

# Enlarging the Academic Community

## Creating Retirement Communities Linked to Academic Institutions

*The growing trend in the US of university-linked retirement communities is presented in the context of social housing trends in Europe. It provides a way for universities to capitalize on existing property to earn revenue and to enhance student and staff quality of life.*

by Andrew Harrison and Tien-Chien Tsao

**Andrew Harrison** is director of learning environments and research at DEGW, an international design consultancy with offices in the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States, and the Asia-Pacific region. He is the director responsible for university research, briefing, and implementation projects around the world and is a member of the European Commission's Advisory Group on New Working Environments and the United Kingdom's Design Council's Advisory Board on Learning Environments.

**Tien-Chien Tsao** is senior research associate with the National Center on Housing and Living Arrangements for Older Adults at the University of Michigan. He received his Ph.D. in Architecture from the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan in 2003. He has worked with Leon A. Pastalan in the area of college/university-linked retirement communities for many years and has provided related consulting services for interested colleges and universities.

### Introduction

Higher education is undergoing profound changes in many parts of the world as universities respond to shifting demands from students and employers, changing economic situations and demographics, and a rethinking of the university's role within the wider community. This article explores a major opportunity that universities have to capitalize on their existing property portfolio to both earn additional revenue and enhance the quality of the student and staff experience: the creation of university-linked retirement communities.

We examine this opportunity in the context of demographic and educational trends in the United States and the United Kingdom and identify the factors that act as catalysts for universities to create these communities. A conceptual framework for university-linked retirement communities has been developed by one of the authors that categorizes communities in terms of the level of university involvement in the community and the level of care provided to the residents. This framework can be used by institutions considering the development of retirement

communities to create a model that is appropriate to their financial situation and academic and social program. University Retirement Community at Davis, California is used as a case study of how one university chose to create such a community.

The article concludes by placing university-linked retirement communities in a broader context of social housing trends in Europe and suggests that it may also be possible to create more socially inclusive university-linked learning-centered communities that provide additional opportunities for universities to capitalize on their resources and expertise while contributing to the surrounding community.

## **The Changing University**

Changes in teaching methods, the nature of the curriculum, the size and composition of the student population, and the impact of information technology on every facet of university life are all challenging the historic models of what a university is and how it sits within the fabric of the city or community in which it is located.

As universities become less self-contained and develop into networked organizations, new concepts of procuring and managing space are also developing. To enhance flexibility, university portfolios are now more likely to consist of a variety of different types of tenure, while making use of publicly available facilities within the vicinity.

New property models are being sought to enable universities to become increasingly innovative in the selection, procurement, and management of their facilities and sites; DEGW, a firm of designers and consultants with offices in Europe, the United States, and the Australia/Pacific region, for example, has developed the concept of “core,” “flexi,” and “on-demand” space as a way of categorizing elements of the university estate and as a tool for developing innovative estates strategies.

At the same time, estates are being rationalized according to changing accommodation needs, location and quality of the existing buildings, ongoing operating and maintenance costs, and a desire to maximize the value of assets. With public funding becoming increasingly scarce, universities are looking to the private sector for funding through partnerships, and the focus for estate management is on shifting from cost reduction to income generation.

The rise of the distributed workplace in the corporate sector offers major opportunities for academic institutions to capitalize on their existing estates, earn additional

revenue, and enhance the quality of the student and staff experience (Harrison, Wheeler, and Whitehead 2004).

The blurring of boundaries between the corporate and academic worlds opens up possibilities including the creation of mixed academic and business campuses, the development of dispersed branded physical “places” to support distance learning as well as corporate training requirements, and the creation of partnerships with workplace providers to develop university clubs and business lounges for alumni and other users in business locations (Harrison and Dugdale 2002–2003).

