

Program Manual 2023-2024

**Peace Corps Fellows Program
Applied Community and Economic Development Fellows Program**



STEVENSON CENTER
FOR COMMUNITY AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Illinois State University

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Foreword

The placement process described here is based on a proposal by the senior associate director at the time, Beverly Beyer, which was informed by discussions at spring 2004 meetings of the Applied Community and Economic Development (ACED) Students Association, student suggestions, and the professional judgment of Stevenson Center staff. The ACED Students Association and director have approved the revised placement process. The Stevenson Center board as well as the ACED Students Association reviewed previous editions of this program manual.

NOTE: The Stevenson Center may amend this manual at any time. If changes are made, the Center will provide Fellows with an updated version and highlight those changes.

Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development
Campus Box 4200, Illinois State University
Normal, IL 61790-4200

Dr. Frank D. Beck, Director

Email: fdbeck@ilstu.edu

Phone: (309) 438-7770

Dane Myers, Assistant Director

E-mail: damyers@ilstu.edu

Phone: (309) 438-8685

Paige Buschman, Program Coordinator

Email: pebusc2@ilstu.edu

Phone: (309) 438-5945

Amy Scovel, Office Manager

Email: alscove@ilstu.edu

Phone: (309) 438-7090

StevensonCenter@ilstu.edu

www.StevensonCenter.org

www.facebook.com/StevensonCenter

[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/isu.stevenson.center): [isu.stevenson.center](https://www.instagram.com/isu.stevenson.center)

[YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...): Illinois State University Stevenson Center

[LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/stevenson-center): Stevenson Center Alumni and Fellows



The Center, which includes the Vernon C. and Elsie D. Pohlmann Resource and Conference Room, is located in the suite of offices accessed through room 435A on the 4th floor and north end of Stevenson Hall.

In the Spirit of Adlai E. Stevenson II

Named for the Illinois Governor, Presidential candidate, and United Nations Ambassador, the Stevenson Center strives to embody Adlai E. Stevenson II's spirit of public service.

Introduction

This manual is written for Peace Corps Fellows and Applied Community and Economic Development Fellows in the Applied Community and Economic Development (ACED) sequence. The purpose is to outline the benefits and obligations of this program, to clarify program and academic policies, and to identify the persons responsible for administering these policies.

Begun in 1994, this Fellows Program is one of over 120 Peace Corps Fellows Programs in various disciplines, each providing Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) opportunities for graduate learning in an applied context. In 1998, Illinois State University began recruiting ACED Fellows: persons who have at least one year of full-time experience in community development or social services, as either a paid professional or full-time volunteer. This experience may have been domestic or international.

Fellows participate in an interdisciplinary, applied graduate curriculum. The sequences of the participating academic departments/schools include an 11-month professional practice internship. The Stevenson Center places Fellows in both urban and rural areas, with many, but not all, placements to date occurring in the state of Illinois. Peace Corps Fellows are required by the Peace Corps Fellows Program to be placed in underserved communities in the United States. ACED Fellows may be placed more broadly, although the Stevenson Center may prioritize underserved U.S. communities. Otherwise, the university and program policies for ACED Fellows and Peace Corps Fellows are identical.

The Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development facilitates the Peace Corps Fellows Program, the ACED Fellows Program, Peace Corps Prep, and faculty/staff applied research/service projects in community and economic development. The Center works with academic departments/schools, other university offices, and off-campus partners to coordinate the Center's processes and activities.

The participating academic departments/schools—economics, kinesiology and recreation, politics and government, and sociology and anthropology—award master's degrees in applied economics, kinesiology and recreation, political science, sociology, and anthropology, respectively, each with an ACED sequence. The sequence in the respective departments/schools includes completion of a specialized core curriculum designed to prepare students for their professional practice assignments and further service after graduation. The sequence provides students an opportunity to learn the theoretical underpinnings of the disciplines, while providing an applied setting to explore and test these concepts.

Governance

The chairs/directors of the academic departments/schools of economics, kinesiology and recreation, politics and government, and sociology and anthropology govern the Stevenson Center's related programs. The chairs/directors are advised by the campus Stevenson Center board made up of themselves, the graduate coordinators for each department/school, affiliated faculty, the director, the assistant director, the program coordinator, and student representatives—usually one to four students chosen by their peers. The Stevenson Center board advises the chairs/directors on policy, site selection recommendations, and all other matters related to the Fellows Program. Due to state and federal privacy laws, student representatives cannot participate in board communication relating to individual Fellows or the placement of individual Fellows. The board may allow some decisions, for example, those pertaining to individual students, to be handled solely by the graduate coordinator and other Stevenson Center staff.

