

Community Outreach and Engagement

UW Carbone Cancer Center

Catchment Area

The University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center's catchment area is the entire state of Wisconsin. Wisconsin's population includes 5.8 million residents with a racial and ethnic distribution of 87 percent white, 7 percent Black/African American, 7 percent Hispanic or Latino, 3 percent Asian, and 1 percent American Indian or Alaska Native residents. Wisconsin by landmass is largely rural; 30 percent of the land in Wisconsin is classified as rural, compared to 19 percent of the landmass in the United States. The cancer mortality rate in Wisconsin's rural counties (166 per 100,000) is higher than all counties combined in Wisconsin (160 per 100,000) and the United States (158 per 100,000), driving the need to serve our widely dispersed rural communities.^{1,2} Further disparities in the cancer burden also persist, with cancer mortality rates for African Americans being 40 percent higher than the state rate (223.4 per 100,000).¹

Community Engagement Focus

Utilizing the UW Division of Extension's existing framework,³ our supplement goal was to build infrastructure (people, processes, systems, tools) that University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center (UWCCC) basic scientists can leverage to connect with and learn from the communities of Wisconsin. We proposed to develop relationships between UWCCC and UW Extension to systematically build a bridge to the community, creating bidirectional linkages between community stakeholders and basic science researchers (RFA Option 1).

At a Glance

The overarching goals of this project are to create bidirectional relationships between researchers and scientists at UWCCC with Extension Educators and the communities they serve, thereby allowing scientists to provide comprehensive cancer research and educational content and collaborate on opportunities for research integration with communities. This was achieved through three aims:

Aim 1: Create linkages between UWCCC and the UW Division of Extension's 72-county educator network to foster engagement through cancer outreach and education.

Aim 2: Establish a UWCCC Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) "in-reach" initiative that educates and trains basic scientists on the science of COE, its importance to the core mission of the cancer center, and how to use that knowledge to increase the impact of their research.

Aim 3: Identify and facilitate one collaborative pilot project where UWCCC Community Outreach Specialists and Extension Educators will work with a team of UWCCC basic science researchers to partner with a community member or organization.

Collaborators

In-Reach Collaborators

Associate directors, program leaders, and UWCCC faculty membership all collaborated on in-reach programming. UWCCC's scientific infrastructure consists of six core programs in the areas of Population Sciences (Cancer Prevention and Control [CPC]), Basic Sciences (Cancer Genetic and Epigenetic Mechanisms [GEM]), Tumor

Microenvironment [TM], Human Cancer Virology [VR], Clinical Sciences (Imaging and Radiation Sciences [IR], and Developmental Therapeutics [DT]).

Outreach Collaborators

For this grant opportunity, we partnered with UW Division of Extension.³ UW Extension serves a key role in the mission of UW Madison as a land grant university to apply and disseminate research and education in local communities statewide. UW Extension connects people across the state with the University of Wisconsin and engages with them in transforming lives and communities. UW Extension offers timely access to knowledge through educators in county offices (both urban and rural), on seven four-year and thirteen two-year campuses and within three tribal nations throughout Wisconsin, with the ongoing goal of effecting positive change in communities by building capacity among residents of all ages. Specifically, Extension Educators team up with organizations and community members for need-based programs on agriculture, food safety and health, resilient and productive environments, and thriving families. UW Extension impacts all corners of the state, diverse groups, and otherwise hard-to-reach areas.

The Approach

Survey- and focus group-based needs assessments were completed with both UWCCC faculty scientists and UW Extension Educators.

Extension Needs Assessment:

- Educators responded from 62 counties and tribal nations and represented a wide array of programmatic focus areas.
- The majority of educators indicated that cancer education is an area of need in Wisconsin communities (particularly cancer basics, policy/systems/environment efforts, and support for families or caregivers).
- 71 percent of respondents said they had capacity and interest in partnering with academic researchers on community-engaged research projects (figure 1).

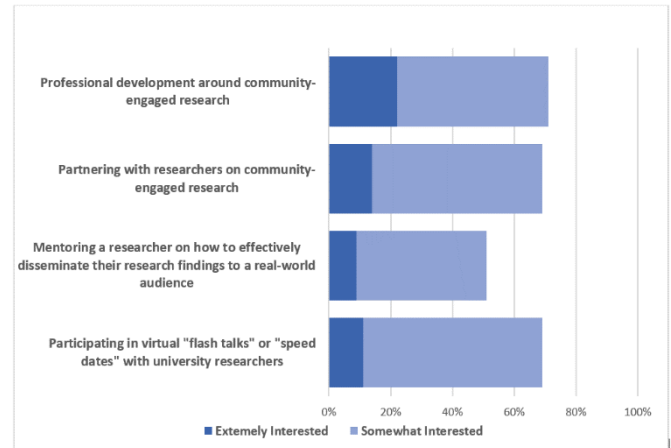


Figure 1. Interest in Engagement with Academic Partners

UWCCC Faculty Scientist Needs Assessment

Faculty showed interest in research dissemination and community engagement in research but expressed barriers such as: (1) not knowing how to connect with communities, (2) not knowing how their scientific expertise could apply to the interests of communities, and (3) not knowing benefits and challenges of engagement with communities for research.

