

Using Community-University Partnerships to Advance School Mental Health Programming: Why, What and How?

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Recently, in the fields of education, health, and mental health care, there has been an increased focus on accountability and the production of positive program outcomes. In the context of this accountability movement, agencies and schools are witnessing that success in obtaining financial support is increasingly tied to the use of evidence-based programs and the ability to document positive outcomes. **However, even when communities have the knowledge about evidence-based programs, they often face challenges in creating the capacity and infrastructure necessary for program implementation, evaluation, and sustainability.** Indeed, recent reports indicate that it typically takes more than a decade for research-based knowledge to be shared with and adopted into community practice. To address this gap between science and practice, national initiatives have called for a transformation in service delivery. Recommendations for transforming service delivery include developing partnerships between education and mental health to expand school mental health programming, and developing partnerships among researchers, providers, youth and families. In fact, integrated and interdisciplinary partnerships are becoming the standard for providing quality mental health care. **One mechanism for closing the gap between science and practice is the development of community-university (C-U) partnerships** that strategically enhance community capacity to identify and address local needs, while also informing the advancement of science.

Rationale of the Paper

Community-University (C-U) partnerships create a mutually beneficial situation. They bring valuable resources to communities to help them address the needs of youth and families, while also providing unique opportunities for education, training and research for university students and faculty members. **The goal of this paper is to empower communities to consider initiating a C-U partnership as a mechanism for advancing school mental health programming.** Specifically this paper:

- Provides a synthesis of the scientific evidence that documents the utility of C-U partnerships
- Presents the benefits of C-U partnerships for both parties
- Outlines possible resources available within universities
- Provides a brief guide for accessing university resources
- Describes typical issues and barriers that may interfere with partnership development
- Suggests possible solutions and avenues for overcoming barriers
- Offers examples that highlight successful C-U partnerships

The intended audience for this paper is community planners, agency directors, and school administrators. A companion paper that addresses the university audience is also being developed.

Key Definitions

Community-University (C-U) partnerships can be defined as a series of interpersonal relationships between (a) community members, agency personnel and community leaders and (b) campus administrators, faculty, staff and students with the stated goal of achieving mutually beneficial outcomes.

Expanded school mental health (ESMH) programming implies two concepts: (a) that community health and mental health services are integrated with, and expand beyond, existing services within the school, and (b) this integrated system provides a full continuum of services for children and their families.

WHY Develop Community-University Partnerships?

To adequately provide promotion, prevention, assessment, early intervention, and treatment services in health and mental health arenas, it is virtually necessary for schools and community agencies to collaborate to maximize available resources. Yet, even with these combined resources, additional expertise and personnel may be needed. By expanding the partnership to include university resources, communities can enhance service capacity, service quality, and service evaluation.

What makes C-U partnerships so effective is that they create opportunities and provide access to resources that neither partner would have on its own. From a university perspective, C-U partnerships offer access to a wealth of educational opportunities (e.g., service projects and practical training experiences) and provide avenues for research that, because it is conducted in a real-world community setting, has applicability for local, regional, and national communities. While there are many benefits to university personnel, this paper intends to outline the benefits to communities in hopes of creating interest, dialog and action.

We offer three reasons why communities should consider engaging in a C-U partnership for ESMH programming. **First, many communities lack the knowledge, resources, infrastructure, and leadership capacity to implement, evaluate, and sustain effective prevention and intervention programming in schools.** A reoccurring theme in research on community partnerships implementing evidence-based interventions is the need to carefully address capacity building to sustain quality implementation. Community capacity has been defined in many ways. Commonalities across the definitions include the development of skills and competencies within community members, leadership that capitalizes on local talent, and the identification, mobilization, acquisition and strategic use of resources. In many communities, an untapped resource is the university. Through a C-U partnership, community agencies can access scientific knowledge, personnel resources, and technical assistance to develop the competencies and leadership skills necessary for conducting needs assessments, program evaluation, and strategic planning for sustainability. Long-term benefits may include recruitment of future employees and access to a network of unforeseen resources that may be helpful in the future.

