



**Center for Community Solutions
West Chester University**

**2023 – 2024
Annual Report**



“Neighbor is not a geographic term. It is a moral concept.”

- *Joachim Prinz*

Emblematic of the University’s mission to develop graduates who succeed personally and professionally and contribute to the common good, the Office of External Relations works based upon the University’s role as an anchor institution within community and thus its moral responsibility to lead and serve its campus and broader community guided by sound ethical decision making and a genuine commitment to have a positive impact upon society and the lives of those who reside within it. The Center for Community Solutions (CCS), housed within the Office, is integral to the fulfillment of this aim.

CCS’ purpose is evident in its name, with the focus upon working to address community need through providing project-based, community-engaged learning experiences for students, enabling their applying knowledge and skills learned, and community partners value through achieving organizational goals and objectives with needed assistance at no cost to the community partners. The CCS is central to informing, growing, and sustaining the University’s community engagement and leadership as an institutional priority and demonstrating its genuine commitment to actualize its public mission.

Community Partners

For Academic Year 2023-2024, the CCS is grateful to have generated mutually beneficial partnerships with the organizations listed below. The CCS would like to thank these community partners for giving WCU students the opportunity to expand their educational and professional skill sets, experience and skills.

- Arts Holding Hands and Hearts
- Borough of South Coatesville
- Borough of West Chester Administration
- Borough of West Chester Department of Parks and Recreation
- Chester County Economic Development Council
- Chester County Food Bank
- Chester County Partnership to End Homelessness
- Coatesville Area School District Education Foundation
- Crescendo Phoenixville
- Exton Region Chamber of Commerce
- Hearing Loss Association of America, Chester County Chapter
- Lundale Farm
- Newlin Foundation
- Phoenixville Community Health Foundation
- PLAN of PA
- United Way of Chester County
- West Chester Film Festival
- West Chester Green Team
- West Chester Police Department

Project Highlights

Chester County Economic Development Council Michael Loughlin, Finance and Economics Major

The Chester County Economic Development Council (CCEDC) partnered with Michael to research and identify

topics of importance, aid the organization's social media efforts, and ensure efficient data management. The purpose of this marketing engagement project was to work with businesses of all sizes and stages of development with a focus on serving socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Often such individuals were best reached through social media channels or via email marketing platforms. Michael was able to help the CCEDC communicate and engage with various audiences and build brand and program awareness for businesses and the community.



Chester County Partnership to End Homelessness Rena Korbich, Media and Culture Major

The Chester County Partnership to End Homelessness collaborated with Rena to maintain a digital presence aimed to engage a variety of stakeholders by providing information

on the opportunities to volunteer or donate and spreading awareness of the services provided to the public. This partnership served as a vital component toward clarifying and emphasizing the critical role of the Chester County Partnership to End Homelessness in the health and prosperity of the local community.



Hearing Loss Association of America, Chester County Jenna DeAngelis, Communication Sciences and Disorders Major

The Hearing Loss Association of America Chester County Chapter collaborated with Jenna to research, develop, and launch an app that would identify the restaurants that are

hearing friendly within Chester County. The app will allow the categorization of restaurants by noise level, acoustics, and other variables. The app enables direct input from the community, which will help keep experiences as accurate and authentic as possible for all who utilize it.



Project Highlights

Phoenixville Community Health Foundation Courtney Bridges, Psychology Major



The Phoenixville Community Health Foundation partnered with Courtney to research the impact of substance abuse and addiction on the Greater Phoenixville area and available resources. Courtney gathered substance usage and overdose data (age, gender, and ethnic demographics), identified services available to combat substance usage, and determined which entities in a relative radius to the Phoenixville area provided education for awareness purposes regarding substance usage and overdoses. Each of these efforts was streamlined and presented to the Foundation's Board of Directors toward facilitating positive change within the community.

West Chester Film Festival Liam Daly, Computer Science and Cybersecurity Major



The West Chester Film Festival partnered with Liam to help with its significant needs in marketing, sponsor outreach, fundraising, website development, and film selection. This project supported the production and promotion of the West Chester Film Festival to inspire and educate the public on the artistry of filmmaking through the presentation of global independent and innovative short films and interactive workshops.

West Chester Green Team Devin Gray, Computer Science and Earth Science Major



The West Chester Green Team partnered with Devin to work towards a successful West Chester Green Team Porchfest for 2024. The project accomplished its goals thanks to notable work by Devin in helping to identify secure participating artists and vendor support. This annual event has grown exponentially within the Borough of West Chester community, building and promoting connection through music and the arts within the historic downtown.

CCS Impact: Community Partner Feedback

Working with the Center for Community Solutions has proven to be beneficial to our mission and our strategies to move our organization forward. We value the work that the students have produced. In fact, some of our associates and board members have come to rely on them for their critical thinking and creativity, hence adding true value to our work... I am so pleased with this experience that I plan to continue to work with the Center for Community Solutions well into the future.

— Regina Lewis, *Coatesville Area School District Education Foundation & Newlin Foundation*

I cannot say enough about the Center for Community Solutions and its partnership with local nonprofit organizations to create meaningful impact in the region. The process to engage eligible WCU students as interns is easy and seamless and the quality of candidate expertise has been exemplary. The Exton Region Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to participate and happy with our Spring Semester intern.

