



More communication, collaboration needed, say community partners in major CACC study

Research universities step up civic engagement

Compact awards process open

Educating Citizens  
Building Communities

WINTER 2008

*Compact Current* is the newsletter of Campus Compact, which provides leadership, resources, and advocacy to support civic education, community building, and campus engagement for more than 1,100 member campuses.

## Promoting Social Equity in New Orleans' 9th Ward

by *Kenneth M. Reardon*

**A**fter Hurricanes Katrina and Rita blew through the Gulf Coast, residents of New Orleans' devastated 9th Ward district faced overwhelming damage with little opportunity to rebuild.

Now, thanks to a unique community/campus collaboration involving the nation's largest citizen organization and three research universities, 9th Ward residents will have the chance to rebuild their homes, churches, and neighborhoods—and, in the process, perhaps reclaim their lives and sense of community.

The process began in September 2005, just weeks after the hurricanes hit. Steve Kest of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) called Cornell University's Department of City and Regional Planning to request help with resident-led recovery efforts in the 9th Ward. With the enthusiastic support of students, faculty, and staff, Cornell re-allocated \$100,000 to fund recovery efforts, including hiring adjunct faculty to offer a series of workshops and paying for student and faculty travel to New Orleans.

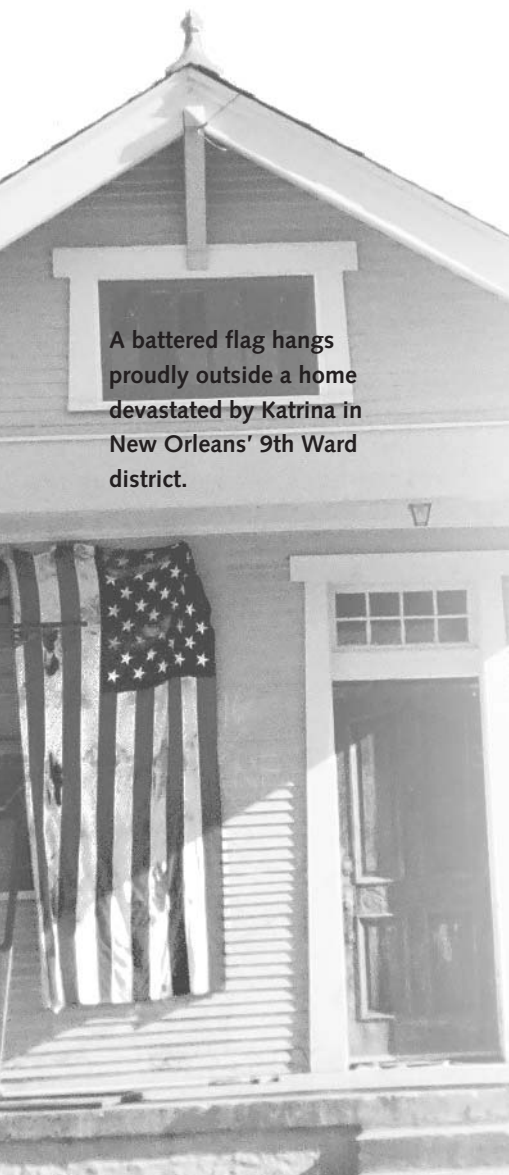
We prepared for this work by quickly organizing a two-credit course examining the city's ecological, cultural, political, and social history for the fall term. Thirty-six students and four faculty members collaborated to identify readings and facilitate classroom discussions. Eager to extend their work, students in the class launched a fundraising campaign to finance a winter service trip, during which 16 students

worked with local residents to prepare their homes for rehabilitation and to gain a deeper understanding of the community's immediate recovery needs.

Guided by this information, we organized four new courses in the spring of 2006 designed to address storm water management, affordable housing, urban design, and manpower issues raised by local residents. The residents' response was so enthusiastic that ACORN asked Cornell to establish a summer internship program for students to develop their most promising plans. During the internship, students completed a study of abandoned properties, investigated alternative property tax assessment methods, and developed a set of principles for participatory neighborhood planning.

Aware of the serious challenges of creating workable recovery plans, students had asked faculty members not only from Cornell but also from partners Columbia University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for assistance in recruiting support for these efforts. Led by the students, the partnering universities formed a community joint venture, the ACORN Housing/University Collaborative (AHUC). At the end of the summer, armed with students' extensive field research,

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A battered flag hangs proudly outside a home devastated by Katrina in New Orleans' 9th Ward district.



## Campus Compact

Campus Compact is a national coalition of more than 1,100 college and university presidents—representing some 6 million students—who are committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education. As the only national association dedicated solely to this mission, Campus Compact is a leader in building civic engagement into campus and academic life. Through our national office and network of 32 state offices, members receive the training, resources, and advocacy they need to build strong surrounding communities and teach students the skills and values of democracy.

Campus Compact comprises a national office based in Providence, RI, and 32 state offices in CA, CO, CT, FL, HI, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, ME, MI, MN, MO, MT, NC, NH, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, TX, UT, VT, WA, WI, and WV. For contact and other information, see [www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org).

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**RIGHT: Broken windows on this marked house greet a student conducting a physical conditions survey.**

## Rebuilding the 9th

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AHUC responded to the city's Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for comprehensive recovery planning services.

As the fall semester approached, we were thrilled to learn that AHUC had been selected as one of 16 consultants from a pool of 69 firms to participate in this historic effort. We were especially pleased when we were assigned to prepare a recovery plan for the 9th Ward in collaboration with the residents with whom we had been working for nearly a year.

