The Rochester Center for Community Leadership (RCCL) is developing a culture of engaged citizens here at the University of Rochester. In alignment with the Social Change Model of Leadership, we strive to support students as they develop appreciation for social responsibility, collaboration, awareness, and diversity. To that end, we offer four overlapping categories of programing: leadership development, community engagement, political engagement, and community-engaged learning. These categories are not mutually exclusive.

In fact, when combined, they can lead to the development of highly engaged citizens.

Programs like Urban Fellows and Transition Opportunities at the University of Rochester (TOUR) truly cultivating an appreciation for diversity. As an Urban Fellow, students engage with the Rochester community through summer-long internships with local organizations and weekly urban issue seminars. Through their service, students come to understand the importance of diversity and how collaboration and community-centered leadership are at the root of civic engagement. In addition, TOUR invites students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to come to UR and take college classes, participate in internships, develop independent living skills, and connect with the broader campus community. TOUR operates on the premise that access + support = success.

As such, a vital component of TOUR is peer mentorship. Academic coaches, who support TOUR students as they take UR courses, each enroll in CAS 125, an experiential learning course about mentorship, disability, and inclusive higher education. Through this course and their work as mentors, coaches develop strong disability awareness and mentorship skills. TOUR aims to create a campus culture where disability does not equal deficit. On the contrary, given appropriate support, the strengths and assets of people with disabilities can be nourished and celebrated.

Two new initiatives at RCCL aim to promote engagement with Rochester’s diverse and rich community. The #ROCtheROC campaign encourages UR students to connect more deeply with their wider Rochester home. We challenge students to post pictures to social media as they connect with community members, volunteer at local events, and explore all that Rochester has to offer, using the hashtag #ROCtheROC.

Community-engaged learning is an approach to scholarship where students, faculty, and community partners work together to identify needs and apply knowledge to address complex social issues. This framework for teaching and learning builds and sustains high impact partnerships, enriches learning, and provides institutional support to achieve our mission to learn, discover, heal, and create. Together these initiatives provide students with more opportunities to develop an appreciation for diversity while also becoming engaged citizens right here in Rochester … what more could we ask for? At RCCL it is our privilege to be part of such a diverse and inclusive community and to contribute to its growth. We welcome the input and collaboration with all University and community partners. Visit us in 107 Lattimore Hall, drop us a line at community.leadership@rochester.edu, and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/URCCL.

Spotlight on Diversity

Building Leadership for the Future

UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER