REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Engaged Unit Program
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Application Submission Deadline: Monday, October 31, 2022

We are pleased to launch the University’s new Engaged Unit Program, facilitated through the Office of the Chancellor.

The Engaged Unit Program supports teams representing overarching academic units—colleges, schools, centers, and institutes—in identifying and implementing action steps for furthering the institutionalization of community-engaged research and/or teaching in the academic agendas within their units.

The dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racial injustice require us to focus intently on enacting more effective public engagement efforts as we find ways to contribute solutions to today’s most pressing and challenging societal issues.

As we consider resumption of in-person, face-to-face engagement work with communities post-COVID, it is time to identify strategies within our academic units for ensuring high quality, equitable partnerships and collaborations in light of the significant developments that have occurred over the two past years.

The Engaged Unit Program is designed to support overarching academic units (i.e., colleges, schools, centers, and institutes) that wish to develop or strengthen post-COVID research--focused and/or teaching-focused university/community engagement partnership initiatives that enhance the involvement of faculty, staff, and/or students in community-embedded work that advances the unit's academic agenda.

Post-COVID engagement requires us to think differently about our relationships and collaborations with external partners. Specifically, post-COVID engagement requires us to be attentive to:

- changed conditions and capacities within the communities to partner with the University;
- amplified societal inequities faced by communities due to persistent systemic racism and other forms of discrimination;
- differential and heavy impacts of COVID on underserved communities;
- increased interest among students and faculty to conduct community-engaged work;
- increased desire among communities to partner with the University and other organizations to address societal challenges;
increased demand from funders for projects that are built on established, sustainable, and reciprocal university-community partnerships;

increased demand from legislators for the University to demonstrate its impact on the state and beyond.

the value of having a unit-wide and University-wide public engagement agenda; and

the role that public engagement can play in advancing participating units’ academic and scholarly goals and priorities.

**Up to ten colleges, schools, centers and/or institutes will be selected to plan, establish, and implement strategic initiatives (three to five action steps) that advance the integration of public engagement into the units’ research and teaching activities that address post-COVID issues.**

Units selected to participate will receive up to $15,000 to support the development and implementation of their actions plans as well as have access to resource materials (books), technical assistance providers, external speakers, and community-based and university-based networks to enhance post-COVID community-engaged research and/or teaching.

**Purpose**

The *Engaged Unit Program* builds on the work conducted at other universities to support overarching academic units in developing and implementing strategic initiatives that further institutionalization of public engagement at the University through the integration of public engagement into the academic programmatic features of a college, school, center, or institute.

An *engaged college, school, center, or institute* is one that:

- utilizes public engagement as a strategy to achieve key academic goals for students and faculty;
- encourages and supports high quality community-based research and engaged scholarship among faculty and/or students;
- incorporates public engagement (local and/or global) into academic coursework to enhance student learning and development;
- supports collaborative research and teaching activities between members of the unit (faculty, scholars, department leaders, college administrators, staff) and members of the community (non-profits, government, industry, etc.); and/or
- addresses meaningful and important societal issues in collaboration and partnership with external partners.

**Focus of the Program**

This program focuses on supporting overarching academic units — units at the college, school, center, or institute level — in developing and enacting plans to prepare for post-COVID community-engaged research and/or community-engaged teaching efforts, in light of the changed conditions in communities and at the University, and in consideration of the systemic racial inequities that permeate society.
The development of engaged college activities under this program might involve but are not limited to the following post-COVID preparation activities:

- developing and piloting curricular materials that align with community-based courses and overarching college-wide or departmental learning goals for students and that consider the post-COVID contexts in which the community-based efforts are situated.
- supporting collegiate and departmental members or leaders for professional development opportunities that enhance their capacity to conduct high quality community-engaged research and/or teaching post-COVID;
- offering unit-wide and/or program-wide retreats that engage faculty, staff, and community partners in strategic planning to further the institutionalization of public engagement within their work;
- building the unit’s personnel’s understanding of the principles of community-based participatory research that take into account systemic inequities; and/or
- developing instruments or benchmarking tools to assess the progress and outcomes of the unit’s and its respective programs’ public engagement activities.

Key Components
Activities that are part of the Engaged Unit Program should include all of the following components:

1. an identification of the unit’s key teaching and/or research goals for students and faculty, as appropriate;
2. an articulation of some of the ways that public engagement activities can have value added in achieving the unit’s goals articulated in #1;
3. the development of collaborative partnerships with community members (local or global) that consider the communities’ state of affairs post-pandemic and are based on producing mutual benefits, reciprocity, and long-term sustainability;
4. the development of a strategic, action-focused plan that advances the integration of public engagement into the programmatic features of the college and its academic units/departments;
5. the implementation of the activities of the action plan developed in #4;
6. monitoring the institutionalization of public engagement into the college’s teaching and/or research activities; and
7. consideration of the ways in which the unit’s public engagement efforts might enhance the goals of the University’s strategic plan.

