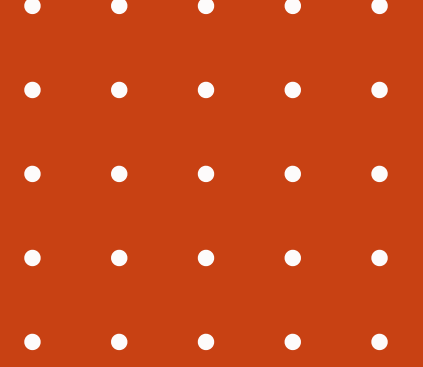




Community Engaged Scholars

Empowering students to meet the needs of the Champaign-Urbana community

2024 - 2025 Academic Year Report



We CU supports service learning instructors in creating impactful learning experiences for students through project matching with community partners, trainings, mini-grants, and service recognition.

We CU works with the Community Learning Lab in the School of Social Work to connect instructors to local community organizations. Since 2020, We CU has supported 179 courses, and 3,741 students have completed 914 service projects and 71,718 service hours for community organizations in Central Illinois and across the United States.



Principles that guide our work:

Experience: We CU offers students hands-on experiences and workshops that build new skillsets, perspectives, and networks.

Impact: We CU supports instructors and students in meeting community needs.

Reciprocity: We CU centers the needs of local community partners and builds mutually beneficial partnerships between instructors, students, and community organizations.



2024-2025 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



591

**Student
Participants**



21

**Service Learning
Classes**



15,604

**Total
Service Hours**



112

**Community
Projects**



76

**Community
Partners**



Campus-Community Compact

We CU is supported by the Office of Public Engagement and the Campus Community Compact to Accelerate Social Justice. Our team is committed to working collaboratively toward campus-community empowerment.

Economic Development

Students interviewed farmers about sustainable practices and regenerative agriculture for the Land Connection.
(Summer 2024)

Inclusive Education

Students created assistive and adaptive toys for children with disabilities in the Unit 4 School District. (Fall 2024)

Accessible Technology

Students supported data collection and analysis for the Champaign County Mental Health Board and Developmental Disabilities Board. (Spring 2025)



Campus-Community Compact

We CU's partnership with the Community Learning Lab leverages student enthusiasm and campus resources to create positive local change. Students gain valuable experience. Faculty apply their expertise to meet community needs, and our local community is stronger.

Health, Wellness & Resilience

Students helped Candor Health promote preventative healthcare services to students and young adults. (Spring 2025)

Workforce Development

Students wrote grant applications for the HOYCE Center, an enrichment program for youth and teens. (Spring 2025)

Community Relations

Students partnered with the Immigration Project to connect immigrants and refugees to legal and social services. (Fall 2024)





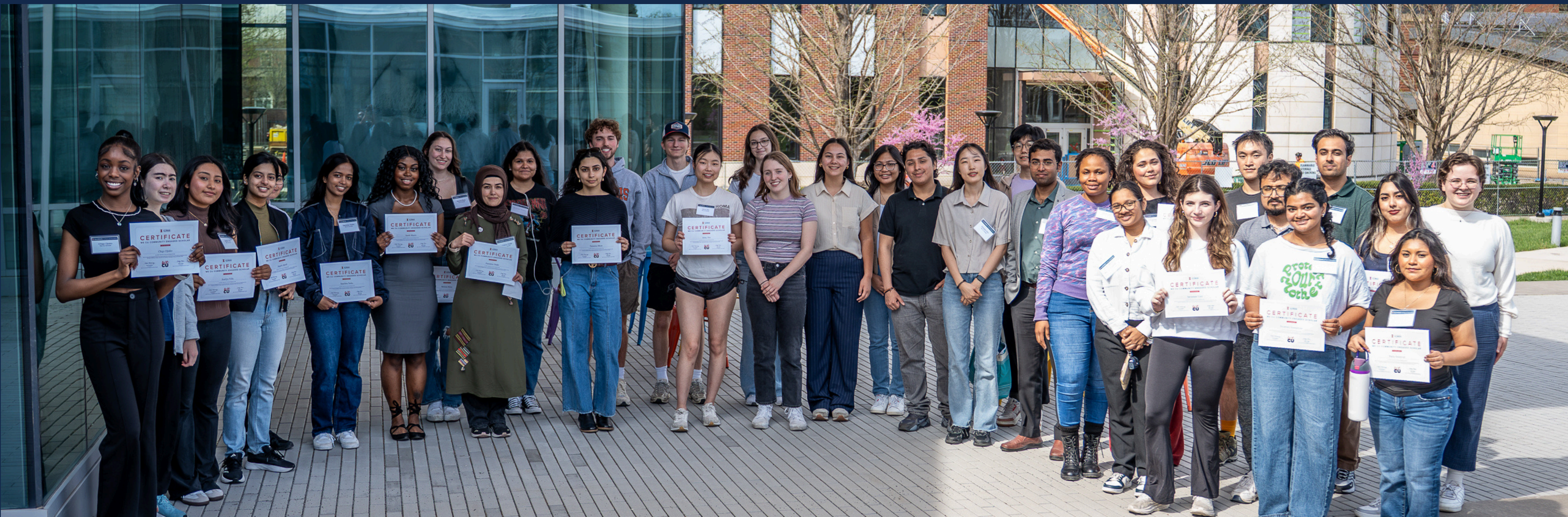
“I would like to thank We CU and the CLL for supporting me and my students this semester by providing us the opportunity to work with and serve community partners! This partnership was also the motivation for a group of my students to reignite the Statistics in the Community registered student association and connect with the community outside the classroom.”

