

New book charts how urban universities can help revitalize their communities

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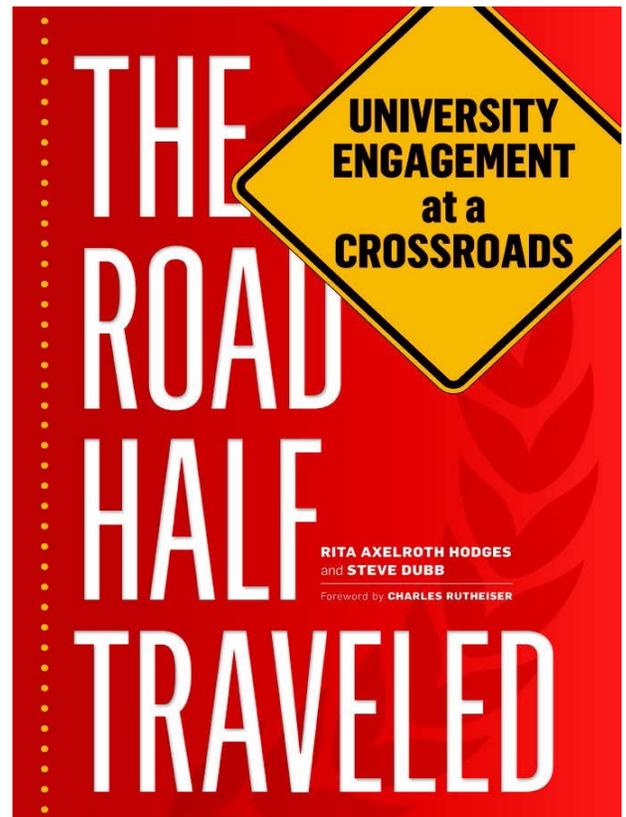
In the past two decades, a number of universities have taken significant steps toward adopting conscious, place-based anchor institution strategies. *The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads*—published in Michigan State University Press' Transformations in Higher Education series—profiles ten leading colleges and universities and assesses how such strategies can be more sharply focused for greatest impact, particularly to benefit low-income neighborhoods and families locked in generational poverty.

Universities' role as economic anchors is large—and growing

Taken as a whole, universities collectively spend over \$350 billion a year—more than two percent of GDP. They employ over 2 million full-time employees and over 1 million part-time employees. They enroll over 18 million students. Their endowments, even in the wake of the Great Recession, exceed \$300 billion. As a result, universities can bring many resources to bear: not just intellectual, but also economic—purchasing, investment, hiring, and real estate development among them—to help solve the economic challenges facing U.S. metropolitan regions.

The book makes the case for universities to act in more strategic ways and recognize their role as local anchors in their communities. It outlines a vision of what might be possible if urban universities were to fully achieve their anchor institution mission—that is, if they consciously applied their long-term place-based economic power, in combination with human and intellectual resources, to better the long-term welfare of the communities in which they reside.

The authors examine in depth the renewed movement over the past few decades by a number of universities from a range of different backgrounds (community colleges, historically black



Praise for *The Road Half Traveled*

Complete with illustrative best practices, principles and guidelines for implementation, and keys for assessing progress, this book is a one-of-a-kind compendium of what works and how to move the dial toward comprehensive community revitalization. I have had the privilege of serving at campuses that truly embrace the responsibilities of anchor institutions to facilitate, lead, or convene key stakeholders in community revitalization. Now in New York, I see no higher calling than to steadily deepen the anchor of the State University of New York in communities across the state. The Road Half Traveled will be our roadmap.

—Nancy Zimpher, Chancellor,
State University of New York (SUNY)

By focusing their economic power locally—particularly their procurement, hiring, and investment practices—institutions of higher education can help move the needle on such vital urban issues as job creation, poverty reduction, and providing economic opportunity for low-income residents. For those committed to the revitalization of our nation's great urban places, The Road Half Traveled will prove an invaluable resource.

—Ben Hecht, CEO, Living Cities

colleges and universities, state comprehensive universities, land-grant colleges, and private research universities) to adopt innovative anchor institution strategies.

Building from best practices

The book explores the promising practices at each of these institutions that have the greatest potential to contribute to improving the quality of life, as well as building individual and community wealth, in distressed and underserved neighborhoods, including:

- Deploying institution-wide resources (academic, human, and corporate) to achieve comprehensive neighborhood revitalization in a specific geographic area, such as Penn's work in West Philadelphia.
- Driving cross-sector collaboration that builds on existing partner strengths for sustainable engagement, such as Syracuse University is leading throughout its city.
- Employing a university's endowment to finance community investment, such as the University of Cincinnati's \$148.6-million investment in Uptown.
- Pursuing diversity hiring as well as connecting low-income residents to workforce training and small business development, such as Miami Dade College's efforts in Miami-Dade County.
- Sustaining inclusive planning and dialogue that leads to shared ownership between the university and community, such as the approach adopted by the University of Minnesota in North Minneapolis.

Policy recommendations

The book concludes with recommendations aimed at practitioners, administrators, policymakers, and foundations to more effectively leverage universities' assets. Among the policy recommendations are:

- A more conscious linking of the corporate and academic sides of the university, to work with its community in democratic, mutually beneficial and respectful partnerships.
- Adopting a strategic, place-based approach to community development to help ensure that existing institutional resources have much greater impact.
- Using the convening power of foundations to bring practitioners together to develop a common voice, as well as promote comprehensive initiatives.
- Identifying specific opportunities to direct federal funds towards anchor institution strategies.

Partnerships between universities and communities generate local investment by helping entrepreneurs turn academic ideas into commercial inventions, pushing city planners to map green spaces, and encouraging businesses to promote sustainable building practices. Yet, challenges remain to ensure underserved communities benefit from truly inclusive local economic development. The Road Half Traveled outlines how to serve those needs and spur universities to address the challenges of the low-income communities surrounding them.

—U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH)

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More information

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The Democracy Collaborative works to create new models for economic development that empower communities, build democracy, and attack the root causes of poverty and economic inequality. The Collaborative helped design Cleveland's Evergreen Cooperatives, a growing network of worker-owned green businesses in low income neighborhoods, recognized nationally as a model for anchor institution engagement. For more information about the Collaborative's projects and research, visit community-wealth.org.



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The Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania was founded in 1992 to serve as a university-wide center to simultaneously improve the quality of life in West Philadelphia/Philadelphia and advance research, teaching, service and learning at Penn, as well as serve as a model for higher education institutions around the globe committed to engagement with their local communities. For more information, visit nettercenter.upenn.edu.