

“A Space Between”: Exploring Tensions and Opportunities in Community-Engaged Research Through the Lens of a Faculty Fellows Program

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Abstract

This essay aims to contribute to the literature on training faculty to undertake community-engaged research (CER) and offer colleagues at diverse institutions insight into what works—and does not—through the lens of a CER-focused faculty fellows program at Georgia Tech. We review existing models and literature on faculty development programs in CER and describe the themes, structure, goals, and outcomes of Georgia Tech’s program. To illustrate how CER takes shape in different disciplines, the essay offers five anecdotes from faculty fellows in engineering, modern languages, science, sociology, and literature. Additionally, the piece shares data gleaned from program interviews, focus groups, and surveys to make recommendations for program improvement at Georgia Tech and, more broadly, for advancing CER at other institutions. The essay is collaboratively authored by two program leads and seven program participants representing seven academic departments.

Keywords: community-engaged research, faculty development, interdisciplinarity



Colleges and universities across the United States are facing multiple crises. According to Gallup polls (Andrews & Shaffer, 2025), confidence and trust in higher education has been at the lowest of lows in recent years: 57% of Americans said that they had “a great deal/quite a lot” of confidence in 2015, but by 2024 that number had dropped to 36%. In 2025, attitudes improved somewhat (42% responded positively); however, public confidence was still far from levels reported in 2015. There are a variety of reasons for this decline—from the rising costs of higher education to political polarization to concerns about the quality of education and connections to careers and jobs (Jones, 2025) to feelings that institutions of higher education are focused on the “ivory tower” and do not contribute enough to the surrounding communities, among others. However, the “town and gown” divide has

existed for decades (Derounian, 2022). Many of us in academia also feel that these critiques are valid to some degree and wish to better contribute to the communities around us, reversing the extractive dynamic that too often characterizes community-researcher relationships, particularly in communities of color (Louis et al., 2022).

Community-engaged research (CER) is often seen as a potential response to these critiques. However, CER comes with its own challenges: It often takes time and resources that not all instructors and institutions have access to, requires training in CER best practices, and relies on institutional policies that incentivize faculty to undertake CER. In what follows, we explore a case study of a CER-focused faculty fellows program at the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) to provide our peers at other institutions with our key lessons, garnered from both failures and successes.

Community-engaged research wins have no single formula, but if they are true successes, they share characteristics that translate across settings, partnerships, and disciplines—such as dedicated, creative faculty members, partners who find their expertise respected and compensated, and a shared commitment to long-term collaborations. One such success—that can shed light on the context this piece describes—began in a sunny breezeway on the campus of a vacant high school in Jackson, Georgia. A small group crowded around an unassuming black box, two cell phones, and a tangle of cords. One member of the group, the founder of the Henderson School Alumni Association and Trust (HSAAT), asked a question about how the “internet-in-a-box” might host content related to career development and science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) learning. The computer science professor facilitating the discussion, Ashutosh Dhekne, went into some detail about how the technology would support content for programs HSAAT would host, as the group worked to transform the vacant property into a community innovation center with services for Jackson’s children, its workforce, and its elders. Other members of the group—longtime Jackson residents who had themselves attended the then-segregated Henderson School and now serve on the HSAAT Board—discussed how this form of free, local internet would supercharge their plans.

Some months later, Dhekne, a faculty fellow in a CER program at Georgia Tech and coauthor of this essay, applied for a grant for the project and was denied. Instead of moving on, he regrouped with HSAAT to refine their shared vision and joined forces with another fellow, a professor of architecture with expertise in technologies related to historic and cultural preservation. This new team applied for the next round of internal funding and was awarded a grant to conduct a scan of the school building to prepare for renovation and for the implementation of “internet in a box.” However, their proposal went beyond the faculty members’ individual technological contributions for a transdisciplinary approach to the HSAAT vision for reimagining the property and its uses. This expansion included cocreated STEAM workshops as well as a design-build project on the campus that will activate the football field through interventions such as a modular concession stand. The partnership between the faculty members and HSAAT also entails immersing

their students in a long-term relationship, stewarded by Georgia Tech’s Center for Sustainable Communities Research and Education (SCoRE), supporting faculty to become costewards of that partnership over the coming years and ensuring that training provided by the SCoRE’s faculty fellows program—described in this piece—continues to structure and energize the relationship. What the internet-in-a-box plans and current design-build vision for HSAAT look like now may shift substantially in the coming months, but the groundwork for success is already laid through the centering of partner vision and the commitment by all parties to build a lasting relationship, instead of merely executing a single grant-funded project.

This collaboration between HSAAT and the faculty fellows, unfolding over the course of 2 years, illuminates how fruitful it can be to gather community partners, faculty, and modest resources in order to shape CER projects that center the vision and knowledge of partners and engage the skills of faculty and students. The anecdote also underscores the ingredients we identify as key for faculty development in CER and for stimulating and supporting CER more broadly: funding, mentoring, institutional support for partnerships, and peer support. In this piece, our group of nine authors unfolds the goals, activities, and outcomes of a CER-focused faculty fellows program, as well as elaborating on the “ingredients” that we feel are most relevant for other institutions currently running or developing similar programs. The piece fills a gap in the literature on faculty training in CER by providing both granular outcomes and recommendations relevant to faculty development as well as broader guidance pertinent to any institution hoping to strengthen community-engaged research. It also has the distinction of its author team: hailing from eight different disciplines and coming to the program with different levels of experience in CER, the authors crafted this essay as evidence that all disciplines belong in a big CER tent. Authors each offered reactions to one another’s sections of this text, and relationships among us flourished as each of us came to understand CER from other disciplinary perspectives.

Literature Review

At the core of CER are community partnerships. The process of building those partnerships, maintaining relationships,

and collaborating on research design and outcomes in effective ways requires engagement skills, as well as ample time, effort, and commitment (Jenkins et al., 2020); strong partnerships also demand familiarity with local contexts, histories, and cultures. As CER is not yet mainstream in academia, many researchers have never been trained in CER methodologies, such as participatory action research, or exposed to the ideologies that underpin them, such as asset-based community development, popular education, justice, and equity.

CER has been embraced more quickly in some fields than in others. There has long been an understanding of the importance of involving communities within the research process in the medical and health field, as this practice increases the potential for successful interventions (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997; Collins, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2020). An appreciation for community-engaged research is evident in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding focus on “research translation,” which typically requires or at least supports community partnerships and participation (Jenkins et al., 2020; National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, 2024). In the past two decades, some universities—often large public institutions and land-grant institutions with a mandate to serve their state—have strengthened their infrastructure for and honed their focus on CER, creating models that strive for “transformative engagement” (Brown et al., 2006). This more robust, systemic approach entails resourcing networks of CER faculty supporting different geographic areas over the long term, rather than merely supporting an assortment of disconnected projects. In their most mature iterations, institutional approaches to CER demonstrate a commitment to authentically shared power in developing research questions, methods, and products, as well as to meaningful recognition of faculty practicing CER through the tenure and promotion process.