Alexandra Chronopoulou,
Clinical Associate Professor
Department of Statistics



Scholar Recognition

This year, 126 students from 12 colleges earned recognition as We CU Community Engaged Scholars! These students dedicated more than 12,487 service hours toward social and racial justice, health and mental wellness, youth advocacy and education, translation and immigrant services, arts and culture, and community outreach.



We honored this year's We CU Scholars at our April 22 Spring Reception at the Siebel Center for Design. Scholars received a certificate and enamel pin to wear at graduation. We are so proud of these students' dedication to service and community!





We CU partnered with Cunningham Township to build care packages for unhoused families and individuals in our local community. We CU scholars, faculty, and community members built more than 80 care packages during our Spring Reception!



“The care packages not only meet an immediate, deeply felt need, but show that community members care for residents experiencing homelessness and want to support them in this crisis.”

Danielle Chynoweth,
Supervisor, Cunningham Township





“Through my work with the Public Defender’s Office, I came to see how deeply social and economic inequalities are intertwined with legal outcomes. This experience has deepened my belief in the importance of community-centered approaches to justice, ones that prioritize prevention, rehabilitation, and equity. Overall, this experience helped me see that service is not just about helping others in the moment; it’s also about understanding the systems that create the need for help in the first place.”

Viktoria Karaivanova
2025 We CU Scholar



Humanities in Action

The Humanities in Action Program, which we offer in collaboration with the Humanities Research Institute, completed its third year. This year, 10 students across two semesters dedicated more than 350 hours of service. Their efforts built stronger community relations, made education more inclusive, and helped improve our community's health and mental wellness.



Humanities in Action

The Humanities in Action students also learned about HRI's different opportunities for undergraduate students, and they participated in biweekly professional development workshops. Workshops featured guests from LAS Career Services, the Women's Resource Center, staff from the Graduate Employee Organization, and The Odyssey Project.





“Being part of Humanities in Action and working with The Refugee Center...has been one of the most meaningful experiences of my college journey. It allowed me to use my bilingual skills in a purposeful way [and] form deeper connections with my students while student-teaching. I’m incredibly grateful and deeply honored to have been part of such a compassionate and impactful program that has shaped the kind of educator I strive to be, one who supports students and their families, especially those facing language barriers.”

Yudany Diaz
Spring 2025 HIA Scholar



Mini-Grants

We CU gave out more than \$4,500 in mini-grants this year thanks to the generosity of the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Institute. Chigo Ojiako is one of dozens of Illinois students who received a grant. She used the grant to help knit scarves for people accessing the Refugee Center's services.

"I am lucky to have been able to use my passion for crafting toward a meaningful cause that supports others. Service can take many forms, and even small, thoughtful contributions can help meet real needs in the community. Even if I am able to help just one person be a bit more bundled up, cozy, and even confidently stylish in the harsh C-U winter, I know the project was well worth the time and effort that it took me. I'm grateful to We CU for helping make this project possible."

Chigo Ojiako
We CU Scholar



We CU Team



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Director



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Director



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Program Manager



We CU Team



Virginia Leach



Gabriel Malo



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We CU is grateful for the support of the Office of Public Engagement and the Campus Community Compact to Accelerate Social Justice. The School of Social Work, College of Education, Humanities Research Institute, Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Institute, Siebel Center for Design, and the University of Illinois Alumni Association also support We CU programming.





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