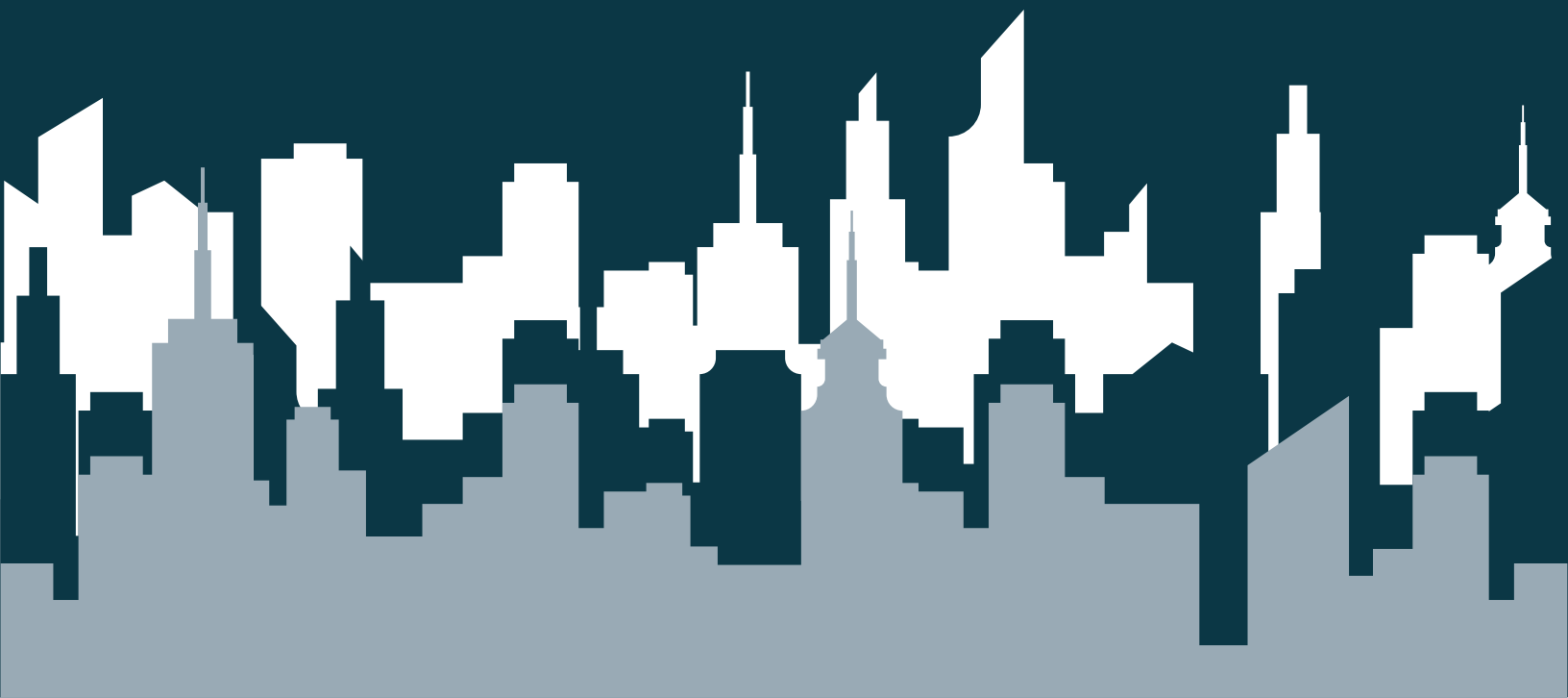


20th
Coalition of
Urban Serving Universities
Anniversary

The Coalition of Urban Serving Universities: A History



The Coalition of Urban Serving Universities: A History

1970s

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1990s

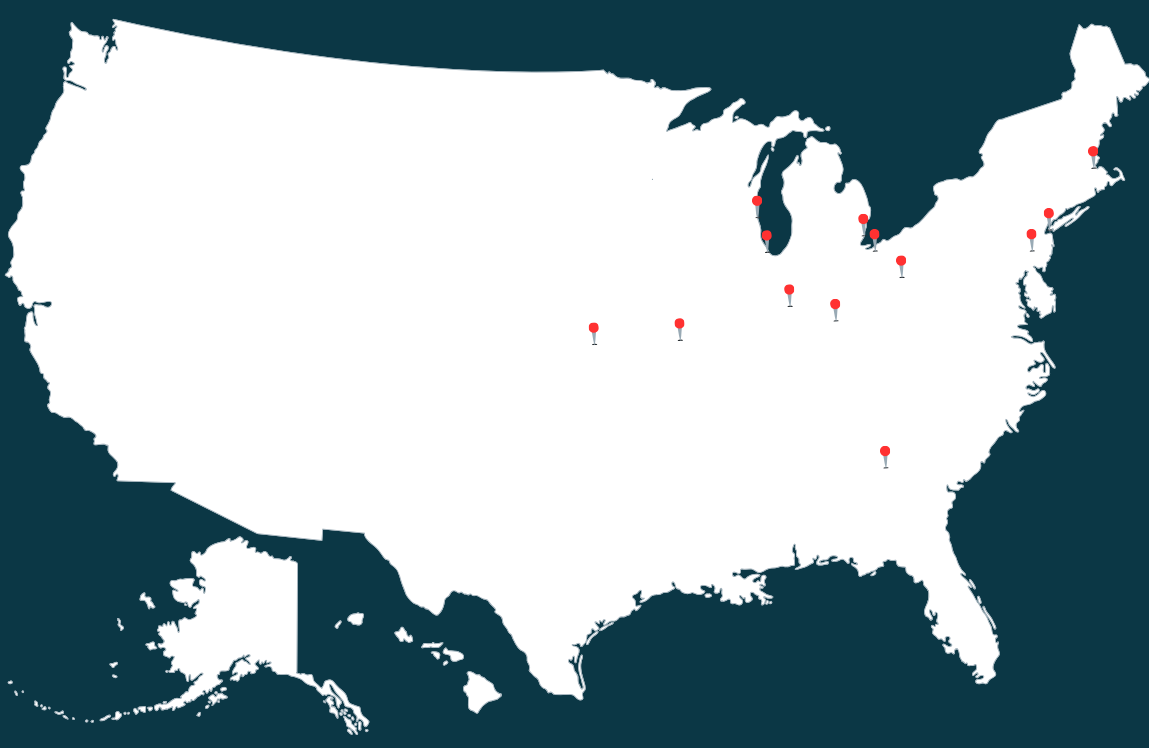
The Great Cities Universities Coalition (GCU) was the successor to the Urban 13. Founded in 1998, GCU brought together university presidents to collaborate on urban-focused research and public-private partnerships. The group primarily pursued federal appropriations, grants, and contracts to support their initiatives.

