



COMMISSION<sub>ON</sub>  
DIVERSITY<sub>AND</sub>  
INCLUSION

# Urban Fellows Report

Submitted to:  
Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton  
Provost Holden Thorp

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May 3, 2016

# Recommendations for Pilot St. Louis Urban Fellows Expansion

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Last year the Chancellor and Provost charged a Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee with making a set of recommendations to make Washington University in St. Louis a more diverse and inclusive community. Although the Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee did not recommend specific action items regarding community engagement, it did convene a subcommittee to consider these issues; discussed them at length; and ultimately referred to the Commission for further consideration a few potential items that would strengthen the University's presence in the St. Louis community and region and that are also deeply aligned with our mission as a global research, teaching, and patient care institution.

The Commission notes that community engagement is a pillar of the University. The University itself has several signature initiatives and programs, including our partnerships with St. Louis charter schools; the College Prep Program; CORTEX; and the Black Rep. In addition, the seven schools each work in the St. Louis region and community, independently and collaboratively, in ways that align with their specific academic and teaching mission and expertise. The Gephardt Institute recently relaunched as an Institute for Civic and Community Engagement. Student Affairs works with our students to find creative ways to work in and with St. Louis. Finally, our individual students and faculty members create nodes of engagement that have become signatures of our commitment to the region.

Prompted by the Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee, and with the permission of the Chancellor and the Provost, the Commission has determined to identify and recommend a very small set of signature community engagements that align with the University's academic mission.

## BACKGROUND

The Gephardt Institute for Civic & Community Engagement has established the St. Louis Urban Fellows Program, a signature initiative that will enable a select number of graduating University students to commit to one year of public service in St. Louis. As the Gephardt Institute notes:

Cultivating the next generation of impassioned public leaders is essential to address the evolving and complex challenges facing urban environments. A growing number of Washington University students have passion, energy and skills to contribute to local government in new and innovative ways, and a desire to stay in St. Louis after graduation. The St. Louis Urban Fellows Program will house recent Washington University alumni in 10-month placements where they will contribute to civic efforts in the region while honing their understanding of urban issues and professional skills. The Program, administered by the Gephardt Institute, will serve as a talent retention, capacity building, and human capital development program

dedicated to the long-term vitality of the region.

(The Gephardt Institute of the St. Louis Urban Fellows Program can be found [here: https://gephardtinsttute.wustl.edu/st-louis-urban-fellows-program/](https://gephardtinsttute.wustl.edu/st-louis-urban-fellows-program/))

The Gephardt Institute conceived the Urban Fellowships to have two components. The first is project-based placement with a host department within local government in St. Louis city or county. Students will work across an array of Government departments, with an emphasis on those that build resiliency for the region. The second component is a cohort experience that includes programming, workshops, and excursions led by the Gephardt Institute. This is designed to both enhance the Urban Fellows' exposure to civic challenges and opportunities and offer space for deep reflection and discussion among the cohort.

The St. Louis Urban Fellows Program is launching this year with three inaugural Fellows who will begin their Fellowships in August 2016. Already there is widespread and significant enthusiasm about the opportunity: 23 students and recent alumni applied for the 3 inaugural

positions with applications coming from Arts & Sciences; The Brown School; Olin School of Business; and the School of Engineering & Applied Sciences.

The Commission believes that the St. Louis Urban Fellows Program could become a signature University diversity and inclusion program. Many University students express interest in finding ways to use their educations and skills to

combat historic and structural inequality and ongoing disparities. As the Gephardt Institute has found, increasing numbers of our students have expressed an interest in finding ways to do this work in St. Louis, for at least some period of time.

Moreover, the recent events in Ferguson impressed upon our entire campus community an awareness of

how inextricably tied we are to the surrounding region. Many urged the Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee to identify ways the University could facilitate new, innovative, and above all, meaningful opportunities for our campus community to better serve the St. Louis region. The Commission believes the Gephardt Institute St. Louis Urban Fellows Program provides just such an opportunity.

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## RECOMMENDATION #1

The Commission recommends that the University conduct a one-year pilot expansion of the Gephardt Urban Fellows Program to begin in AY 2018. After discussions with the Gephardt Institute, we recommend the expansion be along two axes.

- First, we recommend that each of the six Danforth schools and The Graduate School explore partnering with the Gephardt Institute to designate an Urban Fellow from each school. A cohort of seven additional Fellows, whose discrete educational training will bring distinct knowledge bases, expertise, and perspective, could exponentially enhance the power of the St. Louis Urban Fellowship program and quickly grow it into a University-wide signature initiative. Importantly, from their discrete backgrounds and training, Urban Fellows will work together to identify, approach, and resolve a common set of problems. We envision the substantial outcomes that can occur when engineers; designers; social workers; public health experts; lawyers; and those with training in business, economics, and markets join together to tackle the toughest problems facing our region.

- Second, we recommend expanding the scope of projects and work that Urban Fellows could undertake to include not-for-profit organizations or other agencies dedicated to improving the region. This aligns with the Gephardt Institute's dual mission, to support both civic and community engagement. Our students are seeking opportunities to engage with the St. Louis region in a variety of creative and innovative ways. The Gephardt Institute is an ideal portal for this work, not only during their experience with us as students, but also afterwards, as alumni. The St. Louis Urban Fellows Program will actively engage our recent alumni in community-engaged work, while giving them the tools to do so thoughtfully and respectfully. We also believe that this expansion will significantly complement the existing local government placements. Those working in local government will benefit from the perspectives of Urban Fellows working in community-based placements. And for those working in community-based placements, they too will benefit from the insights of Urban Fellows who understand the goals and constraints of local government. In sum, placements across the civic and community sector will provide an enhanced experience for all.

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## RECOMMENDATION #2

Finally, as Washington University in St. Louis considers ways to invest in the St. Louis region that align with our academic mission, the St. Louis Urban Fellows program is an ideal and emblematic opportunity. It will function as a kind of laboratory for immediately leveraging the world-class education our students receive. It also will help the not-for-profit sector of our region build capacity, through a reliable pipeline of talented and energetic University Urban Fellows. The program offers an immediate opportunity to share the very best part of our community—our students—with our under-resourced region. While the Gephardt Institute would

continue to design, lead, and oversee the Urban Fellows program, we envision the schools could become active partners in nominating and/or vetting Fellows as well as identifying potential placements that align with each school's intellectual and community footprint in St. Louis.

- We understand that medical education functions differently from the other schools and that norms of post-graduate medical training may make a medical campus Urban Fellow infeasible. We recommend that the medical campus explore creative options and determine whether any of its units might be able to participate in the pilot program.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- Should the pilot be continued, we encourage participating schools to consider proportional representation among the Fellows.
- We encourage the schools to work with the Gephardt Institute in determining stipend amounts, to ensure equity among the Fellows while also ensuring the opportunity is an accessible one. We strongly encourage that the housing and insurance benefits be extended to all of the Urban Fellows.
- Should the pilot be continued, we recommend the schools' work with the Gephardt Institute to explore ongoing Fellowship placements in not-for-profit organizations. In this sense, the not-for-profit placements would parallel the local government placements and would allow the University to ensure a good Fellowship experience. By selecting partners, these agencies/offices/institutions can build capacity around a pipeline of annual Fellows.

To view the full report click [here](#);  
to view the Executive Summary of the report, click [here](#).