

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

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**SPECIAL
ISSUE**

**UD ENGAGES WITH
DELAWARE COMMUNITIES**

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE MAGAZINE

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104 Hullihen Hall
Newark, DE 19716

December 2018

Dear Friend,

As Delaware's flagship university and one of the nation's most engaged research universities, the University of Delaware is dedicated to continuing our long tradition of applying knowledge and creativity to the critical challenges facing the people of Delaware and beyond.

In 2015, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recognized this commitment and classified UD as an engaged university, a designation shared by fewer than 1 in 10 colleges and universities nationwide. Since then, we have created the UD Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) to align and drive our efforts and launched the UD Civic Action Plan to articulate our strategic vision for further strengthening our engagement with the community.

Our efforts to improve society span the globe, but our most direct and sustained impacts are in communities throughout the state of Delaware. Our expansive portfolio of activities involves faculty, staff and students from throughout the University. Each year, we carry out hundreds of teaching and research projects and policy discussions, offer services to improve health and enhance the quality of our environment, and provide technical assistance to strengthen institutions in all sectors and for all Delawareans. As part of the UD Civic Action Plan, we have formed new community partnerships to promote improvements in public education, community health, and access to arts and culture. We also have launched partnerships to strengthen the quality of life in our home city of Newark and to address the challenges facing our state's largest city, Wilmington.

The needs and aspirations of the community provide impetus and urgency to our educational efforts and help drive the research questions that lead to more authentic classroom experiences and better outcomes for the community. Through meaningful engagement with the community, our students learn to become active citizens and develop the habits of service that can stay with them throughout their lives. You will get a taste of our community engagement activities in this magazine, though these stories only scratch the surface.

We encourage you to get involved, too. If you want to work with us to help your community, please reach out to BlueHensEngage@udel.edu to ask about available opportunities. Visit the Community Engagement Initiative website (udel.edu/engage) to see how we collaborate and connect through research, creative activities, teaching and service.

As president of the University of Delaware, I am proud of the impact our students, faculty and staff are having on the community, and I am grateful for the impact the community has on us.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Dennis Assanis'.

Dennis Assanis
President

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Q&A

with UD's Champions of Community Engagement

Community engagement is a term that's popular on college campuses but is not always well understood. What does it mean? And why is it important to UD and the wider community? Professors Dan Rich and Lynnette Overby, leaders of UD's Community Engagement Initiative, share why it is central to the University's mission.

Q: What is the Community Engagement Initiative?

Dan Rich: It is an effort to reaffirm the public purposes of the university and strengthen the ways that we contribute to the community. We are a large research university in a relatively small state. We have an impact up and down and across the state that probably is not matched by most universities in other states, and that comes with a responsibility to ensure that our impacts strengthen the quality of life of those we serve.

Q: The word engagement originally had to do with a moral obligation. Is this sheer benevolence or is UD getting something out of the equation?

Lynnette Overby: We want it to be reciprocal; we're not just going in a community and collecting data or helping to solve a problem and then disappearing. That's not good community engagement. The benefits should be mutual. Students gain a lot from not just sitting in a classroom but actually having to apply the knowledge and get along and learn how to partner. It helps them prepare for careers where

they're working in diverse communities.

DR: Our students are enriched by doing this; it's something that can transform them and their education, and prepare them for lifelong contributions. It's the same thing for the faculty. Most of the

people at UD believe that knowledge can make a positive difference in the world and we ought to provide more opportunities for them to act on that belief.

LO: And community members gain by having access to the resources of the University and to be able to share their assets and their knowledge so that the

problem-solving is more sustainable. We know students come and go, but the communities are going to be there and they need to know how to sustain some of the work that has been done.

Q: UD is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as an

engaged university. More recently, the University became a member of Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic and



The Research Universities Civic Engagement Network (TRUCEN). What do these recognitions mean and why do they matter?

DR: There are 5,000 higher education institutions in the U.S., and 360 have the Carnegie

designation. Only 40 of the nation's top research universities are members of TRUCEN. These designations mean that UD is recognized as one of the nation's most engaged research universities, an institution that is committed to using knowledge to address the critical challenges of the 21st century. This commitment carries special responsibilities for our faculty, professionals and students in all fields of study. There's a fundamental rethinking that's going on across the nation about how universities can best prepare people to fulfill those responsibilities, and UD is a leader in that process.

Q: UD has been involved in community engagement in different forms for many years. How is the Community Engagement Initiative changing the way UD approaches its contributions to the community?

Continues on page 32

BY THE NUMBERS

232,425

Annual visitors to UD's campuses for athletic and artistic events, including games, musical performances, plays and other happenings.



6,475

Students participated in Teach Children to Save Day, UD's program that sends banking professionals to elementary school classrooms statewide to present lessons on money management.



255

Number of Delaware high school seniors who reported they would not have applied for college if they had not participated in College Application Month, a collaboration between the Delaware Department of Education and UD's School of Public Policy and Administration. UD waives application fees for all Delaware students who apply during College Application Month.

500+

Patients visit health clinics on UD's STAR Campus each week for primary care, physical therapy, nutrition/exercise counseling and speech/language/hearing therapy.



50

Number of years the Delaware Geological Survey (DGS) has operated a network of observation wells in the state to monitor groundwater levels. DGS shares the information on a publicly-accessible portal used by environmental managers, engineers and scientists statewide.

65%

Percentage of participants in UD's Yes We Can and Si Podemos healthy eating and exercise program who decreased their body mass index. The programs helped lower the diabetes risk in African-American and Hispanic individuals in Kent and New Castle Counties.



109

Number of ongoing partnerships focused on improving education that involve UD. Key partners include the Delaware Department of Education, Delaware school districts, 16 educational organizations and other statewide initiatives.



3,907

UD Osher Lifelong Learning Institute members. The Osher programs are membership organizations for adults age 50 and over to take classes, teach and exchange ideas in four locations statewide: Wilmington, Dover, Lewes and Ocean View.

\$2.8 Billion



Economic activity in Delaware generated by UD through direct spending and multiplier effects, supporting more than 24,000 jobs in the state.

CHANGE AGENTS

Members of the UD community who are actively making a difference

“They wrote a book this year. Amazing!”

—Sequoia Rent, 4-H afterschool program, Kent County

Three o’clock to six o’clock p.m. can be the most dangerous time of day for kids, particularly black and Hispanic children. Nationally, juvenile violent crimes triple during that window. Sequoia Rent, a Cooperative Extension agent, makes sure “her kids” are otherwise occupied. “A lot of people sometimes look at after school as just a 3–6 babysitter, but that’s not what we do, we do a lot more than that,” she says, highlighting the enrichment activities and homework help offered, along with healthy snacks, at schools and community centers statewide. Rent tailors activities to the kids’ interests from science and tech activities to tapping their creative juices.



“My goal is to home in on areas where there is great need, and help.”

—Nicole Mejia, Education major

The number of public-school students who spoke English as a second language (ESL) grew from 3.8 million in 2000 to 4.8 million in 2015. The figures are only projected to increase in coming years and reflect a national imperative to improve educational outcomes for this population. That’s where elementary education major Nicole Mejia hopes to make her mark and “give back to the services that made me who I am.” Mejia credits her grade-school ESL teacher with her academic successes, saying, “Without her, I don’t know if I would have gotten into college.” Today, she is one semester away from becoming the first person in her family to earn a degree. “I want to help communities that don’t always get the resources they need,” she says.



