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The Development of After-School Program Educators Through University-Community Partnerships

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Participation in after-school programs (ASPs) *can* positively affect the development of young people. However, *whether* ASPs are beneficial depends on program quality. Although many factors influence the quality of a program, the competencies of adult staff who lead ASPs are a critical determinant. Unfortunately, ASP staff members often do not receive the education and training needed to provide high quality programming. This article discusses how training provided through university-community (U-C) partnerships can help to fill this educational void. After summarizing existing research on staff development for educators, the role that U-C partnerships can play in providing a realistic and viable means to developing the competencies of ASP educators is described and examples of two model programs are provided. Challenges and future directions for the development of the after-school workforce are discussed.

Experiences in structured organized activities are common for American children and adolescents. For example, approximately 15% (8.4 million) of K-12 students are enrolled in an after-school program (ASP) (Afterschool Alliance, 2009) with peak participation rates occurring during middle childhood (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Most young people between the ages of 6 and 17 years participate in one or more sports, lessons, or clubs during the year (National Survey of Children's Health, 2007) and millions more participate in community-based organizations (e.g., Boys & Girls Club of America, 2008; Girls Inc., 2008; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2008).

Researchers have become increasingly interested in studying how involvement in these ASPs and activities

affects child and adolescent development (for recent reviews see Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, in press; Mahoney, Parente, & Zigler, 2010; Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, & Zarrett, 2009). Overall, the evidence suggests that participation in ASPs *can* positively affect the academic, social-emotional, and physical well-being of young people, including long-term educational attainment and occupational success. However, both the direction and magnitude of associated effects depends on program quality. Although many factors influence the quality of a program, available research indicates that competencies of adult staff who lead ASPs are a critical determinant (e.g., Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, in press; Pierce, Hahm, & Vandell, 1999; Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996; Smith, Peck, Denault, Blazevski, & Akiva, in press). Despite the established links between staff, quality of program offerings, and child outcomes, few ASP providers receive the type of formal education and training that would be likely to facilitate their ability to provide quality programming (National Afterschool Association [NAA], 2006).

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Efforts to train and prepare after-school educators are in their infancy. Various preparation models are currently being developed and implemented that include training through workshops, professional meetings, and online programs and webinars. The purpose of this paper is to stimulate discussions and debate about the role of, and approaches to, staff development in after-school programming. We are particularly interested in highlighting the importance of university-collaborations as one means to provide a formal, sequenced approach to pre-service and in-service education and training for after-school program staff. We begin by summarizing research on staff development for educators. Next, we discuss how U-C partnerships can offer a realistic and viable means to education and training for ASP educators. This discussion invites a description of two promising U-C partnership approaches to staff development at the pre-service and in-service stages. Both approaches are at the early stages of development; however, the descriptions and early evaluation findings are intended to demonstrate how such partnerships can be developed to help fill the educational void in the after-school workforce. We conclude by outlining challenges and future directions for staff development of the after-school workforce.

STATUS OF THE AFTER-SCHOOL WORKFORCE AND APPROACHES TO STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A national survey of 4,346 after-school workers conducted by the the National Afterschool Association (NAA, 2006) summarized the state of the after-school workforce as follows: "...many workers with little experience or education directly relevant to afterschool, frequent turnover, and many part-time workers, suggesting the need for training approaches to ensure basic knowledge of afterschool work" (p. 1). In this study, the typical after-school worker was female (86%), White (73%), an average age of 35, held a two-year degree or higher (66%), earned an average salary of \$25k/year or \$10.75/hour, and received no paid time to pursue staff development training. Although some of the degreed workers were educated in areas that might inform their after-school practice (e.g., early childhood education), very few had formal education or credentials in after-school work. Approximately 40% of the workforce involves part-time staff members who plan to stay less than 3 years. These part-time workers tend to be less educated, younger, earn less, and are unlikely to receive benefits compared to their full-time counterparts. A staff turnover rate of about 30% was found among front line workers in this study and resonates with other recent assessments of the after-school workforce (e.g., The

After-School Corporation, 2009; Yohalem, Pittman, & Moore, 2006). Pay, benefits, the chance for career advancement, and the opportunity for training were common reasons staff reported when considering whether to stay in the after-school workforce.

Although education and training correlated with longevity in the workforce, the after-school field has no well accepted system of formal instruction. Staff members who work in ASPs are seldom required to hold teaching credentials or advanced degrees (Bouffard & Little, 2004). The lack of degree requirements for after-school educators can be juxtaposed to the large efforts made to prepare K-12 teachers in which pre-service and in-service training are commonplace. The difference in requirements might be explained by the fact that there is no national education program or credentialing system for after-school educators and universities have seldom provided any formal training in after-school programming (NAA, 2006). If available at all, the education and training that ASP providers receive ordinarily consists of discussions among staff at the program site or 2-3 day workshops that serve a relatively small number of program providers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). Unfortunately, such workshops have been heavily criticized as an ineffective means to prepare K-12 educators (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). Often they amount to sporadic dissemination efforts that do not connect directly with actual instruction and/or are not sustained long enough for participants to develop skills. Educators often have limited opportunities for meaningful interaction or follow-up. This design makes it unlikely that teachers' practice will change in significant ways (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Although the military and eleven states now offer a school-age care credential or associate degree, the content of coursework in these programs is seldom designed to instruct ASP providers, and the utility or effectiveness of these efforts is basically unknown (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). As such, we currently have millions of young people participating in ASPs being served by adults with little or no formal education in providing quality after-school services. Only a small fraction of the after-school workforce receives training through activities designed for working in after-school settings and the effectiveness of these approaches is highly questionable and the opportunity to receive such training is infrequent (School's Out Washington, 2008; Vile, Russell, Miller, & Reisner, 2008).

Evidence from the field of K-12 education indicates that, under some circumstances, professional development activities for teachers who are already credentialed is likely to be beneficial (for reviews, see Clewell, Campbell, & Perlman, 2004; Garet et al., 2001; Kennedy,

1998; Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, & Garec, 2008; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). For example, Garet and colleagues' (2001) one year study of the Title II-supported Eisenhower Professional Development program examined associated impacts according to program emphasis on content knowledge, active learning (e.g., discussion, planning, practice), and coherence (e.g., aligns with state standards and assessments). Findings indicated:

1. Program duration was important and predicted higher use of active learning and greater coherence. Durable professional development opportunities allowed teachers to try out new skills in the field and receive feedback.
2. Programs with greater content focus, coherence, and an emphasis on active learning showed a marked positive relation to teacher knowledge and skill development. Programs focusing on knowledge and skill development were, in turn, associated with positive impacts on teaching practice.

Overall, the findings suggested that educators often lacked content-specific teaching skills. Content knowledge is critical because it predicts substantive child outcomes such as achievement gains (e.g., Cohen & Hill, 1998; Kennedy, 1998). However, mastering content knowledge and understanding how to apply it requires time and opportunities to practice. This implies that teacher professional development programs should provide educators with significant, extended opportunities to gain content knowledge and develop and practice skills in an active and coherent program of study. Although based on work in K-12 education, it seems plausible that after-school educators could benefit from pre-service and in-service staff development programs constructed along these conceptual lines.

EFFECTIVENESS OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR AFTER-SCHOOL EDUCATORS

There is limited work on the effectiveness of staff development for after-school educators. For example, Bouffard and Little (2004) report that staff development is important to program providers, increases their job satisfaction and, therefore, helps to stabilize and sustain the after-school workforce. Given that low wages, high turnover, and a perception of temporary or supplemental work characterizes the field of after-school education (U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, 2007), such benefits are important in and of themselves.

In addition, some evidence shows that staff development relates to improvement in aspects of program

quality (e.g., Miller, 2005). For instance, the North Carolina Quality Enhancement (NCQE) Initiative (Hall & Cassidy, 2002) examined quality in 28 school-age child care programs using the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS). At baseline, the average pre-test score for overall program quality was 3.4 (scale range 1–7) reflecting “minimal” program quality. The staff training initiative in this study was associated with a significant increase in overall program quality (i.e., average post-test score was 4.1). Because minimal quality was the norm at baseline, and many programs were lower than this rating, the findings suggest considerable room for quality improvement.

More recently, Smith and colleagues (in press) examined the quality staff practices using seven scales from the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA). Quality practices from a total of 599 after-school offerings from within 165 organizations located in 6 states were examined through observation. Staff practices were rated as below average in quality (i.e., below the scalar mid-point) for four of the seven scales assessed. Moreover, one-third of all observed offerings were characterized by a *profile* of low quality practice. In the light of the need for improvement, researchers from this project also developed an intervention to improve staff quality practices. Results from a randomized control trial showed that staff training significantly increased program quality ratings on the YPQA (Smith, Lo, Frank, Sugar, & Pearson, 2009).

Although these examples highlight both the need for, and promise of, staff development approaches to improve ASP quality, they represent exceptional efforts. Most published reports of staff development for after-school educators are short-term, provide training for a small number of staff working in a limited number of programs, and offer little or no mentoring of staff while they attempt to implement the training at their program sites (e.g., Bruce & Bruce, 2002; Grineski, 2003; Ferreira, 2007; Nocon, 2004). In addition, typical staff development programs, including the NCQE and YPQA initiatives, do not provide pre-service training for prospective after-school educators and volunteers such as college students. U-C partnerships offer one means to provide staff training and education on a large scale that addresses limitations of past efforts.

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN AFTER-SCHOOL EDUCATION

U-C partnerships refer to an explicit agreement between a community entity and a university academic unit for the purpose of working together over an extended period of time to achieve common goals that are

mutually beneficial (Suarez-Balcazar, Harper, & Lewis, 2005). We suggest that U-C partnerships can be developed to provide needed preparation and ongoing training of after-school educators. In the models we have developed, there are two blended components to these partnerships: 1) a sequence of coursework taught by university faculty that is focused on the development and training of prospective and/or current after-school educators, and 2) fieldwork that allows university students and ASP educators to apply the coursework content in local ASPs located in the community. Taken together, the partnership provides local ASPs with trained volunteers in the form of college students who earn course credit for their service and/or offers existing staff at community programs with ongoing opportunities for university-based education and training in after-school programming. We argue that this form of partnership is a realistic means to facilitate the development of after-school educators on a large scale while affording a variety of benefits to both partners.

One benefit of U-C partnerships is the opportunity to evaluate the efficacy of evidence-based education and training efforts under ecologically valid conditions. Although research cited earlier has established independent associations between the development of ASP staff, program quality, and child outcomes, experimental longitudinal studies demonstrating whether and how systematic change in the staff development of program providers affects this full process are lacking. This may be the result of scholars having much to say about ASP development, quality, and outcomes from a distance, but seldom taking a hands-on approach to affect the program-outcome process (Zeldin, 2005). Developing and testing staff development approaches through U-C partnerships moves the research towards a true transactional approach that increases the likelihood that the efforts will succeed and that the findings will be both useful and utilized.

With respect to advancing developmental theory, the theoretical notion of developmental contextualism suggests that all knowledge is related to its context (e.g., Lerner, 2006; Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, & Warren, in press). Research conducted in "sterile" laboratory conditions may not be valid with respect to understanding human development as it occurs in the real world. Jensen, Hoagwood, and Trickett (1999) argue that research needs to move from the "sanitized conditions" of the university to become palatable, feasible, durable, affordable, and sustainable in the real world. In this regard, research evaluating staff development programs for after-school educators formed through U-C partnerships has the potential to be highly valid.

Another benefit pertains to service and accountability to the public. Public universities absorb a non-trivial portion of the state education budget. Because part of their

mission is to provide extended learning through adult education and extension that can help to prepare and re-prepare professionals for the workforce (Weinberg & Erickson, 1996), U-C partnerships offer an avenue by which institutions of higher learning can provide deliberate and visible evidence of their responsibility to the state's well-being (Eccles, 1996). In a related vein, as Lerner, Patterson, McKinney, & Abrams (1994) noted, the service orientation of institutions of higher learning could be stronger and there is a sense in which access to higher education has devolved into an increasingly private benefit rather than a public good. Indeed, expanding access to college and university education continues to be among the top educational goals of the Obama administration (Organizing for America, 2009). The ability of U-C partnerships to provide both a direct education service to community members and provide support to local programs in the form of trained student volunteers engaged in service learning is noteworthy.

In addition, it has been argued that universities should not only help the surrounding communities through the provision of research-based knowledge, evaluation tools, and related resources (Peterson, 2005), they should also be required to produce and provide knowledge directed at the needs of the communities in which they are embedded (McHale & Lerner, 1996). Accordingly, an important goal of university research should be the production of new knowledge that is useful to both the academic and local communities (Ostrom, Lerner, & Freel, 2005; Williams, Labonte, Randall, & Muhajarine, 2005). To this end, U-C partnerships aimed at staff development of after-school educators offer an excellent opportunity for scholars to disseminate the knowledge gained through research and evaluation activities to those who can more directly affect change efforts (Camino & Zeldin, 2006).

