ED 460 656   HE 034 558

AUTHOR   Larson, R. Sam; Barnes, Sonia
TITLE   Building Philanthropy and Nonprofit Academic Centers: A View
                from Ten Builders.
SPONS AGENCY   Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek, MI.
PUB DATE   2001-05-00
NOTE   24p.; "Report to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Prepared as
                part of the Building Bridges Initiative Cluster Evaluation."
AVAILABLE FROM CenterPoint Institute, 114 Church St., New Lenox, IL 60451.
                For full text:
                http://www.centerpointinstitute.org/bridges/Papers&Reports/
                papers.htm.
PUB TYPE   Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   *Administrator Education; Departments; *Educational History;
                *Graduate Study; Higher Education; *Nonprofit Organizations;
                Philanthropic Foundations; Private Financial Support;
                *Program Development

ABSTRACT
                In response to changes in society and the nonprofit sector,
the W. K. Kellogg Foundation developed and funded the Building Bridges
between Practice & Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education initiative
(Building Bridges). The work of those involved in Building Bridges and other
leaders in nonprofit management education can benefit from the experiences of
innovators who developed centers for education in the management of nonprofit
organizations. This study was conducted to explore the development of the
early centers and the roles of their founders. Researchers interviewed 10
"builders," or academic innovators to find out how the centers with which
they are associated emerged and how they were sustained. Findings show that
the impetus for development of the center came from faculty, administrators,
and external funders, and not from students or practitioners. The centers
became more comprehensive over time, more inclusive of activities, topics,
and societal demands. The relationships between the centers and their
communities tended to focus on information dissemination rather than
co-learning. The builders were, to some extent, practitioners. The four
factors that emerged as critical in the long-term viability of the centers
were: funding, faculty involvement, university leadership support, and the
visibility of the field. The builders relied on relationship strategies to
navigate the challenges of developing and sustaining their centers. Builders
were purposeful about constructing networks and collaboration. (SLD)

Building Philanthropy and Nonprofit Academic Centers:
A View from Ten Builders

May 2001

By:

R. Sam Larson, Ph.D. and Sonia Barnes, M.S.
Applied Research

2

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) have become an increasing source of support for the development of health and human services, largely in response to the changing budgets and roles of the business and government sectors. As a result of the changes in the operational environment for NPOs, new management and leadership competencies are required of leaders and managers in this Third Sector of society. In response to these changes, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation developed and funded the *Building Bridges Between Practice & Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education* initiative (BBI). In developing this initiative, Foundation leadership recognized that their efforts to link practice and knowledge in nonprofit management education and to elevate the field of nonprofit studies would build on the work of a set of established academic centers and academic innovators.

The work of the Building Bridges Initiative, and indeed the work of current and future leaders in this field of study, can learn from these early innovators. This study was developed for the purpose of exploring the development of early centers and the roles that academic innovators played in the development and sustainability of these centers.

We interviewed ten "builders" or academic innovators to find out how the centers they were associated with emerged and how they were sustained so that we can inform future builders and the field in general.

We found:

■ The impetus for development of the center came from faculty, administrators and external funders and not from students and practitioners.

■ The centers became more comprehensive over time – more inclusive of activities, topics and societal demands.

■ The relationships between the centers and their communities most often focused on information dissemination and focused less on co-learning.

■ Builders were, to some extent, practitioners. All had previous work experience in the nonprofit, government or business sectors.

■ Four factors emerged as critical to the long-term viability of academic centers: funding, faculty involvement, university leadership support, and the visibility of the field.

■ Builders relied on relational strategies – the ability to develop relationships and networks within and outside the university – to navigate the challenges of developing and sustaining their centers.

3

4

■ Meeting the challenges of building and sustaining not only centers, but also a field of study, wasn't something that the builders did in isolation. In fact, builders were purposeful about constructing a network with each other and with other center directors.

Introduction

*I think the centers have been the engines, have been the leaders…
I mean the reason that we've got about 100 programs now is that
you've got those initial [centers].*

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) have become an increasing source of support for the development of health and human services, largely in response to the changing budgets and roles of the business and government sectors. As a result of the changes in the operational environment for NPOs, new management and leadership competencies are required of leaders and managers in this Third Sector of society. In response to these changes, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation developed and funded the *Building Bridges Between Practice & Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education* initiative (BBI). In developing this initiative, Foundation leadership recognized that their efforts to link practice and knowledge in nonprofit management education and, indeed, to elevate the field of nonprofit studies would build on the work of a set of existing academic centers and academic innovators. These academic centers were units within universities and were devoted to the study and teaching of nonprofit management, philanthropy, fund raising and other topics coupled under the umbrella of the Third Sector. The faculty innovators that helped to build these centers – herein referred to as "builders" – provided the intellectual capital, practical knowledge, organizational skills, and, as we learned in this study, networks of relationships that have enabled other like minded persons to bring this topic of study to their own campuses.

