The University of Pittsburgh
Office of Child Development ---

An Experiment in Promoting Interdisciplinary Applied Human Development[1]

by

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Abstract

The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development is an unusual university facilitative and administrative unit that promotes, funds, plans, implements, manages, and conducts interdisciplinary applied educational, research, service demonstration, program evaluation, and policy projects pertaining to children, youth, and families. In the eight years of its existence, its soft-money budget has grown more than 30 times, its employees have increased 23 fold, and it has played a major role in $56 million worth of collaborative projects. This paper describes the Office's rationale, structure, purposes, principles of operation, projects, evaluation, and positive and negative factors in its development so that others may benefit from this case-study experiment in interdisciplinary applied human development programming.

The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development --- An Experiment in Promoting Interdisciplinary

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Applied Human Development

In 1984, two junior psychologists, one in the Department of Psychology (MSS) and one in the Program of Child Development and Child Care of the School of Social Work (CNJ) at the University of Pittsburgh, shared a common perception. They observed that at the University of Pittsburgh, and probably at many other large universities, faculty interested in children, youth, and families were scattered across the campus in different schools, departments, and institutes. Typically, these developmentalists did not see or talk to one another across these administrative fences. This was true even if they shared the same degree and academic value system, and it was certainly the case if they differed in their focus on basic research, professional training, applied concerns, or service delivery. Moreover, if the chasms were wide within the University, the gulf was even greater between University faculty and the human service and policymaking professionals in the community. These several types of professionals presumably share the common goal of contributing to the welfare of children, youth, and families, despite their different spheres of expertise, different values, and different professional criteria. Surely, then, much progress could be achieved if these otherwise disparate professionals worked together rather than in parallel or in splendid isolation.

MSS and CNJ started by organizing the University. Undaunted by the fact that theirs was very much a top-down university, they started a grassroots coalition by assembling key faculty from several relevant units --- Developmental Psychology, the Children and Youth Section as well as the Program in Child Development and Child Care from the School of Social Work, Maternal and Child Nursing, Education, the Learning Research and Development Center, Children's Hospital, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, and the Institute for the Black Family. Collectively, they molded a concept of a facilitative and administrative unit, rather than of a residential center (see McCall, in press), that would promote interdisciplinary educational and research projects within the University, mutually-beneficial cooperative projects involving University faculty and community human service providers, and the dissemination of research and professional information on children, youth, and families to academics, service professionals, policymakers, and the general public. They convinced two local foundations, The Howard Heinz Endowment and The Buhl Foundation, to fund the Core Program of the unit (see below), and the University to provide a senior professorship for its Director and a small amount of cash to support its activities.

The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development began in September, 1986, with a Director (RBM), two unpaid Associate Directors (MSS, CNJ), a Human Services Coordinator now Co-Director (CJG), and a secretary. What started with the vague purposes described above, $150,000 per year and a Director's salary, and a three-person paid staff has become in eight years a unit that employs approximately 70 people, has an annual budget of $4.6 million, and has had a hand in planning, funding, implementing, or managing $56 million worth of applied projects operated by itself or other faculty or community agencies.

How did this happen? What follows is a description of the Office's rationale, financing and administrative issues, purposes and principles of operation, activities, evaluations, and speculations

on what factors contributed to its success. The discussion is not predominantly historical or chronological, but rather contemporary and retrospective, because such a perspective will be of most use to current readers.

Background

The Office is basically a facilitative and administrative unit that promotes interdisciplinary applied educational, research, service demonstration, program evaluation, and policy projects pertaining to children, youth, and families.

Rationale

The rationale for such a unit is even more apt today than it was in 1986.

The movement toward applied projects. Years ago, almost any behavioral research project that represented good science had an excellent chance of being funded. Indeed, according to Representative George Brown (D-CA), Chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, US science policy was traditionally focused on facilitating the performance of research (Gladue, 1994). Scientists came to expect the federal government to support their research. As a result, many federal legislators today feel that scientists engaged in basic research act as if they are entitled to a large and increasing portion of the national income, but at the same time they are not concerned with the usefulness of their research (Gladue, 1994). Indeed, the Republican Administrations of the 1980s and '90s nearly annihilated social and behavioral research funding, partly for political reasons but also because they felt it was irrelevant to the public interest.

Prior to the recent political restructuring in Washington, Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) chaired the subcommittees of the Appropriation Committee that control the budgets of NSF, NASA, EPA, and NIH. Her philosophy of funding differs from both the previous administrations and that of many scientists. "Getting government grants is not a form of intellectual entitlement. And when you do, you are getting the public's money so in your mind there should be a public linkage . . . " (The Hand . . . , 1994). It was Mikulski that insisted NSF spend 60% of its budget on "strategic research," and her Subcommittee also directed NIMH to spend 15% of its budget on research on services. Research funding has shifted from investigator-initiated pure science projects toward government-specified priorities, problem-oriented research, and attaining national strategic scientific and technical goals --- in a word, applied.

The need for interdisciplinary approaches. A major current funding focus is on problems, which are not defined neatly with respect to the traditional academic organizational chart. Child abuse, for example, is typically identified first by physicians, nurses, and school teachers; the family often then encounters social workers and perhaps the legal system, psychologists may study the causes and consequences and treat some cases of abuse; and funders and policymakers are asked to support legislation and projects that will prevent or minimize the undesirable consequences of abuse. But

research and training in abuse rarely cross disciplinary lines, and community professionals and policymakers who often must deal with the problem rarely interact seriously with academics of any discipline who study it. Consequently, if funding is problem oriented with applied purposes, many research and demonstration projects receiving such funding should be interdisciplinary, both across academic disciplines and between the academy and community professionals (that is, interdisciplinary in a "horizontal" as well as a "vertical" sense; McCall, in press).