That fall, 80 students enrolled in studio courses offered by the three partnering universities traveled to New Orleans to document conditions within the 9th Ward and determine residents' preferred redevelopment strategies. In addition to analyzing recent population and housing trends and reviewing the district's plans, students:

- Evaluated the structural integrity of 3,000 buildings;
- Surveyed 29 local playgrounds, parks, and residual open spaces;
- Inspected businesses along the area's four busiest commercial corridors;
- Interviewed 250 residents about their redevelopment preferences; and
- Conducted focus groups with civic and faith-based organizations and elected officials.

Data from these activities formed the basis of a student-produced planning document, *The Peoples' Plan for Overcoming the*

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For more information, visit the AHUC website at [www.rebuildingtheninth.org](http://www.rebuildingtheninth.org).

*Hurricane Katrina Blues: A Comprehensive Strategy for Promoting a More Vibrant, Sustainable, and Just 9th Ward.* Widespread support for *The Peoples' Plan* resulted in its unanimous endorsement by both the New Orleans City Planning Commission and City Council. A highly favorable news wire story, which appeared in more than 175 metropolitan newspapers in the United States and elsewhere, further reinforced public support for the plan.

In March 2007, New Orleans' Director of Recovery Services unveiled the city's \$1.1 billion investment strategy, which included more than \$145 million in new public investment for infrastructure, business development, and housing projects in two areas of the 9th Ward recommended by *The Peoples' Plan*. These proposals represented a dramatic shift from those contained in earlier plans, which had recommended withholding public investments from severely damaged areas, including parts of the Lower 9th Ward, pending fur-

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# More Communication, Collaboration Needed, Say Community Partners in Nation's Largest Study

by Marie Sandy

**O**verwhelmingly, the most active community partners want more communication and collaboration with higher education, says results from a study by California Campus Compact (CACC).

The goal of the study, the nation's largest of its kind, was to find out what community partners need to work effectively with higher education and what barriers they encounter. The study involved a total of 99 experienced community partners in a series of 15 focus groups. Key results follow:

**Community partners perceive themselves as co-educators.** Agencies cited dedication to educating college students as the primary motivation for partnering with campuses. Partners had deep knowledge of service-learning and a desire to become more involved in course planning and evaluation. *At a minimum, partners want to see the syllabus and the learning goals for students so they can contribute to an effective learning outcome.*

**Communication with faculty is essential.** Lack of communication with faculty, particularly with regard to curriculum planning, was the primary challenge described by community partners. Participants in every focus group reported encountering student assignments that violated their agency's legal or ethical guidelines. *Partners need a way to connect with faculty to plan the curriculum, negotiate student placement, and evaluate the service-learning experience.*

**Relationships are foundational.** Partners stressed that building successful community-campus relationships involves

clearly communicating mutual roles, goals, and responsibilities, as well as understanding workplace cultures.

**Accessibility is key.** Community partners noted that service-learning offices often function as "gatekeepers," making it difficult to connect with faculty and others on campus. They would like to see both broader and deeper communication.

Specific recommendations from community partners include the following:

1. Value relationships.
2. Talk regularly about partnership processes and outcomes.
3. Hold face-to-face curriculum planning sessions, pre-semester meetings, and orientations for all involved faculty members and community partners.
4. Balance personal relationship building with the need to expand communication and campus access.
5. Develop other accountability options to complement tracking of hours, which can be burdensome for students and partners alike.
6. Get together informally as well as in formal settings.

The study is based on work supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service under a grant from Learn and Serve America. **CC**

"I think a great partnership is when you stop saying **MY** students. They're **OUR** students."

— COMMUNITY PARTNER

**WEB**link 

The full report and a campus conversation guide are available at [www.cacampuscompact.org/cacc\\_programs/community\\_campus\\_partnership/index.html](http://www.cacampuscompact.org/cacc_programs/community_campus_partnership/index.html).

*Marie Sandy is an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. She was one of five researchers who conducted the community partner study.*

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## Rebuilding the 9th

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ther research and evidence of significant reinvestment by families and institutions.

The Collaborative's work is ongoing. During the fall 2008 semester, students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign examined implementation of Louisiana's Road Home Program—designed to help homeowners restore their houses and return to the city—to recommend improvements. Cornell University students have organized a second Winter Term Service Trip, a Spring Affordable Housing Workshop, and a Summer Internship Program, which will involve approximately 30 students in preparing funding proposals and physical designs to implement *The People's Plan*. **CC**

*Kenneth M. Reardon is an Associate Professor of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University.*

# Research Universities Step Up Civic Engagement

**Campus Compact serves in a coordinating role** for a network of research universities working to advance campus-based civic and community engagement. The network has published a new report, *New Times Demand New Scholarship II*, outlining recommendations in four critical areas: community-engaged scholarship, research on engagement, educating students for

civic engagement, and institutionalizing engagement.



## WEBlink

The report, as well as model programs and information about the network's ongoing work, is available at [www.compact.org/initiatives/research\\_universities/](http://www.compact.org/initiatives/research_universities/).

The research university initiative is part of Campus Compact's continuing effort to advance civic engagement across the spectrum of higher education.

# Compact Awards Process Open

**The online application process** for Campus Compact's national student and faculty awards is now open. Here is your chance to shine a spotlight on the work of students and faculty members on your campus who are dedicated to the principles of civic engagement. Winners receive a cash award to support community work as well as national recognition for their efforts.

## WEBlink

For application materials and other information, please see [www.compact.org/awards/](http://www.compact.org/awards/).

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