

# Organizational and Community Characteristics Study

## Results

This study focused on answering the question, “What are the characteristics of PRCs related to staff, partner community, organizational and partnership structures, resources, leadership, and institutional environment?” The results provide most of the data needed to answer the following overarching evaluation question: What are the similarities and differences across PRCs concerning infrastructure, organizational factors, and how PRCs partner with communities and organizations? Data from indicators and other studies also help answer this question.

Each PRC sets up an infrastructure that suits its organizational needs, and each one does so within the environment of a different academic institution. The organizational characteristics describe both how the PRCs relate to their academic institutions and how the PRCs themselves are structured.

The results from this study also describe PRC communities, which are located across the country. Each PRC partners with a community to accomplish the center’s research, training, and other goals, and the partner community is defined as determined by each PRC. The PRCs partner with largely underserved communities to address health disparities and often overlooked health needs.

The findings are organized in three sections:

- Characteristics of the Structure, Resources, and Support of the PRCs’ Academic Institutions
- Aspects of the PRCs’ Organizational Structures
- Characteristics of the PRCs’ Partner and Core Research Communities

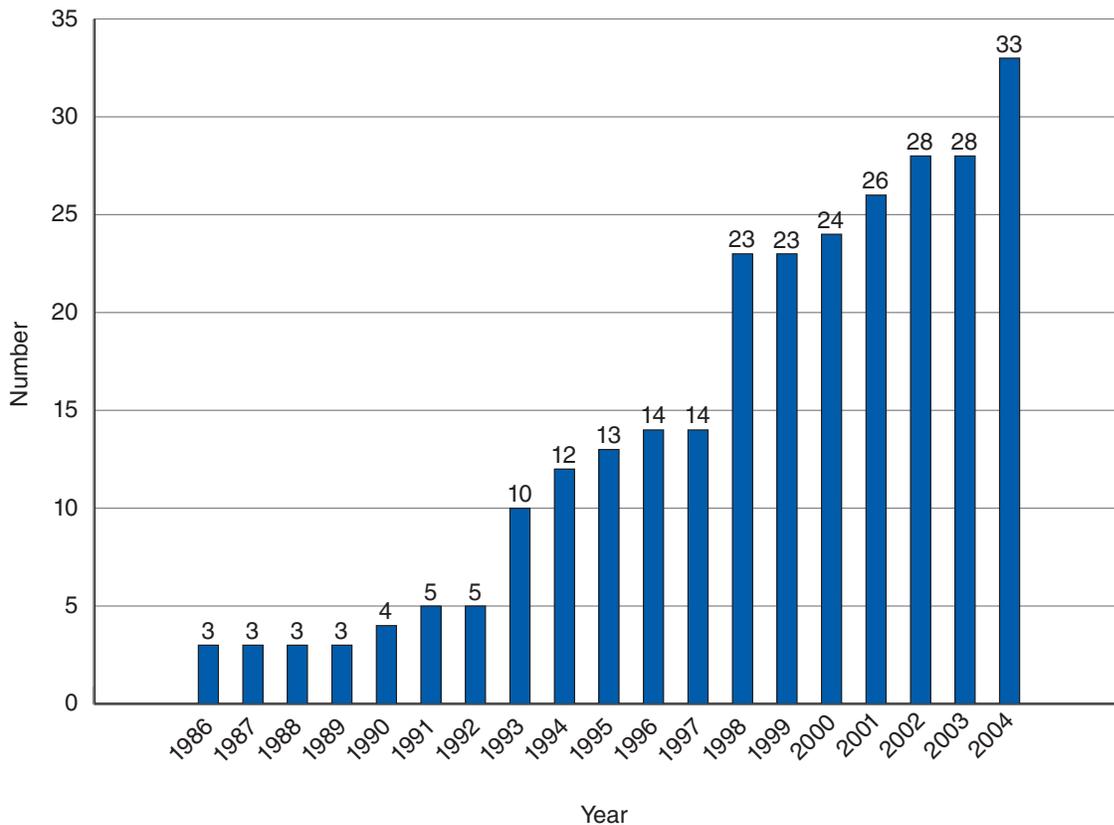
The text notes when findings resulted from the document review or the interviews.

## Characteristics of the Structure, Resources, and Support of the PRCs' Academic Institutions

### *Types of Academic Institutions (Document Review)*

PRCs are funded for five-year cycles, and they must reapply each funding cycle. The first three PRCs were funded in 1986 (Figure R-1), and the next funding cycle begins in 2009. Additional centers were added to the network almost every year beginning in 1990. No centers have been added since 2004.

Figure R-1. Number of Funded PRCs, by Year

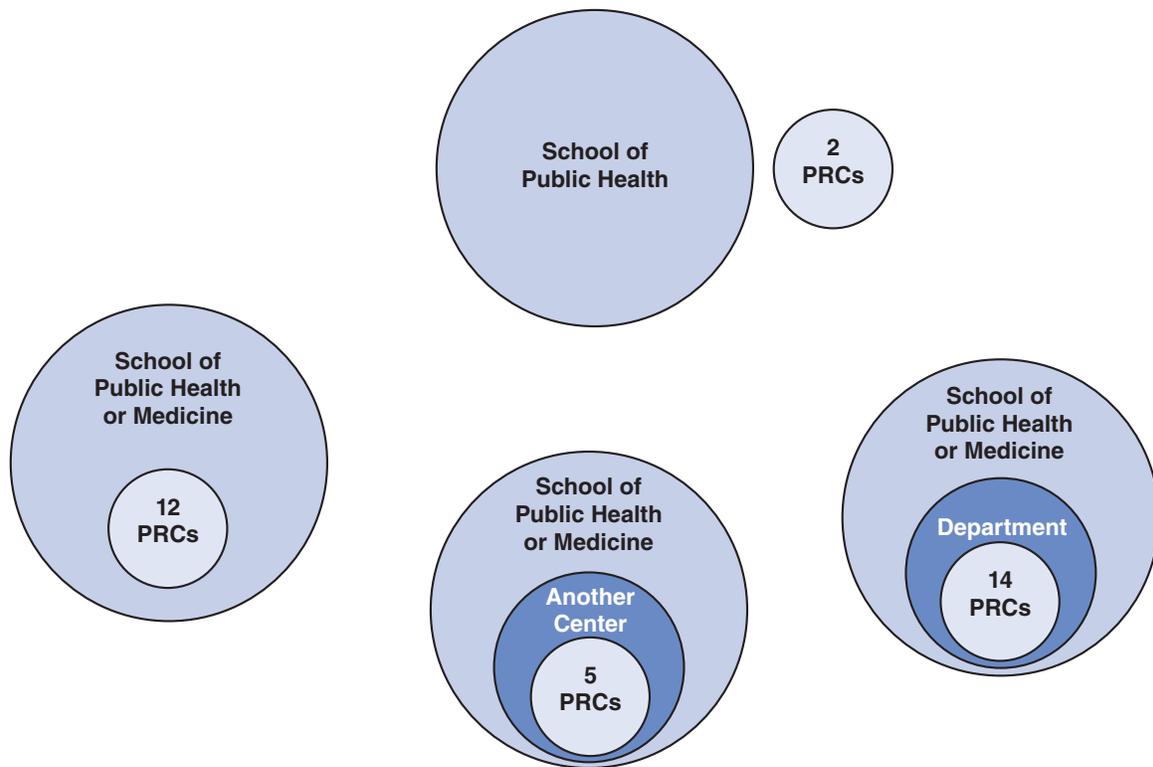


Source: CDC PRC Program Web site.

Funding for each PRC is provided by CDC through a cooperative agreement with the center's academic institution. As required by law, the fiscal agent of each PRC is a school of public health or a school of medicine or osteopathy with a department of preventive medicine. Twenty-five of the 33 PRCs funded in the 2004-2009 cycle were funded through schools of public health, and 8 were funded through schools of medicine. Twenty-three PRCs were in public academic institutions, and of those, 7 were land-grant institutions; 10 PRCs were in private academic institutions. Table R-1 (Appendix H) lists the 33 PRCs and identifies characteristics of each.

The PRCs funded in the 2004-2009 cycle had four types of relationships to their academic hosts (Figure R-2): a center external to a school of public health’s organizational structure, although funded through the school; freestanding within a school of public health or medicine; within another center; or within a department. The number of PRCs to which each configuration applies is given in the figure.

