ENGAGING FOR GREATER IMPACT

OFFICE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
JULY 2020 TO JUNE 2023
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AT UCHICAGO

Civic engagement can be defined as individual or group activity designed to identify and address issues of public concern.

At the University of Chicago, civic engagement is an institution-wide commitment that encompasses our contributions to the enrichment of human life through research and education, our work to increase economic opportunities on the South Side, and our support for the open exchange of ideas with our broader community.

Our relationship and engagement with the city of Chicago was of critical importance to our founding, and continues to guide the University’s contributions to the city and the South Side today.

We are part of the civic life of Chicago.

The University approaches civic engagement in a comprehensive and deliberate way.

- We approach civic engagement as a University-wide commitment that furthers our core mission of research and education and reflects our core values.
- We build meaningful, mutually-beneficial partnerships that increase civic participation, expand educational access, and create economic and social opportunity.
- We apply an interdisciplinary approach that brings our best thinking across multiple domains to advance innovative initiatives that enrich human life in our city.
- We solve real world problems with rigor by supporting our faculty, students, staff, and alumni to engage with the community and the world around them as they address the most pressing urban challenges and build evidence-based solutions.
- We measure and communicate our impact, sharing what we are doing and learning as we partner with others to contribute to the public good.

THE OFFICE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The following strategic framework lays out the Office of Civic Engagement’s (OCE’s) focus over the next three years to strengthen and scale the distinct areas of work it leads and support the sustainability of civic engagement as an integral part of the University of Chicago overall to enable greater impact.

We will use this framework to set goals that leverage OCE’s primary functions, guide decision making as we navigate the work ahead during these critical times, and increase the University’s positive contributions on the South Side and in the city.

The Office of Civic Engagement’s mission is to strengthen the University’s impact on the lives of people living in Chicago and demonstrate the transformative civic role leading urban research institutions can have in cities around the world.

OCE’s guiding principles are to:
- Uphold and extend the University’s core values
- Create mutually-beneficial partnerships
- Demonstrate positive local impact

The Office of Civic Engagement serves a dual purpose for the University. First, we steward the University’s commitment to the city, supporting other academic and administrative units as they develop and advance their distinct civic priorities. We also lead areas of strategic work that extend the University’s reach and impact citywide and on the South Side.
HOW WE DO OUR WORK

We advance our work through four primary functions:

**NAVIGATE**

We are Partnership Builders.

We make connections, build relationships, engage diverse stakeholders, and listen to our neighbors to understand their priorities. We ensure these relationships inform the University’s civic engagement work and lead to identifying shared interests and building sustainable partnerships.

*By doing this well, OCE informs and advances the University’s priorities as a civically-engaged urban research institution.*

**CONVENE**

We are Civic Strategists.

We keep civic engagement top of mind within the University and provide strategic leadership and guidance for its civic engagement work. We convene civic leaders to build shared knowledge on effective outward engagement strategies.

*By doing this well, OCE helps to enable and strengthen new mutually-beneficial partnerships that extend the University’s impact on the South Side and citywide.*

**DEMONSTRATE**

We are Program Leaders.

We creatively align the ideas and knowledge of our faculty, students, and staff with those of our local and citywide partners to design and deliver initiatives that extend economic, social, and educational opportunities beyond our campus. We lead programs that contribute to a vibrant South Side and a civically-engaged city.

*By doing this well, OCE demonstrates the power of collaboration to increase community impact.*

**AMPLIFY**

We are Information Sharers.

We disseminate information about University programs and opportunities available to the community. We document and celebrate University and community partnerships and strategically communicate the positive impact of our commitment and contribution as a civic partner.

*By doing this well, OCE raises awareness among stakeholders of the University resources and opportunities available to the community, as well as the University’s partnerships with and contributions to the city.*
OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We will advance the University’s model of civic engagement through a set of strategic priorities that extend the University’s mission and by supporting other academic and administrative units as they develop and advance their distinct civic commitments. These priorities will guide goal setting, while also allowing us to be responsive to the needs of the University and city moving forward.

SUPPORT ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Promote the capacity of local small businesses, nonprofits, and South Side residents to participate in and benefit from the anchor functions and educational mission of the University.

EXTEND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY
Connect Chicago Public School students to University resources that provide Pre-K-12 classroom enrichment, increase STEM preparedness, and college readiness and access.

INCREASE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION
Increase faculty, student, staff, and alumni engagement with local schools and organizations, while also expanding civic leadership education and networks.

ADVANCE GOVERNMENT AND CIVIC RELATIONS
Foster relationships with civic and community leaders, and build support for the University’s activities and priorities with public officials and policymakers.
OUR AREAS OF WORK

Over the next three years, the Office of Civic Engagement will deepen work in a nine-neighborhood focus area, identify opportunities to expand partnerships and programs to reach the broader South Side, and scale its work citywide for greater impact.

As part of advancing our strategic priorities, OCE will lead the following program areas and collaborate with other campus partners to scale those areas with potential for growth.

STUDENT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
We will work with campus and community partners to provide UChicago students with meaningful engagement opportunities that foster their social and intellectual development while advancing shared impact with community partners. We will also scale our student programs powered by the Neighborhood Schools Program and the University Community Service Center by working with other campus partners to support new student training, data tools, and program coordination.

CIVIC LEADERSHIP
We will collaborate with academic units to develop a University-wide approach to make UChicago a premier destination for the scholarship, teaching, and practice of civic leadership. We will also lead civic leadership initiatives, like the Civic Actor Studio in partnership with Court Theatre and the Civic Leadership Development Exchange in partnership with the Rustandy Center for Social Sector Innovation at the Booth School of Business.

NONPROFIT CAPACITY BUILDING
We will strengthen and scale the Community Programs Accelerator as a platform for faculty, students, and staff to contribute to and learn from the work of community-based nonprofits and social sector entrepreneurs. We will also expand the geographic reach and programmatic depth of capacity building services to more nonprofits on the South Side and citywide.

COLLEGE READINESS AND ACCESS
UChicago has a deep commitment to providing access and affordability to all students coming to the University and supporting Chicago Public School students to attend college wherever they choose. We will strengthen the integration and scale of the Collegiate Scholars Program and the Office of Special Programs-College Prep, as well as continue to support PK-12 strategies in partnership with other academic and administrative units.

ECONOMIC INCLUSION
OCE will advance UChicago Local 2.0 to increase the University’s direct economic investment in the South Side of Chicago through increased local purchasing and hiring, as well as support for housing and other neighborhood revitalization initiatives. In partnership with the Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, we will help local small businesses grow, create jobs, and build economic opportunity in their communities, and, in partnership with the Office of Business Diversity, we will work to increase the University’s contracts with minority and women-owned firms as part of the University’s economic anchor strategy.
ENGAGING FOR GREATER IMPACT

Engaging for Greater Impact provides a roadmap for the Office of Civic Engagement to deepen its own strategic work and broaden the support it provides across the University and into our local communities. It also furthers our vision to convene others committed to more impactful civic engagement across the city of Chicago and nationally. It will require OCE to expand existing partnerships as well as invest in new ideas in order to support, scale, and sustain the next generation of civic engagement across our campus community. By making this investment, the University of Chicago will strengthen its civic commitment and its ability to partner for community impact for years to come.