4</sup>

For colleges and universities to fulfill their great potential and more effectively contribute to positive change in their local communities, cities and metropolitan areas, however, they will have to critically ex-

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<sup>3</sup> The college Franklin envisioned broke radically with the classical tradition and gave instruction entirely in the vernacular language. Instead of imitating English colleges, Franklin theorized, an American college's curriculum, methodology and texts should be appropriate for the education and development of American youth. For a college in Philadelphia to insist on instruction in Latin and Greek and a curriculum dominated by intensive study of classical texts in their original languages, Franklin believed, simply exemplified the disastrous tendency "in mankind [to] an unaccountable prejudice in favor of ancient Customs and Habitudes, which inclines to a continuance of them after the circumstances, which formerly made them useful, cease to exist." Reinhold, Meyer, "Opponents of Classical Learning in America During the Revolutionary Period," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 112 (4), 1968, p. 224. A "prejudice in favor of ancient Customs and Habitudes," in our judgment, continues to function as a primary obstacle to the radical transformation of research universities into democratic, engaged, cosmopolitan institutions. Moreover, powerful incentives exist (career advancement, financial support among them) to focus on internal disciplinary issues and concerns and to neglect working to solve real-world community problems.

<sup>4</sup> Harkavy and Puckett (1994) describe four key reasons why it is in a university's, particularly an urban university's, enlightened self-interest to help revitalize its local community: "The first reason is institutional self-interest, including the safety, cleanliness, and attractiveness of the physical setting ... The second reason involves a more indirect effect on institutional self-interest. It includes the costs (financial, public relations, and political) to the institution that result from a retreat from the community, as well as the benefits that accrue from active, effective engagement.... The third reason involves the advancement of knowledge, teaching, and human welfare through academically based community service focused on improving the quality of life in the local community ... Promoting civic consciousness, we believe, is the core component of the fourth reason for significant university involvement with the community" (pp. 300-301).

amine and change their organizational cultures and structures and embed civic engagement across all components of the institution (Hartley, Harkavy, & Benson, 2005). Comprehensive involvement of all the resources of colleges and universities are required if significant progress is to be made. A primary goal should be to engage the university's resources fully – human, cultural, academic, economic – with its community in democratic, mutually beneficial, mutually respectful partnerships (Task Force on Anchor Institutions, 2009). Moreover, the work of anchor institutions needs to be informed by an ethos of reciprocity and social responsibility that “imbue[s] their institutions with the spirit of democracy and a commitment to building a better, more just and equitable society” (Taylor & Luter, 2013, p. 8; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011).

Throughout the past decade, organizational developments have also occurred to promote the economic and community development role of public and private higher educational institutions, including the founding of the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, the Office on Urban Initiatives within the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, and the Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF). Since we are most involved with the latter, we provide a brief summary of AITF below.

In 2009, a national task force coordinated by the University of Pennsylvania advised the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on how the agency could leverage anchor institutions, particularly eds and meds, to improve communities and help solve significant urban problems. Soon after the Anchor Institutions Task Force submitted its report, “Anchor Institutions as Partners in Building Successful Communities and Local Economies,” it became a formal organization with the mission of forging democratic civic partnerships around anchor institutions. AITF is guided by the core values of collaboration and partnership, equity and social justice, democracy and democratic practice, and commitment to place and community. Now with approximately 400 individual members, the AITF has become an important voice for increasing the engagement of anchor institutions in their localities and regions, as well as encouraging policymakers and funders to integrate anchor institutions into community improvement strategies.

#### **Anchor Institutions Task Force**

### **3. Effective Governance**

“A theme in the anchor institution literature is that to sustain the progressive actions of anchors, their activities must be conscious and intentional. The reason is that without making internal changes in their institution's culture, priorities, operations, and procurement policies, anchors cannot use fully their resources to spearhead these activities.”