Second, there is evidence to suggest that communities working in isolation (i.e., “grassroots efforts”) without expertise in theory-driven work, evidence-based practices, and program evaluation have limited effectiveness and may not produce desired outcomes. Grassroots efforts require a tremendous amount of time and community resources. If positive

outcomes are not achieved, particularly after such resource expenditure, the risk of community burnout is high. One solution to this challenge is for communities to develop partnerships with university-based personnel to leverage resources to address community problems.

Third, recent research suggests that C-U partnerships that include critical ingredients can produce the outcomes that communities are seeking. For example, Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is a model that seeks to actively involve researchers and community members representing a variety of stakeholder positions in all phases of the research process. This model focuses on resolving problems identified by community members while also generating scientific knowledge. The model prioritizes the values of mutual benefit, co-learning between the academic and non-academic communities, capacity building, and long-term commitment. Studies using this model are demonstrating promising results. A skill-building curriculum for the CBPR approach is available online at www.cbprecurriculum.info. Another emerging approach to science and practice collaboration is called Community Science (CS). CS is an inter-disciplinary field that attempts to strengthen community functioning by investigating how community-centered models maximize the effective and efficient use of evidence-based practices in real world settings. While this approach is newly emerging, key features that are thought to lead to successful partnerships include active participation of community members and organizations, local control over intervention adaptation, collaborative projects that measure outcomes over long periods of time, and infrastructure and capacity building. Because this approach attempts to directly address the historical disconnect between programs developed under carefully controlled research conditions and community contexts, community members may be interested in learning more about how they can adopt this approach within their C-U partnerships.

Research emerging from diverse areas of science including environmental research, public health, and more recently behavioral health suggests that C-U partnerships are beneficial in producing positive outcomes for both communities and scientists. Thus, there is hope that these same benefits could be realized for school mental health programming.

WHAT Resources are Available through a Community-University Partnership?

As agencies begin to consider how a C-U partnership could be beneficial for their community, they may want to know what resources are available. Several possible resources are described below. (Note: although we use the term “university,” many of the resources described below are available through colleges and community colleges as well.)

1. Graduate Student Resources. One of the most plentiful resources that a university has to offer is student resources. Most universities that have graduate programs in education, nursing, medicine, social work, psychology, counseling, speech/hearing sciences, or physical therapy are interested in partnerships with community agencies and schools to develop **training sites** in which graduate students can obtain **practical experience** in their field for course credit. Through these types of partnerships, community agencies and schools can provide services to children and families that are reflective of **state-of-the-science techniques** drawn from current scientific literature, that are provided at a reduced cost, and that often **fill a gap in existing community services**. By using graduate student resources, agencies can also provide services to schools that

otherwise may not be possible because of billing restrictions (e.g., prevention programming). By coordinating these services, agencies can enhance their relationships with local school districts while also **enhancing service delivery across the full continuum of care**. Universities benefit from these partnerships by having a site that offers rich experiential training for students in a setting that mirrors future practice or that offers greater diversity than can be obtained through a university-based clinic. Thus, partnerships with universities for student resources can be mutually beneficial and often self-sustaining.

2. Undergraduate Student Resources. Many university departments also have field placement classes for undergraduate students as well. While undergraduate students may not provide the same level of clinical expertise as a graduate student, many community agencies and schools have found the additional personnel resources to be of substantial benefit. There are multiple roles to be filled in a multi-disciplinary team. By **strategically using undergraduate students** in roles that require less expertise, agencies can ensure that credentialed staff stays focused on providing quality care and maintaining productivity. For example, undergraduate students can serve as **community support professionals, homework tutors, transportation liaisons, or could contribute administrative assistant capacities**. Finally, because service-based learning is highly valued at many universities, many institutions have community service clearinghouses that coordinate campus-community partnerships to provide services to the community and to promote mutually-beneficial learning. As one example, the Ohio University Center for Community Service (<http://www.ohiou.edu/commserv/>) is a connecting point for students, faculty, community members, and community agencies interested in volunteer and community service projects. Most universities have similar coordinating offices. See <http://www.univsource.com/oh.htm> for a list of all colleges and universities in Ohio (then search for the community service center within the selected university).