These opportunities are focused on the blurring of the boundaries between the corporate and the academic world. The blurring of boundaries between living and learning is similarly opening up new possibilities for universities and other higher education institutions. This article focuses on the opportunities in this area and explores in particular the potential benefits of linking retirement communities to academic institutions.

## **The Changing Population**

Over the next 30 to 40 years, the balance between older and younger segments of the population is expected to shift, largely as a result of increased life expectancy. For the first time, the proportion of older people in the population will exceed the proportion of children. By 2050, the proportion of older people in the world will have more than doubled when compared to 1995 (increasing from 10 percent to 30 percent), while the proportion of children will have declined from 31 percent to 18 percent (United Nations Population Division 1998).

In more developed regions, the proportion of older people is projected to increase to 33 percent by 2050, with the proportion of children declining to 15 percent. In 1995, 62 million persons in the world were aged 80 or over; in 2050, this age group is expected to rise to 956 million (United Nations Population Division 1998).

In the United Kingdom, the number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase from 9.3 million in 1996 to around 15 million during the 2030s. If current trends continue, those aged 65-plus will exceed those under 16 for the first time in 2016, and by 2040, about a quarter of the population will fall into this older age group (Government Actuary's Department 2003).

Proportionally, the biggest increase has been in the “oldest old,” that is those over 85, who are more likely to

have chronic illness and disability and to need care at home, in residential homes, or in hospitals (Barratt 2000).

The United States is also experiencing the aging of its population at a dramatic rate. Since 1900, the proportion of the population aged 65-plus has tripled (from 4.1 percent in 1900 to 12.3 percent in 2002), with the total number increasing from 3.1 million to 35.6 million (Administration on Aging 2003). With the leading edge of the “baby boom” generation now nearing age 65, the older population is expected to double to 71.5 million (20 percent of the total population) by 2030.

These staggering numbers are a result of impressive increases in life expectancy. In 1900, life expectancy at birth was 47.3 years. By 1950, this had increased to 68.2 years, and by 2001 to 77.4 years (74.7 years for men and 79.9 years for women). Life expectancies at ages 65 and 85 have also increased. Under current mortality conditions, people who survive to age 75 live on average for an additional 11.5 years (National Center for Health Statistics 2004).

## Lifelong Learning

In the United Kingdom, research from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has shown that more “over 60s” are signing up for part-time courses. According to the LSC figures, seven percent (237,000) of the 3.5 million people undertaking education and work-based learning are now over the age of 60—an increase of 300 percent since 1994. In southeastern England, the figure has reached 17 percent (Ford 2002).

Computing, mathematics, and the sciences top the list of subjects attracting the 60-plus age group, with 44 percent of students aged over 60 signing up for courses in these areas (Ford 2002). One of the oldest participants in further education found by the study in 2002 was a woman who had completed a six-week course in basic computing at the age of 108.

As Jim Soulsby, the “older and bolder” development officer for the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), has pointed out, it should not be assumed that growing older implies diminishing ability, skills, or interest in the world. Inviting older people into learning is as important as providing skills for the workforce, since older people are still able to contribute significantly to the development of the “social economy” (Ford 2002).

Involvement in continuous learning may also bring health benefits for participants. In 2000, the Institute for Employment Studies in the United Kingdom researched the impact of learning on older people. The survey of more than 300 people aged 50 to 71 found that 74 percent of those who said their health was excellent or very good were engaged in some form of learning. In addition to a link between education and good health, the research showed that learning had a positive effect on people’s enjoyment of life, self-confidence, and ability to cope. More than a quarter of those surveyed reported more involvement in social, community, or voluntary activities as a result of learning (Smithers 2000).

The University of the Third Age (U3A) is one of many organizations around the world dedicated to increasing opportunities for learning for older people. The movement was established in France in 1972 but has since grown rapidly into a global affiliation of related organizations. In the United Kingdom, for example, there are now 560 U3As with 152,092 members (University of the Third Age 2005).