The University’s public engagement efforts take place in many different community contexts, from local to global and include partnerships with a broad range of external stakeholders and sectors. Each effort and partnership brings with it a unique set of circumstances and situations that warrant consideration and careful planning.

Team Criteria and Expectations
Unit Teams: Up to ten (10) college, school, center, and/or institute teams will be selected to participate in the program. Each team will consist of at least four individuals who will serve as
representative’s the unit’s engagement work and action planning efforts. Each unit team must include the following members:

1. at least one individual who serves in a unit-wide leadership role (dean, associate dean, dean designee, director, associate director);
2. at least two faculty from the unit (at least one of whom is a tenure line faculty member); and
3. at least one other member, including but not limited to other faculty members, unit staff members, students, and community partners.

Note: There is no limit to the number of individuals who can serve on a unit team.

Engaged Unit Institute
The members of each of the selected teams will participate as a cohort in a three-phased, 18-month institute that includes:

1. Planning and Development of a strategic action plan for conducting post-pandemic public engagement within the unit (Spring semester 2023)
2. Implementation of the action steps within the plan (2023-2024 Academic Year) and
3. Reporting to document lessons learned that can be shared campus-wide, and to provide some documentation of the different approaches units use to conduct post-COVID public engagement.

Planning and Development (Spring 2023):
The members of the teams will meet in Spring 2023 for two mandatory half-day meetings (each lasting three hours) on action planning for public engagement institutionalization. These meetings will be held Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 9:00 AM - 12:00 noon and Wednesday, May 3, 2023, 9:00 AM - 12 noon. All team members are expected to attend these meetings.

The first meeting, Wednesday, February 8, 2023 (9 AM - noon) will explore the essential elements of high quality public engagement, as it pertains to advancing the research and teaching goals of academic units. This meeting will include discussion regarding challenging and changing conditions in communities as a result of COVID and persistent systemic inequities. Participants will engage in a review of the action planning template that teams will use to complete their respective action plan. This template engages team members in articulating goals to be accomplished and key action steps to be implemented over the course of the program to achieve each participating unit’s identified public engagement implementation and institutionalization goals.

Following this first meeting, each unit team will work throughout the Spring 2023 semester to flesh out and refine its Engaged Unit Action Plan.

During the second meeting, Wednesday, May 3, 2023 (9 AM - noon), the members of each Engaged Unit Team will present their respective action plan and solicit peer feedback from the
other teams. Each team will then refine and finalize its plan and action steps to prepare for its year-long implementation starting in the Fall 2023 semester.

Implementation (Fall 2023 and Spring 2024): Each Engaged Unit team will implement its action plan during the 2023-2024 academic year. During this period, there will be two mandatory 90-minute meetings (one per semester, dates to be determined) to discuss each group’s progress and share helpful materials and information. Teams are required to send at least one representative to each of these two 90-minute meetings.

Reporting: One mandatory final meeting (3 hours) will be held at the end of the Spring 2024 semester (date to be determined) to review each team’s implementation progress, to assess the progress of the unit’s engagement work, and to identify next steps.

Expectation and Deliverables
Engaged Unit teams that wish to participate in this program agree to the following:

1. actively participate in all aspects of the Engaged Unit Institute, including participating in the required three-hour planning meetings (February 8, 2023 and May 3, 2023), the two 90-minute implementation meetings (Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, to be scheduled), and the final 3-hour full-team meeting (Spring 2024, to be scheduled);
2. complete a pre- and post-self-assessment of the level of institutionalization of public engagement within the unit (rubric to be provided);
3. develop, implement, and refine an engaged unit action plan (template to be provided) that will further the integration of public engagement into research and/or teaching activities within the unit in consideration of post-pandemic engagement and the systemic racism and inequities present in society;
4. prepare a brief final report (2-3 pages of bulleted notes, template to be provided) at the end of the program that articulates the unit’s experience and lessons learned in this Engaged Unit initiative.

Funding Priority and Criteria
Priority for funding will be given to proposals that:

• offer specific details on unit-wide and program-wide efforts that will take place to integrate public engagement more fully into the unit’s teaching and/or research activities in ways that advance the unit’s academic priorities and agenda;
• include plans to assess the short- and/or long-term benefits to faculty, students, the units and its programs, and/or the community;
• articulate the importance of this grant to advance and/or sustain public engagement activities;
• offer visions for what the unit will look like at the end of the grant period and beyond;
• supplement the Engaged Unit funding with additional support from the college/school/center/institute or other sources; and
• use the Engaged Unit funding to leverage other resources to support community-engaged research and/or community-engaged teaching within the unit.

Funds from this grant initiative can be used for any purpose that supports the advancement of the team’s engagement action plan. These funds may be combined with other university or
external funding sources. An 18-month budget (January 2023 - June 2024), against which college teams can charge expenditures, will be allocated in January 2023. However, the actual disbursement of funds will occur in three phases: 50% of funds after submission of a completed action plan in Spring 2023, 25% of funds at the end of the Fall 2024 semester, and 25% of funds at the end Spring 2024, after final reports and documents are submitted.