“Research is a way to do justice.”

—Yasser Payne, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice

Impersonal data often serve to categorize the decidedly personal conditions of urban black communities like Wilmington. But can researchers ever tell the full story based on data alone? Yasser Payne doesn’t think so; he believes the story must be told by the ones who live it every day. An associate professor, Payne studies “the streets of Black America,” sending teams of young men and women—some ex-offenders, all recruited from the streets that threaten to consume them—back into their communities, where they assess people’s fears, dreams, hopes and terrors. What emerges is a more nuanced understanding of the city’s problems and challenges, but also of its survival and resilience.

“Solving problems, working with young people getting them engaged in meaningful work that improves the quality of life and economy of our state and region. That’s what we’re all about.”

–Jerome Lewis, Institute for Public Administration



Jerome Lewis attends community meetings and legislative hearings for fun. “Some people think I’m crazy,” the director of UD’s Institute for Public Administration says, chatting about important but often dry proceedings. Lewis says such events are a great source of ideas for student projects. At any given time, the Institute for Public Administration has between 60 and 70 students working with entities including: municipalities, schools, nursing homes, nonprofit agencies, Delaware’s General Assembly and more. They conduct research, run public forums, offer trainings, mediate conflicts and develop strategic plans. IPA students help diagnose problems in the state and supply solutions. “We need to have our students get a great education, get some real experience and get great jobs where they can make a difference,” Lewis says.

“It’s finding the match between the person and the environment. I think the gap is pretty wide at the moment.”

–Iva Obrusnikova, Department of Behavioral Health and Nutrition



Adults with intellectual disabilities are less active and have higher rates of obesity than the general public. Physical activity can be a great mitigator of that risk but many fitness centers and gyms do not offer the assistance needed to support their fitness journeys. Professor Iva Obrusnikova researches ways to improve accessibility and change attitudes within the fitness industry. She is developing systems of supports that fitness centers could implement in their facilities. One clinical trial taking place at a YMCA of Delaware location tests the effectiveness of instructional videos demonstrating how to use a given exercise machine in multiple steps. Rather than relying on the brief, often cryptic, instructions displayed on the machine, individuals work with physical trainers who use the videos to guide them as they learn the mechanics. As an exerciser starts to master the moves, the trainer plays a less prominent role and the individual gains independence and confidence.

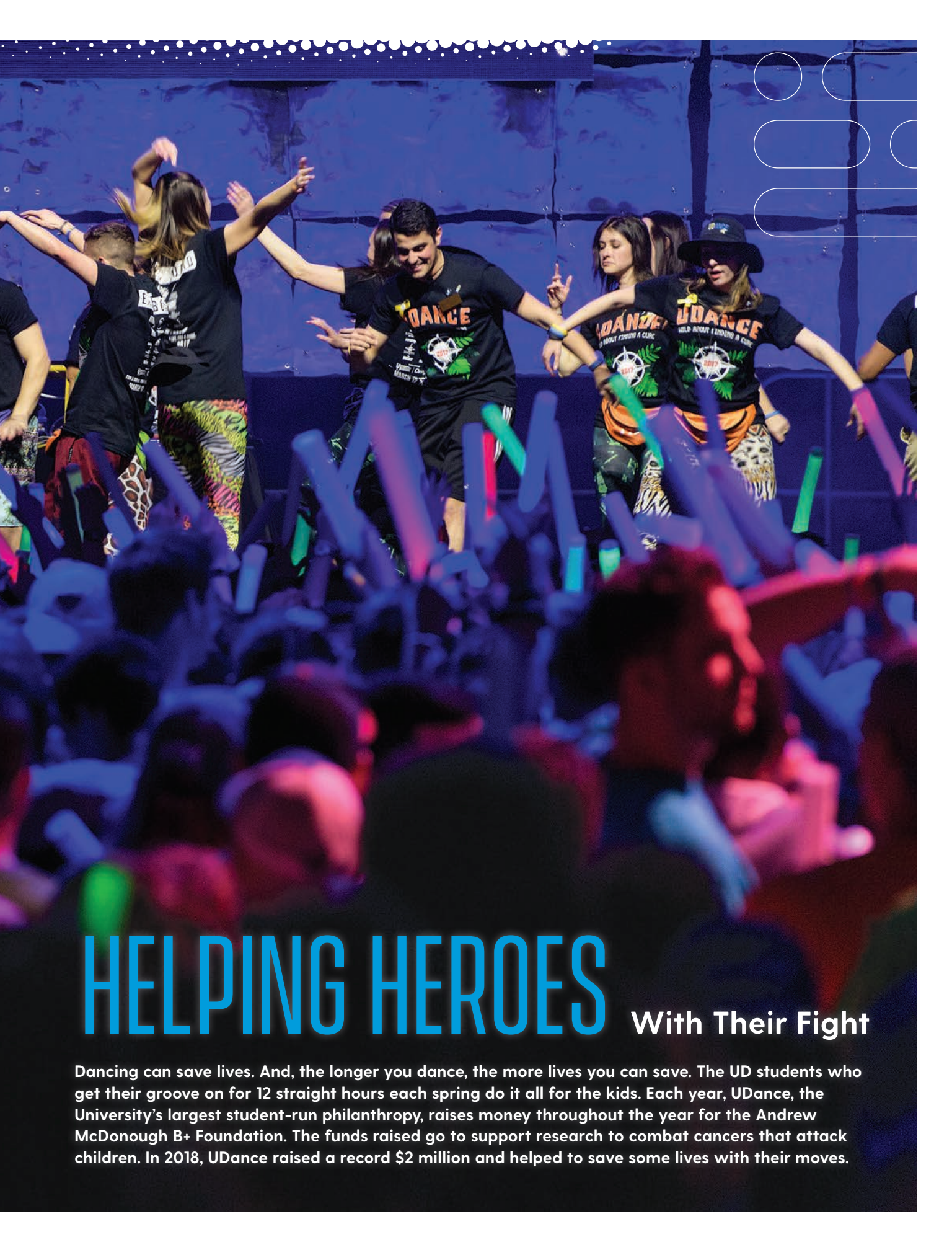


“I feel like we are missionaries going out to help people become economically literate and productive citizens.”

–Carlos Asarta, Center for Economic Education and Entrepreneurship

Most social studies K-12 teachers did not major in economics in college yet they must teach the subject in some form. UD’s Center for Economic Education and Entrepreneurship trains teachers, writes curriculum and hosts competitions to help students understand concepts such as the importance of saving and how financial markets work. “If you think about decisions we make every day as adults, most of them involve some type of economic analysis to make personal finance choices,” says Asarta, the center’s director and a professor of economics. Asarta and his team began by bringing teachers to the UD campus by the dozen for professional development but soon realized they were sacrificing efficacy for efficiency. That was inconvenient for already overloaded educators. Now, they work with teachers during their planning periods and develop lesson plans around curricula they are already teaching, including children’s books sitting on the shelves in their classrooms.