U-C partnerships can also provide direct assistance to communities in need of support that may otherwise be unavailable. For example, during economic and labor market downturns, ASPs face a variety of financial challenges, including: 1) The need to introduce or increase parent enrollment fees that lead both to a decline in participation among families with the fewest resources and a decrease in the resources available for the organization to offer quality program services; 2) The need to downsize staff that could increase child-to-staff ratios and diminish the types of offerings programs can provide which, in turn, restricts the ability of ASPs to meet student needs; and 3) An inability to support travel for program staff to attend training and workshops. U-C partnerships may help to reduce these pressures by assisting with the training needs of existing staff and providing support in the form of trained college students who themselves can offer range of new skills and activities to existing programs.

Finally, the opportunities provided through U-C after-school partnerships are in line with the current educational needs of children today. There is a growing recognition that young people need somewhat different skill sets to be successful in the 21st Century than was true of prior generations (e.g., Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Verma, 2002). In an increasingly global and diverse world, the ability to understand and work effectively with a variety of populations is one such skill. Institutions of higher education can play an important role in developing these competencies through guided opportunities for students to become engaged with diverse children and families in the surrounding communities. At the same time, there is a sense in which education is viewed in increasingly broader terms today than was true in decades past (e.g., Heckman, 2005). This broader view of education is concerned with learning and development from early childhood to adulthood, in school settings and out-of-school settings, across social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development, and during the school year and summertime. In this view, the most effective educators will be able to conduct holistic learning activities across diverse contexts that fit well with the needs, developmental level, cultural background, and interests of the children served (Eccles & Roeser, 2009).

OVERVIEW OF TWO MODEL PROGRAMS

The aforementioned discussion provides the rationale and background that has guided the development of two model after-school education programs. In the following pages, we provide an overview of the development and basic components of these programs. We also summarize early findings from independent implementation evaluations of the programs and discuss some challenges encountered in their development. These early findings provide some preliminary feedback concerning how effectively the program development process has gone and whether this form of staff development is perceived as valuable by the participants.

The programs share some basic similarities, but they were created independently and in quite different ways. The first program described, the University of California, Irvine (UCI) Department of Education Certificate in After-school Education, was initiated by university faculty in cooperation with participating community programs. The second program was initiated by The After-School Corporation (TASC), the principal after-school intermediary in New York City, and offers a certificate through a collaborative effort between the City University of New York (CUNY) and the Center for After-School Excellence.

Certificate in After-School Education (CASE)

Planning for the UCI Department of Education Certificate in After-school Education (CASE) began during the 2007–2008 academic year and the program was launched in fall 2008. The long-term goal of CASE is to prepare after-school educators to promote positive youth development (e.g., Zeldin, 2005). Accordingly, the needs of program providers and youth were at the forefront of discussions when designing the program curriculum. In addition, a basic assumption of CASE was that after-school educators need access to serious and sustained learning opportunities that are sensitive to the stages and types of staff being served and the various settings in which they work (e.g., Feiman-Nemser, 2001). As such, the program was developed to prepare after-school educators to work in varied programs including those located in school-based and community-based settings, offering academic and non-academic content, and serving diverse children and adolescents.

To earn a certificate, CASE students complete five quarter-long (10-week) courses that combine classroom instruction with fieldwork. The classroom instruction includes content lessons, principles of after-school learning and youth development, basic knowledge in child and adolescent development, and multicultural education. These in-class experiences are blended with at least 70 hours of hands-on experience working in local ASPs under the supervision of experienced leaders. The integration of direct instruction, observational learning and mentoring, and discussion/reflection that occurs throughout the CASE program has similarities to staff development approaches aimed at improving quality in early childhood programs (e.g., Raver et al., 2008; Riley & Roach, 2006) and to professional development models in K-12 teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Although UCI students comprise the main audience for the CASE program, it is also accessible to ASP staff and adults in the surrounding communities through university extension. In addition, it is common for UCI students enrolled in CASE courses to concurrently hold staff positions at local ASPs. Accordingly, CASE training and education occurs both at the pre-service and in-service stages of staff development.

CASE Coursework

Figure 1 depicts the overall structure of CASE coursework. Both core and elective course content are part of the curriculum (cf., Nakkula, Ayoub, Noam, & Selman, 1996). In terms of core courses, the curriculum was designed to provide after-school educators with foundational knowledge to facilitate working with

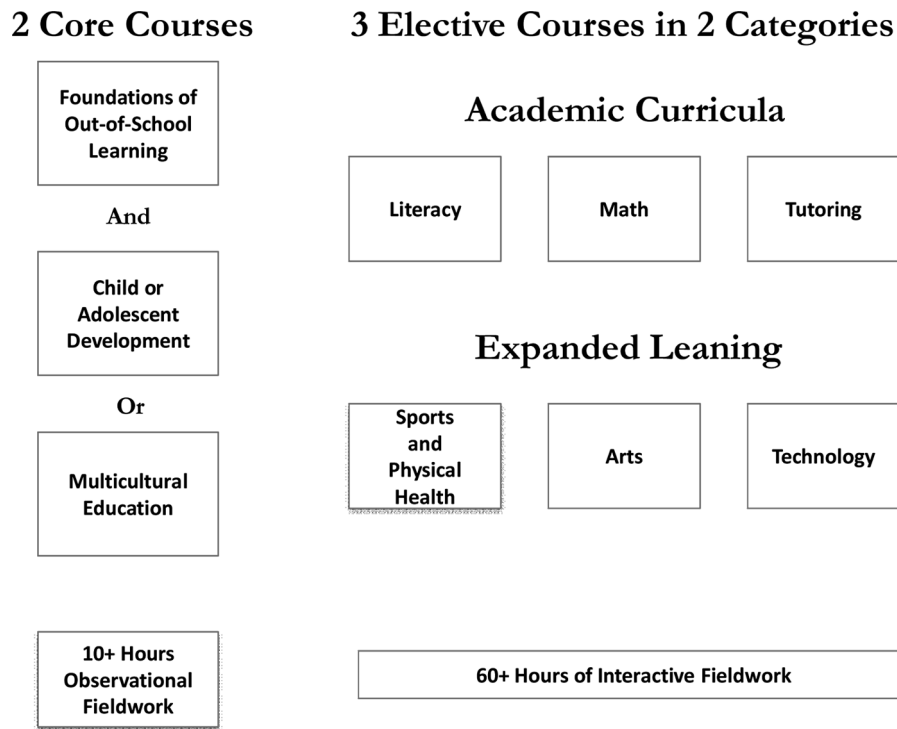


FIGURE 1 Structure of coursework and fieldwork in the UCI Department of Education's Certificate in After-School Education (CASE).

