

Concept Paper (3-15-2024)

WSU's Office of Community Partnerships (Name TBD)

Committed to supporting community partnerships, services, and applied learning

Background

WSU has several grant and contract funded areas that are successful with community partnerships, including CEI and PPMC. Many other WSU faculty, staff, and students are interested in and seek opportunities to partner with community organizations for research, consultation, service, or other expertise. Yet, such efforts are largely disconnected creating inefficiencies, confusion, and a lack of coordinated response to opportunities. Other universities are embracing and recognizing the importance of community partnerships by forming offices focused on community engagement, outreach, and/or connection. For example, K-State's Office of Engagement was recently established <https://www.k-state.edu/engagement/>. In addition, the University of Oklahoma's Outreach is another example in the region <https://outreach.ou.edu/>

Purpose

Establish the WSU Office of Community Partnerships to serve as a backbone support for a collaborative hub of community-focused WSU departments, faculty, and students interested in strengthening the well-being of Kansas residents, organizations, and communities.

Goals & Objectives

Elevate Awareness and Interest. The office will routinely highlight and showcase community partnerships, helping elevate awareness and interest throughout WSU and across the community.

Create New Connections and Partnerships. Through the enhanced partnerships across WSU centers, faculty, and departments, new community partnerships and opportunities will be sought.

Establish New Learning Opportunities. An office with a strong collective history and interest in community partnerships will provide opportunities to learn from each other and community partners.

Provide Infrastructure for WSU Processes. An office with the necessary infrastructure will work closely with WSU administrative support offices (finance, general counsel, research, purchasing, HR, strategic communications etc.) to support all units under this office in the processing of grants, contracts and subcontracts, personnel, purchasing, financial budgeting and planning, and communications.

Offer Leadership and Guidance. An office with appropriate leadership and authority will create alignment within the university structure and provide support and guidance across WSU.

Support Additional Services & Efforts. The office will be available to respond and initiate other programs, services, or supports based on identified needs or opportunities. Possibilities include a faculty fellows program, seeking APLU designation, or the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education. These would require additional financial support if the office were to support.

Structure & Staff

The Office of Community Partnerships will be led by administrative staff with a strong history of community partnerships as listed below. As Associate VP for Community Partnerships, Scott Wituk, PhD will report to Shirley Lefever, PhD, Executive Vice President & Provost. Staff and community-oriented departments listed below (Core Team) will report through the Associate VP for Community Partnerships.

Administrative Staff

- Scott Wituk, PhD, Executive Director of the Community Engagement Institute and Associate Vice President for Community Partnerships
- Misty Bruckner, Director of the Public Policy and Management Center and Assistant Vice-President for Community Partnerships
- Heather Perkins, Director of Finances and Operations, Community Engagement Institute
- Additional staff will assist with communications; proposal/grant development; financial-budget support; HR liaison, including forms, processing, and payroll
- Student employment and applied learning opportunities will be identified as appropriate

Core WSU Departments, Faculty, and Staff

The Office of Community Partnerships will serve as the reporting structure for WSU departments with a history of community service and partnerships. Initially, we are proposing that these include CEI and PPMC. Once the infrastructure is in place, we would work with leadership to identify potential other departments, centers or offices that meet the strategic goals of the University to bring a more coordinated effort as it relates to community outreach, projects, partnerships and relationships. In addition, this Office could serve as the logical location for new departments, centers or offices that have a community-facing mission as we could provide the needed oversight and mentorship, as well as critical administrative and compliance support as it relates to finance, contracts and research. Quarterly meetings will be held among key partners to build relationships, discuss potential partnerships and projects, and overall uplift community impact of Wichita State.

Affiliated with WSU Administrative Offices

As mentioned above in goals and objectives, the Office of Community Partnerships will provide the necessary infrastructure and administrative support for these community-based departments. The Office of Community Partnership will provide support through experienced personnel and processes in day-to-day compliance, administrative, contractual, research, and finance tasks that are required of these community-based departments. While these personnel and processes will not replace existing University support offices (office of research pre-award and post-award, purchasing, accounts receivable, accounts payable, property management, property control, payroll, HR, legal, applied learning, etc.), by centralizing these responsibilities, we will bring cost and time efficiencies, streamlined processes, and an increase in compliance – as well as offsetting time and burden on these supporting offices. CEI and PPMC have a strong history working collaboratively with WSU HR, General Counsel, Office of Research, and Finance, and understanding the various policies, processes and forms that are needed, to provide unique expertise and support in this area.

