Greetings from the Office of Community Engagement

IMPACT

Across Iowa

Advancing engagement across the state of Iowa and beyond

The 2021-22 academic year has been full of renewed commitments and new beginnings in community engagement at the University of Iowa. Following the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Community Engagement began the academic year with enhanced focus and dedication to building mutually beneficial partnerships between campus and communities across Iowa and beyond. This year, we implemented new programming, resources, and support to facilitate the exciting and impactful engagement work of our faculty, staff, students, and community partners. These new campus opportunities have opened pathways for students and faculty to connect with community partners to impact lives and communities through community-engaged teaching, learning, and research.

Following a collaborative, campus-wide effort, our office launched the Community Engaged Course (CEC) designation to provide students with more information about community-engaged learning opportunities at Iowa and promote the high-impact teaching practices deployed by many of our instructors. In partnership with the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, we established the Graduate Engagement Corps (GEC) to empower graduate students to connect their research and teaching to community issues and opportunities. Support from the Graduate College enabled the first cohort of GEC students to implement community engagement projects and make a lasting difference in communities right here, in Iowa, and worldwide. In addition, training programs and workshops, such as the Engaged Faculty Institute, ensured that faculty could adapt in real-time to the shifting educational landscape while providing meaningful impact through classroom experiences.

Every day, thousands of University of Iowa students and staff advance engagement efforts to uplift Iowa communities. The Office of Community Engagement is committed to providing the resources, training, and connections necessary to advance their work. Thank you to all of our partners who have continued to be a driving force committed to community impact despite recent challenges. Join us for even more new and exciting initiatives as we work together for a better, brighter tomorrow for all those we serve in Iowa and beyond.

In partnership,

Nicholas Benson
Executive Director
The Office of Community Engagement advances student success through community engagement, supporting engaged research that makes a difference in the lives of Iowans, and building partnerships between campus and communities by:

- Advancing high-impact educational experiences for students by facilitating project-based, experiential community engagement.
- Supporting faculty, staff, and student research and discovery that is community-engaged and addresses real issues facing the state of Iowa and beyond.
- Building mutually beneficial community partnerships that transform how we teach, learn, and research while impacting the quality of life across the state of Iowa, the nation, and the world.
- Fostering community engagement and the arts through Arts Share and Grant Wood Art Colony.

"I can't say enough good things about the people we've had a chance to work with at the University. Their insights have helped us look at the bigger picture, and the students - and the faculty who support them - have been fantastic in helping us do that."

- Jackson County Economic Alliance

Our Values

Respect
We embrace the diverse experiences, backgrounds, and approaches of our University and community partners and recognize that these differing perspectives are essential to the success of community engagement at Iowa.

Relationships
We facilitate the development of enduring relationships between faculty, staff, students, and community partners. We involve students in worthwhile work meaningful to their education and career goals while supporting faculty in their teaching and research missions to ensure the development of sustainable partnerships.

Humility
We work collaboratively with campus and community partners by listening and responding to their expressed needs.

Excellence
We exhibit professionalism in our interactions and deliver high-quality work to our campus and community partners grounded in community-engaged scholarship and research.

Creativity
We value creative, innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to this work.
Community Engaged Courses (CEC) offer students a unique educational experience to apply learning in real-time while assisting community partners with projects that can enact real change in Iowa communities and beyond through learning and research.

For the first time at the University of Iowa, students across campus interested in taking a course that includes community engagement can now identify these courses during registration through the Community Engaged Course designation in MyUI.

The designation is the culmination of a year of work by a campus committee focused on improving access to community engagement for students at Iowa, reflecting best practices for instructors, and ensuring classes contain academic rigor and meaningful community partner interaction and coursework inclusion.

CECs are not limited to any academic discipline, and many incorporate multidisciplinary concepts. Through a partnership with an organization outside the University of Iowa, students are able to collaborate to identify needs, work in class to develop materials aimed at helping meet those needs, and reflect on the project at the end of the semester; students can put in-class learning to practice in the “real world.”

