



# Making Connections

Community-University Collaboration in Southwest Baltimore

## Summary of Findings May 2015

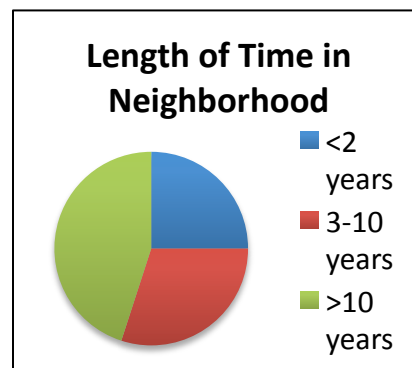
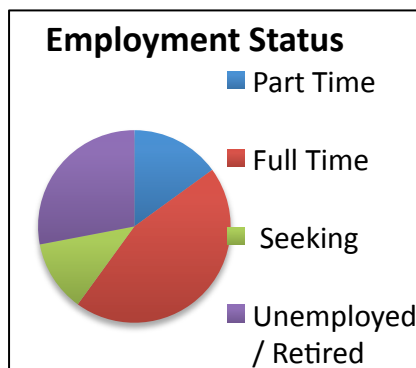
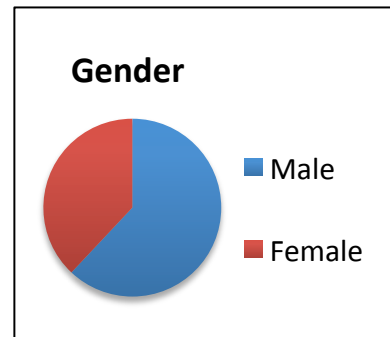
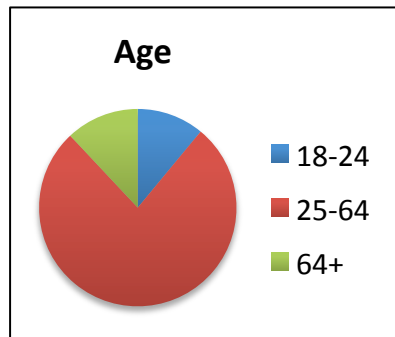
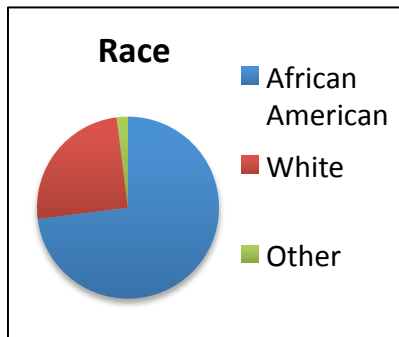


**Overview of Project:** In June 2014, the Community Action Network (CAN), a student group at the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) School of Social Work, along with Dr. Amy Cohen Callow and community partner Southwest Baltimore Partnership, were awarded a grant from UMB's Center for Community Based Engagement and Learning to complete research on enhancing relationships and collaboration between the students at UMB and the members and stakeholders in the Southwest Baltimore (SWB) community. The goals of the project were to learn about existing relationships and resources within UMB and SWB and create a tool for sustaining these relationships and enhancing communication methods.

### Survey Results

121 surveys were completed in all 7 SWB neighborhoods by teams of student and community researchers. The neighborhood of residence for respondents included Pigtown (23%); Hollins Market (16%); Franklin Square (16%); Union Square (15%); Mount Clare (12%); Poppleton (10%); Barre's Circle (5%); & Other (3%).

#### Respondent Demographics:



#### Summary of Findings:

The majority (79%) of community residents interviewed had not had contact with students or University representatives. All of those (21%) that had contact with students from the University rated their experience as positive. The majority of respondents (79% and above) believed that UMB students were trustworthy, shared similar values, and cared about the SWB community. Of all survey respondents, 77% were willing or very willing to engage in community projects with students in the future, however only 32% were aware of ways that UMB students were involved in the community. Respondents were most interested in students being involved in the community through volunteering, providing professional services, or engaging with the youth in the neighborhoods. The majority of respondents said that the best way to communicate for future projects would be face to face (30%) followed by internet or email (28%) and flyers (13%).

## Focus Group Results

Three focus groups were held in the Month of November with a total of 19 participants that represented members of the SWB community, neighborhood associations, SWB business and arts non profits, museums, and city wide non profits. Participants were recruited via email blast, individual emails, and by word of mouth. Each focus group lasted for approximately two hours and discussions focused on previous experiences interacting with students and the University on project, interest and need for future projects, and concerns about previous and future collaboration. Minutes were taken by student and community researchers at each meeting and summarized by the research team into six themes represented below.