Scholars of CER have focused on how critical faculty reward systems are to the proliferation of strong CER programs, even at institutions where the culture of community engagement is ratified by certifications such as the well-respected Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (Saltmarsh & Wooding, 2016). Institutions that have implemented this focus, such as the University of North Carolina Greensboro, have

“integrated community-engagement terms persistently across the teaching, research, and service [categories]” (Janke et al., 2023, para. 3), reinforcing a broad culture that values engagement. Institutions themselves are not the only sources of recognition and reward for effective engagement of communities and strong community partnerships; the Biden–Harris Administration’s Justice40 Initiative stimulated interest in CER in the science and engineering fields by turning the attention of technologists toward the communities their innovations will impact. The Justice40 Initiative required that 40% of the benefits from certain federal investments related to climate change and sustainability flow to what they called “disadvantaged communities” characterized by disproportionate pollution burdens and underinvestment (Exec. Order No. 14,008, 2021; The White House, 2024). This initiative provided an opening for federally funded research and implementation projects to actively engage communities to understand how projects affect and can benefit them. Across the United States and the world, universities are developing a variety of tools and programs to support the respectful and meaningful engagement of community partners in research.

In some cases, universities may develop themed programs and trainings in CER in response to broader funding and research trends. Increasing interest in CER among STEM faculty who hoped to take advantage of research funding during the Biden–Harris Administration but who had little experience with CER created an opening for SCoRE. SCoRE began developing their faculty training programs in 2016 in SCoRE’s previous incarnation as the Center for Serve–Learn–Sustain, the university’s Quality Enhancement Plan, or QEP. To maintain accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, public universities in Georgia must submit a QEP every 10 years. Serve–Learn–Sustain’s successes running interdisciplinary faculty fellows programs fostered sustainability-themed research and teaching collaborations across departments and provided an excellent foundation (Hirsch et al., 2023). The faculty development program described here was created with an eye to the Justice40 Initiative and an aim to include the effective elements of SCoRE’s previous faculty development programming, such as field experiences, fostering interdisciplinary faculty relationships for research and

teaching projects, and engaging community partners as cofacilitators.

In reviewing other institutions' programs, SCoRE program leads found the most common training models for CER included self-guided training materials such as online courses (Allen, Culhane-Pera, Call, & Pergament, 2011; University of Minnesota, 2022); open and informal seminar series and networking sessions (University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 2024); standardized or class-based sets of training workshops (Randolph et al., 2022; Washington State University, 2024); and semester- or year-long cohort-based programs (fellowships). From the outset, SCoRE intended to build a network of interdisciplinary community-engaged researchers across Georgia Tech. Equally important was the goal of providing individualized support for faculty in creating new community partnerships. The cohort-based program model, which allows a small subset of researchers to interact with the SCoRE team and with each other over the course of a year, seemed the most appropriate to achieve these collective goals.

This program is transposable but would understandably look different across institutions. Georgia Tech is a state-funded, R1 university located in a dense, urban environment, rich in a diversity of community-based organizations as well as a high concentration of other colleges and universities (ideal for cross-institutional partnerships). Its commitment to CER and community-engaged teaching (CET) has a documented history, first with Serve-Learn-Sustain and now through SCoRE. And yet, the fellows program discussed here is the first instance of a more formal initiative at Georgia Tech to train faculty in CER. We believe a program of this kind could find success anywhere (not only at R1 institutions or state-funded universities, and in settings both urban and rural); it can serve as the first step in leveraging existing strengths among faculty and staff to establish a larger framework/structure for CER and CET at the institution level.

Each iteration of such a program, then, would yield different questions and answers at distinct institutions. For instance, funding, on which we expand in what follows, might pose challenges at institutions where no program development grants are

available. The very act of building bridges, however, remains, and is what we find most transposable and translatable across institutions. In other words, the framework and values of the program—communication across disciplinary silos, respect, curiosity, and good listening—are reproducible from institution to institution and from program to program. The pluralism that this program fosters is its strength and the source of its ability to be replicated.

Funding models for fellowship programs vary (see the Appendix). Many are funded through government agencies, such as NIH, and funding can come from collaborative proposals or targeted recruitment. Those funded through the NIH (many through the Clinical and Translational Science Award program) tend to strongly focus on developing a medical or health-based participatory research project with community partners (Jenkins et al., 2020; Medical University of South Carolina, 2024; Penn State Clinical and Translational Science Institute, 2024). In some cases, nascent partnerships are already developed and academic and community partners apply to the program together as teams (Jenkins et al., 2020). On the other hand, fellowship programs at less specialized universities tend to recruit individual academic fellows (rather than teams), rely on mentorship with experienced community-engaged researchers, and focus efforts on developing partnerships and proposals rather than concrete project outcomes (Purdue University, 2024a, 2024b; University Outreach and Engagement, 2024).

Although these fellowship programs differ in their outcomes and activities, all found it essential to provide foundational training in CER and partnership principles. These trainings tend to center an understanding of equity, inclusivity, and justice; highlight the need for research to reflect community interests and for communities to be involved as meaningful partners; focus on respectful, reciprocal, and culturally sensitive communication and processes; and emphasize building trust with partners over time (Jenkins et al., 2020; M. McNall, personal communication, August 6, 2024; SoLaHmo Partnership & University of Minnesota, 2017). In addition to this foundational training, fellowship programs often incorporate a combination of other elements, such as

1. training on other skills that support successful engagement, such as communication, team building, conflict resolution, program evaluation, and grant-writing (Allen, Culhane-Pera, Pergament, & Call, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2020; Purdue University, 2024b; University Outreach and Engagement, 2024);
2. matching community partners and faculty members to build new relationships (Allen, Culhane-Pera, Pergament, & Call, 2011);
3. supporting short-term, pilot CER projects, proposal development for such projects, or creation of scholarly works about CER (Purdue University, 2024a, 2024b; University Outreach and Engagement, 2024);
4. creating a community of practice and strong network of community-engaged researchers at the university (Penn State Clinical and Translational Science Institute, 2024; University Outreach and Engagement, 2024; Wadsworth et al., 2019); and
5. supporting faculty in developing promotion and tenure packages that showcase impact from community-engaged scholarship or research (M. McNall, personal communication, August 6, 2024; Purdue University, 2024a; University Outreach and Engagement, 2024).

Some programs offer set trainings each year, whereas others provide a more individualized approach, interviewing fellows and then tailoring training sessions to their learning needs (Jenkins et al., 2020). Additionally, some programs, particularly those focused on producing pilot project outcomes, also include trainings for community researchers and scholars, either with academic partners or separately (Allen, Culhane-Pera, Pergament, & Call, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2020).

Few resources are available that reflect on or evaluate the impact and effectiveness of these fellowship programs and of the activities that compose them, especially for those not associated with translational science funding through the NIH (resources addressing such programs include Allen, Culhane-Pera, Pergament, & Call, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2020; Wadsworth et al., 2019). However, based on evaluations that do exist, as well as our conversations with other staff administering these programs, we have

identified four components—funding, mentoring, institutional support for partnerships, and peer support—as key to ensuring impactful training programs for faculty. In the case of funding, many programs have found it essential to provide funding for fellows' time, seed funding for pilot projects, and/or course releases to free up time for participation, given the numerous responsibilities faculty already manage. Senior mentors (those experienced in CER) play a vital role in guiding new fellows in almost all the programs listed (see the Appendix), and often interdisciplinary perspectives were particularly valuable in this regard. For example, in MSU's program, pairing fellows with senior mentors who shared similar interests, but came from different disciplines, was crucial in broadening perspectives and enriching the overall experience (M. McNall, personal communication, August 6, 2024). Additionally, mentors or engagement office staff are vital in developing nascent community partnerships, such as through initial matching and by providing advice on communication, trust-building, and shared decision-making (Allen, Culhane-Pera, Pergament, & Call, 2011; Wadsworth et al., 2019). Fellows also greatly valued opportunities for interaction that allowed them to offer each other peer support and engage in shared learning (Allen, Culhane-Pera, Pergament, & Call, 2011; M. McNall, personal communication, August 6, 2024).

Creating an Inclusive, Interactive Program

In close collaboration with three interdisciplinary research institutes at Georgia Tech, the Brook Byers Institute for Sustainable Systems, the Renewable Bioproducts Institute, and the Strategic Energy Institute, SCoRE ran its faculty fellows program—formally titled the “Energy Equity, Environmental Justice and Community Engagement Faculty Fellows Program”—over the course of 8 months in 2023 and 2024. The program engaged 22 Georgia Tech faculty and two external fellows: A staff member from a local policy-focused nonprofit, the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance, and a faculty member in Chemistry at Georgia Gwinnett College, were invited to lend their perspectives and deepen the well of shared wisdom.

In service to the goal of growing collaborative expertise and building long-term relationships with each other and with

community partners around energy equity, community benefits, and environmental justice, the program offered a variety of learning and networking opportunities. Each fellow chose the activities in which they participated. All activities were intended to (1) grow fellows' familiarity with the mission and programs of local sustainability partners, (2) build relationships with those partners based on shared research interests, and (3) support relationship building among the fellows, especially across disciplines. Each fellow also worked on an individual deliverable that advanced their own goals for integrating CER in their work and worked in a small group advancing a group deliverable intended to strengthen the community-engaged sustainability research ecosystem at Georgia Tech.

Program coleads recruited an eclectic pilot cohort of faculty. An emphasis in SCoRE on supporting technologists and STEM faculty led to strong representation from the College of Engineering, composing more than one third of program participants (10 faculty). However, to foster cross-disciplinary learning environments and relationships, program leads also ensured participation from faculty in design, liberal arts, sciences, and computing. In analyzing the interests of these participants during the application process, program leads were able to set up informal "buddy" (peer mentorship) relationships, connecting participants in different disciplines who shared similar motivations.

Toward the goal of cultivating relationships with community partners and increasing familiarity with partners' missions, fellows were invited to attend a closing and opening reception and one or more site visits in the community. Hosting partner organizations included ECO-Action and Community Health Aligning Revitalization, Resilience, and Sustainability (CHARRS), two local environmental justice nonprofits; ReBuild ATL, a local coalition advancing workforce development and sustainable construction; and HSAAT, a metro area nonprofit transforming a local vacant high school into a resilience hub and community center (introduced in the vignette above).

To enhance the fellows' knowledge base related to community-university partnerships broadly, fellows were also invited to workshops focused on partnering with community organizations to seek federal funding and on understanding the landscape of local

government efforts and advocacy around issues of importance to Atlantans, such as housing, health, gun safety, and education. Program leads urged fellows to attend other public events that would be either hosted or well-attended by many community-based organizations in the areas of energy, civic engagement, and environmental justice, such as service opportunities offered by the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance and the Center for Civic Innovation. Finally, fellows began the program by determining, in concert with coleads, what individual and small group deliverables they would pursue. Leads offered fellows a menu of options based on the interests that fellows described in their applications and the broad priorities of SCoRE.

At the beginning of the program, two of the program leads interviewed each faculty fellow to gain an understanding of what specific interests and aims they brought to the program. The interviewers followed a loose interviewing guide that addressed fellows' research background and familiarity with CER, the types of community engagement (if any) typical of their research field, their expectations for how the program might shape their research moving forward, what they hoped to learn from other fellows and partners with whom they would engage, what strengths they brought to the cohort of fellows, and what their definition of "success" was for a CER project.

The data from these interviews informed the planning for Spring Semester activities and helped leads determine how to match faculty with "buddies" in the program. The diversity of the responses underscores the spectrum of experiences represented by participating faculty: Some had years of experience in research and teaching collaborations with community-based partners, and others had never worked with an external partner of any kind and were merely trying to imagine what sort of partnerships might be possible given the context and parameters of their research agenda. Fellows' areas of research expertise ranged from sea-level rise to next-generation polymers to postcolonial literature and environmental humanities.

This essay's authors analyzed the interview transcripts (approved IRB Protocol Number H23519). Together they identified key themes that were common across the interviews, including shifts in fellow orientation toward community impact, what CER trainings should provide, the necessity

of interdisciplinary CER collaborations, and the promise and challenge of authentic codevelopment of a research question and CER project. Several fellows discussed their own orientation toward the impact of their work, and some described a shift in their careers—from a “pure research” mentality toward a desire to have a positive societal impact, and a shift away from glamorous, ambitious solutions to smaller incremental contributions cocreated with community members. Relatedly, STEM faculty described the tension that animates much STEM education: a commitment to creating solutions that positively impact people, but an almost complete lack of training around how to engage impacted communities in cocreating those solutions. The issue of interdisciplinarity often accompanied conversations about the absence of community engagement training for STEM faculty. Humanities faculty commented on the importance of interdisciplinary collaborations that bring them into dialogue with STEM faculty. These interactions help confront stereotypes about a positivistic, technology-centered approach to solving societal problems in STEM fields and an inclination to theorize problems instead of devising solutions in the humanities. One fellow noted that successful community-engaged research models will “show us how to use everyone’s different toolboxes to build a house we all find livable.”

