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# Portland State and the Downtown Portland Plan - 50 Years Later with Ethan Seltzer

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# Portland, Portland State, and the Urban University Idea

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## Introduction

This year we'll celebrate the 50th anniversary of the City of Portland's 1972 Downtown Plan, one of the most consequential plans in the City's history. That plan put in place a vision for a public, pedestrian-scaled, multipurpose, and vital downtown, a downtown able to contribute profoundly to the well-being of the entire City and the region. Through the requirements adopted in the Downtown Plan, and subsequent public and private investments stemming from it, Portland's core area became an international icon for central city recovery.

In addition to reshaping and redirecting the physical development of downtown, that plan also formally identified Portland State University as Portland's "urban university." How did this mission statement for PSU end up in a Portland City plan? What did the term mean to the City and to PSU, and what might it mean today and in the future? As we celebrate the 50th anniversary for the 1972 Downtown Plan, how should that celebration enable us to better understand PSU's role in the City and the region, past, present, and future?

This paper begins with an examination of the history of the urban university idea in the United States, followed by the presentation of a working definition for what an urban university is today. It then examines the way that being an urban university has been baked into PSU's identity from its very beginning, and ends with some thoughts about where we might go from here. Attached as an appendix is the summary of an inventory of community engagement in

teaching, research, and service on the part of the College of Urban and Public affairs at Portland State.

### **1) The Urban University Idea in the United States**

Before the advent of the Morrill Act of 1862, US universities were located primarily in the East and reflected a classical view of knowledge and education. In particular, they reflected the notion that the life of the mind was a cloistered one, existing at some remove from the tumult of everyday life, often behind high walls, and focused on an elite view of knowledge, learning, and what mattered. Cities were not considered ideal places for universities. Detached, pastoral settings were considered preferred environments for learning and teaching (Severino, 1996; Spaight, 1980).

Thanks to the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1862, new states were given grants of land that they could use to raise the funds needed to establish state colleges and universities. The higher education objectives of the act were to create the capacity for research and service related to the agricultural and mechanical industrial sectors of state economies and, most importantly, to bring higher education closer to people who weren't able to relocate and live apart from their families and communities.

Land grant universities were also envisioned as a means to prevent the "brain drain," mostly to the East, that accompanied the outmigration of people from rural states seeking higher education. At the time of the passage of the act, only about 20% of the nation's population lived in urban areas, with the West, South, and Midwest collectively notching even less than that. After the Civil War, the second Morrill Act of 1890 established funding for Black

land grant colleges and universities in segregated Southern states, though not at the same amounts as were received by the 1862 land grants (Diner, 2012; Severino, 1996).

The land grant institutions became the backbone of US higher education, educating a majority of Americans seeking undergraduate and graduate degrees. It enabled residents of states newly admitted to the Union to farm, build, and get educated without having to leave home. The focus on “agriculture and mechanics”—and explicit embrace of public sector and university support for the expansion of private sector economic activity, competitiveness, and profitability—contrasted with the classical education offered at private institutions of higher education at the time. Extension services soon followed to bring education and the products of research closer to places distant from campuses and where that knowledge could most quickly be applied.

Between 1910 and 1920, the US population became primarily an urbanized one for the first time. Oregon, settled/colonized predominantly by farm families from the Missouri River valley, remained more than 50% rural until about 1930. The population of Washington, which achieved statehood some 30 years after Oregon, but was settled much more intensively thanks to eastern capital, was more than 50% urban by 1910.

By 1914, evening and weekend classes for urban, place-bound residents had begun to spring up at NYU, the City College of New York, Johns Hopkins, the University of Pittsburgh, and other higher education institutions. That same year the Association of Urban Universities (AUU) was formed to advance the interests of urban universities, universities located in cities and serving the needs of an urbanized population. Like the rural population addressed by the Morrill Act, urban universities saw themselves serving an urban population that could not

uproot and depart for residential higher education opportunities distant from home, families, and work (Mulhollan, 1992; Severino, 1996).

At the first AUU meeting, urban universities were seen to be developing in a very different way than other universities: They were becoming more flexible and practical in their programs to meet their students' needs, using the city as a laboratory where professors worked with residents, and providing cultural resources for them. For example, John Dewey's famous work in primary and secondary education at the University of Chicago embodied the idea of combining theory and practice in urban universities (Crooks, 1982).

Charles William Dabney, a founder of the AUU and president of the University of Cincinnati, knew urban universities were more affordable and accessible to students who otherwise wouldn't have access to a college degree. In his first AUU address, he described the connection between democracy and higher education and how universities could be intellectual powerhouses for cities, meeting the needs of people in urban centers (Crooks, 1982).

Following the Great Depression and a second World War, the nation's cities experienced a new round of growth and change. The nation's urbanized population stalled at about 56% of the total for an entire decade, from 1930 to 1940, but by 1970, almost 74% of the US population lived in urban areas. The rapid post-WWII expansion of both cities and suburbs, along with racism and white flight, the concentration of poverty, and newly apparent environmental degradation, left cities reeling. Whereas the 1920s were an age of great urban optimism, the 1950s brought with it a new sense of urban crisis (Diner, 2017).

Beginning in the 1950s, the urban university idea expanded, adding response to the urban crisis alongside meeting the higher education access needs of urban populations. Whereas early ideas of the urban university dealt primarily with access by virtue of location in an urban place, the evolving mission included applying research and university service to help address the most pressing challenges facing their home cities. Notably, the expectation that the urban university mission meant more than simply an urban location, but instead an evolving partnership between universities and their communities, arose at this time. Similarly, the idea that the success of the university was intimately connected to the success of the place became part of the expectation for how an urban university would behave. Starting in 1959, the Ford Foundation began funding university initiatives for addressing challenging city issues, as did the Carnegie Foundation (Diner, 2017).

Throughout the 1960s, AUU speakers repeatedly spoke of creating “urban grant” universities, echoing the model and legacy of the land grant universities in and for rural areas. Those institutions would get funding to educate urban populations based on a curriculum that focused on urban issues. Some leaders and scholars argued that the analogy was too simplistic, and that urban cores were more complicated and their universities needed an integrated and interdisciplinary agenda, whereas the land grant universities had their primary focus in agriculture and “mechanical arts” (Diner, 2012).

As part of President Johnson’s “war on poverty” of the early 1960s, the Higher Education Act became law in 1965 and secured resources for universities to address issues of poverty. “Speaking on the importance of this legislation, the president drew on the familiar land grant analogy: ‘Just as our colleges and universities changed the future of our farms a

century ago, so they can help change the future of our cities.’ The act authorized substantial Federal funds to strengthen community service resources and continuing education” (Diner, 2017, pp. 92–93).

