Community-Engagement Grants: Fostering Partnerships and Advancing Scholarship and Human Well-Being

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Community-Engagement Grants: Fostering Partnerships and Advancing Scholarship and Human Well-Being

Abstract
This preliminary report presents how Virginia Commonwealth University creates a culture of community engagement, facilitates university-community partnerships and how seed grant money can be a catalyst for long-term partnerships.

Keywords
grant, community engagement, partnerships, community

Disciplines
Higher Education

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A Preliminary Report
Virginia Commonwealth University

- Urban, research university
- 31,000 students
- Academic medical center
- #1 public art school
- No football team, but cool basketball coach!
VCU’s Quest for Distinction

**Theme IV:** Become a national model for community engagement and regional impact

- Expand community engaged scholarship and service learning.
- **Create** university-community partnerships with a focus on the key targeted areas of:
  - K-12 Education
  - Access to Health
  - Economic Development
  - Sustainability
- **Provide** strategic leadership in addressing sustainability challenges through curricular and service innovations and green facilities and operations.
Recognition for Community Engagement

Recognized as 1 of 40 top community-engaged institutions by the Carnegie foundation

President’s Higher Education Service Honor Roll, with highest distinction

Recipient of a CTSA grant
Division of Community Engagement

Vision
VCU is a community of engaged citizens, working together changing lives.

Mission
The VCU Division of Community Engagement mobilizes university-community partnerships that generate innovative solutions to societal challenges and prepares the engaged citizens of tomorrow.
Council for Community Engagement

- Builds a network of contacts across units
- Disseminates information and resources
- Gathers information from the community on critical needs and opportunities
- Recognizes accomplishments of university-community partnerships
- Oversees the grant program
- Promotes CE opportunities
Questions

• How do we create a culture of community engagement?

• How do we facilitate university-community partnerships?

• Can seed grant money be a catalyst for long-term partnerships?
Grants: Purpose & Background

- Funds from the Offices of the Provost and the Vice President for Health Sciences ($100,000)
- Provides one-year seed grants up to $20,000
- Supports and encourages community-university partnerships
- Creatively addresses community-identified needs with interdisciplinary approaches
- Advances community engaged scholarship
History

• Program began during 2007-2008
• From 2007-2014, 51 grants have been awarded
• Approximately $700,000 has been awarded
• Funded Projects have supported
  • K-12 education,
  • Access to health,
  • Sustainability and
  • Economic development
Application Process

- Information sessions
- Online application
- Applications reviewed by Council committee
- Finalists interviewed with community partner
- Awarded in May at a community celebration
- Projects presented at subsequent May celebration
- Final report and follow-up surveys
CCE Grants Impact (2007-2012)

Data collected from PIs:
- Final reports
- Follow-up surveys

Next steps:
- Survey of community partners
- Analysis of combined impact and comparison of perspectives
Response Rate

- Complete data for 20 grants
- 52.6% response rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCE Grant Year</th>
<th># Grantees</th>
<th># Reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3*</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Only reports with complete data are in count
Key Findings

• Majority of projects (65%) are ongoing
• 20% of closed projects still maintain a relationship with their partners
• Students are primarily engaged through service-learning
• Scholarship generated is primarily articles and presentations
• PIs leverage this grant to obtain additional internal and external funding support
Status of the Projects (n=20)

- Ongoing Projects (n=13) - 35.0%
- Closed Projects (n=7) - 65.0%
Maintained a Relationship After Grant Period (n=20)

- Ongoing Projects (n=16): 80.0%
- Closed Projects (n=4): 20.0%
Faculty Contributions to Ongoing Partnerships (n=16)

- Joint Presentations: 10
- Volunteers: 10
- Public Speaking: 8
- Agency-based project: 8
- Joint Publications: 7
- Co-write grants: 7
- Serves on Board: 4
- Fundraising: 3
- Other: 3
- Serves on Committees: 3
- Fee-based Consultation: 2
- Make it real.
Community Member Contributions to Ongoing Partnerships (n=16)

- Service Learning/Internships: 9
- Public Speaking: 8
- Presents in Class: 7
- Data Access: 6
- Scholarship Consultation: 4
- Other: 3

Make it real.

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
Financial Sustainability

- No match required, but many PIs report additional in-kind and cash contributions to support the funded project

- Of the 20 reports, 5 projects received additional funding ($213,000 from external sources)

- Sources have been federal grants, private and corporate foundations and other VCU sources
Contribution to Faculty Scholarship (n=16)

- Journal articles: 9
- Books or book chapters: 1
- Creative expression: 19
- Technical reports: 1
- Conferences/Presentations: 27
- Other: 18
## Areas of Student Involvement
*(10 of 13 ongoing projects)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Undergraduates</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Study/Research</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid member of project team</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work study/Graduate assistant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service learning</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship, practicum, field placement</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>118</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>371</strong></td>
<td><strong>231</strong></td>
<td><strong>602</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Contribution to Student Scholarship

- Journal articles: 6
- Books or book chapters: 1
- Creative expression: 19
- Technical reports: 0
- Conferences/Presentations: 25
- Other: 17
Reflections on Impact

• Involvement of community partners in all stages of the projects
• Impact on the VCU culture and Richmond community
• Encouragement of interdisciplinary work
• 70 different VCU units have participated
• Development of models for engaged teaching, research, and service
• Growing number of faculty with expertise in community engaged scholarship
Questions

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Division of Community Engagement

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