The same can be said of human services in general. For example, as the family support movement takes hold, families increasingly are assigned a case manager who coordinates the variety of health, mental health, educational, job training, and other services specifically needed by an individual family. School-related clinics are bringing medical, public health, and mental health professionals together with the schools. And the successful early intervention programs, many originally crafted by psychologists, are now implemented by educational professionals often in combination with nurses, social workers, child development specialists, and other family support professionals. In addition, many line staff in social welfare agencies, who formerly were social workers, now have undergraduate degrees in psychology, sociology, or child care. Such interdisciplinary combinations require interdisciplinary training programs, which in turn, demand that credentialing agencies rethink what interdisciplinary breadth should be required and how it can be effectively and efficiently obtained by students. Moreover, within universities, red ink is pressuring deans to look for similar courses (e.g., child development, statistics, program evaluation) that are apparently "duplicated" across different departments and schools that could be combined to cut costs through interdisciplinary programming.

Finally, and most recently, the federal government, partly in response to the urging of urban universities, has established at least two funding programs specifically designed to encourage universities to collaborate with community policymakers and organizations to solve local problems. The Department of Education's Urban Community Services Program and Housing and Urban Development's Community Outreach Partnership Centers funding programs were begun in 1992 and 1994 respectively, and are targeted at promoting university-community, interdisciplinary, applied projects.

Structure

A new type of university unit. The traditional response of universities toward changes in research and training emphases is to create a new school or department, such as cognitive neuroscience or ecology, or to establish an institute or center. Often, this course of action requires a financial commitment to space, facilities, and new positions. In addition, the activity of such units, with notable exceptions, is often more multidisciplinary than interdisciplinary, the latter referring to the conduct of research and training by interdisciplinary teams who actually work together (rather than working independently in the same building or within the same department), each contributing necessary but not sufficient expertise to the project. Study groups are another approach to interdisciplinary programming, especially around more particular problems (e.g., child abuse, infant mortality). But they are often operated as a part-time venture by their organizers and are ephemeral, perhaps because of the changing interests of their leaders, lack of a formal structure and financing, or changing societal emphases.

The purposes of the proposed Office of Child Development did not seem well served by another department or a residential center, but rather by a facilitative administrative unit that would stimulate and manage interdisciplinary collaborations that existing faculty and community professionals would operate. Collaborations of any sort, but especially of an interdisciplinary character, do not ignite by spontaneous combustion --- someone must see it as their responsibility to not only bring matches, kindling, and logs together but to light the fire and perhaps fan it to keep it going.

So the Office of Child Development (McCall, 1990a) was conceived to be more like a focused, decentralized University Office of Research than a research center, in that it would primarily inform, stimulate, convene, and support others in the conduct of interdisciplinary education, research, and dissemination projects but not do the actual work (e.g., write the grant, conduct the research, teach the classes). It would alert its constituency about funding, convene and administratively manage interdisciplinary groups to apply for such funds, plan and implement such collaborative projects, and generally provide a central resource and focus for academic and community professionals interested in children, youth, and families. But existing faculty and community professionals would actually direct, conduct, own, and operate the collaborative projects.

An important byproduct of this approach would be to give the field of children, youth, and families a higher collective identity and prominence within the University. Children, youth, and families is a pervasive theme in education, but it is a smaller component of the disciplines of psychology, sociology, social work, nursing, psychiatry, medicine, and public health. However, collectively such faculty may constitute one of the largest clusters in the University, but this concentration goes unnoticed because of its dispersion throughout the University's traditional organizational chart.

Financing and administration. Since the Office was to convene collaborations across all schools and departments, it was reasonable and important to have it administratively housed in a neutral unit. Initially, it reported to the Provost (i.e., an Associate Provost for Academic Affairs --- the University has no senior academic administrator specifically designated to oversee interdisciplinary programs,

public service, or community outreach). Eventually it became part of an interdisciplinary research center (University Center for Social and Urban Research), which reported to the Provost.

This neutrality was crucial in establishing the Office's independence and in making it unique. Most professional schools (e.g., Education, Social Work) have units that promote relations with the community, typically for the purpose of placing students in internship positions, providing continuing education and technical assistance to schools or agencies, and arranging for research sites and subjects for faculty projects. Such activities are typically limited to one particular school, and they primarily serve the needs of students, agencies, or faculty, but are not true collaborations or partnerships since the benefits are predominately unidirectional. In contrast, the Office was to be interdisciplinary, and independence from such schools permitted an even-handed administration of collaborative projects and defused potential perceptions that the Office might favor its home unit. It also had the effect of minimizing the ability of schools or departments to dominate or control the activities of the Office for their purposes. Specifically, the Office adopted a policy of not seeking internship sites and subjects for faculty research, for example, preferring instead to focus on mutually-beneficial collaborations between faculty and the community in which each partner needed the others and contributed a necessary component of the total project in a mutually-respectful, mutually-influential collaboration.

Administrative structure was not sufficient to guarantee independence --- core funding was also necessary and provided by the University, The Howard Heinz Endowment, and The Buhl Foundation. Convening collaborations was sufficiently unusual that collaborators initially asked the Office with great suspicion, "What is in this for you? Why are you doing this, and what are you getting --- or going to take --- out of it?" It was crucial for the Office to be able to say, "This is our job, and we are paid to do it. We do not take anything from the collaborative project, unless we earn it by continuing to play a role in it, which we do not need, or necessarily want, to do. The final collaborative product is whatever the cooperating members decide, and it does not have to involve the Office." Also, independent core funding meant that the Office did not need to draw down resources from other schools and departments to support itself, nor did it need to take portions of direct and indirect costs from funded collaborative projects away from participating departments as many residential centers do. The Office could not have gained the trust and confidence of otherwise competing faculty and agencies to yield power to the Office to manage a collaboration without both administrative and financial independence.