The work of the Building Bridges Initiative, and the work of current and future leaders in this field of study, can learn from these early innovators – many, but not all, of whom were part of the BBI. With this thought in mind, this study was developed for the purpose of exploring the development of these early centers and the roles that academic innovators played in the development and sustainability of these centers. From this, we drew successful strategies for sustaining nonprofit academic centers. And perhaps more importantly, we recorded the experiences of these academic innovators for the history of the field. We conclude this paper with recommendations for academic center directors and external funders.

4

Methodology

This paper is based on a set of interviews with ten builders – academicians who helped to build nonprofit management academic centers. Some of these builders were and still are directors of centers. Yet, others were interested and involved faculty who never formally directed a center. The builders, and the centers they were associated with in this study, helped to create a place at the academic table for nonprofit studies.

We identified builders by first asking five faculty members who were or currently are center directors to identify individuals who, in their opinion, have been instrumental in developing the study of nonprofit management education. We compiled their recommendations and developed a list of 28 individuals whom we then ranked by frequency of mention. Fourteen builders were mentioned by at least two of the five raters. From this list of 14, ten were chosen to be interviewed. We chose these ten because of their ranking and to ensure gender representation. (See Table 1 for the list of builders and the institutions they are associated with in this report.)

Once builders were identified, they received an e-mail letter that detailed the purpose of the study and asked if they would be willing to participate in this study. In most cases, builders responded via email indicating their willingness to participate. In others, we followed-up with personal telephone calls. We were unable to contact one person and asked an alternate builder to participate.

Table 1. List of Builders and Centers

BUILDER	INSTITUTION
Dennis Young	Case Western Reserve University
John Palmer Smith	New School for Social Research
John Simon	Yale University
Kathleen McCarthy	City University of New York
Michael O'Neill	University of San Francisco
Naomi Wish	Seton Hall University
Robert Hollister	Tufts University
Robert Payton	Indiana University
Suzanne Feeney	Portland State University
Virginia Hodgkinson	Georgetown University

We collected data through open-ended personal interviews. We conducted eight in-person interviews and two telephone interviews. Participants were informed that all data collected for this study would be presented in a manner that would not permit their identification. We also asked for, and received, permission to

tape record the interviews. If a respondent chose to speak off-the-record, we stopped the recorder and did not take notes. Recorded interviews were transcribed.

We began data analysis by organizing responses by research and evaluation topics used to develop the protocol. Once the data were organized by topic, we read through all responses and searched for themes or concepts, which we present in this paper. The identification of themes involved an interplay of data and interpretation. That is, we began to analyze data while in the field to generate initial themes and concepts. We tested these themes throughout the data collection process, changing them as we learned more from the respondents.

The body of this paper is organized into four sections. First, the initial development of the centers is discussed, focusing on the impetus for their initiation, original missions and changes in missions, the relationship of the center with the nonprofit community, and academic and professional background of the builders. The second part of this paper presents the challenges facing academic centers as they moved toward sustainability. The factors we discuss are funding, faculty involvement, university support, and the visibility of the field. The next section focuses on the strategies that builder's employed to build and sustain academic centers. While several management strategies are described, most of the discussion is about builders' interpersonal relationships and networking as sustainability strategies. The conclusion summarizes the findings and includes recommendations for center directors and external funders.

Starting A Nonprofit Academic Center

As mentioned earlier, this is a study about the development of ten nonprofit academic centers from the perspective of the academic innovators – builders – who steered these centers during their initial development. We begin this part of the paper by focusing on the initial development of the centers: Why were they created? What were their missions? What role did the nonprofit community play in their development? These questions guided our inquiry. In addition, we found that the Builders' educational and professional experiences had much to say about how and why these centers were developed.

Creating Academic Centers: Supply v. Demand

Based on the interview data, three impetuses for the development of these academic centers were identified: (1) Demand from students and the broader nonprofit community; (2) the interests of individual faculty members and

7

university administrators – the supply side; and (3) the role of external funders – primarily family, private, and community foundations – an additional supply side factor.

Student and Community Demand

Of the ten builders we interviewed, only one said his center was created in response to students' and practitioners' demand for more training and information. He said the push for the center came, more or less, from "a group of professionals...whose special education needs [were] not being provided by any other graduate educational programs... that was the original conception of the program." This is not to say that student interests or the needs of the nonprofit community did not figure into the development of the other nine centers. They did, as the builders often spoke of the need to meet student and practitioner demand. However, students' and practitioners' demands did not appear to be the primary impetus for the development of these centers. Rather, the push for development appeared to come from faculty and administrators or from external funders.

Faculty and University Administrators

Based on these interviews, the push for forming these academic centers came primarily from within the university and typically consisted of faculty interest coalescing with support from key administrative leaders. At one center, the builder said he and two other faculty members wrote a book that touched upon ideas of philanthropy, investments, and ethics. The president of the university was intrigued by their work and, according to the builder, "the president thought, 'Gee, the time has come to do some serious work, academic work, on nonprofit issues'." The respondent continued this thought saying that the president's interests were "spurred in this case by the fact that he saw nonprofits being edged out and, in some cases, sort of overpowered by government...He saw the independence of the nonprofit sector being suppressed to some extent. That is his theory for starting the center."