populations who are diverse in economic and cultural background, age, and program setting. This includes knowledge of the central facts, concepts, theories, and science in the field along with explanatory frameworks that help to organize and synthesize knowledge. Through observation-based fieldwork assignments, the core coursework also allows students to develop their learning skills through detailed study, interpretation, and analysis of actual programs. For example, all CASE students are required to complete the core course Foundations in Out-of-school Learning. This course overviews developmental theories and research related to a variety of out-of-school settings and special attention is given to organized after-school activities and programs. Content areas include program quality, staffing, evaluation, program impacts, individual differences, program types and models, and relevant historical and social policy issues. Fieldwork assignments allow students a chance to observe and measure program aspects (e.g., program quality parameters) and interact with program staff.

The core coursework also provides students with a strong developmental orientation alongside attention to issues of racial/ethnic and economic diversity that are meant to shape students' approach to interactive fieldwork. To this end, students are required to complete a course in either child or adolescent development or

multicultural education.¹ Students are allowed to choose between core course options based on their own needs and interests and the age group and background of the children they plan to serve. These core courses focus on understanding the needs of diverse young people from a pedagogical perspective, including how core knowledge translates to the everyday lives of different children. This involves having a sense of the abilities, interests, and needs of students of different ages and cultural backgrounds.

In terms of elective coursework, the CASE program assumes that the most effective training will involve regular and ongoing opportunities to test the theories and utilize the knowledge from the classroom in actual programs. One of the key aims of CASE elective courses

¹The number of courses that could be offered through the CASE program was constrained. To distinguish the certificate program from a UCI minor degree program involving six or seven courses, the CASE program was limited to five courses. The CASE faculty steering committee decided that two core courses and three elective courses would provide a good balance of both breadth and content knowledge along with substantive fieldwork experiences while also allowing students to have a choice in their program of study. Thus, although both child/adolescent development and multicultural education are deemed important and students are encouraged to take both courses, the program parameters necessitate that students designate one or other course for purposes of satisfying CASE requirements.

is to help students integrate the academic content of the classroom with their experiences in after-school programs. As such, education in elective courses begins developing in students a teaching repertoire that involves a range of content knowledge, techniques, skills, and approaches in specific and fundamental areas of after-school programming that can stimulate the positive growth and development of the young people they serve.

In recognition of the fact that ASPs have diverse goals that reflect the various interests of different stakeholders (e.g., parents, youth, program staff, and schools) (e.g., Cornelli Sanderson & Richards, in press), CASE elective courses were designed to provide students with in depth content knowledge and programming skills in two broad areas: 1) Academic curricula including mathematics and literacy activities for ASPs; and 2) Expanded learning courses including sports and physical health, arts, and technology in education. To ensure students have a breadth of content knowledge and related skills, they must choose at least one elective course from each of the two main areas.

The core and elective courses chosen for the initial year of the program were developed from those already being offered in the Department of Education. However, because these courses were originally designed for school day educators, the instructors often needed to modify them for the CASE program along the following lines: 1) include active learning and discussion components that emphasize how the educational needs of children in after-school settings can differ from the school day; 2) incorporate additional lessons on content knowledge and skills specific to after-school settings that address those differences; and 3) include a substantive after-school fieldwork component.

CASE Fieldwork

Different from many staff development programs, CASE provides a clear synergy between coursework and field experiences. Indeed, they are fully interdependent, in part, because the faculty members who are responsible for the field experiences also teach the academic courses. The fieldwork is integrated into the course content to provide designed opportunities for students to connect theory, research, and practice. Specifically, students complete at least 70 hours of fieldwork at local ASPs to earn the certificate. The nature of this fieldwork is tailored to student interest, course content, and needs of the community programs that allow for ongoing and sequenced/structured active learning opportunities in specific subject matter. For example, students enrolled in the CASE elective course Reading and Writing Enrichment for After-school Programs complete their fieldwork at a program whose curriculum includes literacy activities. Students would

gain literacy-based content knowledge and skills in the classroom, practice delivering those skills at the program, and then return to the classroom to discuss and reflect on the experience.

As part of the fieldwork experience, mentoring is considered an important aspect of the CASE program. Students receive expert guidance both from their course instructors and the lead program staff at their field sites. To the extent possible, fieldwork assignments are matched to the students' developing abilities so that they can both grow and succeed. That is, as their skills develop across core and elective courses, they move from observation and program assistant roles, to limited participation, to full responsibility for program activities. Both the timing of this process and extent of their involvement is guided by the experience of CASE faculty supervisors and mentoring program staff. The best students may be given the opportunity to become lead program teachers and, eventually, directors, and regional coordinators of ASPs.

Developing University-Community Partnerships

Suarez-Balcazar and colleagues (2005) discussed three phases in U-C partnership development, namely: 1) gaining entry to the community; 2) developing and sustaining the collaboration; and 3) recognizing outcomes and benefits. In terms of gaining entry, the careful selection of partners is critical for a successful partnership in the short run and down the road in terms of maintenance and growth (Fullerton & Coiner, 1987; McHale & Lerner, 1996; Takata & Tyler, 1997). In this instance, a two-way selection process occurred between the university faculty and community ASP directors according to the interest level, needs, and fit between the CASE program and the community ASPs.

A main concern at the entry stage of forming partnerships was creating a good fit between the content of CASE courses with the opportunities afforded by the ASP environment and the needs of the children therein (Eccles & Roesner, 2009). In doing so, the goal was to identify existing programs where that fit was already apparent versus attempting either to modify programs to conform to what the university had to offer or develop coursework to fit the curriculum of specific programs (cf., Peterson, 2005; Zeldin, 2005). A second concern was program sustainability. A limitation of some U-C partnerships and service learning efforts is that community programs become dependent on college students and/or faculty to survive. To avoid this problem, field sites were also selected so that their sustainability does not depend on UCI students or faculty directors. Instead, CASE students provide high quality *support* to existing ASPs that are reasonably mature. A third concern was the population of children and

youth served. Given research on the benefits on ASPs for children in poverty coupled with the more limited access to programming in low-income areas (e.g., Mahoney et al., 2010; Vandell, Pierce, & Dadisman, 2005), the selection of initial community partners focused on programs serving economically disadvantaged children.