With the Higher Education Act passed, the idea of the urban grant university continued to build momentum. In 1967, Clark Kerr drew on the land grant model when he proposed that urban universities be supported directly by the federal government as “urban grant” universities. Instead of grants of land to states, urban grant universities, Kerr proposed, would be supported by direct federal funding, bypassing states and their politics altogether.

Kerr and others saw identification as urban grant universities as an important opportunity for securing new sources of funding for often overlooked and underfunded institutions (Kerr, 1967). They also saw the emerging field of “urban studies” as an important avenue for urban universities to use to distinguish themselves from their older and better supported land grant siblings, and as a means for accelerating the development of truly multidisciplinary modes and approaches needed to address the urban crisis.

At about the same time as the emergence of the urban grant university idea, Robert Woods, a professor of political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), itself a land grant research university, suggested in a 1962 speech at a conference on urban living at Washington University in St. Louis, the idea of social science-based urban research “observatories.” Woods’ idea was supported by many policymakers, and in 1966 he was appointed undersecretary of the new federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

HUD worked with the National League of Cities in 1968 to initiate an urban observatory program. Six cities were chosen out of 58 that applied, and another four cities were added in 1970. The program required close collaboration between cities and their urban universities. The observatories investigated many areas of urban life, including citizens' views on taxes, services, citizen participation, and local issues. Professors partnered with city officials, but tension often arose between the immediate needs of the city sponsors and the more tempered pace of academic teaching, research, and service. The urban observatory model was deemed successful, but federal funding was discontinued in 1974, based on the expectation that local funding would be provided. By 1980, urban observatories had largely disappeared (Diner, 2012).

In 1970, the Organization for Social and Technical Innovation (OSTI) conducted a review of 11 identified urban universities and concluded that none of them qualified as any different than a traditional university. OSTI defined an "urban university" as an institution that provided 1) learning access for the local community; 2) curriculum and degrees focused on benefitting the local city population; and 3) assistance to the local city and government. OSTI was surprised at the inconclusive effects that "urban universities" had had on their city environments: "Our basic rather pessimistic conclusion is that universities are unable to respond centrally to the demands of urban constituencies to the urban crisis" (OSTI, 1970, p. 3 as cited in Severino, 1996, p. 303).

In 1980, Ernest Spaights, professor of psychology at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, outlined a comprehensive and detailed urban university framework that was responsive to the specific needs of its community. "Urbanness must be the standard by which



an urban institution sets all its priorities” (1980, p. 370), Spaight explained, and the urban university must be accessible both educationally and geographically, and its curriculum and teaching aligned with the university’s connection with the city. Courses could be taught at multiple locations, including remedial classes. He felt the comprehensive urban university model needs to recruit faculty who are excellent scholars and who also have community-engagement interests. Graduate programs should be offered as they apply to an overall urban perspective and curriculum design. Funding for research by faculty should be funneled toward urban-emphasized endeavors, with more of a focus on community research than on published papers.

Spaight warned that urban-oriented academicians would tend not to fit into the traditional hierarchy of university systems and may be more difficult to manage. Urban university students tended to be nontraditional, too, from lower income and working-class communities. For this reason, volunteer activities for students should be credited. Attention to part-time adult students—day care, night and weekend classes—were vital. Counseling needs would be more complex with flexible hours required. University events should involve students as both active participants and observers, and facilities should be shared with community groups when not being used. The urban university should “permeate its institution with an academic zeal for urbanness. The outcome of such focus and effort should be an urban university of quality” (Spaight, 1980, p. 374).

The Urban Grant University Act of 1979 was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter in 1980. Had it been funded, it would have provided the direct federal funding for urban grant universities envisioned by Kerr and others. In 1986 it passed again, with changes. The legislation

focused on strengthening local students' access to education; developing professional and graduate programs; and growing active relationships with the cities in which the urban universities were situated. In 1984, Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young wrote "the universities can learn from the cities as much as the cities can learn from the universities" (Young, 1985, as cited in Diner, 2017). Again, Congress never provided funding. Since then, the term urban grant university has mostly been dropped in favor of urban university (Diner, 2017).

In the early 1990s with the costs of university education rising precipitously and the economy stumbling, there were new calls from the public for accountability from universities (Mulhollan, 1992). Sheldon Hackney, University of Pennsylvania president from 1981 to 1993, echoed many other educational leaders when he announced, "We will be expected to contribute in directly understandable ways to the solution of pressing public problems. . . . For universities to stand aloof from the task of revitalizing our nation's schools and communities, when society has clearly decided that it is an urgent priority, simply will not be tolerated" (1994, p. 9 as cited by Wiewel et al., 1996, p. 127).

Paige E. Mulhollan in 1992 emphasized that the metropolitan university is important both for our times and also from an historical perspective. She described Harvard and the University of Michigan and UC Berkeley as national research institutions that aren't metropolitan universities even though they are situated in urban areas. She identified a metropolitan university mission as one that embraces a leadership role in addressing local urban issues. According to Mulhollan, a public expectation for universities to work to solve complex city problems is valid and the metropolitan university model that focuses the needs of the local university region in its mission and practices is essential (Mulhollan, 1992).

If sufficient numbers of universities adopted the metropolitan university model, Mulhollan argued, it could become an accepted higher education institutional framework. The model would be successful if university leadership actively engaged students, faculty, and staff around the concept. Since faculty and students are accustomed to traditional higher education institutions of research universities and liberal arts colleges, selling the metropolitan model would be challenging. The metropolitan university should measure itself with its own metrics instead of measuring in comparison to research universities or liberal arts colleges, because they are very different entities (Mulhollan, 1992; Ramaley, 1996). In 1990, a “Declaration of Metropolitan Universities” was created and signed by 49 universities. However, without funding to support an urban university model, the urban university mission began to recede, with evaluation of urban universities inappropriately occurring through a research university lens (Mulhollan, 1992; Ramaley, 1996).

Claire Melhuish described the role universities in Europe and the United States played in the first half of the 20th century supporting and upholding the national interests of their countries. That changed in the latter part of the 20th century, when universities changed their focus during postcolonialism to a global viewpoint combined with a connection to their local urban environments.

Universities became anchors for their local city economic activity and international nodes as well, connecting their city to other cities across the globe through international scholarship. Universities have become neoliberal institutions, relying on corporate and foundation funds. They are expected to be leaders in driving a competitive, globalized market focused on research that moves industries into the future. As the world has shifted from an

industrialized economy to a knowledge-based economy, universities are often centered in that movement (Melhuish, 2020).