At another center, the builder said that he "got this idea [to start a center on nonprofit studies], and went to two deans ... and they knew me... and had confidence in my ability to bring off the program." Faculty interest and administrative support came together at another center where the builder said that a couple of faculty got "excited about the idea of starting a center" and the provost at the time "loved the vision, loved everything, would come to every meeting" and supported the idea. At a fourth center, the internal push "actually came from the administration... the president and provost at the time decided this was an important idea." The administrators then brought the builder into the center.

8

Support from university administrators was not always evident in our interviews. At one center, it was the faculty builder who started the center "with very little support from university leadership." The builder said that the center evolved, that he "went from a half-time faculty member to a full time faculty member with responsibility of developing a nonprofit management concentration." He did so without support from the university. According to the respondent, this lack of support eventually forced the center to move to another university.

External Funders

A third factor that figured into the creation of several of these academic centers was the role of external funders. At four of the ten centers, the builders spoke of external funders – family, private and community foundations – as being a primary catalyst in the development of the center. One builder said the idea for his center, and the impetus for its development, "originally came from [a local family foundation]. And they got other funders involved in the notion." These external funders approached university administrators and the two groups worked together to develop the center – the funders provided the capital and the university supplied the space and human resources. A similar story was told at a second center where the builder said that the original idea or push for the center came from a foundation program officer. This same foundation later became the major funder for the center.

Another builder said two groups came together to create the center. One was a group of WWII veterans who wanted to "preserve the values that we fought to protect, values of democracy, and they created a [foundation]." The second group consisted of a "former school superintendent and professor of education... who were working to improve the teaching of civics." These groups formed a partnership and, along with financial support from a family foundation, were the impetus for the development of the nonprofit center. At a fourth center, the builder said the idea for starting the center came from within the university but the ability to realize it required external funds, and "that's where the [foundation] came in."

With one exception, centers in this study did not arise from direct demands from students and practitioners. In fact, it would be difficult for students, regardless of age and experience, to articulate a need for a program that did not exist. Rather, centers seemed to emerge from faculty, administrators and external funders who recognized a *societal* need for research and education focused on nonprofit management and philanthropy. However, once nonprofit management and philanthropy programs were initiated, students clearly realized that these new programs would meet their needs. Student demand did not "create" centers, but it was a factor contributing to center sustainability.

Missions: Consistent and Unique

As we learned through the interviews, these centers shared a common mission: To understand and improve the mechanisms of the Third Sector. However, each center represented different aspects of this theme. Under the umbrella of the Third Sector, several centers focused on philanthropy and civic engagement while others focused on management and policy issues. Taken as a whole, these centers appeared to complement rather than compete with each other. For example, one builder said he saw no reason to offer a non-profit management program because another school "right down the street" was doing so and "there is no reason to duplicate that." The builders were cognizant of the differences between the centers, and several builders discussed how their centers were different from other nonprofit academic centers. Perhaps, then, the distinctions among the centers were no accident. It may have been that, in a new, small area of study, key players – such as these builders – purposely looked for unique niches within the field so that their contributions were not redundant to those of others.

Typically, the centers began with narrow missions, perhaps focused only on fundraising or instruction. Missions appeared to expand over time. One way that missions broadened was by the scope of *activities* a center undertook. One builder said that he came to the center with a "broader vision. ... I thought you couldn't really have a great center without having a good research program and without having community service." Another center expanded its traditional focus on graduate education and research to include certificate programs and undergraduate study.

Missions also changed over time by expanding the range of *topics* that a center addressed. For instance, one builder said the mission of the center "changed to a focus on the role of different groups and institutions." Another builder said that with his appointment to the position, the center "moved away from the focused citizen participation and toward an emphasis on non-profit leadership and management."

Centers appeared to become more comprehensive over time. They became more inclusive of activities, topics and societal demands. An advantage that academic centers may have over academic departments is the ability of a center to quickly make mission and structural changes to meet societal demands and environmental opportunities. Yet, there was a consistency of mission across the centers: A focus on the Third Sector.

An important lesson to keep in mind as we assess the development of the centers and programs associated with the Building Bridges Initiative is programs that may appear narrow now could become more comprehensive over time.

Connecting with the Nonprofit Community

The Building Bridges Initiative emphasizes the need for centers and programs to connect with the nonprofit community. We asked the builders we interviewed about their connections with the nonprofit community when the center first formed and the status of those connections today. Each builder mentioned several ways that their center or program connected with their local geographic nonprofit community. Most mentioned academic courses and programs as a linkage, and many talked about lecture series, clinics, collecting data from nonprofits, sharing research with nonprofits, meeting with nonprofits, and working with the K-12 educational system. While some centers were more connected to the nonprofit communities in their geographic area than others, all were connected. Connections with national groups or professional organizations – another way to reach out to the nonprofit community – was mentioned far less often than other methods.