Purposes and Principles of Operation

After eight years, the purposes and principles of operation of the Office are more finely articulated, and our approach to promoting interdisciplinary and faculty/service professional collaboration has been described more fully elsewhere (Groark & McCall, 1993, in press; McCall, 1990b).[2]

These current purposes and operational principles are somewhat different in practice than the original conception, primarily because the Office is no longer purely facilitative. The Office's original conception was that it would act in this facilitative way, and once the collaboration was started and funded, the Office would fade out and instigate another collaborative project. We soon discovered, however, what is obvious in hindsight: If one needs a dedicated, independent convener to get a collaborative project going, it is also likely that one needs an independent professional to help manage the project when there is real money, control, and operational problems to be handled. But maintaining an administrative role in collaborative projects can have a cannibalizing effect by consuming all of the time of major Office staff, who then have no time to devote to convening new collaborations because they are managing those that they have previously established. While additional staff could be hired, this is not simply done, because they must be senior and already respected by their constituents to be successful (see below). Consequently, the Office has begun to plan, fund, and implement projects for other units, perhaps training future managers in the process, then weaning itself from the projects and turning them over to other departments or agencies or setting them up as independent agencies in the community.

Another departure from the original plan is that the Office actually performs projects, not just manages them, with or without the involvement of other faculty or agencies. This has occurred primarily with respect to the dissemination of professional information to other audiences and community needs assessment, program evaluation, and policy studies. These domains are potential natural bridges between University faculty and community service professionals and policymakers. But few faculty are inclined to perform them, partly because few faculty are trained in such areas and because few faculty are rewarded for performing this kind of scholarship, especially when it is directed at local issues and local programs.

Office Projects

The projects and activities of the Office can be divided into two categories. The Core Program attempts to create an identity for children, youth, and families in the local area by serving as a central resource among professionals and by operating a set of activities and services that create and support a climate in which interdisciplinary projects can be created and flourish. Such activities are generic

[2] Detailed material regarding the Office of Child Development's purposes, principles of operation, core program activities, and special projects can be found at the end of this article.

in content and open to everyone. Special Projects, on the other hand, consist of the products of the Office's attempt to foster interdisciplinary collaborative projects. They are separately funded and staffed, they may be operated by the Office or other organizations, and they have specific purposes and more limited constituencies. They live and die with their own specific funding.

Core Program

The Core Program consists of a variety of services and activities conducted by the Office staff, often in collaboration with members of its constituency.[2] These activities include sponsoring interdisciplinary colloquia open to faculty and community professionals, luncheon discussions, and workshops and conferences; distributing notices of funding opportunities and a newsletter; awarding seed grants for interdisciplinary projects; coordinating University-community networks around applied problems; participating on various task forces and advisory groups; and publishing articles and disseminating information through the media.

Special Projects

The Office promotes, funds, plans, implements, and manages a variety of special projects pertaining to interdisciplinary education, interdisciplinary research, University-community human services demonstrations, program evaluations, and policy studies.[2] Some of these projects are conducted entirely by the Office, others represent collaborations with other faculty and community agencies, and in other cases the Office performs one or more functions (e.g., funding, planning, or implementing a project) for other organizations who then take over the project.

For example, the Office : 1) Convened and supported the successful application of faculty from two universities who are one of nine groups nationally studying the antecedents and consequences of different early life experiences; 2) Helped coordinate, fund, and manage two interdisciplinary training programs, one in child abuse and neglect and the other in child welfare; 3) Funded and/or managed several large-scale, case-managed, comprehensive service demonstration and evaluation programs, including one of the original sites of the federal Comprehensive Child Development Program; 4) Received one of the first Urban Community Services Program grants (Department of Education) to conduct and assist community agencies in conducting evaluations of their service programs and to perform needs assessments and other studies for state and local policymakers; and 5) Publishes an annual databook for Pennsylvania in collaboration with Pennsylvania's Partnerships for Children with a Kids Count grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Evaluation

The progress and success of the Office can be assessed in two major ways. One approach is to use consumer satisfaction surveys. More specifically, we asked our constituency whether they used the Core Program services and judged them valuable and whether they felt the Office had attained some of its more nebulous goals, for example, of creating an identity for children, youth, and families in the area and making a contribution to the climate for local academics, service professionals, and policymakers. A second measure of success, especially of the Office's attempts to create interdisciplinary collaborative projects, is the number of such projects that have been created and the amount of money obtained to support them.

Constituency Questionnaire

In the fall of 1992, after 6 years of operation, a questionnaire was sent to approximately 2,600 of the Office's constituency --- University professionals, community human service providers, and policymakers. The sample consisted of all individuals who had previously responded to a request for information about their interests and specializations and who were part of the Office's mailing list. Respondents were given approximately three weeks to return the questionnaires and were sent a reminder card one week after the survey was distributed. Responses were received from approximately 26% (similar for each type of constituency), a rate considered typical by the University Center for Social and Urban Research, which conducted the survey and is experienced in survey research practices in the area. Responses were received from 674 respondents, 34% of which were from the University, 55% were human service professionals, and 10% were policymakers.

Use of core services. The Core Services offered by the Office were used by a remarkably broad and large constituency. Essentially all of the respondents had experienced some service from the Office, ranging from reading the Newsletter to participating in a funded collaborative. Even if reading the Newsletter and receiving Requests for Proposals were omitted, 86% of all respondents (the percentage was similar for University, professional, and policymaking groups) participated in one of the activities or services of the Office. Therefore, while some services appeal to some segments of the Office's constituency more than others, the set of core services is used extensively by a wide range of individuals. More specifically:

- **Newsletter** --- Nearly half (45%) of all respondents said they almost always read something in the Newsletter, and nearly three out of four (73%) said they frequently or almost always did so. In addition, the Special Reports were used in class or in preparing lectures (26% of faculty), recommended to a colleague or a student (47% of respondents), and formed the basis of a paper or speech (19%). Some service professionals also used the Reports for staff development, strategic planning with their boards of directors, in grant proposals, to evaluate legislation, and for making recommendations to the court about clients.

- **Notices of Requests for Proposals** --- Among those individuals (two of three respondents) who received notices from the Office about Requests for Proposals and who were in the habit of submitting proposals (i.e., who submitted a proposal of any kind and for any reason during the last three years), one-third submitted a grant proposal as a direct result of one of the Office's notices. This means, for this sample of respondents alone, that more than 100 proposals were submitted as a result of receiving the Office's funding notices.

