

POINT PARK UNIVERSITY

For Immediate Release

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Point Park expanding its work in the community, starting with partnerships to improve Downtown

PITTSBURGH, PA – Point Park University’s Department of Community Engagement is moving into the Rowland School of Business with an eye on expanding its already immersive work in the city. That work, in partnership with the City of Pittsburgh and other community partners, is under way.

The new Department of Community Engagement & Leadership will focus on government, civic and nonprofit sectors, with an eye on serving the surrounding region through a number of projects supported by participation from students, faculty and staff. Heather Starr Fiedler, founding director of Community Engagement, will continue in the role.

“Bringing Community Engagement into Rowland allows Heather to expand on the important work her department does,” said Steve Tanzilli, dean of Rowland. “There will be increased support from our faculty and more funding opportunities.”

One of the first priorities for the department this summer is a research project examining the feasibility of public restrooms in Downtown Pittsburgh. That work is being done in partnership with the Building Owners & Management Association of Pittsburgh, the City of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership and the Allegheny Health Network, and other organizations.

“For most people, needing to use the restroom when we are visiting Downtown is an inconvenience. We can usually wait until we get home or, in an emergency, ask a restaurant,” Fiedler said. “Many, however, do not have that privilege. Homeless individuals often may not have a safe, easily accessible place to use a restroom at all. Access to safe, clean water and sanitation is globally recognized as essential in public health.”

Students in the Community Engagement doctoral program, using connections and resources from the Rowland School of Business, will work with the aforementioned community organizations to produce a feasibility study that will be presented to stakeholders later this summer. The groups will then work to find funding for implementation.

In addition, Community Engagement students are working with the PDP, the Downtown Neighbors Alliance and the office of Mayor Ed Gainey to reimagine a Downtown alleyway, turning it from an

undesirable walkway to something filled with art and innovation. The Department of Community Engagement & Leadership, in conjunction with Rowland, is working to be active in the PDP and Mayor Gainey's efforts to clean and revitalize Downtown.

"We are proud to partner with Point Park University in finding new and innovative ways to engage our community," Mayor Gainey said. "We can only make Pittsburgh into a city where everyone feels welcome, is safe and has opportunities to thrive when we work together. This partnership is critical for our success and we look forward to seeing how much of an impact we can make together."

Fiedler said her department is committed to expanding its impact on the community, especially within the University's Downtown Pittsburgh neighborhood.

"Our hope is to create innovative educational opportunities for students by linking them with and embedding them into partner organizations and providing them with real, impactful experiences that will not only educate them, but also change their lives and the lives of those around them," she said.

Community Engagement includes an interdisciplinary doctoral program, minors and community-engaged courses; its Social Impact Grants & Scholars Program; Wood Street Communications, an initiative to connect nonprofits seeking communications services assistance with Point Park students; and has developed partnerships with numerous organizations in the region. It also developed and operates the Pioneer Pantry for students and other members of the University community living with food insecurity.

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Point Park University, immersed in the heart of Downtown Pittsburgh, focuses on student success through innovative experiential learning opportunities. Point Park enrolls nearly 4,000 students in over 100 undergraduate, master's and doctoral programs offered through its Conservatory of Performing Arts, Rowland School of Business, and schools of Arts and Sciences, Communication, and Education. The University's alumni and students represent all 50 states and 34 countries around the world. Visit PointPark.edu to learn more.