The centers differed in when they began to build connections with the nonprofit community. For several, the connections or the need for connections were a primary focus from the start. One builder said "from the very beginning there was something in me that said this kind of program is different... Everything that you do has to be community based." Another builder said:

> In a number of different ways we tried to get community
> involvement and community relations right from the beginning,
> because it was going to be a program that was hopefully going to
> serve the non-profit community.... It was not only the right thing to
> do, but it was in our best interest to develop that relationship as
> much as possible. So, we've had that kind of community
> relationship going way back to the beginning.

Other builders developed ties with the nonprofit communities over time. One builder said that "lately we've put on a much stronger push on networking with nonprofits." Another builder indicated that "initially there wasn't much contact [with the nonprofit community]... and the [center] has found itself increasingly working with nonprofits." Interestingly, the builders that spoke about their centers as gradually building connections with the nonprofit community were also centers where their impetus for creation came primarily from external funders.

Most builders talked about the challenge of meeting community needs and moving forward on the academic front. Though not necessarily representative of all builders, the following comment captured a theme that ran throughout many of the interviews:

> There was always this tension between the managers who needed
> information, techniques and the need to do basic research.... The

mangers wanted the product yesterday, but if you have no
knowledge base ... [shrugs shoulders].

It is romantic to think of nonprofit centers as grounded in the daily lives and
challenges of the Third Sector and of faculty working in the trenches with
nonprofit practitioners. In one or two cases, this did depict one aspect of the
relationship of the center to the community. However, it certainly wasn't an
accurate picture of most centers. Centers were mindful and responsive to the
community, but they were also mindful of the academic work that must be
accomplished. There was a sense that most of the community relationships
described by the builders consisted of information dissemination activities –
classes, lectures, clinics, data gathering – and less focus on co-learning or "in the
trenches" experiences.

Higher education is challenged internally and externally to develop new ways to
engage the community – and to reward these engagements. Sometimes the
appropriate form of engagement is knowledge dissemination – replying to
questions with answers or information. What the BBI is striving for however, and
what there was little evidence of in these interviews, was a co-learning process
where the academician and practitioner generated answers or knowledge
together and ultimately passed on this new knowledge to the field of practice and
theory development. Perhaps academic centers, such as these founding
nonprofit centers, needed to become more internally or organizationally stable
before experimenting with new forms of practitioner and academic partnerships.
Or perhaps co-learning processes are more frequent than our interviews
revealed.

The Builders: Non-Traditional Career and Educational Paths

The data from the builders' interviews illustrated that many builders had non-
traditional academic career paths. Many of the builders were, to some extent,
practitioners. They worked either in the nonprofit, government or commercial
sectors – with many having worked in all three. For example, several builders'
had worked in public or private elementary or secondary schools, another builder
had been a president of a corporate foundation, and one builder had worked for a
state government agency. A few builders began their careers with a deep interest
in the nonprofit field. One such builder said, "I was facilitating a lot of consulting
with nonprofit boards, sitting on nonprofit boards, my research was on nonprofit
boards, and I was just simply interested in nonprofits."

In terms of their educational paths, all but one builder held a Ph.D. Their doctoral
disciplines and topics covered a wide range including engineering, urban studies
and planning, transportation systems, and business administration. Their
involvement in the study of nonprofits and the Third Sector was sometimes the
result of happenstance. One builder said:

12

After I got my Ph.D., I went to [a research institute]. And most of the projects developed there…were kind of around the front end of what people were talking about, privatization and new ways to provide public services and different institutional arrangements…So that got me interested in public services and it also started getting me interested in economics of public services…and in the context of those projects…nonprofits sort of popped up… So that was kind of the genesis of it. And then I had in the back of my mind that at some point I might want to try academia and was recruited [to a university]…

Diversity in the builders' work and educational experiences may have contributed to how and why they built their centers. Having previous experience working in business, government or nonprofit organizations may have sharpened their management skills. It is likely that such on-the-job experiences helped them to empathize with practitioners and develop responsive programming.

In conclusion, we found that academic centers were not initiated out of student concern or interest but by university faculty and administrators who recognized a need "to do some serious work, academic work, on nonprofit issues." The missions or foci of these ten centers expanded over time and gradually became more comprehensive – focusing on more topics and providing new types of programs and services, including research. Centers were, and are, connected to the communities they serve. The connection was often somewhat traditional, consisting of information dissemination. A couple of universities talked about specific programs or projects where practitioners were more actively involved, but these seem to be the exception and not the norm. The builders themselves likely drew on skills developed in non-academic arenas when creating these centers. Their diverse backgrounds, often times rooted in non-profit practice, may have provided the grounding necessary to make the centers more responsive to community concerns than might otherwise be the case when a center is headed by a faculty member with a more traditional academic background.

Challenges to Developing Academic Centers

But from the beginning, one challenge was for academic respectability and legitimacy. A second has been funding. Who would pay for this work? How to sustain the funding?…Those were critical challenges from the very beginning of the center.