- **Colloquia, workshops, conferences, luncheons** --- More than half of all respondents (54%) from every constituency group attended at least one such event during the last three years, and 1 in 5 (20%) attended an average of one each year. These results confirm our impression that these events are well attended by a constantly changing and diverse set of professionals.

- **Support services and technical assistance** --- Approximately 3 out of 4 respondents (74%) had contacted the Office at least once for 1) some form of personal assistance, especially information about an event, meeting, service, or other OCD program (38%); 2) background or other information about a given topic, problem, or other issue relating to children, youth, and families (27%); 3) referral to a faculty member, service provider, or some other professionals who could give information, be a collaborator, or give a speech (20%); and 4) help in locating a funding source, preparing a grant, or reviewing an application (18%). Clearly, the Office is acting as a central resource within the University and between the University and the community.

- **Interdisciplinary collaborations** --- Nearly 1 in 3 (30%) of the Office's constituency had been involved in a self-help collaboration (e.g., network) and one in five (19%) were part of a collaboration that sought new funding. Of those who participated in either activity, 5 out of 6 (84%) felt these activities were worthwhile (i.e., the top two categories of a five-point scale).

- **Health, education, and welfare data** --- While only 17% of the constituency had ever used the publication or requested specific health, education, and welfare data, almost 7 out of 8 (85%) of those who did felt the service was valuable. This project was begun only in the year of the survey, which explains the low usage; the publication and its distribution has been vastly improved since the survey.

- **Publications** --- With respect to <u>directories</u> of personnel and services, more than half (58%) of the respondents had one or more of these publications, and nearly 5 out of 6 (82%) felt they were valuable. With respect to <u>policy publications</u>, 3 out of 10 (29%) had one of the two publications and 90% of them thought they were worthwhile. Substantially more policy publications and projects have been conducted since the survey.

Value of core services. Nearly half (45%) of the respondents on the average judged the set of core services to be very valuable and 3 out or 4 (75%) felt these services were moderate or very valuable out of a five-point scale. Among those respondents who had actually used a service, 82% felt it was moderate or very valuable. While restricting the sample to users produces some selection bias (e.g., those who participate in the service are most interested in it and presumably are more favorably disposed toward it), such a group also has actually experienced the service and is in a better position to know whether a good job was performed. All constituencies showed relatively high values for all of the core activities, with no one activity standing out as being especially valuable or especially weak.

Significance of general contributions. Respondents were asked the extent to which the Office contributed to each of six general missions: 1) The academic life of the University (i.e., research, teaching, community relations); 2) the health, education, and welfare of the community; 3) an identity for children, youth, and families on the campus and in the community; 4) the climate and facility for conducting interdisciplinary research, training, or other academic activities; 5) the climate and facility for conducting University-community collaborations; and 6) disseminating research and professional information to scholars, applied professionals, parents, and citizens. Respondents indicated whether they felt such a contribution was "none, somewhat, moderate, or significant" or that they did not know (some questions pertained more to the University or to the community, and members of the other constituency might not be aware of the Office's activity in those areas).

Respondents from all three major groups graded all six missions similarly: Nearly 3 out of 5 (59%) felt the Office had contributed significantly to each mission and 7 out of 8 (87%) felt the Office's contribution was moderate or significant.

Funded Special Projects

A second evaluative measure of the Office is the amount of money it has raised for a variety of purposes.

Grants to the Office. Grants to the Office during its eight years of operation have been of two kinds. The Core Program has been supported with five grants totaling $1,535,000. In addition, the Office has received 54 grants for 35 Special Projects which it owns and operates totalling $19,747,965. Thus, the Office has raised $21.3 million for its own existence and its own Special Projects.

Projects operated by other organizations. As a facilitative unit, however, the Office plans, funds, implements, and sometimes temporarily manages collaborative projects that are owned and operated by other organizations. There have been four such projects having a total value of $35 million (exclusive of the funds that went to the Office to pay for its services). Therefore, the Office has either received grants itself or funded, planned, implemented, or managed research, training, service demonstration, evaluation, and policy projects for other organizations worth more than $56 million.

Indirect support of other organizations. The Office also offers indirect and technical assistance to faculty and service agencies that contribute to the funding of their projects. Specifically, the Office's Seed Grant program has awarded 15 grants worth $49,877 which subsequently produced 7 grants from state and federal agencies for approximately $2.2 million. In addition, the Office routinely provides technical assistance to University faculty and community service agencies in their quest for funding. Such applications have been successful 28 times, receiving a total of $10.6 million. Therefore, the Office has had a hand in approximately $69 million worth of projects in the eight years of its existence.

These figures should be evaluated next to the Office's personnel resources. Universities tend to perceive faculty, their largest investment, as the principal, if not only, personnel who get grants. Consequently, universities evaluate units on the basis of grant dollars per faculty member. Until very recently, only one faculty member was paid to work on the Office, and two others each volunteered approximately 25%-50% time to the enterprise. Ultimately, more faculty became involved as program directors, some of whom helped to obtain the funds for their projects and some of whom were recruited after funding was available to operate projects. The Office employs only one other doctorate, who now has adjunct faculty appointments. This means that the vast majority of the grant money reported above was obtained by non-faculty staff of the Office, including three masters-level people. This does not surprise agency professionals who often obtain large grants, but it stands in marked contrast to university residential centers which may have many faculty or to other university facilitative units that often count the dollars of many faculty who run their grants through that unit. Therefore, the Office has fulfilled its promise as a facilitator, generating substantial income and support with a relatively minimum investment of faculty time and space.

This conclusion of financial leverage can be seen in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows that the outside and University funding of the Office's Core Program has remained relatively constant over the eight years, rising at approximately the rate of inflation. In contrast, this investment has produced a substantial and increasing amount of money in grants received by the Office for projects it owns and operates. Indeed, what started with a Director, an Associate, and a Secretary and a budget of $150,000 per year, eight years later employed approximately 70 people with an annual budget of $4.6 million. Clearly, a "facilitator" can produce a substantial return on a modest investment.