An example of a CEC is a marketing class that works with the City of Bellevue to plan and execute a rebrand that provides modern appeal and conveys the community’s unique character. Another example is an international studies class where students work with a local nonprofit organization serving refugees and immigrants to create new programming and build connections with the community.

CECs play an essential role in the University of Iowa’s community engagement mission. These courses provide students with high-impact learning experiences while building mutually beneficial partnerships between faculty, students, and community partners that address the most pressing issues facing today's communities. Thousands of hours of work by University of Iowa students and faculty occur each year in CECs, contributing to economic development, sustainability, cultural vitality, and the health and well-being of citizens of Iowa and beyond.

Courses that integrate community partnerships deepen student understanding of course material and help students better connect with their academic studies, and provide an opportunity to enhance critical skills like professional communication, working in teams, and leadership.
The Office of Community Engagement is available to assist instructors in developing their CEC courses. Please reach out to Nick Benson at nicholas-benson@uiowa.edu to receive help in designing your course to meet the CEC designation standards.

CECs also receive favorable reviews from students at Iowa. Recent survey data indicates that over 90% of students at Iowa who took a course that incorporated community engagement would enroll in another. The designation in MyUI is the best way for students interested in engagement to seek out courses proactively.

In addition, all instructors and faculty considering incorporating a CEC component into their classroom experience have access to workshop opportunities to enhance the development of their coursework and community partnerships, along with application feedback upon submission.

With support from the campus committee and campus partners like the Center for Teaching, the Office of Community Engagement reviews applications for the CEC designation while offering assistance with syllabus development and modification, community partnerships, assessment, evaluation, and other support needed to teach a community-engaged course successfully.

The CEC designation is also an excellent way to promote courses to interested students and connect with other instructors teaching community-engaged courses. This process helps strengthen academic deliverables by incorporating feedback and resources available through the Office of Community Engagement.

Many classes throughout the University of Iowa system already contain a community-engaged component. Instructors are encouraged to designate them for easy identification during registration and take advantage of the feedback and development opportunities available to standardize the experience.

In the spring of 2022, instructors designated 23 courses as a CEC, with the fall ‘22 semester exceeding those numbers. As the CEC designation continues to grow and expand, the Office of Community Engagement encourages faculty and instructors who have questions to reach out for advisement and assistance.

"Frank Durham, associate professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, spent a semester planning ahead for classes that incorporate community engagement. He began shaping his spring 2020 community-engaged learning course in mid-August and applied ideas gained from the institute and other faculty members. "Basically, I put the philosophy of community engagement into the nuts and bolts of the course to make sure that my students work hand-in-hand with our ‘live’ clients," Durham said. "Real-time problem-solving tops any traditional course."

Research indicates that CECs are a high-impact learning practice.
The Graduate Engagement Corps (GEC) is an opportunity for students seeking advanced degrees to learn about and receive support for community engaged teaching, learning, and research. Members of the GEC will also be part of a network of like-minded, community-engaged students that can provide friendship and connection throughout their time at the University of Iowa. This is a community of students looking for the opportunity to make an impact in the world through research and teaching,” said Nick Benson, executive director of the Office of Community Engagement.”

The Graduate Engagement Corps fuels engagement projects

In partnership with the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, the Office of Community Engagement, supported by graduate research assistant Noel Mills, launched the Graduate Engagement Corps in the fall of 2021. The partnership designed the GEC to advance training opportunities for graduate students in community-engaged teaching and research and build a community committed to community engagement. Illustrating the growing interest in community engagement among graduate students, the first cohort of students submitted more applications than could be accepted.