HELPING HEROES

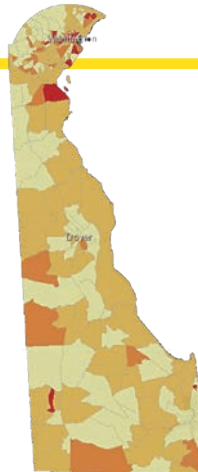
With Their Fight

Dancing can save lives. And, the longer you dance, the more lives you can save. The UD students who get their groove on for 12 straight hours each spring do it all for the kids. Each year, UDance, the University's largest student-run philanthropy, raises money throughout the year for the Andrew McDonough B+ Foundation. The funds raised go to support research to combat cancers that attack children. In 2018, UDance raised a record \$2 million and helped to save some lives with their moves.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Good conversations help make good neighbors. Via a newly established partnership, exchanges between UD representatives and the Newark branch of the NAACP are creating a deeper level of collaboration. Nearly each month, individuals from both entities meet to discuss the concerns of Newark's African-American community, including the impact of University growth on surrounding neighborhoods. One notable project preserved historic details about School Hill, a Newark neighborhood directly adjacent to campus. Volunteers collected oral histories, photographed mementos, scanned photos and digitized the archive which is now available on UD's website. Meanwhile, students have deepened the connection as well, re-establishing the UD student chapter of the NAACP. Together with the Newark branch and UD's Community Engagement Initiative, they work to **encourage their fellow young people to get involved**, attend community meetings, vote and see themselves as citizens who have a role to play in society.

A team from the University of Delaware's Center for Drug and Health Studies led by Tammy Anderson is tracking death to save lives. They have been **mapping drug overdose deaths** in Delaware from 2013–2017 and overlaying them with drug crime data. Through smart use of this coordinated data, the team hopes to make policy recommendations on how to best combat this massive problem while creating a publicly available interactive map where lawmakers and citizens can examine the effects in their hometowns and enact solutions.



UD AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CELEBRATED THEIR RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP AT A CEREMONY WHERE VETS IN THE AUDIENCE WERE RECOGNIZED.

The Wilmington VA Medical Center needed a research facility to **enhance care for its more than 30,000 veterans**. UD wanted to provide students research opportunities directly impacting dire needs in the community. So it was a natural fit to marry UD's research strengths in areas such as traumatic brain injury, rehabilitative medicine and neuroscience with care provided to veterans. Collaborative projects focus on health coaching, physical therapy for vets with limb prosthesis, ways to prevent falls among the elderly and a series of business school courses in hospitality for VA staff focused on improving the patient experience.



Autonomous vehicles are coming. Getting self-driving cars into everyday use includes considerations that span engineering (getting the vehicles to talk to each other, scanning their environments for hazards) as well as policy (urban planning, privacy—your car will know your comings and goings) and more. In UD's labs, scientists run simulations, backed by a \$4.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy's Advanced Research Projects Agency. Meanwhile, School of Public Policy researchers serve on Governor John Carney's Advisory Council on Connected and Automated Vehicles.



Through UD's **Alternative Break program**, 500-plus students spend their spring or winter breaks serving in two dozen communities. From Baltimore to Tennessee, Maine to Detroit, they swing hammers, serve lunches, restore walking trails and tutor kids. All the while, the students practice "active citizenship," making a positive difference, learning firsthand about social issues in communities outside their own and gaining the knowledge that true service is never about yourself.

Some of the most productive workers in financial giant JPMorgan Chase's worldwide workforce have one thing in common: they are on the autism spectrum. Yet, the hurdles limiting their entry to the workforce can be substantial. Nontraditional interpersonal skills and misunderstandings about social norms often block their paths. Together with UD, the company is working to assist students majoring in subjects such as computer and information sciences. UD's new **Spectrum Scholars program**, backed by a multimillion grant from JPMorgan Chase, provides students with coaching through UD's Center for Disabilities Studies as well as internship opportunities. At those internships, students will learn how to translate their academic skills into workplace skills, giving them a better chance to become in-demand employees after graduation.



It just makes sense to band together, say the leaders of the city of Wilmington, Delaware State University and University of Delaware. By combining the various strengths of each and pledging mutual cooperation, more will be accomplished. That's why in late 2017, the three entities signed a formal agreement creating the **Wilmington Public Policy Partnership**. While both institutions and the city have worked together for decades, the agreement paves the way for enhanced coordinated efforts. This includes opportunities for research projects; shared grant applications; field experts who can advise one another—all to promote government efficiency and service delivery.

The University of Delaware Community Engagement Initiative, in collaboration with the Institute for Public Administration, is supporting the creation of a new citywide, community-based nonprofit organization to strengthen economic prosperity and the quality of life in the city of Newark. The **Newark Partnership** will provide a platform for businesses, community institutions, city residents and students to work together on advancing Newark's social, economic and cultural vitality. One of the initiatives already underway is a Newark Futures Workshop series, the first of which on June 13, 2018 engaged 100 community members in setting priorities for Newark's future as a diverse and inclusive community.



SUSSEX SPOTLIGHT

LAUREL SCHOOLS



ONE OF THE STATE'S WORST
PERFORMING SCHOOLS MAKES
TREMENDOUS GAINS THROUGH HARD
WORK AND TEACHER COACHING



IN 2015, ON AVERAGE, LAUREL'S THIRD THROUGH EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS TESTED 20 PERCENT BELOW THE REST OF THE STATE IN MATH. TODAY, THAT GAP IS JUST 2 PERCENT

A binder—that's what teacher Angela Tier was given when she started teaching science at Laurel Middle School. It contained no lesson plans, no instructions for experiments to conduct, no insights from the previous occupants of her position, just a schedule provided by the Delaware State Department of Education about the sequence in which topics should be taught.

Tier, then a recent college graduate, had to build her lesson plans from nothing. Starting from scratch is something many teachers have to do when they begin at a new school, switch grades or subjects. But most don't have to do it at one of the worst performing schools in the state. Laurel is a double threat. Not only is it a Title I school (a federal designation given to public schools with the highest percentages of poor children), it carries another label: priority school. Priority schools are among the lowest performing schools on statewide assessments.

This reality starkly contrasts with the school itself. Laurel Middle School and High School share a sleek built-for-purpose conjoined building. It is color coordinated in the school's hues of black and red with a giant bulldog mascot head on an



exterior wall. The clean, inviting hallways could be the setting for a Nickelodeon show about tweens' and teens' wholesome hijinks.

Laurel's priority school designation also contrasts with the people who work inside. On a recent teacher in-service day, Laurel's dedicated staff sat in their students' classroom seats, studiously taking notes and asking insightful questions of their own teachers, UD staff members and faculty from the Professional Development Center for Educators (PDCE) and the Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL). Both

PDCE and DASL are service-oriented programs run by UD's College of Education and Human Development. The first helps teachers develop their professional skills while the latter assists principals, vice principals and other educational leaders.

While PCDE and DASL work with nearly every school district in the state of Delaware in some capacity, their ties with Laurel School District are strongest. At the request of the superintendent, the programs amped up the intensity and frequency of their work in the district in 2014.

Ashley Giska, Laurel School District assistant superintendent, says district leaders realized they hadn't been supporting their teachers well enough. Teachers were being asked to do too much, to deliver great instruction, support students and develop high quality curriculum. Laurel educators excelled in the first two areas, Giska says, but needed support in curriculum development.

"We said, okay, we need really smart people in these areas that are really strong in the current understandings of best practices in education to work with our teachers on the regular," he says. "It was great because we had a staff that was

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It was really empowering for our teachers.