Curriculum and other academic matters are primarily guided by the respective academic departments/schools. Each department/school's graduate studies committee or department/school council makes recommendations that are channeled through the Dean and College Council, then Provost and Academic Senate. Some matters, such as overall degree programs and their Sequences, also require involvement of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE).

NOTE: In this manual, “degree program” refers to the academic degree/sequence as approved by the IBHE; “Program” refers to the overall experience of the Fellows Program.

Mission Statement

The Stevenson Center at Illinois State University promotes community and economic development in the U.S. and abroad. The Center cultivates leaders in public service through a unique combination of interdisciplinary coursework, research, professional practice, and community collaboration.

Goals

- Cultivate leaders to positively impact communities
- Recruit talented, motivated, diverse students
- Convey current, relevant knowledge
- Build experience through professional practice
- Prepare students for meaningful careers
- Foster partnerships to meet mutual goals
- Enhance relationships with organizations, campus, alumni, and supporters
- Make new connections
- Provide effective services and prepared students
- Promote scholarship of community and economic development
- Raise visibility of student and faculty research
- Facilitate applied research projects
- Secure commensurate resources
- Strengthen marketing
- Continuously assess performance, staffing, and structure
- Invest in professional development
- Pursue funding for organizational sustainability and adaptability

Values

Service • Education • Drive • Community • Diversity • Collaboration • Integrity

EDI Statements

Our Vision: (That) The Stevenson Center is a place where every student feels dignified, listened to, supported, and celebrated for who they are and in the work they accomplish here.

Our Mission: To act as stewards of this program and advocates of our students, promoting inclusion, justice, and equity and challenging practices that maintain the status quo and benefit the advantaged and privileged.

Our Strategies: We strive to actively recruit, admit, hire, and inclusively support students, faculty, and staff that display diverse backgrounds and exemplify care for inclusivity and a socially just mindset; deliberately design and offer curricula that is generated by diverse scholars and practitioners and displays diversity of thought while accurately representing the experience of diverse communities; regularly review our policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that they are in line with our mission; and provide space for students to share their perspective and live their authentic truths.

Our Philosophy: As an organization engaged in Community and Economic Development and in training professionals to work in diverse communities, we believe that promoting social justice and combating social injustice is inherently part of our work. Similarly, we believe that the purposeful and positive unfolding of community requires people learning from each other and working collaboratively to find solutions to locally-defined problems. We value equity and justice as the means to proliferating fairly derived community development outcomes. The interdisciplinary nature of our program also exemplifies our belief that diversity of perspective and thought is valuable and prompts stronger outcomes. We recognize that educational institutions have historically been exclusive in nature and have purposefully and systematically marginalized and oppressed members of our community. We acknowledge we are doing this work on land brutally stolen from native peoples. We understand the limitations of doing this work in that context and seek to make progress within the confines of these truths and systems. We advocate for people marginalized by experiences shaped by, but not limited to: race, ethnicity, color, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, class and economic status, spirituality and religion, disability, neurodivergence, age, military status, marital status, visa and citizenship status, geographic location, language/linguistic ability, and the intersectionality thereof. As an organization, knowing we are not perfect and will not do this work perfectly, we seek constant growth and improvement by remaining open and taking the opportunity to learn from every misstep we may take.

Learning Goals for the Applied Community and Economic Development Sequence

The Departments of Economics, Politics and Government, and Sociology and Anthropology, and the School of Kinesiology and Recreation, adopt the following learning goals for students in their respective master's degree programs with the interdisciplinary Applied Community and Economic Development (ACED) Sequence. These goals promote the cross-disciplinary competencies required of community and economic development practitioners in both U.S. and overseas environments. They also align with the strategic plans of the Stevenson Center and Illinois State University. Students will achieve these goals through the year of on-campus study followed by full-time field experience and, in some cases, a culminating research project.

ACED Sequence students will learn and apply the concepts, themes, and theories central to the interdisciplinary community and economic development literature such that they demonstrate knowledge of:

Forces affecting communities, including:

- 1) The dimensions of power in communities and what roles community and economic development professionals can have within those power dynamics.
- 2) The complex relationships among public policy, economic context, and the needs and resources for community and economic development.
- 3) Intersecting global, national, and local factors that impact communities and their economies.
- 4) The dynamic means by which communities change over time, including:
- 5) How people can be mobilized, through activism and/or changes in public policy, to create desired changes in communities.
- 6) Social, cultural, and economic differences affecting people, organizations, and communities in the development process.