Judith Rodin served as president of the University of Pennsylvania from 1994 to 2004. In the 1950s and '60s, as urban renewal became part of the federal response to the urban crisis, universities like Penn began to work with the cities they were in to take advantage of this new tool. Penn, working with the City of Philadelphia, acquired large swaths of the surrounding neighborhood. In the 1970s and '80s, Penn didn't connect with its neighborhood much—it simply wasn't a priority, and much of the land taken for urban renewal had yet to be transformed into more than vacant lots.

As president, Rodin sought to use the power of her office and the wealth of the university to create a new and more productive relationship with the surrounding neighborhood. A committee on urban initiatives was formed that had the same status as other upper-level university board committees. All departments were involved to foster university-wide commitments to the neighborhood. Centering leadership in administration helped keep the initiative front and center (Rodin, 2005).

## **2) The Urban University: A Working Definition**

Since the early 20th century, the urban university idea has evolved from simply universities in urban environments to universities as anchor institutions providing access to higher education and working collaboratively with local partners to make the shared urban place more successful. Today, with more than 85% of the US population living in urban areas, an urban focus has become almost ubiquitous in higher education, even for land grant universities.

Still, the tension within higher education between the elements of traditional universities, and the self-replicating nature of their research and degree programs, and those of place-oriented institutions, urban and rural, remains. The following chart compares some of the ways that distinctions have been made between traditional and urban universities:

	<b>URBAN UNIVERSITY</b>	<b>TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITY</b>
<b>MISSION</b>	Access, research, and service to advance the prospects of the urban community; urban mission	Teaching and research to create knowledge, educate students, advance fields; Carnegie Research 1 (R1) aspiration
<b>CURRICULUM</b>	Profoundly interdisciplinary, urban studies as a core	The liberal arts, specialization within disciplines
<b>PLACE</b>	In the city, accessible, porous boundaries, of the city and committed to a specific place, local focus	Can be anywhere, cloistered campus, bucolic setting, not committed to any single place, global or at least national focus

In short, the central question for asserting urban university identity hinges on whether the institution relates to its city environment in a deliberate and integrated way (Diner, 2017; Severino, 1996). In the 1970s, the Carnegie Commission stated, “Good universities are not only

of but for their cities” (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1972, p. 5 as cited in Severino, 1996, p. 301). However, what, exactly, that entailed and whether it would result in providing urban universities with distinct roles and images remained to be seen.

Today urban universities have aspired to Carnegie Research 1 status, and traditional universities have provided nearby cities with valuable research and support. Early 20th century notions of what universities are and how those ideas have evolved do not necessarily provide the kind of distinctiveness for urban universities once envisioned in 1914. Nonetheless, universities that have tried to balance both a traditional model and an urban university model have met with limited success (Waetjen & Muffo, 1983).

While traditional universities encourage specialization, urban university frameworks recognize the need for interdisciplinary connections and relationships as critical to solving urban issues (Ramaley, 1996). Student engagement in community-based projects enhance the relationship between university and city (Fouad et al., 2020). Strong correlations exist between student service learning and higher GPAs and graduation rates (Yates & Accardi, 2019).

The university/community partnership is essential to a thriving urban university framework and requires 1) planning and commitment to build long-term relationships and trust; and 2) recognition of the mutuality of the partnership and the expertise the community brings to the relationship (Yates & Accardi, 2019). There is much focus today on how anchor institutions, including universities, museums, and hospitals, can partner with business, government, city residents, and others to strengthen cities together (Diner, 2017). Cities have also been encouraged to see themselves in a global rather than national context—a larger and more inclusive frame (Diner, 2017).

In sum, today we find the following conditions associated with what we've come to know as an urban university:

- Located in a city and/or metropolitan region, both physically and in the minds of its students, staff, faculty, leadership, alums, neighbors, and sectoral partners.
- Committed to providing urban residents with access to higher education close to where they live, work, and have family and other support networks, and preparing their students to be successful participants in the local economy and valued members of the community.
- Aware of the conflicting aims of the research university and the urban university, and committed to realigning rewards and incentives, business and planning practices, career paths, hiring criteria, and other factors needed to ensure that the urban university is distinctive among institutions of higher education for its urban mission and place focus.
- Focused on the interdisciplinary reality of urban life and acting to ensure that traditional disciplinary views of the city do not stand in the way of cultivating interdisciplinary approaches necessary for addressing the needs of the contemporary urban community.
- Fundamentally organized around integrating urban community needs and aspirations into teaching, research, and service activities and carrying out those activities wherever possible through partnerships spanning university/community boundaries, and across public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

### **3) Portland State University: Portland's Urban University**

Portland State College (PSC) was created in 1946 as an extension campus of the Oregon State System of Higher Education to serve returning GIs seeking post-secondary education thanks to the GI Bill. Almost immediately, debates began regarding PSC's future, and what role, if any, would be played by Oregon State College and the University of Oregon in meeting the higher education needs of the metropolitan region. Originally located in Vanport, the PSC campus was lost to the catastrophic floods that claimed Vanport in 1948. The college relocated first to the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation in St. Johns and then, finally, to the old Lincoln High School building on the South Park Blocks and has developed its campus around that building ever since.

Portland State has had the urban mission baked in from the beginning. It started as part of the Oregon Extension Center, operating directly out of the Chancellor's office, to bring higher education directly to returning soldiers and facilitate the use of tuition benefits offered by the GI Bill. Access, a central component of the urban university idea, was the reason why Portland State exists today, and the idea that this was a different kind of institution was evident to both students and faculty.

Gordon Dodds, Portland State's first "University Historian," noted that the students themselves understood the value and opportunity being provided to them in the community within which they lived and worked (Dodds, 2000). Dodds quotes then-engineering student Wally Priestly, destined to become a populist stalwart in the Oregon State Legislature, cautioning his fellow students to understand Portland State as a different kind of college:



I am disturbed by the perpetual bombardment of those concerned with the school spirit of our college. Portland State is neither a high school where group activity is an expression of youthful conformity nor a campus college where the student sphere of activity is somewhat dependent on school regulation. Portland State is a city college. (Dodds, 2000, p. 87)

As Dodds relates, the transformation of the Vanport Extension Center into Portland State University was a struggle that took place over 23 years, from its founding in 1946 until its transition from college to university in 1969, and in a way continues to the present day. None of the other public universities in the state, or the Chancellor, wanted this evolution to take place, seeing it as competition for resources, students, and public support. Only community and legislative champions, coupled with committed and resourceful institutional leadership and faculty, were able to overcome the opposition of the other institutions and their alumni (Dodds, 2000).

To the other universities, Portland State was supposed to offer courses that students could then apply to majors and degrees at those other institutions. To a large degree, PSC was expected to disappear as the demand from returning GIs inevitably would wane. However, Portland State evolved in precisely the opposite direction, likely in direct proportion to the lack of adequate higher education opportunities in Oregon's largest and most densely settled urban center.