**Figure R-2. PRCs’ Locations within Academic Institutions’ Organizational Structures**



Source: PRC Web sites, university or school Web site, fiscal year 2004 PRC applications.

***Cost of Living in the Locations of the PRCs’ Academic Institutions (Document Review)***

Cost of living may have implications for employing and maintaining staff and faculty members, and the overall cost of doing business at the location. Table R-2 in Appendix H shows the range of cost of living in the cities of PRCs’ academic institutions. The table lists PRCs from lowest to highest cost of living; College Station, Texas, and Houston, Texas (Texas A&M University and University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, respectively), were the two lower-bound cities, and New York, New York (Columbia University), was the single upper-bound city. The median was Morgantown, West Virginia.

### *Indirect Rates (Document Review and Academic Interview Respondents—Interview Guide 3)*

Indirect cost rates are negotiated between an academic institution and the federal government, and they represent the proportion of a grant or cooperative agreement funds subtracted from the grant to help cover the academic institution’s general operating expenses. Indirect rates are calculated as a percentage of the grant’s direct costs, which are expenses associated directly with the conduct and operation of the grant or cooperative agreement. Table R-3 shows the range of institutional indirect rates charged by the 33 PRC academic institutions, as reported on the PRCs’ budget requests for fiscal year 2007. Because not all direct costs are subject to an indirect rate, the evaluators calculated the actual indirect rate for each PRC.\*

**Table R-3. Indirect Rates at PRCs’ Academic Institutions (N = 33 PRCs)**

Type of Indirect Rate	Percentage of Indirect Costs Rates		
	Range	Mean (SD)	Median
Institutional indirect cost rate	8–64	40 (14)	46
Actual indirect cost rate	6–47	25 (9)	26

SD = Standard deviation.

Source: Fiscal year 2007 PRC core budgets.

A few respondents reported that their PRCs received lower indirect cost rates as an incentive for researchers to conduct research through the PRC.

Sometimes, universities return some money they receive from indirect rates. Most of the nine PRC representatives interviewed reported receiving some indirect costs back from their academic institutions; from the core funding award, respondents who could cite a specific number reported a return of 7% to 28%. In interviews, none of the respondents reported that the academic institutions that return indirect costs to the PRCs distinguish between core or special interest projects (SIPs) or other grants. A few respondents said indirect costs are returned to faculty members who use the money to support PRC research or infrastructure. Respondents said that few, if any, restrictions apply to how PRCs spend money they receive as returned indirect costs with the one exception that the money could not be used as salary support for permanent staff.

Among PRCs whose indirect costs are not returned, respondents stated that the academic institution would lose money on grants or that it wanted to keep the money for its own infrastructure.

Universities also have different rules about grants that restrict the indirect rate a university can charge, which could affect a PRC’s ability to apply for some supplemental grants. One respondent mentioned that an academic institution may avoid applying for grants that cap indirect cost rates because they may cost the academic institution more to administer than the funding supplied by the grant.

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\* Actual indirect cost rate = 100 – (direct cost/total cost)

### *Resources Received from Academic Institutions (Academic Interview Respondents—Interview Guide 3)*

Respondents were asked about the types of resources that their host institutions made available to their PRCs. Most respondents said their PRCs received some form of in-kind support or resources, primarily as office space, facilities, and services (e.g., information technology, travel support, general administration of grants, and personnel). One respondent received funds to pay staff salaries. In contrast, one respondent said the PRC had not received any resources from the academic institution; however, this respondent also said the PRC was well supported by grant funds from other sources.

Most respondents said no restrictions were placed on how the resources were used (e.g., whether they must support core projects, SIPs, or other projects).

Displaced faculty salary dollars result when funds that an academic institution originally designated for faculty salaries are freed because faculty members cover some portion of their salaries from grants or other funding. How this money is handled differed by academic institution. A few respondents said the money was returned to the institution or to the faculty member's department (or both). Some respondents noted that faculty members could use the displaced dollars to "buy out" of teaching, which gave them more time to spend on research related to the PRC. One respondent mentioned that displaced funds could be used to pay the summer salary for a faculty member on a 9-month calendar.

### *Support for and Barriers to Community-Based Participatory Research at PRCs' Academic Institutions (Academic Interview Respondents—Interview Guide 3)*

Regarding academic institutions' support for community-based participatory research (CBPR), respondents reported an underlying tension between PRCs, their academic institutions, and their communities. However, most respondents thought that their institutions were supportive of CBPR—in theory if not in practice. However, only a few respondents could provide concrete ways their academic institutions demonstrated support for CBPR. For example, one respondent reported that the institution added a community member to the academic institution's institutional review board (IRB):

[The community researcher on the IRB has] been very helpful for supporting the conduct of prevention research....We are no longer coming in and having to start from scratch, re-explaining what we're doing each time we submit a protocol. So, that's a big improvement. So, the university..., I think, deserves credit for that.

Some respondents noted that their academic institutions saw community involvement as part of the institutional identity, and this view of community involvement has helped the PRC conduct CBPR. However, a few respondents questioned whether their academic institutions were truly committed to CBPR or whether they were likely to highlight the PRC's work to advance a particular agenda. One respondent described feeling uncomfortable when representatives of the academic institution held a meeting in the community to gain support for expansion and development within the community:

... it was almost like a sales job—trying to impress people that we really are about the community. And part of that, I think, is accurate and needs to be articulated more, but there needs to be, I think, the support backing up that talk with much more concrete programming and support.

Two other respondents sensed that CBPR was becoming increasingly important at their academic institutions. One of these respondents noted that, although no specific action had been taken, discussions were under way about how to incorporate CBPR into faculty tenure considerations.

Other facilitators of CBPR that some respondents mentioned included the following:

- Maintaining strong relationships with state and local health departments.
- Generating buy-in and interest from state office holders (e.g., the governor).
- Attention to, and interest in, the community on the part of the academic institution's leadership.

Overall, most respondents did not think their respective academic institutions inhibited the conduct of CBPR, and they characterized their academic institution as supportive of or neutral about CBPR. However, some respondents mentioned barriers. For example, a few respondents reported that an institution's emphasis on publication and academic productivity did not always fit the model of CBPR, which is slow paced and does not lend itself to publication in the short term. Another barrier mentioned by a few respondents was the difficulty in finding an administrative mechanism at an institution for activities such as paying incentives to or hiring community members as staff. Two respondents mentioned a lack of coordination at the institution in tracking research being conducted in the community, which resulted in multiple academic departments or institutions involving the same community in their separate research without knowing about the other researchers' work. Furthermore, difficulties in one project created setbacks for other projects, as described here:

People also have to realize that when they do something negative, when there's a misstep, when there's some confusion, when a request isn't honored or whatever it is, it not only reflects on them, it reflects on everybody that's associated with the university....[It] lasts far longer than some of these programs exist, so that sometimes you go into a situation, you end up having to undo the damage that somebody else did several months before.

### *Credit from the Academic Institution for Work Conducted by the PRC (Academic Interview Respondents—Interview Guide 3)*

Most respondents stated that the PRC's work was highlighted by the academic institution in newsletters and press releases as well as through grants and publications. Most respondents were satisfied with the level of recognition; one respondent stated,

I don't think we're any less recognized than any other entity on campus, it's just a question of how do you get on the radar screen....We certainly work hard and our communication person works hard to make sure that we're on the radar screen.

However, a few respondents said their PRCs needed to do a better job of publicizing their work and that improved communication would promote their work. As one respondent stated,

...one of our major priorities is to increase our visibility within the university as a valued center of research and to be seen as something bigger and important to the university in terms of its relationship with the communities and the region.

A few respondents thought that their academic institution needed to do a better job of sharing credit with the PRC for the community-based research conducted and for research dollars that come in through the PRC. Two respondents stated that their academic institution publicized the PRC for fundraising purposes, but its use did not necessarily translate into material support for or recognition of the PRC.

## Aspects of the PRCs’ Organizational Structures

To gain insight into each PRC’s organizational structure, the evaluators examined organizational charts, staff lists, and reports submitted by the PRCs to the PRC Program office. The reviewers identified three main aspects of the PRCs’ organizational structures: (1) PRC faculty and staff, (2) the division of labor, and (3) community committee involvement in PRCs’ organization. Interviews with academic respondents helped further describe the PRCs’ organizational structures.

