

UConn Engagement In the City: 2018 - 2020

Celebrating innovative teaching
and faculty engagement on cities
and towns at the University of
Connecticut

Featuring SGCI Faculty Affiliates

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Director, SGCI

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THE SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL
CITIES INITIATIVE (SGCI)



UConn Engagement in the City: 2018 – 2020

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The **Sustainable Global Cities Initiative** (SGCI) at UConn Hartford will enhance the research capacity and scholarship of UConn that engages critical challenges faced by cities in Connecticut and around the world by convening and expanding interdisciplinary research and projects. The SGCI aims to develop new models of democratic, healthy, and equitable urban life in partnership with public and private organizations as a natural evolution of UConn's civic outreach legacy.

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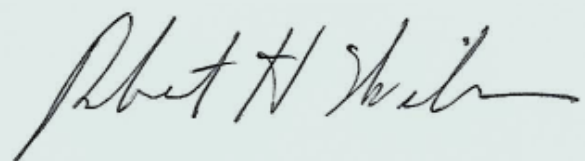
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In August 2020, the Sustainable Global Cities Initiative (SGCI) released its inaugural *UConn Scholarship on the City* report – the first of many efforts to commemorate cities-related academic excellence at UConn. As a companion piece to that report, *UConn Engagement in the City* celebrates the equally valuable cities-related efforts of the SGCI's Faculty Affiliates (FAs) in both innovative teaching and community engagement, often directly based on their research agendas. Recent self-reported engagement and teaching activities of twelve FAs in 2018-2020 capture twenty-one faculty-initiated efforts, or award winning recognition, that use research to inform the public and create opportunities for transformative education. Even though it represents only a fraction of the public engagement efforts undertaken by the 85 FAs of the SGCI, this report provides a window for appreciating the scope of these urban-related efforts at UConn. The activities commemorated in this report include:

- **Community and Public engagement**, which has been central to the land grant outreach tradition of UConn and ensures that its scholarship and teaching is relevant to the challenges faced locally and globally. These activities range from expert technical advice for the public sector and non-profit organizations as well as broader public education on critical issues.
- **Professional Engagement and Recognition** illustrates that socially-engaged research within professional associations both enhances the national and international reputation of UConn faculty members and reflects the shared enterprise nature of higher education research and knowledge. These efforts have resulted in national and international excellence awards for SGCI FAs, which we are proud to recognize here.
- **Innovative Teaching** utilizes the rich learning environment found in cities, sparking curiosity and critical thinking among students about prevailing social practices. Teaching about cities, in all their complexities, prepares undergraduates for life-long learning and citizenship and, at the graduate level, for professional, scholarly and research careers. In addition to this traditional role, the focus on the challenges of urban life creates multiple opportunities for socially-engaged teaching, where students develop research skills and become acquainted with contemporary challenges.

We hope you will join us in celebrating the efforts of these professors that have successfully found the means to engage their research in multiple venues and thereby contribute to core UConn missions.



Robert H. Wilson
Director, Sustainable Global Cities Initiative


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Community and Public Engagement

SGCI Faculty Affiliates frequently collaborate with community partners and public organizations to address key societal issues – ranging from COVID-19 responses to wildlife conservation in urbanized areas – and also offer technical consulting on issues of public concern. Through engagement with the communities in the Hartford area, the state of Connecticut, and beyond, FAs apply and amplify research expertise to the benefit of the broader public.

Phil Birge-Liberman (Community and Urban Studies) and **Sohyun Park** (Landscape Architecture) are organizing a commemoration of Frederick Law Olmsted, generally accepted as the father of the field of landscape architecture and well known for his design of Central Park in New York. Olmsted used his creative genius to transform the American landscape and his private practice firm designed thousands of parks and greenspaces across America. In April 2022, UConn Hartford will celebrate the bicentennial of this Hartford native by hosting a symposium bringing together landscape architects, city planners, urban historians, park professionals, and community leaders to focus on Olmsted’s design legacy in 21st century American cities.