The movement recognizes the immense resources, skills, and experience of older people no longer employed full-time. Individual members are encouraged to see themselves as both learners and teachers and to give their services voluntarily. There is no restriction on membership and no educational qualifications are awarded.

A typical U3A will offer a range of interest groups including language classes, archaeological and philosophical studies, arts and crafts, music, and creative writing. Interest groups are often quite small, with meetings or classes taking place in members’ homes. Costs are kept as low as possible so that members can take part in as many groups as they wish. In the United Kingdom, for example, eight-week-long tutored courses typically cost £10 (approximately \$18) and non-tutored small group/individual study courses cost £5 (approximately \$9).

In the United States, there is also significant evidence that increasing numbers of older adults are participating in adult education. The percentage of adults aged 55 and over participating in educational activities has increased sixfold within 15 years, from 5.7 percent in 1984 (Manheimer, Snodgrass, and Moscow-McKenzie 1995) to 37.9 percent in 2001 for 55 to 64 year olds, and to 21.4 percent for those age 65 and above (National Center for Education Statistics 2003).

At a conservative estimate, 14 million Americans aged 55 and over are pursuing lifelong learning by participating in

work- and nonwork-related learning activities through formal and informal adult education program providers.

The level of educational attainment of older Americans is significant in terms of the increased participation in older adult education. Research indicates that individuals with higher levels of education are more inclined to enroll in educational programs when they retire (Cross 1992; Peterson 1983). During the second half of the 20th century, the educational level of Americans aged 65-plus rose considerably. In 1950, just 18 percent of the people in this age group had completed high school. By 1998, this figure had almost quadrupled (67 percent); furthermore, 15 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. Given dramatically increased educational attainment among older Americans, the United States is anticipating substantial participation by older adults in educational programs in the near future.

## **Retirement Communities Linked to Universities**

In a presentation at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Professor Leon Pastalan of the University of Michigan described higher education's role in an active retirement: "People are no longer satisfied with a condo and a golf course. They are looking for more value and meaning" (Pastalan 2001, p. 6).

In the United States, college-linked retirement communities already exist at more than 60 campuses nationwide, including the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor; Cornell University in Ithaca, New York; Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire; and at smaller schools such as Lasell College in the Boston suburb of Newton.

The number of such communities is predicted to increase significantly over the next two decades as many of the nation's 76 million baby boomers reach retirement age (Alexander 2003).

In her 2003 *New York Times* article "Prime Time: How the Baby Boomers will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America," Alexander cited Marc Freedman's 2002 book of the same name. Freedman suggested that, at the very least, these communities could provide a revenue generator for universities and a pleasant way for older people to while away their days—and, at best, they will satisfy the baby boomers' increasing appetite for lifelong education.

The nature of the relationship between the retirement community and the university varies. Often the community is affiliated with the school and residents include alumni

and former faculty members. Some retirement communities have informal ties to university programs, while others offer their residents access to university healthcare services and gerontology experts, the opportunity to attend classes and cultural events on campus, and the chance to learn and live alongside the college community.

For example, the Village at Penn State in State College, Pennsylvania (opened 2003) offers residents the opportunity to take and teach courses and participate in research, while the Oak Hammock community at the University of Florida in Gainesville (opened 2004) includes a television studio, performing arts venue, and a service whereby veterinary students care for residents' pets while they are away.

A number of factors serve as catalysts for universities to develop retirement communities on or near their campuses:

- *A vision based on a mutually empowering relationship between colleges/universities and campus retirement communities.* Universities are recognizing older adults as invaluable human resources in terms of their time, experiences, expertise, and energies. Older adults can contribute to the diversity of campus life and stimulate the development of the campus environment by actively using facilities and participating in social and intellectual activities; they can also support the university in its teaching, research, and public service activities through, for example, guest lecturing, mentoring, participating in applied research projects, or volunteering, both within the university and among the wider community. Likewise, senior residents benefit from the rich and varied resources provided by colleges and universities; the opportunities to explore learning, working, and leisure while aging; and the intergenerational interactions that can facilitate new roles and personal growth (Tsao 2003).

