

# REQUEST FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Community Application



Augustana College



The Augustana College Upper Mississippi Center (UMC) is accepting proposals from cities, counties, and local organizations to become a 2026-2028 Community Partner.

## PROGRAM BACKGROUND

### WHAT IS THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI CENTER?

The Upper Mississippi Center (UMC) mobilizes Augustana College faculty, staff, and students to collaborate with communities in addressing pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. Partnership with the UMC provides communities with specialized expertise, interns to support high-priority projects, research assistants to conduct related studies, interdisciplinary perspectives to address complex problems, on-the-ground capacity to complete work, and assistance with project management.

By working alongside local organizations, governments, and nonprofits, the UMC connects academic resources with community needs. Communities gain access to innovative ideas, research support, and additional capacity while students gain meaningful, hands-on experience applying their knowledge and skills to complex, interdisciplinary challenges.

Since its founding in 2013, the UMC has fostered high-impact learning across campus through community-based research, project-based coursework, internships, and service-learning. Rooted in the liberal arts, these experiences draw on the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences to prepare students to address today's most pressing community challenges.

### WHAT IS THE AUGUSTANA ACCELERATOR?

The Augustana Accelerator is the cornerstone of the UMC's efforts to build learning partnerships that both enrich the liberal arts education and help communities solve pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. The model establishes a one- to two-year partnership between Augustana and a community partner, aligning existing courses, independent research, internships, and other learning experiences with community-identified priorities.



Students assess macroinvertebrate populations in a local stream—one factor involved in determining the overall health of a watershed.

## YOU COULD BE OUR COMMUNITY PARTNER!

In this partnership, **you identify high-priority projects that strengthen local and regional economies, foster vibrant and livable communities, promote healthier and happier individuals, and support a more sustainable environment.**

Experienced faculty from a diverse array of disciplines will lead teams of passionate, creative students to tackle your priority initiatives. Expertise is available in many areas:

- **Accounting and Finance:** financial planning & budgeting
- **Business and Marketing:** plan & strategy development
- **Graphic Design:** website & social media design
- **Biology and Ecology:** wildlife & plant survey inventories
- **Environmental Science:** soil & water quality assessments
- **GIS and Data Science:** mapping, geospatial analysis, predictive modeling, & database design and analysis
- **Public Policy and Administration:** ordinances and management plans (stormwater, urban forestry, watershed)
- **Urban and Transportation Planning:** park & community masterplans
- **Resiliency Planning:** stormwater & flood mitigation strategies
- **Archival and Historical Research**
- **Survey and Interview Research**

# 8 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

BY THE NUMBERS SINCE 2015

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECTS

**+975** STUDENTS   **+50** COURSES   **+40** FACULTY   **+20** DEPARTMENTS

## SI PROJECTS AND FACULTY MENTORED RESEARCH

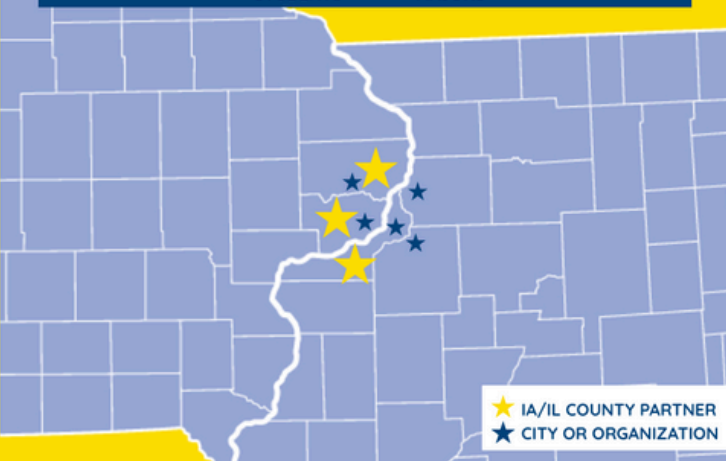
**+125** STUDENTS   **+15** MAJORS

## ACADEMIC INTERNSHIPS

**+25** STUDENTS   **+15** MAJORS

## SUMMER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE INTERNSHIPS

**+100** STUDENTS   **+20** MAJORS



★ IA/IL COUNTY PARTNER  
★ CITY OR ORGANIZATION

## TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS

**Interdisciplinary Projects:** Community partners work with the UMC on large or multifaceted projects that require expertise from multiple disciplines and a variety of courses. Typical interdisciplinary projects range from \$10,000-\$25,000.

**Disciplinary Projects:** Community partners collaborate with the UMC on smaller, focused projects that typically involve one or two classes and address specific issues. Typical disciplinary projects range from \$2,000-\$5,000.

Over the course of the partnership, projects may be modified or new ones added to meet emerging community needs.

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS?

Staff involvement is a key element of a successful partnership. Each partner should designate a Program Coordinator to serve as the main liaison between the organization and the UMC. The time commitment will vary based on the number and complexity of projects. Partners should also assign staff to serve as Project Leads for each individual initiative. Project Leads act as the primary contact for students and faculty, compile information and materials, mentor participants during site visits, attend meetings, contribute to project reviews and presentations, review and edit final deliverables, and participate in kickoff and end-of-year events.