Please be sure to visit the SGCI website, cities.hartford.uconn.edu, in coming months for updates on UConn’s Olmsted 200 symposium.

Sara Bronin (Law) led a broad-based coalition in drafting the City of Hartford’s 2020 comprehensive City Plan and also drafted the first housing code overhaul for the city in 40 years in 2019. She also drafted and oversaw the development of an award-winning form-based zoning code, personally conducting over 75 stakeholder and community outreach sessions from 2014 to 2016. On a national level, Sara contributes 10 - 15 yearly briefs developed through her UConn courses to the Sustainable Development Code, a national organization that supports local government where she also serves as an advisory board member. She advises the National Trust for Historic Preservation on policy matters and has had a leading role in Desegregate CT, an initiative to reform land use laws in Connecticut to reduce systemic racism and concentrations of poverty in the cities.

For more information on Desegregate CT, please visit www.desegregatect.org.

Maria Chrysochoou (Civil Engineering) is the Director of the Connecticut Brownfields Initiative (CBI), a dedicated, engaged coalition of industry, academic, community, and government partners to advance remediation of Connecticut’s brownfields to benefit community development and environmental quality. Her vision is to create a center of

excellence that will develop successful strategies for planning and redevelopment, support communities to promote urban renewal, and create educational opportunities for students (discussed in detail in Section 4 below) to engage diverse audiences, including industry and community partners, to cultivate an environment of inclusion, democratic ethos, creativity, and innovation.

For more information about the Connecticut Brownfields Initiative, please visit cbi.engr.uconn.edu.

Mary K. Donegan (Urban and Community Studies) has developed a strong working relationship with BiCi Co, the social enterprise arm of the Hartford-based Center for Latino Progress, and in particular with its Transport Hartford efforts. She helped plan Transport Hartford’s third annual New England Multimodal and Transit Summit following two years of participation as a moderator at previous summits. In partnership with BiCi Co, students conducted surveys and interviews to investigate barriers to bicycling in metro Hartford in her Urban and Community Studies course, “Understanding Your Community” (Spring 2019). Following this course, she hosted BiCi’s intern program at UConn Hartford.

For more information about Transport Hartford, please visit ctprf.org/programs_services/transport-hartford.



Ken Foote (Geography), director of UConn’s dynamic Urban and Community Studies Program (UCS), recently organized a symposium – “Urban Living in the Age of Climate Change: Sustainable Local Development in Hartford and Connecticut” – in collaboration with the Center for Urban and Global Studies at Trinity College, the Center for Montessori Studies at the University of Hartford, and URBAN Hartford. The two-day event drew students, faculty, community partners, local officials, and the public into discussion of the climate futures of Hartford and other cities and towns in Connecticut.

Kim Price-Glynn (Sociology) is the current Co-Chair of the Carework Network, an international organization of researchers, policymakers, and advocates involved in various domains of healthcare work. During this critical period of COVID-19, the lives of individuals and entire societies have been upended by a long-standing healthcare crisis, shining a spotlight on the unforeseen challenges of paid and unpaid care work being provided across the globe. Inspired by the robust exchanges among the Carework Network members, a virtual hub, ‘Carework Network Responds,’ was launched with Price-Glynn’s help to help shape the public dialogue around healthcare and create awareness of challenges, social policy, and best practices, including advocacy around

paid and unpaid care. The hub extends access to the large body of existing feminist research relating to care and how it intersects with inequalities among care givers and facilitate research collaborations.

For more information about the Carework Network Responds hub, please visit careworknetworkresponds.com.

Bandana Purkayastha (Sociology) has integrated her strong research record (her career research awards are discussed in Section 5 below) in multiple policy and advocacy venues, including serving as an invited expert member (2015-2016) for the World Health Organization’s (WHO) initiative on Women on the Move: Contributions and Consequences on Women’s Health.

