

FITZ CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY

The mission of the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community is to cultivate servant leaders and just communities through reciprocal partnerships; engaged learning and scholarship; and community building. The Fitz Center lives its mission to address the diverse, comprehensive and interconnected challenges of urban neighborhoods and larger communities; create, share and apply knowledge for the common good; and educate and prepare students for lives of impactful civic action. The Fitz Center's vision is for the University of Dayton to advance the common good of communities through diverse, community-based partnerships, engaged learning and scholarship and servant leadership. Grounded in Catholic social teaching and Marianist ideals, the Fitz Center stimulates, coordinates and facilitates learning and scholarship on leadership that builds and sustains community.

The Fitz Center builds on the University's and the Marianists' long experience of linking University resources to those of the Dayton community to solve regional problems, develop community leaders and build neighborhoods and nonprofits. Through the Fitz Center, the University has built collaborative relationships with dozens of neighborhood, community, nonprofit and local government organizations and associations in efforts that have enriched the quality of life for thousands of citizens within Dayton and surrounding communities. These projects also have afforded meaningful learning opportunities to hundreds of students and dozens of faculty members annually.

The Fitz Center represents a different way of learning, one that is based in practical reasoning and democratic civic engagement; a different way of seeing and understanding the urban community as a social ecology of children, families, neighborhoods and systems; a different way of designing and implementing change using a model of comprehensive community building based on assets, not needs; and a different way of leading focused on adaptive leadership through constructive conversation that balances inquiry and advocacy. The Center also emphasizes the importance of relationships and the necessity of widely shared vision to move communities forward. These basic convictions guide planning and program development. They also build on the extensive community experiences of the Fitz Center staff.

The Fitz Center for Leadership in Community has four primary functions. These functions are carried out by teams of students, faculty and Fitz Center staff working in partnership with neighborhood and community leaders. They are:

- Build university and community capacity for constructive deliberation and change.
- Develop communities of reciprocal learning, scholarship and practice.
- Develop curricular and co-curricular innovations around leadership in community.
- Initiate and sustain partnerships.

The Fitz Center educates leaders who build and sustain communities. The Center offers the following opportunities for learning about and experiencing leadership in community focused on community and neighborhood partnership, community engaged learning and student servant leadership:

- Annual CityLinks Neighborhood Conference
- Annual River Summit
- Community Assets Bus Tours
- Community Engaged Learning
- Dayton Civic Scholars
- Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers
- Fr. Ferree Professor of Social Justice
- Leadership in Building Communities seminar
- Research and evaluation
- Rivers Institute and River Stewards
- River Leadership Curriculum
- Semester of Service

The Fitz Center provides an interdisciplinary minor in family development within the College of Arts and Sciences. It also conducts research on a broad range of contemporary family and community issues and offers opportunities for the development of social science research skills through tutorials and participation in its ongoing research projects. The Center serves as a resource to local governmental, health, religious, educational and social service agencies by evaluating programs and developing solutions to the problems of families and the communities in which they live. The Fitz Center is committed to an integrated perspective on families and communities that draws on multiple disciplines. For more information on this minor, visit FDV in Academic Information. The Fitz Center also houses the research division of the Montgomery County Office of Family and Children First. This office is available to assist students and faculty interested in local human services issues.

The Society of Mary supports the Ferree Professor of Social Justice in the Fitz Center. Marianist Provincial Father William Ferree was recognized as a key spokesperson on the Catholic theory of social justice. The Ferree Professor connects Catholic social teaching to the social sciences and other disciplines through the community-building mission of the Center.

The nature of the leadership challenges in the Dayton community requires adaptive learning and leadership across professional and community sectors. The University of Dayton has established a reputation as an effective community partner, especially with urban Dayton on difficult community challenges. The University of Dayton adds value to the community through the Fitz Center as it brokers and leads ongoing community building partnerships.