

# Community-Engaged Learning

## The Classroom Beyond the Classroom

► The mutually beneficial relationship between the University of Rochester and the Rochester community spans 165 years and has been particularly strong in the last decade. There is no question that the future—and the success—of both are intertwined.

For our students, this means new opportunities to learn by doing through an approach to experiential education that weaves the community into the curriculum. It also provides unique ways to engage with our neighbors, both in and out of the classroom, and address shared challenges.

This is how truly transformative learning happens—when students take what they learn in the classroom and have the opportunity to live it and practice it in an authentic setting.

### The College's Approach

The College's approach to community-engaged learning has been, and continues to be,



▲ Margarita Guillory, assistant professor of religion, African-American religion, and American religious history, takes her Religion in Hip Hop class on a tour of WALL\THERAPY murals around Rochester, New York.

a distinguishing feature of a Rochester education. Our vision is to find more ways to incorporate community-engaged learning into every academic discipline within the College and to find ways that the community can advance the education of our students.

In so doing, we will support faculty-community partnerships in scholarship and teaching. Existing programs will grow, new programs

will be developed, and student learning will flourish.

By providing fertile ground for the growth and success of experiential learning and scholarship, our courses will embrace the community as a classroom, welcome community experts and leaders into our campus classrooms, and provide opportunities for our students to apply what they are learning in meaningful ways.



*“The programs I was involved with as an undergraduate sparked something powerful in me to want to make a difference in the lives of inner-city youth and to be a part of the changing face of education. The University’s programs showed me that I can do this, and that I can truly make a difference.”*

—Alesa Yuodsnukis '15

Yuodsnukis was a psychology major and recipient of the Etta Miller Scholarship (2012–15). After graduating, she joined Teach for America, a nonprofit organization focused on raising student achievement in public schools.

## Models of Success

The College is already pioneering courses that take a community-engaged learning approach and has done so for years. Here are just a few current examples.

### Water Use and Conservation

This course allows students to explore the science of water, from its physical and chemical properties to ways to store, conserve, and use it. Field trips are an important part of their learning experience. Students don hip waders and head into nearby Irondequoit Creek to understand and calculate water flows. They compare their data with that from the local U.S. Geological Station to help them to understand variability in the natural environment.

“Natural systems differ significantly from what a lecture or a textbook can illustrate,” says Karen Berger, the course instructor. “Students

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“Taking traditional teaching methods and infusing them with community-engaged components transforms learning. It helps our students and can serve the specific needs of our community partners.”

—Richard Feldman, dean of the College

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need to get outside the classroom to really learn about the environment, our impact on it, and ways to build and sustain a healthy planet.”

### American Sign Language

“Community-engaged learning is baked into our educational approach,” says Guillaume Chastel, senior lecturer within the University’s American Sign Language (ASL) program. “We require all of our students to learn and practice in natural environments such as Deaf events, clubs, and theater to learn how to communicate in a conversational, effective, and ‘real’ way.”

The University’s program is one of just a few four-year programs in the country that focus on ASL and on teaching about Deaf culture. Most students who major in ASL pair it with another major, such as brain and cognitive sciences, modern languages, or philosophy. More than 80 percent pursue an advanced degree in fields such as interpreting, Deaf education, medicine, or law.

### Urban Crime and Justice

Students in this course investigate and analyze academic work on law and legal institutions from a variety of disciplines. During the course, students participate in a variety of experiences with the Monroe County judicial system—giving them an opportunity to pair academic study with firsthand observation of local legal institutions at work.

“Community-engaged learning helps students find meaningful connections between their academic work and the world beyond the classroom,” says Craig Doran, University of Rochester instructor and a Monroe County judge. “In this course, they participate in ongoing discussions about our judicial system that they explore by observing the local court system on a weekly basis.”

### Positive Youth Development

This seminar-based course examines the processes that enable children and adolescents to be

“The ASL program here has given me far more than conversational language skills—it has given me an appreciation for Deaf history, Deaf culture, and the beautiful literary arts stemming from the Deaf community in America. Through my classes and conversations with community members, I have learned firsthand about their experiences, upbringings, and what it means to have a Deaf identity.”