For more information about the “Women on the Move” initiative, and to download a free copy of the WHO report, please visit who.int/gender-equity-rights/knowledge/women-on-the-move/en.



Tracy Rittenhouse (Natural Resources and the Environment) studies wildlife populations within social-ecological systems in Connecticut, and addresses the population persistence (or overabundance) of wildlife resulting interaction with human population through land use and land cover change, climate change, and emerging diseases. Through the Connecticut Bobcat Project, a statewide multi-year effort, Rittenhouse and her team humanely tagged over 100 bobcats with GSP collars to help track their movements in urban and suburban areas, with a special focus on the Hartford and West Hartford boundary area in the upcoming year.

For more information about the Connecticut Bobcat Project, please visit ctbobcatproject.weebly.com.

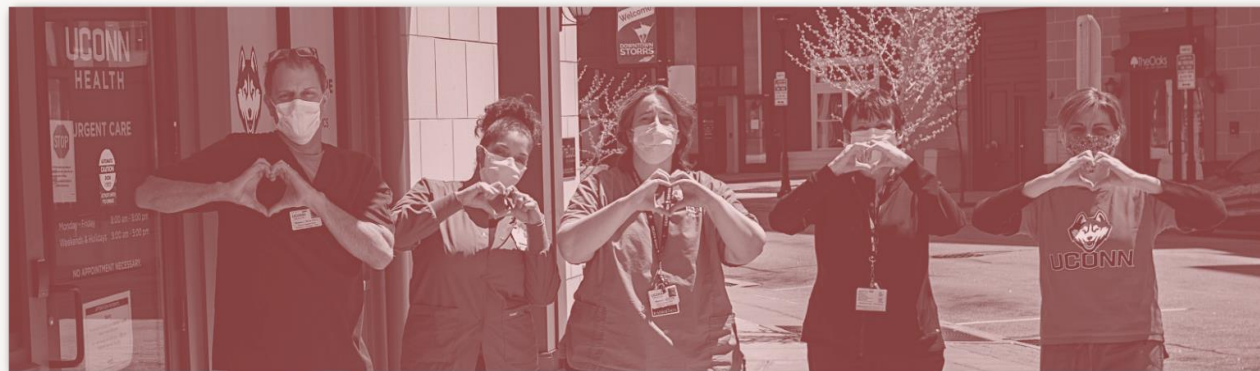
Professional Engagement and Recognition

UConn faculty participate in professional and disciplinary communities as part of their academic endeavors, and these professional interests can often intersect and overlap with their engagement efforts. For example, FAs may shape their research efforts to focus on current social challenges brought to light in their respective disciplines. Exceptional efforts of the FAs are frequently acknowledged by awards from professional and other communities, which we are pleased to recognize here.

*Several SGCI Faculty Affiliates have used the multiple and complex challenges of cities to provide avenues for this kind of **professional engagement**, as the examples below demonstrate:*

Kim Price-Glynn (Sociology) co-chairs the Carework Network Steering Committee (2019 - present) with Amy Armenia (Rollins College, Sociology), with organizing responsibilities for its biennial summit, which was last held in Toronto (2019) with 220 attendees representing 16 countries and six continents. The next meeting, scheduled for 2021, will be held in Costa Rica. She is also the co-editor for a book series addressing this topic with Rutgers University Press.

Bandana Purkayastha (Sociology) serves on the Executive Committee of the International Sociological Association (ISA), an international professional organization with members from over 127 countries, as well as the 2022 program committee and subcommittees on bylaws, membership, award standards, the Young Sociologists dissertation award. For the Intersectional Research Agenda Collaborative, she served on the Advisory Committee and White House Initiative on Girls and Women of Color.