At the 1955 celebration marking both the creation of Portland State College and the inauguration of its first president, John F. Cramer, and before a gathering of honored guests including the governor of Oregon, the mayor of Portland, and business leaders, Dodds reports

that Cramer's remarks noted the "increasing importance of close links between the urban university and the larger community in which it resides" (Dodds, 2000, p. 98). At a very early stage, both the access and collaborative notions at the heart of the urban university idea were at play in this young institution.

Emblematic of Portland State's ongoing struggle, though, was the creation of the curriculum for the new PSC itself. With Portland State College no longer a remnant of the extension system, PSC had to present its new curriculum in 1955 to the Chancellor for approval. The Chancellor, aware of the antipathy toward PSC on the part of U of O and Oregon State College, circulated the proposed list of courses to them, resulting in what Dodds called an uproar. The Chancellor then went so far as to appoint a committee of U of O and OSC faculty members to pare down the proposed list of PSC courses (Dodds, 2000, p. 96).

That the city reciprocated the interest shown by PSC in its Portland location was evident in the early years of the college. In January 1962, Mayor Terry Schruck wrote to the State Board of Higher Education asking that Portland State College develop a "curriculum leading to a degree in the field of city planning." The mayor noted that two-thirds of the US population lived in metropolitan areas and this number was going up fast. He wrote:

This huge and unprecedented growth of urban living contains a concomitant and inherent problem for the cities of America generally and Oregon specifically. If the cities of Oregon are to be able to plan for the most effective utilization of space and facilities, technically trained city planners must be available to do the necessary technical staff work.

At the present time, there are only two universities on the West Coast which offer a degree, either undergraduate or graduate, in the field of city planning.

Unfortunately for those of us in Oregon, these schools are located in those states which border us to the north and on the south, leaving a void in the middle. (Schrunk, 1962)

He went on to say, “The mass of urban problems which face Portland will provide excellent facilities for practical field work” and suggested that the board keep in mind that such a program at PSC would benefit the entire state as it grappled with the challenges of urbanization (Schrunk, 1962).

The letter quickly found its way from the state board to the desk of PSC President Branford P. Millar, who responded to the Chancellor that he had no prior contact with the mayor, but that it might be “profitable” for him to meet with the mayor to discuss the request for such a program. Meanwhile, within PSC, the memos started flying, including one from Brock Dixon, then—Administrative Assistant to Dean Swarthout and later to become Dean of Administration for the College, to President Millar suggesting that a planning program could be built on the “urban studies base” then present in the college (Dixon, 1962).

On February 14, 1962, the Dean of the Faculty, J. M. Swarthout, wrote about the mayor’s requests to President Millar acknowledging that:

This matter has been on our minds and under some discussion for at last three years. I don’t think there is any question but that we could make a large go of a planning program, and I think the demand is certainly around us.

As a matter of fact, I have been dragging my feet to keep our boys from running too fast on this matter, in view of our current heavy concentration on the standard

disciplines and our need to preserve some of that concentration for a few years yet ahead. . . .

One other small consideration: We started thinking down here a couple of years ago about the possibility . . . of bringing together under a single quasi-administrative roof 1) an appropriate curriculum in metropolitan planning and problems, 2) an appropriate set of research activities . . . , and 3) an institute, workshop, or what-have-you for appropriate people in Portland, like that for which a couple of colleges have gotten whopping grants. I am pretty sure that given the right dynamic and respectable leadership, we could attract both money and local attention in quantity. At the moment I am not averse to either! But it would take sweat and/or money of our own to get us off the ground. Knowing this college, I suspect we could do it with a lot of sweat and not very much money, rather than the opposite. (Swarthout, 1962).

This episode, starting with the mayor's letter and rapidly moving through both the Chancellor's office and PSC itself in a matter of days, shows that, like the access mission, the idea that an urban university would be fundamentally in and of its place was very much part of PSC from its inception. It also revealed the role that urban studies, as an interdisciplinary endeavor, would play in providing a bridge between the curriculum of a traditional university and the requirements of the urban world and the emerging urban crisis then unfolding.

Between the lines, we can see the tension within PSC between investing in traditional disciplinary divisions rather than in emerging urban-facing, community-serving scholarship and disciplines. The image of the traditional university has proven to be an enduring one, particularly given the fact that most faculty and administrators have been trained in them.

Additionally, the reassurance offered by Millar to the Chancellor, that he had had no prior contact with Schrunk, reveals the delicate position that PSC found itself in, battling for recognition, legitimacy, independence, and resources within the Oregon system of higher education.

In addition to the urban crisis, a major evolutionary force throughout all of higher education was the launching of Sputnik in 1957. That single event brought into focus the lack of capacity to meet the graduate education needs of the nation, its economy, and of places like Portland and Oregon. The question of graduate education had been considered at PSC since its inception. Under the rules of the Oregon system, PSC could only offer graduate programs that weren't presently offered at other Oregon state colleges and universities. By 1963, this led PSC to offer master's programs in two fields, Social Work and Teaching, but not without a lot of negotiation, intrigue, and time.

Still, between Sputnik and the urban crisis, the seeds were well planted for the expansion of graduate education in Portland. Led by State Senator Don Wilner, who represented Portland, and with the help of President Millar, the Oregon State Legislature passed Senate Joint Resolution 8 in 1963, which called for a "quality program of graduate education" in the Portland metropolitan area, and for the legislature to develop a funding proposal to do so for the 1965–67 biennium (Dodds, 2000, p. 170). Governor Mark Hatfield was a proponent of a public/private research university, a project that had been underway since 1957 and what ultimately became the Oregon Graduate Center, but Wilner and other PSC proponents used SJR 8 as a means to accelerate action to fulfill the unmet graduate education

and research needs of the region and the nation, and to enable PSC to play a central role in meeting those needs.

In a 1965 presentation to the Subcommittee on Research and Graduate Education of the Educational Coordinating Council for Oregon's State System, Frederick Cox, PSC's first Dean of Graduate Education, started by noting that graduate education would move to the "urban environment," home to more than 70% of the US population. He reminded the committee that:

Culture, commerce, and government make their home in the city complex and draw their vitality from it. Their wellspring of community knowledge is the urban-based college, with its community program of service, research, and study. . . . The Portland metropolitan area is unique in its lack of a state-supported university with its full complement of programs, graduate study, and research. Many agencies have pointed to this deficiency. (Cox, 1965)

Cox went on to suggest that, as President Millar already had, the emergence of Portland State College as a "city grant" institution, modeled on the land grants, could create a compact among all colleges and universities in the region to meet the needs of the community:

A state institution, designated as a city-grant college, might involve its resources in the following three areas of urbanism: (1) in teaching, with the development of specialized courses and curricula, the assignment of staff jointly to planning and teaching, the creation of interdisciplinary approaches and the development of new specializations, and the bringing of "urban consciousness" generally to faculty and students; (2) in research, with the development of projects bearing especially on problems of the local community in light of available knowledge and that which may be developed; (3) in

extension, with a variety of community services including cooperative projects with private and public agencies and social groups, conferences, continuing education, and the development of apprentice and in-service training.