3. Professional Development. Most credentialed educators and mental health providers are required to engage in on-going professional development training. Because university faculty members are required to develop **programs of research** that advance science in a specialized area, they often have a depth of expertise that can be of value to professionals in the community. Thus, schools and community agencies may tap this resource when establishing professional development trainings. For example, the Southern Consortium for Children is a consortium that serves as the program planning, coordinating, fundraising, and development arm for children and youth across ten counties in Southeastern Ohio (<http://www.sccchildren.com/>). In this role, the consortium organizes a **professional development training series that utilizes the expertise of faculty at several universities across the state**. With the expansion of video-conference technology, faculty expertise no longer needs to reside in the local area. Thus, it behooves community agencies and schools to **become familiar with the areas of excellence and expertise within universities across the state**. It is also noteworthy, that the land-grant universities within each state (e.g., Ohio State University) have **Cooperative Extension Services** (see <http://extension.osu.edu/index.php>) whose mission is to improve quality of life through research-based education programs. Historically, Cooperative Extension Services have focused on the areas of agriculture, nutrition, and family and consumer sciences. However, in recent years, several C-U partnerships have used this infrastructure to advance services in children's education, health, and mental health. Thus, communities should consider accessing relevant professional development resources through a branch office of the Cooperative Extension

program, as these offices have an existing infrastructure designed to facilitate C-U partnerships.

4. Technical Assistance. Research suggests that the two most common technologies for building community capacity are professional development training and technical assistance. Professional development training can be a valuable way to obtain content knowledge for community professionals; however, one-time trainings are often insufficient to develop new skills or competencies. Thus, **on-going technical assistance** is a method through which community professionals may obtain case-based training and competency development, as well as planning for and implementing evidence-based programs. In addition, resources from within selected university departments could provide technical assistance to a school-agency partnership to facilitate partnership development, community capacity building, strategic planning, and collaborative program implementation. Universities can also provide resources for **program evaluation and planning, including identification of outcome indicators and measurement tools, statistical analysis**, and technical report writing. Further, communities can work with university researchers **to obtain (and understand) data** from studies conducted in their region to share with policy makers or funding agencies about the strengths and needs within the community. Technical assistance may enhance the application of science into practice, and the relevance of research findings for community members, as C-U partnerships can make the data “come alive” for community members. Finally, by engaging in an on-going relationship, historical barriers to C-U partnerships are reduced, trust develops, and communities begin to have access to an even broader network within the university. For example, occasionally, communities may not need as much in the way of personnel capacity, professional development training, or ongoing technical assistance; rather they simply may need access to factual information (e.g., lists of evidence-based programs addressing a specific problem, tools for identifying developmental assets in children, or tools for assessing program outcome), or to be directed to such information. If a C-U partnership exists, accessing these resources may be a substantially more efficient process.

5. Grant Funding. As C-U collaborations develop, the partnership becomes capable of **applying for grants**, that if working in isolation, neither entity may have been capable of obtaining. For example, a researcher may be interested in examining factors that predict successful treatment outcome for youth; however, she may not have the clinical resources to implement all service aspects of the grant. Similarly, schools and communities may be interested in obtaining a grant to provide services, but may not have a strong application because they lack the resources for program evaluation and statistical analyses. Communities may also benefit from university personnel who may have more training in grant-writing, access to other in-kind resources that strengthen the grant application, or national visibility that may facilitate connections to other resources. Pooling resources, particularly in communities where resources are scarce, often results in a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Finally, in the wake of current national initiatives promoting inter-professional care, many funding streams are now requiring that applicants demonstrate a history of inter-professional partnerships.

HOW to Initiate and Sustain a Community-University Partnership?

