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Engaged Cornell awards its first curriculum grants

By *Daniel Aloï*

Engaged Cornell has awarded its inaugural Engaged Curriculum Grants to 18 projects initiated by faculty across the university. The grants, totaling \$930,299, support work that places community-engaged learning at the heart of the Cornell student experience.



Robert Barker/University Photography
Laura Spitz, left, interim vice provost for International Affairs, talks with Gerald Torres, the Jane M.G. Foster Professor of Law, at a reception for Engaged Curriculum Grant recipients, Sept. 1 in the Physical Sciences Building.

One such project is a cross-disciplinary minor in crime, prisons and justice. Students will take five courses in the new minor and will serve as teaching assistants in the Cornell Prison Education Program at the Auburn and Cayuga correctional facilities. Two initial courses, including an experiential learning seminar for TAs, will be offered in the spring.

“Engaged Cornell is such a perfect fit for what we’re trying to do, because it takes students off campus to engage with the men in the prisons and has a social justice mission,” said Joseph Margulies, professor of law and visiting professor of government, who is leading the project. “Ultimately, we want to tap into the energy surrounding criminal justice reform nationwide.”

Engaged Cornell received 47 letters of intent for the year one grant cycle, and 24 faculty teams submitted project proposals for curriculum grant funding. The 18 funded projects will involve 99 faculty and staff team members, 32 Cornell academic departments and 41 community partners, and are anticipated to engage more than 1,000 students when curricula are implemented.

“The response to the call for applications demonstrated a broad diversity of academic disciplines and impressive creativity in approaches to community-engaged learning,” Vice Provost Judith Appleton said. “We were thrilled to see the best of Cornell coming through in the proposals.”

Funded projects that are also underway include: developing a new undergraduate concentration in social and cultural studies in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations; a capstone course for food science undergraduates in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), involving team-based community projects with local partners; and building a portfolio of sustainable partnerships to accommodate up to 200 students per year in the global and public health sciences major.

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STORY CONTACTS

Cornell Chronicle
Daniel Aloï
607-254-1159
dea35@cornell.edu

Media Contact
Melissa Osgood
607-255-2059
mno59@cornell.edu

The Cornell Conservation Medicine Program will team College of Veterinary Medicine students with undergraduates, in international field and community experiences linking the health of animals, humans and the environment to biodiversity and societal needs.

The program is “poised to prepare the next generation of conservation scientists while making significant contributions to conservation of endangered rhinoceroses and great apes,” said Robin Radcliffe of the Department of Clinical Sciences. Project partners are the Jane Goodall Institute, which engages young people in primate research in Africa, and Ujung Kulon National Park in Indonesia, home to the last Javan rhinoceroses on Earth.

[Engaged Cornell, a \\$150 million, 10-year initiative](#), was established in October 2014 with a \$50 million gift from the Einhorn Family Charitable Trust.

In addition to the Engaged Curriculum Grants, [funding for students](#), administered by [Engaged Learning + Research](#) and available this fall, will enable participation in community engagement-focused activities.

Also, a new [Community Engaged Learning Course Guide](#) on the Cornell Courses of Study site lists opportunities for dynamic learning in a variety of disciplines, fostering student and faculty engagement with issues including poverty, literacy, education, health care, immigration, hunger, affordable housing and the environment.

“Moving forward, Engaged Cornell will continue to roll out a range of grant opportunities that result in tangible community benefits and support the broader public engagement goals of the university,” said Basil Safi, Engaged Cornell executive director. “Since the notification of curriculum grant winners this summer, Engaged Cornell has been actively involved in supporting grantees with the necessary resources, technical assistance and orientation to help fulfill their engagement objectives.”

Projects supported by 2015-16 Engaged Curriculum Grants also include:

- **Africana capstone experiences:** The Africana Studies and Research Center will create community-engaged learning, leadership development and professional exploration opportunities.
- **Cancer research:** The College of Veterinary Medicine will establish curricula to promote interaction between students and local cancer patients and offer instruction in public communication about cancer research.
- **Engaged engineering:** Engaged learning experiences (such as service learning, research, internships, outreach and teaching) integrated into the biomedical engineering curriculum will bolster learning of critical engineering concepts and critical real-world “soft skills,” while training engineers who are thoughtful toward societal and community impacts.
- **Engagement in rural Ecuador:** The undergraduate major in international agriculture and rural development will be strengthened with expanded long-term international opportunities.
- **Farmworker Legal Assistance:** The Law School is creating two courses to engage students with local farmworkers and farmworker advocates.
- **Indigenous languages:** An adult linguistic learning tool will be developed for integration into American Indian Program courses and will aid in the survival of the endangered Tuscarora language.
- **K-12 science education communication:** An advanced undergraduate/graduate course in the College of Arts and Sciences will develop hands-on educational science activities and implement them in primary and secondary schools.
- **Latino studies opportunities:** Using existing community partnerships in Tompkins County, the Latino Studies Program curriculum will be enhanced to expand avenues for sharing U.S. Latino culture with the community and establish pathways for engaged learning and research.

- **Leadership Development Curriculum:** An initiative in CALS will assess best practices in community engagement, service learning and leadership, and create skill-building opportunities for students.
- **Planning workshops:** Five city and regional planning workshop courses in the College of Architecture, Art and Planning will be coordinated to share experiences and best practices, improve educational outcomes and publish results.
- **Sustainable food systems minor:** A new university-wide minor, housed in and led by the Department of Development Sociology, will be developed and implemented.
- **Teaching Global Engagement:** Three gateway courses will offer local and international engaged learning experiences.
- **Wind farm research:** A new course in wind farm design will partner with Black Oak Wind Farm in Enfield.