Once established, the builders faced the task of growing and or sustaining their centers. Based on our interviews, four factors emerged as critical to the long-term viability of the centers: 1) funding, 2) faculty involvement, 3) university leadership support, and 4) the visibility of the field.[1] In some cases, it was the presence of one or more these factors that the builder associated with the success of his or her center. In other cases, and more typically, it was the absence of one of these factors that challenged the sustainability of the center.

Funding

It was not surprising to hear that builders struggled with how to maintain their respective centers financially. The extent to which this struggle was experienced varied among the centers. At two centers, financial concerns were modest, with the costs of day-to-day operation and adjunct faculty salaries being recouped through tuition revenues. Thus, the builders at these centers talked about the need for money to do "all these other things that we wanted to do… We wanted to get scholarship assistance for our students… We wanted to go into the research area, and that costs a lot of money."

At many of the other centers, the struggle for funding seemed more severe and stressful. One builder said "a major challenge for each director [of the center] is how to keep the place afloat financially." This sentiment was echoed by a second builder who said his center had always been "a soft money program and I've always had to generate 50% of my salary, and the salaries of all my staff, even though we generate considerable money from [the program]… and I'm not going to get institutional support…I have to be self-supporting." A similar story emerged from a builder who said the university had "either never allowed or never provided significant financial resources to the program" and that although modest amount of funds were raised externally, "it was often more accidental and opportunistic than it was planful and systematic."

Many builders talked about the need to raise money from outside the university to support the center. Most builders focused on money from foundations with none directly mentioning federal agencies or private corporations. In talking about foundation funding, one builder pointed out that raising external dollars had become more difficult because external funders, primarily foundations, had "…all of these other centers to think about." That is, with the growth in the number of centers came greater competition for limited external funds.

---

[1] These factors are consistent with the following work related to this initiative: Larson, R. S. & Long, R.F. (1998). <u>Nonprofit Management Academic Centers: Moving from the Periphery.</u> Paper presented at the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, Seattle, Washington.

Another builder ruminated on the financial stability of the collective set of centers. The builder said:

> The great academic programs of our universities have had an infusion of investments and very few of our centers have that kind of infusion of investment. And it seems that people think because the center is there, 'Well, we've done it and we can move on.' But the point is, when you begin to look at the finances of these centers, you realize that many of them are on precarious grounds. They are doing great work; they're offering education that is really needed. But they don't have that kind of investment that is needed to move the field forward.

Financial stress was experienced by most, perhaps all, of the centers, but to varying degrees. Most centers, and again, perhaps all, sought more stable support from their institutions. What determined the extent to which a center experienced financial stress? Our analysis suggests that centers with a key administrator as a "champion" were less likely to identify lack of university financial support as a significant challenge to the operation of the center. Finding or cultivating an administrative champion was key, then, to a center's ability to secure hard money. This crucial strategy is addressed later, in the 'University Leadership Support' section.

Faculty Involvement

Faculty involvement was another key to sustaining an academic center. Faculty members were needed to build and legitimize the curriculum and the field. One builder said, "We really need to have people beside the director that have a faculty position… and we need some assurance from the school that our students are going to receive the same consideration as other students with respect to who we put in the classroom." A similar concern is mentioned by a second builder who said that the provost gave him money to hire adjuncts for instruction but that the "undergraduates here said, 'No, we want our faculty to teach in our programs.' So we need to have our own dedicated faculty."

The benefit of faculty involvement extended beyond the classroom: faculty helped to institutionalize centers. One builder said, "to institutionalize this stuff" we needed "core faculty." He, and several other builders, suggested that the creation of faculty lines within the centers helped to stabilize the financial base (provided the faculty line came from the central budget) and elevated the academic credibility of the program.

Not all universities were able to support faculty involvement in these centers. One builder said the "university wasn't providing access to or support for members of its regular full-time faculty to teach in the program." An issue broader

14

than university funding for faculty positions was the traditional academic reward structure. Even if a university is willing to fund faculty, is it in the faculty member's best interest to work in a center? Several faculty members spoke about the disconnection between center work and the academic reward system. As one builder said:

> I think the major challenge is the challenge of how you build a center at a university where faculty have to teach and do research and service is shunned…. How do you build up and do research and technical assistance and get people to do that when the reward system is not there to do that?

Another factor that appeared to limit or deter faculty involvement with the centers is the visibility of the field. At one center, the builder said his challenge was and continues to be "getting people [faculty] interested in the field." Another builder said, "It was hard to encourage people [faculty] to get into the field" because their intellectual interests were elsewhere.

Universities are human resource dependent. The process of education, research, and service depend primarily on the efforts of individual faculty members. It is not, then, surprising that these builders talked about the growth and sustainability of these centers being linked to faculty involvement. Faculty members were needed, in part, to develop and teach the curriculum and to provide technical assistance and outreach. However, they were also needed to help create an identity for the field and to secure a future for the centers.