With these general parameters in mind, the following process of selecting community after-school partners was carried out:

1. Faculty identified ASPs that were potentially appropriate for the CASE program and phone interviews with site directors were conducted.
2. Programs were excluded if they were not interested, too far away, did not match CASE course fieldwork needs, were not able to commit to enough CASE students, did not have staff that could supervise the UCI students, were unable to follow the “student teacher” model of training, or were at an immature stage of development.
3. Remaining sites were visited by at least two faculty members and observed for quality and match with CASE course objectives. A second in-person meeting with the program director followed to discuss specifics of the CASE program and site curriculum and needs.
4. Programs that best match the CASE program were invited to become partners. In the program’s first year, six after-school organizations operating multiple sites in three cities were selected.

Once sites were in place, developing and sustaining the collaboration over the first year focused on making sure the program was equally beneficial for the community partners and university students and faculty. Short-term partnerships can be a burden for community agencies (Flick, Reese, Rogers, Fletcher, & Sonn, 1994; Zeldin, 2005) and diminish the education value of the experience for students (Brisbin & Hunter, 2003). Therefore, we chose to design CASE as a new educational *program* (vs. project) in the Department of Education and made it explicit to our community partners that we were only interested in a long-term relationship. We also had regular contact with each partner through in-person visits, email, and surveys to determine how the UCI students were contributing to their ASPs and whether their involvement could be modified or improved (Lerner, 1999; Lerner, Ostrom, & Freel, 2005). Lastly, we believed it was important for program directors to be directly involved in the CASE courses if they desired. To this end, each program director was invited to individually discuss their program to students at the beginning of one of the core courses. As a panel, all the directors also share their expertise about

after-school education and career options with students enrolled in a core course.

Program Goals and Anticipated Benefits

The primary goals of CASE were to benefit UCI students, local ASPs and staff, and the children and youth they serve. With respect to UCI students, we anticipated that the students would increase their knowledge and ability to provide quality after-school programming as they progressed through the program’s coursework and fieldwork. At the same time, these students would be gaining marketable job skills that could offer them immediate part-time employment or advancement and could pave the way for a career in after-school education. In addition, many of the students in CASE courses also have an interest in becoming school day teachers. The fieldwork experience provided through CASE courses is likely to make these students more competitive on the job market. Moreover, because public schools often administer ASPs, having certification in after-school education is likely to further increase their marketability. This should be particularly true as the CASE program matures and its reputation expands into the surrounding communities.

Furthermore, the coursework-fieldwork component of CASE is also a service learning activity. Research suggests that college students can benefit from high quality service learning activities in terms of increased civic-mindedness, interest to work with populations in need, and appreciation of cultural diversity (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Sherrod & Lauckhardt, 2009). Lastly, students earn UCI course credit towards graduation by successfully completing CASE courses and this has been found to be important in other U-C partnerships (e.g., Fullerton & Coiner, 1987). In fact, students completing the certificate can also earn a minor in Educational Studies at UCI with two additional courses.

There are also several anticipated benefits to programs and staff. First, program staff have the opportunity to enroll in CASE courses through university extension. As such, CASE provides for in-service training of staff at any level of experience. Second, UCI students bring training and new skills directly relevant to community programs during their fieldwork. This is particularly important during the economic downturn because many programs struggle to finance the training for their staff. It is also important to note that program staff members serve as experienced mentors for the university students involved in fieldwork at their site. Thus, these benefits are reciprocal. Third, and related, UCI students provide their assistance as part of a university course. Because CASE courses enroll a sizable number of students (see below), community partners usually receive as many student volunteers as they desire free

of charge. Although staff and volunteer turnover occurs (we return to this issue in the discussion), a continual supply of students trained in after-school programming is available to serve. As a result, child-to-staff ratios at CASE program sites are anticipated to decrease, program quality is expected to increase, and program staff and directors are predicted to view CASE as beneficial to their program's success.

First-Year Evaluation Activities

To begin addressing the third phase of this U-C partnership—recognizing benefits and outcomes—a process evaluation was initiated to monitor program implementation and ascertain whether CASE was operating as intended (e.g., Jensen et al., 1999). Course enrollment and fieldwork hours completed were monitored. Students in CASE course electives and one core course were surveyed at the beginning and end of the courses. The ASP directors were surveyed at the beginning and end of the academic year.

With respect to enrollment, 619 students enrolled in CASE courses during the 2008–2009 school year. Of these, 433 (70%) enrolled in one CASE course and the remaining 186 (30%) were enrolled in more than one CASE course. Approximately half of these students were enrolled in core courses. The other half was enrolled in elective courses, each of which required students to complete at least 20 hours of fieldwork at an ASP. Program directors reported that an average of 2.2 students assisted in their program each day. This amounted to over 5000 hours of fieldwork, service, and support to local programs during the first year of the CASE program.

Seventy percent (282/405) of students enrolled in surveyed CASE courses completed a survey. Over two-thirds of respondents reported planning to work in an ASP in the future. For many (35%) of the respondents, CASE fieldwork was their first experience in an ASP. Students rated themselves as highly active during the fieldwork and reported engaging in the following activities: observation, instruction, supervision, developing lesson plans, on-site training, physical education, homework assistance, reading, arts and crafts, music, cooking, and games. End of course survey results revealed that 70% of the respondents were interested in, and 43% expressed a decided intent to earn, the after-school education certificate.

Seventy six respondents (27%) completed an open ended question explaining their desire to obtain the certificate. The most frequent open-ended responses these students cited for interest in the certificate were: 1) belief that CASE will provide valuable experiences for the future (41%); 2) inspiring course content (15%); and 3) belief that after-school education is important (9%).

The majority of these respondents (60%) also reported that the required fieldwork was their favorite experience because of the direct involvement in children's development and the ability to apply what they had learned through coursework. Other favorite experiences included learning specific, useful skills (27%) and valuable interactions with ASP staff (6%). The most significant challenges students reported were scheduling issues and wanting additional training to work with children demonstrating behavior problems. Uncertainties about fulfilling requirements, career path, and/or ability to commit enough time were the main reasons that students reported for not being interested in the certificate.

Five of six ASP directors completed surveys about their experience with CASE students at the beginning and end of the academic year. First, all site directors reported high interest in the CASE program at the end of the academic year. This likely reflected the variety of benefits described by directors in an open-ended question and included: improved instruction, lower student-to-staff ratio, better program organization, improved behavior of children, and CASE students serving as good role models. Directors also reported positive changes in CASE students' qualifications to work in, and contribute to the success of, the ASPs over the academic year.

