

Engagement at Iowa Updates



June 2022

Empowering New Beginnings in Community Engagement



For many, the summer marks a period of renewal and reflection as we take stock of the successes of the academic year and look forward to the future as we begin planning for the next period of growth and engagement. The Office of Community Engagement is proud to spend this time empowering graduate students to bring new projects in community engaged research to life through grant awards in the Graduate Engagement Corps (GEC) while celebrating new funding opportunities through the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR).

After a two-year hiatus, Arts Share and the Grant Wood Art Colony will be starting their annual summer camp this week, which has experienced record interest and enrollment from families eager to bring community engaged arts programming into their children's lives this summer. Our stories of impact highlight the meaningful work that students undertook during a Community Engaged Course (CEC) this spring which has helped a budding tech startup launch an app focused on making the lives of children and families with mental health challenges better nationwide. In addition, Herky stopped by The Bee Project's publicly engaged art installation at the new Stanley Museum of Art as the University of Iowa received the Bee Friendly campus designation.

Our office is always excited at the new partnerships and possibilities forming with each new initiative and program that aims to connect and elevate communities across Iowa and beyond through community engaged learning, teaching, and research.

In partnership,

Nick

Nick Benson
Executive Director

GEC Grant Award Winners



Funding the Future of Engagement

Congratulations to the five GEC members from this year's cohort whose community engaged research projects have been awarded funding through our competitive grants

program.

There will be another round of grant funding next academic year. We extend thanks to the Graduate College for their partnership and support in providing funding for the GEC, which allowed us to fund additional projects this year.

[Learn More](#)

Mavis Gyesi

**Educational Policy
and Leadership Studies**

Mavis’s project will work with schools in Cape Coast, Ghana to explore how open access educational materials can support students from disadvantaged, low-income communities to collaborate in classrooms without being constrained by socioeconomic status, time or geographic location.



Yuchen Liu

**Foreign Language and ESL Education
PhD**

Yuchen’s project will work with local nonprofit organizations, including Open Heartland, to explore how storytelling and technology can support education and intercultural communication and training for diverse communities from a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.



Frankline Matanji

**Journalism and Mass Communication
PhD**

Frankline’s project will explore the role of digital media in community fundraising and empowerment in Kenya.



Diana Brace

**Educational Policy
and Leadership Studies
PhD**

Diana’s project will collaborate with InsideOut Reentry Community to tell the stories of people impacted by the incarceration system and share these stories on a digital platform in order to lift up marginalized voices and effect change.



Megan Dehner

**College of Education,
Teaching and Learning
Masters of Art Education**

Megan’s project will partner with the Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County to provide opportunities for kids in their after school and educational programs to visit the new Stanley Museum of Art, providing kids who often don’t have access to art museums the opportunity to engage with world-renown art at the University of Iowa.



Funding Opportunity

Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR)

In collaboration with the Obermann Center, applications are sought for collaborative, one-year OVPR Community Engaged Scholars (AHSS) proposals with awards up to \$5,000 to support publicly engaged,



research-based project in the arts, humanities, and social sciences that mutually benefit university research and scholarship and the involved community.

Applications are due July 1, 2022.

[Learn More](#)

Event Spotlight

HOW FACULTY CAN RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME



**One Week Virtual Course
with Three Live Sessions:**

Monday, June 6th, 2:00 – 4:00 PM (EST)
Tuesday, June 7th, 2:00 – 4:00 PM (EST)
Thursday, June 9th, 2:00 – 4:00 PM (EST)

With our planet in crisis and communities being impacted by growing challenges, higher education is called to action to take the lead in addressing two of the world’s most pressing social issues: Climate Change and Food Insecurity. To help prepare faculty for this vital role, Campus Compact is offering a one-week virtual course that will bring together faculty participants to consider ways to implement community-engaged teaching/learning while addressing many critical topics.

[Register Here](#)

Sustained Conversation Groups

Based on continued interest, the opportunity to participate in Sustained Conversation groups will extend to the new year. Please take the opportunity to review and select one or more conversation groups in which you might like to participate. You may also wish to propose and consider co-leading a new group on a topic of significant interest.

Sustained conversations allow members to "dive deeper" into key aspects of their work, problem solve with others, and share experiences and resources to advance their work. Meeting times and frequency will vary by group and are typically decided on by group co-facilitators in consultation with group participants. Campus Compact suggests monthly meetings beginning in summer 2022.

Please select one or more in which you'd like to participate, and please share these offerings with relevant engagement colleagues and community collaborators at your institution.

- 1. STRENGTHENING ENGAGEMENT IN A CHALLENGED DEMOCRACY
- 2. ANTI-RACIST PEDAGOGIES
- 3. SUPPORTING EQUITY-FOCUSED COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH
- 4. CULTIVATING COMMUNITY VOICE IN OUR ENGAGEMENT WORK

[Join a Group](#)

Call For Participation



[Apply Here](#)

Imagining America National Gathering

In partnership with Tulane University, Ashé Cultural Arts Center and a diverse Working Group, Imagining America (IA) invites participants to the long-awaited return of the ritual of an in-person IA National Gathering. This year’s Gathering theme *Rituals of Repair and Renewal* invites participants to engage in joyful celebration of the magic in being together.

