

# It's a Match: PNC Foundation and the Ginsberg Center

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A matchmaking mechanism identifying connections between U-M resources and community needs gets funding from a like-minded organization to maximize local impact.

Nonprofit organizations play an important role in helping to address a host of related challenges within our society. Despite talented and passionate staff that are strengthening our communities and providing important services to our most vulnerable citizens, these organizations are often stretched beyond capacity and can lack the resources to fully deliver on their vision and intended impact.

The **University of Michigan** is a world-renowned university dedicated to serving the people of Michigan and the world by developing leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future. The gap between community-identified priorities and U-M interest and skill set is one that the **Edward Ginsberg Center** fills, serving as a community engagement and matchmaking entity.

The PNC Foundation's priority is to form alliances with community-based nonprofit organizations in order to enhance educational opportunities, with an emphasis on early childhood education, and to promote the growth of communities through economic development initiatives.

These groups share a common interest, and when connected through U-M's **Business Engagement Center**, this is precisely where the PNC Foundation's local leaders saw a match. The more they learned about the Ginsberg Center's program to pair university resources with community needs, the more compelling the program was for investment. As a result, the PNC Foundation funded a pilot program with the Ginsberg Center to cultivate or strengthen relationships with nonprofits in the Ypsilanti community.

### **How it works**

Ginsberg's staff gathers data about nonprofits' work, challenges, and needs that could be addressed by U-M students, faculty, or other campus resources. They collect and categorize this information and enter it all into a customer relationship management system. From there, in-house "matchmakers" reach out to our broad networks within U-M to identify potential resources to support a nonprofit partner.

Everything is on the table: from help with one day community service projects to student consulting help for a semester. Most of the needs identified are more significant requests such as evaluation or quality improvement support, research on best practices, or technical expertise with things like marketing, finance, or even systems design work. These projects offer a higher value-add for U-M students and faculty, giving them the opportunity to take their classroom experience or research interest into the real world.

### **Impact**

As a result of the PNC Foundation’s funding, the program created 19 community-university matches with 17 local agencies in Ypsilanti. Each match connected a community partner with U-M resources that has helped build their capacity to deliver on their respective missions.

“Alliances are where we identify and provide the most impact, and an alliance such as this one with PNC allows us to play a role in maximizing the public good done by both community organizations and the University of Michigan. It’s a relationship that has already born great fruit for partners in communities such as Ypsilanti and one we look forward to continuing and deepening in the years ahead,” shares Dave Waterhouse, Associate Director of the Ginsberg Center.

The PNC Foundation echoes this sentiment. “This pilot program with the Ginsberg Center helps us make an impact on student learning and our community partners,” said Ric DeVore, PNC regional president for Detroit and Southeast Michigan. “The ripple effect is impressive and has already produced strong results.”The impact is evident in each organization. Three key examples of the matches between Ypsilanti alliances and U-M resources highlight the on-the-ground effect these alliances have developed.

## **Mentor2Youth**



U-M students engage with Mentor2Youth participants.

Mentor2Youth is an Ypsilanti-based nonprofit with a mission of helping disadvantaged youth in Washtenaw County secure a bright future through the creation of a school-to-career pipeline. The PNC Foundation funding has helped Ginsberg broaden this organization's impact, by matching Mentor2Youth with U-M resources to deliver a series of STEM workshops for elementary-aged students.

The Ginsberg Center identified student groups and individuals already focused on this key work at the University of Michigan, and the resulting connections led to the design and execution of an eight-week workshop by FEMMES (Females Excelling More in Math, Engineering, and the Sciences), a student group focused on attracting girls to STEM fields, and the Society of Women Engineers.

“Ginsberg's team supported us in realizing our vision of a STEM program in Ypsilanti,” says Emmanuel Jones, Executive Director of Mentor2Youth. “One of our biggest focuses is on providing kids with exposure to disciplines they may not be taught in school. At the end of this year's workshops, we ended up having several students who actually were interested in pursuing careers in STEM fields. I don't think we would have had the capacity to do this on our own without Ginsberg's help.”

## **SOS Community Services**

SOS Community Services is an Ypsilanti-based organization that promotes housing stability and family self-sufficiency via programs and services. Their SOS Food Pantry operates out of an older home. At present, food donations are stored in a basement solely accessible by old stairs. Thus, when Food Gatherers, another local non-profit, drops off its sizable donations, often weighing hundreds of pounds, the food has to be carried downstairs for storage, then up again for re-distribution—a less than ideal situation.

SOS contacted the Ginsberg Center in hopes of pursuing a remedy. Ginsberg connected the organization with Amy Hortop, a mechanical engineering faculty member at U-M. One of her teams of mechanical engineering students met with SOS to assess the situation, then built a prototype for a system of rotating trays that would carry the food up and down the stairs.

“Ginsberg facilitated the connection between our need and the mechanical engineering students. It was instrumental in bringing us together with Amy to talk about the nature of the issue,” says Rhonda Weathers, Executive Director of SOS Community Services. In the coming semester, Amy and her students will be moving towards building a full-scale version of the system.

## Michigan Works! Southeast



The Summer Youth Employment Program through MichiganWorks! places local youth in jobs in the community and at the University of Michigan.

Another example of a social sector partner in Ypsilanti is Michigan Works!, which provides services and support to Michigan’s workforce development system. This year, the Ginsberg Center’s Community Technical Assistance Collaborative (CTAC) worked with Michigan

Works! SE to provide crucial support for determining the focus and maximizing the impact of its Expungement Fair, an event designed to help convicted felons go through the process of having their convictions expunged from their records in order to improve their career opportunities.

CTAC helped Michigan Works! Analyze existing data that informed design of a clear process for participants, as well as tools for gathering and evaluating data regarding client engagement with the process.

In addition, Ginsberg partners directly with Michigan Works! on the Summer Youth Employment program. This initiative aims to provide career exposure, networking opportunities and work experience to young people from across Washtenaw County, with a particular focus on reaching underserved youth from the Ypsilanti area. The Ginsberg Center helped to connect this program to the University as a major employer, as well as continues to serve as one of two university representatives on the programs' steering committee, alongside Michigan Works! Southeast, the Office of Community and Economic Development for Washtenaw County, and Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan.

## **The work continues**

Through relationships with nonprofit, education, and government partners – and the support of funding partners such as the PNC Foundation – the Ginsberg Center continues to develop a dynamic inventory of community-identified priorities and needs. The resulting partnerships leverage corporate, campus and community resources for increased impact—all in service to the public good.