Center for After-School Excellence Certificate Programs

The After-School Corporation launched the Center for After-School Excellence ("Center") in 2006 with a mission of advancing quality in the after-school sector through training and research. Its central strategy was to partner with local institutions of higher education to help develop a new system of professional development for the field. Unlike the program at UCI, which primarily serves those already enrolled in an undergraduate degree program, the Center's aim has been primarily to improve the capabilities of front-line staff already working in the after-school field though not enrolled in college. According to a survey conducted by the Center in 2008 of 1,300 after-school workers in New York City-based ASPs, the breakdown of educational attainment for group leaders is as follows: 40% have no college experience (generally only a high school diploma or GED), 35% have some college, 9% have a two-year college degree, and 15% have a four-year degree or higher. Even in cases in which staff are enrolled in college or have previously completed a college degree, their course of study is often not related to youth work—a pattern evident nationally (NAA, 2006).

A variety of sources indicated that training, in general, and college experience, specifically, are important factors

in staff's ability to deliver high-quality after-school services. An evaluation of New York City's Out-of-School Time initiative by Policy Studies Associates has linked staff qualifications to the quality of after-school programming (Russell, Mielke, & Reisner, 2008). A study conducted by the Center found that frontline staff in higher-quality programs in New York City had higher levels of education and were more likely to be students currently enrolled in college as compared to those in lower-performing programs (Khashu & Lobb-Dougherty, 2007).

The Center has thus sought to improve staff practices in New York City through partnerships with five campuses in the City University of New York (CUNY) system. Beginning in the 2007–2008 school year, staff members have enrolled in year-long, three- or four-course, credit-bearing programs leading to certificates granted by the Center. Approximately 100 participants have enrolled in each of the program's first two years, with registration currently underway for the third year of operation. Participants come from a network of approximately 25 after-school providers in New York City, primarily drawn from the ranks of front-line staff (though in 2008–2009 the Center created a special cohort for managers). The curriculum consists of coursework in education, psychology, and related departments, with syllabi which have undergone some degree of customization for the after-school context. Participants are grouped in learning communities or cohorts at each campus, proceeding through their classes together throughout the school year.

The Center's short-term goals for the project are that participating staff will improve their knowledge about

youth development and advance their general academic skills. Additional near-term goals include contributing to a sense of professionalization in the after-school field and increasing retention of staff members. In the longer term, the Center expects that participants will improve their ability to deliver high-quality content and take on leadership responsibilities within their programs.

Coursework

The Center has partnered with two CUNY community colleges, Kingsborough Community College (in Brooklyn) and Hostos Community College (Bronx), where participants earn a Foundations in After-School certificate. Senior college partners include Medgar Evers College (Brooklyn) and York College (Queens), where the certificate is Excellence in After-School. The sole graduate-level partner is Hunter College's School of Education (Manhattan), where participants who are managers in their programs earn a Leadership in After-School certificate. Table 1 depicts the structure of coursework by institution for the 2008–2009 school year. The line-up of courses varies by campus for several reasons: 1) most courses are drawn from the existing catalogue which is somewhat different at each institution; 2) the interests of the administration at each school varies; and 3) at two campuses a series of youth development-related courses was already on the books (this was the case at York and Medgar Evers, although all these courses had not necessarily been offered in recent years). Despite this variation, each campus's line-up followed a similar pattern which included a youth development or psychology course and a Foundations of Education course.

TABLE 1
Structure of Coursework in the Center for After-School Excellence Certificate Program by Institution (2008–2009)

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Hostos</i>	<i>Kingsborough</i>	<i>Medgar Evers</i>	<i>York</i>	<i>Hunter</i>
<i>Certificate Program</i>	<i>Foundations in After-School</i>	<i>Foundations in After-School</i>	<i>Excellence in After-School</i>	<i>Excellence in After-School</i>	<i>Leadership in After-School</i>
<i>Number of Credits</i>	9	9	9	10	9
<i>Courses Offered</i>	Introduction to After-School Programs General Psychology Or Adolescent Development Introduction to Special Education	Introduction to After-School Programs General Psychology Or Art in Education Or Music and Movement in Education	Group and Family Dynamics Foundations of Youth Services Foundations of Educational Psychology: Middle Childhood Or College Composition I	Youth Development: Theory and Practice Introduction to College Writing Teaching with Multimedia Technology Games and Sports for Children	Art of Effective Teaching Child Development Educational Psychology

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Customization of courses to the after-school context is a key objective of the Center, though this has been achieved with varying degrees of success, depending largely on the interests of the instructor. Importantly, the Center succeeded in developing a new course covering a general introduction to the field of after-school, which is now offered at both community college campuses. This is the first course of its kind in New York City, and one of the few offered nationally. Because nearly all participants in the Center's certificate programs are currently working in an ASP, field work placement as part of coursework has not been a necessity.

Partnering with Colleges and ASP Providers

The Center recruits participants for the certificate programs from among the staff of a diverse mix of after-school providers in New York City, including non-profit, community-based organizations of all sizes, and two government agencies which offer youth programming (the New York City Housing Authority and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation). To date employers have generally borne no cost for their staff's enrollment in the program—tuition and other costs are covered by a mix of private funds raised by the Center, financial aid, and contribution by participants.

The Youth Development Institute found in a recent study that a strong commitment on the part of the employer to staff development was essential to after-school staff's success in a college program (Reilly, 2008). The Center has thus depended on employers to encourage participation by their staff and to provide support and incentives to those enrolled, though in practice the level of engagement by employers has been mixed. A study by the San Francisco Beacon Initiative found that on the one hand many managers see certificate programs as a way to improve staff skills and create greater consistency among programs, but some also fear this might lead to a need to pay higher salaries (DeNike, 2006). The employers most supportive of the Center's offerings have often been those who view the programs as a way to improve staff retention—and in fact a study by the National Collaborative for Youth backs up this assertion (Garza, 2006).

Unlike UCI, for the Center (which is part of an independent non-profit and not formally affiliated with a university) collaboration with institutions of higher education has been essential. The Youth Development Institute, in examining similar partnerships, found that the involvement of college leadership, such as an academic dean, was a critical factor in the success of the collaboration (Reilly, 2008). The Center has been fortunate to build strong relationships with senior leaders at each of its partner campuses, up to and including

the college president. In the best cases this allows for coordination of recruitment, registration, course scheduling, selection of instructors, remedial services, and customization of curricula. In an extremely promising development, beginning in 2009 CUNY's John F. Kennedy Institute for Worker Education has begun to fund and administer a youth studies certificate program at one of our partner campuses, Hostos Community College (they have sponsored a similar program for several years at Lehman College). The Center sees such investments by CUNY itself as critical to ensuring long-term sustainability of college training programs for after-school staff.