Fellow interviews illuminated the need for relationships built on, and reinforcing of, CER-related competencies. Facilitating collaborations with community partners that are asset-based and not deficit-focused, funding partner participation even without large grants, codeveloping the research agenda, and codevising governance structures for the collaboration are examples of competencies that require support and training that few academic departments provide (Center for Sustainable Communities Research and Education, 2024b). Fellows with humanities backgrounds and those whose courses engage community partners particularly highlighted the skills essential to developing teaching—and research—partnerships. CER requires skills in relationship building, some familiarity with concepts like structural inequality and epistemic justice, and background knowledge about the history of the community and region as well as the tenor of the relationship between the institution

and the communities surrounding it. Faculty members who had more experience in CER spoke to how a history of mistrust between the university and its neighbors—particularly in the cases of predominantly White institutions and the Black or brown neighbors living in their environs—has led to a need for much more time-intensive trust-building with community partners. On this note, one faculty member stated that good partnerships are a “long game” in tension with the short timelines that characterize grant cycles, the tenure timeline, and the academic quarter or semester. The program focused on supporting faculty to understand and implement best practices in CER, offering them tools and guidance that could nourish nascent CER collaborations and help shape future efforts.

The faculty development program demonstrated several key takeaways and a framework that can be utilized by diverse institutions. In focusing on key principles rather than institution-specific resources, fellows learned how to redefine notions of success through primarily working with community partners in developing and sustaining meaningful relationships and avenues for community partner participation. Defining success through authentic connection led to the development of robust relationships with existing and new partners and the funding of projects that integrate research with community members. This conceptual shift was by design, engineered through deliberately selecting a diverse cohort that crossed borders between STEM and the humanities, tenured faculty and their nontenured colleagues, and academia and community members. The facilitated interaction among participants in a shared space revealed a core, transferable principle for CER: Success and long-lasting impact are not fixed in a rigid model, but rather a flexible mindset across varied academic cultures, where communication, curiosity, and respect are emphasized. The qualitative data from participant reflections is strong evidence for the framework’s efficacy, indicating its potential for adaptability across a range of institutional types outside the R1 university. The success of faculty whose roles prioritize pedagogy and service is of particular relevance for teaching-focused liberal arts, regional, and community colleges seeking to build or strengthen a culture of engaged pedagogy and scholarship.

Expansions: CER Perspectives From Six Disciplines

The perspectives below are offered by authors of this piece—program participants who have different depths of experience with CER. The perspectives are organized to move from those authors newer to CER to those with longer records of partner engagement to the final author, with several years of experience in grant-funded, multipartner collaborations. Each presents a form of “expansion.” The first—and only one representing two departments—explores the expansion of a commonly used framework to include social dimensions. The second, third, and fourth explore the expansion of the classroom to include community organizations, leaders, and associations outside the bounds of traditional course formats. These three perspectives contain CER expansions of their own: expanded definitions of sustainability, of institutional resources, and of expertise. The fifth and final example explores expansion of networks. The author highlights how the intentional nurturing of diverse networks in ever-widening circles—from interdisciplinary collaborations with faculty at Georgia Tech to regional partnerships to international collaborations—can spur broader and more transformative multipartner CER initiatives. These perspectives begin to highlight how CER across diverse departments, epistemic systems, and research projects might function. Although it isn’t the goal of this piece to discuss CER’s impact on partnering communities, there is a growing body of literature with that aim (Heffner et al., 2003; Jenkins et al., 2020; Kuttner et al., 2024; Matson et al., 2021; Randolph et al., 2022), and several fellows are exploring that mode of “expansion”—how to include evaluations by and from community partners in their research deliverables.

Expanding Frameworks

Patritsia M. Stathatou, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, and Joe F. Bozeman III, Civil and Environmental Engineering and Public Policy

In fields as diverse as engineering, business, conservation, and medicine, life cycle assessment (LCA) is used to evaluate (typically environmental) impacts associated with all stages of a product’s or system’s life, from raw material extraction through production, use, end-of-life treatment, and recycling/

reuse or final disposal (International Organization for Standardization, 2006). LCA involves compiling an inventory of relevant energy and material inputs and environmental releases, evaluating the potential impacts associated with them, and interpreting the results to help make informed decisions. A natural connection can be drawn between this much-used tool and the fundamental premise of CER, which is the engagement of people whom the research outcomes will affect. However, LCAs too often exclude local communities and social environments where new interventions are to be implemented, overlooking crucial local environmental and social factors. In our fields, we seek to engage local communities in cogenerating assessments that reflect the actual environmental impacts residents experience.

Engaging local communities and stakeholders from the beginning of an LCA study, such as for a new wastewater treatment plant, chemical recycling facility, or biorefinery, can yield numerous benefits. At the most basic level, it helps identify environmental indicators that are of specific concern to these communities. Residents often have concerns informed by lived experience—such as particulate matter emissions, odors, or specific pollutants that might be present in water or solid waste streams. By including these issues in the process, researchers can ensure that the LCA addresses these concerns and includes a broader set of environmental indicators beyond just energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Further, comparative analysis and transparent communication of the LCA findings to local stakeholders can enhance relevant decision-making processes. By comparing LCA results with those of alternative systems or counterfactual scenarios, local communities can better understand the potential benefits and drawbacks of a new technology or system. Such comparisons can help highlight the trade-offs between different scenarios, supporting more informed, nuanced decision-making. Presenting LCA results in a transparent manner also builds trust and demonstrates the environmental performance of nascent technologies and systems. The inclusion of community input in LCA studies should not only improve the accuracy and credibility of the results but also enhance the chances of successful implementation of new technological interventions.

However, traditional LCAs tend not to incorporate meaningful social elements. Soliciting community input and consulting local stakeholders in LCA has given rise to social life cycle assessments (S-LCAs). Comprehensive S-LCAs provide quantitative or meaningful qualitative insights across worker, consumer, local community, and societal stakeholders in impact categories such as health and safety, fair salary, local employment, access to intangible resources, and public commitment to sustainability issues (Gulcimen et al., 2021). Additionally, existing databases and tools that calculate S-LCA impacts, such as the Social Hotspot Database and the Product Social Impact Life Cycle Assessment database, require that community partners themselves validate the outputs of these databases and tools for effective interpretation or provide complementary insights that may not be otherwise captured, providing partners with greater control over those outputs (Bozeman et al., 2022; Del Rosario et al., 2024). CER training can facilitate interpretative qualification and the integration of complementary insights from community partners to enable the consideration of these aspects in LCA, allowing for more comprehensive assessments.

A specific example that underscores the connections between this program's activities and S-LCA development resulted from a symposium organized during the program year, focusing on the potential community benefits of advancing direct air carbon capture for decarbonization. This event generated networking opportunities enabling us to build community partnerships, leading to the submission of two successful grants—one external award for \$750,000 and an internal seed grant for \$15,000—both of which incorporated S-LCA and community engagement. Moreover, the community partner will receive commensurate funds for their engagement and services as budgeted in these two grants. By foregrounding activities such as site visits and networking, the fellows program played a role in bolstering faculty-partner relationship building and paving the way for subsequent grant awards.

