

JUSC Releases Latest Study --- University Community Partnerships

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JUSC recently released a report on University-Community Partnerships. The report identifies the background and concepts associated with successful and unsuccessful partnerships between institutions of higher education (IHE) and their surrounding communities. JUSC has decided to develop a two-part report on the topic of university/community partnerships (UCPs). Phase I of this report, identifies the basic concepts of these partnerships. JUSC will publish a second report that will take a more pro-active role in identifying possible funding opportunities and initiatives for local institutions of higher education and their community partners that are based upon their strengths and the needs of our communities later this year.

Locally, there are many examples of successful partnerships with colleges and universities helping their surrounding communities that positively affect the local economy. Some of the programs and initiatives will be identified in the report. For example, Wilkes University, King's College, and Luzerne County Community College employ nearly 900 people in downtown Wilkes-Barre alone. Institutions of higher education are major employers of a highly skilled and educated workforce. These schools buy goods and use local services. They strive to beautify and improve the neighborhoods that they are located in. Their employees buy goods and services that are close to their workplace. These are just a few of the benefits that are provided to our communities by our institutions of higher education. They are desirable cornerstones of communities. The presence of numerous institutions of higher education in northeastern Pennsylvania are an asset in many facets to our communities.

In most cases, university/community partnerships play a vital role in the revitalization of communities by offering specific resources to their partners. Throughout our report, JUSC highlights the basic fundamentals of understanding, planning, forming, and implementing successful university/community partnerships. In Luzerne and Lackawanna counties, our local colleges and universities have been involved in assisting their local communities with a variety of programs and activities. Some of those will be highlighted both phases of the report.

Phase II of the university/community partnerships report will focus on some of the current partnerships and how our institutions and their host cities can partner on more initiatives that are mutual beneficial. The goal is to identify new ways that IHEs can aid the community through partnerships that help educate the community and utilize the resources of the institutions to assist with rebuilding the community, and in turn, how the community can assist the institution in building its student population.

The possibilities for increased partnerships are evident based on the data. Our communities have the drive and passion, and our IHEs have the knowledge and experience to make a difference. With the help of JUSC, the goal is to unite these two powerful forces to create a healthy, successful community and region.