**Collegiate retirement communities have great potential to add land value and generate revenues, as well as provide income from membership fees, gifts, donations, and bequests.**

- *Property development and financial considerations.* Colleges and universities are seeking ways to effectively develop their property and expand and

diversify sources of revenue. Collegiate retirement communities have great potential to contribute to this goal by adding land value and generating revenues from the sale or lease of land and facilities. They also provide the potential for income from membership fees as well as from gifts, donations, and bequests from residents who are relatively affluent and often comprised of alumni, friends, and retired faculty and staff (Tsao 2003).

- *Demand from alumni, retired faculty, and staff.* In some cases, the development of a university-linked retirement community is initiated by a group of people affiliated with the institution who envision an active adult learning and living environment linked to the academic community and then created in partnership with a private developer. An example of this type is University Commons at the University of Michigan, established in 2000. In 1986, a group of University of Michigan faculty and staff members conceived the idea of developing an active adult residential community on campus in which residents could continue their affiliation with the university; enjoy social, cultural, and educational activities; and pursue intellectual growth. The group established the University Condominium Association, purchased land from the university, and collaborated with Blue Hill Development, a local developer, to make the idea a reality. Other examples of this kind include the Forest at Duke, affiliated with Duke University in Durham, North Carolina and established in 1993; Academy Village, affiliated with The University of Arizona in Tucson and established in 2002; and Oak Hammock at the University of Florida in Gainesville and established in 2004 (Tsao 2003).
- *Demand from developers.* Universities are well regarded by many older adults because they offer access to a wide range of educational, recreational, and social activities and resources and a vibrant mix of age groups. Some developers, recognizing both the potential benefits of an association with the reputation of a “big name” college or university and the potential market of alumni, retired faculty, and staff members, have proactively initiated joint ventures with universities to develop retirement communities on or near their campuses. The nonprofit Kendal Corporation, for example, has developed university-linked retirement communities such as Kendal at Hanover, linked with

Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and opened in 1991; Kendal at Oberlin, linked with Oberlin College in Ohio and opened in 1993; and Kendal at Ithaca, linked with Cornell University in New York and opened in 1998 (Tsao 2003).

## Recognizing the social challenges resulting from increased longevity, some universities are attempting to develop new models for retirement and lay the foundations for attitudinal change.

