

# Preliminary Civic Action Plan: 2017

(Pending Completion of UMR Strategic Plan 7/18)

University of Minnesota Rochester

Fall 2017

## Summary

The University of Minnesota Rochester is the newest campus in the Minnesota system, with an emphasis on innovative education in the health sciences. Given the constraints of UMR's youth and small size, this Civic Action Plan emphasizes improving existing efforts through incremental and sustainable growth. Currently, a campus strategic planning process is in progress, with anticipated additions to this plan expected to emanate from that endeavor by July 2018.

The strategic approach of this action plan focuses on three goals:

- Deepening and expanding our platform partnership with the Mayo Clinic.
- Leveraging the expertise of faculty in the scholarship of teaching and learning to deepen and expand service-learning and community-based research opportunities for students.
- Developing systems and processes to increase awareness of how our campus is engaged in the community, and assess the impact of that engagement.

## Plan Rationale

### Institutional Context & Civic Action

The University of Minnesota Rochester lies in the heart of downtown Rochester, surrounded by one of the premier health care providers in the nation: the Mayo Clinic. Given this proximity, and the growing regional and national need for health care providers, it is not surprising that the institution is committed to education in the health sciences. The newest campus in the University of Minnesota system, UMR graduated its first students with the Bachelors of Science in Health Sciences in 2012--between the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010 and the initiation of its first provisions in 2014.

The connections between health care and social and economic inequalities are numerous, and the breadth, depth, and impact of those connections are only increasing. Fighting prescription addictions, ensuring access to care, maintaining affordability, meeting the growing need for elder care, balancing the access to and profitability of rural medicine, and countless other challenges face all of our communities. Our students must be prepared to not only understand the biological drivers of health, but the social and cultural ones as well. They must be able to advocate for their patients regardless of cultural background, engage in public dialogue in critical and thoughtful ways, and lead the way to sustainable healthcare.

### Institutional Commitments & Civic Action

UMR's commitment to the pursuit of the public good are present throughout its key documents and plans. The **vision** of the institution is to "inspire transformation in higher education through innovations that empower our graduates to solve the grand health challenges of the 21st century." In pursuit of this transformation of education, UMR focuses on **six arenas of distinctiveness**, one of which is "community

immersion and engagement.” Underlying both the vision and the arenas of distinctiveness are our **core values**, four of which speak directly to civic action:

- Respect. We value habits of interaction that demonstrate the worth and dignity of each person.
- Human Potential. We value every person’s capacity to learn, develop, imagine, create, and contribute.
- Community. We value collective work and a culture of trust that promotes collaboration, problem-solving, and partnerships while creating belonging, accountability, and courageous action.
- Diversity & Inclusiveness. We value the range of human differences and the active pursuit and involvement of varied perspectives.

From the vision and core values, UMR has developed six **centering aspirations**, three of which focus our attention on community engagement:

- Generate transformative contributions to the renewal of higher education, providing a collaborative environment of inquiry that allows innovative thought-leadership in teaching and learning; educational research; public engagement; organizational efficiency; and community integration.
- Enhance the diversity of the healthcare workforce, through intentional inclusivity emanating from our core commitment to respectful human relationships and permeating our habits of interaction in recruitment, teaching and learning, and the ongoing life of our UMR community.
- Contribute significantly to the continued development of the Rochester community, through intentional partnerships and initiatives.

A commitment to partnerships and community engagement permeates the vision, values, distinctiveness, and aspirations of UMR. Given this grounding, it is not surprising that when UMR recently developed its *Strategic Growth Plan*, one of the ten working groups concentrated on *Community Engagement and Partnerships*. This group identified the following **decision-making principles** for UMR to consider as it develops tactical objectives and action steps:

- Develop policies to support staff and faculty community engagement efforts.
- Enhance community interaction with our students, staff, and faculty.
- Develop new partnerships for student experience and coursework.
- Better understand student, staff and faculty community involvement.
- Provide administrative and faculty support.

In addition to this working group outcome, the overall *Strategic Growth Plan* included four **priorities**.

One of these specifically affirmed our commitment to reciprocal relationships with the community: **COLLABORATION**. As we grow in size and influence, our history of commitment to collaborative partnerships will continue and expand with intentionality. Aware of the need for collective action to impact systemic challenges, we will not move forward in isolation. We remain committed to UMR’s physical integration in downtown Rochester and extensive connection with community partners that share a learning-focused mission and a commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

## **Institutional Baseline**

All levels of UMR’s institutional documents, from vision statements to strategic plans, affirm our commitment to empower students to be engaged citizens, and collaborate with the local community to solve healthcare challenges. This drive is operationalized in the infrastructure and engagement efforts

currently present on campus. A need for additional data has emerged in the process of strategic planning, which will be addressed in our civic action plan.

