

2015

Urban Campus

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Recommended Citation

DMACC, "Urban Campus" (2015). *Campus & Center Histories*. Paper 2.
http://openspace.dmacc.edu/campus_histories/2

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Urban Campus

Urban Campus Beginnings

In early 1971, the college in cooperation with the Des Moines Model Cities Agency, made application for a \$25,000 Title III grant. The purpose of this project was to employ a liaison coordinator between the college and the urban community, and to develop citizen advisory committees.

These activities resulted in the development of a plan to establish an Urban Transitional Campus in the Model Cities neighborhood. The project was approved for fiscal year 1972-1973 at a funding level of \$100,000. On March 29, 1972 a meeting was held at St. Paul A.M.E. Church whose purpose was to develop procedures for implementing the recommendations for the report of the Higher Education Facility needs for Model Cities.

The short-range goal of the community was to secure a facility and develop a program that would begin no later than September 1972. The long-range goals included the infusion of such modern day concepts as site-based learning, community collaboration, and cultural diversity. In addition, the community asked for financial aid, child care, tutorial assistance, counseling and college orientation for the students.

The goal of this educational facility was to provide educational opportunities and services including regular college studies as well as pre-professional, paraprofessional, vocational and technical education. In addition, the programs offered were to help students gain skills needed for survival in an increasingly complex society. These programs were aimed at, but not limited to, high school dropouts or pushouts, unemployed, underemployed and senior citizens.

In order to effectively plan for a new campus development, parameters were established to provide a common base of understanding to all interested and affected parties. These parameters were as follows:

1. The Urban Campus should provide comprehensive education programs including adults, arts and science and career education as well as necessary support services.
2. The Urban Campus should encourage new program development designed around the specific needs of an urban environment.
3. Urban Campus should continue to be a catalyst for the career opportunity programs, Upward Bound, Student Support Services or any other initiative that increases access for minority and disadvantaged students.

The original intent of the Urban Center was to provide a wide variety of educational and support services in a non-threatening environment. It was thought that the campus would become a starting point in the process of higher education, with rapid transfer to educational programs currently in operation at surrounding colleges. However, it soon became evident that while there was a great need for transitional and compensatory activities, there was also a need to provide educational programs that could be completed entirely at the Urban Center.

Shortly thereafter the Urban Campus became an integral extension of the college, filling a previously unmet educational need of the urban community. From 1980 to the present, the Urban Campus ventured into several special initiatives to increase access to the college. Upward Bound, Student Support Services and Iowa New Choices were among the most noted. What began as a limited federally funded project emerged as a new and fundamental thrust for Des Moines.