Participant Characteristics

On average, participants in the Center's programs have seven years of experience working in the after-school field. Though most entered the program with significant knowledge about working with and motivating young people, many began with concerns about their own ability to succeed in an academic setting. About half had some previous college but had withdrawn because of academic, financial, or other challenges. According to an evaluation of the Center's work by Policy Studies Associates (PSA), participants enrolled in the program to improve their ability to be effective youth workers (67%), earn credits towards a college degree (55%), serve as positive role models for youth (46%), and advance their careers (44%).

Participants are 28% male and 90% African American or Latino. The gender and racial/ethnic composition of the staff are critically important not just for the after-school field, but for a variety of related social service professions to which after-school staff often migrate. Most notably, the proportion of people of color, men, and especially men of color among the Center's participants is far higher than it is for teachers in New York City (for example, the rates for African Americans are 45% at the Center and 13% among new teachers in the city's public schools). This illustrates the potential of the Center's programs and the field as a whole to provide a diverse pipeline of talent to teaching and related professions.

Supports and Incentives

Because most participants have little or no prior college experience, and because the academic skills of many are not yet up to college level, it has been vital for the Center to build in a variety of support mechanisms for students. This assistance comes not only from Center staff but in varying degrees from faculty, employers, and peers. The Center provides guidance in the registration and matriculation process, offers a kick-off

institute focused on strengthening core academic skills, and leads occasional workshops on test taking and similar topics. Basic writing workshops are built into the first semester at each of the program's undergraduate campuses. Additionally, approximately half of students report receiving academic help and tutoring from their college's faculty and administration. Last year, the level of support provided by employers varied widely, with only a minority providing mentoring, access to computers, or flexibility in scheduling.

Participants place extremely high value on the support they receive from their peers, including working collaboratively on group projects that provided overall encouragement. This is facilitated by the learning community model employed by the Center, in which participants stay together throughout the year. Research confirms this phenomenon: a study of an unrelated program at Kingsborough Community College found that learning communities improved students' college experience by making students feel more engaged in the college process (Scrivener et al., 2008).

Participant Experiences

Attrition during the course of the school year was approximately 30% in 2007–2008 and 35% in 2008–2009. These figures are comparable or slightly better than the average for CUNY as a whole. Though not an exact comparison, CUNY reports that at its community colleges only 2.3% of students earn their degree in two years, and 7.9% do so within three years (Edelman, 2009). About a third of those who drop out of the Center's programs cite family obligations (many are single parents). An equal portion leave because of employment issues, such as losing their job in after-school or being forced to take a second job which conflicts with their college class hours. An increase in the number falling in the later group accounted for the rise in attrition in 2008–2009, as the economy endured a pronounced period of weakness.

As part of its evaluation of the Center's first-year implementation, PSA surveyed participants and received extremely positive feedback, including on the following questions:

What did the participants get out of the program?

- 94% reported completing the program with improved academic abilities.
- 92% reported increased knowledge about working with youth.

Were the participants satisfied overall?

- 96% of participants reported that they enjoyed the program.

- 98% felt proud of their accomplishments.
- 100% would recommend the program to a co-worker or friend.
- In general, participants were positive about the ways in which the certificate program helped them to improve their own academic abilities as well as their knowledge about working with youth.

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Education and training of the after-school workforce is a central issue confronting the field. This training has the potential to increase program quality and promote positive youth development. The thesis of this paper is that U-C collaboration can play an important role in this regard. The paper has provided a conceptual basis for establishing these partnerships and examples of two programs that have recently been developed within this framework. In the following section, we discuss some of the larger lessons learned from our efforts to develop these partnerships and suggest several avenues for future work.

A comprehensive approach to professional development would ideally provide both pre-service and in-service training for the after-school workforce. In this respect, the two models of U-C collaboration described above are complementary. The UCI model currently emphasizes pre-service training to prepare future generations of after-school educators and provides trained support in the form of undergraduate volunteers to the existing workforce. The Center for After-school Excellence model focuses on in-service education for line staff currently employed at ASPs. Both approaches are clearly feasible and U-C collaboration can be developed to achieve either (or both) objective. However, common to the early success of both models is a commitment by key administrators and personnel at the universities. It seems essential that institutions of higher learning recognize the need for education and training of the after-school workforce and that they make the responsibility for providing that education a priority.

Although the focus and audience of the two models also differs somewhat, both created education programs designed to provide sustained, practical, and attractive educational opportunities to meet the needs of the workforce. This is consistent with available theory and research on effective professional development for K-12 educators (e.g., Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The programs featured a sequence of coursework that could be tied to hands-on experience in the field and reflection and discussion in the classroom. Opportunities for students to receive supervision and feedback on their fieldwork were also part of the training.

Moreover, there was significant agreement in what types of coursework were provided to develop after-school

educators. Specifically, the coursework in both models: 1) included a broad-based foundation course on out-of-school learning covering cross-cutting issues in the field; 2) emphasized the importance of knowledge on child/adolescent development; 3) focused on education approaches to working with diverse and special populations of young people; and 4) provided opportunities to gain content knowledge and related skills in several areas relevant for after-school programming (e.g., sports, arts, technology, etc.). In both cases, the programs drew upon existing university courses that were then modified to meet the needs of after-school educators. In addition, components of the programs were tailored to accommodate the specific needs of the staff and students. For example, the Center for After-school Excellence provides coursework to support the remedial education needs of program staff while coursework for the CASE program aligns with undergraduate degree requirements for a minor in Educational Studies.

Although this article has emphasized the important role that institutions of higher learning can play in developing the after-school workforce, this does not imply that other approaches are ineffective or unnecessary. To the contrary, multiple modes of training are likely to be required. Among these modalities, we believe that U-C collaborations are one approach that might be situated at the top end of training opportunities. However, workshops, on-site orientations and mentoring programs, seminars and conferences, local, regional, and statewide networks, and online resources are examples of other approaches that can contribute to the development ASP staff. At present we know little about how these different approaches might fit together. Moreover, efforts to rigorously evaluate these alternatives are sorely lacking. We are ultimately interested in developing ASP staff to provide high quality program offerings that will lead to better developmental outcomes for participating children. To evaluate the impact of these approaches, it will be important to examine how core competencies of program staff grow, program quality changes, and child outcomes are affected in relation to the types of training that after-school workers at different stages of staff development receive. Basically, we need more information regarding how much of which types of training are required and feasible for different workers to achieve what sorts of outcomes for which types of youth in what sorts of programs. This knowledge will be critical to informing current movements towards credentialing and accreditation systems in the after-school field and to generate a career lattice with pathways towards advancement that may help to stabilize the workforce.