Factors in the Office's Operation

While it cannot be determined in any systematic way, we offer below our speculations on why the Office has worked reasonably well and the problems we have encountered in the hope that other universities can evaluate their own situation in the light of these factors.

What Made It Work?

We speculate that the following factors contributed to what success the Office has enjoyed.

Personnel. It is often said that personnel are more important than program. A facilitative unit requires senior personnel --- one cannot as easily get the cooperation of senior faculty, agency

directors, or policymakers by sending a graduate student. Except for the Seed Grants, the Office is not a grant-giving organization, so the cooperation of other professionals is dependent on their trust in and respect for Office personnel, and such cooperation is more likely to occur if the Office is represented by senior individuals who have earned credits that the constituency values.

The leadership of the Office is itself a collaboration similar to those which the Office attempts to engender in others. Day-to-day leadership is taken by an academic in child development (RBM) and an administrative service professional (CJG) who had worked in and was widely known by agency directors and policymakers in the Pittsburgh area before coming to the Office. Two academic Associate Directors (MSS, CNJ) and a Human Services Coordinator, Kathryn W. Rudy, complete the "senior staff" that has operated the Core Program. Nearly all major policy decisions in the Office are made collaboratively, and senior staff meetings are frequently devoted to amalgamating the perspectives of different disciplines as well as faculty and service professionals. This allows Office staff to practice among themselves the coalition building that they will try to forge among faculty and agencies outside the Office.

Staff also are selected for their energy level, productivity, and responsibility. The image of the Office as a responsive, "can do," rapid turnaround, "count on 'em" outfit is crucial to its success in the community and impossible without personnel that perform this way. Service demonstration grants, for example, typically provide respondents with 3-5 weeks in which to submit a proposal, and much of that brief time is spent putting together the collaborative team. The Office is prepared to drop everything, work days, nights, and weekends to put together proposals of 100-200 pages in 2-4 weeks. Furthermore, community administrators, especially funders and policymakers who juggle dozens of projects simultaneously, must be able to assign a project to the Office and know that it will be done on time and satisfactorily without them having to supervise it any further. Indeed, policymakers frequently publically commit to a deadline for a report even before the work is assigned. To be late is to embarrass your funder. For this reason, new employees are specifically told that every phone call must be answered as soon as possible, every task must be done by the agreed-upon deadline regardless of how long it takes, and every promise to a constituency member must be fulfilled. While this style is sometimes foreign to faculty who typically do not work under deadlines, facilitative units are nothing if they cannot be counted on to provide the services they promise when they promised them.

An attitude of service. Office personnel are dedicated to help the Office's constituency, and if that constituency is not interested in a proposed project, then it is abandoned. The collaborators decide the Office's role, and if that role is nothing once the project is funded, that is acceptable. If faculty, for example, can do the project themselves without the Office, they do so and the Office pursues other agenda. The Office tries not to compete with its constituency and typically defers to other groups who want to do the job. Finally, the Office keeps a low profile in its Newsletter and in its style of operation in deference to its constituency, upon whom it relies for the success of its projects. Many things can be accomplished, it is said, if one is willing to give the credit to others, and correspondingly, altruism is the most enlightened self-interest.

But there is a limit to the service the Office provides. The Office helps others do what they themselves could not do alone, and, conversely, the Office does little for them that they could do themselves. Specifically, for example, the Office does not write collaborative grants for participants as much as organize them. In short, the Office helps those who help themselves in a collaborative activity and each collaborator must do his or her part.

Mutual benefit. Every collaborative project must be mutually beneficial for all of the participants. The Office does not find subjects for academics or money for service providers. While Office staff give countless hours of service to University committees, sit on numerous advisory boards, and provide much technical assistance to community agencies, The Office's main collaborative projects are not "public service." Public service is frequently defined as academic charity, or at least unidirectional activity (e.g., the academic donates time and expertise to a non-University project). All of the Office's major projects are mutually-beneficial collaborations, they are not unidirectional in their benefits, and they are fully funded by external agencies, not charity.

Full-time dedication. Many faculty at universities across the country have made the observation that dozens if not hundreds of faculty concerned with human development are distributed across numerous departments and schools. Why do they not work together? The answer provided by one University administrator was, "I guess no one has taken the time to lead such collaborations." Collaborations do not occur spontaneously; they require somebody to take the lead and see it through, and this occurs best when someone is employed, directed, and paid to do precisely that.

Timing. Timing is everything, it has been said, and the Office's function and orientation were well timed to the Zeitgeist. The rationale provided above for applied, interdisciplinary human development paints a picture of circumstances in academics and in human services that has emerged recently and that is well served by a unit such as the Office. However, nothing lasts forever, and the new congress may well change what the Office does and how as well as with whom it collaborates.

Pittsburgh. Not only did the focus on University-community relations fit the urban environment of Pittsburgh, which has all of the problems of any contemporary American metropolis, but Pittsburgh had a tradition of supporting human services for children, youth, and families. Policy and funding for services is governed largely by a handful of people who supported the Office's function financially and otherwise and who serve on its Advisory Board. Pittsburgh was the right place as well as the right time.

Core funding. A facilitative unit is inherently not self-supporting. Although the Office currently has a budget of $4.6 million a year, it cannot survive without approximately $250,000 to support the Core Program and activities devoted to prospecting for and organizing new collaborative projects. These costs cannot be assigned to or paid retrospectively from Special Project grants, so a stable, continuous core budget is essential. Not only is the core funding necessary to operate, but it also means the Office does not need quid pro quo's for its services nor does it need to be involved in the final collaborative arrangements at all, options that lend trust and credibility to the Office as a convener of interdisciplinary groups.

Responsive and flexible. Except for its basic structure and the Core Program activities, the Office does not have a specific topical plan or program agenda. Its Directors cannot say what they will be working on in a year or even a few months into the future. Certainly, no one imagined the Office of today and its list of Special Projects when the unit was conceived eight years ago. Instead, the Office goes with the flow --- the need, the personnel, the resources --- and often that flow is instigated by the arrival of a RFP or a telephone call from a local funder or policymaker that changes the course of the Office's activity that afternoon and possibly for months and years to come.