## WHAT WILL THIS COST COMMUNITY PARTNERS?

We ask that partners make a financial contribution through a program fee based on a sliding scale, which considers the number and complexity of projects as well as the expected outcomes and deliverables. This contribution helps ensure that community partners are actively invested in the projects. There is no required minimum, and the anticipated contribution is one of several factors considered in project selection. Program fees cover:

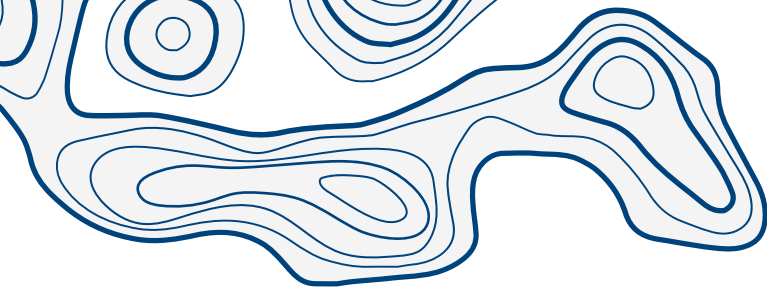
- Coordination between Augustana faculty, staff, and community partners
- Travel for student and faculty site visits
- Data collection and analysis
- Lab, software, and field study equipment
- Printing, postage, and distribution of high-quality final reports and deliverables
- Publicity that incurs direct costs to the UMC

Partner communities may also fund their contribution through collaboration with other organizations, such as counties, state agencies, school and watershed districts, private developers, business partners, or chambers of commerce. UMC and Augustana College Advancement Office staff can assist communities in identifying potential partners and funding sources on a project-by-project basis.

To learn more about projects completed with past community partners, visit:

[www.augustana.edu/academics/upper-mississippi-center](http://www.augustana.edu/academics/upper-mississippi-center)





## CRITERIA FOR PARTNER SELECTION

A panel of Augustana faculty and staff will evaluate applications using the following criteria:

**Top-Level Support:** Applications should demonstrate commitment from key decision-makers (city/county managers, elected officials, department heads). Leaders should describe their willingness to allocate staff time and resources, participate in related courses, and mentor students.

**Community On-the-Ground Impact:** Projects should align with the community's short- and long-term strategic goals and show clear potential for measurable, positive community impact. Applicants should also explain how success will be evaluated after the partnership concludes.

**Project-Course Match:** Projects and deliverables must be feasible for Augustana faculty and students. Matches are determined by existing courses, research capacity, and faculty/student interest. Early collaboration with the UMC Program Manager and Director strengthens alignment. Note: not all proposed projects are guaranteed to be matched with a course.

**External Partnerships:** Projects involving other organizations (school districts, state agencies, nonprofits, businesses, professional associations) are especially encouraged. Applications should describe how these partnerships will function and enhance the project's impact.

**Local Financial Contribution:** Financial contributions signal the community's commitment to the partnership. Applications should specify the amount and source(s) of funding, whether pooled or distributed by department. Priority will be given to proposals with sufficient funding to support completion, taking into account project scope, complexity, duration, and faculty/student involvement.

## PARTNERSHIPS & IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL PROJECTS

Successful partnerships are built through collaboration between community leaders and UMC staff. We've found that the most successful partnerships follow this framework:

1. Community leaders share the request for proposals with key stakeholders to gauge interest.
2. If interest is sufficient, UMC and community partners meet to brainstorm potential projects and answer questions.
3. The community partner refines and prioritizes the project list, defining scope and expected deliverables.
4. A follow-up meeting with UMC reviews the list and explores matches with learning experiences.
5. If selected as a partner, separate meetings are held with relevant staff, leaders, and Augustana faculty to finalize the scope of work for each project.

UMC staff are available throughout the application process to assist with project development and proposal preparation. Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with other entities to strengthen proposals, expand stakeholder involvement, and identify potential funding sources.

## PROGRAM TIMELINE

Fall semester runs from early September to mid-December; J-term lasts three weeks in January; spring semester runs from early February to mid-May; summer internships take place in June and July; and yearlong projects span August to May.

**September:** UMC issues a request for proposals from community partners and begins accepting applications.

**September-October:** UMC staff are available to discuss project ideas, refine proposals, and meet with interested partners.

**November 15:** Proposals submitted by this date will receive full consideration. Reviews begin immediately and continue on a rolling basis thereafter.

**January-February:** UMC notifies the Primary Partner and Microproject Partners, coordinates media announcements, and finalizes project matches with Augustana courses and faculty.



Former Rock Island Mayor Mike Thoms and Augustana College President Andrea Talentino join faculty and students in a citywide effort to survey 12,000 homes and map water service lines to support lead pipe replacement to protect residents' health.

# APPLICATION

## Submit Your Application

Email your completed application to:  
Alyssa Klauer  
UMC Sustainability Program Manager  
alyssaklauer@augustana.edu

We strongly recommend meeting with us to brainstorm project ideas prior to submitting a formal application. Applications submitted by the deadline of **November 15th, 2025 at 5:00pm** will be ensured full consideration. We will accept applications on a rolling-basis thereafter.

## Community Partner Contact Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Partnership Type

Interdisciplinary ☐      Disciplinary ☐

## Demonstration of Support

Include letters of support from key decision-makers. Ex. mayor, city manager, elected governing body, executive director, board of directors, etc.

## Proposed Local Funding Contribution

Indicate the amount of local contribution available and the source(s) of those funds. Typical disciplinary projects range from \$2,000-\$5000, while interdisciplinary projects range from \$10,000-\$20,000.  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Proposed Project List & Descriptions

*Copy/paste the template below for each proposed project.*

**Project Name:**

**Project Lead:**

**Project Goal** (state project goal and specific deliverables desired):

**Timeline** (indicate the desired date for the project deliverables from the UMC):

**Project Description** (provide a narrative of the project's overall scale and scope including the specific, achievable, and measurable objectives addressed):

**Project Relevance and Priority** (describe the relationship of the project to the community's stated strategic goals and explain the potential of community impact):

**Resources** (describe all staff involved with estimate of hours/week available, materials supplies, equipment, internships you are willing to support, etc.):

**Existing Materials** (list existing plans, report, documents, or other information relevant to the project that may be shared with Augustana's UMC and their students):