*-Taylor and Luter, 2013, p. 12*

**For us, governance is how universities engage in decision-making; it is the process by which various constituent groups come together and influence the management of an institution.**

In order to understand the factors that lead to the effective governance of an anchor institution, it is important first to be clear what we mean by the term governance. For us, governance is how universities engage in decision-making; it is the process by which various constituent groups come together and influence the management of an institution. In the U.S., a variety of constituents can influence decisions, including students and alumni. In general, the three key constituents are the board of trustees, the senior administration, and the faculty. The board of trustees holds ultimate legal and statutory power. No significant strategic decision happens without its formal approval. The board has fiduciary responsibility – it is responsible for the long-term fiscal health of the institution. However, boards hire presidents to serve as their agents on campus and delegate authority to them to oversee day-to-day management. The president, in turn, oversees the administration of the university. The faculty, because of their expertise, have primacy over curricular matters. Although each group has a primary responsibility, the long-term health of an institution requires these groups to work closely together collaboratively. Good governance, therefore, is characterized by “an inescapable interdependence” among these groups (AAUP, 1966, p. 136).<sup>5</sup>

**Distinct institutional identity**

An institution’s mission powerfully influences the governance process. In terms of institutional types (public and private, small and large, teaching centered and research focused), the U.S. system of higher education is highly diverse. Further, many institutions have rich histories that contribute to their distinct institutional identity. For example, the University of Pennsylvania’s founder, Benjamin Franklin, envisioned an institution that would be pragmatic in orientation, seeking to instill in students “an Inclination join’d with an Ability to serve Mankind, one’s Country, Friends, and Family” (Franklin, 1749). The core values articulated in Franklin’s original vision are highlighted by Penn today in its many print and online materials.<sup>6</sup> The Franklin-inspired idea that Penn not only exists to produce new knowledge, but also to use that knowledge to solve significant real-world problems for the betterment of society and humankind, finds expression in the Penn

**Penn’s founder Benjamin Franklin**

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<sup>5</sup> Although students do play a role in American universities’ governance, particularly as it pertains to extracurricular activity through student governments and other organizations, they do not tend to have anywhere near the same degree of influence that they exert in the formal governance of European universities. (See Sjur Bergan, Ira Harkavy, and Hilligje van’t Land’s (2013) chapter “Reimagining Democratic Societies: Thoughts for the Road” In: S. Bergan, I. Harkavy, & H. van’t Land (Eds.), *Reimagining Democratic Societies: A New Era of Personal and Social Responsibility* (pp. 283-288).)

<sup>6</sup> For examples, see Penn’s Admissions Website, <http://www.admissions.upenn.edu/admittedstudent/change>; Penn’s 2013 Commencement Program, [http://www.archives.upenn.edu/primdocs/upg/upg7/upg7\\_2013.pdf](http://www.archives.upenn.edu/primdocs/upg/upg7/upg7_2013.pdf); and Penn’s 2008-09 Financial Report, [http://www.finance.upenn.edu/vpfinance/AnnualRpt/Financial\\_Report\\_09.pdf](http://www.finance.upenn.edu/vpfinance/AnnualRpt/Financial_Report_09.pdf).

Compact, President Gutmann's strategy for institutional advancement, which is described in more detail below (Gutmann, 2004).

Good governance requires institutional leaders to be attentive to the mission of the institution. Without a clear mission, institutions often fall into the trap of trying to be all things to all people. Further, universities are highly complex organizations. They are “loosely coupled,” meaning that individual units operate with a great deal of autonomy (Weick, 1976). The University of Chicago’s president Robert Maynard Hutchins famously defined a university as “a collection of departments tied together by a common steam plant” (as cited in Eckel, 2006, p. 7). A clear mission helps institutions to present consistent priorities, which, in turn, contributes to programmatic cohesion among the various areas of the college or university (Hartley, 2002).