### *PRC Faculty and Staff (Document Review)*

Across all centers, PRCs employed 581 faculty and staff members, filling 231 full time equivalent positions. Table R-4 shows the total number of employees and full time equivalent positions at all PRCs and at each center.

**Table R-4. PRCs’ Staffing**

Type	Number			
	Total	Range	Mean (SD)	Median
Faculty and staff members	581	9–37	18 (6)	17
Full time equivalent positions	231	2–12	7 (2)	7

Source: Fiscal year 2007 PRC core budgets.

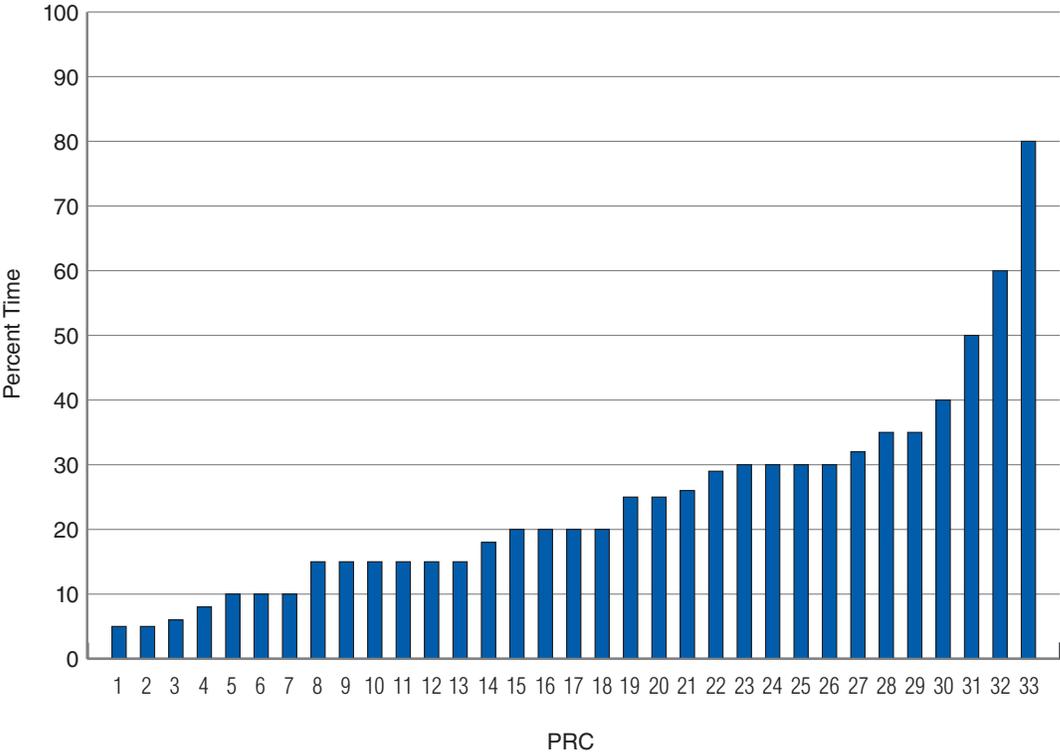
The percentage of time allocated to the PRC’s key activities by selected faculty and staff (based on fiscal year 2007 budget documents) is listed in Table R-5. Figure R-3 shows the percentage of the principal investigator’s or director’s time that is designated for funding across the 33 PRCs; the range is substantial.

**Table R-5. Number of PRCs Having a Faculty or Staff Position and the Percent Time Each Position Is Funded**

Number	Position	Percent Time		
		Range	Mean (SD)	Median
33	Center PI or director	5–80	25 (16)	20
14	Deputy director (involved in research)	20–100	57 (29)	55
16	Center administrator or managing director (non-research)*	7–100	68 (31)	73
39	PI of core research	1–100	28 (23)	20
12	Community liaison†	25–100	71 (31)	80
35	Evaluator*	10–100	42 (32)	25

SD = Standard deviation; PI = Principal investigator.  
 Source: Fiscal year 2007 PRC core budgets.  
 \* Percent time is unknown for 2 people.  
 † Percent time is unknown for 3 people.

**Figure R-3. Percent Time Center PI or Director Is Funded by PRC**



Source: Fiscal year 2007 PRC core budgets.

Of the 14 PRCs first funded in 1986 through 1997, 5 (36%) have had one center director or PI and 5 have had 3 or more. Of the 19 PRCs first funded in 1998 through 2004, 11 (58%) have had one PI or director and only 1 had 3 or more. Sixteen PRCs have retained the same PI or director since initial funding (Table R-6).

**Table R-6. Number of Directors at PRCs, by Initial Funding Year**

Year	Number (%) of PRCs by number of PRC directors		
	1	2	3 or more
1986-1997	5 (36)	4 (29)	5 (36)
1998-2004	11 (58)	7 (37)	1 (5)

Source: PRC Project Officers.

### *Division of Labor and Leadership Positions (Document Review)*

PRCs' staff lists (from budget documents and the PRC information system [IS]) and organizational charts provided data on faculty and leadership staff at each PRC (Table R-7). Each PRC validated its list, and only the most common leadership positions are included.

**Table R-7. Number of Faculty or Staff in Each Leadership Position and the Number of PRCs Having that Position**

Position type	Number of faculty or staff	Number (%) of PRCs
Center principal investigator or director	33	33 (100)
Deputy director (involved in research)	14	14 (42)
Center administrator or managing director (non-research)	16	16 (48)
Principal investigator of core research	40	33 (100)
Evaluator	31	28 (85)
Community liaison	12	11 (33)
Communication and dissemination lead	20	18 (55)
Training and education lead	19	17 (52)
Collaborations and partnerships lead	5	5 (15)

Source: Fiscal year 2007 PRC core budgets, fiscal year 2006 PRC IS, organizational charts, and leadership staff lists provided by PRCs.

Using the PRCs’ leadership lists and associated resumes or curriculum vitae, the evaluators inventoried academic degrees, disciplines, and ranks of faculty and staff (Tables R-8a and R-9). Table R-8b is an expanded version of Table R-8a and includes the frequency of educational disciplines (Appendix H).

**Table R-8a. PRCs’ Leaders by Educational Attainment**

Position	Highest graduate degree					
	MD	PhD	DrPH	Other doctoral-level degree	Master’s-level or other graduate degree	No graduate degree
Center principal investigator or director	11	21	1	0	0	0
Deputy director (involved in research)	0	6	2	0	5	1
Center administrator or managing director (non-research)	0	1	0	0	9	6
Principal investigator of core research	7	27	2	3	0	1
Evaluator	1	21	3	1	5	0

Source: Faculty and staff resumes.

Table R-9 lists the academic rank of each of these leaders. About two-thirds of center PIs and half of core research PIs are full professors. About one-third of administrators are non-faculty.

**Table R-9. PRCs’ Leaders by Academic Rank**

Position	Academic rank				
	Full professor	Associate professor	Assistant professor	Adjunct/research faculty	Non-faculty staff
Center PI or director	23	7	3	0	0
Deputy director (involved in research)	0	3	4	3	4
Center administrator or managing director (non-research)	0	1	1	2	12
PI of core research	16	6	14	2	1
Evaluator	4	8	6	7	6

Position names may not match faculty and staff titles.  
Source: Faculty and staff resumes.

Using the PRCs' leadership lists, the evaluators identified patterns of oversight for key PRC activities. The PRCs engage in five main activities, which are outlined in the cooperative agreement and reflect the PRC Program's logic model (Appendix A): research, evaluation, training and technical assistance, collaboration and partnerships, and communication and dissemination. Although many PRCs assign roles by the five activities, others have a single position in charge of two or more activities. The following areas of overlap are the most common:

- Research with evaluation
- Training and technical assistance with collaboration and partnerships
- Communication and dissemination with collaboration and partnerships

Other terms used by several PRCs to describe activities similar to training and technical assistance and collaboration and partnerships are "education," "capacity building," and "community relations and outreach."