Expanding the Classroom

Brigitte Stepanov, Modern Languages

Serve-Learn-Sustain-France (SLS-France) is a semester-long program run every fall by the French and Francophone Studies branch of the School of Modern Languages in the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts at

Georgia Tech. The program, which I directed in Fall 2023, is hosted by Georgia Tech's international campus, Georgia Tech-Europe, located in Metz, France.

Engaging with humanities-oriented methods, SLS-France also incorporates interdisciplinary perspectives from the fine arts, social sciences, and STEM. The program's requirements include both in-class learning—informed by the environmental and energy humanities and the multidisciplinary breadth that these areas of study allow—and site-specific learning through community engagement. It is thus a program that blends theory with practice, underscoring the very values of interdisciplinary—and global—work.

The community partnerships begin as site visits grounded in active listening and learning. Students learn about the day-to-day operations of a permaculture garden, a community-led bicycle repair shop, two organizations (FJO and Carrefour) that provide housing and services to marginalized individuals newly arrived in France, and the Trucothèque, a “free store” operating on the principles of a circular economy, among a number of other community organizations focused on agriculture and urban farming, social justice, and climate impacts. Indeed, at the foundation of this sharing are the community's assets (harkening to the asset-based community development framework; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The experiential component of the program—of stepping beyond the boundary of the classroom—is an experience in shifting and expanding epistemology, of understanding the histories and overlays of multiple systems of knowledge, and of practicing what is learned in the classroom.

Following the site visits, students reflect on how their understanding of “sustainable community” has expanded or changed. As the semester goes on, they choose the organization with which they will volunteer, always thinking, in tandem with community members and partners, about the expansiveness of the term “sustainability.” These instances of experiential learning lead students and community partners to participate in storytelling through various media, ranging from comic books to blog posts. In-class discussions and subsequent assignments and projects focus on the intersections of gender, race, disability, categories of being, and histories of dispossession to bring the complex network of sustainability

to the fore. Other example topics include the socioeconomic costs of extreme weather events, climate change and forced displacement, barriers to composting and recycling, and the history of climate justice. The work my students and I accomplished in Fall 2023 lives on in our evolving academic and personal growth, continued reflections on and commitments to civic duty, and ongoing conversations about what research can do. Our experiences in Metz, and now in Atlanta, encourage us to make informed and ethical decisions regarding the present and future, and the manifold possibilities for both theory and practice that lie ahead. This work and its afterlives show the deep value of community-engaged teaching, CER, and the interconnectedness of the two.

Mike Lehman, Literature, Media, and Communication

Programs that focus on CER serve to reframe the binary, top-down structure between higher education institutions (HEIs) and community partners by listening to the concerns of the populations and communities that are or will be impacted as a necessary component of research. This method of conducting CER is critical for nonextractive, meaningful engagement that can lead to more robust, long-term partnerships. In my teaching, I have found that between the community partners and HEIs, there exists a space negotiated by students who, in order to make meaning of their research, incorporate an appreciation of the impact their work will have on local and global communities by receiving input from community members. As a starting point, it is crucial to open our institutional doors to community partners with infrastructure in place for them to utilize networks and resources across fields and disciplines. To honor different forms of knowledge and meaning-making across communities, we must ask how HEIs can further create value for community partners in collaborative knowledge production, a point the fellows program emphasized.

As an example, Georgia Tech's Writing and Communication Program (WCP) and Serve-Learn-Sustain developed a collaborative framework for community partners to work with students in their first-year courses. This initiative integrated community engagement into the College of Engineering and WCP curriculum, equipping students with the skills to assess the impact of their work both inside and outside academic settings. My course partnered with

an Atlanta-based start-up that produces sustainable proteins from mealworms. An analysis was conducted with the partner on potential deliverables for the students, which led to student projects focused on website redesign, social media campaigns, investor reports, and promotional materials.

In our course, we studied global hunger through the lens of migrant literature to emphasize narratives of people often considered as data points. Our partner was heavily involved in discussions about the course content as a way for students to understand global, underrepresented communities with a humanities focus, which aligned with her emphasis on using her start-up to relieve hunger during natural disasters. However, the needs of the partner shifted as the course progressed. In addition to communication-based work material, the partner would have also benefited from working with students to develop sensors and other monitoring equipment for the mealworm farms, resources a STEM-focused institution could provide. Both the students and I lacked the technical acumen to offer these resources, but a more expansive, collaborative approach to community partnerships could have helped in incorporating the technical support the partner requested. Collective, interdisciplinary partnerships across communities that are flexible in responding to the needs of partners would make CER more meaningful and beneficial for partners. In my courses, I found that in developing nonextractive partnerships, it is important to ask how the partner benefits from the partnership, and to continuously revisit the partner's vision for the collaboration as relationships evolve.

Emily Weigel, Biology

CER can be leveraged in biology, in both traditional biology research (e.g., cancer treatments, environmental impacts) and biology education research. There is an abundance of ways communities can be involved in traditional biological research (see Cooper et al., 2021 for an overview), but I will focus here on community engagement for biology education research and the advantages offered to educators in implementing engaged approaches. As I elaborate below, community-engaged coursework supports students in developing systems thinking skills; this same ability to develop a "systems view" and apply it is advantageous in devising institutionally robust ways to

support community engagement in research and teaching.

To ground my example, I will describe a community-engaged fieldwork unit that focuses on local stream health by evaluating macroinvertebrate biodiversity, chemical content, and physical characteristics. Students, working with professional scientists, community members, and course instructors, followed Environmental Protection Agency and United States Fish and Wildlife Service protocols to sample both healthy and unhealthy streams. The aim was to contribute to broader city data sets and local cleanup advocacy, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas plagued by pollution and illegal dumping. Students wrote reflections and created concept maps that allowed biology education researchers to examine how student knowledge was gained and constructed between ecological and social concepts. This multimethod approach provided insights into how students' understandings of sustainability evolved through their fieldwork and interactions with the community. In a fairly short time (2 weeks), students increased their knowledge depth, breadth, and complexity, particularly in connecting biological and sociological concepts (Pruett & Weigel, 2020).

Nationally, education research has emphasized engagement in complex biological problems as a critical element of student training (Woodin et al., 2017; Ecological Society of America, 2018). These authentic, but complex, settings—particularly when local—benefit the scientific and sociological training of students and community members, build social capital, deepen students' grasp of applied research, and bolster student interest in activism, particularly for marginalized students (see Vance-Chalcraft et al., 2024 for a comprehensive literature overview). Institutions looking to advantage their students by providing such valuable training are strengthened when policy allows for (1) the compensation of community partners who donate their time as effective coinstructors, (2) mechanisms that reduce the "red tape" to getting students off-campus (transportation, easy-to-use waivers for field trips, etc.), and (3) commitment from the institution to support consistent community-based course offerings with the infrastructure they require.