These goals are consistent with the fundamental condition of Portland State College as a public, urban institution established to serve a particular metropolitan community. . . . Finally, Portland is an ideal laboratory for the development of a city-grant experiment and this fresh educational concept: large enough to have many problems, but small enough for them to be well-defined, grasped and dealt with in a fairly comprehensive manner, as a totality. (Cox, 1965)

Ken Gervais, a 1961 PSC graduate who went to Claremont to get a graduate degree in Political Science and returned to teach at PSC in 1964, reports that in 1965 he met with Jack Swarthout, Dean of the Faculty, to impress upon him the importance of creating a real urban studies program. Gervais found that PSC's urban studies curriculum of that time was just a collection of existing courses from a range of disciplines. He urged Swarthout to create a more intentional program to take advantage of the emerging national interest in urban problems and futures (K. Gervais, personal communication, December 2021).

Though the state legislature did not develop a funding package for the expansion of graduate education in the Portland region in 1965 as envisioned by Senator Wilner and other proponents of SJR 8, the momentum to "solve the problem" of graduate education and research led PSC to propose new PhD programs in Social Work and Urban Studies in 1967, and with the legislature's approval in 1969, to transition Portland State from a college to a university. From its inception as PSC, the "urban university" nature of Portland State was used

both as a means for distinguishing it from other institutions, to garner essential public and political support, and to help create what we'd call today the "brand" for what was a rapidly growing and evolving institution.

In 1970, the City embarked on the creation of its Downtown Plan. After moving to the Park Blocks in 1952 and renovating the old Lincoln High School into the first building on what would become the Portland State campus, the college expanded rapidly. Between 1955 and 1969, 26 buildings were added to the campus, with square footage increasing to 1,985,366 from the initial 135,052 (Dodds, 2000, p. 101). By 1964, PSC was participating with the City in federally funded urban renewal, leading to conflicts between the young institution and its neighbors. Traffic, the impact of students seeking housing, the lack of services and commercial establishments sufficient to meet the new demand, and the impact on the park blocks themselves were all issues of the time.

Consequently, Portland State was of specific interest to the Citizens Advisory Committee that created the goals and objectives for the Downtown Plan. A subcommittee on PSU and the Park Blocks, chaired by realtor Squier Smith and including PSU VP of Planning Robert Low and Stan Amy of Portland Student Services INC., among others, took up issues ranging from the responsiveness of PSU's curriculum, research, and service to community needs to the potential leasing of university space for retail purposes. An article in the *PSU Vanguard*, the student newspaper, reported that the PSU and Park Blocks Task Force of the Citizens Advisory Committee to the Downtown Plan found that "PSU, as an urban university, should interact more with the rest of the community." It went on to quote Squier Smith saying:



“PSU, right now, is an island . . . and the thrust of the committee’s proposals is toward making the university more responsive to the community.”

There is a lot of built-up hostility to the university, Smith believed, and he fears friction if this distrust of PSU is allowed to continue.

To encourage interaction between PSU and the larger community, the task force recommended the university provide a service and research resource for the community: “Academic activity and fieldwork should be directed more toward ‘real’ problems which relate to the public interest.” (Mantia, 1971)

The subcommittee went on to recommend that PSU be regarded as a neighborhood in downtown, not as a separate entity, and that issues of housing, transportation, parks, and other features and services be regarded as of community interest.

The work of the subcommittee brought specific goals for PSU and its neighborhood into the Downtown Plan. That document included the following “General Goal” for PSU:

Portland State should be an “urban university.” By this phrase we intend to imply far more than a fact of location. We believe that PSU and the city should be consciously aware of, take advantage of, and in fact emphasize their impact on each other. (City of Portland, 1972, p. 10).

Portland State was included within one of the 21 planning districts created by the Downtown Plan. Specific goals spoke to encouraging great interaction between the university and the greater community in all aspects of its physical and academic development; minimizing congestion in the area by encouraging walking, biking, and public transit and decreasing planned parking ratios; providing “maximum access” to the park blocks cultural area for both

the public and students; minimizing the impact of students on the housing market; and looking closely at zoning in the area around the university to ensure that speculative uses rather than longer term investments weren't occurring as a result.

In the "Plan Concept" for the Portland State University District, the general character of what was desired in the area was described as:

An area of intense day and evening activity for both educational and community functions, the University district is clearly defined by its institutional function and design. While the University should have its own identity, every attempt should be made to integrate its activity into Downtown. (City of Portland, 1972, p. 74)

The plan went on to call for the coordinated development of the district, resulting in the provision of needed commercial development and the retention of existing housing resources.

The adopted 1972 Portland Downtown Plan brought this concept of the urban university, of PSU as Portland's urban university, into official City policy. The impact of the plan is clear, and has resulted in a downtown that made a lot of "right" moves when a lot of others made other choices (Abbott, et. al., 1998; Seltzer, 2014). That the language of the "urban university" and the expectations for an urban university were featured in this 1972 planning effort should be no surprise: The entire history of Portland State revolves around the use of urban university concepts, language, and imagery in the quest to distinguish it among Oregon colleges and universities and to garner needed support for the evolution of a small extension center into a major university and central city landowner.

The evolution of PSU and of its role in this community has continued since the 1972 Downtown Plan. In 1972, Nohad Toulan, the "father" of PSU's College of Urban and Public

Affairs, was hired to manage the university's portfolio of urban studies, research, and community service initiatives. In addition to developing the School of Urban Studies and Planning, which is named for him today, and building the College of Urban and Public Affairs over a period of three decades, he was vitally active on behalf of the development of PSU itself, serving as the chair for both the Campus Planning Committee for the 1979 PSU Development Plan and the strategic planning effort of the early 1980s that called for PSU to become, among other things, a "comprehensive research university" (Dodds, 2000, p. 437). The significance of this last bit of language has to do both with a commitment to a traditional university path within PSU as well as to the ongoing effort to defend PSU from the efforts of its southern neighbors to pigeonhole the institution as something other than a comprehensive university.

