



**IOWA**

Office of Community  
Engagement

# OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## 2025-2026 Highlights Report

# BRIDGING CAMPUS & COMMUNITY

Thanks to the dedication of our campus and community partners, the Office of Community Engagement experienced a year of growth, innovation, and meaningful connection. The following highlights showcase the impact of our collective efforts to strengthen community-engaged teaching, research, and service.

# GOOD NEWS!

## IOWA RECEIVES CARNEGIE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLASSIFICATION

The University of Iowa has earned the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's 2026 Community Engagement Classification, a national recognition of the university's deep and sustained commitment to community engagement. First designated in 2015, UI's successful re-designation reflects a campuswide effort—engaging more than 120 representatives from every college and numerous community partners—to advance meaningful, mutually beneficial work across Iowa and beyond.



## RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY ENGAGED WORK

With remarks from Provost Kevin Kregel, the April 15 OCE Awards Celebration recognized the extraordinary contributions of faculty, staff, students, and community partners to collaborative, community-driven work across Iowa and beyond. This year, we were especially honored to celebrate our institution's first recipient of Campus Compact's Ernest A. Lynton Award for the Scholarship of Engagement.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Working within your field of study is an amazing experience that I think individuals should take advantage of during their undergrad careers. Being able to have real world experiences through community engagement **has shaped my undergrad career and prepared me greatly for my future.**

- Student in a Community-Engaged Course (CEC)



The Office of Community Engagement's faculty development programs like the FEC are particularly useful for **providing an opportunity to learn from other faculty and review pedagogical strategies that have worked for others in the classroom and with their research.**

- Faculty member in the Faculty Engagement Corps





## ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

### NEW GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY-ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP IN PROMOTION AND TENURE

After more than two years of development, new guidelines for community-engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure have been instituted at the University of Iowa. Intended for faculty whose scholarship and teaching involve mutually beneficial collaboration with community partners at the local, state, national, or international level, the guidelines formally recognize the value and impact of community-engaged work.

### FUELING THE FUTURE: BREAKING CYCLES OF POVERTY IN MUSCATINE

University of Iowa researchers, led by OCE's Faculty Fellow Dr. Rima Afifi, are partnering with local organizations to break cycles of poverty in Muscatine through Fueling the Future (FtF). This community-led program provides wraparound support and short-term certificate programs that help families overcome barriers—from housing to workforce development—while centering community voices in every step.



## STUDENT LEARNING

### ENGAGEMENT TRAINING AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

Undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Iowa strengthened their commitment to community engagement through the Office of Community Engagement's signature programs—the [Undergraduate Engagement Corps](#) (UEC) and [Graduate Engagement Corps](#) (GEC). Both programs provide training, mentorship, and grant funding to support meaningful, community-engaged work.

### FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR AND ONLINE COURSE BUILD SKILLS IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Students seeking to deepen their understanding of community engagement can enroll in a First-Year Seminar [Beyond Volunteering: Changing Your World Through Community Engagement](#) or our new online, asynchronous course [Foundations of Community Engagement](#) in partnership with the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC). Both courses build essential skills for responsible and effective community-engaged work through theory, partner engagement, case studies, and practical strategies.



## BY THE NUMBERS



**159 FACULTY & STAFF** ACTIVELY STRENGTHENING ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT NETWORK (CEN)



**4500+ CONNECTIONS MADE** ACROSS CAMPUS & IN THE COMMUNITY THROUGH NEWSLETTER & SOCIAL MEDIA



**350 COMMUNITY PARTNERS** ADVANCING SHARED GOALS IN 39 IOWA COUNTIES STATEWIDE



**188 CEC COURSES** ENGAGING **2,600+ STUDENTS** IN MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY-BASED WORK



**11 INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS** REACHING **244 UNIVERSITY PARTICIPANTS**



**5,858 IOWANS** BROUGHT TOGETHER THROUGH ARTS ENGAGEMENT EVENTS STATEWIDE

# ARTS ENGAGEMENT

## GRANT WOOD ART COLONY ANNOUNCES NEW 2026 PARTNERSHIP

The Grant Wood Art Colony launched a new partnership with the Grant Wood Country Forum, a community that for five years convened enthusiasts through annual online gatherings and publications exploring Grant Wood's life and legacy. As of January 2026, the Art Colony now serves as the forum's host, continuing—and expanding—the conversation about Wood's enduring impact.

## ARTS SHARE BRINGS IOWA HISTORY TO LIFE WITH BARBERMAN

Graduate students in the University of Iowa Theatre Department, led by Arts Share, are bringing history to life this summer with *Barberman*, an original full-length play about Iowa civil rights leader Alexander Clark. Developed through a unique community partnership and premiering in Muscatine this June, the production highlights the power of storytelling to connect past and present while creating new opportunities for learning and engagement.

Members of the Graduate Engagement Corps visiting the Iowa City Bike Library



Faculty members convening during the orientation of the Faculty Engagement Corps

# OUR STAFF

**RIMA AFIFI - FACULTY FELLOW FOR ENGAGED TEACHING & SCHOLARSHIP**

**MAYA ARTHUR - COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR**

**NICK BENSON - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**LESLIE FINER - DIRECTOR, ARTS & HUMANITIES**

**MAURA PILCHER - DIRECTOR, GRANT WOOD ART COLONY**

**JAN WARREN - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER**

# OUR MISSION

The Office of Community Engagement (OCE) works to facilitate the development of mutually beneficial partnerships between faculty, staff, and students at the University of Iowa with community partners across our state, nation, and world.

# LOOKING AHEAD

Building on this year's momentum, we will continue to cultivate reciprocal partnerships that address community-identified priorities and enrich the university's public mission. We are thankful for the dedication of our partners and excited for the opportunities that lie ahead.

# SUPPORT ENGAGEMENT

We invite you to donate to this work and help expand our impact.

[DONATE.GIVETOIOWA.ORG](https://DONATE.GIVETOIOWA.ORG)

# OUR GRADUATE STUDENTS

**HAJRI AGA - POETRY**

**KATIE FORBUSH - CELLO PERFORMANCE**

**JOSH TURNER - DIRECTING (THEATRE)**

**BEA BEAMAN - DANCE & CHOREOGRAPHY**

**MAY RODED - PRINTMAKING**



## CONNECT WITH US

[engagement.uiowa.edu](https://engagement.uiowa.edu)

[ui-engagement@uiowa.edu](mailto:ui-engagement@uiowa.edu)

Instagram [@iowaengagement](https://www.instagram.com/iowaengagement)

Facebook [@iowaengagement](https://www.facebook.com/iowaengagement)



The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth and related conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. Veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, or associational preferences. The university also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to university facilities. For additional information on nondiscrimination policies, contact the Senior Director, Office of Civil Rights Compliance, the University of Iowa, 202 Jessup Hall, Iowa City, IA 52242-1316, 319-335-0705, [ui-ocr@uiowa.edu](mailto:ui-ocr@uiowa.edu).

# IOWA