— Laurie J. Ryan, *Exton Region Chamber of Commerce*

Our Student Partner was such a valuable resource to help us with Leadership Chester County, our board training program for corporate and community leaders looking to develop their skills as nonprofit board leaders. They helped us research other leadership programs, develop our alumni database, plan our nonprofit expo, and more. United Way of Chester County is so grateful for the West Chester University Center for Community Solutions for this generous resource!

— Kelly Cockshaw, *United Way of Chester County*

The West Chester Film Festival (WCFF) has been working with the Center for Community Solutions at West Chester University for many years. We have been delighted to have WCU assist with our annual international short film festival. We look forward to continuing this relationship and working together with West Chester University to celebrate the creative spirit of our community.

— Victoria Flickinger, *West Chester Film Festival*

CCS Impact: Student Partner Feedback

Working with the Center during my time with the WCFF, I experienced nothing but kindness and respect. I was surrounded by individuals with an amazing work ethic toward providing value for the nonprofit organization. It was such a joy to share time and experiences with these very kind people.

— Liam Daly, *West Chester Film Festival*

I enjoyed working with the CCS and alongside Dr. Dietrich and Curtis. They were extremely helpful all along the way and instrumental in making sure that my project went smoothly. I would recommend to anyone they work with the CCS for a fantastic experience that not only prepares you for your career, but for life.

— Michael Loughlin, *Chester County Economic Development Council*

I had a very positive experience working with ERCC; I worked with Laurie and Jessica who were both great at communicating ideas with and getting feedback. I learned a lot during my experience, especially personal skills like managing my creative process and being able to execute ideas, communicate clearly and to work through challenges.

— Claire Campbell, *Exton Region Chamber of Commerce*

I met determined, intelligent people that I would have not met if I was not a student partner, and I learned more about the challenges hearing impaired populations face in the food and service industries.

— Jenna DeAngelis, *Exton Region Chamber of Commerce*

I have gained insight into the WCPD and experience working with a community partner and also with the local community Chester County History Center, getting a glimpse at the business side of such an organization.

— Kyle McKelvey, *West Chester Police Department*

University Collaborations

The CCS collaborates with numerous University departments and centers toward such community collaboration and partnership, creating a network of mutually beneficial relationships serving the community. The CCS team sincerely appreciates the support and relationships with these entities in connecting University resources to meet community needs.

The Innovation Media Center (IMC) coordinates with the CCS to provide and assist students with the technology that they might need to complete their projects. For example, the IMC will extend equipment loans to these students, so that they can focus on the task at hand without having to use their personal devices and/or for having timely access. The IMC Equipment Technician has also offered one-on-one assistance to students and the CCS staff in areas such as technology training, software assistance, and troubleshooting. “While the IMC strives to assist all students across the whole campus, we appreciate the partnership we have with the CCS and look forward to assisting them and their students with projects in the future”, said Bobby Kirkner, Library Technician, IMC.



During this academic year, the Office of Human Resources introduced a new Student Employment team to support over 1,500 student employees gain professional experience and earn a competitive rate while contributing to our campus community. This team oversees student employee recruitment and onboarding by answering student and hiring manager questions, monitoring hiring forms and I-9 verifications, setting up student employees in the payroll systems, and optimizing the use of federal work study funds. The Compliance team ensures our campus community is a safe place to learn and work. Student employees who must complete background clearances can visit the Office of Human Resources to complete the fingerprinting process, conveniently on campus, at no cost. “The Student Employment team, the

Compliance team, and the CCS have worked together to ensure the timely and successful onboarding of CCS student employees this academic year”, said Lacey Layberger, Compliance Coordinator, Office of Human Resources.



The Twardowski Career Development Center develops individual strategies to aid students and alumni in finding success by providing career and education counseling and facilitating recruiting and networking activities to build a bridge into the professional world. The CCS collaborates with the Twardowski Career Development Center to connect students with participating organizations providing impactful opportunities that allow students to apply academic knowledge and develop as professionals.

Meet Our Team



Dr. Julie Dietrich

Executive Director, Office of External Relations and Director, CCS

Dr. Julie L. Dietrich serves as the institution's primary government relations officer, cultivating and sustaining relationships with local, state, and federal elected officials and their offices, and a leading liaison within community. Through her position, Dr. Dietrich focuses upon executing strategic community and economic development as well as facilitating communication and negotiating partnerships among key leaders to help leverage and optimize the use of institutional assets and addressing community need.



Curtis Stockley IV

CCS Graduate Assistant

As the Academic Year 2023-2024 Graduate Assistant for the Office, Curtis served an essential role through fulfilling project management and tracking responsibilities, developing and managing website content, and contributing to the communication materials. He was also integral to the collaboration and partnership through the CCS, helping to cultivate students' skillsets and knowledge throughout their community-engaged, project-based learning experiences.

Connect With Us

The West Chester University Center for Community Solutions serves as a link between the University and the community. For information on how you can partner with CCS, please contact the following:



jdietrich@wcupa.edu
610-436-3424

Dr. Julie Dietrich, CCS Director



The Center for Community Solutions serves the mission of West Chester University and the Division of University Affairs. University Affairs cultivates and maintains effective relationships with internal and external constituencies to enhance the overall visibility, reputation, and appreciation of West Chester University and its institutional priorities.