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Arts of Citizenship/ Public Scholarship at the University of Michigan

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arts of citizenship

PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Arts of Citizenship promotes and supports public scholarship that simultaneously advances faculty and graduate student careers in the arts and humanities, and the vital agendas of arts and cultural community organizations.

Arts of Citizenship assists graduate students and faculty in the arts and humanities in building meaningful and sustainable connections with partners in cultural and arts institutions, schools, government and community groups. The result is an ever-growing spectrum of publicly engaged, collaborative projects that produce new scholarship, strengthen partnerships and drive change in our neighboring communities. Our goals are to support collaborations by:

- Providing resources and training opportunities to increase the depth and impact of graduate student and faculty engagement in public scholarship;
- Promoting the creation and dissemination of public goods and scholarly knowledge, and;
- Providing career development for graduate students and faculty interested in public scholarship.

To learn more about Arts of Citizenship, visit artsofcitizenship.umich.edu.

2008-2009 Program Evaluation Summary

During the 2008-2009-program year, Arts of Citizenship hired an external evaluator to work with the small staff to implement a multi-faceted program evaluation. The assessment was motivated in part by the reporting required by the University of Michigan Office of the Vice President for Research, which provided a three-year grant to the program from 2007-2010. An evaluation subcommittee, including two members of the Executive Board in addition to the Faculty Director and Assistant Director, co-developed the evaluation plan and advised the evaluator.

Purposes of the evaluation

- To document who was involved with and served by the program
- To determine the effectiveness of each program activity
- To measure change in participant outcomes
- To gather input from participants about ways to strengthen the program in the future
- To build internal program evaluation capacity

Evaluation tools

- Event feedback surveys: 1-page surveys including closed- and open-ended questions distributed at the end of workshops
- Event reports: 1-page form completed by AoC staff reporting event details and attendance
- Interviews: semi-structured interviews with faculty, graduate students, community partners
- Participant observation: evaluator attended events as a participant
- Focus groups: small group discussions (not implemented)
- Online survey: a longer survey to engage a wider sample of participants (not implemented)

Participants

Event surveys completed: **53**. 27 faculty; 16 students; 10 other (staff and non-UM)

Interviews: **18**. 4 faculty; 1 student; 3 community partners; 10 Executive Committee and staff

Highlights of findings

Program Strengths

- Strong, motivating vision and mission
- Benefits to participants:
 - supports and strengthens engaged research
 - builds community capacity
 - improves graduate student learning
 - provides networking opportunities

Opportunities for improvement

- Expand awareness and participation through “new media” and promotion
- Focus on developing a community of engaged scholars
- Integrate community partners more throughout the program
- Refine, articulate and maintain program focus

The Arts of Citizenship associate director and faculty director distributed the evaluation report to the Executive Committee, the Office of the Vice President for Research, and the Rackham Graduate School administration, which became the next home of the program.

Reflections

Inclusive: It was important to the organization to make sure that all participant groups involved with AoC were represented in the evaluation. Those groups were: UM faculty and UM graduate students in the arts, humanities and design, and community partners. Although the sample size was small, each group was represented.

Practicable: The evaluation plan employed a variety of standard, straightforward assessment techniques to build a more complete picture of the program’s benefits to participants and opportunities for improvement. Not all planned aspects of the evaluation were carried out due to scheduling conflicts and apprehension about asking too much of participants. The evaluation plan was robust enough to generate useful information without every component.

Generative: The stance of the evaluation tools and report was generative. Surveys and interviews asked participants to reflect on past experiences *and* suggest future improvements, and the report identified strategies for strengthening the program based on this feedback. The generative impact of the evaluation was limited, however, due in part to institutional constraints. By early 2010, the focus of the AoC leadership was on securing new funding and an institutional home for the program; improving program areas was secondary to that need.