—Katherine Brown '17

dual major in American Sign Language and psychology



▲ Members of the ASL Club, Nahoma Presberg '15, Clint Cantwell '15, and Katherine Brown '17 sign to pop songs at a Rochester Dinner Revue event.

healthy, productive members of society. Participating students partner with a local youth agency to support its community members. For instance, in the spring of 2015, Julissa Thompson '16 was placed with an after-school program at Vanguard Collegiate High School.

Using articles they read and talked about in the course taught by Laura Wray-Lake, assistant professor of psychology, Thompson and her classmates worked with high school students in the program and tried to understand the barriers they face in completing their coursework and pursuing higher education. "You're taking the theory and testing it in an urban environment," says Thompson, a double major in

nursing and psychology. "It looks a little different when you're there."

### **Real-World Engineering**

Every year, student teams at the University's Hajim School of Engineering & Applied Sciences partner with local companies and institutions to solve real-world engineering problems. At the beginning of the fall semester, faculty present students with a dozen or so projects on which to work throughout the academic year. Each student then has to submit a résumé, cover letter, and project proposal and then be interviewed to be on a team.

"From the very beginning of the year, students gain practical skills.

They learn about teamwork, creative problem-solving, and project management, and they ultimately design a device, instrument, or apparatus related to the biomedical industry," says Scott Seidman, associate professor of biomedical engineering. "They can't get all this from the classroom. By being immersed in a real business challenge, they come up with solutions, and they work together, which are profoundly important skills to gain."

### **What Is Community-Engaged Learning?**

Community-engaged learning is an approach to scholarship in which students, faculty, and community partners collaborate to address complex social issues. It builds high impact partnerships, enriches learning, and provides institutional support to achieve our mission: "Learn, Discover, Heal, Create—And Make the World Ever Better."



**"The senior design program gave me an opportunity to use my engineering skills to create a medical device for use in a clinical environment. From the experience, I gained practical skills that I am using now as I pursue my master's in medical product design."**

**—Matthew Baker '15**

biomedical engineering major, graduate student at Georgia Tech University

Senior Design Day in Robert B. Goergen Hall is an opportunity for Hajim students to discuss their research and outcomes with other community members.



Freshmen Gushenghao Zhang, Tian Lan, and Mackenzie Lee build a chicken coop with volunteer D. J. Kitzel at the Gandhi House in Rochester during Wilson Day 2015.

## How You Can Help

The University is committed to educating global citizens who are empowered and inspired to make a difference in their fields and in their communities. Your generosity can help us do this. Please consider any of these giving opportunities:

### **Endow the Community-Engaged Scholar Program:**

The College aims to create a community-engaged scholar program, which will allow students to meet their academic goals while serving and benefiting the needs of the community. The program would include community-engaged coursework, independent research, and an internship or service project. Upon graduation, students would have the opportunity for a one-year position (with stipend) with a local community organization

or business. To implement this program successfully, the College also requests funding for the following:

### **Faculty teaching and scholarship**

The community-engaged scholars program would support the initiatives of faculty and would complement courses they teach and/or help them develop new courses. Funds would help faculty be released from their regular duties to focus on their commitment to community-engaged teaching and

scholarship for a semester or other approved amount of time.

### **Program support**

Logistical issues and costs can be an issue. Your support could be allocated to help provide staff to support the community-engaged scholars program, give students access to low-cost transportation, develop on-campus conferences, and make it possible for students to participate at conferences and other events.

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“Community engagement allows our students to contextualize their learning and to develop valuable leadership skills that will serve them well throughout life.”

—**Glenn Cerosaletti**, assistant dean of students and director of the Rochester Center for Community Leadership (RCCL) at the University of Rochester, where students, faculty, staff, and others come together to create positive change in the Rochester community and beyond

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[www.rochester.edu/college/RCCL](http://www.rochester.edu/college/RCCL)



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For more information on naming and other giving opportunities, please contact  
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