### *Community Committees in PRCs' Organizational Structures (Document Review)*

Community committees are integral to the PRCs. The committees are intended to represent the PRCs' partner and core research communities and provide a community perspective on PRCs' activities. Evaluators used the PRCs' organizational charts and other documents to characterize the committees' relationships with PRCs' academic leaders and noted whether the committee serves in an advisory or leadership capacity. The evaluators characterized the role as "leadership" for community committees situated on an organizational chart at the same level as the center director or PI, or if they were described in applications, progress reports, or other reviewed documents as having a role equal to that of the PRC's academic leaders in most, if not all, PRC activities. The evaluators identified the role as "advisory" when the community committees were described in documents as providing input, advice, or feedback on one or more PRC activity (i.e., core research). Most PRCs (79%) are organized so that community committees have an advisory role; 21% of the PRCs are structured so that the community committee and academic partners have equal roles in centerwide activities and decisions. While these data reflect an organizational structure, they may not reflect the actual level of community committee input.

### *PRC Organizational Structures (Academic Interview Respondents—Interview Guide 3)*

Interviews with academic representatives also helped describe several aspects of the PRCs' organization. Of the nine PRCs represented in these interviews, five were established before 1993.

The PRCs greatly varied in how they operated within their academic institutions and with their core research communities. The following themes emerged from the interviews and are discussed below:

- The importance of a staffing structure that supports a PRC's administrative functions as well as research functions.
- The importance of active community engagement in the PRC.
- Location of the PRC in relation to the community and the academic institution.
- The importance of communication across the PRC.

### *Staffing Structure of the PRC*

Respondents described a struggle between attending to PRC-related administrative duties and engaging in research and with the community. Most respondents reported finding effective ways to manage this struggle. A few respondents described staffing structures that clearly delineated administrative duties as separate from other PRC functions, such as research and community engagement. These PRCs had permanent support staff whose responsibilities included grant administration, information system (IS) reporting, and other administrative responsibilities; these staff freed researchers and academics (who also may have had teaching responsibilities) from serving as administrators. One respondent provided an example in which administrative support staff were important to the PRC:

I think it's been helpful ...to have the business office and the administrative offices here with the projects. I think it definitely helps with efficiency and communication.

Another respondent described a PRC that was hiring permanent support staff for administrative, evaluation, and biostatistical support. This respondent noted that supporting investigators in this way led to increased efficiency at the PRC and attracted more interest across the academic institution in conducting research through the PRC.

### *Community Engagement*

Respondents were not asked about community engagement in the discussion of organizational structures, however some respondents described the level of community engagement and where the community sits in terms of the organizational model as a key aspect of the structure or organization. A few respondents mentioned the importance of maintaining or achieving a balance between academic and community involvement, noting that this balance was sometimes an evolving process.

A few PRCs had to work to build productive relationships with their communities. Other PRCs had preexisting ties with their community partners, and these respondents described organizational models centered on the PRC's engagement with the community. For example, one PRC capitalized on its capacity to carry out research with the community by obtaining funding from other sources when PRC core dollars were scarce.

One respondent said that being the only organization working with a particular community enabled the researchers to develop a close working relationship with the community. However, this respondent also noted that the PRC's ability to efficiently carry out research was severely restricted because of challenges at the community level. A couple of challenges noted were community partners' limited access to transportation and child care. This respondent suggested that the PRC's experience might be a lesson to other research centers in terms of criteria for choosing a core research community (e.g., not working with communities in which the need is great but the infrastructure or capacity to conduct research is limited).

### *Physical Location of the PRC*

Respondents reported that the physical location of the PRC is an important aspect of how the PRC is organized and that it has implications for how the PRC interacts with its host institution and its community. One respondent described how the PRC moved from a location that was central to the academic institution to one that was central to the community. The respondent said that being in the academic setting was conducive to communication among researchers but that the PRC was somewhat isolated from the community, which created a gap that was hard to bridge. The PRC's physical move into the community enhanced its working relationship and ties with community partners, but reduced academic interactions:

I think...where we're located is an issue.... It's not like you walk down the hall and talk to people next to the water cooler. That doesn't happen. So, you have to make a conscious effort to make connections and so on. So, those kinds of...accidental connections with colleagues, where you run into them on the street or coming out of a lecture or something like that, don't happen as often or as much.

One respondent highlighted the importance of keeping PRC staff and research faculty connected. This respondent noted that the PRC had been consolidated in one office building (it was originally separated as research and administrative offices). The respondent stated,

One of the challenges that we have had through the years has been that our administrative offices have mostly been separate from our research team offices. So, we had a little bit of a complexity with just the spatial difference with getting communications. For example, a lot of people on the administrative team or...in the business office really didn't know the people on the research teams. There was just sort of a disconnect.

This respondent also described how once the offices were combined, communication and efficiency increased.

### *Communication*

A few respondents said communication was critical to a PRC's structure. These respondents noted that communication was important both internally and externally, and they talked about putting mechanisms in place to facilitate communication:

We found that people...didn't know the work of the other research teams. They knew their projects very well and their project team, but they really weren't aware of the other projects and the expertise of other research teams. And so, one of the things that we have done is really try to improve our communications, both with people internal to the PRC...as well as externally. I think we do a lot of very good work here, but I don't think we do a really good job of communicating that work.

Another respondent said the PRC addressed some internal communication issues by holding regular meetings to keep staff and faculty members informed of all activities taking place across the PRC. These meetings not only informed PRC members but also created a record for reporting purposes. The respondent stated,

Individual components have their meetings, but we have a monthly what we call the all-[PRC] meeting, and each person who is in charge of one of those areas fills out a template that says what activities they've been engaged in in the last month. If there are any action items for consideration, there are action items down there. And so, everybody knows what everybody else is doing and [is] kept up to date.

## Characteristics of the PRCs' Partner and Core Research Communities

The partners at each PRC defined “community” to describe how it applied to their center. PRCs had both partner and core research communities. The partner communities were those in which the PRCs intended to have an overall impact and in which PRC activities took place (e.g., training, evaluation, or other activities). The core research communities were those in which PRCs conducted their core research project. Characteristics such as distance between the community and the PRC’s academic institution, racial or ethnic identity, and socioeconomic status differed among the communities. This section describes characteristics of both the partner and core research communities.

### *Number of Partner Communities by Geographic Characteristics*

A total of 66 PRC-defined partner communities existed within 322 counties and 26 states. The number of communities each PRC defined ranged from 1 to 12 (mean = 2 and median = 1). Most PRCs worked within the state in which their center’s academic institution was located. These PRCs may have partnered with community members from a particular neighborhood or region of the city; across a single city or county; or across multiple cities, counties, or parishes. For example, one PRC’s partner community was defined by areas from which its partner school districts drew students (comprising two towns). Two PRCs’ partner communities were statewide, and one PRC partnered with two entire states (Table R-10).

**Table R-10. Number of PRCs by Geographic Description of Partner Communities**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Number</b>
City region or neighborhood	7
City, town, or county	10
Multiple cities, towns, counties, parishes, or state region	9
Statewide or multiple states	3
Counties in multiple states	1
Tribal organizations or regional Indian reservations	2
Ethnic population throughout the United States	1

Source: U.S. Census 2000, fiscal year 2004 PRC applications, fiscal year 2007 PRC Work Plans, and fiscal year 2005 PRC Progress Reports.

Most PRCs work in rural or urban areas, and several work in more than one type of area (Table R-11).

**Table R-11. Number of PRCs by Partner Communities in Specific Geographic Areas**

<b>Geographic area</b>	<b>Number</b>
Rural	21
Urban	19
Suburban	10
U.S.-Mexico border regions	6
Tribal organizations	6
Frontier	4

Source: U.S. Census 2000, fiscal year 2004 PRC applications, fiscal year 2007 PRC Work Plans, and fiscal year 2005 PRC Progress Reports.

Each PRC provided data on the travel distance between its academic institution and its farthest partner community (Table R-12).

**Table R-12. Maximum Travel Distance Between PRCs’ Academic Institutions and Partner Communities**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Distance</b>		
	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>	<b>Median</b>
Miles	0–1,765	179 (335)	75
Hours	0–25	2.63 (4.42)	1.42

Excludes 1 PRC whose community is throughout the entire United States.  
SD = Standard deviation.

Source: Travel distance calculated using Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com/>).

*Partner Communities by Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics (Document Review)*

To collect demographic data on the 66 PRC-defined partner communities, the evaluators matched each community to geographic units (e.g., census tracts, counties, towns) for which standard and demographic data are collected. The match identified 153 geographical units. The evaluators identified 135 geographically defined communities in which PRCs conduct their core research. Most of the core research communities overlap with or are a subset of the partner communities, but some are not located within the partner community. The evaluators also included core research control or comparison communities if the core research design included plans to conduct an intervention (delayed or concurrent alternate) in these communities.

*Demographic Makeup (Document Review)*

The total population of communities in which the PRCs’ core research takes place exceeds 32 million (Table R-13).

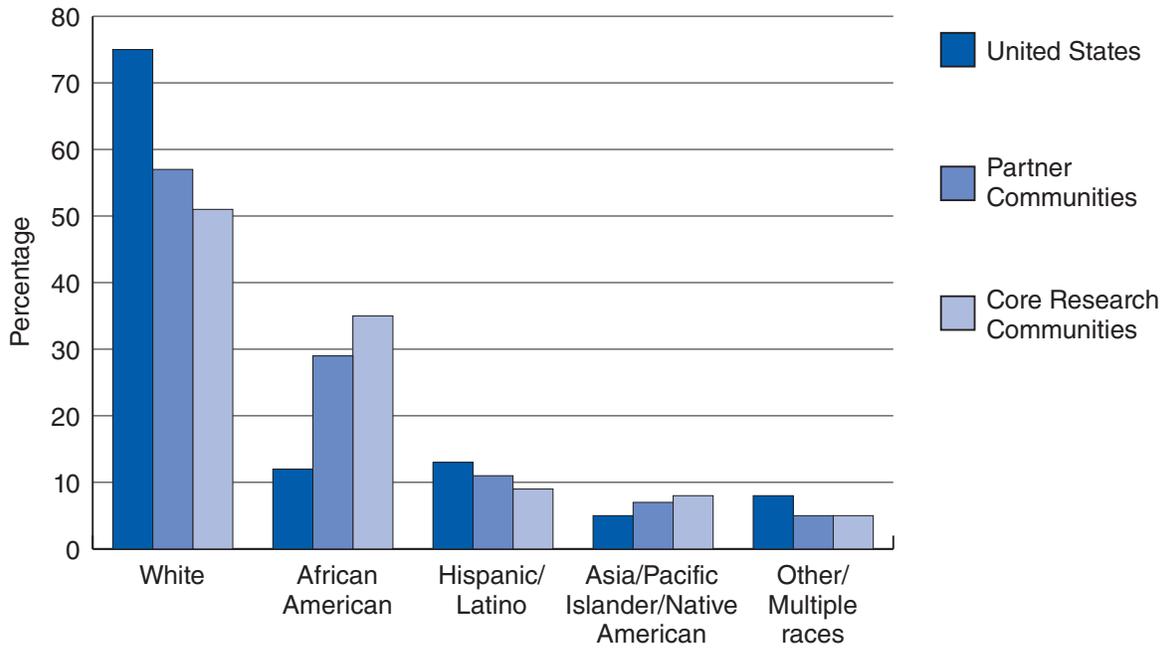
**Table R-13. Population of PRC Partner Communities (N = 146) and PRC Core Research Communities (N = 128)**

Type of community	Number of people			
	Total	Range	Mean (SD)	Median
Partner	40,997,416	781–9,519,338	280,804 (1,203,886)	16,050
Core research	32,174,410	781–9,519,338	251,363 (1,081,530)	18,766

Data were missing for 7 partner and 7 core research communities associated with 3 PRCs.  
 SD = Standard deviation.  
 Source: U.S. Census 2000.

Many PRCs focus their activities on populations that are underserved, have low income, or have more health risks than the national average. Figure R-4 and Table R-14 (Appendix H) show the racial and ethnic distribution of the PRCs’ communities. On average, the proportion of African Americans, and of Asians, Pacific Islanders, or American Indians, was higher in the PRCs’ communities than in the United States as a whole.

Figure R-4. Percentage of PRC Partner Communities (N = 147), PRC Core Research Communities (N = 129), and the United States by Race or Ethnicity

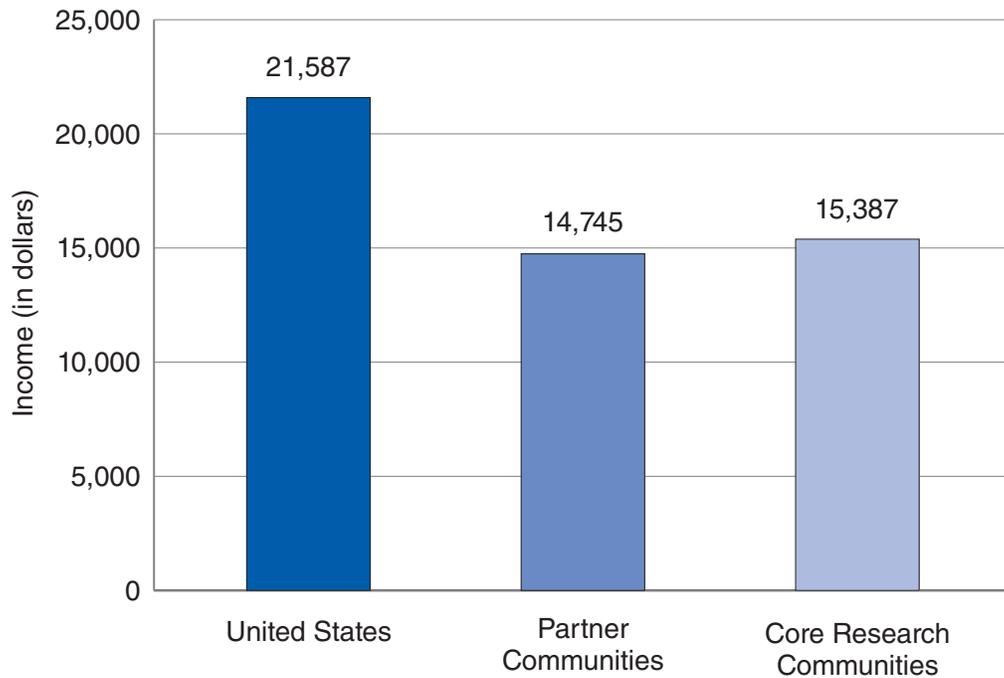


Data were missing for 6 partner communities and 6 core research communities associated with 3 PRCs.  
 Source: U.S. Census 2000.

### *Socioeconomic Makeup (Document Review)*

The mean per capita income of PRC communities is lower (by about one-third) than the U.S. average (Figure R-5; Table R-15 [Appendix H] also shows the range and median). Across all the PRCs' communities, 80% have a mean per capita income that is lower than the corresponding state and national averages (data not shown). Similarly, as shown in Figure R-6 and Table R-16 (Appendix H), PRCs' partner and core research communities have higher unemployment rates, on average, than the U.S. average.

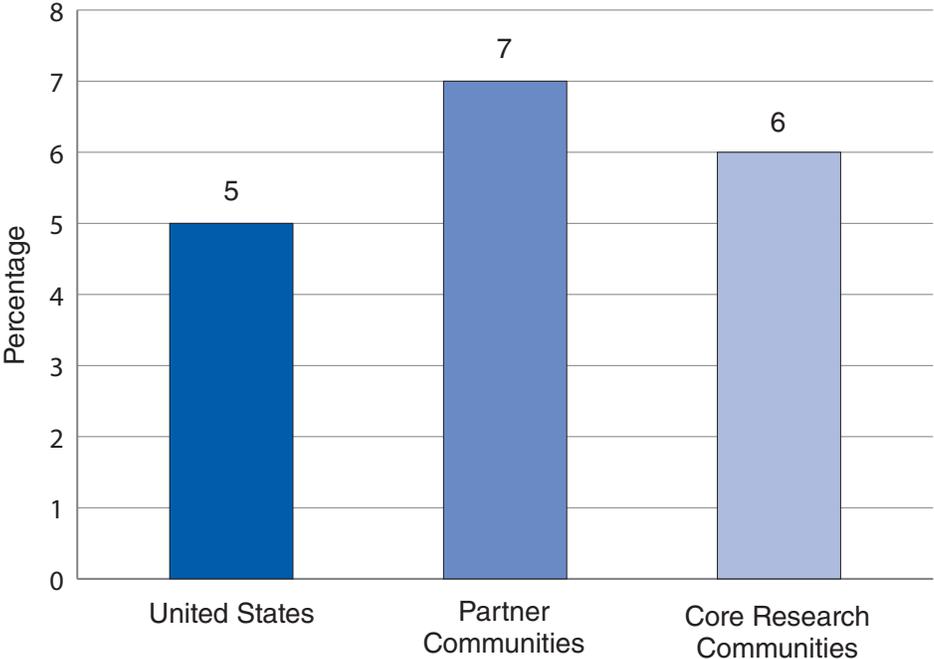
**Figure R-5. Mean Per Capita Income for PRC Partner Communities (N = 134), PRC Core Research Communities (N = 119), and the United States**



Data were missing for 19 partner communities and 16 core research communities associated with 5 and 4 PRCs, respectively.

