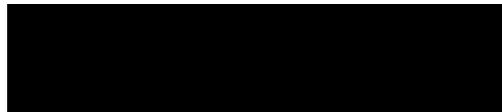


# Awesomely Urban

The metropolitan setting of the Twin Cities campus is increasingly helping shape its mission and identity.



By Meleah Maynard  
Illustrations by Jacob Thomas

## **A Conversation with Andrew Furco**

WHAT DOES IT MEAN for a land grant university to be engaged with the community at a time when higher education is undergoing fundamental change?

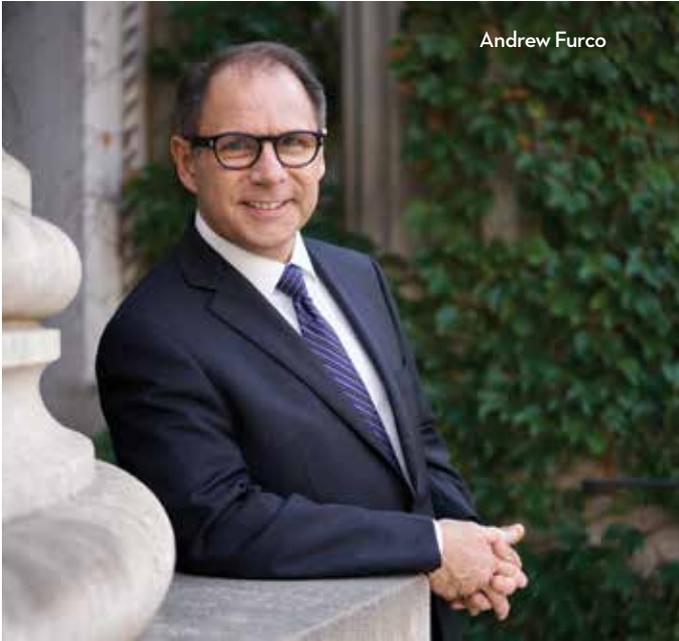
Andrew Furco has spent his career exploring that question. Furco, the University of Minnesota's associate vice president for public engagement and professor of higher education in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development, is an internationally known leader and thinker on public engagement. He talked with *Minnesota Alumni*.

### **What does it mean to be an urban university?**

We have to remember that the University of Minnesota has five campuses [Crookston, Duluth, Morris, Rochester, Twin Cities], so it's not all about location or where campuses are situated. All of the campuses have robust community engagement agendas designed to connect students, faculty, and academic units in partnership with local organizations.

For example Crookston, perhaps our most rural campus, is doing excellent work on urban forestry in the horticulture department. The Center for Small Towns at Morris has partnered with the City of Morris and area schools on a project titled *Adapting to Change: Managing Urbanization in Rural America* to develop mentorship programs, park development, and managing a \$400,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Across the system, we also have faculty, staff, and students doing work globally, much of which is focused on addressing



health, environmental, educational, and other urban-focused issues.

And there are programs and units specifically focused on addressing urban issues, such as the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, the Robert J. Jones Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center, the urban studies undergraduate program, and masters in urban and regional planning.

**What is unique about the Twin Cities campus?**

It is one of the few Carnegie-classified “very high research university” campuses situated in an urban, metropolitan center [see sidebar next page]. This provides the Twin Cities campus with a unique opportunity, and I would say awesome responsibility, to integrate its research and educational activities with the needs of the communities that surround the campus. Given the size of the metropolitan area, there is a rich array of valuable opportunities to partner with nonprofits and governmental agencies to address issues that affect our neighborhoods; with national companies and innovative small businesses on strengthening the development of the future workforce; with educational entities to address K-12 needs; the list goes on.

**What kind of engagement is required?**

Many issues that urban communities face require a long-term, sustained investment in deriving and implementing

solutions. They require systemic solutions coordinated across agencies and stakeholders. The K-12 education achievement gap is a good example. No one agency or entity can solve it alone, and it can’t be solved overnight. For an urban-situated campus, it begs the question: What is the role of a research university in addressing these challenges? Because of its metropolitan location, the Twin Cities campus has a proximal advantage to work directly with these urban issues. It therefore has a responsibility to consider what it can do to work in partnership with external entities to tackle these intractable issues. This is what the Twin Cities campus’s strategic

**Engagement Programs vs. the Engaged University**

THERE’S A DIFFERENCE between being a university with community engagement programs and being an engaged university, says University of Minnesota Associate Vice President for Public Engagement Andrew Furco.

The difference lies in these five factors.