<div align="center">University Leadership Support</div>

A third theme or challenge associated with the growth and sustainability of the centers was support from university administrators. At some centers, as reported earlier in this paper, the support from university leaders prompted the development of the center. At several other centers, the lack of central administrative support stifled the development of the centers. At one university, a change in presidency resulted in the moving of the center because the new president wanted to "off-load" professional programs. Another builder talked about the difference in leadership support for the center provided by two different provosts:

> One former provost loved our community outreach initiative… The provost who just left, however, was only interested in the number of tuition paying students we enrolled. He didn't care if you had 100-200 community people coming to a workshop … He left after a year and half, thank God… Your future, even though the funding doesn't come from the university by and large, your future in a center that really has a mission outside of the university, depends

<div align="center">15</div>

<div align="center">16</div>

very much on the main university administration, even though the funding doesn't.

Yet another builder expressed a similar idea:

> I continue to think that one of the key variables that I wish I would have had that I didn't have here was a real commitment from someone high up. I never had that here…. But I think it needs to be a situation where a president or a provost or a dean really understands what is going on and what the value of this is and why you want do it, because then there is going to be less resistance.

Builders who spoke about administrator support of the center in positive terms tended to be the centers where builders did not list financial concerns as one of their major challenges. Likewise, builders who expressed concern about lack of administrator support tended to discuss financial instability as their most pressing challenge. But the support of university leadership means more than financial support. According to several builders, when presidents, provosts and deans upheld the need for and existence of these centers, they legitimized the field and symbolically elevated the standing of the center within the university.

Visibility of the Field

Most builders spoke about the challenges of "convincing people that this [nonprofit and philanthropic studies] is a legitimate area of study." The "people" this builder referenced are faculty and university administrators. One builder said he personally struggled with articulating the "idea" of philanthropy and nonprofit studies to university administrators. He said their response was "What is this thing?" and that he had to "make it a subject." Another builder said he had to make the program and the field "visible" to the senior university officials – "they didn't understand it" and, therefore, "it wasn't considered a flagship program" or a "significant kind of new venture."

The field also needed to be visible to students. One builder said:

> Visibility was a very big issue and challenge, especially with regard to tracking and recruiting people for our own master's program. Prospective students would raise a very legitimate question, 'What if I spend all of this time and get this degree and then I go and try and get a job with it and people say, I've never heard of this degree, good-bye.'

Even when the center or the field was visible, that didn't mean it was understood. One builder recounted the following story:

One faculty member said to me, an anthropologist, said something to the affect that he understood that I was here to develop this center to help the president to raise money for the university. That's what this [center] was about. And the notion that it could be a serious academic sector, simply wasn't anything. And that was true with a lot of people…. There is a kind of activity that they are vaguely familiar with out in the community, but there wasn't a subject.

Visibility of the field – both within the non-profit community and the university – was an issue that builders struggled with in the development of their centers.

In summary, if sustainability were based on students' and practitioners' demand alone, most of these centers would be experiencing rapid growth. However, in many cases, sustainability hinged on the relationship of the center to the institution. Sustainability required funds from the university - yet only a few of the centers recouped tuition dollars. So, if these funds were not forthcoming from the university, then they had to be raised externally. Sustainability also required university leaders to see and support the program, a condition that was likely dependent on the relationship that the center director had with key leaders. And sustainability required faculty involvement – not only to "cover" courses, but also to add credibility to the program. Finally, there is a condition larger than university support that plays into the sustainability of these centers – the visibility of the field. A summary of these challenges was presented by one of the builders:

I think long term stability is a critical issue. We've started these new businesses and collectively started this new field, and all signs are go on that. There has been a lot of upward movement, and a lot of excitement and enthusiasm. But, unless you at some point get into the real traditional stuff like dedicated faculty lines and endowed scholarships and endowed professorships, even endowed institutes and centers and things like that, you really have some long term issues and long term problems.

Strategies for Sustaining Academic Centers

One purpose of this paper was to identify challenges associated with center sustainability. A linked purpose was to identify strategies that builders used to overcome or meet these challenges. Builders offered a few specific management strategies – the kind of management decisions that one might expect to find in a business article. This research suggested, however, that builders relied more on relational strategies – their ability to develop relationships and networks within and outside the university, to generate support and to maintain momentum.

Management strategies and relational strategies, both used by builders to increase the sustainability of their centers, are discussed next.

Management Strategies

Builders offered several strategies for addressing funding issues. Some relied on (still more were hoping to negotiate) a return of tuition dollars to the center. Tuition revenues required the centers, and the builders in particular, to, as one builder said, "keep the seats filled." Another builder said he was trying to create a more stable funding base by diversifying the center's resource base. In his case, the center had tuition return money, external grants from foundations, and fees for some technical assistance programs. Several builders focused on raising external funds from foundations and, to a lesser degree, nonprofit partners. One center director said much of his job was "constantly fundraising... shaking hands, going out, fundraising, and everything." Part of fundraising, especially from foundations, required, as one builder puts it, "educating them about the importance of building the educational knowledge infrastructures of the field."