— Ashley Giska, Laurel School District assistant superintendent





CATALOGING TREASURES

for Small Museums

By ANN MANSER

**Graduate student SWAT team
assists local museums, benefits
from real-world application of
skills learned in classes**

For students of material culture and history, nothing can top hands-on learning in a working museum. Unless it's hands-and-knees learning.

"You can read about furniture and take quizzes and write reports, but until you actually crawl under a desk to see how it's made, you aren't getting the full experience," says University of Delaware doctoral student Erica Lome while surveying the furnishings in a bedroom of Rockwood Museum near Wilmington.

Allison Robinson, on leave from a doctoral program at the University of Chicago to pursue a master's degree in material culture studies at UD, looked around at Lome and their fellow students examining the objects in the room and agreed.

"We're all the type of people who will crawl under something to learn more about it," she says.

Robinson and Lome are two of the graduate students in UD's Museum Studies program who helped with the collections at Rockwood.

The two-week service project, dubbed the SWAT team, has been held each year since 2011 to provide students with hands-on experience while assisting local museums that rely on small staffs and volunteers to manage their collections and operations. The SWAT students generally provide a jump-start to the process of



THE MUSEUM STUDIES SWAT TEAM SPECIALIZES IN THE TIME-CONSUMING WORK OF CATALOGING MUSEUM COLLECTIONS. THE MUSEUMS THEY WORK WITH OFTEN HAVE SMALL STAFFS AND SMALL BUDGETS.

a picture of how the occupants lived around the turn of the 20th century.

Objects—many on display, some housed in a spacious storage area on the property—range from large pieces of furniture and appliances used for cooking and laundry to delicately framed photographs, fragile ceramics and glassware and many hundreds, if not thousands, of books.

You can read about furniture and take quizzes and write reports, but until you actually crawl under a desk to see how it's made, you aren't getting the full experience.

—UD doctoral student Erica Lome

cataloging and organizing collections and create a plan to help the museum continue that work.

Over the years, students have spent their time on a wide range of tasks, each tailored to the most pressing needs of a particular location. SWAT team members have worked with steam-powered automobiles at Auburn Heights Preserve State Park in Yorklyn, cleaned a doll collection and a set of documents found in the wall of an old house for the Milford Historical Society and cataloged clothing, including an extensive collection of uniforms and hats, at the Milton and Laurel historical societies.

At Rockwood, a Gothic Revival mansion built in the 1850s and formerly occupied by the Shipley and Bringham families, the extensive collection of items gives

In addition to examining, cleaning and cataloging items in the collection, the UD students also entered the information into a collection management database known as Past Perfect, which will allow the Rockwood staff to keep track of the items and their locations.

"We are so glad to have the help," says Loretta Spigel, museum coordinator at Rockwood, which is operated by New Castle County. "Documenting our collection is such a big project, and the students are really taking that on."

For Katherine Grier, professor of history and director of the Museum Studies program, having a SWAT team at Rockwood benefits UD as much as it does the museum.

"They have a good level of professionalism, they need staffing help, and it's a small museum where our students can get a wide range of experience," Grier says.



“Our future cannot depend on the government alone. The ultimate solutions lie in the attitudes and the actions of the American people.”
—Former Vice President Joe Biden

For many UD students, turning 18 is their first chance at participating in the civic process that has governed the United States since the country's founding. Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden and UD's Biden Institute recognize this time of great opportunity and are invigorating students with the “Make It Count” campaign. The campaign's mission is to increase bi-partisan voter registration and civic engagement across UD and the state of Delaware. “Make It Count” attacks apathy and inspires a culture of civic engagement through voter registration drives, facilitated discourse and educational programming to create lifelong ambassadors to democratic involvement.

Civic engagement is a keystone of the Biden Institute, founded in 2017 by the 47th Vice President of the United States. Through civic engagement students become active citizens, recognizing that what they learn in their classes can improve the communities in which they live and work. Civic and community engagement is a defining part of a UD education and prepares future generations dedicated to public and community service.

Broad Creek, a tributary to the Nanticoke River, brought prosperity to the town of Laurel in the 19th century. Town officials, business owners and UD's Sea Grant hope it can do so again in the 21st century. Together, the team is bringing **The Ramble**, a mixed-use redevelopment plan, hugging the river, to life. They secured a downtown development designation that helped restart construction on a previously stalled home development. Sussex County Habitat for Humanity rehabbed three derelict homes offering affordable housing to families in need. A new kayak launch and stormwater treatments are now in place, and the installation of pathways and a nature-based play area are next.





HARMONY IN HEALTH

By ANDREA BOYLE TIPPETT

Rita Landgraf talks with her hands a lot. On this day, her sweeping gesticulations are on display just above the surface of a folding table, one of three arranged in a U-shape to foster discussion with a dozen other seated individuals in a nondescript conference room. Landgraf's manual movements would make her an excellent orchestral conductor, a line of work as complicated as her own calling—public health.

Yet, in Delaware, there is no health orchestra. Sure, there are adept players, thousands of employees and volunteers in nonprofit organizations, hospitals, academia, industry and government, who make a tremendous impact on the lives of Delawareans. But, they simply do not play together harmoniously...yet.

"That's the orchestra; I'm only in the violins right now," says Liddy Garcia-Bunuel, a Washington, D.C. consultant sitting to Landgraf's left. Garcia-Bunuel's company is administering a \$35 million grant provided to Delaware by the federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI), breaking up the funds into smaller mini-grants that bankroll initiatives run by those other members of the orchestra. The intent is to foster healthy neighborhoods, something Landgraf is passionate about.

Landgraf helped secure the grant when she ran the Delaware Department of Health and Human Services as cabinet secretary, a position she held for eight years. In 2017, she joined UD as professor of practice and distinguished health and social services administrator in residence. She also serves as

director of the UD Partnership for Healthy Communities (PHC), an initiative that aims to bridge the gap between research expertise and real-world application. Through PHC, civic leaders are establishing new connections with University faculty, staff and students who possess valuable knowledge about which interventions work and which ones don't. Landgraf is starting by matching community partners with scientists in specific areas. For instance, she wants to link community centers with UD's speech and language pathology group to see what unmet needs exist.

It's this very role that has her spending a lot of time in conference rooms. "In order to start building the partnership, you have to start by understanding the other side, those whom you want to partner with, and then build that trust factor," Landgraf says.

Resources are finite, ideas abound and she is on the hunt for ways to make the best of both, regularly chiming into conversations with diverse stakeholders from members of law enforcement to education officials, asking, "How do we align?"

The CMMI grant is just one of

many projects happening in Delaware to improve the health and well-being of residents. UD's College of Health Sciences alone has dozens dedicated to finding health solutions and supporting individuals with ailments from Parkinson's disease to cardiovascular disease to cerebral palsy. Meanwhile, in UD's College of Arts and Sciences, biologists are examining ways to beat brain cancer. The entire biomedical engineering department in the College of Engineering is looking for ways to improve medical delivery and patient outcomes. And that's just a sliver of what's happening on UD's Newark campus, let alone in the state.

"It's critically important that we honor what is already occurring," Landgraf says.