By the latter half of the 1980s, the lack of graduate education attuned to the emerging high-tech industries in the Portland region once again became an item of interest to an Oregon governor, this time Neil Goldschmidt. Goldschmidt appointed a Commission on the Future of Higher Education in the Portland Region to consider ways to increase the number of well-educated residents able to both participate in the economy and help to solve the major issues confronting the metropolitan region. The commission found that "Greater Portland is one of two of the nation's 33 largest metros without a comprehensive offering of PhD programs, one of two with no major research library" (Governor's Commission, 1990, p. 7). The commission recommended that Portland State be understood as Oregon's "urban grant university," along the lines of earlier formulations of that idea dating back to the 1960s.

The 1991 PSU Strategic Plan, initiated and championed by PSU President Judith Ramaley, refined this understanding of the urban mission and encapsulated it in the university's

mission statement and subsequent reforms. Acknowledging the work of the Governor's commission, the plan went further to formally reassert PSU's urban mission:

The Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Chancellor's Action Plan for implementing the Commission's report have presented Portland State University with opportunities for leadership and development unparalleled in its history. The new vision for the University defines an institution that will increasingly serve as the center of an educational network, developing tomorrow's leaders and ensuring access for all citizens of the region at every stage of their lives.

Portland State University, as an urban institution, has an expanded mission beyond that of the traditional university. Like any major university, it maintains a commitment to excellent scholarship in its programs of research, teaching and service. But the University also is committed to addressing complex urban issues which can only be served through the kind of multidisciplinary programs that are the hallmark of Portland State. The metropolitan setting provides both the opportunity and the obligation to project substantial energies beyond institutional walls, to bring together scholars and community leaders in order to respond to the needs of the community.

(Portland State University Strategic Planning Committee, 1991, p. 7)

And:

The mission of Portland State University is to enhance the intellectual, social, cultural and economic qualities of urban life by providing access throughout the life span to a quality liberal education for undergraduates and an appropriate array of professional and graduate programs especially relevant to the metropolitan area. The University will

actively promote development of a network of educational institutions that will serve the community and will conduct research and community service to support a high quality educational environment and reflect issues important to the metropolitan region. (Portland State University Strategic Planning Committee, 1991, p. 9)

Looking ahead, the Strategic Plan committed PSU to even deeper community connections, not just in the city but throughout the metropolitan region:

Portland State University, since its inception, has been both in the city and of the city. The University has sought advantages from cooperation with metropolitan institutions, agencies, and portions of the community. . . .Over the next five years, Portland State University will broaden and deepen such collaboration, actively reaching out into the community to help identify needs and points of useful shared action. It does so in response to the pressing needs of the region. (Portland State University Strategic Planning Committee, 1991, p. 14)

With a renewed sense of its urban mission, PSU adopted its now-familiar motto, “Let Knowledge Serve the City.” As was the case throughout Portland State’s history, this Strategic Plan served to distinguish PSU and its mission within the state from its higher education cousins while providing it with the leverage needed to undertake both internal reforms and external realignment. Yet, as is the case nationally, the tension between striving for Carnegie Research I recognition, on one hand, versus a place-based, locally serving urban mission, on the other, remains fully in force.

The City, too, has continued to plan. In 1988, the Central City Plan was adopted to acknowledge the spread of downtown functions and activities north, south, and east of the

area addressed in the 1972 plan. In 2020, Portland adopted Central City 2035, a reassessment of its downtown goals in light of the tremendous physical and economic growth of the greater downtown area that occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Whereas PSU was addressed as both a district/landowner and urban university in the 1972 plan, it was identified primarily as a physical district unto itself in these more contemporary efforts. This could be due to the changing nature of planning and of expectations for what a downtown plan addresses, or a change in fundamental relationships between PSU and the region, or both. In any case, PSU engagement through teaching, research, and service has blossomed during this period.

Physical university campus planning has continued as well. The university district received significant attention in the early 2000s. Though land acquisition halted about a decade ago, the redevelopment of existing buildings and creation of new buildings are on the immediate horizon. The Vanport Building, harking back to PSU's origins and developed as a cooperative effort among PSU, the City, and Oregon Health & Science University, opened in 2021, and a new School of Art + Design is slated to be constructed on the last vacant university-owned property on the park blocks.

#### 4) Questions for the Future

The themes evident in Portland State’s early history—access; being grounded in this place; the infusion of “urbanness” in all that PSU is engaged in and all who are engaged in PSU; vital engagement between PSU and its downtown neighbors and neighborhood; and interdisciplinary approaches matched to the multifaceted nature of urban issues—were part of all that has come since. Simply put, Portland State grew as an urban university, and it remains an urban university today.

That is not to say that PSU is only an urban university. Like all urban universities, PSU has built and retained strong allegiances to both urban and traditional university norms. Sometimes they conflict with each other and sometimes they complement each other. From time to time they cloud public understanding of the university’s mission, but both are woven into the fabric of the institution that PSU is today.

Today, the urban crisis is not the only crisis we face. Old challenges for Portland remain, but they’ve been joined by a range of others—climate, equity, justice, equality, civic engagement, to name a few—that apply to urban, suburban, and rural communities, and whose “solutions” will not be easily found within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City. Today, as we approach the 50th anniversary of the Downtown Plan, we have the opportunity to celebrate that landmark by contemplating what our next 50 years might hold.

What will the next 50 years of being Portland’s urban university be marked by? What should PSU do to ensure that the urban mission remains at the core of its identity? What should the region expect from PSU? What should PSU expect from the region to make it so? Can we

create an “Urban University Compact” to mark this point in time, in this place, and with these partners?

Perhaps more to the point, what will it mean for Portland and this region to succeed in the years ahead? What will mark this as a thriving, livable, equitable, just, sustainable, and resilient place for all those who live here? When the story of this successful urban region is told 50 years from now, what will have been PSU’s role in helping to make and secure that success?

The famous American urbanist Lewis Mumford visited Portland and the Northwest in 1938 and issued the following challenge in his address at the City Club of Portland:

I have seen a lot of scenery in my life, but I have seen nothing so tempting as a home for man [*sic*] that this Oregon country. . . . You have the basis here for civilization on it highest scale and I am going to ask you a question that you may not like: Have you enough intelligence, imagination and cooperation among you to make the best use of these opportunities? (Bartholomew, 1995)

We and our region still have this opportunity. The world still awaits the answer.



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## **Appendix: The College of Urban and Public Affairs and the Urban University**

### **Idea**

Kimberly Nightingale and Ethan Seltzer      July 2022

#### **Introduction:**

In honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1972 Portland Downtown Plan, we completed a paper in February 2022 that revisited the urban university “idea” as it emerged at Portland State University and in Portland. The 1972 Downtown Plan is credited with creating what we see in downtown Portland today, and it included an explicit desire to see Portland State evolve as Portland’s urban university. That made us wonder where this idea came from, particularly since it has profoundly affected the university we have today. That paper, “Portland, Portland State, and the Urban University Idea,” reviewed the history of urban universities in the United States, the definition of what “urban university” means in the literature and in practice, and PSU’s involvement with the urban university idea.