Builders offered a few specific strategies on how to involve faculty in programs. Several builders used research funds to attract faculty to the centers. Some used teaching funds to attract faculty to the center. One builder used the excitement of the field to attract faculty. He went to untenured or junior faculty and would say "...you can get ahead in your own discipline by working here because there are all kinds of interesting things that are going on... there are frontiers here."

Few strategies were put forth about increasing the visibility of the field. One builder said he talked with university leaders and said, "Look, this isn't crazy. Yale has been doing research for years on this. There is a growing center at Case Western, San Francisco and Duke." Being able to make a connection to other programs, externally validating the center, was "invaluable" for this builder. This builder went on to say that external funding also helped to address the concern for academic legitimacy:

> The vigorous participation by the Kellogg Foundation and a handful of other major foundations investing generously in this area provided very useful funding and also was a tap from a prestigious foundation stating that this was a topic of high priority concern and, in a very interesting way, also addressed the academic legitimacy concern.

Overall, builders offered few specific strategies for overcoming or grappling with the challenges of starting and managing a center. As we discuss next, builders navigated the challenges of developing and sustaining the centers by building relationships, establishing networks, and co-existing in several spheres of academic and community life.

Relational Strategies

Builders talked about a need to straddle many environments – networking and linking with people on- and off-campus in order to garner financial and human resources to meet the challenges of building their centers. These builders engaged in what the literature refers to as "boundary spanning." As used here, the term boundary spanning involved builders identifying what was needed to make the centers successful and then cultivating and building relationships with key people across all areas of the university and community to fulfill those needs.

One builder described his role as "an interesting...inside-outside role where you are dealing with diverse constituents in many institutions and bridging with significant local and national external constituents...so what you learn in the process of that is helpful with other challenges." When asked how the challenge of building the center was met, one builder said he "boundary spans within the institution; with the president's office, with the development office...with some other divisions of the college. But my focus is [also] external." Yet a third builder, when discussing how to navigate the waters of sustainability, said:

> There's a lot of relationship building that has to be done. You have to find and cultivate potential allies when you start building these centers and programs.... It could be a university administrator, it could be a faculty member, it could be a friendly development officer within the university.

Another builder said that developing and sustaining a center required "slowly building support among those faculty at the university that can be influential and those administrators that can be influential... but buying in takes a long time."

Consistent with our understanding of networking and boundary spanning, building effective relationships requires the builders to believe in their "cause." One builder who spoke at length about the importance of relationships in the development and subsequent sustainability of his center made this point eloquently:

> ...It starts with that sort of notion that there's something of value here to be achieved and a pretty strong commitment to that notion. Then there's this ability to enthuse...other people of the same thing...That's really the basis for the relationship building. If you've got an idea that you think is a good one, and you got some energy behind it yourself, and you have the ability to convert, persuade, sell other people on that idea, then you got the basis for building this relationship.

19

20

The Builders' Network

Meeting the challenges of building and sustaining not only centers, but also a field of study, was not something that the builders did in isolation. In fact, builders were purposeful about constructing a network with each other. Sometimes these networks or relationships were formal – in other cases they weren't. Overall, they represented a third type of sustainability strategy uncovered in the interviews.

An informal support system emerged out of the need for builders to connect and interact with colleagues facing similar challenges and working on similar issues. This support system provided builders the opportunity to exchange ideas, come up with solutions to common challenges, and to know that they were not alone in meeting their mission. One builder spoke about the "satisfaction of just knowing a lot of people to call on for advice. Gee, you know, being able to call up this one and that one and say, 'Hey, can you help us out here?'" Another builder said the center directors had "worked pretty well together as a group... you know, often just informal personal working relationships and communications. But also identifying challenges where we were more likely to have an impact if we worked in concert." A third builder made a similar comment. He said because of the interconnectivity of the builders and sharing and exchanging ideas, he was not sure if what he was telling us was his idea or another builder's.

Another builder spoke affectionately about the benefit to him and his center of being "able to be associated with interesting, productive and capable people like Dennis Young, John Palmer Smith, Lester Salomon, John Simon,... Bob Payton,... and Brien O'Connell" – many of whom were interviewed for this study. Another builder spoke about the "wonderful supporters ... the Bob Paytons, the Kathy McCarthys, the Michael O'Neills, the Dennis Youngs." One builder nicely summed up the value of working together:

> ...I think the ability to find and work with other people doing similar
> things to what I was doing in this growing field of nonprofit sector
> studies was a very important kind of contextual contributor to what
> it is I do now... I was able to identify people in other universities
> who were also trying to start new programs and build, if you will,
> institutions within their university settings. And I began to meet with
> them and have communications with them in a variety of formal and
> informal ways and, and support groups grew up among those of us
> who were trying to do this. So we learned from each other by
> sharing experiences about what was happening in our own
> institution while learning what was happening in other institutions
> and that sort of external collection and sharing of information turned
> out to be a powerful tool that we all used to help us do what we
> were trying to do in our home institutions.