**Engagement differs from outreach.**

Traditionally, universities’ missions have entailed research, teaching, and outreach, and community engagement has been equated with fulfilling the outreach mission. In contrast, the 21st century model sees engagement also as a means to produce research and conduct teaching.

**Engagement is at the heart of the University’s identity.**

Public engagement must go beyond fulfilling the land grant mission. It must be viewed as integral to the University’s identity as an institution that builds and implements research agendas, shapes classroom experiences, promotes educational opportunities, and influences broader society.

**Engagement focuses on partnerships.**

Historically, the biggest complaint from community members is that researchers come in, do their work, and then leave when the project or grant ends. The 21st century model moves away from implementing short-term *projects* to building long-term *partnerships*.

**Engagement is with, not to, for, or in communities.**

It honors knowledge and experience within communities in ways that allow the University and community to codevelop, codiscover, coconstruct, and coproduce.

**Engagement is about institutional transformation.**

For engagement to flourish, a university must implement a comprehensive institutional plan that refines and reimagines the existing culture, policies, and infrastructure.

To learn more about public engagement, go to [engagement.umn.edu](http://engagement.umn.edu).

plan, launched last year, focuses on: solving the grand challenges of a diverse and changing world.

One important part of this agenda is how we engage our students in addressing these community issues. One of my research projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education, which I'm conducting with educational psychology professor Geoffrey Maruyama, is finding that many of our students, especially those from urban centers and from underrepresented groups, see community-engaged learning as a central and important component for enhancing their sense of belonging at the University and to their overall persistence and academic success. A large portion of our diverse student body comes from the metro area and other urban communities. Connecting their academic work with authentic community issues allows them to see that the education they're getting at the U has relevance in their personal lives and that it can help them make a real difference in the society.

### **Is community engagement a core function of the University?**

Yes. In the 25 years I have been studying this issue, there has been a dramatic shift in how community engagement is perceived, valued, and legitimized in higher education. However, while it is an important function and increasingly a valued one, we in higher education still need to find a way to reward faculty who do community-engaged teaching and research.

At the U of M, as a system, we have made great strides in building what we call a 21st century approach to community engagement, which means moving from being a university with community engagement programs to being an "engaged university." This is what we mean by making community engagement a core function.

Higher education is changing. The nature of our student body, the nature of faculty work, the organization of our higher education institutions, disciplinary boundaries, advances in technology, new funding models—all of these are reshaping how higher education operates. And community-engaged work, conducted through the 21st century lens, can help it achieve contemporary goals. This is happening at all types of institutions of higher education across the globe. For universities situated in urban centers, community-engaged work can be the key to strengthening relationships with the broader community and leveraging partnerships that help address the most intractable and challenging issues that urban centers face.

## **How the U is Unique**

THE UNIVERSITY of Minnesota Twin Cities campus is one of the first urban public research universities to have earned the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's prestigious Community Engagement Classification. The Carnegie Classification is the accepted framework for classifying colleges and universities in the United States.

Colleges and universities with an institutional focus on community engagement were invited to apply for this elective classification, which was first offered in 2006. To earn the Community Engagement Classification, institutions must demonstrate an institutional agenda to integrate community engagement with teaching, research, scholarship, and strategic initiatives.

Campuses must reapply for the classification every 10 years, demonstrating substantial advancement in deepening community engagement within the institutional culture. In late 2015, the campus was notified that it had earned its second 10-year community engagement classification.

**The University's 2015 application for reclassification featured more than 100 examples of research and teaching-focused community engagement. Here are six of them. >>**



## 1» Partnering with North Minneapolis

THE ROBERT J. JONES Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC), established in 2009, connects the University and North Side Minneapolis communities through partnerships that address critical issues while improving people's quality of life and advancing learning. Among UROC's high-profile research projects is the Northside Job Creation Team (NJCT) initiative, a collaborative effort with many public and private partners, including the city of Minneapolis, local businesses, community-focused organizations, and the Carlson School of Management's Carlson Consulting Enterprise.

Launched in 2012 in response to Governor Mark Dayton's promise to boost job creation in North Minneapolis, NJCT's goal is to attract 1,000 living wage

jobs to the North Side—where research has shown that 94 percent of residents are employed outside the community—by 2019. So far, the NJCT has created more than 600 jobs, says Heidi Barajas, UROC's executive director. Talks are currently underway with several companies interested in relocating or expanding to the North Side, including Thor Construction, which plans to move its headquarters, and Cut Fruit Express, a retail and wholesale food service provider.