New members received training and a comprehensive multi-day orientation that connected core community engagement concepts with community partners to help lay the foundation for projects benefiting Iowa communities. Through meetings with community partners, members heard about services provided, challenges faced, and how students could get involved by incorporating proposed research projects and continued partnership opportunities. In addition, GEC members began accessing grant opportunities in spring ’22 to advance their teaching, learning, and research to make an impact in their chosen communities.

Presentations from community partners also provided specific examples of community-engaged teaching and research while connecting the concepts shared during orientation to help students visualize the rollout of potential future projects. Graduate students looking to enhance their teaching and research skills learn about incorporating community partnerships into their classrooms and research projects.

In the fall ’22 semester, additional training and networking opportunities will be available to GEC members as the program continues to expand and seek new avenues for growth, enabling participants to maximize impact in communities through community engagement projects.
“The Graduate Engagement Corps aligns with my investment in making scholarship public. The GEC enables me to not only broaden the engagement scope of my project but also foster relationships in Iowa City. The best way to use my humanities training for the public good is to connect with the community, and the GEC certainly helps me gain access to those collaborators.”

~ Emily Wilder, PhD Candidate

“I am participating in the GEC to learn how to more effectively engage with community members and especially to learn how to best make sure that my work benefits the people who live in the places where I am conducting research.”

~ Taylor Billings, PhD Candidate

“I am participating in the GEC because I believe that strong community engagement practices are vital to the planning process and will increase accessibility. Community engagement makes planning fairer and more democratic and gives community members, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, the chance to have their visions and goals heard and appreciated.”

~ Olivia Galyon, MS Candidate

Disciplines Represented

- Anthropology
- Cinematic Arts
- College of Education
  - Counseling
  - Teaching and Learning
  - Educational Policy and Leadership Studies
- Psychology
- College of Law
- College of Public Health
- English
- Geographical and Sustainability Sciences
- Health and Human Physiology
- French and Italian
- Sociology and Criminology
- Informatics
- Journalism and Mass Communication
- Music
- Planning and Public Affairs

Spring 2022
21 graduate students were accepted into the GEC
"Ali Hval (MFA) won the Student Excellence and Service Award from the Office of Community Engagement for her dedicated community engagement work in public art throughout the state of Iowa. Hval began painting public art murals in the summer of 2017 when a friend invited her to join as an extra helping hand with a mural project. Her friend had to bow out, and Hval stepped up to become the main artist. "I had always been interested in the idea of public art but never knew that I would be able to do something like that," Hval said. The support she received enabled further collaboration with Iowa communities."

Committed to advancing the arts and sharing arts resources

Arts Share continues the University of Iowa’s long tradition of sharing creative resources from arts programs, including the Division of Performing Arts (music, dance, theatre), the School of Art & Art History, and the Writers’ Workshop with communities across Iowa. Through collaborative engagement and outreach efforts, Arts Share’s goal is to strengthen the arts and provide access to life-enriching arts experiences throughout Iowa and beyond.

Arts Share offers schools and communities around the state a variety of opportunities, including interactive performances, workshops, readings, residencies, and masterclasses. Each year over 100 faculty, staff, and student artists are available through Arts Share. To date, programming has impacted 86 of the state’s 99 counties and continues to grow.

Annual events include the High School Theatre Workshop and Performance Day. Through these events, high school students from around the state can come to campus to participate in theatre workshops, watch a play, and experience tours by the UI Dance Company Percussion Ensemble and the Chamber Music program.

Arts Share programs can tie into classroom curricula, enhance multi-cultural festivals and diversity days, and expand offerings for performing arts venues and arts organizations.
Comprehensive programming across the spectrum of the arts

Creative Writing
The University of Iowa's prestigious Writers' Workshop offers workshops and readings in fiction and poetry. Graduate writers are gifted poets and writers who frequently visit schools and communities throughout Iowa.

Dance
Individual dancers and dance ensembles will inspire interactive performances, lecture demonstrations, and workshops. UI faculty, staff, and graduate student dancers represent a variety of dance styles, including ballet, modern, jazz, and hip-hop.