In our judgment, an institution can be understood to have both a longstanding historic mission – the core values and beliefs that shape its identity, as well as a temporal mission – the specific understanding and manifestation as to how the institution is implementing that larger ideal in current circumstances. What gives life to this temporal mission is an integrative operational strategy – i.e., a pragmatic, integrated, and comprehensive approach. Institutions that are committed to the civic life of their communities, because they are “loosely coupled” as organizations, often fall back on “letting a thousand flowers bloom.” They broadly encourage community based teaching, learning and research, but there is no identifiable strategy in place to capitalize on synergies across these disparate efforts.

**Both a longstanding historic mission, as well as a temporal mission**

The development of an integrative operational strategy, however, is essential for systematically harnessing the power of the institution and the community to produce meaningful, systemic change. The process of developing such a strategy may be guided by the president and provost (a university’s chief academic officer) but ultimately it is not a “top-down” command and control activity. Rather, it entails having multiple constituents come to an agreement about a common set of priorities and then finding ways to link those efforts for the common good. Strategic planning and re-accreditation offer two opportunities for broad based discussions around integrative strategy to occur. Both processes require institutions to examine their current activities and to ask: *What are we doing well and where are we falling short (i.e. our strengths and weaknesses)?* The processes also necessitate looking to the past and into the future, asking questions such as: *How have the educational needs of our students changed in the past 5 to 10 years? What new opportunities exist that might enable us to fulfill our mission?* As the agency responsible for accrediting institutions in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States notes, one of the key factors that distinguishes a thriving institution from one that struggles is “the degree to which the school [or college]... has a clear understanding of what it needs to do to improve” (Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, n.d.).

**Integrative operational strategy**

**New organizational structures**

Enacting an integrative operational strategy may involve establishing new organizational structures. Some colleges and universities have created special committees of their boards of trustees whose role is to pay attention to work in the community. Most of the colleges and universities in the U.S. that are deeply committed to civic engagement have centers whose staff provide training for faculty and students, offer advice and support for the development of new projects, and engage in ongoing evaluation of these efforts.

**Long-term, reciprocal partnerships**

Organizational centers or centralized units on campuses that are focused on local partnerships also serve as important hubs that connect faculty and students with community groups. Many of these centers have community advisory boards who provide insights into the pressing needs of the community and who help the university set priorities for community-based work. Long-term, reciprocal partnerships, often fostered through such centers, ensure the decision making process around this work is attentive to the needs of all the partners. Further, effective partnerships are predicated on the assumption that each partner has expertise that is important. Faculty members have disciplinary-based knowledge and community members have a deep understanding of the context and the environment, an understanding that is essential for actually solving real-world problems. Genuine partners recognize that it is impossible to engage in meaningful work that produces results without ultimately creating a decision making process that is based on mutuality, reciprocity, trust, and democratic principles.<sup>7</sup>

## **4. University of Pennsylvania as an Anchor Institution: A Twenty-Plus Year Evolution<sup>8</sup>**

### **4.1 President Sheldon Hackney, 1981–1993**

In the 1980s, West Philadelphia, like many American urban communities, was rapidly and visibly deteriorating, with devastating consequences for community residents, as well as the university. This included increased blight, crime, and poverty, as well as Penn's ability

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<sup>7</sup> A democratic approach involves a conscious and high level of transparency, as well as working "*with* the community, not *on* or *in* the community" (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007, p. 105). Among other things, it requires the university, in Langston Hughes' wonderful phrase, "[to] listen eloquently" (Hughes, 1968). From our own experience, implementing such an approach also necessitates a sustained commitment, mutual learning and re-learning, and very hard work.

<sup>8</sup> Much of the history described here first appeared in Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Harkavy & Hartley 2012; and the Netter Center for Community Partnerships' Anchor Institutions Toolkit 2008.

to continue to attract and retain outstanding faculty, staff, and students. President Sheldon Hackney resolved to improve relations with the community and began to take steps in that direction, including the creation of the West Philadelphia Partnership in 1983, as well as the Office of Community Oriented Policy Studies in the School of Arts and Sciences that led to the Penn Program for Public Service in 1988.