"There are many challenges to economic development in North Minneapolis, but few are as complicated as issues of land use," Barajas explains. "That's why UROC's partnerships with the city, county, nonprofit, and private sectors are so critical. The NJCT team has worked to bring the right people around the table so when the unexpected pops up, we can move forward in nimble and creative ways."

In addition to collaborating with graduate students in

UROC's Northside Job Creation Team, photographed on the future site of Thor Construction's headquarters, includes (left to right): Richard Copeland, Thor Construction founder and chairman of the board; Heidi Barajas, UROC executive director and chair of the U's Organization Leadership, Policy, and Development department; Ravi Norman, Thor Construction chief executive officer; and William English, Northside Job Creation Team community director.

the Carlson School of Management to research best practices in economic development and what types of businesses would be a good fit with North Minneapolis, NJCT has partnered with the Schulze School of Entrepreneurship at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul.

#### **Other UROC projects include:**

- **The Trauma Recovery Project**, which aims to improve the quality of life in urban communities like North Minneapolis, where residents are disproportionately affected by high rates of violence, incarceration, and other challenges. Anchored by research, best practices, and deep partnerships with community members, the project works to address individual and community trauma on local and personal levels.

- **The Sex Trafficking and Community Well-Being Initiative**, which since its launch in 2011 has helped raise awareness of policy concerns around the growing problem of sex trafficking and prostitution in the Twin Cities. Led by UROC Director of Research Lauren Martin, the initiative has produced research on the market structure of juvenile sex trafficking and is currently examining the behavior of traffickers and johns in metropolitan and Greater Minnesota.

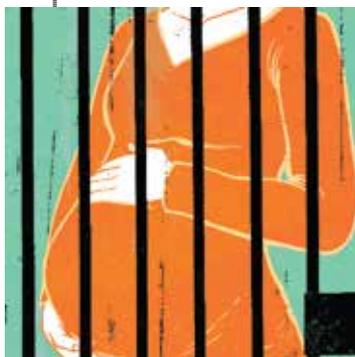
- **The Generation Next/UROC Faculty Fellows project** has charged six University researchers with creating teams of professors and community members to tackle the question, "Why is there an achievement gap in the context of Minneapolis and St. Paul and what promising practices are helping close that gap?" The fellows were chosen for their community-based scholarship in education, health, gender studies, communication, and the arts.

## **2>> Supporting Incarcerated Moms**

SINCE 1977, the number of women who are incarcerated in the United States has increased by more than 800 percent, according to Bureau of Justice Statistics. More than 25 percent of those women have either given birth during the year before their arrest or are pregnant when they are arrested. With little or no access to education, services, or support related to birth preparation and delivery, outcomes for mothers and babies are often poor.

The Minnesota Prison Doula Project is striving to change that. Founded by Erica Gerrity, a social worker and doula who serves as program director, the prison-based project provides women incarcerated at the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Shakopee with multidisciplinary care that includes doulas, nurses, midwives, nutritionists, mental health practitioners, and others. In addition to helping women in prison have healthier pregnancies and births, the program offers support to teach mother-baby bonding, break cycles of child abuse and neglect, and prepare incarcerated women to be confident, capable mothers after their release.

Women participating in the project take part in educational groups facilitated by doulas and childbirth educators. Women who are pregnant are invited to participate in the Doula Program, which involves meeting with a doula individually about once a month for prenatal education and birth planning. During labor, doulas meet mothers at the hospital



and stay with them throughout the birth, as well as during the emotional time when the babies are taken from their mothers. Minnesota law does not allow mothers to keep their babies with them while in prison. Doulas also meet with the mothers to provide postpartum support once they return to the correctional facility.

Rebecca Schlafer (Ph.D. '10), an assistant professor in the University's Division of General Pediatrics and Adolescent Health, serves as the project's research director. In addition to collecting information from doulas and women about their experience with the project, she is also assessing birth outcomes, including birth weights, delivery methods, and gestational age. Initial results indicate that doula care for incarcerated women could be a promising strategy for improving the health of the mothers and babies. Support for the evaluation process comes from the University's Clinical and Translational Science Institute and the Program in Health Disparities Research.

### 3 >> Immigrant and Refugee Health Care

FOR MICHELE ALLEN (M.D. '99), a community-based approach to health care and research means listening. In her work with immigrants, refugees, and community organizations, the University of Minnesota physician and assistant professor in the Medical School's Department of Family Medicine and Community Health is known for an approach that fosters two-way conversation.

"People don't want researchers coming in and telling them things like, 'You have too much diabetes in your community.' We need to listen to how they frame their own issues, which could be to tell us, 'We don't have access to enough fresh fruits and vegetables.' Then, we can work with them to come up with solutions."