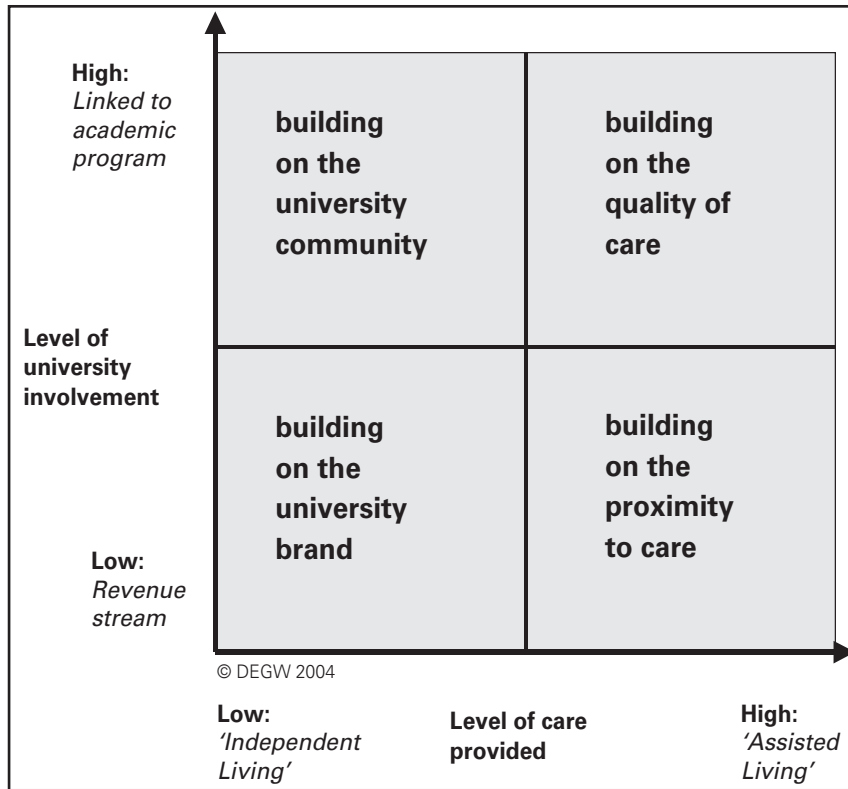
- *A response to the social challenge of increased life expectancy.* Today the majority of older adults are healthy, vigorous, and capable of taking on new challenges after the end of their working life; the low expectations and empty roles traditionally associated with retirement are no longer always relevant. Colleges and universities have traditionally been agents of social change by contributing to the solution of major problems encountered both within their local community and in wider society. Recognizing the new social challenges resulting from increased longevity, some universities are attempting to develop new models for retirement and lay the foundations for attitudinal change. For example, both University Commons at the University of Michigan and Holy Cross Village at Notre Dame in Mishawaka, Indiana, near South Bend, emphasize the creation of an empowering environment and an enabling culture, encouraging residents to find a balance between learning, work, and leisure and to develop intergenerational interactions in order to provide new “retirement roles” and continued personal growth (Tsao 2003).

## Approaches to Community Development

Existing retirement communities can be broadly categorized in terms of two main variables: the level of university involvement in the community and the level of care provided to the residents, as shown in figure 1.

**Level of university involvement.** “Low level” university involvement could include the sale or lease

Figure 1 **Descriptive Framework for University Retirement Communities**



community, or internal, where community residents are integrated into the core activities of the institution, participating in courses with the rest of the student body.

High level involvement suggests that the university has considered in some detail the potential benefits of developing a community. For example, when the University of North Carolina at Greensboro started planning a retirement community in 2001, it considered the opportunities that such a community would provide for the university. The potential benefits identified included attracting potential students of all ages to the campus and expanding the audience for cultural and sporting events; providing research, internship, and work experience opportunities for students and faculty of departments such as Gerontology, Hospitality Management, Nutrition, Nursing, and Public Health Education; enhancing the possibility of donations and bequests through strong links

of a site adjacent to the university campus to a developer or operator of commercial retirement communities. In 2001, for example, Classic Residence by Hyatt, the senior living affiliate of Hyatt Corporation, signed a long-term ground lease with Stanford University in California for 22.4 acres adjacent to the university campus.

On this site, Hyatt plans to build an “upscale senior living community” consisting of 388 independent living apartments and an additional 106 residences in the community’s assisted living and care center that will provide assisted living, memory support/Alzheimer’s care, and skilled nursing care.

As the project Web site states, “...the proposed community is not sponsored by or otherwise affiliated with Stanford University. Classic Residence leases the land from Stanford under a long-term ground lease” (Classic Residence by Hyatt 2001).

“High level” university involvement can be defined as closer integration of the community into the academic and social life of the institution. The integration could be external, where courses and academic activities are taken to the

with retirees; and having retirees serve as adjunct faculty, guest lecturers, and mentors for student groups (Pastalan 2001).

**Level of care provided.** A “low level” of care can be described as “independent living,” where residents are in relatively good health and require no medical or social support on a daily basis. If medical care is required, it may be provided in-house in a medical center or procured externally (for example, through third party health insurance companies). University involvement in this type of community is likely to focus on the provision of academic and social activities for the members.