In July 1992, Hackney created the Center for Community Partnerships (the Center). To highlight the importance Hackney attached to the Center, he located it in the Office of the President and appointed one of the authors (Ira Harkavy) as its director and an assistant to the president. While the Center built upon several years of developing partnerships by Harkavy and colleagues, particularly with the local public schools, symbolically and practically the Center's creation constituted a major change in Penn's relationship with West Philadelphia and the city as a whole. In principle, by creating the Center for Community Partnerships, the University formally committed itself as a corporate entity to finding ways to use its enormous resources (particularly the "human capital" embodied in its students and faculty) to improve the quality of life in its local community – not only in respect to public schools, in particular, but also to economic and community development in general.

**Center for Community  
Partnerships founded  
in 1992**

The creation of the Center for Community Partnerships was based on the assumption that one highly effective and efficient way for Penn to serve its enlightened institutional self-interest, as well as more effectively carry out its academic mission, was for its research and teaching to strongly focus on universal problems – better schooling, health care, economic development – *manifested locally in West Philadelphia and the rest of the city.*

By focusing on strategic universal problems and effectively integrating general theory and concrete practice, as Benjamin Franklin advocated in the eighteenth century, Penn would improve symbiotically both the quality of life in its ecological community *and* its academic research and teaching.

As it was optimistically initially envisioned, the Center for Community Partnerships would constitute a far-reaching innovation within the university. To help overcome the remarkably competitive institutional fragmentation that had developed after 1945, as Penn evolved and became a large research university, the Center would identify, mobilize, and integrate Penn's vast resources in order to help transform West Philadelphia, particularly by helping public schools become innovative community schools.

The emphasis on partnerships in the Center's name was deliberate: It acknowledged that Penn would not try to "go it alone" in West Philadelphia as it had been long accustomed to do, often to the detriment of

the wider community. The creation of the Center was also significant internally. It meant that, at least in principle, the president of the University would have – and use – an organizational vehicle to strongly encourage all components of the University to seriously consider the roles they could appropriately play in Penn’s efforts to improve the quality of its off-campus environment.

**Academically Based  
Community Service  
(ABCS)**

**University-Assisted  
Community Schools  
(UACS)**

During Hackney’s tenure, the Center advanced two key strategies that underpin its community-based work through today: Academically Based Community Service (ABCS), i.e., service rooted in and intrinsically linked to research, teaching and learning; and University-Assisted Community Schools (UACS) as the organizing vehicle for the Center’s work in West Philadelphia. ABCS courses, taught across diverse disciplines at Penn, encompass community problem solving, as well as emphasize student and faculty reflection of the service experience. Three such courses existed when the Center was created, and over 160 have been created to date across 11 of Penn’s 12 schools and in more than 26 departments. The local public school became the catalytic center for these community improvement activities. By drawing on university and community resources, the UACS approach works to educate, involve, and activate all members of a community in which the school is located. At the same time, working with community members to create and sustain UACS provides a powerful means for universities to advance teaching, research, learning, and service, as well as the civic development of their students.<sup>9</sup>

While the Center was successful in breaking down barriers and rebuilding trust with the community, conditions in West Philadelphia/Philadelphia continued to decline due to job loss and erosion of the tax base among other things. Moreover, crime was at its peak in West Philadelphia; public schools were low performing; there was a rash of deteriorated and vacant housing, as well as numerous failing commercial corridors and poorly maintained streets and public spaces. More comprehensive approaches were required that truly engaged all of the University.

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<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that university-assisted community schools now being developed at Penn and elsewhere have a very long way to go before they can fully mobilize the powerful, untapped resources of their own institutions and of their communities, including those found among individual neighbors and in local institutions (such as businesses, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, and hospitals). Among other things, this will require more effective coordination of public and private funding streams and services.

## 4.2 President Judith Rodin, 1994–2004

A native of West Philadelphia and a Penn graduate, Judith Rodin was appointed as Penn's next president in part because of her deeply felt commitment to improving Penn's local environment and to transforming Penn into a leading urban university.