The deadline to apply is June 10.

Voices of Community Engagement



University of Iowa students help Wisconsin-based mental health tech startup reach children and families struggling with obsessive-compulsive disorder

Our Voices of Community Engagement series this June features Jason Niosi, founder of OCDfeat and spring '22 social media marketing community partner in a Community Engaged Course (CEC).

During the Spring 2022 semester, social media marketing students in the school of Journalism and Mass Communications partnered with OCDfeat. The partnership aimed to develop a social media marketing strategy to help reach communities critical to the app's initial launch, which aims to help children and families manage and overcome the challenges of living with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

"I was curious to see what the students would come up with," said Jason Niosi, founder of OCDfeat. "Especially from those not a part of the OCD community."

Student's developed three different plans, which provided direction about post type, frequency, and foundational principles to help the startup establish a social media presence.

"I got way more than I expected," Niosi said. "And a lot more intel that makes it easier for me to move forward with confidence about how to move forward."

One of the teams provided insights about marketing primarily to women that Niosi found surprising.

"My response was this was more than just moms," Niosi said. "Being a dad going through it, I was like, oh wait, what about the dads? Well, 125 people have signed up so far, and only three are men. The students were absolutely right in terms of the audience, which changed some of the communications that I had in mind."

Students also worked to provide competitor audits and analysis of 'top content' strategies to help connect OCDfeat with crucial audiences.

"What was really beneficial for me to learn was what was considered a successful post versus one that wasn't, along with where the engagement was happening," Niosi said.

As a result of the community partnership's initial success, Niosi began recruiting an intern from the class to help continue the work of growing social media and sign-ups for OCDfeat.

Niosi previously worked with Laura Kivlighan, adjunct professor and marketing manager for the University of Iowa College of Law, at an agency in Madison, Wisconsin.

"Laura worked on social media, and I was in public relations, so we worked on several accounts together and stayed in touch," Niosi said. "I later asked if she could help with OCDfeat initiative from a social media standpoint since that's not my expertise."

Kivlighan suggested that Niosi consider being a community partner for her community engaged social media marketing class.

"I jumped on the opportunity because I went through a similar exercise when I was in college with live clients," Niosi said. "So this was a great opportunity to be on the client-side and get different perspectives from students."

Niosi founded OCDfeat during the COVID-19 pandemic in response to his son Dexter's challenges adjusting to the virtual treatment of his OCD.

"Dexter was not engaging with his therapy, and I noticed a bunch of different gaps when researching what parents with children with OCD could do," Niosi said. "I discovered necessary tools that didn't exist."

Dexter was diagnosed with 'scrupulosity' or religion-based OCD when he was eight years old after five years of struggling to get a diagnosis.

"He feared dying and wouldn't go to sleep at night because he feared he wouldn't wake up in the morning," Niosi said. "That turned into prayers, and then prayers took over his life, and he lost focus, which led us to go to some of the most severe treatments."

Read the full story here

Engagement and the Arts

Arts Share

The Arts Share and Grant Wood Art Colony Summer Camp Starts June 6th

The University of Iowa Arts Share and



Grant Wood Art Colony's week-long arts camp for children entering first through sixth grades starts Monday, June 6th.

The half-day sessions feature workshops in visual arts, theatre, music, movement and creative writing.

[Learn More](#)

Grant Wood Art Colony



Sean Tyler, MFA candidate in Painting and Drawing, will install a mural entitled, “Our Roots Run Deep,” in Tipton on June 9 and 10.

Tyler designed the piece in collaboration with Tipton community members who also assisted in painting the mural on April 30. This is the second mural in Tipton that University of Iowa students have created due to the strong partnership with Linda Beck, Tipton Chamber of Commerce, and Brian Wagner, Tipton City Manager. In 2019, Drew Etienne (MFA 2021) created “Tipton: Feels Like Home,” as part of the Cedar County mural project. Tyler is also working in Manchester and Clinton this summer as part of Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities partnerships.

Herky Visits The Bee Project

Herky visited *The Bee Project* on May 26 during his stop at the UI Stanley Museum of Art. *The Bee Project* is a community-engaged sculpture by Grant Wood Fellow Elena Smyrniotis currently located at Gibson Square Park. Community members are encouraged to contribute to the interactive installation through the creation of their own 'bees.'



Photo by Justin Torner, Univ. of Iowa

[Learn More](#)

Upcoming Events and Activities

RISE UP: HOW FACULTY CAN RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME

Campus Compact
June 6th - June 9th
Virtual

“Our Roots Run Deep”

June 9th and 10th
Tipton, IA

[Learn more about these and future events](#)

STAY CONNECTED

