

# Commitment to Community Engagement

## DIVISION OF STUDENT LIFE

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### What Community Engagement Means for the Division of Student Life

The Division of Student Life is deeply committed to its vision to inspire students to become thriving individuals, able to enrich their communities and make meaningful contributions to society as engaged citizens, inclusive leaders and lifelong learners. The Division of Student Life encompasses all walks of the student experience through the Career Services Center, Center for Black Culture, Center for Counseling and Student Development, Fraternity and Sorority Leadership and Learning, Office of the Dean of Students, Office of Orientation and Transition Programs, Office of Student Conduct, Residence Life and Housing, Student Diversity and Inclusion, Student Health Services, Student Services for Athletes, Student Wellness and Health Promotion, and the University Student Centers.

Our efforts engage students in all aspects of their lives beyond the classroom. We strive to help students take leadership roles in developing a healthy and thriving campus community. We also provide structures, support, and encouragement for students to develop habits of contributing to the broader society through service.

Student Life encourages community engagement in two distinct areas: **engagement in community**, and **educating students beyond the classroom** to support a lifetime of active citizenship.

### Advancing Civic Leadership Beyond the Classroom

The Division of Student Life enhances in-classroom learning with direct applications to community engagement. Our emphasis on student learning beyond the classroom and advancing University of Delaware General Education Purposes and Objectives is expressed through our many unique roles with students. The learning outcomes we pursue with both student-led and department-driven programming help students build intent and take action in the world.

Beginning with New Student Orientation, all incoming students are exposed to their potential roles to be civically engaged and the avenues to make an impact at UD and beyond. Students' extended orientation programming, 1743 Welcome Days, expands this by introducing first-year students to a wealth of opportunities where they can learn how to make a difference and start their UD journey in a manner that moves beyond self-gain toward impacting society.

More than 95% of incoming students live on campus and are mentored by Resident Assistants who are trained on frameworks of inclusion, individual contribution to communities, and civic impact. Beyond the initial training, all new RAs participate in a service learning course with both faculty and staff experts and partner with the Community Engagement Initiative to explore social change models with a culminating Habitat for Humanity build project in southern Delaware. Additional peer educators throughout the Division mentor students in various areas helping them develop healthy norms on and off campus through programs such as Each One Reach One, New Student Orientation, Student Conduct Appellate Board, Healthy HENS, Helping Each Newcomer Succeed, and Promoters of Wellness. Many of these opportunities also connect new students with upperdivision students, alumni, local communities, and national organizations resulting in blossoming professional relationships.

Over 400 Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) exist to give students practice and opportunities to become leaders and shape their communities. Our students demonstrate their commitment to community engagement through over 30 advocacy groups ranging from Amnesty International to Ducks Unlimited and over 30 service organizations spanning the range from Music With Heart to Canine Companions for Independence. Each RSO is student-led by an executive board and students learn valuable skills for civic leadership while working with highly invested faculty and staff advisors. Students in the residence halls create self-governing floor councils and committees mimicking civic associations and learn neighborhood leadership skills that will be valuable in their post campus lives. Through these councils, students gain formal leadership development and guidance in creating initiatives to improve their communities.

Our Center for Black Culture hosts thousands of students, families, alumni, and local community members annually at major cultural and educational events on campus highlighting prominent voices regionally, nationally, and internationally. These events and traditions provide deep community engagement opportunities for UD and the broader regional community while boosting awareness of issues facing our communities.

As our students progress through their coursework, our Career Services Center works with each of the Colleges and majors and actively connects students to internships, volunteer opportunities, and mentor connections. The Center recruits former graduates to give back to their UD community with their time, talents, and guidance for current students. The Center hosts key community engagement events such as the Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development Conference and the Social Impact Meet-up.

## Encouraging UD Students in Our Communities

Engaging students in our many communities is a pride point for the Division. Throughout all elements of our work, we view University of Delaware students as citizens on a lifelong path who are here to develop personally, educationally, and professionally. We create opportunities and pathways for students to develop a sense of community belonging as they learn about themselves and others.

Incoming students often build their network within our spaces and through our services. Our Center for Black Culture (CBC) and Student Diversity and Inclusion staff create spaces and moments for students who are underrepresented at UD that build a strong community foundation. The CBC and Student Diversity and Inclusion staff members serve to challenge structural inequality leading to more engaged underrepresented communities both on and off campus – a foundation for civic action. The Division of Student Life also provides ample support, funding, and advisement for students to create their own campus associations organized around common interests, identities and goals – endeavors which often translate to significant engagement and impact at local and global levels.

Around 1 in 3 UD students choose to participate in UD's fraternities and sororities, communities which annually volunteer over 30,000 hours and raise over \$200,000 for philanthropic causes. Since its founding, the student-run UDance organization has raised more than \$9.17 million for families battling childhood cancer, while raising awareness, and creating lifelong relationships between UD students and local families. Our students in first-year residence halls engage in weekly service events with partner organizations such as the Ronald McDonald House and the Little Sisters of the Poor. Residence Life and Housing also partners with numerous community agencies to hold an annual "Night of Service" event to connect residence hall students with local service opportunities. Our annual MLK Day of Service brings over 100 students together for a day of reflection and volunteer work on site with community partners. Our Center for Black Culture hosted the first Alternative Spring Break service trip in 2006, and continues to collaborate in support of diversifying the participation in UD Alternative Breaks to boost engagement of underrepresented communities both on and off campus. Students build their UD community through making distinctive contributions to the community at large.

Our Blue Hen Leadership Program (BHLP) offers a leadership development program fully integrated with service and community agency partners with frequent faculty experts interspersed throughout the program. Tier 1 certificate students complete community service, either through a service initiative planned by the University Student Centers staff, or by working with a verified group or agency. Tier 2 is a year-long program engaging students in learning about the leadership involved in group work. Groups of students partner with non-profit organizations to work on a project that furthers the mission and impact of the organization. Tier 3 BHLP Community Fellows study nonprofits and then, based on researching an identified need, design and implement a social entrepreneurial venture that supports a local agency addressing a specific community issue. This engagement, combined with BHLP's monthly service initiatives and alternative break trips, support mutually beneficial relationships with nearly 40 local and national nonprofits. The Division of Student Life views community engagement as an intra- and interpersonal journey that is critical, yet different, for every Blue Hen. From their first step on campus to their walk across the commencement stage, we aim to further our students' exceptional course-based learning and prepare each with the knowledge and tools they need to discover their path, prioritize their wellbeing, understand how their behavior impacts others, and ultimately take action in each of their communities for the mutual benefit of Delaware and the world.

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