Through the Rochester Center for Community Leadership, the Rochester Urban Fellows program engages students in the civic life of Rochester, promotes learning about cross-cultural issues, and fosters an appreciation for urban life. Students intern four days per week at community-based organizations in the city, and attend weekly seminars about the history, politics, demographics, and sociology of the urban neighborhoods in Rochester. The program is for undergraduate students attending Rochester-area colleges, as well as Rochester residents who attend college elsewhere. Since 2002, the program has engaged 176 students with a diverse network of community organizations throughout the city of Rochester.

In their work with community organizations, Urban Fellows work on projects aimed at improving the social capital of the region. These projects seek to improve outcomes in the areas of education, health and wellness, public safety, and community and economic development. One day each week, the fellows meet with faculty and community leaders to discuss topics such as education, health care, public safety, and community revitalization. These discussions are complemented by experiential programming, which allows fellows to further explore the community and to encounter urban issues in the field. Fellows also participate in various community and cultural events, including attendance at City Council and school board meetings, and other volunteer opportunities.

In reflecting on the program, a 2012 Urban Fellow stated, “I found that that complete immersion in the community gave me hands-on experience, which I can take away both knowledge and understanding.”

“It surprised me to see that Rochester is really a city made up of many distinct communities, each with their own personality and their own issues, and each tour showed me a different aspect of the city. It amazes me just how little I know about this city I have attended college in for the past two years, and I am grateful that I finally have the opportunity to get to know more about all it has to offer and the many ways I can become involved in it throughout the rest of my time here.”

—2012 Urban Fellow

Students and community organizations interested in participating in the 2013 program may visit http://rochester.edu/college/rccl/civic/urbanfellows/index.html for more information.