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For Community-Engaged Work, Isabel Clark '19 Honored as 2018 Newman Civic Fellow

Engineering major recognized for leadership in projects with community partners



March 23, 2018 | Jill Rodrigues '05

BRISTOL, R.I. – For her work undertaking real-world projects that solve critical needs for local communities, Isabel Clark has been honored as a 2018 Newman Civic Fellow, a national award recognizing a select group of student leaders who create lasting change in communities throughout the country and around the globe.

Clark is one of 268 students across the nation to receive the honor from [Campus Compact](#), a national coalition of college and university presidents who support and promote public service in higher education. She is the third student from Roger Williams University to be named a Newman Civic Fellow, joining [Ashley Barton '15](#) and [Mary Dinnean '18](#) in earning the illustrious award.

A junior engineering major, with minors in sustainability studies and mathematics, Clark says the community-engaged work she does through RWU's [Community Partnerships Center](#) (CPC) aligns with her academic and professional passions.

"Helping people and bettering society is the baseline concept of what an engineer does," said the Gloucester, Mass. resident. "By default, an engineer's job is to find a solution to a public need."

Clark joined the CPC her freshman year and quickly became more deeply involved, taking on the role as co-leader of the Design & Research Team and launching her own project initiatives from discussions with community partners about their greatest local needs.

"Isabel's work includes both direct service and building RWU's capacity to serve the community," RWU President Donald J. Farish said. "In her role at the RWU Community Partnerships Center, she has been invaluable in carrying out both team and individual projects working with real clients on important community projects. Her work directly supports RWU's purpose of 'strengthening society through engaged teaching and learning' and our goal to 'be the University the world needs now.'"

Among many projects through the CPC, she helped design a "teaching kitchen" at a local community center and create a Historic and Existing Building Energy Calculator (HEBEC) for the [1772 Foundation](#), an electronic tool that will aid the nonprofit in making construction decisions that protect historic buildings. She is currently working on projects with the Town of Coventry to select and design a municipal composting site, and with the Portsmouth Arts Guild to design a fun, safe space where high school students can hang out after school.

Called Project Café, the latter initiative, which she's co-leading with Brittany Reed, "arose from concern within the community about teenage alcohol and drug abuse, correlating to the lack of an adequate gathering space," Clark said. "This project emerged from a real problem that the community shared with us and now they're getting a product that can change people's lives."

It's an approach to community service that's embraced not only by the CPC, but throughout RWU's academic programs and study-abroad experiences. In the [Honors Program](#), Clark says they talk often about "not just doing service because it makes you feel good. It's working with the community to find out what they need and doing something that will truly serve them." As part of her Honors Program experience, she participated in Stay Break 2016, an intensive course where students trade a traditional spring break from classes to dive deep into research into issues of hunger and food access.

"This has taught me that service is a two-way street," she said. "It's not that we're going in to help the community. It's people coming to us with a challenge they're facing and we say, 'Let's work together on that.' It's more of a collaborative effort, and doing it is personally rewarding as well. Everyone has a learning experience."

These experiences have "instilled within me a deep passion for community-engaged work, as well as the realization that a small group of like-minded and dedicated individuals can have a large impact on a community," she added.

During her sophomore year, Clark took the opportunity for a semester-long [study-abroad program](#) in Limerick, Ireland. It was a richly rewarding experience, taking engineering classes at the University of Limerick, exploring the countryside and meeting new people, she said.

At RWU, she's also involved with the RWU Energy Committee, a part of the University Sustainable Grounds Committee comprising faculty, staff and administrators working toward energy-efficient solutions on campus.

As she looks forward to tackling even more projects with the CPC during her senior year at RWU, Clark said receiving the Newman Civic Fellowship is an exciting opportunity to learn from other student leaders. As a Newman Civic Fellow, she gains multiple opportunities to network with her fellow student leaders at national, regional and state gatherings, and access to professional development training.

"It's really cool to be part of a network of like-minded people," she said. "I'm very excited to converse with them and hear about what other people are doing. Hopefully, it helps expand the ways I engage with the community."

At RWU, we develop Civic Scholars who believe in community-engaged work. That's why we commit to providing every student an opportunity that empowers them to put their knowledge and skills to the test solving real-world problems and creating meaningful change with community partners. Learn more about the [Civic Scholars](#) program and how to help us

reach our goal of every student participating in civic scholarship.

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