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URBAN.Boston (Urban Research-Based Action Network): Creating meaningful connections between community & academia

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Recommended Citation

Summary

The Urban Research-Based Action Network (URBAN) is a national platform that facilitates community-based research, teaching, and learning for action across disciplinary lines, connecting scholars and community activists within and across cities. It was started in 2011 to honor the memory of activist scholar Marylin Gitell, and has received generous support from SAGE Publications. URBAN currently has 5 local nodes: **Boston,** Los Angeles, New York City, Northern California, and Philadelphia; as well as 3 discipline nodes: Education, Sociology, and Urban Planning. More nodes will be established in the future. In the meantime, efforts are focused on connecting academics and community partners nationally, locally, and based on discipline.

Goals and Objectives

THE PURPOSE OF URBAN.BOSTON IS TO PROMOTE + ADVANCE RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS THAT CREATE **NEW KNOWLEDGE** AND SUPPORT **COMMUNITY ACTION**. IT DOES THIS BY:

- Fostering connections and relationships between academics, researchers (outside of academia), community members, and community organizations;
- Facilitating and incubating research-action ideas and projects;
- Developing and encouraging the use of truly collaborative principles of research;
- Facilitating the sharing of resources and development of collaborative and participatory research skills;
- Encouraging graduate students and supporting academics pursuing community-based research;
- Fostering understanding and support of collaborative research within academic institutions;
- Supporting community organizations in building the capacity to link research to action; and
- Connecting URBAN.Boston members to the national URBAN network.

URbAN
RESEARCH • ACTION

Photos above: March 2, 2013 – Fourth public meeting at Viet-AID where over 50 attendees had an opportunity to meet new people in their fields of interest and discuss current policy issues affecting local neighborhoods

There are currently 243 members in the URBAN.Boston network including members of local and statewide community groups, labor unions, think-tanks, academic institutions, government agencies, businesses, financial institutions, and other nonprofits.

URBAN.Boston is led by a Planning Team comprised of diverse practitioners who are committed to building this emerging network. Current Planning Team members include: Ina Anderson (MA SmartGrowth Alliance), Soo Hong (Wellesley College), Chien-Chi Huang (ABC Project), Michael Johnson (UMass Boston), Patricia Krueger-Henney (UMass Boston), Allentza Michel (Tufts University), Karleen Porcena (ABCD Mattapan Family Service Center), John Saltmarsh (UMASS Boston), Mark Warren (UMASS Boston), and John Wooding (UMASS Lowell).

Photo above: June 6, 2013 - Fifth public meeting held with Boston-area Youth Organizing Project (BYOP)

Photos above: October 28, 2013 – Sixth public meeting held with Mattapan United at the ABCD Mattapan Family Service Center

Photo on left: December 4, 2013 - Seventh public meeting held at UMass Boston Campus Center to provide technical assistance regarding URBAN.Boston Seed Grant Opportunity

Approaches/Methods

Since 2012, URBAN.Boston has focused on engaging in public discussions and increasing our network capacity both online and in person. The Boston node has coordinated **7 public meetings** over the past 2 years as well as worked to establish an **online presence**).

With the generous support of the Edward W. Hazen Foundation, **URBAN.Boston provided seed funding to help incubate collaborative research projects during the 2013-2014 academic year**. These seed grant awards are intended for one of two uses: (1) to develop a new collaborative research proposal or (2) to develop a new phase of an existing collaborative research project. Each $1000 award must be used for the planning of a collaborative research project.

Seed Grants for Collaborative Partnership Awardees include:
- Pamela Belford (Dever McCormack School) and Amy Cook (UMass Boston)
- Nandini Sengupta (Dimock Community Health Center) and Teri Aronowitz (UMass Boston)
- Midori Morikawa and Efrain Arias (YWCA Boston), Heather Zaykowski, Jacqueline Lageson, and Lauren Cripps (UMass Boston) and Valleria Miranda and Sophya Williams (Peace Circles)

Conclusion/Next Steps

URBAN.Boston is focused on bringing researchers and community members together to work on mutual areas of interest including, though not limited to health, housing and education as well as neighborhood-level issues, such as transportation; and the ability for community members to use diverse data sources and analytic methods to devise evidence-based interventions. Additionally, URBAN.Boston will continue to enhance its communications capabilities to connect the Boston community around engaged research and action.

Join Us

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Boston Node website:
www.URBAN-Boston.org
National website:
http://urbanresearchnetwork.org/
Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/UrbanBoston
LinkedIn:
https://www.linkedin.com/groups?trk=myg_ugrp_ovr&gid=4804225
Twitter:
https://twitter.com/URBANcolab