Although this work engaging with communities has been praised and recognized

within the research community both inside and outside the university setting, it has not been without pitfalls and pivots. Partnerships can be tested when changes occur to policies that affect how parties can engage, and when leadership, particularly of community groups, changes hands. Institutional policies that allow for agreements to be drafted by representatives of groups, rather than individuals, can help relieve the strain when local leadership changes. Similarly, maintaining a consistent faculty liaison can help to establish trust within the community into which new faculty may be folded, but a lack of oversight may leave some community partners feeling overtaxed by faculty less familiar with effective community engagement. In short, the framework of systems thinking learned by students in doing CER should be used to support it.

Expanding Networks

Allen Hyde, History and Sociology

In my research, engaging impacted communities has been essential to exploring the question of resilience. I focus specifically on how to engage youth from areas disproportionately affected by climate change and the increased storms associated with it. In 2018, I joined the Serve-Learn-Sustain and Global Change Program's Climate Fellows program, which helped me explore the sociological connections between climate and disaster risks that affect communities and people in unequal ways. While I participated in the Climate Fellows program, Professor Kim Cobb introduced me to the Smart Sea Level Sensor project in Savannah, Georgia, through which I developed connections with a local nonprofit, Harambee House, and the City of Savannah, ultimately laying the groundwork for my community-engaged work on disaster resilience in Savannah. Through a National Science Foundation (NSF) Civic Innovation Challenge grant on the Disaster Resilience track, I served as principal investigator (PI) for an interdisciplinary research team with scholars and graduate students from Georgia Tech, Savannah State University, the University of Minnesota, and community partners with the Harambee House Citizens for Environmental Justice, the Savannah Chatham County Public School System, and the City of Savannah's Office of Sustainability. For this project, we initially planned to engage adults to understand what disaster and climate resilience

meant to them in the west side of Savannah; however, we opted to work with youth after some conversations with the Harambee House on community burnout from research projects that led to little community benefit. Youth, on the other hand, were a major program priority for the Harambee House; they are often vulnerable during disasters and commonly left out of planning efforts and conversations around disasters and urban planning.

We developed a program called Youth Advocacy for Resilience to Disasters (YARDs) to engage middle-school-aged youth (12–15 years old) in disaster resilience planning for their communities and to present their action plans to local leaders to advocate for change. In the program, youth sequentially learn about community and disaster resilience from the perspective of environmental justice, as well as civic engagement and advocacy; engage in virtual mapmaking to understand assets and vulnerabilities in their community and region (using MapSpot, designed by Georgia-Tech-based researcher Yanni Loukissas); learn about green and grey infrastructure solutions to disasters; and develop an action plan that they present to local leaders to advocate for more thriving, resilient communities. Through the NSF grant, we ran YARDs twice as a summer camp in Savannah in 2022 and 2023 and once as an after-school program at a Title I middle school in Savannah in 2022. In the after-school program, staffers from senate offices in Georgia and city officials came to hear the students' presentations. In August 2024, we ran a 2-day version of the YARDs program with youth from the Cape Flats YMCA, located outside Cape Town in South Africa, through support from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota and the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts at Georgia Tech. We aim to continue to improve the curriculum and expand the program across Georgia, the United States, and internationally through online and in-person trainings. The connections provided by both fellows programs—the 2018 program cosponsored by Serve-Learn-Sustain and Global Change and the CER-focused program described here—were integral to the development of my research agenda, centering community-engaged collaborations, and the expansion of a faculty network in which I can serve as a mentor to those just beginning their CER journeys.

Outcomes and Recommendations

Outcomes for and Impacts on Faculty

Seeking robust feedback on the program's strengths and shortcomings, program leads solicited reflections from faculty fellows through an online survey and participation in one of three focus group sessions. The vast majority of fellows participated in at least four events (62% participated in 6+). On a scale of 1–5 (with 1 being a waste of time and 5 being extremely useful), participants rated the usefulness of participating in the events as an average of 4.3; small group deliverables as 3.7; and the overall program as 4.3. More than three fourths of the cohort expressed that they would recommend the program to their colleagues. In focus group sessions, fellows' comments about their most important learnings from the program congealed around four themes: reframing research questions, building enduring relationships, training students in CER, and changing institutional systems. One fellow commented that by changing the framing of her research question, she can alter its outcome, giving the example of a "community-forward" framing of a problem versus a "technology-forward" framing. She also poignantly described building a relationship with a community partner through the analogy of nurturing a friendship: making an effort beyond what is required because you want to build a bond, not because you have to do so.

Additionally, in the arena of building relationships, fellows' glowingly positive feedback on sustainability-focused networking events testified to the importance of providing abundant opportunities to connect with each other and community partners, especially in colearning environments. These opportunities included the quarterly meeting of a regional sustainability network, a large decarbonization and community engagement symposium, and the opening and closing events that brought fellows and community partners together to begin forging—or continue nourishing—partnerships based on shared interests. Site visits that encouraged fellows and partners to talk more intensively about potential research collaborations were also ranked highly by fellows. Building relationships within the cohort was also valued; faculty commented on the advantages of having buddies—as-asserting that having a new relationship that could support their scholarly network and CER projects was a lasting meaningful

outcome of the program. Training graduate students emerged in the comments of several STEM faculty; one commented that just the act of adding time for discussing community engagement in her lab meetings was helpful in reshaping her students' understanding of societal impacts. (Program coleads have since modified the program to welcome graduate students, too.)

Several fellows expressed regret about the lack of institutional incentives for doing CER and active discouragement by mentors and chairs of the CER efforts of early-career faculty, especially in STEM disciplines. Although the maxim that "relationships are built at the speed of trust" is broadly accepted when it comes to community-university research partnerships, fellows in engineering and computer science pointed out that one research paper developed over a year or more of partnership with a community organization cannot compete with an output of several scholarly articles in the same period. However, these barriers became opportunities in some cases; faculty members reflected on the benefits that their graduate students had and would get from supporting their CER projects, turning the nurturing of the relationship into the effort of the entire research team, not just the faculty PI.

Program outcomes, in terms of deliverables related to community-engaged research and teaching, also indicated strong progress on the goals of building relationships and supporting faculty knowledge in CER. As a sampling of the cohort's output as of this essay's writing, six fellows have given research presentations and led panels about their CER partnerships, and fellows have individually or jointly submitted five CER proposals to both internal and external funders, including the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. One fellow, who had never cowritten a research proposal with partners before participating in the fellows program, collaboratively submitted a major NSF proposal that engaged three community partners as the proposal's three key personnel. During his experience in the program, that fellow saw there was infrastructure in place to support him and his partners in navigating the maze of NSF requirements, and he had met other faculty through the program who had successfully executed federally funded CER projects. Although the proposal wasn't selected, the fellow has nurtured those relationships and

continued to collaborate with those partners in an informal coalition of southeastern organizations and academics focused on resilience.