**Support to be Provided**
Engaged Unit Teams selected for the program will be provided access to a set of resources, materials, technical assistance, and other support to guide the department’s planning and implementation activities. Each team is eligible to receive up to $15,000 to support the development and implementation of their institutionalization action plan. The resources may be used to (but not limited to):

- present specific details on the college team's action plan at *unit-wide or program-wide* meetings or retreats;
- purchase materials, books, or other resources that support the advancement of the team’s action planning or program implementation;
- pay for speakers to offer perspectives that advance the team’s public engagement efforts;
- leverage the support to supplement other resources that support the engaged unit’s team plan.

During the project period, the Office of the Chancellor will work with each team to secure the necessary support and technical assistance to advance each team’s goals.

**Application Process**
*Complete and submit the attached application (as a PDF) by Monday, October 31, 2022* to Wanda Ward, Executive Associate Chancellor for Public Engagement, weward@illinois.edu. Only those applications received by end of business Monday, October 31, 2022 will be considered for funding.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their grant application by Monday, December 5, 2023.

**Questions:**
Please direct questions to Wanda Ward, Executive Associate Chancellor for Public Engagement, weward@illinois.edu
APPLICATION COVER PAGE
Engaged Unit Program
Application Submission Deadline: October 31, 2022

NAME OF UNIT:

PRINCIPAL CONTACT:  PHONE:

EMAIL:

Name of Unit Team Leader:

Unit Team Leader Signature (required) [Electronic signature is acceptable]

Name of Unit’s Chief Administrator (i.e., Dean, Director):

Unit Chief Administrator Signature (required) [Electronic signature is acceptable]

Project Narrative
In a maximum of five pages (single-spaced), please address the following items (bulleted points are acceptable):

1. Describe the unit’s interest in and experience with community-based teaching and/or community-based research.

2. How would you characterize the support for publicly engaged work among members of the unit?

3. In what ways will implementing a unit-wide action plan for public/community engagement enhance the unit’s research and/or teaching activities and other academic priorities?

4. What are two or three roadblocks/barriers to advancing public/community engagement in your unit that might be addressed through this Engaged Unit program?
5. What will be different in your unit (e.g., practices, policies, procedures, focus, etc.) as a result of having a post-COVID unit-wide agenda for integrating community-focused activities more fully into research and teaching?

6. Identify three unit-wide outcomes your team hopes to achieve through its participation in the program.

7. List the members who will serve on the engaged unit team. Include their title, role(s), and their specific duties and responsibilities. Include any specific area of interest, expertise and/or experience in relation to community-engaged teaching or research. Describe why these members are key personnel for the team.

   **At a minimum, team members must include:**
   - the unit’s Chief Administrator (or designee);
   - two faculty members (including at least one tenure line faculty); and
   - at least one other member (other faculty, students, community partners, etc.).

   NOTE: There is no limit to the number of individuals who can serve on the team.

8. What resources, materials, supports, technical assistance, etc. do you foresee your team needing to develop and implement its action plan. [Note: Your team is not bound to these items; other resources may be named after the program begins].

9. Provide a statement that confirms the unit team’s agreement to participate fully in all aspects of the Engaged Unit Program activities and commitment to work on a post-COVID engagement action plan that is attentive to issues of racial and social inequities.

10. Provide a budget, including amount requested and a budget narrative that explains how the funds will be used to work toward the unit's overarching goals. While matching funds are not required, they are encouraged. Please indicate any matching funds (including in-kind support) that your unit might provide to the team’s action planning and implementation activities.

Submission

Please submit your application (in PDF format) to Wanda Ward, Executive Associate Chancellor for Public Engagement, weward@illinois.edu.

Priority will be given to proposals received by 5:00 PM, Monday, October 31, 2022. Notification of awards will be made by Monday, December 5, 2022. Only one application per unit (i.e., college, school, center, or institute) may be submitted.
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SELECTION CRITERIA

The following review criteria will be used to judge proposals submitted for the Engaged Unit Program.

1. The proposal demonstrates genuine and strong interest in and experience with community-based teaching and/or community-based research among members of the unit. There is evidence of strong support for community-engaged work among members of the unit.

2. A compelling rationale is provided for building a robust action plan for post-COVID community-focused activities that are integrated with the unit’s research and/or teaching agendas, and give attention to issues of racial and systemic inequities.

3. The proposed unit team meets the representation criteria (the unit’s chief administrator or designee, two faculty including one tenure-line faculty, and at least one other person who plays an important role in developing an engaged unit).

4. The barriers that the unit team members hope to address through the Engaged Unit Program are relevant and appropriate for advancing post-COVID community-engaged research and teaching.

5. A clear vision is presented for how the unit’s work with engagement will be different as a result of participating in the Engaged Unit Program.

6. A reasonable (preliminary) set of resources or materials to support the team’s planning and implementation activities are presented.

7. A set of relevant outcomes to be achieved are presented.

8. The signature of the unit’s chief administrator (Dean or Director) is included.