Music
Individual musicians and ensembles are available for interactive performances and workshops. We have performers representing various genres and music worldwide, from jazz to classical. Music ensembles and solo artists offer educational and entertaining performances, workshops, and masterclasses.

Theatre
Theatre artists offer interactive workshops, performances, and presentations for schools and organizations. Through participation and discussion, audiences learn about different elements of theatre while learning how to apply the lessons and skills to their own lives and activities.

Visual Arts
Talented visual artists will work with students of all ages in creating a unique process and exciting products. Workshops are in a variety of media representing art from all over the world.
The Grant Wood Art Colony celebrates the life and legacy of Iowa’s most famous artist, Grant Wood. After painting one of the most recognizable images globally, American Gothic, Wood joined the University of Iowa faculty. The Grant Wood Art Colony seeks to provide a creative home for the next generation of artists and continue Wood’s creative advocacy in the School of Art & Art History and the Division of Performing Arts through artist residencies, teaching fellowships, symposia, and community programs.

Over an April weekend in 2022, the Grant Wood Art Colony hosted a compelling series of presentations investigating 20th-21st-century American artists who, like Wood, extended their practice to creating distinctive homes and studios. During the 7th Biennial Grant Wood Symposium, “A Home and Studio of One’s Own,” scholars explored home, creativity, and identity intersections.

Their papers examined how artists chose to curate their environments over the past 100 years, transforming them into sanctuaries from societal pressures, outlets for their creative brilliance, and inspirations for their seminal work. The prototype is Grant Wood, who renovated a hayloft into a studio and home in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and restored and furnished a significant mid-nineteenth-century historic home in Iowa City where he lived and worked.

Fellows reside in homes adjacent to Wood's Iowa City home. Their proximity to each other within the historically generative space promotes collaboration and exploration among the artists. The long-term goal is to create a vibrant colony and cultural center woven together by gardens and studio space.
**Grant Wood Fellows**

**2020-21**

**Johnathan Payne** (he/him) is a Queer, African-American visual artist. He obtained a BA in Art from Rhodes College in 2012 and received his MFA in Painting and Printmaking from the Yale School of Art in 2018. He served as an AmeriCorps volunteer (Memphis, TN), empowering young people through artistic practice. Payne was the inaugural recipient of the Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson Residency (Columbus, OH) during the summer of 2021.

**Elena V. Smyrniotis** (she/her) is a printmaker and installation artist with a background in architecture. She received her MFA in Printmaking from the University of Notre Dame, MA in Printmaking and Drawing from the University of Saint Francis, and MA in Architecture and Engineering from the State Petroleum University (Ufa, Russia). Her work explores utopian landscapes and their place in the collective imagination, focusing on architecture, topography, and cartography.

**Josh Henderson** (he/him) enjoys a multi-faceted career as a cross-genre violinist, violist, and composer. As a classical soloist, he has performed with the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, China Performing Arts Broadcasting Troupe, Starling Chamber Orchestra, Accent X Festival Orchestra, Colour of Music Festival Orchestra, Bard Conductors Festival Orchestra, Colour of Music Virtuosi, Urban Playground Chamber Orchestra, and the Harlem Chamber Players, among others.

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**Exemplifying the University of Iowa’s commitment to creative work**

The vision of the Colony is to nurture creative work and teaching in disciplines relevant to the art and life of Grant Wood—studio art, art history, and the performing arts. The program exemplifies the University of Iowa’s historic commitment to creative work and the pioneering of the MFA degree. The Grant Wood Art Colony further embodies the “Iowa Idea” of bringing artists and scholars together in an academic context, formulated in the 1920s by President Walter Jessup and Graduate Dean Carl Seashore.

