

**CAPACITY BUILDING IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES:
MATCHING FACULTY-COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

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General Description of the Session

Presenters will provide an overview of an empowerment-based model to build capacity in culturally diverse communities. Through hands-on exercises, participants will have the opportunity to learn and implement an innovative decision-making process for selecting and matching faculty-community partners and to evaluate their selections. Decisions are based on criteria that maximize the potential for a genuine reciprocal role for each partner and to promote optimal benefit for the faculty, community and students.

Motivations/Foundations for the Session

The Center for Community Building and Civic Engagement at Eastern Michigan University has developed and implemented a Community Leadership Fellows Program (CLFP), which is a community capacity-building program, using an exemplary university-community collaboration model. This model is based on the philosophy that the community plays a critical and indispensable role in developing and sustaining successful university-community partnerships. Therefore, the (CLFP) involves teams of university faculty, student groups, and community leaders and organizations in

partnerships that provide an incomparable civic engagement experience for our faculty, students, and community organizations.

The purpose of the program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, is to develop university-community partnerships to build capacity for the prevention and reduction of youth violence in the Latino, Arab-American and Ypsilanti communities.

The innovative CLFP program model involves a process by which faculty and community fellows are matched in one-to-one partnerships to complete a violence-prevention project in one of these communities.

For each cohort, a Request for Proposal (RFP) is issued inviting university faculty to apply for a fellowship in the program. The RFP asks for specific information to help the program steering committee evaluate the applicant's ability to work in the community.

An RFP is also issued to community organizations in which agency directors are asked to nominate a staff member to work in partnership with a university faculty member to develop and implement a violence-prevention project in their organization.

The steering committee reviews all applications to determine the feasibility of each proposed project and applicant to contribute to building capacity for violence prevention in one of the targeted communities. Once the most feasible applicants are selected, the committee embarks on a process to match some of the selected faculty and community applicants. This process involves consideration of multiple factors simultaneously.

These include such aspects as how much each partner could contribute to and learn from the other, how likely a partnership is to meet the goals of the program, and what partnerships will best serve the community and our students.

To be Achieved in the Session

Participants in the session will engage in a process to select and pair faculty and community CLFP applicants. After a program review, participants will be divided into work groups and given guiding materials to make faculty-community partner selections and matches based on criteria to maximize the potential for a reciprocal role for each partner and to promote optimal benefit for the faculty, community and students.

Materials will include actual project Request for Proposals and applications from unidentified community and faculty applicants. After the groups have made their selections and matches, a general discussion will ensue about the decision-making process and its implications. As a result, participants will acquire innovative decision-making skills that maximize the impact of faculty-community partnerships.

Other Information about the Program

The CLFP is now in its second cohort. The model continues to undergo process evaluation that guides continuous improvement. The selection and matching process for the second cohort was improved based on analysis of evaluation data from the first cohort.

By all qualitative, quantitative, process and outcome measures we have employed, this is a tremendously successful model with extraordinary potential for the development and implementation of strong sustainable partnerships that benefit all parties. We continue to develop and refine this innovative model, and in a few months we will apply for additional funding to apply the model to another project to address issues related to urban gangs.