2000s

In 2005, GCU restructured and became the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU). The Coalition reinvigorated efforts to define a shared urban agenda that could be advanced collectively and supported through legislation. In 2006, USU began to partner with NASULGC (now APLU) to host joint meetings for university presidents.

2010s

In 2010, USU officially began a permanent partnership with APLU. USU prioritized advancing a data-driven urban agenda by producing reports and policy recommendations, shifting focus from legislation to presidential engagement, and collaborating with civic leaders, higher education associations, think tanks, and philanthropy.



The Urban 13

Early 1970s

USU began as a group of thirteen like-minded urban university provosts who all had major league baseball teams in the same city as the universities they served. Calling themselves the “Urban 13,” they were one of the first leadership groups in the United States to advocate for the concerns of public urban universities and their cities. Drawing on the ideas of prominent civic and education leaders like Clark Kerr, the Urban 13 championed federal legislation that would mobilize urban universities to expand educational opportunities and tackle urban challenges. Their vision was to “build on the Morrill Act reforms and provide a focus and funding for urban universities and urban extension efforts.” In 1980, as a result of these efforts, Congress passed Title XI, the Urban University Grant Program, within the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The program aimed to marshal “the skills, talents, and knowledge of the nation's urban universities toward the solution of urban problems.” While no funds were ever appropriated at a federal level, Cleveland State, a member of the Urban 13, was successful in getting Ohio to adopt a state-level program based on a similar vision. This established several university-based efforts in Ohio that are still in place today.

The Urban 13 “were one of the first leadership groups in the U.S. to advocate for the concerns of public urban universities and their cities”



Great Cities Universities Coalition

1998 - 2004

The Great Cities Universities Coalition (GCU) was the successor to the Urban 13. GCU was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization in 1998 and led by university presidents, a precursor to the USU member model. GCU presidents collaborated on research initiatives and public-private partnerships on issues of importance to cities such as: urban education, economic revitalization of central cities, transportation, criminal justice, workforce training, health care, and digital government. The group targeted federal appropriations and pursued federal grants and contracts to fund their work. These efforts were successful, securing over \$10 million from Congress from 2000-2004, including a federal grant of \$1.8 million from the Department of Education to fund urban education efforts. Further, a \$100,000 grant from the Atlantic Foundation increased the involvement of GCU institutions in the reform of K-12 urban schools.

“GCU was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization...and led by university presidents [who] collaborated on research initiatives and public-private partnerships on issues of importance to cities.”



Coalition of Urban Serving Universities

2005-2010

In 2005, Great Cities Universities was restructured to a 501c6 membership organization and renamed the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU). During this era, membership grew rapidly to over 40 urban serving universities and systems representing every region of the United States.

In collaboration with members, Coalition leaders reinvigorated efforts to advance a vision that applied the land-grant concept to support a network of urban universities enacting an ambitious agenda for engaging with America's cities. The Coalition worked to define the shared priorities of member campuses as "anchor institutions" in major urban centers that could be advanced collectively. Their intent was to provide a blueprint of ideas and provisions that could shape federal legislation and inform agency budgets.

In 2006, USU began partnering with what was then NASULGC (now APLU), hosting a series of joint annual meetings for presidents to define an urban university agenda and discuss legislation. The presidents identified three programmatic strands by which to organize their work: human capital, urban health, and strengthening communities.

"The Coalition worked to define a shared urban agenda that could be advanced collectively."



Coalition of Urban Serving Universities

2010 - Present

In August 2010, USU and APLU formalized their partnership to launch a shared Office of Urban Initiatives within APLU. By this time, USU's initiatives were well-developed, providing a playbook and infrastructure for collaborative work across universities and cities. A key priority was to advance a data-driven urban agenda by producing reports, white papers, policy recommendations, resources, and technical assistance to support the role of USU members as critical partners in urban ecosystems.

USU underwent considerable change during this period, both to its leadership and its strategies in response to broader trends, the pandemic, and a focus on equitable student success. The organization shifted to promoting its agenda by engaging presidents and other university leaders and collaborating with civic leaders, federal agencies, higher education associations, think tanks, and philanthropic foundations to make progress on its initiatives. USU remained committed to acting collectively on its national agenda and serves as a true "intermediary." Thus, it has ongoing appeal to partners seeking change at scale and impact on the field. USU has secured many large-scale grants that support members, build capacity for innovation and leadership, and disseminate evidence-based strategies, resources, and tools.

Grounded in a thoughtful and ambitious strategic plan, USU will continue to serve its members, support urban ecosystems, and shape national conversations on urban higher education.

“A key priority was to advance a data-driven urban agenda...to support the role of USU members as critical partners in urban ecosystems.”

20th



Anniversary

Celebrating 20 Years



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