In 2014, Allen received the University of Minnesota President's Community-Engaged Scholar Award in recognition of her longstanding commitment to engaged scholarship focused on, among other things, health equity for immigrants and refugees. Her own work focuses on adolescent health issues using community-based participatory research, and she is also an investigator in the Medical School's Program in Health Disparities Research. Two of her projects are funded by the National Institutes of Health and include a longstanding partnership with Extension and community organizations to develop a program that supports Latino families in preventing youth substance abuse. "It's a family program that's focused on supporting parents trying to help their children navigate what it means to be a teen in the United States," she explains.



### 4 >> Ending Homelessness

IN 2007, Minneapolis and Hennepin County launched Heading Home Hennepin, a 10-year plan to end homelessness. The number of families seeking shelter increased dramatically during the great recession, from 2008 to 2010, reflecting high unemployment and the housing foreclosure crisis. In response, Heading Home Hennepin's research and evaluation director Lisa Thornquist (B.A. '80, M.A. '84, Ph.D. '92) partnered with Humphrey School of Public Affairs Associate Professor Maria Hanratty to create a graduate student research project to identify patterns of shelter use among families.

Their report, *Family Homelessness in Hennepin County: A Mixed Methods Examination of the Rapid Exit Program and Patterns of Shelter Mobility*, found an upward trend and higher return rate to shelters by young parents. The study helped launch Hennepin County's Stable Families Initiative in 2014, which included new or refocused interventions for families at risk of reentering a shelter. It also helped get the attention of seven foundations that helped fund the pilot initiative. Outcomes have been positive. For those in the pilot group, income rose substantially and they returned to shelters less frequently than those in comparison groups. More broadly, the number of families in shelters is 45 percent lower than two years ago, the lowest level in 10 years.

Hennepin County's Stable Families Initiative helped Tiffany Sherrod and her daughter find stable housing.



## 5 >> Half a Century of Care

THE COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY Health Care Center (CUHCC) is one of the University of Minnesota's oldest examples of a partnership with the urban community. Established by the U as a pediatric pilot project in 1966 in the Philips neighborhood of Minneapolis, CUHCC was the first community health care center in Minnesota. Its mission was to provide primary care to children and low-income families in South Minneapolis. Today, in addition to primary care, it offers dental, mental health, victim advocacy, and, through a partnership with a Twin Cities law firm, legal services.

As a department within the U's medical school, it also serves as a clinical training ground for health science students and medical residents. It's the largest urban primary care center in Minnesota, serving nearly 11,000 patients each year with over 55,000 visits annually. The population it serves comes from over 12 different racial and ethnic groups from five continents.

## 6 >> Creating the Region's Future

THE BOARD OF REGENTS established the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) in 1968 to strengthen the University's involvement in addressing the urban crises of the time. CURA embodies the philosophy that urban and regional issues are inextricably linked. Communities determine their priority issues and CURA connects them with the University's knowledge, expertise, and technical assistance so they can forge solutions together.

One particularly successful effort is the Resilient Communities Project (RCP). Led by cofounder and director Mike Greco, the program seeks applications annually from cities and counties that want to accomplish specific goals focused on long-term resilience and sustainability. Greco matches projects with applicable University courses and faculty, and students from those courses assist with projects for an entire academic year. Over the last five years, more than 50 departments across the University have been involved with RCP.

One example is RCP's partnership with the city of North St. Paul, which wanted to help older residents age in place. Greco matched the city with three University classes: the housing studies course Promoting Independence in Hous-



North St. Paul seniors met with gerontology graduate students from the U to talk about the challenges of aging in place. Students then made recommendations to city staff.

ing and Community; a social work class called Health, Disabilities, and Aging; and the gerontology course Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Aging. "Each discipline provided a unique perspective on what policies, programs, and services can help residents remain in the community and in their homes as they age and, collectively, the courses helped the University address the city's needs," Greco explains.

Last year's partner, Carver County, identified 29 different projects related to housing, transportation, public health, the environment, and other concerns that were matched with more than 50 University courses. This fall, RCP will begin

collaborating with Twin Cities suburb Brooklyn Park. "We don't just do one project and leave," says Greco. "This is a deep and intensive partnership that creates lasting relationships between faculty and the community."

One of the biggest advantages of this approach, Greco explains, is that engagement opens up the entire University to communities. "It's easy for people to look at a big institution like the U and not understand how it's relevant to them or how it impacts them," Greco adds. "This is an opportunity for people to see firsthand how research, teaching, and outreach can impact people's lives in a very real way."