For some community agencies, initiating a relationship with a university can seem like a daunting task. In addition, community members may view university personnel as

unapproachable and removed from community culture. Further, local lore or past history may suggest that collaborating with a university has more cost than benefit. However, because national initiatives are calling for greater engagement between scientists and practitioners, community members may find that universities are becoming increasingly approachable.

In addition, it is important to recognize that university personnel vary greatly in terms of their research interests, time commitments, and willingness to expand their activities beyond the university campus. There is also great variability across universities and across departments within a university. For example, different academic departments vary in the degree to which they encourage or mandate their faculty to engage in community projects. Finally, even within the same department, faculty members differ in the degree to which they engage in community partnerships. For example, a psychologist who studies the psychological processes associated with stereotypes may rarely engage community members (i.e., most of her research may be conducted with college students); however, a psychologist who studies the impact of depression on the treatment of diabetes may form several community-based partnerships to conduct her research. Thus, the likelihood of success in initiating a C-U partnership depends on getting connected to the right person. Below we describe several mechanisms for finding the right university connection for your community's needs. Once you have developed a relationship with one university contact, this relationship will likely open the door for other possibilities and opportunities.

1. Contacting an Individual Faculty Member. Before contacting an individual faculty member, it may be helpful to understand the structure and responsibilities associated with this position. Faculty at large research-focused universities (e.g. most state-funded schools) usually teach one or two courses per semester/quarter. The remainder of their time is dedicated to developing a program of research (i.e., multiple research projects that build upon each other) within the area of their expertise. They are rewarded for obtaining grants to fund their research projects and for publishing journal articles derived from their research projects. **Because of this, faculty members are typically most open to community collaborations that allow them to conduct research in their area of interest. Thus, it is very important for agencies to contact faculty members whose research is related to the community challenge the agency is trying to address.** For example, if an agency wanted assistance in identifying and implementing a suicide prevention program, they would want to contact a faculty member who conducts research on depression or prevention programming, not a faculty member who conducts research on factors associated with cardiovascular disease or sexual assault. A good place to obtain the research interests of faculty members is on the departmental website (e.g., Department of Psychology; Department of Social Work; College of Education; College of Business). Usually, faculty members have a personal webpage where they describe their research interests and most recent projects.

When you contact the faculty member, it may be helpful to describe the type of resource or assistance that your agency is seeking and request a meeting to discuss the development of a mutually beneficial partnership. During this meeting, be prepared to describe the type of resources or assistance you are seeking, the defining characteristics of your community, as well as the connection between the community need and the faculty members' research area. A mutually-beneficial C-U partnership with a research-focused faculty member would be one that brings services or resources to the community and that provides an opportunity for research for the faculty member.

2. Contacting the Chair of a Department or College. The department chair is the administrative leader of a given department or college. **Department chairs are familiar with the areas of expertise of all faculty members within their department, as well as with the student groups sponsored by the department.** Thus, if you are unable to identify the most appropriate faculty member via the department website, the department chair may be able to direct you to the most appropriate person. Similarly, if you have experienced a failed attempt in connecting with a given faculty member, **the department chair can act as a liaison** between an agency and the specific faculty member who is most likely to be receptive to your ideas for collaboration. In addition, most departments organize **undergraduate honors clubs or graduate student councils.** The department chair could connect you with groups that may oversee service learning projects. Such groups are also good places to advertise employment opportunities within your agency.

3. Contacting the Director of a University Training Clinic. Many universities operate university-based clinics that provide training for graduate students as well as health and mental health services to university students and community members. Departments that typically house these clinics include the Departments of Psychology, Medicine/Psychiatry, Social Work, Counselor Education, Physical Therapy, and Hearing, Speech and Language Sciences. **Clinic directors are often responsible for overseeing the practical training of graduate students.** Thus, when you contact the clinic director, you could discuss the possibility of **creating a new field placement site** for the practical training of graduate students in this department. During this discussion you could ask the director to inform you about her goals for training so that you could consider how those needs could be met within your agency. In addition, clinic directors are often familiar with other clinics and service-oriented programs on campus. Thus, they may be able to direct you to other university personnel or departments that could provide the needed resources.