On another day in another conference room, Landgraf and 20 others are attempting to get their arms around one of the state's most pernicious ills—gun violence. An analysis conducted by the Associated Press and *USA Today* showed that, per capita, Wilmington leads the nation in the rate of shootings among teens by a wide

Continues on page 20

In order to start building the partnership, you have to start by understanding the other side, those who you want to partner with, and then build that trust factor.

—Rita Landgraf, Partnership for Healthy Communities director

It's critically important that we honor what is already occurring.

—Rita Landgraf, Partnership for Healthy Communities director

margin. Out of every 1,000 teens (between ages 12–17), 3.4 in Wilmington were injured or killed by guns. The next closest city was Chicago with 1.8 teens per 1,000. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reviewed Wilmington's problem beginning in 2013, taking an epidemiologic approach. In other words, the CDC treated Wilmington's crisis as a disease and looked for its cause.

They found, of course, that the cause isn't one thing alone. It's systemic. The perpetrators of violence didn't just pick up a gun one day and decide to shoot their neighbors or enemies. These men, most of them young, had lifetimes of adverse experiences, e.g., they lacked stable family environments, had problems in school, were victims of domestic violence, suffered traumatic events and/or engaged in other lesser criminal activity.

The Wilmington Community Advisory Council (WCAC) formed to help implement the CDC's recommendations. The group meets monthly at the Hope Commission Achievement Center in Wilmington and moves through a jammed two-hour agenda.

At this particular meeting, Patti Miller, an analyst from Nemours Health and Prevention Services, reviewed a report identifying pediatric healthcare needs in Wilmington's West Center City section. Miller and her team looked at medical records and conducted research in the community,

examining a wide variety of what experts call determinants of health, factors ranging from distance to a primary care location and numbers of homicides to obstacles such as transit routes and housing code violations in rental units.

"We were specifically interested in those violations that we felt could exacerbate health conditions or impact safety," she says. "Flaking paint, standing water, roaches or rodents, loose, frayed or exposed electrical wires, illegal space heaters, deteriorating stairs, holes in the floor."

Miller says kids in this neighborhood are less healthy than average. For instance, the team looked at children who visited the A.I. duPont Nemours Hospital ER department or were hospitalized. West Center City children were more likely to return in 30 days or less, many suffering from either asthma and pneumonia.

"Asthma is one of the illnesses for which we see a significant racial and ethnic disparity," she says. "It's an illness with a significant environmental component such that poor housing can increase the likelihood that mold, dust and insects like cockroaches can exacerbate it."

How does that connect to gun violence? Miller displayed a map showing three determinants together—bus stops, liquor stores and shootings—in the previous year. West Center City has a high concentration of liquor stores for a

neighborhood of its size. People congregate at liquor stores, and when intoxicated often make foolish choices. Many residents believe crime would go down if some of those stores closed.

"We pictured in our minds a mother with young kids having to walk to the bus stop and wait," she says. "You can see, there are multiple shootings on practically every street traveling east to west and at least one shooting on every street traveling north to south."

Transportation and violent crime, Miller concludes, are serious barriers to accessing healthcare. Most Nemours patients who live in the community rely on public transportation. One third of kids ages 3–6 in West Center City didn't have a yearly checkup last year.

When Miller opened up the floor for questions, Landgraf jumped right in.

"This is great work and can provide a lot of usage in our own respective work," she says, noting that the council is focusing its efforts on three Wilmington ZIP codes: 19801, 19802, and 19805. West Center City is 19801, the other two need similar studies.

"Maybe we can talk about involving UD with the research with Nemours," Landgraf says.

Landgraf and the PHC are inspired by a vision. A healthy community is predicated on the notion that all residents have the resources necessary for optimal health, and burdens or threats to good health

and well being are minimized. They know Delaware is a long way from becoming a Shangri-La where every citizen has equality in health.

Meanwhile, in Wilmington's Riverside neighborhood (ZIP code 19802), Logan Herring works to create a small scale Shangri-La specifically for teens. Herring, CEO of REACH Riverside and executive director of Kingswood Community Center, is raising money and rallying supporters to create a "Teen Warehouse" where kids too old for after-school care can spend their afternoon and early evening hours.

"We want to be able to prevent violence in the city and give teens an opportunity to have a constructive, safe place to go where they are actually getting some benefit," Herring says.

Teen Warehouse programming will span recreation, education, arts, career training and health. Sixty different service providers, including PHC, are queued up to assist. Just like Landgraf, Herring yearns for harmonious alignment among Delaware's many disparate service providers.

"What we are doing now is working in silos," he says. "If we can come together, all of these different initiatives and agree to what piece

of the pie you're going to take, then we'll all be able to eat the entire pie."

PHC's slice could mimic resources UD has already implemented elsewhere. Ideas under exploration include a wellness center featuring some of the services offered on UD's Science, Technology and Advanced Research (STAR) Campus, such as nutrition coaching, mental health and primary care. Another possibility is an introductory Health Sciences course for high schoolers. The course, worth three college credits, intends to spark teens' interest in medical field careers. UD already teaches very successful versions at Newark and St. Mark's high schools.

Education, Landgraf says, is at the heart of how PHC and UD at large can best contribute to change. "We bring scholarly expertise to the table."

Grad students working within PHC know how to dig into the data. They review academic research, look at evaluations of programs underway elsewhere in the U.S. and internationally and make policy suggestions based on best practices. PHC's team is currently examining how to support youth in the criminal justice system and summarizing their findings into policy briefs for the Family Services Cabinet Council,

a group chaired by the governor that includes eight state cabinet members.

Do some Delaware policies hinder the rehabilitation of teen offenders? Landgraf is convinced at least one bad law does. It charges youth offenders as adults if "the child is not amenable to the rehabilitative processes available to the court." Landgraf says this standard defies the laws of nature.

"We are deciding at the age of 14 that a person can't be rehabilitated. How does that happen?" she asks, noting that humans' brains aren't fully developed until age 25, when executive functions, the set of brain processes required for effective decision making, are fully established.

While she doesn't advocate for pushing the legal age of adulthood to 25, she does believe that this particular statute should be changed and will let the council know. UD is not the body that implements policy change, but Landgraf's team can inform and influence good policy making. And that, she says, is the most powerful way PHC helps carry the tune of health in Delaware.



PARTNERSHIP FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES LEADERS LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO MELD TOGETHER RESEARCH EXPERTISE AND REAL-WORLD APPLICATION. THE UD GROUP PICTURED STUDIES THE USE OF WEARABLE ROBOTICS TO ASSIST STROKE PATIENTS IN THEIR PHYSICAL REHABILITATION.



A BLUEPRINT FOR CHA

By ERIC RUTH

UD-LED REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

Once upon a time in America, people thought they knew how to help decaying inner-city neighborhoods, and ease the turmoil that simmered inside them.

To save these places, the reasoning went, we must first destroy them. To help these residents, we must move them somewhere else.

So the bulldozers rumbled in, the

steel condos rose from the debris of shattered homes, and soon, the old neighborhoods simply ceased to exist. As the new urban crowd moved in, the old residents had no choice but to move on, priced out of the place they once called home.

It doesn't have to be that way, 24-year-old Tyler Shade believes. People can be helped without being forsaken, he insists, and

neighborhoods can be saved without being razed. He knows this, because he's seen it happen.

