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Abstract
As Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) takes its place among the nation’s top 50 public research universities, our guiding principles have been an abiding focus on student success at all levels, unparalleled innovation through research, and a university-wide commitment to human health, and engagement and empowerment in our communities. To that end, VCU has named community engagement as a key focus area in its strategic plan with the aim of developing collaborative university-community partnerships that yield creative and relevant solutions for community-identified needs. These mutually-beneficial partnerships not only support the public good, but they also support our mission to advance knowledge and student success through teaching and learning, scholarship, and outreach efforts.

The Council for Community Engagement (CCE) Grants is one way that VCU supports the development of sustainable, mutually-beneficial partnerships. Under the direction of the vice provost for community engagement and the vice president for health policy and community relations of the VCU Health System, the Council provides oversight for the CCE Grants. The CCE projects are designed to enhance and increase university engagement with the community and contribute to community-engaged scholarship. One-year seed grants of up to $20,000 are awarded to proposals that demonstrate the involvement of faculty and students, address community-identified needs, and demonstrate substantive collaboration with at least one community partner.

Over the past 7 years (2007-2014 grant years), $581,871 has been awarded to fund 51 community-based scholarship projects, which have involved 107 faculty from 19 academic and academic support units, representing 68 different departments and over 76 community partners (Appendix A). These projects have largely focused on improving health & wellness (34%), education (26%), environmental sustainability (14%), positive youth development (14%) and other (12%).

This evaluation examined the impact of the seed grant program from 2007-2012 grant years (2007 – 2011 calendar years) from the perspectives of the community partners, PIs and students. Two overarching questions guided this evaluation: 1) do the grants facilitate successful community-university partnerships, and 2) can seed grant money be a catalyst for long-term partnerships. Although not included in the current evaluation, it is worth noting that two recently funded (2012-13) CCE grantees have already demonstrated successful impact. VCU’s School of Nursing recently received a $1.5 million grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services to expand the CCE grant, “Community Health and Wellness Program for Older Adults”. In addition, the “CMoR Learning: Developing Interdisciplinary Partnerships for an Inclusive Learning Community” CCE grantee has been ranked in the nation’s top 10 as a model for children’s learning museums.

Keywords
grant, funding, community-engagement, CEnR, community engagement, community, council, university, seed grant

Disciplines
Higher Education

This conference proceeding is available at VCU Scholars Compass: http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/community_resources/15
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>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></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) - 65.0%
- Closed Projects (n=7) - 35.0%
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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joint Presentations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Speaking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency-based project</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Publications</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-write grants</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serves on Board</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serves on Committees</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee-based Consultation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
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>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>371</strong></td>
<td><strong>231</strong></td>
<td><strong>602</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

• 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?
Division of Community Engagement

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