Engaged Michigan Principles & Values

History and Context*

In the mid 2010s, a coalition of faculty and staff came together to articulate guiding principles for community and civic engagement for the University of Michigan community. Intended to provide clear guidance for both university stakeholders and community partners, the Engaged Michigan principles articulate guiding values and ideas to put these principles into practice.

The language of these principles emerged by reviewing and synthesizing several existing sets of principles for engagement in use at U-M, including those of the Detroit Urban Research Center, the Edward Ginsberg Center, the (now former) Community-Engaged Academic Learning (CEAL) in LSA, Global Engagement, and others. These principles were also reviewed and discussed by the Council for Civic Engagement, the Provost's Office council that serves as a UM-wide platform for discussion of civic engagement in scholarship and learning.

Principles for Community and Civic Engagement

Replicated from https://engaged.umich.edu/about/principles-and-values/

"U-M is a public institution with a deep public ethos. Our mission to serve the people of Michigan and the world is deeply rooted in our ethos and identity as a public institution. Through our engagement we can directly benefit the society that supports us by combining our expertise with that of people who live in communities, both around us and around the world, to build on their own capacities and to maximize and realize their opportunities. By learning from communities, we develop connections with new ideas that challenge us and confront us with the new questions that allow us to create, communicate, preserve and apply knowledge, art and academic values to the challenges of the world. And through the opportunities that communities provide to help educate our students, we create the leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future.

We are committed to the following principles to guide our practice in ethical and sustainable ways:

- **Principle of Recognition** for the expertise and knowledge within the community
- **Principle of Respect** for individuals, communities, and their resources
- **Principle of Equitable Partnership** focused on reciprocal relationships, transparency, and accountability

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*This content was derived from the Engaged Michigan website and mildly adapted based on a recorded conversation between Elyse L. Aurbach and Nick Tobier, Professor in the Stamps School of Art & Design and Senior Counsel to the Provost on Civic Engagement.

Principle of Recognition

The U-M's approach to working with communities begins with acknowledgement of the expertise and knowledge that already exists within any community in which we engage. Our own beliefs and understandings of the opportunities and capacities in that community must be balanced with the real, lived experience of those with whom we would partner.

Implications

- Community members must be respectfully recognized as experts with deep knowledge of their own communities and ways of life, in the same way that members of the U-M are recognized as experts who bring a different perspective to the community. The knowledge within communities can be and should be viewed as a valid form of knowledge.
- U-M scholars working in a community should be willing to critically examine their own values, beliefs or ideas that emerge from a different context.
- Engaged scholarship or learning in communities should begin with seeking to understand the community, the peoples who comprise it, and the opportunities and capacities they possess, before seeking to apply preconceived ideas or solutions.

Principle of Respect

Communities comprise many individuals, who collectively and individually have unique opportunities and capacities. Community members must be recognized as having agency in their own decisions in their own community. Their resources, not the least of which is time, must be recognized as having value. U-M scholars must be aware of power structures, both hidden and explicit, that might influence community members and U-M scholars.

Implications

- Seeking opportunity for collective action and synergetic engagement should be the norm, both to respect the opportunity costs to community members collaborating with U-M scholars, and to provide greater return value to the communities in which we engage.
- Equally, long-term partnerships and engagements are encouraged that build benefit and understanding, and prevent the harm to community resources and expectations that come from many disconnected short-term engagements. We recognize that individual efforts are sometimes project based and inherently finite in scope, but even in these cases there may be opportunity to build long term relationships with the partner across multiple projects and multiple U-M faculty and staff engagements; we should be aware of and seeking these opportunities.

- Faculty and students should make it a practice to first learn from others, especially others at U-M, who are already engaged in the same community, and seek first to complement existing efforts rather than create wholly new and disconnected efforts.
- When faculty and students seek institutional support for their work, we should expect such initial fact-finding and research as a requirement for institutional support to engage with communities. Faculty and students should invest their own time first, before taking time from partners.
- U-M scholars should recognize that communities are diverse and heterogeneous, with multiple perspectives and needs. Power structures are in place both within the community, between the community and the U-M, and between the community and other agencies, and these power dynamics can lead to unintended consequences or harms.

Principle of Equitable Partnership

Effective engagement requires true partnership, which must be founded on relationships and mutual benefit. All members of a partnership must see and understand the evolving benefits to themselves, their organizations and their communities, that will emerge from the engagement, and have effective recourse in case of concerns. They must have full visibility to the motives, needs, and concerns of others, and must be mutually accountable to meet these needs and address these concerns.

Implications

- Faculty and students engaged with community partners should be able to articulate the value of their work or project in accessible language, free from academic jargon. Similarly, faculty and students should help community members to articulate the value of the work to the U-M. And all should be able to articulate how these value propositions are complementary and balanced.
- U-M faculty and students working with communities should provide those communities with systems to address concerns, including clear expectations for raising concerns, methods to do so, and pathways to higher authorities if concerns are not being addressed. U-M administrators should be prepared to engage and act when concerns are raised to them.
- We recognize that when we engage with communities, we are part of those communities. We should contribute ideas and knowledge, and support local partner-based businesses, for example by renting from community partners or purchasing from them when appropriate. We should work to make long-term partners preferred vendors for purchasing. When possible, we should hire local community

residents for project-related positions (e.g., survey interviewers, project managers, field coordinators, community health workers).

- In U-M communications about community engaged work, we should be sensitive to presenting the community partner equally alongside the U-M faculty, students and staff, recognizing that all are contributing and that often the community partner has been engaged far longer in ensuring a successful outcome."