The secret to successful urban revitalization lies in the residents themselves and within the neighborhoods they love, Shade has learned during his time as a graduate research assistant in UD's Center for Community Research and Service, which has worked with



Wilmington neighborhoods since the 1960s. Change happens when unity and resolve are ignited within the community itself, giving residents the leverage to enhance their neighborhood's good assets, and push back against the bad.

That's the prescription that lies at the heart of the Blueprint Communities program, a UD-led effort to help people help

BLUEPRINT COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS IDENTIFY ASSETS EACH NEIGHBORHOOD ALREADY HAS. IN NORTHEAST WILMINGTON, ORGANIZERS POINT TO BRANDYWINE COMMUNITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH'S WINDOWS FOR HOPE PROJECT, A JOB READINESS AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT.

(FRONT ROW, L-R) LAVADA OWENS-WHITE, BOBBI BRITTON, ADRIENNE SPENCER, (BACK ROW, L-R) THOMAS SCOTT, THE REV. JONATHAN WHITNEY.

themselves in neighborhoods across the state. At its core, Blueprint Communities aims to give these volunteer residents the knowledge and organizational skills needed to become leaders, consensus builders and change agents in places where change is badly needed.

"If you're able to get the right coalition together, that can make all the difference in the world. That's the key to success, I think," says Ellen Casson, member of the Washington Heights Blueprint Team.

So far, the program—launched and funded by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh and offered in just two other states—has been implemented with UD's help in eight Delaware communities, bringing together dozens of community volunteers who have been taught the arcane art of applying for government grants, rallying blasé neighbors, soothing intra-neighborhood squabbles and forging partnerships.

The results are often incremental, but vital. Participants are now on the way toward establishing new community gardens and better access to health services in Northeast Wilmington, and have connected its residents to housing opportunities. The Washington Heights community recently snagged a grant to renovate a church gym, and on the West Side, members pushed for the successful redesign of the Union Street corridor to add parking spaces and

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ACTIVE BLUEPRINT COMMUNITIES IN DELAWARE

Participation in the Blueprint Communities program remains open to any interested community. For more information, email Roger Hesketh at rogergh@udel.edu, or visit www.sppa.udel.edu/ccrs and look for the Blueprint page.

- ♦ East Side (Wilmington)
- ♦ Edgemoor
- ♦ Georgetown
- ♦ Historic Overlook Colony
- ♦ Northeast (Wilmington)
- ♦ Simonds Gardens
- ♦ Washington Heights (Wilmington)
- ♦ West Side Grows (Wilmington)

If you're able to get the right coalition together, that can make all the difference in the world. That's the key to success.

—Ellen Casson, member of the Washington Heights Blueprint Team

pedestrian-friendly amenities.

Being part of that growing momentum was one of the reasons Northeast Blueprint team member Jeania Watson stayed in her beloved community despite its woes. "I could have left, but I would feel like I was leaving the Titanic on a lifeboat when all these people are drowning," she says.

Achieving change is never easy and can seem nearly impossible, participants say, despite the eight months of training, financial support and faculty-led workshops that the UD center provides. But it has given many a new sense of hope after decades of broken promises; the so-called "urban renewal" projects of the 1960s demolished hundreds of homes and businesses in Wilmington's East Side alone. "It's hard," says Shardae White, a member of the Blueprint team for Northeast Wilmington, where 9,327 people live. "It's hard because the community is sometimes hesitant to trust these organizations, and that trust is important."

The first steps in gaining that trust are wide-ranging surveys that seek residents' top priorities for change: Better street lighting for safety. Beautification efforts that might encourage business investment. Many push to create better housing opportunities and jobs, realizing that homeownership and unemployment are perennial challenges. "We don't necessarily know what the people want or need, so we rely on them to tell us," Shade says.

They know they don't have resources or the power to attack some of the more formidable issues—such as crime and education. So they aim for the attainable. And they work to identify the assets that already exist in these neighborhoods—such as proximity to the interstate, or a riverfront area that holds potential as a prime attraction.

Without this "asset-based" focus, communities and government agencies are prone to focus too much on what is lacking, says Roger Hesketh, director of community revitalization for the Center for Community Research and Service. "It's not that it's wrong to have needs," he says. "It's that the approach makes you blind to what the assets of the community are."

A large part of the program's power lies in the legitimacy that participants gain by undergoing training and forging themselves into a reliable, cohesive organization. The agencies that hand out grant money and the businesses and banks that consider community investments are comforted by that structure, giving residents a leverage they never knew.

(L-R) ROGER HESKETH, CANDICE BROWN, ELLEN CASSON AND THOMAS SCOTT POSE FOR A PORTRAIT IN WILMINGTON.

After two years of hand-holding and technical support—and once the Blueprint teams have found an established organization in the community willing to serve as a "backbone" of future efforts—the UD team steps out of the picture. "The teams are the ones that carry out most of the change by then," Shade says. "They become self-sustaining."

Ultimately, the Blueprint legacy could even be passed down through generations.

"Ideally, it's something that goes on in perpetuity," says Bobbi Britton, a member of the Northeast Wilmington Team.

Since its inception in 2005, the Blueprint program has been adopted by 55 communities in Delaware, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Leveraged by \$1.4 million in bank investment, these communities have so far produced \$282 million worth of development projects, Shade says.

"It has been a joyous thing to see these many viewpoints within a community come together," he says. "The members all genuinely care about the community, and there's a lot of compromise."





THE DO-BETTER GENERATION

Most of UD's undergraduate students were born in the late 1990s and early 2000s. For these digital natives, TV has always been in high def, the shrill tone of a dial-up modem has never rung in their ears and the answer to almost any question could be found on Wikipedia.

.....

Connectivity characterizes the reputation of these young people, often called Generation Z. Connectivity stretches well beyond machines to human interactions; Gen Z is driven by concern. They want to change the world. A full two-thirds of UD students participate in community service, adding up to 300,000 hours annually.

This desire aligns perfectly with the direction established by the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) for the entire University: to have community engagement become a signature feature of a UD education for students. Thus, a holistic idea was born. Why not provide

undergraduates with the opportunity to fully integrate community engagement into their studies throughout their four-year academic careers? In 2018, the **Community Engagement Scholars Course of Study** was formalized. Students in any major can apply to become Community Engagement Scholars. The selected students enroll in academic courses on the subject, receive enhanced academic advisement from CEI-affiliated faculty, participate in semester or summer-based immersion programs, service trips and volunteer opportunities. In senior year, participants complete a

capstone project with a community engagement focus. Upon graduation, scholars will receive special recognition, have a resume that reflects their deep commitments to community and most importantly, will know how to be creative and collaborative leaders in a diverse society.

The Community Engagement Scholars are just the latest in an ever-expanding inventory of ways both undergraduate and graduate students make community engagement part of their academic experience. UD sponsors a variety of programs offering such opportunities. A sampling follows:

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Community Engagement Initiative Summer Scholars and Fellows immerse themselves in a community-based research or creative project under the direction of a faculty mentor. Scholars spend 10 weeks during the summer in full-time pursuit of their projects with a Delaware nonprofit or governmental agency, examining interventions through community-based research, or working within a service-based corporate activity.

THROUGH THE “BEAT GOES ON” PROGRAM, UD STUDENTS TEACH MUSIC COMPOSITION TO KIDS IN SUMMER CAMPS RUN BY ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE SALVATION ARMY AND GIRLS, INC. DELAWARE.