4. Contacting the Administrator of University Student Services or Student Affairs. Universities typically have an office that oversees all academic, extracurricular, and health support services for students (often called University Student Services or University Student Affairs). **The administrator for this office can serve as a liaison** between an agency and the specific faculty member or service department that would most appropriately match the community need. Interestingly, some agencies may view a partnership with this office as a mechanism for increasing business for the agencies (i.e., another source of referrals). For example, **some community mental health agencies have developed contracts** with the Office of Student Services to provide mental health services to university students. From the university perspective, such a contract may be a more efficient and cost effective method of obtaining services for students than hiring a full time staff at the university. As the partnership develops, the agency can obtain other contacts within the university to explore the development of other partnerships.

5. Contacting the Clearinghouse for Student Service Learning Projects. As mentioned above, many universities have a community service clearinghouse to coordinate campus-community partnerships that simultaneously provide services to the community and learning opportunities for students. **By contacting this office, you can learn about available student resources, as well as individual faculty members and university departments that tend to be**

involved in such endeavors. See <http://www.univsource.com/oh.htm> for a list of all colleges and universities in Ohio. Typically an internet search that includes the words “service learning” and the name of the educational institution will lead you to the service learning clearinghouse.

6. *Speaking with Colleagues within Your Local Region.* Because many communities have already found multiple benefits from C-U partnerships, it is quite possible, that community professionals in a neighboring community have an existing C-U partnership from which you could also benefit. In addition, many community professionals also teach at a local college or university. This person could direct you to the most appropriate contact for your agency needs. A good time to learn about these connections is during meetings in which multiple agencies are present (e.g., **Family and Children First Council meetings**) and in which cross-county professionals are convened (e.g., community mental health center administrative council meetings; regional or state-level superintendent’s meetings; Alcohol and Drug Addictions and Mental Health Services [ADAMHS] board meetings).

7. *Contacting State-level Offices and Coordinating Bodies.* Several State departments can provide information about relevant university resources and areas of expertise across Ohio’s educational institutions. For example, within the Ohio Department of Mental Health, two relevant offices would be the **Office of Children’s Services and Prevention** within the Office of Program and Policy Development (<http://www.mh.state.oh.us/communications/odmhoffices/offices.progpolicydiv.html>) and the **Office of Program Evaluation and Research** (<http://www.mh.state.oh.us/communications/odmhoffices/offices.oper.html>). In addition, the **Ohio Mental Health Network for School Success (OMHNSS)** can facilitate linkages to university partners. The OMHNSS consists of six action networks, each of which is spearheaded by regional affiliates (<http://www.units.muohio.edu/csbnhp/network/index.html>). Each of these regional affiliates has experience and has developed past successful C-U partnerships; **thus, they can provide contact information that could help launch other C-U partnerships.**

Community agencies offer a variety of benefits to the university. Thus, regardless of the mechanism you pursue to initiate a C-U partnership, it is important to **promote the strengths and benefits that your agency offers to the potential university partner.** These benefits include (a) real-world training experiences for students, (b) opportunities for community-based research projects, (c) service learning projects that facilitate application of content knowledge learned in class, and (d) content and process information that allows real-world practice to inform future research, as well as the educational and training curricula for the next generation of professionals.

Overcoming Common Barriers to C-U Partnerships

While there are many avenues for initiating a C-U partnership and many benefits of engaging in C-U partnerships, there are also barriers and challenges at every stage of partnership development. Thus, as we attempt to engage in C-U partnerships, it is important that we approach these challenges with sufficient understanding of the historical context, the practical barriers, and with ideas for addressing both. We discuss these concepts below.