In 1924, prominent Cedar Rapidian John B. Turner provided a carriage house to Grant Wood for use as a studio. Wood quickly made “5 Turner Alley” his home. This gift of time and space to create work set Wood on a course to become one of the most famous American artists. Wood continued his live-work lifestyle when he moved to 1142 East Court Street in Iowa City. These home-studio spaces are the impetus for the current Grant Wood Fellowship.

The Colony provides three fellowships in Painting & Drawing, Printmaking, and Interdisciplinary Performance, which rotates between Music, Dance, and Theatre. Fellows teach students, engage Iowans, and pursue their artistic endeavors. This year, the Colony celebrates the fellowship’s 10th year and 30th fellow at the University of Iowa, continuing the legacy of giving artists time and space to practice their craft.

Four former fellows currently hold tenure-track positions at the University of Iowa. In the spring of 22, the School of Art and Art History promoted T.J. Dedeaux-Norris to Associate Professor with Tenure with a 25% appointment in African American Studies.
Community engagement is practiced in many different forms by faculty, staff, and students at the University of Iowa. One effective form at the University is community-engaged learning, a pedagogical approach to teaching courses that integrate community engagement into coursework. The Office of Community Engagement (OCE) provides information, best practices, and expert resources to facilitate various engagement activities.

Often called service-learning, community-engaged learning is a broader term used to describe the creation of mutually beneficial partnerships that go beyond direct service (e.g., cleaning up a community garden or tutoring youth) to deepen students’ academic and civic learning.

The Office of Community Engagement supports community-engaged learning through training and resources for course and syllabus creation, partnership development, project management, reflection and assessment, and community-engaged learning scholarship. This year, the office created a library of community-engaged learning resources on our website to provide campus and community partners with a central database for finding scholarly articles about implementing engagement best practices. Partnerships with other campus units offer additional resources and technical assistance for faculty, staff, and students. Partners include the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, and the Office of the Vice-President for Research.

Community engagement also occurs at Iowa through the research and scholarship of our faculty, staff, and students. Community-engaged research deploys a collaborative process between University researchers and community partners to share knowledge and creative expression. This scholarship advances discipline and strengthens communities through essential contributions to the arts, sciences, healthcare, economic development, and more.
Empowering Engagement at the University of Iowa

Looking In, Zooming Out: Community Engaged Learning in the Big Picture, in partnership with Iowa Campus Compact, featured an interactive workshop for those teaching community-engaged courses to learn about how to introduce interdisciplinary, systems-level thinking, and/or local-global connections into their course design, assignments, and activities. Topics also featured information about how to strategically use the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to contextualize conversations about community partnerships and the purpose of community engaged learning more broadly.

Ensuring Reciprocity and Sustainability in Community Engagement featured a panel discussion by Loyce Arthur, Associate Professor of Theatre Arts, and Travis Kraus, Associate Professor of Practice, in the School of Planning and Public Affairs and Director of Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC), discussing best practices for creating community partnerships that are mutually beneficial and reciprocal, and how to sustain partnerships over time. The workshop also featured presentations by Arthur and Kraus about their collaborative community-engaged course partnerships.

Equity and Accessibility in Community Engaged Courses during COVID-19 and Beyond featured Sara Nasrolliahian, PhD - Office of Teaching, Learning, & Technology, Bailey Anderson, MFA Candidate - Student Disability Services, and Barry Shreier, PhD Candidate - University Counseling Service, discussing how to navigate community-engaged teaching, research, and projects while being mindful of the needs of students, faculty, staff, and community partners during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. This workshop helped instructors in community engaged work learn how to navigate out of the pandemic.

Fostering a culture of collaboration and professional development

This year, community-engaged research at Iowa continued to flourish. Innovative programs like the Research Development Office’s Seeding Excellence: Community Engaged Scholars grant program provided significant financial resources to engage scholars across campus.