It is also important to note that U-C partnerships can take many forms. These can range from an individual faculty member working with a single non-profit

organization to the highest level of university administration coordinating actions across schools or departments to form partnerships with multiple community agencies or school districts. Thus, how one approaches issues of implementation, scale, and sustainability of such partnerships depends on the particular instantiation of such collaboration. The substantive commitment required of the university will vary in kind. Up to this point, our own efforts have taken an approach falling somewhere between the two extreme examples just provided. For example, university involvement through the CASE program primarily involves action within the Department of Education including support from the administration and several faculty and graduate students, but the program also has connections with other academic units on campus offering related content. For the Center for After-school Excellence model, university collaboration consists largely of making arrangements for students to engage in fieldwork, community service, and practica.

In addition, we wish to acknowledge that other models of U-C partnerships have been developed to help prepare after-school workers. In some of these instances, university entities are also largely responsible for running the ASPs in the community. The effectiveness of these alternative models should be carefully considered. One concern for all U-C partnerships is that there may be a point at which university involvement becomes so pervasive and encompassing that community programs are no longer able to operate without university support. Related, university-driven collaborations could also run the risk of becoming too focused on the goals of the university entities involved and might therefore fail to best serve the needs of the community in a way that more equitable partnerships would allow. To avoid these pitfalls, it seems critical for university entities, in any form, to work cooperatively with community partners from the outset to develop a truly collaborative educational and training program that serves the needs of both parties well.

It is also critical that effective education and training approaches are designed to be affordable, accessible, and sustainable. In these respects, there are several promising features to U-C partnerships including the physical capacity and organizational infrastructure to support large-scale training efforts, proximity of colleges and universities to ASPs and populations likely to desire and benefit from such training, instruction and coursework provided by faculty with expertise in current research and practices, and a consistent pool of young people (students) available and interested to learn and serve the surrounding communities.

A potential drawback to the U-C approaches described is the time required to complete a sequence of coursework/fieldwork. As noted earlier, approximately

40% of the after-school workforce anticipates spending less than three years in the field (NAA, 2006). The question raised is to what extent do U-C approaches to training and education mesh with the relatively high rate of turnover for this segment of the workforce? To be sure, the education programs we described were not designed to be a panacea for all forms of staffing problems. The CASE program, for example, involves a fair amount of college coursework that is fee based. Thus, completing the program in full may be less feasible for the part-time, transient portion of the workforce that is not pursuing a university degree.

Nonetheless, participating staff report that the programs help to address staffing needs and, in some cases, these perceived benefits could contribute to a reduction in rates of staff turnover in several ways. For example, participants receiving in-service training through the Center's program report experiencing social support and a sense of being part of a learning community as well as pride and enjoyment about their program-related accomplishments. To the extent that low motivation, lack of identity as professionals in an identifiable field, and a lack of training opportunities contribute to ASP staff turnover (NAA, 2006; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007), the positive psychosocial experiences reported by Center participants may foster a sense of solidarity that could strengthen their job commitment.

Moreover, in terms of access and affordability, it is noteworthy that education once limited to physical attendance in college classrooms is now increasingly available via the Internet. Online coursework opportunities of a shorter duration may be particularly useful for program staff members who are part-time and short-term but, nevertheless, in need of formal training in how to work with young people. Universities are perhaps uniquely well-suited to create these educational opportunities because they often already possess the resources, knowledge, and expertise to develop and provide online coursework. As an example, UCI is currently collaborating with several ASP providers to develop an online version of the CASE program. This online version will couple video-based instruction with remote live access to instructors. In the process, the coursework is streamlined so that the key lessons can be delivered in a timely fashion that will be accessible and affordable to a broad audience of ASP providers.

An additional option would be to establish a core group of high quality, recognized, and approved trainers within local systems of ASPs. For example, ASPs may be able to designate some staff to serve as training specialists who themselves would first undergo extended and intensive training provided through U-C partnerships. After becoming expert, these individuals would provide training for their fellow staff. Elements of this

approach have been used effectively in large-scale efforts to train early childhood educators (Riley & Roach, 2006). This method could assist ASPs with a very basic problem; namely, how do programs provide ongoing training, supervision, and mentoring for their staff? Although variants of the training specialist model are taking place in ASPs, we suspect that individuals serving in these capacities do not receive the extent of training provided through the U-C collaborations described previously.

Furthermore, college student involvement in ASPs via pre-service training is not necessarily as transient as it may seem. For example, because it usually takes a few quarters for CASE students to complete the required coursework, they are ordinarily able to serve the same ASPs for a year or longer. Accordingly, the turnover rate for these trained student volunteers is not very different from the rate reported to occur for the roughly 40% of part-time, paid line staff who possess little, if any, formal training (NAA, 2006; TASC, 2009; Yohalem et al., 2006). In addition, the skills that a particular student brings to the ASP could, in most cases, continue either by paid program staff who learn these techniques or through new student volunteers. In fact, we predict that a feedback cycle of learning and mentoring will evolve. Students and staff participating in CASE share a coordinated learning experience and common core of knowledge. This should facilitate the ability of experienced staff to mentor student volunteers and for the more advanced volunteers to mentor novice volunteers. Thus, the faces of the volunteers would change, but ASPs would continue to receive the same type of support from students over time.

Finally, we note that the U-C collaborations we have established focused primarily on educating line staff working directly with children. However, whether and to what extent U-C partnerships are formed and the educational opportunities we have described are employed will depend on ASP directors and coordinators. There is an additional need for advanced coursework and training to help prepare these ASP administrators. This is particularly true as program systems expand across geographical areas that serve increasing larger numbers of diverse children. For administrators of this sort, graduate school programs that offer coursework and training in leadership, organization theory, business administration, educational policy, research methodology and program evaluation, and grant making seems essential.

In conclusion, efforts to develop after-school educators are in a very early stage of maturity. Varieties of approaches are now being initiated and implemented. Although much more work is needed to advance this area, the early signs suggest that U-C partnerships are

feasible and offer advantages for university scholars and community practitioners alike. The approach holds promise as a means to better prepare the after-school workforce to provide high quality programming with the potential to promote the positive youth development of young people.

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