An example of an independent living community is University Commons, which consists of 92 apartments and townhouses aimed at University of Michigan alumni or retired faculty over the age of 55. As well as individually owned units, the community provides 17,000 square feet of common space including a large lecture and recital facility, dining room and commercial kitchen, library, crafts workshop, fitness center, and seminar rooms. The community hosts a regular schedule of lectures, classes, seminars, and music

performances. In addition, residents can attend classes and events at the nearby campus. All the learning spaces and living units are connected to MERIT, the university's higher education Internet network (Rose 2002).

A "high level" of care can be described as "assisted living," where a wide range of health and social services are provided, up to and including Alzheimer's long-term care and hospice care for the terminally ill. It should be noted that some communities provide both independent and assisted living options and allow residents to move seamlessly from one to the other as their health needs change. This may involve changing the resident's accommodation (e.g., sale or exchange of the individual unit) or monthly service charges.

At the Village at Penn State, for example, residents pay an entrance fee ranging from \$166,100 to \$361,700, with a second person fee of \$10,900 for lifetime use of an apartment. A monthly service charge is levied on top of the entrance fee, depending on the size of the apartment. Residents have priority access to university cultural and sporting events, university classes on a space-available basis, and transportation to campus for group activities, presentations, workshops, and activities. The fee also covers utility charges (except telephone and cable television), scheduled housekeeping and linen service, 20 meals per month, and delivery of the daily university newspapers. Residents are also entitled to "priority access to on-site assisted living and skilled nursing care at virtually no increase in the monthly service fee" (The Village at Penn State 2005).

The framework shown in figure 1 is consistent with the research on university-linked retirement communities conducted by Tsao and Pastalan (2004) at the University of Michigan.

They suggest that there are three main types of campus retirement community:

- Where the university provides academic and social programs for the residents but is not involved in the development or operation of the community
- Where the university is involved in the development of the community by providing land, financing, or support as well as academic and social programs for the residents but is not involved in the operation of the community
- Where the university directly operates and manages the facility and is involved in the development of the community and the provision of academic and social programs

## Case Study: University Retirement Community, Davis, California

The University Retirement Community (URC) Web site describes the benefits of active retirement living: "When you move to University Retirement Community, you'll be surrounded by like-minded people: individuals who enjoy learning, trying new things, and meeting new friends. You'll live in beautiful surroundings, enjoy fine dining, and take part in a wealth of programs and activities. Here, in your beautiful new home, you'll revel in a lifestyle designed to invigorate your outlook and energize your attitude!" (University Retirement Community 2005a).

The URC campus is set on a 10-acre site close to the University of California, Davis. It is also adjacent to Sutter Davis Hospital, which offers a range of medical, diagnostic, emergency, and hospital services to residents of the community.

The \$40 million-plus community consists of 425,000 square feet of buildings providing a range of living options as well as shared social and healthcare facilities, including 18 cottages, 16 garden apartments, 192 independent living apartments, 36 assisted living units, and a 51-bed skilled nursing center with a 14-bed Alzheimer's wing.

Residences vary from one-bedroom apartments to three-bedroom cottages with private gardens; residents are able to customize the internal finishes of their units. Shared amenities in the community include activity/crafts rooms, meeting and dining rooms, a library, a coffee shop/deli, an exercise and fitness center with a swimming pool, and underground parking for residents.

The adjacent hospital provides a variety of support services on-site including physical, occupational, and speech therapies as well as radiology services. Assisted living services include the provision of caretakers to assist with daily activities, all meals, housekeeping, local transportation, laundry services, health and wellness programs, medication supervision, and social and recreational activities.