Another side of this attitude is that the Office does not go to the faculty or to the community with a preconceived project or agenda. Too often, faculty, accustomed to working alone and controlling all aspects of a project, approach community agencies with a well-articulated plan or project seeking the agency's cooperation. But true collaborations are partnerships from the beginning in which all participants contribute to the plan as well as its implementation. The lack of a specific agenda for the Office allows it to encourage such true partnerships.

Universities that consult the Office about establishing such a unit have the most difficulty with this lack of a specific agenda. Academics are accustomed to asking faculty job candidates what research they intend to pursue during the next 3-5 years, and grant applications want each proposed project described in excruciating detail. Consequently, faculty are frustrated and uncertain when they ask, "What would such a unit do at our university?" and the response is, "Whatever is needed and feasible at the moment." The Office is a planned structure of services, not a specific project or program. Facilitative units do not need to be this programmically flexible, but it is a strategy that insures that programs are timely, apt, and feasible, and that one can pursue funds under very severe time constraints. It is also the way policymakers and service agencies, if not faculty, typically operate.

Prominent, active, representative local Advisory Board. The deans of schools and heads of relevant centers and institutes that the Office serves plus local funders, policymakers, and agency directors serve on a local Advisory Board. They are prominent and influential individuals within the University and community, and they represent all of the Office's constituencies --- administration, faculty, service agencies, funders, and policymakers. They meet formally twice a year to be kept abreast of Office functions and to decide broad policy issues of how the Office should operate. In addition, they are used individually throughout the year in many capacities, because they direct or influence most of the organizations and constituencies with whom the Office works. It is fair to say that little would happen without their support and cooperation.

A National Advisory Board has recently been established to provide broader perspectives on the potential role of the Office within the University, community, state, and nation.

What Have Been the Problems?

The Office ship has not sailed as smoothly as it may appear from the above description. We have encountered the following storms.

Core funding. The amount of core funding ($150,000-$450,000 per year plus the Director's salary depending on what functions are included and what special project funds are available) is not large compared to several other such facilitative units in other universities, nor are most of the operating funds "hard" university money. But foundations prefer to start projects, not to provide continuing funds for operations; consequently, the Office is continually concerned about funding the Core Program. Although it represents only approximately 6% of the current total budget, it is crucial for the operation of the Office in its present form. Without it, the Office would become essentially a residential research, demonstration, evaluation, and policy center, rather than a facilitator of collaborations. Although the Office has never been in financial difficulty nor do we believe that local funders will allow it to die for lack of core support, it is a constant uncertainty to the Office Directors.

University collaborations. The Office has been far less successful in the number and dollar value of University collaborations that it has organized for conducting research or training than it has in putting together University-community collaborations. We believe several factors have contributed to this imbalance. The most important reason is we simply have fewer resources to pay individuals to organize University collaborations than to organize University-community partnerships. Restrictions in the external grant support and very limited resources from the University to support the promotion of faculty collaboratives simply means the Office is able to put more personnel on University-community collaborations than on University partnerships. Indeed, all but one of the collaborative research and training projects were orchestrated by an Associate Director (MSS) who volunteered his time.

A second possible reason is the allegation that faculty are trained to operate independently and are less willing to give up control over a project which is required for a smoothly operating partnership. We have seen little evidence of this proposition. In our experience, faculty do not turn down collaborative opportunities more frequently than service professionals, nor are they necessarily more difficult to hold together in a collaborative arrangement.

A third reason may be that faculty are a little less desperate for funding than are service providers, who literally do die and lose their jobs if they do not get grants. Although service providers are competitors, they will work together in collaborative projects as a means of supporting their services. Also, many service providers are not experienced with nor feel competent to pursue state and federal funds without the help of more experienced colleagues, so a partnership to approach these sources is a plus for them.

Conflict with University structure and values. The Office was created as a grass-roots movement in a very top-down University. This has meant that for most of its early years, the Office was tolerated but not embraced by the University administration, which had little role in its creation. Furthermore, by the time its ninth year began, the Office had five Provosts overseeing it directly or indirectly, which requires establishing relations from scratch every year or two for a clearly "odd" unit. Moreover, the University of Pittsburgh does not have many seriously interdisciplinary research

or educational units, it has no upper-level administrator designated to be responsible for interdisciplinary affairs, and it lacks policies or structures to deal with administrative and financial issues that arise in conducting interdisciplinary research or training programs. The Office was often viewed as a "problem" or "troublemaker," because it frequently confronted administrators with issues that arose because of the lack of structure and policies in the University for dealing with interdisciplinary affairs. This was especially acute with respect to contracts and accounting, which frequently involved numerous subcontracts, often with small agencies or local governments that were unaccustomed to grants and their management.

Finally, the administration valued academic excellence and productivity above all and had never developed a "land-grant mentality" that encouraged faculty to become involved with the community either in public service or in mutually-beneficial collaborative arrangements. This represented a two-edged sword. On one side, the Office was largely ignored by University administrators, because it was not mainstream and it was small, at least initially. On the other side, the Office faced few preconceived ideas or structures regarding interdisciplinary programs or University-community relations. It had a fairly clear playing field. One sympathetic colleague at an academically traditional university asked, "How did you get your University to let you do these things?" The answer was, "We did not ask; forgiveness is easier to obtain than permission." Currently, however, the new University Chancellor has frequently espoused his desire for the University to contribute to the community in which it operates, and the Office represents one model of how to do so.

Office or research center. It has been difficult to convince the University that the Office of Child Development is a facilitative unit, not a residential research center. As such, it is more like a decentralized and more proactive Office of Research than a traditional research center in the way it operates, the way it is funded, and the way it should be evaluated. This lack of appreciation for the Office's structure and purpose has led to questions about why most of our grant money "goes out the door" to other institutions, how we get credit for organizing a grant that actually goes to other faculty, why we cannot support ourselves on "all the grant money you get," and why we do not get more indirect costs per grant dollar. Although these issues have decreased as we have become more successful and better known, they reflect a traditional university perspective applied to a nontraditional unit.