On taking office in 1994, President Rodin made it her first priority to reform undergraduate education. She established the Provost's Council on Undergraduate Education and charged it with designing Penn's undergraduate education for the twenty-first century. In the spirit of Penn's founder, Benjamin Franklin, the Provost's Council emphasized the action-oriented union of theory and practice as well as "engagement with the material, ethical and moral concerns of society and community defined broadly, globally and also locally within Philadelphia" (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007, p. 95). To apply the Franklin-inspired orientation in practice, the Provost's Council designated academically based community service (i.e. service intrinsically connected to research, teaching and learning that was being developed by the Center for Community Partnerships, in collaboration with faculty from across the disciplines) as a core component of Penn undergraduate education during the next century.

Penn's 1994-95 Annual Report, *The Unity of Theory and Practice: Penn's Distinctive Character*, illustrated and advanced a fundamental, far-reaching cultural shift that had begun to take place across the university. By the end of her first year in office, President Rodin had increased the prominence of undergraduate education, defined the integration of theory and practice (including the theory and practice derived from and applied within the local community) as the hallmark of Franklin's university, and defined academically based community service focused on West Philadelphia and its public schools and neighborhoods as providing a powerfully integrated strategy to advance university-wide research, teaching, and service.

President Rodin recognized the importance of addressing community issues that continued to challenge Penn and in 1994 created the Office of Government, Community, and Public Affairs (now the Office of Government and Community Affairs, OGCA) and appointed a new vice president to oversee the office. One strategy employed by OGCA to foster an atmosphere of transparency and to improve the perception of Penn in the community was to hold public monthly meetings that were open to all members of the community. The "First Thursday" meetings continue today, serving as a vibrant forum for discussion on any of Penn's proposed plans that may have an impact on the neighborhood and to field any questions from members of the community.

**Reform undergraduate education**

**Integration of theory and practice**

**Office of Government and Community Affairs**

**"First Thursday" meetings**

Although these efforts were making a difference, violence experienced too routinely in West Philadelphia was also increasingly impacting Penn. Perception of a campus that was not safe for students or faculty confronted President Rodin and senior administration, including the shooting of a graduate student in 1994, numerous robberies, and finally the stabbing death of a faculty researcher in 1996. Penn had two options: it could retreat and put up barriers to the community, or it could engage. Rodin, supported by the Trustees, chose to engage, developing the West Philadelphia Initiatives.

The West Philadelphia Initiatives was a university-led, multipronged approach to restore and revitalize the neighborhood, as well as the campus. The Initiatives sought to simultaneously address five critical areas – safety, housing, commercial and real estate development, economic development, and education – and it involved significant cooperation among university, community, business, and government partners.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Trustees' Committee on Neighborhood Initiatives**

With the encouragement and leadership of President Rodin and Chair of the Board of Trustees Roy Vagelos, the Trustees established a Committee on Neighborhood Initiatives that would be on par with Finance and other standing committees of the board and oversee local engagement efforts at the trustee level.<sup>11</sup> As described in her book, *The University and Urban Revival* (2007), President Rodin chose

#### **Policy decision to place leadership, management, and communications responsibilities in senior University administrators**

... to assign leadership, management and communications responsibilities for the West Philadelphia Initiatives across all of the University's major administrative departments, as part of a broad, decentralized network that would link to our neighborhood and public and private partners. Overall leadership and direction for this priority was provided by the Office of the President through my direct participation and the assignment of my chief of staff and other senior staff members to handle key administrative responsibilities. Direction of the day-to-day implementation activities was handled by the executive vice president (EVP). The vice presidents of departments with major imple-

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<sup>10</sup> For a more complete description of the different tools implemented as part of the West Philadelphia Initiatives, as well as lessons learned and questions for other institutions to consider, see Judith Rodin's *The University and Urban Revival: Out of the Ivory Tower and Into the Streets* (2007); see also John Kromer's and Lucy Kerman's *West Philadelphia Initiatives: A Case Study in Urban Redevelopment* (2004) and the Netter Center for Community Partnerships' Anchor Institutions Toolkit (2008). For a discussion of the West Philadelphia Initiatives that draws on the perspectives of neighborhood residents, as well as university officials, see Harley Etienne's *Pushing Back the Gates* (2012).