This paper was developed as a complement to that first paper. We wanted to take the pulse of PSU as an urban university today. Throughout PSU, faculty and students are involved in a wide range of ways with this metropolitan place. Engaged teaching, research, and service can be found in every department and almost every facet of this university. To explore that in more detail, we decided to explore the urban-service activities of faculty and center/institute directors in the College of Urban and Public Affairs. To do this, every faculty member and institute/center director in the college was invited to participate in a 30-minute interview. Out of 78 invitations issued, 51 colleagues opted to take part.

The interviews spanned all six departments—Urban Studies and Urban Planning, Criminology and Criminal Justice, Political Science, Global Studies, Public Administration, Economics—as well as the 17 centers and institutes embedded in CUPA. Faculty and directors discussed their values, their motivations, and the numerous activities they have engaged in to promote collaboration and scholarship within an urban university framework. They also made suggestions for strengthening and enhancing PSU’s role as an urban university.

**Findings:**

Our previous research identified five urban university characteristics, which we have used to sort the responses:

**1) An urban university is located in a city and/or metropolitan region, both physically and in the minds of its students, staff, faculty, leadership, alums, neighbors, and sectoral partners.**

Faculty and directors solidly identify PSU as an urban university “in the city and of the city.” Portland State is known for being physically located within the City of Portland and the metropolitan area. People come to PSU to learn about the region, its history, and its opportunities. One professor noted that many PSU alumni live in Portland: “Everybody in Portland went to PSU.”

**2) An urban university is fundamentally organized around integrating urban community needs and aspirations into teaching, research, and service activities and carrying out those activities wherever possible through partnerships spanning university/community boundaries and across public, private, and nonprofit sectors.**

Almost all professors and directors interviewed articulated that service to the community—citywide, regionally, and statewide—is a critical aspect of PSU’s success as a university. The urban mission is what PSU is known for locally, nationally, and internationally. A primary and unique PSU asset is that it is deeply trusted by the local community. A young faculty member explains, “The community knows our work in our department. We are trusted and respected. As a junior scholar, that trust and respect are important.”

CUPA faculty and directors are immersed in a robust can-do culture of investigating and addressing complex, real-world problems through working collaboratively in multiple community contexts. Many professors talked about how their teaching, service, and research are interrelated, with the intersection of the three being particularly important and meaningful. Across CUPA, faculty show exceptional commitment to their scholarship and research, to their students, and to the community. CUPA professors are highly motivated in building mutually supportive community partnerships. Relationship building is their strength.

Professors work closely with students to build a web of community engagement between CUPA, students, PSU, and community partners. PSU faculty, with students, are involved in creating, managing, and/or evaluating numerous local and regional projects. For example, one recent CUPA research project was an ethnographic storytelling project that changed the narrative around homelessness through ten short comics created through collaborations between PSU students with lived experiences of homelessness. The research project was featured in multiple newspapers and had three public exhibits. Partners included Street Roots, Independent Publishing Resource Center, and The Downstairs Gallery.

PSU is known for working with local community partners mutually to come up with innovative ideas, pilot them, and evaluate them. Across departments, the innovate-pilot-evaluate model influences and informs local, state, regional, and national practices. Bike boxes are an example. When Sam Adams was mayor, two bicyclists were killed because of a right hook crash. In Europe, there are green-painted bike boxes at corners, which help prevent this type of accident by reinforcing road-sharing and outlining separate spaces on the pavement for cars and bikes at intersections, but they weren't federally approved in the United States. CUPA worked with the City of Portland in creating bike boxes as a pilot study and evaluating them. It was an interdisciplinary project with a PSU engineer working on travel safety and a CUPA professor working on travel behavior. The study resulted in the first installation of bike boxes in the United States. It showed bike boxes reduced accidents and improved feelings of safety. Because of PSU's work, bike boxes are now federally approved.

CUPA faculty are engaged with the local and regional community, including in international endeavors. One professor conducts research seminars with Chinese scholars on Portland's urban growth boundary. CUPA's Middle East Institute, first established in 1949, is one of only two federally funded centers in the country. The institute is the leading resource for Oregon K-12 teachers on Middle East curricula and also hosts a local monthly lecture series. In the Japanese Local Governance and Management (JaLoGoMa) program, students, faculty, and practitioners from Japan learn about Portland's approach to civic engagement. PSU has strong linkages to Mexico with over 1,000 Mexican students having attended PSU and more than 250 PSU students having been hosted in Oaxaca, Mexico. With the Middle East Partnership Initiative, approximately 20 emerging Middle East and African leaders come to PSU annually.

Fluid relationships exist between CUPA and local and regional communities. Examples include CUPA faculty inviting community members into their classrooms to discuss the issues of the day, whether it is Oregon politics, housing, equity, trash collection, homelessness, or public art. One professor explains that “having partners coming to the classroom to talk to students about their experiences and their challenges is easier in Portland because there are a lot of involved organizations.” Professors also speak in the community, reflecting the mutuality of the PSU relationship. Several professors interact with the media on such topics as local elections, politics, and art, strengthening the relationship between PSU and the local community.

CUPA professors and directors serve on multiple community boards. They show up as individuals on these boards, but they all have a strong understanding that their role as university professors and directors is a critical aspect of their board service.

The power of CUPA centers and institutes as linkages and incubators for making change—connecting people and institutions in new ways, working in an interdisciplinary manner, and bringing additional resources to PSU—is an extraordinary and unique aspect of CUPA. The centers and institutes play a role reminiscent of the “urban observatories” concept developed and funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the 1960s and ’70s to connect emerging ideas in the academic world with city and regional governments and stakeholders.

CUPA’s 17 centers and institutes act in entrepreneurial ways to access funds and activate projects. Changes in leadership, funding, and projects are part of the cycle of opportunities each center and institute must manage. With all their positive contributions, it is also clear that centers and institutes could connect and build more capacity with faculty, the

college, and the university if they were better integrated into the top leadership structure of the university and in CUPA. There is a need to find a way to encourage that integration while continuing to support autonomy and entrepreneurship.

Departments, centers, and institutes that actively foster a supportive culture of collegiality and collaboration on research projects create a powerful organizational framework for developing strong, long-term partnerships between each other as faculty, and with students, PSU, and community organizations and institutions. Such a culture of collegiality and collaboration should be strengthened and encouraged with and across CUPA departments.

There are many ways for community partners to access CUPA: through contacting the college information line, the professors themselves, and the centers and institutes. All the different doors ensure that connections are many and there is no “guard at the gate” or bottlenecks preventing connection. That said, developing clearer roads of connection would strengthen access.

