



Transitioning Leadership of the Urban Health Institute (UHI)

Dear Friends,

What follows are the comments I gave this past week to the Community-University Coordinating Council (CUCC) of the UHI on my stepping down as director of the Urban Health Institute.

Thank you for allowing me to have a few minutes for what is my last CUCC meeting and my last month as director of the UHI. I began to have conversations with the Provost last April, and as you know, he convened a search committee last May. While the search that we had anticipated never materialized, we are in a much different, and I would suggest, better place than I had ever anticipated. First, I could not be more pleased that the Provost has named Amy Gawad as the executive director on an interim basis. He and the Hopkins Advisory Board (the deans and head of hospital who all finance the UHI) have reaffirmed the support for the UHI's work and mission. Such reaffirmation is never certain; and within the Hopkins context the level of commitment is unprecedented both in amount and duration. There is also a commitment to do a full search starting in the fall. So, we are moving forward with great optimism.

Thinking back on what we have accomplished together over the past 14 years has been substantial. It is a track record of which we can all be proud. When I took over the UHI on an interim basis in 2006 the former director and all the staff except Chris Gibbons had left, the UHI was about \$200 K in debt, we were officed at the Inner Harbor, we were running a couple boutique programs and a medical clinic that was dependent on mostly students, a few volunteer health professionals and no ability to provide any referrals since it was operating outside the JHMI system. The Advisory Board had seriously considered discontinuing support. In the first 6 months, I hired a colleague with whom I worked at the National Academy of Medicine—perhaps the best thing I have done is recruit and hire Amy Gawad. I also turned to the administrator of my academic department and asked if she would work on getting our financial house in order. For the past 13 years Pam Martin has managed both the small and large details of the UHI. Likewise, I started to build a working group and I reached out to Phil Leaf to join us as the Sr. Associate Director of the UHI; and like Pam and Amy, Phil has been a cornerstone of the UHI for the past 13 years. Like myself, Phil is stepping down as the Sr. Associate Director at the end of this month.

In 2007, there was a search for a permanent director, and I applied—during my interim year I fell in love with Baltimore and the people of this great city. I have told many people what I love about Baltimore is that it is dirty, gritty, loud, and alive. What I learned about the people is that



they will shout at you and then embrace you. I have experienced both-- but the hugs have far outweighed the conflicts.

So, what have we done over these years?

1. In lieu of the clinic that was closed, Hopkins Hospital convened a planning group to develop an alternative; the UHI was a part of that. As a result, what emerged in 2009 was The Access Partnership, which for the price of a \$20 card anyone could get healthcare up to “end of care” services. By anyone that includes those who are insured, uninsured, underinsured, documented, or undocumented immigrants.
2. With support from the Weinberg Foundation we joined with Margaret Williams and the Maryland Family Network to lay the groundwork for what has become the Weinberg Early Child Development Center at the Henderson Hopkins School. Today, a child can enter the school at the age of 6 weeks and graduate the 8th grade at age 13. As part of that initiative we lead a delegation.
3. Together with a wide array of community partners we led a community assets mapping initiative where Hopkins and East Baltimore community leaders worked side-by-side to identify the people and places that are the pillars of our neighborhoods.
4. In 2008 we established a quarterly symposium, bringing to Baltimore those who our community partners felt were important to hear: people like Antero Pietila, Rebecca Scloot, and Reverend Jeremiah Wright.
5. Together with Amazing Grace Lutheran Church and SOURCE we established community dialogues built around the theme of race, racism, and privilege; and to participate in the conversation we invited those who have written on and about Baltimore. People like Eddie Conway and Kathy Edin.
6. In 2009 we established quarterly Baltimore Researchers’ Dinners that today are led by our associate director, Terri Powell, and attracts approximately 50 researchers focused on Baltimore from across the city’s diverse colleges and universities.
7. Also in 2009, with the encouragement of Nia Redmond, we established the annual Henrietta Lacks Memorial Award to honor a community agency that partners with Hopkins to improve community health and wellbeing; and over the years some who we have honored include: Turnaround Tuesday, Newborn Holistic Ministries, and Squashwise.
8. Established in 2003, we have built the small grants program to where today it awards over \$125,000/ yr. in small grants and since 2006 have awarded nearly 150 such program and research grants to foster university-community collaborations.
9. In 2010, we began to partner with Josh Sharfstein and the Baltimore City Health Department on what was initially known as “Reverse Research Day” and has subsequently been known as Community Driven Research Day. This annual event attracts approximately 50 community agencies that share their work and needs with



hundreds of interested students and faculty from Hopkins, Morgan, Maryland and other colleges and universities. The program has also been replicated in at least 3 other universities nationally.

10. In 2011, we began to offer capacity building workshops on topics that range from program evaluation to grant writing and financial management.
11. In 2012, we assumed responsibility for organizing and convening the annual Provost-UHI Symposium on the Social Determinants of health that has between 500 and 800 registrants from across Baltimore and has dealt with a range of topics from the Epidemic of Incarceration, Healthy People Healthy Neighborhoods, and the 50th celebration of the events of 1968 that shaped Baltimore and the country. This year's symposium, our 8th, had 725 registrants.
12. And last year we added a 1-day youth symposium on SDH for high school students across Baltimore. The second is planned for the Fall of 2019.
13. In 2012, we partnered with Johns Hopkins Medicine to build the community advisory board and service network for what became known as J-Chip, there are community relationships that we nurture and support to this day.
14. In 2014, we began a collaboration with the Hopkins Cancer Center to eliminate racial disparities in Colorectal Cancer; and today that program continues stronger than ever under the leadership of Rebkha Atnafou.
15. And in 2016 we began partnering with Departments of Emergency Medicine and Psychiatry on a Trauma Response Project for East Baltimore that continues under the leadership of Phil Leaf.
16. Likewise, in 2016 we received an award from the Bunting Family Foundation, matched by the UHI, that established the Bunting Neighborhood Leadership Program, an intense one year leadership program for 6-7 young community leaders, we now are in our third cohort and already a number of our first cohorts have moved on to increasing positions of responsibility and leadership. Rebkha has led this extraordinary program.
17. In response to recommendations of our Advisory Board, in 2016 we began to collaborate with the Center of Excellence for Latino Health to sponsor an annual conference on Latino Health that brings together providers, advocates, and donors from across Maryland. In 2019, the conference attracted over 125 participants.
18. This year we have collaborated with colleagues in the School of Education and at the Carey Business School to develop a university-wide certificate program in urban health—expanding the priority and visibility of urban health at JHU.

This is a brief summary. More is omitted here than is noted but these are some of the highlights.



JOHNS HOPKINS
URBAN HEALTH INSTITUTE

Engaging communities
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In the Jewish tradition, there is a basic tenant that is known as *tikkun olom*—the healing of the world. Essentially, it translates to say that if you have helped one person you have healed the world. It is my hope that through partnerships with you we have taken a small step toward healing if the world at least Baltimore.

This is one of the greatest honors I have ever had to lead the Urban Health Institute. We are well poised for a terrific future.

With deep affection and appreciation for the trust, friendship, and collegueship that has been the hallmarks of our relationship.

Bob Blum