<sup>11</sup> The Trustees' Committee on Neighborhood Initiatives has continued its work under current President Amy Gutmann but has been restructured as the Local, National, and Global Engagement Committee.

mentation roles reported to the EVP. A new position of vice president for government, community, and public affairs, reporting to me, managed ongoing communication and coordination responsibilities with government officials and community organizations. Despite the division of responsibility, there was constant communication ... It was essential that everyone was in the loop all the time. The policy decision to place leadership, management, and communications responsibilities in senior University administrators is a key defining characteristic of Penn's approach ...

Additionally, the provost and the deans of Penn's twelve schools played a crucial role in the Initiatives. Official roles were assigned to the deans and leadership of the Graduate School of Education, the Center for Community Partnerships, and Penn Design ... While the Initiatives were not part of an academic program and were not led primarily by faculty, we believed strongly that they had to be *academically informed*, with support for some activities provided by the University's Center for Community Partnerships and numerous academic programs (Rodin, 2007, pp. 48-49).

President Rodin summarized her reflections on the governance structure she created for the West Philadelphia Initiatives in the following way:

Penn's administrative structure for leading and implementing the West Philadelphia Initiatives made sense for the University. It allowed for flexibility to act broadly, to avoid, the "death by consensus" syndrome, and to sustain our vision over the many years that it would take to bring it to fruition. For institutions with fewer resources, this kind of committed leadership and structured coordination may be even more critical for success. It is not about the money. It is about the vision, the planning, the networking and communicating, the staying power, and the leadership (Rodin, 2007, p. 58).

**Committed leadership  
and structured  
coordination**

### 4.3 President Amy Gutmann, 2004-present

Amy Gutmann, Penn's current president, a distinguished political philosopher whose scholarly work explores the role public schools and universities play in advancing democracy and democratic societies, has taken the University's engagement to the next level. In her inaugural address in October 2004, President Gutmann announced a comprehensive "Penn Compact" (the Compact) designed to advance the university "from excellence to eminence." Although the Compact's first two principles – increased access to a Penn education and the integration of knowledge – had, and continue to have significant importance for Penn, the third principle is particularly relevant in regard to Penn's role as an anchor institution:

**The Penn Compact**

The third principle of the Penn Compact is to engage locally and globally. No one mistakes Penn for an ivory tower. And no one ever will. Through our collaborative engagement with communities all over the world, Penn is poised to advance the central values of democracy: life, liberty, opportunity, and mutual respect. Effective engagement begins right here at home. We cherish our relationships with our neighbors, relationships that have strengthened Penn academically while increasing the vitality of West Philadelphia (Gutmann, 2004).

Gutmann's articulation of Penn's core values and aspirations in the Compact brought an increased emphasis to realizing the university's institutional potential through working to solve real-world problems in partnership with communities, while continuing to invest its economic resources locally.

Local engagement work moved from being primarily a means to help Penn revitalize its local environment to becoming a way for it to achieve eminence as a research university. Moreover, the Compact's clear directive has become infused in nearly every aspect of the University, shaping both operations and culture across campus.

For example, Penn's comprehensive capital campaign from 2007 through 2012, *Making History*, was rooted in the principles of the Penn Compact. Penn's economic inclusion initiatives in employment, procurement, and construction are providing increased opportunities for local and minority individuals and businesses to participate in the economic activity of Philadelphia's largest private employer.

