

The University of Pennsylvania Faculty Programs

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The University of Pennsylvania (Penn) has a longstanding commitment to working closely with community partners in West Philadelphia. The Penn Compact, President Gutmann's articulation of the broader mission of the university, describes this goal as "engaging locally." Since its founding in 1994, Penn's Center for Community Partnerships (now the Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships) has sought to develop and strengthen partnerships between the university and the community.

As a research university, Penn is an extensively decentralized organization. Though many faculty members are involved in community-based work at each of its 12 schools, few organizational structures enable these individuals to come together to share information and find ways to work collaboratively. The Moorman-Simon Program (established in 2011 through the generosity of Ruth Moorman and Sheldon Simon) is an initiative aimed at supporting the efforts of faculty members involved in community-based teaching and research to self-organize into affinity groups. To accomplish this, the program is creating a series of faculty seminars—groups of faculty members drawn together by a common set of interests.

The seminars in 2011–2012 focused on a range of topics, including improving health and nutrition within the West Philadelphia community (a key priority of the community), examining environmental issues within the city, promoting university-community culture and arts partnerships, and developing effective and comprehensive pre-K through 20 STEM programs. Seminars are proposed by faculty members and reviewed by an oversight committee consisting of members of the Netter Center staff and the leadership of its Faculty Advisory Board. Each seminar receives \$5,000, which the seminar's coordinators may use to support the work of the participants. Funding for participatory action research projects is also available. The leaders of the various seminars convene each semester to discuss the progress of the seminars.

The Moorman-Simon Program also has established a Faculty Fellow position at the Netter Center. The Moorman-Simon Fellow provides support to the seminar leaders and to faculty members who are new to community-based work. The Fellow also serves as

a member of the planning group for the overall initiative and helps coordinate the overall effort of the Moorman-Simon Program. It is a rotating 2-year position that provides a course buy-out or its equivalent.

The overall initiative is intended to create a flexible and evolving structure similar to those that support successful grassroots movements. Through the seminars, faculty members can self-organize around issues that they care about and that the community has identified as priorities. The seminars also offer an opportunity for faculty members not yet involved in community-based work to learn more. The response, thus far, has been positive.

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