The residents enroll in a Continuing Care contract that includes an initial entrance fee and a monthly accommodation fee. The amount of each of the two fees is based on the type of housing accommodation and the level of care the resident chooses. If an individual comes to the community as an independent living resident and later moves to another level of care, the monthly fee is adjusted accordingly but no additional entry fee is paid. It should be noted that in

Figure 2 **University Retirement Community Facilities**

Activity room	Library with more than 10,000 items (books, videos, CDs)
Art loft auditorium with surround sound, theater-quality rear projection system, piano	Meditation room
Bank	On-site assisted living apartments and services
Beauty shop	On-site health care center
Club lounge with private liquor lockers, two-story stone fireplace, refrigerator, ice machine	On-site special care center for residents with Alzheimer’s and other memory-impairing conditions
Computer learning center	Outpatient rehabilitation services
Community lounges/family rooms throughout facility	Parking: open parking as available; covered parking for an additional fee
Deli/coffee shop	Photo lab
Dining room	Poolside lounge
Fitness center	Private dining rooms
Game room	Residents’ laundry room
High-speed internet access in each apartment and cottage (for an additional fee)	Storage space
Hobby shop	Swimming pool and spa (heated, outdoor)
	24-hour campus-wide security system

Source: University Retirement Community 2005b.

the United States, the Internal Revenue Service may recognize a percentage of both the entrance fee and the monthly fee as a medical expense deduction, which may provide residents with tax benefits compared to other retirement options.

The not-for-profit company that established the URC has also created a foundation to further develop the community and to provide assistance for residents who have outlived their financial resources.

The community provides a link to a wide range of continuing education opportunities in the surrounding area including the UC Davis Extension program, the ASUCD Experimental College, and the Hadley School for the Blind, but does not have a dedicated academic program associated with its campus. Figure 2 further describes the services and amenities offered by the URC.

### **Lessons Learned from Existing University Retirement Communities**

Developing a university-linked retirement community is not simply a matter of building senior housing on or near a campus. In order to gain maximum benefit, colleges and

universities must look at broader issues regarding the institution’s commitment to the community, its policies and programs, and the development of an enabling culture that will sustain and nurture older adults on campus and integrate them into all facets of campus life. A policy that fosters diversity and age integration on the campus, combined with programs that provide residents with opportunities to pursue fulfilling activities, has great potential to create an environment where there are widespread opportunities for learning, work, leisure, and intergenerational interactions.

**To gain maximum benefit, universities must look at broader issues regarding the institution’s commitment to the community, its policies and programs, and the development of an enabling culture.**

For example, Holy Cross College at Notre Dame has a long-term commitment to the Holy Cross Village, manifested both in supportive policies such as building an active intergenerational community that integrates senior

residents into college and campus life and in the development of programmatic resources such as the “Adult Learners” and “Community and Continued Education” programs.

Adult Learners provides senior residents with learning and working activities, while the Community and Continued Education program serves as an enabling structure, providing information and opportunities for interested individuals and drawing together senior residents from the village, young students from the college, and older adults from the local community. It also serves as a focal point for relationships between the college and the village in terms of newsletters and meetings. Furthermore, it develops courses and community service projects that have the potential not only to integrate the village into the college but also to reach out to the larger community. Connections between Holy Cross College and Holy Cross Village are therefore actively developed.

A market study to determine the feasibility of establishing university-linked retirement communities on or near campuses is one of the most important planning issues for colleges and their consultants to address. The market study should result in data-based guidelines regarding interest in the retirement community concept on the part of alumni, friends, and others; preferred residential types, sizes, features, and costs; types of educational, recreational, and cultural programs; and campus amenities and considerations.

Other critical planning issues such as financial considerations, healthcare issues, and governance and management are important factors in the development of a successful collegiate retirement community and must be given careful consideration.

## **Towards New Models for University Retirement Communities**

The creation of university-linked retirement communities in the United States sits within a wider trend: the rise of gated communities. In the United States, the proportion of people living in gated communities is now estimated to be 11.1 percent in the west, 6.8 percent in the south, and less than 3 percent in other regions (Sanchez, Lang, and Dhavale 2005). These communities often focus on exclusiveness, the protection of families in a secluded environment, and the provision of private leisure facilities and amenities such as golf courses, beaches, parks, and horseback-riding trails (and even, in one case in Nevada, a private shooting-range) (Le Goix 2003).