Public Policy Fellows conduct research within the School of Public Policy and Administration on public policy issues such as aging, education, the environment, healthcare, homelessness, housing discrimination, land-use planning, poverty, transportation and water resources planning.



Cooperative Extension Scholars spend their summers under the guidance of Cooperative Extension agents and specialists. During their internships, students follow Cooperative Extension’s service learning model centered on one of four program areas: 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, lawn and garden, or agriculture and natural resources.



Community Engagement Ambassadors are campus leaders, peer educators and innovators dedicated to service. These students dedicate many hours to community service and recruit their peers to get involved in issues that are meaningful to young people today.

Judicial Fellows work 20 hours per week for the Administrative Office of the Courts. Through UD's Institute for Public Administration, these graduate students observe the court-management process, perform court-related research, offer technical support to judicial committees and subcommittees, and contribute to written reports and data analysis for the judicial branch.

Urban Fellows enhance municipal services in the city of Wilmington, working side-by-side with the city's senior leadership. Through the Wilmington Public Policy Partnership, UD and Delaware State University graduate students analyze public policy and management issues and assist the city with strategic planning.



Legislative Fellows observe and contribute to the political decision-making process under the guidance of UD's Institute for Public Administration. Fellows conduct nonpartisan, in-depth research for members of the Delaware General Assembly to assist legislators in addressing critical issues facing the state.



Partnership for

ARTS & CULTURE

When Michael Solomon was living on the streets of Wilmington, trying to numb the pain of his wife's death with alcohol and drugs, he stumbled upon The Creative Vision Factory. He really just needed an address to get his food stamps, but he found much more—not only the artist hidden within him, but also a desire to help his community and others struggling as he did.

Art has been there for me when people haven't been there for me.

—Knicoma Frederick, *The Creative Vision Factory*

"It's a really good feeling to know I can give back to what somebody gave to me," Solomon says now. "I can make somebody else feel the way I feel."

The Creative Vision Factory in downtown Wilmington provides those on the behavioral health spectrum opportunities for self-expression, empowerment and recovery through the arts. It is also one of several organizations participating in the University of Delaware's Partnership for Arts and Culture launched in March 2018 as part of the university's Community Engagement Initiative.

"I see art-making as an adaptive behavior that can treat underlying anxiety," says Michael Kalmbach, director of The Creative Vision Factory and a graduate of the UD master of fine arts program. "You see people who gravitate toward making things with their hands and you can see that they are literally working through some of the issues they're dealing with that day."

The Creative Vision Factory has 580 members and 70 of those are using studio space at the facility every week. In addition to creating their own work for public exhibition and to sell, members also work on community projects, like murals for the Kalmar Nyckel Foundation, the Wilmington Police Department and others. Members are free to pursue a wide array of visual, literary and performing arts.

"The Creative Vision Factory is going to give you this zone of freedom," Kalmbach says, "an autonomous space where people can be self-directed, find some mastery over something, have some purpose and connect with people, and it's those relationships that really matter and really promote recovery."

Creating and fostering a connection between arts and the community is what the UD Partnership for Arts and Culture is all about. Through collaborative project design, the partnership facilitates the development of socially relevant research, advocacy, creative activities and educational opportunities for faculty, students and community partners.

"Many of the great cultural movements through history have been inspired by the arts," UD Provost Robin Morgan said at the launch of the partnership. "Part of the beauty

of the arts is that they bring people together despite their differences."

The partnership launch event featured a dance and theater performance entitled, "Women of Consequence: Ambitious, Ancillary and Anonymous," which was based on historical research by UD students into the lives and contributions of often-overlooked African-American and African women. The performance incorporated dance, poetry, music, visual arts and drama. The performance was one of several interdisciplinary community engagement projects designed to address health, educational and social issues through arts and culture. Another involved documenting the stories of those who lived through the National Guard occupation of the city of Wilmington in 1968.

Sam Sweet, executive director of the Delaware Art Museum, got involved with the Partnership for Arts and Culture in its early stages, shortly after arriving in Delaware in 2016.

"You think sometimes of universities being on a campus and staying within their campus," he says. "I was really pleased to see it wasn't just a partnership for arts and culture but that it was part of their broader community engagement efforts."

A 2017 UD survey designed to inform the University and the greater community about the types of arts and culture partnerships in the region revealed 64 partnerships, 171 community partners across all colleges and four partnership categories of education, advocacy, health and research.

The Partnership for Arts and Culture plans to grow those numbers by moving into other parts of the state of Delaware and the region, while also establishing UD as a national leader in arts and culture partnerships by connecting with national organizations such as Imagining America and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities.

For those who have a deep passion for the arts, the connection is personal and meaningful, which is why the community partnership is so important. As artist Knicoma Frederick of The Creative Vision Factory, puts it: "Art has been there for me when people haven't been there for me."

PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Liz Farley-Ripple in UD's School of Education knows well that perception is not always reality, especially when it comes to education research.

"Sometimes researchers have this 'stuck in an ivory tower' image and I know that's not true," says Farley-Ripple, director of the Partnership for Public Education (PPE). "We have things to offer."

The partnership's mission is to better leverage University resources to support public education in Delaware. Each year UD conducts numerous studies and reviews, publishes academic journal articles on education and engages directly with schools, nonprofits and advocacy groups. PPE works to combine and align these sometimes disconnected efforts to ensure maximum impact. "None of public education's challenges are solvable by one group alone," she says.

According to Farley-Ripple, an associate professor of education, nearly every academic department on the Newark campus collaborates with Delaware's public schools in some capacity. The trick is ensuring they do not work in silos. "We affectionately call what we do 'hubbing,'" Farley-Ripple says. PPE has a small staff dedicated to making connections: acting as a hub on campus for UD personnel and as a doorway into the University for those interested in strengthening Delaware's public schools through research-based practices.



THE PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION ACTS AS A HUB, BRINGING TOGETHER VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN DELAWARE'S EDUCATION COMMUNITY TO SHARE IDEAS AND INVENT SOLUTIONS.

The Colonial School District, for instance, is working directly with PPE on combating inequity in education.

"If we educators don't recognize the inequities across our society that also appear in our educational systems, if we don't recognize our own lens on the world, we are perpetuating those inequities," Farley-Ripple says.

So, every other month, a dozen UD researchers join Colonial administrators for a joint book study, discussing works on the subject, as well as possible changes to implement.

This sort of collective learning is a touchstone of PPE. The partnership facilitated TeachDE, the statewide initiative charged with supporting the quality and quantity of Delaware's teacher pipeline. This initiative is made up of teachers,

parents, school leaders, districts leaders, representatives from Delaware's Department of Education, UD, Delaware State University, Wesley College, Wilmington University, Delaware Technical Community College, Teach for America, New York City's Relay Graduate School and other critical stakeholders. Nationwide fewer college students are majoring in education and concerns about the teacher workforce of tomorrow abound.

TeachDE recently released a set of recommendations to ensure a high-quality, diverse K-12 workforce that meets the needs of Delaware's schools and students. The collective, too, knows that knowledge is no good locked up in a tower or a document. The crucial next step is to bring the recommendations to life.

