

The Community Engagement Working Group recommends that the Chancellor allocate \$3M over the next three years to seed an innovative, anti-racist UIC community collaboration lab (collaboratory) that is directly engaged with, and attuned to, underserved and underrepresented neighborhoods on the South and West Sides of Chicago.

In July 2020, we were charged with generating big and bold ideas for how UIC could/should address systemic racism across campus and in particular in its community engagement practice. Working as a diverse group of staff, faculty and students in August 2020, we ideated on how UIC could advance racial equity through a process of truly reciprocal community engagement. We tried to imagine what it would mean for UIC to transform its structure to redress past wrongs where communities have been acted upon and not heard, while also acknowledging the significant and varied community engaged research and service happening across campus.

UIC is not just an institution “*located in an urban community.*” UIC, as a land grant institution, is an engaged neighbor and partner with all of the responsibilities and sentiments associated with that designation. Part of UIC’s agenda is to transform the historical tripartite approach of *service, education and research* into a paradigm that blends, rather than separates these three activities into dynamic, responsive, and high impact learning partnerships between the university and the community. Our partnerships with, and commitment to provide service to, the community needs to be equitable across the city, regardless of the race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation of a community’s residents.

To put these aspirations into practice, we listened to what students, faculty and staff, many of us among them, said needed to change at UIC. Taking their lead, we embraced an explicitly anti-racist practice. This meant we needed to name ways UIC could repair the harms caused by the syndemics of our time: structural racism, the global pandemic of COVID-19, and the ensuing economic depression and expansion of economic inequality. We particularly focused on how we could build connections between UIC and the Black and Brown communities that surround campus, and agreed at the outset that UIC must make a substantive and ongoing investment in disenfranchised communities on the South and West sides of Chicago.

We also listened to community partners who have detailed, again and again, their multifaceted aspirations for their neighborhoods. Over the last decade, more than a

dozen neighborhoods have produced exceptional Quality of Life Plans describing their vision for their communities. At the core of the recommendations that follow is the idea that for a university to advance its efforts in community engagement, we cannot parachute into neighborhoods with the sense that we know what is best for them. Instead, we must focus on the solutions that have historically been articulated through an ongoing process of community development and planning.

To these ends, four documents served as a preamble to our efforts:

- UIC Strategic Priorities Report on Community Engagement (2015)
- The African American Community at UIC: Alignment of Reports and Recommendations by Aisha El-Amin (2020)
- North Lawndale Quality of Life Plan (2018)
- Auburn Gresham Quality of Life Plan (2016)

What follows are the overarching recommendations that have garnered consensus from the committee:

- Establish UIC Office of Community Collaboration to coordinate and support existing and new efforts of community engagement. The vision for it comes from the 2015 Strategic Priorities Report, which names the need to:
 - Embrace community
 - Create partnerships
 - Expand care

This office needs to be staffed with a Director and a Project Manager or Assistant Director at the start. It will be charged with designing and implementing an internal Racial Equity Audit for community engaged research and service provision at UIC. We also recommend that it initiate, in partnership with the Office of Diversity, an audit of the various administrative systems at UIC, including HR, Procurement, and Grants and Contracts. We also recommend that this office coordinate existing entities/units, such as IRRPP, IPCE, SJI, GCI and CCTS. We also would like to see this office have a good working relationship with DPI.

- The Office of Community Collaboration should also create two pilot community hubs/centers with and for North Lawndale and Auburn Gresham. These spaces will be programmed through dialogue with community partners, and will be guided by the Quality of Life Plans and their evolution. The committee recommends that UIC initially focus on K-16 education and Community Health

and Wellbeing (detailed below). Subsequent areas/foci might include Economic Development and Jobs, Arts and Culture programming and Legal Services. Initially, each hub should have a community coordinator (50T each) who stewards local partnerships and engagements with various UIC stakeholders. More staffing will be necessary as programs expand.