*The SGCI would also like to celebrate the **awards** bestowed by academic and professional organizations on the outstanding contributions and achievements of its Faculty Affiliates:*



Sara Bronin (Law): Work on Hartford’s zoning code developed under her tenure received the 2020 Driehaus Award from Smart Growth America and the Form-Based Codes Institute. As the Chair of several Boards including the City of Hartford, Energy Improvement District Board, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission, Sara has received numerous awards and recognition in recent years, reflecting the diversity of her work, including awards from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, the Congress for New Urbanism (New England), the American Planning Association (Connecticut), the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, the Connecticut Main Street Center, the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, the Capitol Region Council of Governments, and the Connecticut Economic Development Association (Best Practices, 2016-2019).

Noel A. Cazenave (Sociology and Urban and Community Studies) received the Faculty Excellence in Research and Creativity Award in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at UConn, in recognition of his long and distinguished career. Cazenave’s research on issues of contemporary American society, including racism, racial violence, and poverty, was acknowledged as influential not only in the social sciences but also in the fields of public policy, politics, and law.

Maria Chrysochoou (Civil Engineering) was honored by the Connecticut Technology Council at the 16th Annual Women of Innovation Awards for her innovations in Brownfields development through the Connecticut Brownfields Initiative (for more information on CBI, see the ‘Community and Public Engagement’ section above).

Bandana Purkayastha (Sociology) received the American Sociological Association's Jessie Bernard Award in 2019 for “scholarly work that has enlarged the horizons of sociology” and for “significant cumulative work throughout a professional career.” She was also awarded the UConn CLAS Research Excellence Award in 2019.

Innovating Teaching and Transformative Education

UConn offers a range of courses, programs, internships, and other opportunities for life-transformative education for undergraduate and graduate students in urban settings. The **Urban and Community Studies (UCS)** program based at UConn Hartford offers majors and minors in Hartford, Storrs, and Waterbury, with several SGCI Faculty Affiliates (FAs) teaching in the program. UCS also administers the Urban Semester Program, a “study away program” that brings UConn students from all majors into the city of Hartford to intern in public and non-profit organizations and directly observe and study urban issues. In addition, students can gain practical experience through the Education Abroad and Urban Semester programs, Service-Learning courses, and the Human Rights Institute at UConn. This section highlights innovative examples of interdisciplinary teaching that builds on SGCI FA research programs, followed by cases of direct community engagement by students through UConn coursework.

*The following **Interdisciplinary courses** take advantage of the intellectual complexity and richness of cities and towns to educate students on the multiple dimensions of urban and community life and build a solid foundation in analytical and qualitative techniques, including survey research and application of historic geographic information systems.*

Kerry L. Marsh (Psychology) – The **Environmental Psychology** course taught by Marsh adopts an interdisciplinary approach on educating students about urban environments by addressing the multiple forms of human interaction with both natural and built environments. Approved as meeting UConn’s “Environmental Literacy” core requirement for undergraduates, this course is currently taught at the Hartford Campus.

Bandana Purkayastha (Sociology) – Purkayastha’s graduate course, **Sociology of Immigration**, focuses on the scholarly analyses of power, privilege, and marginalization that reflect intersecting dominant ideologies, interactions, and institutional arrangements in the 20th and 21st centuries. The **Human Rights in the US** and **Indian Women’s Activism for Social Change** courses provide students with the tools to understand and weigh different methodologies and methods of social inquiry, and to develop the ability to critically read research literature.

Incorporating Real World Experience in Transformative Education: Practical real-world work experience can broaden academic training to develop a deeper understanding of urban vitality and planning strategies to achieve sustainability in contemporary urban landscapes. The innovative efforts provided below richly illustrate the benefits of urban-related teaching by FAs with expertise in fields as diverse as engineering, communications, landscape architecture, and sociology.

Maria Chrysochoou (Civil Engineering) – The highly innovative academic component of the Connecticut Brownfields Initiative is a **two-course sequence** offered jointly by the Environmental Engineering, Environmental Science, and Environmental Studies programs. Having been offered in three consecutive years, the objective of the sequence is to develop practical knowledge of (1) environmental law and regulatory frameworks in Connecticut, (2) financing of real estate development and brownfields and (3) urban planning processes. Students in the first semester attend lectures delivered by professionals in the field and assist communities with preparing grant proposals for the EPA Brownfields Program.