A victim of its own success. A major requirement in establishing any new unit within a large organization is that it not tread on anyone else's turf. The Office defined its domain to be children, youth, and families, and declared that it would only pursue projects that were interdisciplinary in character. While it was the only all-university interdisciplinary unit focused on children, youth, and families, in principle nothing prevented any school or faculty member from organizing an interdisciplinary team to conduct a given project. While the Office has only rarely competed directly with another local unit, the success that it has had in arranging such projects and the fact that it is frequently called upon by local funders to organize such projects have occasionally created tensions between the Office and other units. From the perspective of other units, the issue may be, "Why are they getting all this money? Why doesn't some of that money come to us?" From the perspective of the Office, other units do not form the collaborations desired by funders and do not have the track

record in doing so. Nevertheless, it is our judgment that the Office has had remarkably few turf battles, conflicts, and criticisms when one considers the nature of its activities and the potential for disaffecting both the individuals involved in collaborative projects as well as those who are not involved but think they should be.

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Caption

Figure 1. Annual Office of Child Development budget since its inception broken down into general university support, core grant support, and special project grants given to the Office. This shows the direct return (lightest shaded area) on the investment in the Office (two darker areas).

Purposes of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development

- To foster a **supportive and facilitative atmosphere** within which interdisciplinary programs pertaining to children, youth, and families may be conceived, nurtured, implemented, and managed.

- To promote **interdisciplinary research and educational programs**, especially of an applied nature, within the University for undergraduate and graduate students and professionals seeking continuing education.

- To stimulate, plan, and sometimes manage **interdisciplinary and multi-institutional collaborative research, policy, and human service demonstration and evaluation programs** involving University faculty and community human service professionals.

- To coordinate, conduct, and produce background information, needs assessments, white papers, and other **research and professional services for policymakers**.

- To provide a wide range of **interdisciplinary program evaluation services** and technical assistance to human service agencies, funders, and policymakers.

- To **communicate research and professional information** on children, youth, and families to those individuals who can use that information, including academics, service professionals, policymakers, parents, and citizens.

Principles of Operation of the Office of Child Development

- The Office emphasizes **interdisciplinary and collaborative** projects among faculty, human service agencies, community groups, and policymakers. Projects that are the rightful province of a single discipline or do not require substantial collaboration are typically not pursued.

- Collaborative projects are viewed as **partnerships that must be mutually beneficial** to participants, each of whom shares responsibility and control over the project and contributes a necessary, but not sufficient, component of it.

- The Office emphasizes projects that pertain to the **University of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania**, but it also conducts inter-university collaborations and **regional, state, and national** projects.

- The Office exists primarily to facilitate, coordinate, and **help others** attain goals that they are unlikely to achieve without collaboration. It supports, rather than supplants, the work of other faculty and community professionals who have an interest in children, youth, and families.

- The Office has **no formal membership**, and it attempts to serve all relevant faculty, human service agencies, and policymakers.

- While the Office does initiate projects of its own creation and design, it tends to be **responsive and flexible** to changing needs, policies, personnel, and funding opportunities. The Office does not have a focused content mission or planned agenda; instead the Office consists of a structure and capabilities that are mobilized, often rapidly, to meet the changing needs of its constituency.

- The Office **does not charge or exact benefits** from collaborative groups it organizes for special projects, and it will serve such consortia whether or not it is the primary grant recipient. In fact, the Office prefers other groups ultimately to own and operate collaborative projects that the Office has stimulated, planned, helped to fund, or implemented. However, it will maintain a continuing presence if necessary and if separately funded.

- The Office **prefers not to operate direct human services**, but it does coordinate services and perform case-management functions.

- The Office operates as an **independent, credible, unbiased, and balanced source** of information, administrative management, program evaluation, and policy analyses rather than as an advocate for specific pieces of legislation or policy, partisan issues, or particular strategies of social change.

Core Program Activities of the
University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development

Interdisciplinary lectures on issues of children, youth, and families. Since its inception, the Office has sponsored or co-sponsored 54 interdisciplinary lectures open to faculty, service professionals, policymakers, and students. In the last year, for example, the topics have included an evaluation of a long-term residential treatment program for drug addicts, an elementary school program to prevent school failure, and community coalitions to prevent childhood problems. Typically attended by 50-100 people, these lectures bring together professionals from many disciplines within the University, and they provide community professionals with a steady exposure to leading figures from across the country speaking on issues of contemporary interest.

Luncheon discussions. The Office has sponsored 25 buffet luncheons for faculty and service professionals at which one to four faculty representing different disciplines or perspectives on a controversial issue present their views followed by a discussion with the audience. Recent topics include uses and abuses of behavior modification, what works and what does not in family support programs, and several sessions on the evaluation of educational and mental health service programs. These Luncheons, typically attended by 30-60 people, are often the only time faculty and service professionals meet each other and discuss an issue together. The process helps professionals understand and value different disciplinary perspectives on a theme and feel part of an informal group attempting to deal with an issue that transcends traditional disciplines.

Workshops and conferences. The Office has sponsored or co-sponsored 40 workshops and conferences for faculty and human service professionals. Typically, the Office provides mailing lists, advertising, and support for major speakers. Recent topics have included training youth to be peer trustees, grant writing, youth gangs, and families and racism. These events are typically attended by approximately 100 local faculty and community professionals.

Requests for Proposals. The Office sends out several hundred notices each week of Requests for Proposals for research, training, demonstration interventions, and services to members of its constituency who have submitted their interest areas to the Office's computerized database. The Office scans *Federal Grants and Contracts Weekly* and several other weekly publications and sends out brief notices when a funding opportunity appears relevant to a substantial segment of its constituency. Single notices are sent to individuals or specific units when only they would be eligible to apply or have much chance at obtaining the funds. While a university Office of Research could do this on a university-wide basis, the Office of Child Development's more decentralized service is often able to target notices more effectively, personally encourage some groups to apply, perceive opportunities because of our knowledge of the area and particular individuals or agencies, and convene potential collaborators.