The Office of Community Engagement supports community-engaged research through informational resources, training, workshops, and partnership development support. The office was pleased to partner with the Research Development Office to ensure researchers applying for the Seeding Excellence grant understood community engagement best practices and where to access resources and support for their work. Additional resources include an online library on the Office of Community Engagement’s website of publishing outlets and opportunities for community-engaged scholars to present their work at conferences and seminars.

The mutually beneficial partnerships between faculty, staff, students, and community partners are at the heart of community engagement. The Office of Community Engagement works to facilitate the development of these partnerships by offering training and workshops on partnership development best practices that empower campus partners to create lasting, sustainable relationships with communities across the state and the world. We also directly connect faculty, staff, and students to local and state-wide organizations, local and state governments, and private businesses to jumpstart the community partnership development process and ensure continual engagement across the state and beyond.

External partners, including Iowa/Minnesota Campus Compact, the Engagement Scholarship Consortium, and other community engagement entities, provide enhanced support for faculty, staff, students, and community partners.

Best Practices - 13
Engagement continues to be a strategic priority at the University of Iowa, and community-engaged teaching, learning, and research are critical components. In a spirit of collaboration and partnership, the Office of Community Engagement looks ahead to enhance further community engagement programming and support at the University of Iowa.

**Empowering the student experience**

Expanding existing programs like the Graduate Engagement Corps (GEC) to include undergraduate students, continuing the development of Community Engaged Courses (CEC), and deploying online engagement training modules will be key priorities for the Office of Community Engagement in the coming year. The office is working to increase the availability of CECs, provide community-engaged and participatory research opportunities, and bolster mentoring and training to prepare all students to engage in impactful community partnerships.

**Supporting academic initiatives**

Faculty and staff that teach community-engaged courses and integrate community engagement into their research play a critical role in advancing engagement at Iowa. The office will continue expanding training and professional development to support their efforts further while enhancing community partnerships through workshop and development series’ and through continued partnerships with organizations like Iowa/Minnesota Campus Compact that bring the Engaged Faculty Institute (EFI) to campus.

**Fostering community partnerships**

The Office of Community Engagement seeks to empower partnerships grounded in equity that advance shared goals and objectives and enrich educational and research opportunities while positively impacting our communities. The office looks forward to expanding opportunities for connections between community partners and faculty, staff, and students and elevating successful partnerships by telling impact stories. This catalytic work with faculty, staff, and students advances the broader mission of building mutually beneficial partnerships with community partners in Iowa, across our nation, and beyond.
Our Team

Executive Director
nicholas-benson@uiowa.edu

Nick serves as the Executive Director of the Office of Community Engagement and provides leadership on campus for community engaged teaching and learning and community engaged research. He has worked for eight years in various community engagement roles at the University of Iowa, including as Director of the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities and Director of Community Development and Outreach. Nick holds a Master’s Degree in Urban and Regional Planning and Juris Doctorate from the University of Iowa.

Director, Arts & Humanities
leslie-finer@uiowa.edu

Leslie works to enhance community vitality by utilizing the University of Iowa’s arts and cultural resources. She oversees the Arts Share program, which has been facilitating arts outreach and engagement initiatives for over 25 years. Leslie received her Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees in Piano Performance from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, with a PhD in Musicology from the University of Iowa.

Director, Grant Wood Art Colony
maura-pilcher@uiowa.edu

Maura currently serves as the Director of the Grant Wood Art Colony. In collaboration with Arts Share, she facilitates Grant Wood Fellows’ engagement with Iowans throughout their residency. Maura holds a Bachelor of Art Degree in Anthropology and Art History from the University of Notre Dame and a Master of Science in Historic Preservation from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Marketing and Communications Manager
james-dykeman@uiowa.edu

James oversees strategic communication, including marketing of office events and activities, managing the website, and creating and editing content for multiple media channels. He holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Journalism and Mass Communication, with a certificate in Nonprofit Leadership and Philanthropy, from the University of Iowa.
Helping Hawkeyes Impact Iowa Communities
Through Community Engaged Learning, Teaching and Research