### Engagement Infrastructure

At a small institution, civic engagement must both have a few champions as well as be distributed broadly, since insufficient resources exist for a civic engagement “office.” Two positions at UMR — one faculty and one staff — are closely aligned with civic action:

- **Tenure-track Civic Engagement Scholar:** Conducts research on student learning through sustainable and mutually beneficial collaboration with local community organizations, assists other faculty in developing service-learning courses, and leads the assessment of engagement efforts across campus.
- **Community Engagement Coordinator:** Assists students in finding off-campus opportunities (including research, internship, and service) to further their learning and development, connects community partners with UMR initiatives, and fosters on-campus engagement with students.

Institutional support for engagement in the academic realm is strong. All faculty must have the scholarship of teaching and learning as their primary research focus. Thus research studying the impact of pedagogies such as service-learning and community-based research are explicitly valued, in contrast to many institutions where this type of scholarship may only be tacitly acknowledged or even devalued. Other institutional commitments on the curricular side include requiring a course on civic engagement for all students (CLI 2522 — Community Collaboratory), and a unique Capstone Experience that encourages students to include co-curricular opportunities and off-campus experiences (e.g. research, internships, volunteering, and/or study away). Finally, financial support for faculty development of new service-learning courses has been possible thanks to a grant from the University of Minnesota Office of Public Engagement.

UMR’s student development staff, known as the Student Engagement Team, collectively provide additional institutional support for co- and extra-curricular student engagement in the community. Success coaches assist students in identifying volunteer and internship opportunities that fit with their developmental goals. Several staff (as well as faculty and students) serve on a Diversity and Inclusion Committee that encourages the UMR community to live our core values of diversity and inclusiveness and promotes a campus culture where diversity and equity are integrated into the work and lives of every student, faculty, and staff member. Study away, health and wellness, and student activities staff all contribute to developing engaged students capable of having an impact beyond the campus.

### Engagement Actions

In addition to the infrastructural support, UMR provides students, faculty, and staff with numerous opportunities to live out the commitments to engagement expressed in both the Campus Compact Plan call and UMR’s own vision and value statements.

- **Capstone Experience:** students design their senior year to meet their personal and professional development goals. Through the ownership of their learning, each student showcases their resiliency and ability to take responsibility. Faculty, staff and community partners are also positively impacted through their work with students and the support they offer. Many students choose to actively contribute to the community through volunteer work or internships with local partners.
- **Living Learning Communities (LLCs):** Students have an opportunity to prepare for lives of engaged citizenship through our LLCs and the related covenants each student signs. Students commit themselves to each community holding themselves and each other accountable. Each

member of the LLC commits to engaging with the community and making a positive impact, leaving Rochester better than they found it.

- **Community Collaboratory:** We embrace our responsibilities as a place-based institutions through our Community Collaboratory course. Students partner with local agencies that have as their mission contributing to the health and strength of the community. Through meaningful partnerships, students assess the capacity of an organization and offer real-life solutions to obstacles the organization is facing.
- **Service-Learning Coursework:** In classes ranging from Genetics to Introduction to History, students and faculty collaborate with local agencies to address social and environmental challenges while learning course content. Recent partners include:
  - Quarry Hill Nature Center
  - Somalia Rebuild Organization
  - Community Interfaith Dialogue on Islam
  - Celebrate Dakota!
  - Rochester Public Schools Native American Liaison
  - Pine Island High School
  - Tettegouche State Park
  - Rochester Public Library
- **Faculty Research:** Thanks to UMR's focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning, our faculty are harnessing the capacity of the institution to directly impact the social inequalities in education. Ongoing research shows that traditionally underrepresented students are performing as well or better than their peers at UMR, due to the innovative and high-impact practices that infuse all of our courses.
- **Internship & Research Opportunities:** Our connection and proximity to Mayo Clinic provides students with a unique opportunity to challenge health inequalities. A range of entry points allow students in their first year, close to graduation, or anywhere in between to participate in developing solutions that will improve individual and community health.

## Engagement Data

During our recent Growth Planning, the Engagement Working group identified that as an institution we have a need to better track what engagement efforts are occurring, as well as assess the impacts of that engagement. While efforts to address this will be included in this plan, some existing efforts can assist us in the creation of benchmarks for student transformation.

All UMR students currently take the following surveys as both incoming first year students and outgoing seniors, to assess their development along measure related to civic engagement and diversity. Some of these surveys have only recently been implemented, and as yet insufficient numbers of students have taken the post version to draw any conclusions.

- **ACT Engage Survey:** Measures the status of students in ten areas such as a student's communication skills, academic self-confidence, and resilience.
- **Civic-Minded Graduate Survey:** Quantifies students' levels of civic and community engagement and commitment.
- **Intercultural Development Inventory:** Assesses how students primarily interact with people from another cultural background. Students will both take the instrument as well as write reflective essays about their results.

## Campus Team

As is true at most small institutions, civic engagement at UMR is a collaborative effort. The primary champions, however, are the Civic Engagement Scholar (a tenure-track faculty member) and the Community Engagement Coordinator (a staff member who is part of the Student Engagement Team). In addition, the Administrative Director of Academic Programs is heavily involved as the administrative member of the team. A VISTA volunteer is currently working with underrepresented health-science college students to increase their resilience and sense of empowerment in the community.