Possible Barriers	Possible Solutions
<p><u>Divergence in Cultures:</u> The cultures of academia and the community differ with regard to problem solving style, use of information, and pace of action.</p> <p>Characteristics of Academia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skeptical, seeking to control • Slow pace of action • Prioritize precision in measurement • Rewarded for grants and publications • Speak in statistical and theoretical terms <p>Characteristics of Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on improving quality of life • Seek practical solutions • Adapt programs to fit community • Qualitative, uncontrolled analyses • Swift pace of action 	<p><u>Divergence in Cultures:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance understanding of the respective cultures, communicate openly about each other’s cultures, pressures, and operating demands • Create a glossary of terms for each other to facilitate use of a common language • Community professionals may request that reports or summaries be written in non-scientific terms
<p><u>Unbalanced Leadership:</u> Too often university personnel and community professionals are not coming to the table as equals; rather, the university professional is viewed as the “expert” and the community professional is viewed as the “learner” or the “recipient.”</p>	<p><u>Unbalanced Leadership:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a university professional who is able to engage in a collaborative, mutually-respectful partnership • Community professionals must be prepared to serve as the experts on issues in their community • University professionals must be prepared to share the role of expert in the decisional process • Both parties should foster meetings that involve co-learning, joint decision-making, and compromise
<p><u>Lack of Response:</u> When pursuing a C-U partnership, community members may experience unreturned phone calls, lack of interest and limited time from faculty members, or a mismatch between what you have to offer and the needs of the department,</p>	<p><u>Lack of Response:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact another faculty member or another office. Faculty members have different needs, philosophies and interests in innovative partnerships. • Be persistent. Keep trying • Because leadership changes frequently, barriers that exist one year may not remain the next year. Call year to year or inquire about changes in leadership.

Possible Barriers	Possible Solutions
<p><u>Time and Scheduling:</u> After the partnership has been initiated, challenges associated with student schedules, travel, and time constraints related to interviewing students, supervision or networking meetings may arise.</p>	<p><u>Time and Scheduling:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach a compromise that allows student interns to provide services at a time that matches agency constraints. • Use video-conference technology for activities that require less interpersonal interaction (e.g., staff orientations, trainings)
<p><u>Financial Constraints:</u> C-U partnerships may struggle to find stipends to pay for student services or financial reimbursement cover time professional time spent in training, supervision, or networking meetings.</p>	<p><u>Financial Constraints:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss in the early stages about the financial requirements necessary to sustain the partnership • Consider blended funding sources (e.g., billing, grants, in kind contributions) to contribute to the development • Jointly apply for grant funding as an early partnership activity

Community members should expect the process of partnership development to be iterative and continual. Partners need to dedicate time for building the relationship and finding a common ground for the collaboration. Successful partnerships seem to employ a sum of principles to facilitate the process of collaboration: **collaborative and equitable involvement of all members, mutual benefit of all partners, mutual trust and respect, acknowledgment of different partners’ agendas and priorities, consideration of multidisciplinary approaches, promotion of co-learning and capacity building, dissemination of findings and the long term commitment by all partners.** By adhering to these principles, many challenges and pitfalls that are based on historical divergence can be prevented, reduced or readily addressed.

Examples of Successful C-U Partnerships

Example 1. The Administrator of the Student Services Office at a local community college contacted the CEO of a community mental health center (CMHC). He explained that the college was experiencing transitions in the Counseling and Psychological Services Clinic at the college. He was interested in learning more about the services provided by the CMHC and possibly developing a C-U partnership that would bring more mental health counseling and therapy services to the college community. The college administrator and the CMHC CEO met three times over the course of two months. During these meetings, the college administrator described the needs and characteristics of the student population, and presented data about treatment utilization rates. The CEO described available services his staff could provide as well as possible contractual arrangements. In addition, the partners discussed ethical, legal, and practical arrangements that would facilitate the development of a C-U partnership. The end result was the development of a contract between the agencies that allowed the CMHC staff to provide services to the college community in a manner that was cost effective for the college.

