A Celebration of Community Engagement

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A Celebration of Community Engagement

On Wednesday, April 24, students, faculty, staff, and community members, gathered to recognize more than 80 collaborative projects that have bolstered community initiatives and instilled in students important skills for the future.

Holly Harris '21, elementary education major, sets up an exhibition on KidWind, a project where RWU students worked with fourth graders on building wind turbines.

April 25, 2019  |  Julia Rubin

WARREN, R.I. – 4,313 students. 368 projects. 303 community partners. In six years of making community engaged work central to our mission, Roger Williams University students and faculty have dedicated 207,908 hours to delivering projects and important research that transform lives.

On Wednesday evening in the historic Tourister Mill of Warren, R.I., Roger Williams University and RWU Law students, staff, faculty, and community members celebrated the work of our Civic Scholars. Civic Scholars are students who learn to thrive, adapt and conquer challenges that await them. At RWU, we are committed to providing every student with experiential learning opportunities that address real-world problems. The event showcased more than 80 exhibitions demonstrating the impact of their community engagement in our backyard and around the globe.

From building wind turbines with fourth-grade budding engineers in KidWind to providing pro bono legal support through a variety of RWU Law legal clinics, RWU students collaborate every day with community partners to solve problems that matter to the communities we serve and to make a
meaningful impact on society. These learning opportunities prepare our students with the skills and experiences that employers demand, while instilling a passion for the power of giving back to the community.

Stephanie Aldana ’21 presents work with the Central Falls High School Athlete Mentoring Project

“The Community Engagement Celebration is an opportunity for RWU to mark the wonderful collaborations between our faculty, staff, students, and community partners,” said Robert Shea, Vice Provost. “The event highlights the myriad ways that our students apply their knowledge and skills, as guided by our faculty and community partners in response to community-defined needs. This is truly a day to celebrate our collective efforts to strengthen society through engaged teaching and learning.”
One of the many projects showcased at the event was a collaboration with the Providence Police Department.

“We worked with the police department’s Community Relations Bureau to make their website more user friendly,” said Brett Lowder, junior criminal justice major. “I served as a liaison between the classes involved and the police department, so I learned a lot about communicating with partners and collaboration.”

While some projects, like Lowder’s, allowed students to gain important professional skills and give back to local communities, others took students farther from home.

Carolyn Westgate, a graduating senior who double majors in history and secondary education, worked with a high school history teacher in England through her Hassenfeld Fellowship. Together, they built a curriculum and Westgate taught virtual classes from across the pond. Most recently, Westgate got the opportunity to travel to England and teach the students face-to-face.

“This trip has made me think about my impact as a teacher and the system of education overall in the United States,” she said. “While I was in England we also talked a lot about what students can do to change the world.”
The local and global projects of our Civic Scholars are crucial contributors to Roger Williams’s mission to build the university the world needs now, said President-Designate Ioannis Miaoulis.

“We are proud to be a university that builds and sustains relationships with our communities,” Miaoulis said. “Community engagement both equips our students with the experiential knowledge they need to succeed as professionals and addresses the challenges that matter most to our society today.”

The day after the Community Engagement Celebration, RWU held our third annual Day of Giving, where twice the number of dedicated Hawks answered the call to support our students. Find out how our loyal community helped us meet or exceed every one of our fundraising goals: Hawks Soar Past the Challenge: RWU Day of Giving Breaks Records.