The second course is a practicum in which students work with Connecticut municipalities or a regional planning agency on a specific aspect of a real brownfields project: helping the communities identify sources of funding and potential end uses, creating remediation or reuse plans, prioritizing sites, and/or conducting a Phase I investigation. Students, attracted from a wide range of disciplines, are supervised by professionals from CBI partners with years of experience, whose expertise spans relevant fields. The practicum also offers students further opportunities for internships, and hands-on experience and interaction with future employers.

The success of this effort led to a National Science Foundation grant award for Redefining Public Engagement at the University of Connecticut for Studying the Impact of an Innovative STEM Service-Learning Model on the University Community.

Anne Oeldorf-Hirsch (Communication) – The **Social Media Research and Practice** course, offered in partnership with the Connecticut Science Center in Hartford, targets the Science Center's social media presence to young adults. Students engage in real-life experiential learning by applying course content to a research-based strategy for the Science Center's exhibit promotions. Working in teams, students conduct background research on the Science Center's current social media presence and produce content to promote its upcoming exhibits and events. The most successful content is selected and displayed on the Science Center's social media accounts and students then assess the resulting engagement analytics.

Sohyun Park (Landscape Architecture) – Two sections of the **Community Planning** course (2018 and 2019) were conducted as Service-Learning projects. The first course generated design proposals for urban revitalization in North Hartford, which were presented by students as their final project to community stakeholders. Select student work was recognized as a finalist in the Dream Green Eco-Design competition, hosted by the City of Hartford, the Hartford Climate Stewardship Initiative, and the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation. In the second course, students participated in a design charrette and in-resident engagement processes for the Tolland Senior Citizen Park on the 14-acre property in the Town of Tolland, CT. Students then presented the final project to community stakeholders.



In Park's **Planting Design** course, students proposed design ideas for creating 'inviting and engaging' informal entrances to Keney Park, an urban park in North Hartford designed by Frederick Law Olmsted's firm in the 19th century, and one of the largest in the Hartford area. The design interventions focused on aesthetics of entryways, functioning micro-habitat creation, and neighborhood access to the park from the Promise Zone of North Hartford.

Kim Price-Glynn (Sociology) – The **Sociology of Carework** special topics course builds on Price-Glynn's extensive research and focuses on the pressing healthcare issues families face today. The course explores several salient issues, including how carework is affected by the forces of globalization, technological development, and the changing dynamics of the urban labor force. Using UConn's Service-Learning framework, students apply knowledge gained in the course to assignments in local community carework organizations. In a separate initiative, Prof. Price-Glynn will use her 2020 Hartford Matters Teaching Grant competition award and donations from partnering organizations to support development of a Service-Learning component centered on Hartford child and elder care programs.



Urban-Centered Teaching and Engagement at UConn

The University of Connecticut, as a Tier 1 public research university, makes significant contributions to scholarship and thereby creates opportunities for community engagement and innovative, interdisciplinary teaching that reinforce its research mission. Although this inaugural report reflects only a portion of the engagement-oriented efforts of the SGCI's Faculty Affiliates, we celebrate this work as reflecting the potential, and obligation, of public universities to engage in the issues of the day. (A comprehensive and updated list of cities-related public engagement efforts, teaching innovations, and academic achievements can be found at the Faculty Affiliate Directory on the SGCI website.)

The Sustainable Global Cities Initiative considers the support of urban-related public engagement efforts at UConn to be one of its primary goals. In capturing the excellence of public engagement and teaching of select SGCI Faculty Affiliates, this inaugural report highlights the rich array of opportunities represented by our cities and urban life for the integration of scholarly research into teaching and community engagement. The challenges of the city attract diverse disciplinary approaches, offer transformative educational opportunities, and provide a means for UConn faculty to apply their intellectual efforts in ways that benefit the communities in which they are located.

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