However, as noted above, numerous other faculty and staff from the Chancellor on down are committed to preparing UMR students to be engaged citizens. The institutional emphasis on collaboration means that the standard practice is to involve as many stakeholders as possible in decision making and execution. The campus-wide commitment ensures our engagement efforts will persist regardless of the presence or absence of any one individual.

While campus involvement is high, community members currently are not involved directly in planning and decision-making. This is one area for potential improvement and growth as we strive for reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships. Once sufficient relationship development has occurred, key community partners will hopefully begin to serve on advisory boards or other similar groups to ensure our partnerships remain respectful and transformative.

## Timeline & Accountability

UMR's status as one of the newest public institutions necessitates that we focus on growing and improving existing programs before starting new ones. Given this situation, the following three primary goals have been established for UMR's Civic Action Plan, projected to take place over the next five years:

- Deepening and expanding our platform partnership with the Mayo Clinic.
- Leveraging the expertise of faculty in the scholarship of teaching and learning to deepen and expand service-learning and community-based research opportunities for students.
- Developing systems and processes to increase awareness of how our campus is engaged in the community, and assess the impact of that engagement.

At present, our campus Growth Planning has only completed a strategic phase. This means that in general only priorities and broad goals have been identified. Over the next academic year, working groups will develop tactical plans with specific objectives and action steps. However, some potential paths forward have been suggested.

## Platform Partnership

As noted earlier, UMR is in the heart of Rochester, a mere block away from the Mayo Clinic. Given this proximity, and our focus on health sciences, it makes sense to partner with this health care provider. This partnership ensures our students are prepared to contribute to the health of their future communities.

Over the next five years, our goal is to collaborate with key leaders at the Mayo Clinic to increase our students' involvement in research, outreach, and care giving. Both the Mayo Clinic and UMR are highly committed to ensuring that underrepresented students in particular have greater access to these opportunities. The Community Engagement Coordinator will work with members of the Diversity & Inclusion Team as well as future VISTA volunteers to ensure this occurs. The Community Engagement

Coordinator will lead the efforts to develop contacts, communicate opportunities to students, track involvement, monitor progress, and ensure that the partnership is mutually beneficial. However UMR's highly collaborative nature means this effort will be assisted by many others, including the faculty leading the Capstone Course, student success coaches, and more.

### **Service-Learning & Community-Based Research**

Now that UMR's curriculum has stabilized after an initial developmental stage, faculty have an opportunity to explore more ways to enrich student learning. Service-learning and community-based research are still in an early stage at UMR. However, the recent hiring of a Civic Engagement Scholar will facilitate growth in these pedagogies.

Over the next five years, our goal is to increase the number of courses that include a service-learning or community-based research component. Thanks to a recent grant for the University of Minnesota's Office of Public Engagement, a cohort of faculty has been established who currently are piloting engaged courses across the curriculum. This group will be able to serve as mentors for other faculty after they gain the experience necessary to help others.

The Civic Engagement Scholar will take primary responsibility to grow campus service-learning and community-based research efforts, with the support of the Administrative Director of Academic Programs. Together they will provide pedagogy workshops, personal consultations, creative scheduling (to facilitate working with community partners) and other mechanisms to facilitate faculty adoption of service-learning or community-based research in their courses.

### **Awareness & Assessment**

UMR's recent Strategic Growth Planning exercise identified gaps in our understanding of what engagement efforts are presently occurring. Without a centralized office tasked with tracking and monitoring engagement, engagement can go unnoticed, partners can be over-used, and duplication can easily occur.

Over the next five years, all three primary campus team members — the Community Engagement Coordinator, the Civic Engagement Scholar, and the Administrative Director of Academic Programs — will develop systems and processes to monitor, promote, coordinate, and assess the campus' engagement efforts, whether by students, faculty, or staff. The Community Engagement Coordinator (a recently created position) and the Administrative Director of Academic Programs will be primarily responsible for tracking and logistical processes, while the Civic Engagement Scholar will focus on assessment.

All of these goals will be more fully developed into specific objectives and action steps over the next year as the campus develops its Tactical Growth Plan. Since these objectives will be part of the overall Tactical Plan, progress monitoring will occur at the campus level. The Chancellor will be responsible for the overall plan, and leaders will be identified for the various sub-sections.

### **Outcomes**

Given that our focus is on growing our existing programs, the outcomes we expect to achieve at the end of five years are primarily increases in size and scope. How large of an increase is difficult to project at this point. It would not be unreasonable to expect to be able to double the number of service-learning

courses, since at present few exist. However, it is difficult to project growth in other areas since we have gaps in knowledge about current activities. Once an accurate survey has been completed, we will be able to establish realistic targets for growth.

Beyond *having more* at the end of five years — more collaborations with our platform partner, more service-learning and community-based research courses, and more awareness and assessment of our engagement efforts — we hope to *be more*. We will be more effective at using the capacity of our institution in our relationships with partners, as increased awareness of all efforts allows us to better plan and coordinate broader efforts. We will be more intentional in our service-learning and community-based research efforts, deepening the connections between course content and the collaborations with community partners. And we will be more responsive to our place in the heart of Rochester.