- Build on and expand established relationships and partnerships with organizations in initially selected communities. We recommend that the Chancellor promptly meet with organizational stakeholders such as Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation and North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council to collaborate on unveiling UIC's plans to community stakeholders.
- Make strategic investment in communities: Create a sustainable community fund that awards grants to community based organizations in North Lawndale and Auburn Gresham. (\$500T)
- Create and align existing campus research funding to support faculty in developing and sustaining community-engaged research across fields. (\$500T)

K-16 PATHWAYS to UIC

Relationships are the foundation for everything involved in teaching and learning within the identified communities. Relationships build and foster identity. Building more strategic relationships with Chicago South and West Side schools will set the tone for students to want to attend UIC and to arrive with a sense of belonging. If we enact these recommendations, we can build relationships that may serve to eliminate the discrimination that impacts the academic engagement of future students of color who may become students at UIC.

- Establish a UIC K-16 coordinating committee (UIC and community leaders) so communities know what pathways/pipelines programs we offer as a package.
- Provide new recurring funding (mostly to increase # staff) for the following UIC programs to expand efforts in North Lawndale and Auburn Gresham. This will focus on neighborhood elementary and high schools, as well as, schools and learning spaces designed for adult learners.

A. The CHANCE Program

- B. C.H.A.M.P.I.O.N.S Network
- C. TRIO
- D. Urban Health Program- Early Outreach Program
- E. Center for Literacy (Head Start Parents)
- F. Academic Resource Center (Pathway program to college degrees for Returning Citizens)

- Create a sustainable scholarship fund to award students who successfully complete one of these pathway programs. (up to \$1M)
- UIC becomes a partner institution for scholarships earmarked for students of incarcerated parents. (eg. ScholarCHIPS, Ava's Grace Scholarship, Children of Inmates fund)

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Community engagement requires action and a commitment to the holistic health and wellbeing of all citizens living in and around the Chicagoland area. UIC's goal to strengthen this commitment in the African American community is more critical now as the world witnesses demonstrations of increased violence, racial injustices and the continued disparities in health for this population.

While we acknowledge that UIC has a history of working in and with the community through existing programs such as those offered in the School of Public Health, the VCHA Office of Community Engagement and Neighborhood Partnerships (OCEAN-HP) and the various colleges and councils existing throughout the UIC campus, this committee recognizes that there is little coordination to these efforts. This lack of coordination weakens the impact and capacity of the programs and services offered. Cross campus coordination is vital to the UIC community engagement efforts if there is to be trusted and sustained partnerships in our most vulnerable communities. True partnerships reflect a commitment to equity and provide opportunities for partners to be involved in defining and, as necessary, redefining the terms of engagement and measures of equity. The recommendations of this Task Force are grounded in the belief that in order to fully impact the health and wellbeing and negate some of the racial injustices experienced by our African American families we must create opportunities in and with our community partners that are based on equitable, financially viable agreements. The following activities will provide the preliminary ground work for this process to begin.

- Mobilize people around parenting and how to support families

- From family, to community, to neighborhood
- Looking at holistic health
- Focus on first generation families

- Clearinghouse for Funding for CBOs -- for research, service, health care (starts with UIC and then looks to foundations, fundraising to build fund)
 - Innovative Community -based services
 - Housing First
 - Community-based scholars, practitioners, scientists

Projected Timeline:

Years 1 and 2 - Planning and Programming

Planning:

- Hire Full-time liaison coordinator in North Lawndale and Auburn Gresham; and staff for UIC office.

- Hire additional program staff for existing K-12 UIC programs.

- Obtain Hardware equipment/software

- Space and operational costs

Programming:

- Existing K-12 programs provide workshops and activities to school and CBO partners in N. Lawndale and Auburn Gresham

- UIC Colleges and other stakeholder engagements are brokered by community liaisons

- Adult Education classes begin

Year 3 -- Expand UIC Community Hubs/Centers

From collaborative strategic planning with North Lawndale and Auburn Gresham stakeholders community hubs programming will expand that addresses critical needs as well as promotes and stewards pathways to UIC. Spaces open to the communities. Some proposed ideas for these spaces include: computer/laptop equipment, media software, workshops, tutors, and creative collaborative spaces for organizing, e-sports, studio recording for video/sound, creative writers, etc.