**3) An urban university is committed to providing urban residents with access to higher education close to where they live, work, have family and other support networks and preparing their students to be successful participants in the local economy and valued members of the community.**

One institute director describes their family support and subsequent career at PSU: “I got my undergraduate at PSU and my mother was a PSU student. It was because my mom went back to school that I joined PSU. . . . When I finished, I went to work in the United States Senate . . . so I got to be a part of—as a recent graduate—starting out my career working on the legislation that ultimately established the Institute at PSU.”

Another professor reflected on the local student population and community trust: “Universities are often viewed with some suspicion . . . students . . . viewed as outsiders like these are some outsiders who have come here for school. They don’t really know or care about this place, and that’s just completely different here. To be able to have conversations with undergrads who are already deeply invested in their communities, so then when they talk about community development, ‘it’s our community.’ It’s not—I am parachuting in as a savior to somebody else’s world. It’s my place that I already know about and care about.”

U.S. News and World Report 2022 lists CUPA’s Urban Policy degree as #10 in the United States. One professor explains, “Portland is a draw. Planning is a thing in Portland, so we attract students from around the country, to a lesser extent around the world.” National and international students attending CUPA benefit from local students’ sense of belonging to their city.

One professor says of the student body, “We get the opportunity to teach a lot of folks who are first-generation college students.” Yet another professor reflects, “Many of our students . . . are children of farmworkers.” Professors understand the importance of having flexibility guidelines. Many faculty are excited to use different teaching techniques, including the “Flipped Classroom Model,” “Universal Design,” and “Negotiated Syllabus” because people learn in different ways and these models strengthen student autonomy and success.

CUPA professors experience tension between finding online teaching necessary and appealing and part of the urban university idea of access, and the view that online offerings dilute the concept of place-based learning and jeopardize the strength of PSU as being situated



in Portland. Others say online learning provides a way to complete a degree, especially for students who have work constraints and with rising rents pricing many students out of the city.

**4) An urban university is aware of the conflicting aims of the research university and the urban university, and committed to realigning rewards and incentives, business and planning practices, career paths, hiring criteria, and other factors needed to ensure the urban university remains distinctive among institutions of higher education for its urban mission and place focus.**

Clear tension exists between the idea of an urban university and a research university at CUPA. There is concern that many faculty are hired from elite research universities and may not understand and embrace PSU's urban university model or feel motivated to work mutually with the community and the local student population.

The local community is so involved with CUPA that sometimes it participates in faculty hiring processes. A Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet) representative sat in on a potential new CUPA faculty interview. The representative didn't have voting power but participated in the interviews.

Nonetheless, PSU is still aligned with a traditional research university model that rewards tenure to faculty with peer-reviewed journal articles over community engagement work. New professors who are excited to do community engagement work because of PSU's reputation, and come here to do just that, are told to focus on peer-reviewed work until they are tenured, which often has a stifling effect on their motivation.

One professor recounts the joys of working at PSU once tenured: "It's a dream for me, what happens at PSU. I don't have to figure out how to shoehorn this project into a product

that looks like this very narrow definition of an academic product, and it also helps me in my personal ethics, because I can have clear conversations with people about which parts of this do we want to put into the world and how, because I don't feel the pressure that every single thing that I do has to turn into something that's in *Journal X*, and *Taylor and Francis Y*, and *Rutledge Z*. I don't have to turn everything into a commodity in that space, and so I can say to people in the community, authentically, that they own their knowledge and I'm not taking it away and extracting it in talking to them."

One professor working toward tenure describes the confusion between what is said at PSU and what happens: "Early on, I had these warning bells, because I was hearing faculty didn't get tenure saying, 'Wow, I came here thinking we were all about engaging the community doing this work . . . but I didn't get tenure.'"

Many professors talked about how community engagement is not valued in the tenure process, creating a disconnect between what PSU says it is and what it does. The impact with community partners is often powerful, but peers in academia don't give it value. CUPA supports papers with the community, but discrepancy between community-partnered work and faculty-senate tenure guidelines exists. Civically recognized work is believed not to be valued as highly in the tenure process.

The current Non-Tenure Track Faculty (NTTF) structure is relatively new for CUPA and has created some tension. The NTTF model is seen by some as creating a barrier against collegiality, contributing to an entrenched feeling of malaise and unequal power relationships within CUPA. NTTFs are very engaged with students and in the community. NTTF professors do

not have the same feelings of belonging as tenured professors. The sincere, recent attempt to change the NTTF structure didn't solve the underlying issues.

**5) An urban university is focused on the interdisciplinary reality of urban life and acts to ensure that traditional disciplinary views of the city do not stand in the way of cultivating interdisciplinary approaches necessary for addressing the needs of the contemporary urban community.**

Many professors and directors said interdisciplinary work is PSU's secret sauce, something that makes it unique among its peers. Most faculty say that institutionally, interdisciplinary research is widely practiced, comprehensive, accessible, and works effectively.

The PSU budget structure, however, discourages interdisciplinary teaching. Currently, the budget/reward system is based on the number and size of classes in each department, not among departments. One professor notes, "I don't think we need to additionally reward that kind of work for people to feel motivated to do it. . . . The motivation is already there, but we need to remove the structural barriers."

Many faculty members talked about how so many positive things were happening at CUPA, but it would be more powerful if the work connected to place within a comprehensive strategy. One professor summed it up as follows: "What is our collective impact as a school and as a college? No one ever talks about that. I think our job is to come up with a compelling vision that reflects who we are as a school, as a college, and as a university."

## **Concluding Thoughts:**

At the heart of the urban university idea is the realization that universities and their communities share a common fate. Though both exist in global contexts, place matters. Negotiating that tension between local and global concerns, rewards, and expectations lies at the heart of a successful urban university. Our exploration of CUPA found that faculty were aware of and value the opportunity to participate and build a career in an urban university. Simply put, they're doing it. They're engaged, concerned, and able. It's an exciting group of colleagues doing the teaching, research, and service expected of an urban university.

That said, tensions between PSU's urban and traditional university roles, structures, and rewards remain unresolved. Interdisciplinarity is a challenge. Managing relationships between the university and other organizations and institutions seems cumbersome and under-supported. Strategically, PSU's own unresolved ambivalence over its urban mission versus its Research I ambitions creates unnecessary barriers to fully realizing the urban mission and the promise of the urban university idea.

As we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1972 Downtown Plan and recognize, in particular, the seminal role it played for both downtown and Portland State, we hope the university and its partners will look forward to the next 50 years. What will our defining challenges be? How can an urban university in our midst enable new and needed innovations to be found and employed? What, 50 years from now, should we expect the legacy of this moment to be?