Source: U.S. Census 2000.

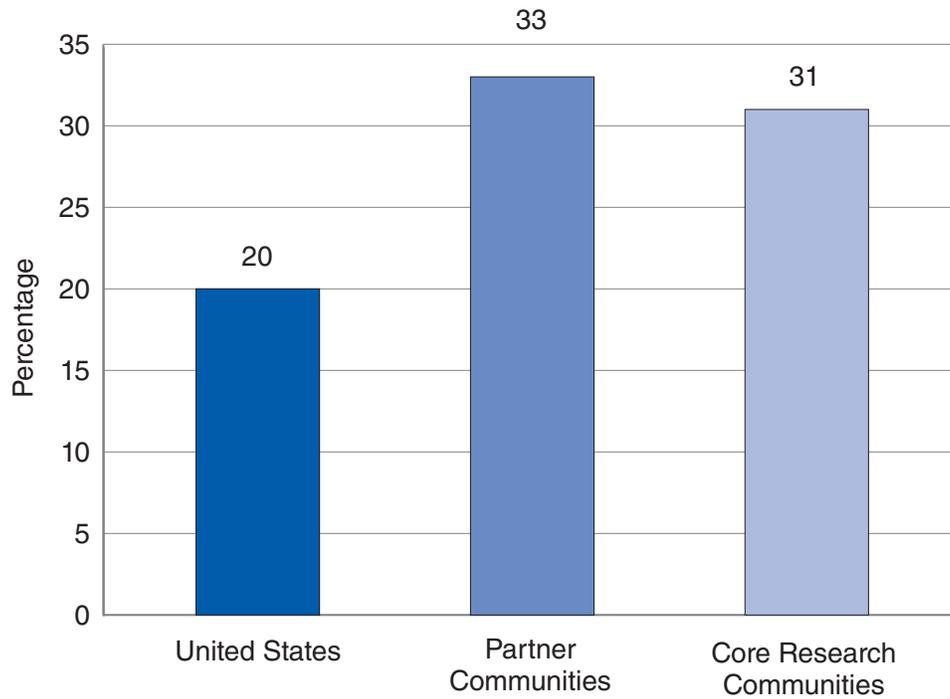
Figure R-6. Mean Unemployment Rate for PRC Partner Communities (N = 136), PRC Core Research Communities (N = 118), and the United States



Data were missing for 17 partner communities and 17 core research communities associated with 5 PRCs. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2005 County and State Data Tables for all but 4 partner and core research communities for which U.S. Census 2000 was used.

On average, the proportion of the PRCs' partner and core research communities with persons over 25 years old lacking a high school diploma is greater than in the U.S. population (Figure R-7; Table R-17, Appendix H).

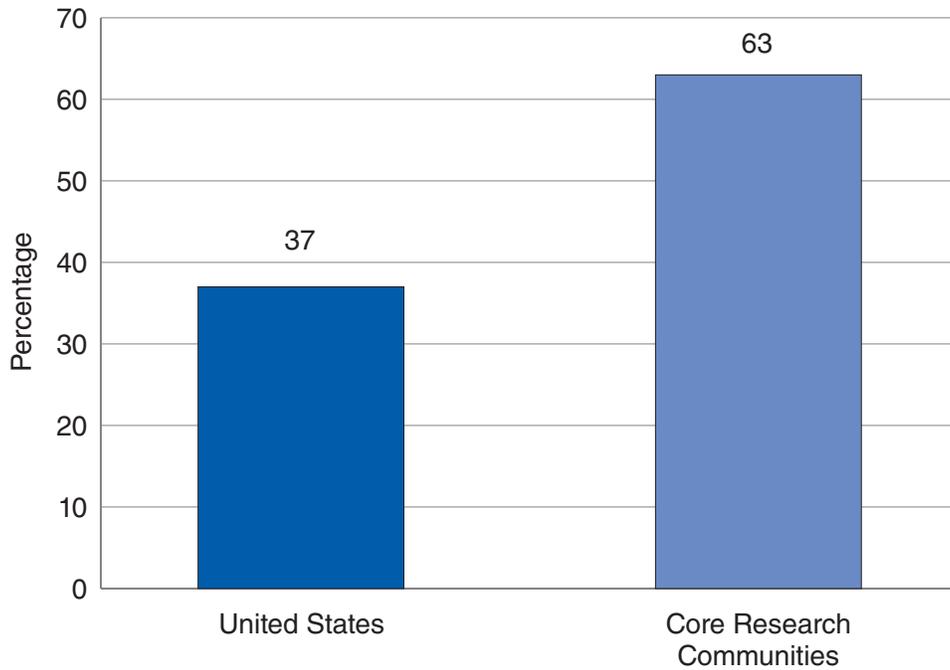
**Figure R-7. Mean Percentage of Persons Age 25 and Over Without a High School Diploma for PRC Partner Communities (N = 132), PRC Core Research Communities (N = 116), and the United States**



Data were missing for 21 partner communities and 19 core research communities associated with 7 PRCs.  
Source: U.S. Census 2000.

Seventeen PRCs conduct core research or some aspect of their core research in schools. The evaluators identified 64 geographically defined core research communities associated with these schools or school districts. In the communities for which data were available, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced school lunch ranged from 20% to 95%, mean = 63% (Figure R-8). The U.S. average is 37%.

**Figure R-8. Mean Eligibility for Free or Reduced School Lunch for PRC Core Research in Schools (N = 53) and the United States**



Data were missing or incomplete for 11 core research communities.  
Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Data Tables, School Year 2004-2005.

# Organizational and Community Characteristics Study

## Discussion

This section discusses three overarching topics: resources, infrastructure and organization, and characteristics of the partner and core research communities.

### PRC Resources

- All PRCs receive core dollars from CDC to cover costs associated with the five key activities of research, evaluation, training and technical assistance, collaboration and partnerships, and communication and dissemination.
- Factors that influence a PRC's ability to stretch those dollars include cost of living in the city in which the PRC is located and support provided by the academic institution in which the PRC is located.

### *Cost of Living*

- The cost of living, which varies across PRCs, may influence both the attraction and retention of faculty and staff.
- PRCs located in cities with one and one-half times the cost of living in other locations may find a large proportion of their budget allocated to faculty and staff salaries. However, those PRCs may be better able to attract faculty and staff because they are generally located in desirable, high-density cities.

### *Academic Institutional Support for PRCs and CBPR*

- Academic institutions demonstrate support for PRCs in many ways, including reducing indirect cost rates, providing resources, and offering public recognition or credit to a PRC for its work.
- Data on indirect cost rates provide some information about the fiscal challenges and opportunities of PRCs. The hypothesis is that PRCs with lower indirect cost rates have more money available to carry out the work of the PRC. However, a negotiated indirect cost rate or even the actual indirect cost rate might not provide an accurate estimate of resources available to conduct work at a given PRC. For example, an academic institution might return some of the dollars taken through indirect costs; another might provide financial support for faculty, staff, or students; yet another might provide administrative or other infrastructure support.
- A few PRC academic representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the level of support and recognition they receive, and they suggested the academic institution supported the PRC out of convenience rather than true commitment to the PRC or to CBPR.
  - CBPR is an evolving field, and academic institutions may have few models on which to base their support for and interest in expanding this type of research.
  - While many academic institutions enthusiastically support CBPR in theory, some have trouble translating this support into practice.