### **Championed the Netter Center for Community Partnerships**

President Gutmann has also championed the Center for Community Partnerships, which became the Netter Center for Community Partnerships in 2007 thanks to a substantial endowment provided by Barbara Netter and the late Edward Netter (a Penn alumnus) that President Gutmann was actively involved in securing. From her inaugural week, during which she participated in a Penn-West Philadelphia Community Celebration Day at Sayre University-Assisted Community School, to her inclusion of the Netter Center as a fundraising priority for Penn's comprehensive capital campaign in 2007, to her powerful words of praise for the Netter Center at its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in 2012,<sup>12</sup> Dr. Gutmann has continued to express her commitment to local engagement and the work of the Netter Center.

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<sup>12</sup> During her remarks at the Awards Luncheon of the Netter Center's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference (November 2012), President Gutmann stated, "For its focus on (and work with) the local community, for its university-wide approach engaging support and insights from across the institution, for the comprehen-

A significant development that exemplifies the strong campus support for local engagement is the Young Quakers Community Athletics program, recently launched by Penn's Division of Recreation and Intercollegiate Athletics (DRIA) and the Netter Center. The program is designed to create mutually beneficial partnerships between select Penn intercollegiate athletic teams and West Philadelphia K-8 public schools. Members of the Penn teams teach athletic skills and provide mentorship and academic support as part of a partnership involving Penn student athletes and coaches, Netter Center staff, and community school students, parents/guardians, and teachers.

Operationally, President Gutmann conceives that the activities of the Executive Vice President's Office ought to be in ongoing collaboration and coordination with the academic side of the university, largely with the Netter Center, as part of the Local Engagement objectives of the Penn Compact. To this end, leadership at the Netter Center and the Executive Vice President's Office have increased collaboration and, among other things, have co-presented Penn's evolving, unified approach as an anchor institution to representatives from other higher educational institutions, foundations, corporations, and governmental agencies.

**Executive Vice  
President's Office**

By beginning to consciously integrate its academic and administrative engagement efforts, Penn is mobilizing increased resources to better realize its mission as an anchor institution.

Penn's current Neighborhood Initiatives are being assessed for their impact on enhancing the quality of life and learning in West Philadelphia and at Penn. These initiatives are producing valuable data that are useful for directing future strategies as we continue to evolve. The Executive Vice President's Office and the Netter Center utilize this data, for example, to inform their collaborative efforts and the development of ideas for future actions.

**Current Neighborhood  
Initiatives**

Penn's development of an integrative operational strategy also includes working with local partners. The evolution of the University City District serves as an example. Created in 1997 as an independent nonprofit special services district, this partnership of anchor institutions, small businesses, and residents in University City provides supplemental municipal services for a 2.2 square-mile area that includes more than 50,000 residents, 60,000 employees, and 40,000 students.

**Partnership of anchor  
institutions, small busi-  
nesses, and residents**

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siveness of its efforts, for the close association of students, faculty and staff working as a coherent team, for its ability to address specific issues while at the same time advancing general knowledge, and most of all for the sheer audaciousness of its goals and mission and achievements – in all these respects the Netter Center is an ideal example of what makes Penn distinctive.”

Penn is the largest contributing member to the University City District (UCD) and Penn's Executive Vice President Craig Carnaroli serves as its Chairman. The UCD has historically focused on clean and safe programs, neighborhood planning, and marketing, but in recent years, under Carnaroli's leadership, it has evolved to focus more intentionally on community economic development. For example, the District's West Philadelphia Skills Initiative, which was catalyzed by the Netter Center, trains and connects local youth and adults to jobs at health care, educational, and other institutions in University City.

### **Reaccreditation process**

Penn's approach to its recent reaccreditation process further highlights how local engagement has become infused into the culture of Penn, as well as how the University's role as an anchor institution contributes to its academic mission. Completed every ten years, reaccreditation is a rigorous process in which the University prepares an in-depth campus-wide Self-Study Report, typically focused on one aspect of campus life, which is then submitted to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The current Self-Study Report describes how the mission and goals of the Penn Compact guide institutional assessment and undergraduate education at Penn. Local Engagement, importantly, was one of seven working groups charged to take stock of current activity and produce a set of strategic considerations and recommendations for the University.<sup>13</sup>

