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Community Engaged Research Academy at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth: Reflections, Visions, and Plans

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Abstract

- The Community Engaged Research (CER) Academy at UMass Dartmouth began in 2015 to develop and support dynamic research efforts, in partnerships with community organizations, agencies, and public services, with the goal of seeking external funding to support substantial CER projects.
- Its primary aim is to engage research-active faculty who are working, specifically, with community partners in the UMass Dartmouth catchment area. Further, the CER Academy actively seeks to build a community of like-minded scholars in interactive, supportive, and didactic processes.
- The coordinator of the CER Initiative facilitates modules, with activities designed to mentor CER Academy scholars during and after their participation in the structured curriculum of the CER Academy.
- Beyond the interactive curriculum with a cohort of CER Scholars, ongoing mentorship continues for as long as CER Scholars want/need support to develop durable community partnerships.
- Plans going forward include:
 - 1) working with community-based professionals in UMass Dartmouth catchment area agencies and organizations to participate in the structured CER Academy with their respective CER Scholars; and
 - 2) to incentivize and recruit, and then to educate and engage, undergraduate students to develop skills and experience in community engaged research in an academic CER Student-Scholar Partnership Program.

Highlights of the CER Academy • AY 2016

Community Engaged Research Academy – Robin and Mary

- Four Scholars: Christina Cipriano, Psychology; Lisa Knauer, Sociology/Anthropology; Robin Locke Arkerson, Psychology; Kristi Oliver, Art Education
- Four 2-hour sessions, addressing stakeholder analysis, project support and review, external funding, theory and methodology
- MyCourses platform for readings, discussion, review, follow-up to individual scholars projects and requests for feedback and consultation

Conference/Symposium Presentation

- UMass Medical School Center for Clinical and Translational Science Community Engaged Research Division: Breakout Session: UMass Dartmouth Panel, Creative Approaches to Building Community Research Partnerships: Resources and Collaborations by Robin Robinson, Caitlin Stover, Andrea Klimt, Christina Cipriano, and Mary Hensel. The breakout session video is featured on the UMass Medical CCTS-CE website and eScholarship and has had 294 online users. Full program available at: https://plu.mx/plum/a/?repo_url=https://escholarship.umassmed.edu/chr_symposium/2016/program/10&theme=plum-bigben-theme

Highlights of the CER Academy • 2017

Community Engaged Research Academy – Robin and Mary

- Two individual Scholars and one team of three Scholars: Joohyun Chung, Nursing (with Gary Davis and Donghui Yan, Mathematics); Ricardo Rosa, Educational Leadership; and Monika Schuler, Nursing.
- Same CER modules and support as AY 2016.

Highlights of the CER Academy • 2018

Community Engaged Research Academy – Robin Robinson and Mary Hensel

- Three Scholars: Andrea Klimt, Sociology and Anthropology; Rayna LeTourneau, Community Nursing; and Lynn D'Esmond, Community Nursing [Lynn was selected as a CER Scholar, and also as a CRISP Scholar at UMass Medical CCTS CER Division Community Research Innovative Scholars Program (CRISP). She participated in both.
- Same CER modules and support as AY 2016 and 2017, with additional external funding consultation from Mary.

Symposium Presentation: UMass Medical School Center for Clinical and Translational Science Community Engaged Research Division: Breakout Session: UMass Dartmouth Community Engaged Research Academy: Some Methods to Develop Inclusive Community Engaged Research.

- Breakout Session 1A: The UMass Dartmouth Community Engaged Research Academy has completed two years of CER skills building, mentoring, seed funding, and other resources, with seven supported CER scholars to date.
- This interactive breakout session drew on the curriculum of the CER Academy to build particular skills, stakeholder analysis and mapping of needs that together chart the path to inclusive and practical CER proposals, and lead to creative, relevant approaches to grant seeking.
- In a stakeholder analysis, the goal is to identify who is involved in a CER issue, to what extent they are engaged at the start of the process of identifying needs to be addressed in the research, how likely they are to try to address the issue and remain involved as those who have a stake in outcomes, and what might happen post-research findings, leading to impact, implementation, and dissemination.
- The mapping of basic and perceived human needs (adapted from David Gil's *Unraveling Social Policy*) deepens researchers' understanding of the problems they will address, in a format that serves as a readily accessible communications tool for working with community partners.
- CER grant seeking: resources, approaches, and case studies

Visions and Plans for the CER Academy

To continue to engage research-active faculty who are working, specifically, with community partners in the UMass Dartmouth catchment area

To build a community of like-minded scholars in interactive, supportive, and didactic processes

- CER Academy curriculum
 - › Formal stakeholder analysis
 - › Formal and informal assessment of community partners' and community populations' basic and perceived needs
 - › Formulating community engaged research questions and relevant, appropriate methodologies, by discipline
- Ongoing Blackboard discussions of CER Scholars' projects/issues/challenges/processes as they develop and proceed
- Ongoing meetings with CER Scholars' projects throughout proposal development

To mentor CER Academy scholars during and after their participation in the structured curriculum of the CER Academy.

- Weekly mentorship in the CER Academy meetings as part of the curriculum – one month
- Ongoing mentorship, as requested and needed, following the CER Academy, for as long as wanted/needed.

To invite community-based professionals in UMass Dartmouth catchment area agencies and organizations to participate in the structured CER Academy with their respective CER Scholars

- To build an interactive, outside-the-ivory-tower presence of UMD CER research in communities
- To develop Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) skills amongst community professionals
- To engage students in the community toward impactful, meaningful research experiences

To incentivize and recruit, and then to educate and engage, undergraduate students to develop skills and experience in community engaged research

- Develop an academic CER Student Scholars program to support growth of student resources
- Engage students from diverse fields to bridge their knowledge to practice.
- Didactics – Students will engage with CER faculty on their research in a Student-Scholar Partnership.
- Learning Through Engagement – to provide CER students with a valuable and credit-bearing course as a Community Engaged Research Assistant to CER faculty Scholars.
- Engage students in a culturally and linguistically supportive community-academic research environment.

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