Newsletter. The Office publishes a quarterly newsletter that consists of articles on activities and events, colloquia, conferences, the research and services of members of the Office's constituency,

funding sources that do not have immediate deadlines, etc. Very little appears about the Office itself. In addition, the Office publishes Special Reports and Briefing Papers, the former aimed more at academics and service providers and the latter targeted more toward policymakers. These reports are 2-10 printed pages that summarize what is known about a particular problem or issue. In the case of a problem, it may define the problem and its variations, describe the consequences to individuals and society of the problem, identify risk factors and causes or etiology, describe categories if not specific programs that have attempted to treat or prevent the problem and how successful they were, outline the common or crucial elements of such programs as a basis for designing future initiatives, and consider the implications for policy and other action. Recent topics have included Head Start, preventing antisocial behavior and school failure, children who experience violence, and mental health services in the schools.

Seed grants. As funds permit, the Office awards Seed Grants of $5000 or less to interdisciplinary collaborative teams who propose a project that holds promise of obtaining future funding. Services are not funded unless they create a publically available product (e.g., a curriculum, program manual) that extends the benefit of the activity beyond the clients directly served and has promise of securing additional funding.

University-community coordination activities. The Office conducts a great variety of activities designed to coordinate University and community professionals around themes of common interest. These activities consist of organizing networks and task forces (e.g., gang prevention, child abuse and neglect, adoption, permanency planning), convening collaborators and providing technical assistance to them in the preparation of a grant application, and publishing directories and guides to services. Such activities have been instrumental in promoting coordination among services and interaction between service professionals and faculty members.

Memberships on task forces and advisory committees. Office staff participate on numerous task forces, committees, and advisory groups for local, state, and national organizations as a means of promoting interdisciplinary and interagency relations and collaborations.

Articles and programs that disseminate research and professional information to service professionals, policymakers, and the public. Office staff write articles in local and national newspapers and magazines, do interviews with local and national journalists, appear on local and national radio and television programs, and give public presentations of information pertaining to a variety of issues of children, youth, and families as part of the Office's attempt to disseminate scholarly and professional information to those who can use it. The Office also maintains a database and publishes a compilation of ten commonly cited indices of the health, education, and welfare of children and families in each county in Pennsylvania, which is now part of the Annie Casey Foundation's Kids Count program.

Professional presentations and publications relating to office functions. Office staff have made numerous presentations at local, state, and national meetings and published papers pertaining to

runaway and homeless youth, multi-institutional service delivery, early childhood services, and special interdisciplinary academic centers, institutes, and offices.

Selected Special Projects of the University of Pittsburgh
Office of Child Development

Interdisciplinary Education

- Funded and co-directed one of ten **Child Abuse and Neglect Training Grants** in the country;

- Funded and co-directs one of the five original **Interdisciplinary Child Welfare Training Grants** in the country;

- Operates a two-semester **Interdisciplinary Proseminar on Applied Issues of Children, Youth, and Families** for advanced undergraduates and graduate students as well as community service professionals.

- Operates the **Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund for Early Childhood Development and Parent Education**, which supports students, continuing education, and other projects aimed at improving parent education for rearing young children.

Interdisciplinary Research

- Convened and seeded researchers from Penn State and the University of Pittsburgh who are conducting one of nine studies in the country on **Young Children's Lives**, tracing the antecedents and consequences of different early childhood experiences.

- Seeded and stimulated a collaboration of researchers within the University and the community to study the **Antecedents of Development In Infants from Low-Income Families**.

University-Community Human Services Collaborations

- Operates 1 of the 24 original national sites of the **Comprehensive Child Development Program** (locally called Family Foundations) for high-risk children birth to six years of age.

- Created and operates the **Alliance for Infants,** which provides case-managed services to disabled and high-risk infants and families and those potentially needing early intervention services.

- Coordinates **A Better Start**, a statewide program to bring pre- and perinatal services to hard-to-reach, at-risk women.

- Operated 1 of 16 **Drug and Alcohol Prevention Task Forces for Runaway and Homeless Youth**, a federal program providing education and prevention services.

- Organized the grant application and supervised the planning year for the **Pittsburgh Healthy Start Program**, a federal project to prevent infant mortality.

- Manages the **Partnerships for Family Support**, a set of three community-empowered family support programs in Pittsburgh.

Program Evaluation

- Operates one of the 17 original **Urban Community Services Programs** of the federal Department of Education, which provides a variety of program evaluation services and policy studies for numerous local agencies.

- Conducts the data analyses for the evaluation of the local site of the **Comprehensive Child Development Program** (Family Foundations).

- Performed an evaluation of the **1993-94 United Way Allocation Review Process**, the procedure by which the United Way grants funds to agencies.

- Designed and conducts the evaluation of the **Partnerships for Family Support** in Pittsburgh.

- Manages the data and conducts analyses of the **Even Start** program of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, which attempts to improve parent literacy, parenting and child development skills, and school readiness in preschool, low-income children.

- Conducts the evaluation of **Project Beacon**, which promotes prereading skills in 3-5-year-old children.

- Performs two evaluations for the **Western Pennsylvania Caring Foundation** pertaining to medical services and insurance for low-income children and families.

- Helped to plan and implement the **Statewide Early Intervention Evaluation Project**, an outreach, tracking, and evaluation program for state supported early intervention services for children birth to six years.

Policy Studies

- Publishes collaboratively with the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children a ***Kids Count Fact Book***, a county-by-county presentation of health, education, welfare, economic, and mental health indices for Pennsylvania's children and families.

- Publishes ***Overcoming the Odds***, a report that designates geographic areas in Allegheny County in which children and families are at greatest risk, summarizes services, and identifies service gaps.

- Conducted a **Statewide Needs Assessment of Early Childhood Services in Pennsylvania**, a comprehensive report of literature and three statewide surveys conducted for the State Board of Education.

- Performed an **Early Intervention Policy Analysis**, which reviewed the implementation of early intervention programs in Allegheny County for policymakers and funders.

- Wrote the Human Services section of Pittsburgh's application to become a federal **Empowerment Zone**.