There may also be opportunities—and a demand—for communities of this type in the United Kingdom. Recent research by the University of Glasgow found more than 1,000 existing gated communities in the United Kingdom. The communities are generally small, fewer than 50 units, and are spread across England although clustered more in the relatively expensive southeast. While security was an important factor in the decision to live in such a community, other benefits were seen to be “living amongst fellow professionals” and a desire for privacy (Atkinson and Flint 2003).

While it may be possible to replicate the American model for university-linked retirement communities in the United Kingdom, it does not fit comfortably within the European social agenda and the concerns about social sustainability and inclusiveness. Greater opportunities exist in terms of reinventing the retirement community as a more vibrant mixed community that is equally viable in the inner city and in suburban locations.

The development of inclusive retirement communities is made more likely in the United Kingdom by the regulatory and funding environment for housing. Planning regulations often require the inclusion of a significant proportion of affordable housing as part of all new developments, and many social housing schemes also include a proportion of privately owned units. The income to the housing association from the sale of these units can either fund the provision of an enhanced specification for the scheme overall or the creation of shared amenities for the scheme that are not fundable through a grant from the Housing Corporation. The Housing Corporation funds and regulates the provision of affordable homes in England and is a non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

It should therefore be possible for an academic institution to work in partnership with a housing association or a private housing developer to create a retirement community that includes a range of occupancy types and shared facilities that can be used by both the residents and the wider community. The type of retirement community that can be developed under this model can still vary, both in terms of the level of involvement of the academic institution and the level of care provided to residents.

While this article has dealt primarily with the provision of retirement communities by universities, it should be recognized that opportunities also exist to create wider communities based on a learning and resource center

linked to the academic institution. The learning and resource center could, for example, include a “work center” for freelancers or people wanting to work near home, a library and information resource center, and a range of teaching and meeting spaces that facilitate both face-to-face and distance learning activities.

The creation of learning-centered communities is entirely consistent with government policies to widen adult participation in learning in the United Kingdom. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), for example, is concerned that 35 percent of adults do not engage in any education or training after their period of statutory schooling (Learning and Skills Council 2003). By 2010, the LSC’s vision is that adults from all social backgrounds will have the opportunity to engage equally in the learning and skills development available to them, in work and in preparation for work. They will also be empowered to engage equally in learning that helps them contribute as active citizens, using and extending their talents to benefit themselves and their wider local community (Learning and Skills Council 2003).

Providing new types of learning environments closely linked to the local community and the places where people live may encourage the residents of these communities to sign up for learning activities when they may not have been willing to enter a formal university or college setting.

As well as helping achieve wider social sustainability goals, the development of learning-centered communities may also provide significant opportunities for a wide range of academic institutions across the United Kingdom and in the United States. Where an institution has a significant land bank, the creation of these communities may provide an opportunity to maximize the value of this asset or, if an institution has redundant buildings or campuses, to regenerate the sites and reinvent their role within the wider academic institution.

An institution without land, redundant buildings, or financial resources to act as a developer can still participate in learning-centered housing developments by providing the academic program, access to learning resources, and an “academic brand” that can help to differentiate the development (in the case of privately funded developments). While the direct financial benefits of this type of partnership may be less, the other benefits resulting from the enlarged learning community may still be significant, including many of the benefits described previously in this article relating specifically to retirement communities in the United States.

While the involvement of academic institutions in the provision of general housing or retirement communities is not yet as common in the United Kingdom as in the United States, the development of these communities may provide many institutions with significant opportunities to both generate additional revenue and enrich their academic community. As part of the strategic planning process in the future, it may well be worth exploring partnership opportunities with both private and social housing developers and considering the potential re-use or re-invention of parts of the estate as learning-centered communities. ❧

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