

Trinity College Center for Hartford Engagement and Research

Guidance on Principles for Ethical Community Engagement

Available for download with active links at bit.ly/CHERGuidance

When planning curricular and co-curricular experiences involving community engagement,¹ Trinity's [Center for Hartford Engagement and Research \(CHER\)](#) encourages attention to the below principles, in line with the goals identified in its 2021 evaluation (italicized below). We have received feedback on these guidelines from our advisory board, urban engaged learning center directors, and community learning faculty. However, many groups across campus are participating in valuable community engagement efforts and we welcome further input. CHER can also provide resources and consultation about Hartford-based community engagement. Our team can be reached [here](#).

- ***Mutual Benefit (Enhance a Culture of Mutually Beneficial Partnerships)***: Design a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and resources that benefits constituents from both the community, broadly understood, and campus, building trust through sustained relationships.² Co-create engagement with community partners to set attainable goals and practices that acknowledge and adapt to differing values, interests, and capacities among students, staff, faculty, and partners. Consider (1) how the results of research and engagement will be shared with the broader Hartford community and (2) how products can be archived to maximize community benefit and minimize extraction. Contact [Erica Crowley](#) about [CHER's Hartford Research archive](#).
- ***Mutual Respect (Celebrate Hartford and Combat Harmful Stereotypes)***: Demonstrate respect for the knowledge, experiences, and strengths of diverse communities, especially in our city of Hartford. Promote an assets-based view of Hartford, minimizing deficits-based language, highlighting all that makes Hartford beautiful, and rejecting ideologies of white saviorism.
- ***Justice (Advancing Principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)***: Actively confront forms of oppression, including racism and classism, reflecting on differing historical experiences of power and privilege. Cultivate an awareness of [positionality](#) and understanding of how [structural racism](#) shapes community context.
- ***Equity (Seek Fewer Boundaries between Trinity and Hartford)***: Promote equitable access to campus space and sustained College financial investment in community engagement. Compensate community partners for their time and expertise as co-educators. This [linked document](#) provides CHER's recommended norms for compensating participants in classes and research projects. Applications for funding can be directed to [Community Learning](#) (for Hartford-based engagement), [Student-Initiated Research Grants](#), and other centers, departments, and programs. Inform community partners that disbursing checks typically takes one month after completion of work, though it can take longer.
- ***Accountability***: Generate flexible opportunities for reflection, feedback, and evaluation among all participants, including owning up to and repairing damage from mistakes.

¹ Community engagement describes collaboration between the College and its broader community for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources. It aims to generate positive impact by enriching research; enhancing teaching and learning; and addressing critical societal issues (adapted from the [Carnegie Foundation, 2011](#)).

² Community partner refers to any local, national, or global individual or organization that partners with students, staff, faculty, or the College as an institution. At Trinity, partners in Hartford are particularly important.

To promote these principles, we recommend a partnership agreement articulating the responsibilities of and benefits to campus and community constituents (template [here](#)). Consider the questions below in planning:

- Who will benefit from this engagement and how?
- Who will be involved in planning and implementation and how?
- How will this engagement prepare participants to understand: (1) Their [positionality](#)? (2) The community partner and their interests? and (3) The broader community context, including [structural racism](#)?
- How will this engagement compensate community partners when they serve as co-educators?
- How will this engagement incorporate reflection and feedback from all participants?