Outreach Program

The needs assessments allowed for the tailoring of outreach programs and content. As such, UWCCC provided the following program content to Extension Educators and community members:

1. Cancer 101 webinar, including details on how the Carbone Cancer Center serves the community.
2. Outreach webinars on "Social Determinants of Health & Cancer in Wisconsin" and "Cancer Prevention and Screening in Wisconsin."
3. Collaboration on outreach, event sponsorship, and project funding for local and community programming.

Faculty Scientist In-reach Program

The faculty in-reach program allowed for the UWCCC outreach team and Extension Educators to train faculty on the benefits of community-engaged research, research dissemination across Wisconsin, and outreach. UWCCC faculty received:

1. "Community Engaged Research 101" talk at their scientific program meeting
2. "Scientific Communication and Stakeholder Engagement" lecture by renowned communication specialist Dominique Brossard, PhD
3. Community Engagement for Research Toolkit for best practice guidance for community engagement and research dissemination
4. Data on the Wisconsin catchment burden via a "Catchment Report"

Community/Research Connection

The project team focused on bringing opportunities for connection between community and scientists.

For example:

1. Speed-networking events where faculty share research and receive feedback from the community
2. Community "grand rounds" to share research with communities

Implementation Guidance

In-reach Implementation Tips

Speak the language of scientists and researchers. Present data about benefits of community engagement and best practices in scientific communication.

- Gain leadership buy-in before encouraging faculty scientists to engage with communities.

Sustainability Plans

UWCCC and Division of Extension are both committed to continuing the relationship building between faculty scientists and communities. We will do this through:

1. Continued opportunities for Extension Educators and UWCCC scientists to convene and collaborate on research and outreach
2. Financially support at least one (up to \$10,000) community/academic partnership each year
3. Prioritize UWCCC funding to faculty who integrate community voice, collaboration, or community dissemination and impact
4. Continue to serve as a resource for guidance and support as scientists translate research to communities

[This] helps me as I work with so many partners in the community, to understand the depth of your resources and expertise. It's amazing to have connections to this critical, emerging work [at the UWCCC]. I feel Extension could be of the most value in outreach insights and connections, and giving feedback on what types of outreach tools, [or how to] make materials or programs accessible to a variety of audiences.

—Extension Educator, July 2021

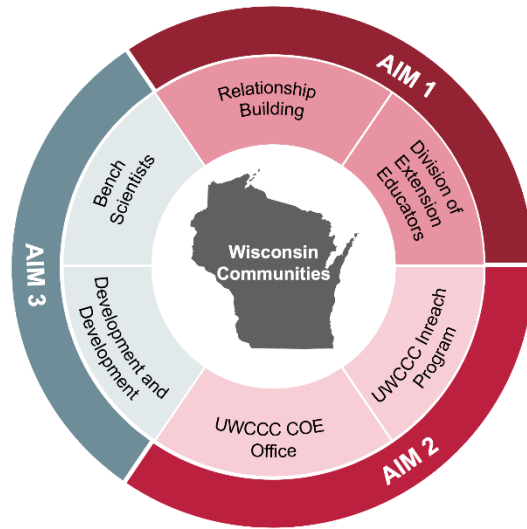


Figure 2: Engaging Basic Scientists with Communities

References:

1. Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Health Informatics. Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) data query system, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/index.htm>. Cancer Module. Accessed May 12, 2020.
2. Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program (www.seer.cancer.gov) SEER*Stat Database: Incidence - SEER Research Data, 18 Registries, Nov 2019 Sub (2000-2017) - Linked To County Attributes - Time Dependent (1990-2017) Income/Rurality, 1969-2017 Counties, National Cancer Institute, DCCPS, Surveillance Research Program, released April 2020, based on the November 2019 submission. Accessed May 12, 2020.
3. University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension: <https://extension.wisc.edu/>. Accessed November 16, 2021.

Find Out More

To find out more about our collaboration with the Division of Extension, please visit: <https://cancer.wisc.edu/community-outreach-and-engagement/division-of-extension-partnership/>

This project was funded through an administrative supplement from the National Cancer Institute to the University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center (P30CA014520-46S4).

Contact

Allison R. Dahlke, MPH, Carbone Cancer Center
ardahlke@wisc.edu

Kristin Litzelman, PhD, UW Cooperative Extension
litzelman@wisc.edu

Community outreach and engagement (COE) activities across the translational research continuum

National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated cancer centers' COE efforts should span all cancer center programs, including basic, clinical, translational, and population research. In FY20, NCI issued a call for Cancer Center Administrative Supplements to support COE activities that focus on either basic science or the translation of evidence-based interventions into community practice. The long-term goal of the supplement initiative is to build capacity for cancer centers' COE programs to adapt and implement evidence-based programs and successfully collaborate with cancer center investigators across research programs and in partnership with community members. To learn more, visit us at: <https://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/research-emphasis/coe>