

International Conference in Chicago Examines Role of Research Universities in Addressing Urban Challenges

November 18, 2013 - The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is collaborating with Northwestern University, the University of Chicago and the University of Illinois to bring together leaders from more than 25 leading research universities around the world for an international conference on the role university-based research plays in addressing the challenges of urban growth. The conference will take place in Chicago and on the university campuses November 18 to 20.

Ambassador Ivo H. Daalder, president of The Chicago Council on Global Affairs; Robert Easter, president of the University of Illinois; Morton Schapiro, president of Northwestern University; and Robert Zimmer, president of The University of Chicago, will deliver welcoming remarks during the public plenary session on November 19. See the full [conference agenda](#).

In 2011, the United Nations projected that nearly two-thirds of the world's population will be living in cities by 2050. Yet the physical and social infrastructures of most cities are ill-prepared to absorb the expected influx of new residents. Staffed with expert faculty members and leaders on these issues, research universities are especially qualified to develop new knowledge and creative solutions that could be beneficial to global cities.

More than 60 representatives of universities from around the world, in addition to local government officials, urban planners, and business, philanthropic and civic leaders, will participate in the three-day conference. Private working group sessions will be held on all three campuses, and public plenary sessions will take place in downtown Chicago on November 19.

"As one of the top global cities and home to several leading colleges and universities, Chicago is the right place for this conference," said Daalder. "Its world-class universities have exceptional research capacity, extensive international student enrollments and global reach. Through their centers overseas, each institution is actively pursuing different models of global engagement."

The conference will serve as a forum to exchange ideas and research expertise and provide opportunities to forge international partnerships. Plenary and working group sessions will frame the challenges in areas of urban health, urban education and urban vitality.

Participants will consider the current structures and models in place for university interactions with government and other non-profit and for-profit institutions, and recommendations for the future of these relationships. Working groups will also explore research methodologies, the use of data and ways that researchers and policymakers can collaborate to guide research and policy. They will look at international case studies where researchers have identified best practices and effective outcomes.

On the final day, participants will discuss methods being used to translate research into policy and practice and how researchers evaluate their impact. They will also share best practices for engaging industry and government as partners and discuss bringing projects to scale.

"This is an unprecedented partnership of some of Chicago's most reputable institutions," said Rachel Bronson, vice president of studies for The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. "It will serve as a springboard for long-term local and international collaborations while continuing to position Chicago as a hub for research and expertise."

The conference is supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, Northern Trust, the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Foundation, the Segal Family Foundation and the Spencer Foundation.

International Partners

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[Northwestern University](#)

Northwestern University is a private institution founded in 1851 that combines innovative teaching and pioneering research in a highly collaborative environment that transcends traditional academic boundaries. Northwestern is recognized both nationally and internationally for the quality of its educational programs at all levels. *U.S. News & World Report* consistently ranks the University's undergraduate programs among the best in the country.

[The University of Chicago](#)

One of the world's premier academic and research institutions, the University of Chicago has driven new ways of thinking since its 1890 founding. Today, UChicago is an intellectual destination that draws scholars to the Hyde Park and international centers, keeping UChicago at the nexus of ideas that challenge and change the world. Undergraduates in the College broaden their perspectives on world issues in the rigorous Core curriculum. Graduate programs in the four academic divisions, six graduate professional schools and the Graham School of Continuing Liberal Arts and Professional Studies transform scholars into leaders across disciplines.

[University of Illinois](#)

The University of Illinois is the state's best and most comprehensive public university. The three distinct campuses in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago and Springfield serve the people of Illinois through a shared commitment to their missions of excellence in teaching, research, public service and economic development. The University of Illinois is a world leader in research and discovery. Its internationally renowned faculty win more federal research dollars than all other public Illinois universities and colleges combined, resulting in priceless new knowledge and life-changing breakthroughs in medicine, agriculture and technology.

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