In the realm of community-engaged teaching, three fellows submitted proposals for internal funding for incorporating partner engagement into their courses, all of which were fully funded. Small group deliverables that are still in process after the conclusion of the program included this collaborative reflective essay, a set of CER principles and related case studies, and a networking and partnership tracking platform for CER at Georgia Tech. This last project was designed to meet a need voiced by this cohort of fellows and many other CER practitioners (at the writing of this piece, the platform is built out and currently in beta testing). Each of these outcomes rests on creating a program that nurtures and extends networks of partners, researchers, and institutional resources that are welcoming to new practitioners and that leverage and strengthen existing infrastructure for collaboration.

Proposed Program Improvements

Although faculty enjoyed opportunities to connect with partners, they also wished for more chances to build rapport among themselves—such as sharing short presentations of their own research with the rest of the cohort and having structured opportunities to interact throughout the semester to gain deeper familiarity with each other's scholarly expertise and experience in CER. In the realm of training students, given the very siloed nature of research and teaching at Georgia Tech, it is uncommon for researchers of various disciplines to interact in spaces dedicated to building new relationships and even rarer for the interactions to encompass and embrace research and teaching on an equal footing. An important change to the program would be adding further rapport-building opportunities for fellows and incorporating more fellows whose focus is on both teaching and research with partners. Rich chances to colearn and cocreate courses, projects, and initiatives are lost when the focus remains solely on research partnerships and proposals without equal emphasis on community-engaged teaching.

As the program was designed to encourage fellows to partner with community-based organizations on research proposals, program leads and fellows confronted the reality that not all collaborations would get

funding. Fellows and community partners should aim for external funding but should be—if possible—rewarded by small internal funds for the work inherent in building a partnership. Even if these grants do not exceed \$5,000, they would be a clear way to indicate that the work of both the partner and the faculty fellow is a meaningful brick in the edifice of a strong partnership and to seed inaugural research activities that will help to grow the relationship.

Relatedly, communicating through university channels and through local or regional news media the promising research and teaching collaborations of partners and researchers—not just those that attract multimillion-dollar grants—will help stimulate broader institutional support for CER. For example, the biology community-based lab course, shared through the university's communication channels and through local media outlets, was positioned to alter broader public perception about the local environment and catalyze action around, in this instance, the health of the local watershed and its denizens (Weigel et al., 2018). Such courses are a testament to the ways that strong community partnerships support a range of research and teaching activities and point toward the way that an institutional investment in those relationships can support the multiple registers of impact that Chupp and Joseph (2010) described—on the community, the institution, and the students.

Tenure and promotion policies are one additional area of potential programmatic change. In future iterations, the program should explicitly support participating faculty to gather evidence, including communicating the impact of their own work and changes in policies around CER at peer institutions, that supports incremental (and then eventually much bigger) changes to the process. Revisions to promotion and tenure evaluation criteria would, among other things, account for a longer timeline and the importance of non-peer-reviewed publications. In higher education broadly, there are opportunities and hurdles in this area. Research sampling the policies of research institutions participating in the Consortium for Institutional Cooperation (CIC) suggests that there is no special recognition of community-engaged research and teaching activities in the guidelines:

Seventy-three percent of the CIC institutions permitted the reporting of outreach and engagement as either a primary focus or a part of a faculty member's promotion and tenure materials. . . . Despite this recognition, the majority of the CIC institutions continue to use the word service instead of engagement in their policies, and of those using service, only a few make the critical distinction among service to the university, the discipline, and the community. (Doberneck, 2016, p. 15).

Our final major amendment to the program would be requiring participation in “CER 101,” a basics workshop focused on principles for equitable partnerships and core frameworks such as asset-based community development. This workshop has been established as an ideal context for sharing the deep expertise of community partners, offering training that can highlight—and compensate—three to four partner trainers, each with a strong track record partnering with academics who are willing to candidly share how past collaborations have gone right and wrong. In the inaugural year, participating community partners were paid to host visits and gave informal feedback about their interactions, in one case agreeing to join a research proposal on the basis of a productive, warm interaction at the first program gathering that led to a lively, engaging research demonstration at a site visit hosted by that partner.

Recommendations for HEIs

To grow their CER capacity overall, institutions of higher education must support long-term relationships that build partner capacity beyond single research opportunities, including developing a systematic approach to understanding how CER faculty fellow programming has impacted and will impact communities. At one level, HEIs can capture community-based activities such as the type and amount of community partner site visits, partner-hosted workshops, symposia, and fellow-partner networking events. These activities have led to recognizable academic products such as grant submissions, publications (like this one), and presentations. Nevertheless, such outcomes do not necessarily lead to positive community impact. In fact, community participation in these types of activities, even

when supported by community stipends or grant budget allocations (e.g., allocating commensurate stipends or consultant fees for community partners), may even represent a drain on partner resources. For instance, a community organization might host and attend several of the CER program activities and be included, with commensurate budgeting, on a submitted grant only to find, months later, that the grant was not awarded. In cases such as these, it is vital to explore other ways a community might benefit from HEI-led CER programming.

Making a long-term commitment to community partners demands going beyond research transactions. One way of stewarding relationships with partners once a CER project is complete is by exploring with partners which nonmonetary institutional resources would be useful to partnering communities. For example, community partners may ask for periodic and subsidized access to university infrastructure such as pool and gym facilities, shelter in cases of emergencies, and prioritization in subcontracting for service operations and consultancy (e.g., institutions contracting with local food vendors and community-based consultants). Such an approach to university-led CER programming aligns with the systemic equity framework developed by Bozeman, one of the program coleads and an author on this essay. That framework requires fair and simultaneous distribution of resources, sharing of power in policy development and decision making, and addressing of the cultural and psychological needs of the historically marginalized over a long period (Bozeman et al., 2022).

Second, CER must engage community partners as long-term coresearchers such that the failure to win one grant does not damage the partnership or prevent the completion of a project. If the researcher and partner engage with realistic expectations of success and with support from their respective organizations, then the partnership can constitute an enduring intellectual, community-based collaboration, rather than a one-off, funding-dependent research effort. Relatedly, compensating partners for the role they play in communicating and disseminating research outcomes is key; major journals, conferences, and workshops can pave the way for greater engagement of community partners as “peer reviewers” by compensating that work, as the load can be significant and is rarely included in the scope

of the partners’ job. Compensating partners is one aspect of building—or as is often the case, rebuilding—trust with community partners when broken promises have characterized previous research engagements. SCoRE offers compensation guidelines on its website that recognize several forms of contribution and labor that partners put toward research and teaching collaborations (Center for Sustainable Communities Research and Education, 2024a).