Another indicator of the centrality of the work to Penn is the participation in the Netter Center's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference in November 2012. Administrators, faculty, and deans from nine of Penn's twelve schools served as panelists or moderators during the two-day conference on "The Role of Higher Education-Community-School Partnerships in Creating Democratic Communities Locally, Nationally and Globally." The conference drew over 500 participants from nearly 80 colleges and universities and 110 local, national, and global organizations from across the U.S. and seven other countries. Penn President Amy Gutmann offered remarks and presented awards at the Awards Luncheon on the first day; Provost Vincent Price offered remarks during lunch on the second day; and Executive Vice President Craig Carnaroli offered remarks both during the evening reception and at a private reception for donors, as well as served on a major panel titled, "The Role of Anchor Institutions in Community Building."

### **Strengthening democracy**

Finally, President Gutmann also connected work with West Philadelphia to a most important goal – strengthening democracy. This focus was echoed in her inaugural theme, "Rising to the Challenges of a Diverse Democracy," and local engagement serves, as we have written, as a key means to achieving that goal.

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<sup>13</sup> One of the authors of this article, Matthew Hartley, chaired the Local Engagement Working Group for Penn's Reaccreditation.

Penn, of course, cannot become a university dedicated to preparing a moral, engaged democratic citizenry with disconnected programs, no matter how extensive. Democratic local engagement must become a central organizing principle of the institution, embedded in its institutional DNA – and that is a primary goal of Gutmann’s Penn Compact, as well as her renewed vision outlined in Penn Compact 2020. In this way, Penn’s temporal mission under President Gutmann, with its significant focus on democratic local engagement, increasingly informs and provides saliency and renewed meaning to Franklin’s founding mission for Penn.

## 5. Conclusion

In this article, we have tried to provide an overview of institutional efforts to support the University of Pennsylvania’s role as an anchor institution, dedicated to creating sustainable, democratic partnerships with its neighbors in West Philadelphia. This civic imperative has been an aspirational ideal since Penn’s founding by Benjamin Franklin. It certainly remains very much a work in progress. Increased faculty and student involvement through academically based community service; the development of numerous sustained, democratic partnerships in the community; and the level of support for local engagement by successive presidents and Penn’s board of trustees make it clear that we have come a long, long way.

**Remains a work  
in progress**

These indicators of progress also are signs of a reshaping of Penn’s culture. One of our senior faculty colleagues, reflecting on his experiences, said recently that, 15 years ago, if someone had said they were involved in community-based teaching or research, it would have been viewed as a nice but perhaps somewhat quirky activity. Today, the value of that work is accepted. Such activities are regularly profiled in Penn’s institutional literature, including alumni magazines and materials for the University’s recently completed capital campaign. It is a striking change. It is this shift in culture, supported by institutional structures and policies, that is the most telling measure of Penn’s success in this area. It is also a basis for our optimism that Penn will further evolve as an anchor institution and increasingly realize Franklin’s democratic civic vision for the university he founded.

**Reshaping of Penn’s  
culture**

## 6. Lessons Learned

The lessons learned are based on more than two decades of our own work and research, as well as the experiences and research of other colleagues engaged in similar efforts in the United States and around the world.

In our experience, it is essential to:

1. Secure support from leadership – Trustees, President, and Faculty.
2. Integrate into the University's Core Academic Mission, as well as its Mission of Corporate Citizenship.
3. Leverage and engage with full academic and administrative resources.
4. Create and support the organizational unit(s) within the university to sustain commitment and engagement over time.
5. Identify common planning opportunities among university, community groups, businesses, and government.
6. Form democratic, mutually beneficial, mutually respectful partnerships.
7. Establish on-the-ground projects and practices to put rhetoric into action.
8. Harness the power of the institution's role as an economic engine.
9. Communicate with confidence.
10. Be focused and patient – changing institutional culture and revitalizing communities take time and ongoing work.
11. Advance the idea of anchor institutions nationally through writing and organizational and network development.

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