Affiliated Partnerships with WSU Departments, Faculty, and Staff

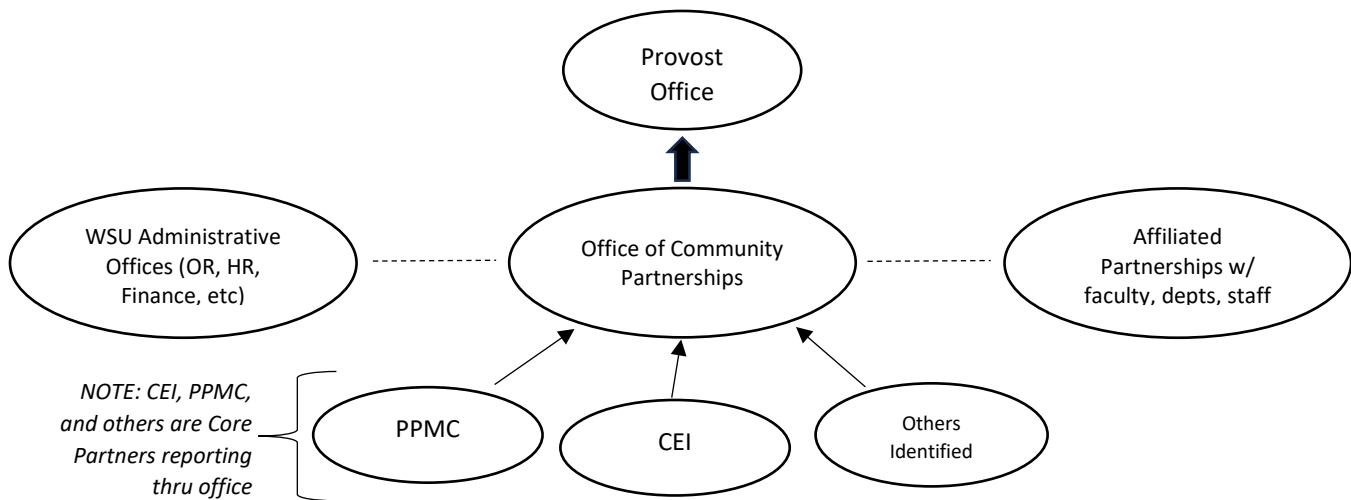
Other WSU departments, faculty, and staff have an interest in community-oriented services, projects, and research. Each of these have different needs, interests, and experiences. The Office of Community

Partnerships will provide a supportive partnership structure for their interests and development as described above in Goals and Objectives. Given their different needs and interests, affiliated WSU Departments, Faculty, and Staff may have different reporting structures.

Interested departments, faculty and staff will be identified as becoming an affiliated partner. These affiliates will be vetted by the Office of Community Partnerships and reviewed and approved by the Provost. We will limit the affiliated partnerships to three a year to ensure that we can provide sufficient support through growth or attrition. Infrastructure support will be provided to Affiliated partners as determined appropriate. Examples may include a faculty member interested in having a class project focused on supporting a community organization, a department interested in their graduate students having additional applied learning opportunities, a faculty member who wants to pursue a one-time community-based grant, or a staff member with a passion for working with community groups. Other affiliated partnerships may include supporting WSU community-focused efforts (WSU Connect, University Village, Bio-Med Campus) or helping promote WSU’s campus amenities and services to further support connections between WSU and the community.

In addition to the affiliated partnerships, we will explore the development of a faculty fellows program. Its development could include a small group (3-5) junior faculty working with an experienced faculty member and Office of Community Partnership to gain experience in working with clients, grant/contract writing, and student applied learning to increase capacity of the University.

The figure below represents the staff structure and relationship to other WSU administrative offices, affiliated partnerships, and the initial core centers that would report through the office.



Fiscal Year 2025 Activities

Based on the above purpose, objectives, and structure, several activities have been identified for the office during its initial year of operation (FY2025).

Finalize Core WSU Departments, Faculty, and Staff. Ensure that new reporting structure is finalized so that appropriate changes to positions are made and authorization is in place throughout WSU administrative departments.

Communications and Marketing. Establish a website and social media presence that is consistent with WSU Communication guidelines, including highlights in WSU News, social media, and community outlets. Work with Strategic Communications to communicate and market internally and externally.

Coordinate with Timely WSU Community-Focused Efforts. Coordinate with Wichita State Connect, WSU Bio-Med Facility, and/or other efforts as to how the office can provide support and partnerships.

Affiliated WSU Departments, Faculty & Staff. Launch affiliated partnerships with WSU departments, faculty, and staff.

- Assess the interest of WSU departments, faculty, and staff who may be interested or already involved in community-oriented services, projects, and research. The types of needs, interests, and experiences are likely to vary, but gathering such information and building such relationships will help provide future direction for the office and how it can best meet their needs.
- Establish an “Affiliated Partnership” program as described above where interested WSU departments, faculty, and staff become affiliated with the Office of Community Partnerships.
- Develop additional details with Executive Vice President & Provost and others.

Events and Recognition. Host an event and create other opportunities to recognize WSU faculty, staff, and students involved in the community. The event will bring additional attention to community partnerships, highlighting their importance, and contribution WSU is making to the broader community.

New Collaborations and Partnerships. Seek to expand community connections, services, and opportunities that results in new grants, contracts, and applied learning opportunities for students.

Funding

We believe there are likely three sources of long-term funding that will lead to additional growth and development.

- The office would largely be supported through retained indirects and administrative fees from obtained grants and contracts from the core partners reporting through the office.
- As the office begins to develop affiliated partnerships, financial agreements for services, administrative, or infrastructure support could be included.
- Finally, timely opportunities, projects, or other needs identified by WSU administration may be another source of funding.

Summary

Wichita State University has always been an engaged community partner. By creating an Office of Community Partnerships this provides a support system for this work today, and future projects and centers, and can amplify the impact. While the approach allows for autonomy, it also recognizes the benefits and increased results by working together. Community service centers provide significant recognition for the University and service to the public. By aligning and elevating the work, Wichita State and the public will benefit through increased partnerships, communication, applied research and overall recognition of the value Wichita State provides.