## *Recommendations*

- PRCs could share strategies on budgeting and on faculty and staff recruitment and retention.
- The PRC Program office could help identify and share activities PRC leaders use to gain institutional support for CBPR.
- The types of resources (such as financial, equipment, supplies, and technical support) each academic institution provides its PRC should be assessed to help understand both the availability and variability of resources and their effect on the center's budget.
- PRCs need to better communicate and promote their activities within their academic institutions, which could help elevate the importance of their activities and garner support for CBPR.

## **PRC Infrastructure and Organization**

This study revealed the organizational structures PRCs use to carry out their activities. The results show that leading a PRC involves much more than being the principal investigator of research activities. In addition to conducting research, PRC leaders contribute to the development and sustainability of academic-community partnerships and to the coordination of research with communication and dissemination, training, capacity building, and evaluation activities. Additionally, a PRC's organizational structure may provide the mechanism for accomplishing the key activities of the academic-community partnership.

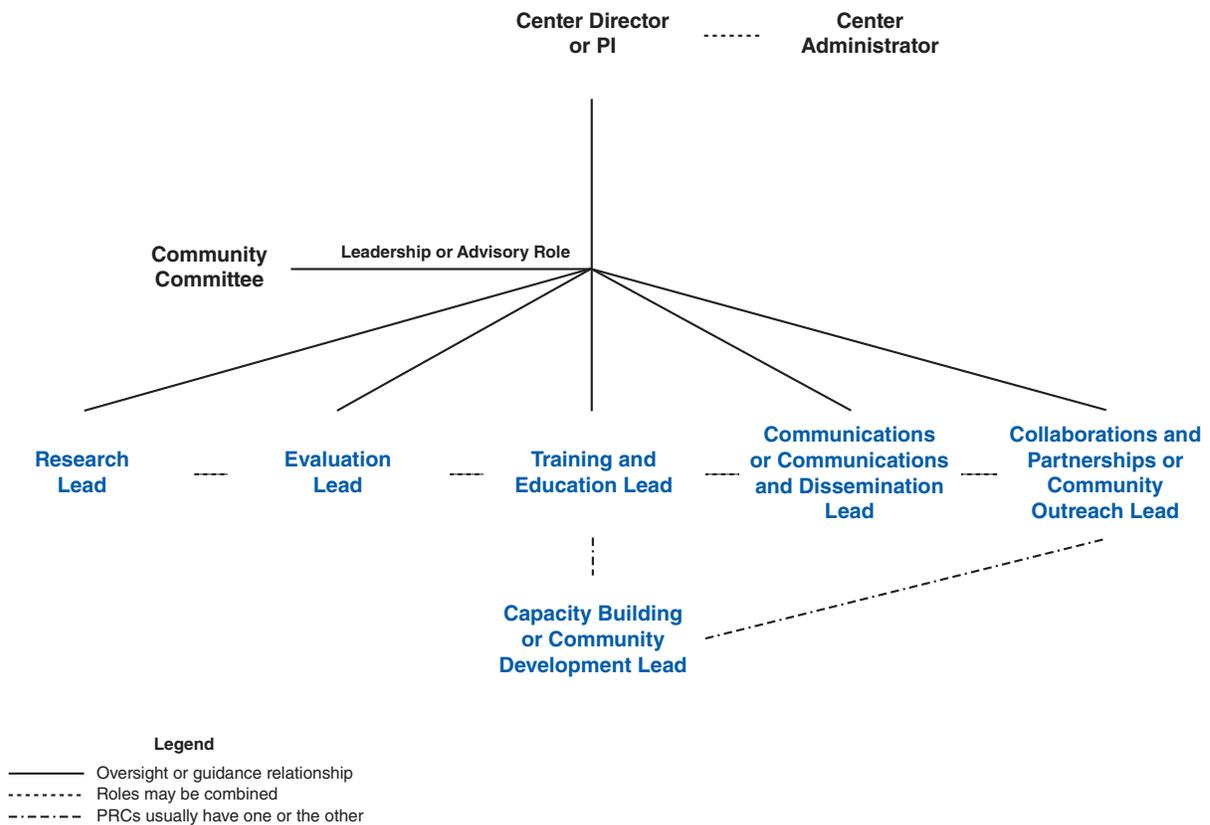
## *Staffing and Leadership*

- Across PRCs, the document review revealed both diversity in staffing structures and similarities in division of labor.
- A theme that emerged from the interviews concerned the value of having support staff responsible for administrative functions, such as PRC IS data entry and grants administration. Respondents from PRCs that have administrative staff, who free academic staff from administrative responsibilities, spoke less about such challenges interfering with research. One interviewee suggested PRCs may want to commit faculty or staff to community liaison, evaluation, or biostatistical support responsibilities. Many PRCs have designated these roles as leadership positions.
- The document review revealed that the PRCs' faculty and staff represent many disciplines. Most of the leaders were trained in public health and related fields (epidemiology, health education, and behavioral sciences), and many other professional fields were represented (psychology, sociology, social work, law, education, and anthropology).
  - All center PIs and directors and all but one PI of a core research project hold doctoral degrees. Most of these people are full professors or associate professors.
  - Other leaders have a range of graduate degrees and academic ranks, which may make PRCs a productive venue for training junior faculty.

### PRC Organizational Models

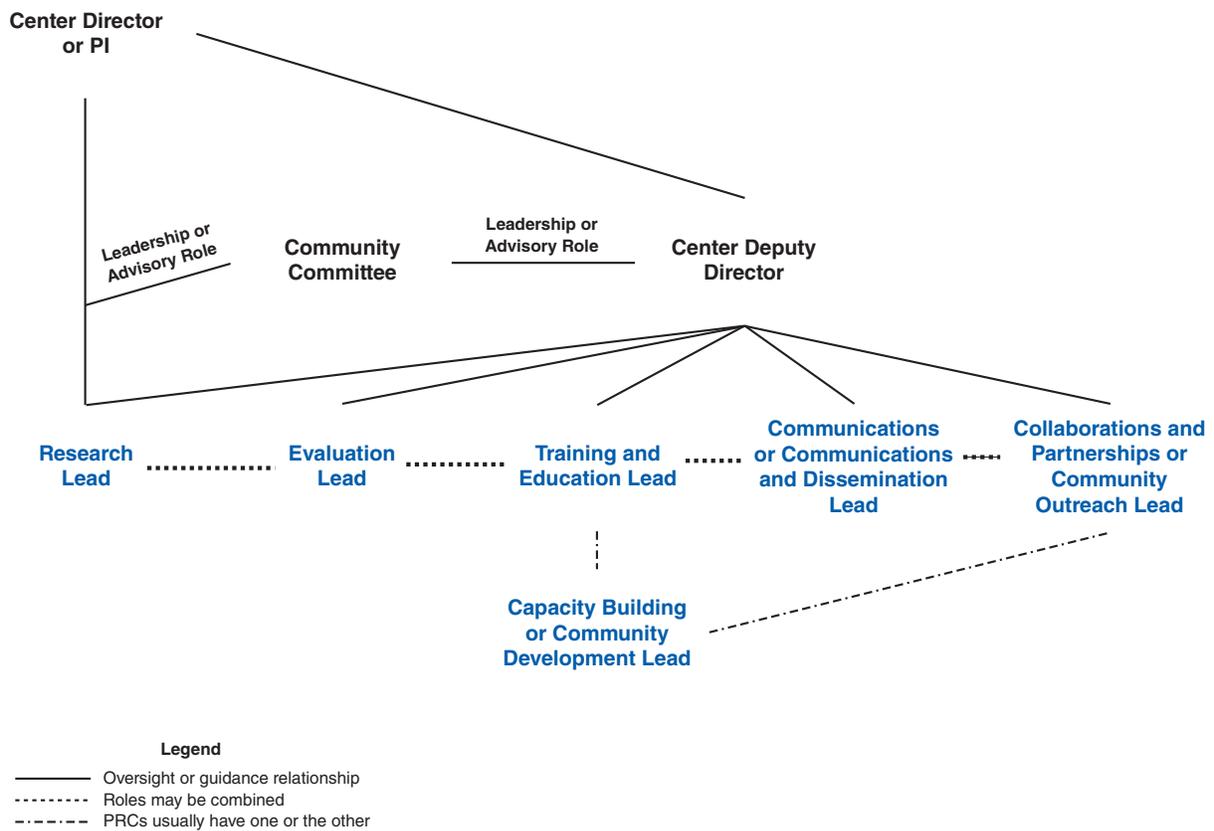
- Based on data related to staffing, division of labor, and leadership structures, three models of organizational structure emerged (Figures R-9a through R-9c).
  - All three models include leadership positions for the five key activities that PRCs engage in (research, evaluation, training and technical assistance, communication and dissemination, and collaboration and partnerships).
  - A solid line denotes a direct reporting relationship, a dotted line indicates that sometimes the two positions are filled by a single individual, and a dashed line indicates that PRCs have either one or the other.
- In all models, the level of community committees' involvement in research and other activities differs.
- In the Center Director Model (Figure R-9a), the PRC has leadership positions for each of the five key activities. The center director or principal investigator either has direct oversight of the five units or supervises a person or committee responsible for each activity. The community committee plays either a leadership or advisory role. There may be an administrator who provides administrative leadership to the overall PRC.