21

Another builder said the reason for interacting with other builders, and center directors in general, wasn't just to help build any one center, but to build a field of study:

> We [center directors] felt really dedicated to building the field. That was what was special. It wasn't that we were just building some unit of...part of some program in our own universities. We were building a brand new field... We all felt that we had common problems. We were all fighting for our place in the sun and in our own universities and there was a lot of generic similarity.

We also found that formal organizations, such as the Association for Research on Nonprofit and Voluntary Association (ARNOVA), Independent Sector, and the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC) have played an important role in the growth of these centers. One builder said ARNOVA and ISTAR, in particular, provided connections to research that he "could bring back into the institutions that we were trying to build." NACC also played an important role, providing builders with a venue for discussion and support. One builder talked about the events leading up to the formalization of NACC. He said, "There was a half dozen of us sitting around a table saying we ought to have some sort of an association of centers and we started to meet... And the thing I want to emphasize was that there was this culture – it was like we were in this together." Another builder said these organizations were "not just about building the community, this is legitimization of the field, theoretical framework. So I think those institutions had a tremendous impact."

On some level, builders and centers may have competed, perhaps for external funds, but overall, builders appeared to have worked closely with each other – providing each other with ideas and strategies for meeting organizational challenges based on their own experiences. They also appeared to have provided moral support for each other, helping to frame the issue at hand as not just the survival of any one center, but of the emergence of a field of study. It seems as if these centers were built collectively and not individually. This notion underscores one of the points made earlier. As the builders connected with each other and began to understand the areas being covered by their peers, the centers developed in such a way that they did not compete with each other, but rather complemented each other. Perhaps builders informally (and even unintentionally) mapped out what types of programs were needed and how to strategically build the field.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The builders or academic innovators we interviewed were similar to corporate or social entrepreneurs. They were highly committed to an idea or cause, were

22

innovative, drew from a set of varied work and professional experiences, and took risks. Perhaps these builders are best described as "academic entrepreneurs."

The builders were not always the ones to conceive of the need for an academic center. Sometimes it was a university administrator or external-funding agent who gave rise to the creation of the center. But it was, without exception, these builders who made the centers – who set the center's early direction, helped to expand the missions of the centers, who developed partnerships with the community, and tied the centers in with the larger network of nonprofit researchers and academicians.

The centers were, from the beginning, challenged by funding issues, faculty involvement, university leadership support, and the visibility of the field. These concerns still linger. Builders found ways to address or overcome these challenges. Sometimes they used managerial strategies, such as negotiating tuition returns with university administrators or using research funds to recruit faculty. But often they met these challenges by relying on their interpersonal relationships both within and outside of the university. Builders developed relationships with university leaders and faculty from across the university. They also reached out to the community. And, most important, is the relationships or network they developed with each other and with other academic center leaders. This network, now formalized, more or less, through NACC, enabled builders to talk about their challenges, to share ideas, and, perhaps, to re-charge their commitment to not only their own academic centers, but as one builder said, "to the legitimization of the field."

Looking ahead, we see application of these findings for current and new center directors or leaders and for external funders. For academic center directors or leaders we recommend:

   ▦ Build relationships within your institution, particularly with administrators who can provide direction and resources.

   ▦ Connect with other centers. One builder in speaking to what advice he would give a new center director said, "...I would say connect regularly with other center directors. Learn from them and support them...often just informal personal working relationships and communications, but also identifying challenges where we were more likely to have an impact if we worked in concert."

   ▦ Seek to develop or increase "hard money" institutional support, perhaps through tuition reimbursement or tenured faculty lines.

■ Promote the work of the center within the university and, in so doing, clarify the contribution of this field to society and its distinctiveness from other programs of study.

■ Build linkages with practitioners and the community at-large through traditional dissemination strategies but also seek more collaborative means of knowledge generation.

For external funders interested in nonprofit management education, these courses of actions are suggested:

■ Support the on-going development of centers, perhaps by creating endowed faculty positions.

■ Meet with university administrators to build internal support for the center.

■ Fund the convening of center directors and leaders so that they can share their ideas. This might involve an annual meeting supplemented with regional or topical meetings as well as electronic linking.

■ Invite academicians from other fields or from newly formed nonprofit centers to the annual meetings, perhaps during a pre- or post-session. If these other individuals are invited, time should be preserved for the established network to focus on its own agenda and to renew their long-term ties.

The Building Bridges Initiative, and the larger field of nonprofit studies, may, as the saying goes, be standing on the shoulders of giants. We have profiled ten of the innovators of the field of nonprofit studies – innovators who helped to develop and build academic centers that house and promote the serious study of the Third Sector and the education of nonprofit managers and leaders. We doubt that these builders see themselves as "giants," – in fact, their lives have been and continue to be so focused on the challenges and the promise of the future, that they may have had little opportunity to critically reflect upon their own contributions to the field. We considered it a privilege to give voice to their accomplishments.

NOTICE

REPRODUCTION BASIS