PLANT PLANS

Plant scientists are helping Delawareans travel back in time and improve their golf games. Sounds like science fiction, but this scenario is closer to reality than fodder for a Hollywood blockbuster. Faculty and staff have been working on two separate projects that use native and beneficial plants to enhance scenery in Kent and New Castle counties while helping drive commerce.

HISTORIC HERBAGE

In Leipsic, town officials are collaborating with UD's Sustainable Coastal Communities Initiative (SCCI) to enhance their community. SCCI researched Leipsic and developed a set of recommendations on development and community engagement strategies the town, located between Smyrna and Dover along Route 9, might implement.

"Leipsic itself isn't looking to grow, but rather to celebrate its heritage while supporting its small fleet of working watermen," said SCCI Coordinator Ed Lewandowski.

STUDENTS TALI GASKO AND ROB KUNTZ HELPED KENT COUNTY'S LEIPSIC BEAUTIFY ITS TOWN HALL/MARITIME HISTORY MUSEUM THROUGH LANDSCAPING.



Conversations with town residents fueled one easily implementable suggestion—town beautification through flora. Soon, under the supervision of a faculty member, UD College of Agriculture and Natural Resources students developed a landscape design for Leipsic's combined town hall and maritime history museum building.

Nine hundred plants later, the town had a municipal building and tourist attraction with curb appeal, and students had sharper design and customer service skills.

"It can be deceptively easy to design something that is beautiful or functional, but if it's not serving the community, what is its use?" student Olivia Kirkpatrick says.

JUST OFF THE GREENS

In Greenville, the superintendent of Bidermann Golf Course was looking for new conservation management methods that might save money and benefit the environment. Cue even more Blue Hens with green thumbs. Erik Ervin, chair of the

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, is methodically looking for the best mix of flowers and grasses to fill the course's out of play and decorative meadow areas.

"What we're trying to do is establish something that's low maintenance, where pesticides aren't used and fertilizer really isn't used," Ervin says.

In test plots on UD's Newark campus, Ervin and one of his graduate students are growing 20 different species of wildflowers and several different grasses, some better adapted for warm seasons, some for cool seasons. Cool season grass seed is typically cheaper than warm season seed. By planting meadows with cool season grasses, Bidermann and other golf courses can drive down costs. The wildflowers, most of which are native to the region, will attract beneficial pollinators. When planted together as a meadow, the land will require little mowing and make a small impact in the global decline of bees and other pollinating insects.



Q&A | Continued from page 3

DR: Yes, programs such as Cooperative Extension and Sea Grant have been engaged with the community continuously. These programs remain important, but we also need new models of community engagement to address the changing needs of the communities we serve. The critical challenges of our times are not divided to fit the organization of a university. Poverty doesn't fit into a single department, nor do environmental or energy challenges. We need knowledge from many disciplines to address these challenges and we need to prepare students who

are able to draw upon knowledge from many areas. Part of our responsibility as a research university is to shed light on these complex challenges, identify what is required to effectively address them and help initiate strategies for positive change.

LO: Applying for the Carnegie designation helped open our eyes to areas where we had to work on connectivity. We had to search hard for some of the information because there was no central place to gather it. Now, the Community Engagement Initiative provides a space where we can promote community engagement in a variety of ways. We provide an

administrative structure and this space where we collect, evaluate, assess, educate and promote all of these things in one location, and then spread them throughout the community.

Dan Rich, University Professor of Public Policy and a former provost and dean, is known for his work on the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission, a group aiming to strengthen Wilmington public education.

Lynnette Young Overby is a professor of theatre and was recently elected to the Council on Engagement and Outreach Executive Committee of the Association for Public and Land Grant Universities. She led the UD Community Engagement Commission in helping UD become officially recognized by the Carnegie Foundation in 2015.

Laurel Schools | Continued from page 13

struggling and now all of a sudden they had the support of these master educators with research backgrounds and deep content knowledge. It was really empowering for our teachers."

PDCE and DASL employ former educators as coaches for teachers and administrators. Just like an athletics coach, they motivate and inform their teams, watch them in action and provide feedback on potential improvements. Each month seven coaches visit Laurel schools at various times. Each specializes in a different area: school leadership, math, science, social studies, literacy or special ed.

Science teacher Tier says the feedback and guidance provided by her coach, Amy Trauth, has been invaluable. Trauth, PDCE's senior associate director, helps Tier develop lesson plans that not only teach students the basics of scientific principles such as the carbon cycle and kinetic energy but develop competency in skills that will last a lifetime like higher-level thinking and the ability to analyze technical material. Tier says she regularly asks her coach for advice, texting any time she has a question.

"It's a remarkable thing," Giska says. "There's such a bond."

Often, he says, professional development has been a punchline in public education, characterized as one-day sessions that are temporarily inspiring but that lack sustained coaching and the connections necessary for

lasting change. Giska says what's happening in Laurel is quite different. "This has been about building relationships with people and having professional dialogue."

Alison Travers, school leadership associate with DASL, credits Giska and district leaders with creating a dynamic that reinforces success.

"I don't think we've seen another school that has made such a succinct plan and stuck to it from the top down with district support, and had such quick growth. It is one of the best stories that we've heard," Travers says.

The latest round of Smarter Balanced Assessment standardized test scores provides evidence these efforts are paying off. Laurel's schools have made outstanding gains, the best improvement in the state. On average, just three years ago, there was a 20 percent performance gap between Laurel's third through eighth grade students and the rest of the state in math. Today, that gap is just 2 percent.

The most remarkable jump is evident in eighth grade math. In 2015, just 21 percent of Laurel eighth graders were deemed proficient in math. Today, 59 percent hit that mark, beating the statewide average by 20 percentage points. And in English, similar gains can be found even as Laurel has Delaware's second fastest growing population of English language learners. Laurel Middle School seventh graders now beat the statewide average in proficiency, jumping from 28 percent proficient in 2015 to 56 percent.

LET'S CHANGE THE WORLD. TOGETHER!

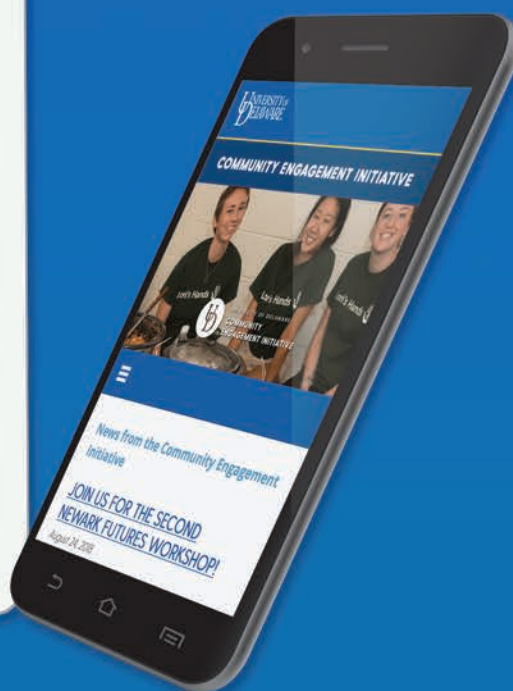
At any given moment, multiple members of the UD community are immersed in a community-based project. Great collaborative work happens year round throughout the First State and beyond. Contact us at BlueHensEngage@udel.edu to inquire about available opportunities or suggest a new way UD students, faculty and staff might work with you in your community.



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