Finally, academic institutions should embrace innovations that eradicate the barriers that make partnering with HEIs challenging for community organizations. For example, partners who host students for a site visit in the first weeks of the term may not receive payment for that work until the end of the term, given the cumbersome nature of vendor registration, approval, and the delays that can come with paper checks, if those are the required method of payment by the institution. If the life of the partnership is only one semester, then the hurdles of vendor payment may be deemed simply not worth the trouble of engagement. However, in the context of a deeper, longer partnership that can engage a multidisciplinary student team over several semesters, positive outcomes of the relationship, such as increased partner capacity, amplification of partner vision, and additional funding, may offset the challenges of working on the calendar and within the bureaucracy of an HEI. Programs that provide this kind of flexibility are proliferating (Morini et al., 2025), and HEIs are well served by adopting innovations that create infrastructure for long-term research and teaching collaborations between interdisciplinary teams and community partners.

Conclusion

Through a detailed analysis of one faculty fellows program, this essay’s authors have sought to offer insight into effective faculty development for CER and broader recommendations for how our institution and others may strengthen CER and multiply its benefits. The essay has highlighted five perspectives on CER in different disciplinary contexts—and in both teaching and research. We have used data gathered both before and after the program to understand its impact on the participants and the ways that an improved program can benefit faculty and extend benefits to

students, the institution, and, importantly, our partnering communities.

Program-level recommendations, based on fellows' feedback, include additions such as the identification of small seed grants for CER projects, amplifying CER projects in institutional and local media outlets, supporting the inclusion of CER in tenure and promotion guidelines, and more peer-to-peer interactions for fellows. The institution-level recommendations offered address important conditions for strong coresearcher relationships and warn against the assumption that simply engaging communities will ensure positive outcomes for residents. Both the institu-

tion- and program-level recommendations emphasize that without resources (including time) dedicated to building lasting community-university relationships and supporting the faculty and partners who commit to these relationships and projects, no effective faculty development or overall institutional development in CER can be accomplished. In generalizing the lessons from our program, we hope that those responsible for faculty development programming at other institutions, and community partners seeking to advance their work through strong CER partnerships, can find useful footholds that apply to their contexts and share back with the authors their own learnings in the fields of CER and faculty development.



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Appendix: Comparison of Fellows Programs From Other Universities

University	Name of program	Years operating	Program length	Participants	Approx. no. of fellows	Stipends/ funding incentives	Program aims	Program activities	Reference
Medical University of South Carolina ^a	Community-Engaged Scholars Program	2009–current	1 year	Academic and community partner teams (health- focused)	1–6 community & academic partner teams, who have already identified a research topic of interest to work on together	Up to \$10,000 in pilot project funding for each community–academic team	To support research translation by incentivizing and fostering community–academic partnerships that collaboratively identify community health priorities and conduct research with mutual ownership	Training (15 hours over 15 weeks, teams attend together); Academic and community mentorship; Codesigning and completing a community- based participatory research project	Jenkins et al., 2020; Medical University of South Carolina, 2023, 2024
University of Delaware Clinical and Translational Research ACCEL Program ^a	ACCEL Community-Engaged Research Awards	2014–current	1 year	Academic and community partner teams (health- focused)	2–5 community & academic partner teams	Up to \$20,000 in pilot funding for each community- academic team	To support research translation by creating and expanding community–academic research partnerships and training a cadre of community- engaged scholars in Delaware	Training (15–26 hours over 5–8 weeks, teams attend together); Mentorship; Codesigning and completing a community- based participatory research project	Jenkins et al., 2020
Penn State Clinical and Translational Science Institute ^a	Community-Engaged Research Fellowship Program	2017–current	1 year	Early-stage investigators (health- focused)	2–3 researchers	0.10 full- time equivalent funded during the fellowship or two course buy-outs (one per semester)	Provide a learning experience and mentoring in the science and practice of CER for early-stage investigators to advance their CER knowledge and skills	Training (6-month curriculum); Senior academic mentorship; Team meetings and community services with the Community-Engaged Research Core; Conducting a community- based pilot study; Delivering a CER presentation; Planning for academic manuscript submission and external grant submission	Penn State Clinical and Translational Science Institute, 2024; Wadsworth et al., 2019

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University	Name of program	Years operating	Program length	Participants	Approx. no. of fellows	Stipends/ funding incentives	Program aims	Program activities	Reference
University of Minnesota ^a	CBPR Training Program	2009–2010 (facilitated as a 2-year NIH-funded research project to evaluate CBPR training models)	1.25 years	Community scholars (refugee immigrant communities) and academic researchers (health-related, with a focus area matching community scholars' interests)	9 community scholars and 7 researchers, forming 7 teams	Monthly stipend for community scholars; pilot project funding available	Build capacity to support community-based participatory research partnerships through training, matching, and facilitation of partnership development	Training, attended separately by researchers (6 hours) and community scholars (18 hours); Partnership matching and development via community liaisons; Codeveloping a pilot project proposal	Allen, Culhane-Pera, Call, & Pergament, 2011; Allen, Culhane-Pera, Pergament, & Call, 2011
Purdue University	Scholarship of Engagement Fellows Program	2015	1 year	Assistant and associate professors, tenure track (interdisciplinary)	12 fellows, 4–5 senior mentors	\$1,500	Help faculty use engaged scholarship within Purdue's promotion and tenure process, by developing their scholarly engagement portfolio	Workshop training (8 hours); Collaborating with systemwide mentors; Developing goals for a project with societal benefit; Completing a work focused on the scholarship of engagement	Purdue University, 2024a
Purdue University	Societal Impact Fellows Program	2021	1 semester	Faculty and staff (interdisciplinary)	12 fellows, 3–6 senior mentors	\$1,000	Enhance the societal impact that faculty and staff have in learning, discovery, and engagement by providing the tools necessary to prepare and submit research grant proposals	Attending workshops and presentations; Senior faculty mentorship; Planning a proposal for a scholarly project with societal benefit; completing goals, executive summary, and logic model; Submitting reflections	Purdue University, 2024b
Michigan State University	Community-Engaged Research Fellows Program	2022–current	1 year	Faculty and staff (interdisciplinary)	8 (4 staff, 4 faculty), each assigned a senior mentor (different discipline, but similar research interest)	\$2,500 stipend for each fellow and mentor + \$2,000 in pilot project funding for each fellow	Building capacity for CER, creating a supportive learning community in CER, and establishing a cohort of leaders for CER at the institution	Workshop training (12 hours, delivered monthly); Experienced CER mentorship; Executing or planning a small project with a community partner	M. McNail, personal communication, August 6, 2024; University Outreach and Engagement, 2024

