

**AN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS  
OF THE INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS  
BETWEEN A PUBLIC AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION UNIVERSITY  
AND SIX UNITED STATES CORPORATE SUPPORTERS:  
AN INSTRUMENTAL, ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY  
USING CONE’S CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP SPECTRUM**

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*“The most useful and influential people in [America] are those who take the deepest interest in institutions that exist for the purpose of making the world better,”*

~ Booker T. Washington (National Philanthropic Trust, 2012, ¶ 151).

**ABSTRACT**

This organizational analysis examined corporate citizenship through the inter-organizational relationships between a public American doctoral research university and six of its corporate partners as framed through Cone’s (2010) corporate citizenship spectrum. A single embedded, instrumental, ethnographic case study viewed organizational participants from 2006 to 2010 and included a public research university, the university’s foundation, and two small, two medium, and two large (i.e., *Fortune 500*) corporations. Research questions used to explore this relationship: (RQ1) Why does a higher education institution accept corporate citizenship engagement and financial support? (RQ2) Why do U.S. corporations engage as corporate citizens in relationships with a higher education institution as identified on Cone’s corporate citizenship spectrum as philanthropy, cause-related branding, operational culture, or DNA citizenship ethos? (RQ3) What ethical concerns arise in the engaged inter-organizational relationships between corporations and a higher education institution? Triangulation of data was provided by 36 interviews, more than 12,609 pages of documents and audio-visual materials, and a campus observation of 407 photographs.