Figure R-9a. Center Director Model



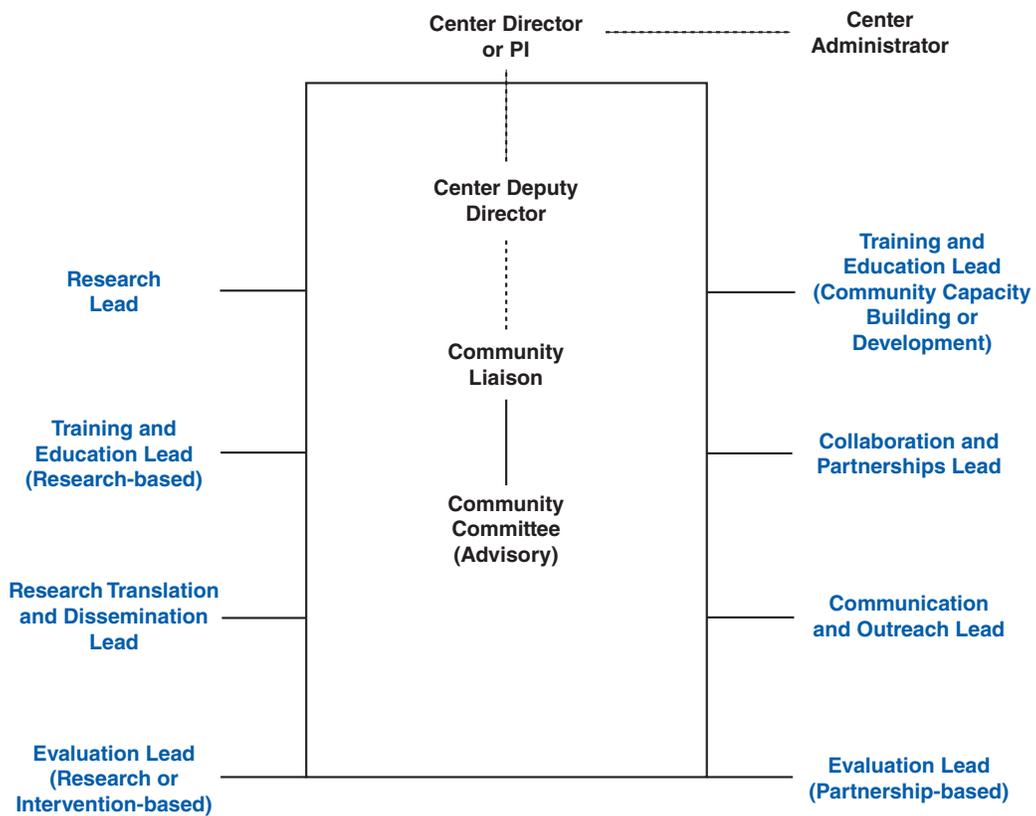
- In the Center Deputy Director Model (Figure R-9b), the deputy director provides direct oversight of the five key activity leaders. The center director or principal investigator is involved primarily in core and other research, and less involved in the overall management of the center. The deputy director serves as either an administrator or a manager of activities including research (as a principal investigator or co-principal investigator of a PRC's core or other research project). In this model, the community committee plays either a leadership or advisory role to the overall PRC through a link to the deputy director or the core research project.

Figure R-9b. Center Deputy Director Model



- In the Research and Community Organizational model (Figure R-9c), PRCs generally have two main categories of activities—one for research and one for community and partner engagement. The leadership positions are specific to each category, and a community committee or community liaison links the two categories and may act as an advisor for the research.

Figure R-9c. Research and Community Organizational Model



**Legend**  
 — Oversight or guidance relationship  
 - - - - Roles may be combined

### *PRC Organizational Variation*

- This study showed that the five key activities often overlap, that PRCs emphasize different activities, and that the role of the community committee differs.
- Figure R-10 provides an example of how these variables could be represented for the five key activities.
  - The size of each circle represents the level of emphasis placed on an activity; larger circles represent an activity to which a larger proportion of PRC and partner resources are allocated. In Figure R-10, the circles are about the same size, indicating an equal emphasis on all activities.
  - The intersection or overlap of the circles depicts the level to which the activities are integrated. In Figure R-10, evaluation, communication and dissemination, and research interact but evaluation activities are not integrated with collaboration and partnerships and training.
  - The different shades of the circles indicate different levels of community committee involvement in each activity. In Figure R-10, dark blue indicates substantial community involvement; a lighter shade shows less involvement.

**Figure R-10. Example of the Five Key Activities of the PRCs by Three Variables**



The variables are resource allocation (size of circle), integration (overlap of circle), and level of community involvement (shading of circle).

## *Recommendations*

Macro makes the following recommendations about PRCs' infrastructure and organization:

- PRCs could remove the primary responsibility for administrative activities from researchers, to allow increased efficiency and help attract researchers from across the university to conduct research through the PRC.
- Future evaluation could clarify the representativeness of the organizational models, explore how PRCs structure themselves to engage communities and partners, and determine how the key activities relate to and support research.
- Future evaluation could create a Venn diagram for each PRC, which would likely produce 33 unique models of organization and help understand the similarities, differences, and benefits of different organizational structures. This analysis could reveal how PRCs structure themselves.

## **PRC Partner and Core Research Communities**

The data on the PRCs' partner and core research communities show the breadth of the communities.

### *Geographic characteristics*

- The PRCs have extensive reach into the U.S. population and a wide variety of communities, no matter how the word is defined.
- The data suggest potential challenges to PRCs, such as conducting research with communities located far from the PRC offices or conducting research with a very large or diffuse community.

### *Sociodemographic characteristics*

- The PRCs' partner communities include largely poor and underserved populations. These communities had a higher percentage of African Americans, Asian or Pacific Islanders, and American Indians than the overall United States and a lower percentage of Hispanics; however, the PRC data were from the 2000 census. As of July 1, 2006, an estimated 15% of the nation's population was Hispanic. Between 2000 and 2006, Hispanics accounted for one-half of the nation's growth, at a growth rate of 24.3%—almost four times that in the total population (6.1%).<sup>1</sup>
  - Across the partner communities, the mean per capita income is about 30% lower than the U.S. average, and the unemployment rate is 20% to 40% higher.
  - The PRC partner communities have a higher percentage of persons 25 years of age and older without a high school diploma than the U.S. average.
  - Among PRCs conducting research in schools, the partner communities have a high percentage of children eligible for free or reduced lunch.
  - As low-income and undereducated persons are at high risk for increased morbidity and mortality, these data show that the PRCs are addressing health promotion and disease prevention in populations likely to have a disproportionate burden of disease.

## *Recommendations*

Macro makes the following suggestions for further understanding research communities:

- Future evaluation could assess how the distance from a PRC to its partner community or how working with a large or diffuse community affects the resources the PRC requires to successfully partner with the community.
- A map showing the states and communities in which PRCs conduct research might help partners grasp the program's breadth and reach.
- Because the racial and ethnic makeup of the nation continues to change at a rapid rate, assessing the racial and ethnic makeup of PRCs' communities will be important to ensuring appropriate attention to minority health issues. Future evaluation could use 2010 census data for comparison.
- Describe the health focus of the PRCs' research across the partner communities.

## **References**

1. Hispanics in the United States [PowerPoint]. Washington (DC): U.S. Census Bureau; 2008 [cited 2008 Sep 10]. Available from: [http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hispanic/hispanic\\_pop\\_presentation.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hispanic/hispanic_pop_presentation.html)