

### Why Involve Colleges?

Why focus on colleges as the base for preparing people for Community Change careers? Aren't they so removed from the realities of low-income communities and the practical difficulties of running complex organizations that they are incapable of educating people for community change work? Doesn't their entire reward system militate against the kind of multifaceted, multidisciplinary knowledge and skill-building which is needed?

There are four good reasons to partner with colleges for these programs. First, that's where young people are. Colleges are the best point of contact with the young generation which the community change movement desperately needs. Community colleges, state universities, and commuter colleges are particularly good places for reaching people who might devote their lives to this work if they were influenced by experiences and a curriculum which drew them into this fascinating and challenging field.

Second, they can be great sources of help. While the vast majority of colleges offer few if any courses which are directly relevant to community change work, there are a growing number of exceptions. The sites where CLP is working are leaders in a growing movement to create new programs of "practitioner education" which mix practical skill-building with opportunities for students to develop the knowledge, critical thinking capacities and commitment to lifelong learning which are critical to excellent community organizing and community change work.

Third, experience demonstrates that, sadly, nonprofits will never get the resources which are needed for intensive, long-term educational programs. Nonprofits have difficulty attracting funding for even a three or five day training program. A few organizations are funded to offer three or four weeks of training over a year, usually coupled with a research or action project related to the trainee's daily responsibilities. Some community organizing networks provide three months of training through workshops and experience working on an organizing campaign.

It is highly unusual for any nonprofit to be able to offer people more than those levels of training. Most instead have no choice but to hire the best people they can find and train them on on-the-job.

Fourth, universities do have great potential as sources of education and training for this field. This has been demonstrated by the best programs which currently exist. They have a great influence on the career choices their students make. They have enormous resources for teaching, research, and partnerships with communities. They have been central to the development of many professions, and many higher educational institutions have extensive experience providing continuing education for midcareer professionals in various fields. Finally, they have the prestige, stability and continuity which are particularly appealing to people whose backgrounds make them strongly value being associated with an educational track which promotes career development and upward mobility.