- 1. Communication Concerns**– Participants reflected that for effective collaboration, there needs to be a better way for the University student and the community to communicate with each other. Better communication would create clear expectations for time commitment and scheduling and prevent replication of efforts (reinventing the wheel).
- 2. Concerns with University Involvement**- Participants shared that some residents express concern that the University will take over the community without input from its residents and will only seek to fulfill its own agenda. In addition, the University seems very bureaucratic and difficult to understand, and does not do a good job depicting SWB in a positive light.
- 3. Future Methods of Communication**- Suggested methods of communicating results of project and future opportunities included attending neighborhood association meetings, creating handouts and flyers, utilizing the faith community, posting on websites, or holding a resource fair and inviting members of the community and University.
- 4. Community Characteristics (needs and strengths)**- *Needs* of the community expressed by participants included safe activities for children, relationship building, more action and less research, systemic changes, an increase in socioeconomic diversity, environmental and physical changes in the community, and more job opportunities. *Strengths* of the community included community member involvement, diversity among community members and established community programs.
- 5. Student Characteristics (needs and strengths)**- *Needs* expressed by participants included that students needed to be more visible and integrated in the community and that they need to understand community dynamics and existing resources before suggesting project ideas. *Strengths* of students shared by participants were that students bring a positive energy and that previous student involvement met has generally met expectations of community members.
- 6. Student and Community Collaboration**- Representatives agreed that they would welcome student involvement in a variety of ways including advertising, volunteering, internships, fundraising, project implementation, technological and non technological support, and utilization of professional knowledge to assist in programs. Concerns about future involvement include finding the right match between student and community and creating sustainable relationships.

## University Meeting Results

*Student and community researchers met with representatives of student groups and University Student Affairs Staff from the 7 schools at UMB (Medical, Nursing, Social Work, Law, Pharmacy, Graduate, Dentistry) to learn about the various student groups' and programs' involvement and interest with volunteering and activities in the SWB Community. Overall, researchers found:*

- Students are interested in volunteering in both professional and non-professional capacities**
- Some student groups already have established relationships with places in SWB or other organizations in Baltimore City**
- Most student groups receive funding that can go towards activities for students**
- Many student groups do not know who to contact for projects in SWB**
- Students have limited time and would need help managing projects and commitments**
- Student affairs staff would be great contact points to disseminate project ideas to students**
- Students seem to have more time for professional projects as they would also meet academic needs**
- Professional projects would additionally need staff support**

## **PROJECT CONNECT**

**What now?** After considering feedback from both student and community members, the Making Connections research team has partnered with the Office of Community Engagement (OCE) to create and sustain a networking tool that can connect community members with student groups for project ideas, events, and other collaborations.

**How will it work?** A dedicated staff person will have access to a database of contact information, project ideas, resources, and previous history of projects gathered by the Making Connections Research Team. Community members will be able to submit project ideas, need for volunteers, etc. to the website and the staff person will read the submission and send the information to any applicable student group or student affairs staff.

**Where is the tool and when can I submit?** The tool will be located on UMB's Office of Community Engagement website. It is not yet live, but is expected to be effective Fall of 2015. *If you would like to be notified when the tool becomes live, please email Bill Joyner at [wjoyner@umaryland.edu](mailto:wjoyner@umaryland.edu) with your name & email and the subject heading: Project Connect.*

### **Any Further Questions? Please Contact:**

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- William Joyner, Office of Community Engagement [wjoyner@umaryland.edu](mailto:wjoyner@umaryland.edu)

## **Contacts and Resources**

### **University of Maryland, Baltimore**

- University Student Government Association: <http://www.umaryland.edu/usga/>
- UMB's List of Student Organizations  
<http://www.umaryland.edu/university-life/student-groups/list-of-student-organizations/>
- Graduate School: Graduate Student Association <http://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/gsa/>
- School of Social Work: Student Government Association <http://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/sqa/>
- School of Nursing: Student Government Association  
<https://www.nursing.umaryland.edu/student-life/student-organizations/nsga/>
- School of Dentistry: List of Student Organizations:  
<https://www.dental.umaryland.edu/studentaffairs/student-organizations/>
- School of Medicine: List of Student Organizations:  
<http://medweb1.umaryland.edu/medscope.net/activities/#Type6>
- School of Pharmacy: List of Student Organizations <https://www.pharmacy.umaryland.edu/studentorg/>
- School of Law: List of Student Organizations: <http://www.law.umaryland.edu/students/life/orgs/>

### **Southwest Baltimore**

- Southwest Baltimore Partnership: <http://www.southwestpartnershipbaltimore.org/>
- Franklin Square Community Association: Edith Gilliard-Canty; [EGilliard1@verizon.net](mailto:EGilliard1@verizon.net)
- Citizens of Pigtown: Email: [board@citizensofpigtown.org](mailto:board@citizensofpigtown.org)
- Hollins Roundhouse Neighborhood Association: Email: [Hollinsroundhouse@gmail.com](mailto:Hollinsroundhouse@gmail.com)
- Mount Clare Community Council: Nancy McCormick: [Nancynmcc@aol.com](mailto:Nancynmcc@aol.com); Anne Ames: [Annames@verizon.net](mailto:Annames@verizon.net)
- Union Square Association: Email: [Unionsquareassociation@gmail.com](mailto:Unionsquareassociation@gmail.com)



**The Community Action Network would like to extend their gratitude and appreciation to all participants of the Making Connections Research Project. Together, we can make effective and sustainable change in our community!**