Example 2: *A county juvenile court judge contacted the chair of the Psychology Department. He explained that he was seeing an increase in the number of elementary school children and an increase in the number of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in his court. He wanted his community to learn more about effective treatments for ADHD, and to partner with the university to obtain the resources needed to implement such treatments in his community. The department chair connected the judge to a faculty member whose research examines the effectiveness of school-based mental health programs for children with ADHD. The judge invited the faculty member to a community meeting that included key school and community professionals. During this meeting, the faculty member presented possible services that could be provided by supervised graduate students, and the research questions she was interested in answering. School and community professionals shared the needs of the community and the gaps in services. The team identified where the university and community interests overlapped and agreed to continue meeting to discuss the development of a mutually-beneficial arrangement. The team spent one year in monthly planning meetings. During these meetings, each agency shared their strengths and limitations, as well as their operating demands (e.g., billing restrictions, space limitations, etc). Each agency also shared a list of frequently-used acronyms and operating codes so that a common language could be established. In addition, over the course of the year, leadership of the collaborative team came to be shared by the juvenile court judge, the school district director of pupil personnel services, and the university faculty member. The result was the development and implementation of a school mental health program that strategically fills a gap in the continuum of community services (i.e., the need for more intensive behavioral intervention in the classroom and enhanced home-school linkages), while simultaneously providing a training and research mechanism for university students and faculty.*

Example 3. *The Director of a Community Advocacy Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence contacted an individual faculty member at a university. She described a grant project that she was connected with, that involved school and community interventions focused on preventing intimate partner violence. She wanted to know more about the work the faculty member was conducting in hopes that they may find some common ground from which to develop a C-U partnership. The community professional and the faculty member talked several times by phone. During these conversations, the faculty member described the research efforts associated with his lab. In addition, the faculty member was teaching a graduate course and was looking for a service learning project for students in the course. The director described the grant project and her hopes for assistance. After several phone calls, a meeting was scheduled. This face-to-face meeting brought together key stakeholders in the community coalition and graduate students from the professor's course. A mutually-beneficial partnership was formed. The university partners agreed to collaborate with the coalition to identify a specific project that would best suit the needs of the community. A set of goals and current needs emerged through ongoing communication among partners: namely the need to enhance participation of more stakeholders in their coalition (e.g., youth and community members) and the need to assess factors that may support domestic violence and sexual assault in the community. The students collaborated with the coalition for a semester, developing a guide for conducting the needs assessment and enhancing stakeholder participation. One graduate student continues to work with the coalition with hopes of studying the process for her thesis.*

Summary

There is an increased demand on schools and communities to implement evidenced practices, to demonstrate positive outcomes, and to achieve sustainable programming to address community concerns. In addition, the call to advance expanded school mental health services requires that communities form cross-agency partnerships to provide services across the entire continuum of care (promotion, prevention, assessment, early intervention, and treatment). In this paper, we argue that by forming C-U partnerships, communities can obtain resources that will facilitate achievement of the aforementioned goals. Resources that can be derived from C-U partnerships include personnel resources, professional development training, technical assistance, and statistical analyses. C-U partnerships can also facilitate community problem solving, expansion of service delivery, grant writing, and acquisition of locally meaningful data that can influence policy and funding. Meanwhile, there are commensurate benefits experienced by university faculty and students in the domains of training, research, and service learning. Characteristics of successful C-U partnerships include mutual respect, co-learning, joint decision making and long-term commitments. To successfully narrow the chasm between science and practice, we must focus on more than just the dissemination of scientifically-proven knowledge or interventions; we must aim at the development of infrastructure, capacity-building, and local participation in accountabilities. We have provided information about available resources within universities, a brief guide for accessing those resources, as well as a map for navigating likely pitfalls. While the intensity of the C-U partnership may wax and wane over months and years, the ongoing relationship provides a gateway to a larger network of resources to assist communities in meeting the needs of youth and families. We hope to empower communities to develop C-U partnerships as a mechanism to expand their capacity to provide a full continuum of school mental health services.

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