ACED Sequence students will understand and demonstrate transferable skills and appropriate techniques to support their effectiveness in community and economic development careers. Students will be able to:

- A. ANALYZE: Apply quantitative and qualitative empirical research methods to design, direct, and evaluate programs and projects.
- B. PLAN: Devise community and economic development strategies that engage stakeholders in achieving measurable results.
- C. EXECUTE: Secure and coordinate the resources and relationships to manage programs and projects with maximum impact.
- D. COMMUNICATE: Effectively use a range of tools to clearly and convincingly share information in a variety of settings.

Academic Programs and GPA

The requirements for the Program are unique in each department/school, and Fellows should consult their plans of study and their academic graduate coordinators about course selection, thesis preparation or capstone requirements, and registration. Each department/school may provide a suggested list of electives for Fellows that reflect not only past Fellows' course choices but also courses that may be useful in an applied setting. Fellows should ultimately make course selections in consultation with their graduate coordinator. Academic requirements for Fellows seeking master's degrees in anthropology, applied economics, kinesiology and recreation, political science, and sociology with the ACED sequence are available online, from graduate coordinators, and in the Stevenson Center office. Please also note that ACED students are expected to maintain a 3.0 grade point average throughout the program. This is required to maintain the first-year Graduate Assistantship, which allows for the tuition waiver. If a student does not earn a 3.0 in the first or second semester, their future in the program will be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the student's academic department. If a student is allowed to continue in the

program, they will be placed on academic probation and have one semester to bring their GPA back up to at least a 3.0.

Staff Roles

Director

The Stevenson Center director's duties include planning and directing community-economic development research. The director submits external grant proposals; oversees the Stevenson Center core curriculum and coordination of classes; develops, in consultation with the board, an annual financial planning document; creates and implements Center policies in consultation with the board; and serves as chair of the Stevenson Center board.

Assistant Director (AD)

The Stevenson Center assistant director's duties include: selecting prospective students for admission; aiding the academic graduate coordinators with respect to student admission and matriculation; providing counsel to students; supervising the placement process and evaluating students in AmeriCorps positions; maintaining relations with Peace Corps and relevant offices on campus; and aiding the director in other Center operations.

Program Coordinator (PC)

The Stevenson Center program coordinator's duties include: recruiting students, from initial queries to completed applications; advising and mentoring students in meeting program requirements; placing students in off-campus assistantship and professional practice positions; managing relations between students and host sites; managing the Center's online presence and digital marketing; data management and program assessment; and EDI strategic planning and programming. They aid in other Center operations as needed/assigned.

Office Manager

The Stevenson Center office manager performs a variety of support tasks relating to management of student (current, former, and prospective), host organization, and other files; bookkeeping; publications and website maintenance; telephone reception; correspondence; and other duties as needed.

Office Space and Pohlmann Resource and Conference Room

Through the generous gift of Dr. Vernon C. and Elsie D. Pohlmann, students have access to two workstations; a small library; and a conference table at which to work, meet for group projects, dine, and learn from each other. Students have keys and access to the Vernon C. and Elsie D. Pohlmann Resource and Conference Room (Stevenson Hall 435C) around the clock.

The workstations can be accessed like any other on campus. There is a printing station either in the conference room or in the hall outside of the Center. Students not affiliated with the Center may use the space only when Stevenson Center students are present.

Stevenson Center staff also use this space for meetings, sometimes with external partners. As such, it needs to be clean and presentable during business hours. If the space will be closed to students, staff will give advance notice whenever possible.

The kitchen is maintained by the Stevenson Center community. The refrigerator and microwave are present for your responsible use. Tea, coffee, (an assortment of other beverages) and hot water are also available.

It is not the job of Stevenson Center staff to clean. Please follow these simple rules:

Be responsible for removing what you place in the fridge in a timely fashion. If food in the fridge begins to rot/mold or smell, staff have the right to throw these items and their containers away without notice.

Clean off the conference table after EACH meal and/or work session.

Dishes used for beverages may be washed in the Economics department office. Because we do not have a sink in the office you have a few options for washing food dishes: 1) Use disposable or compostable paper plates and cutlery; 2) bring your own utensils/dishes and take those items home for washing; 3) Bring your own dishes or use ours and wash them in the restroom.

Place a paper towel over food items as they are warmed in the microwave. If spills or splatter occurs, please wipe the microwave down.

The main office is generally open from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. each day. If it is closed during those hours, a note on the door will indicate the time it will reopen.

Please enjoy the collection of artifacts in the main office. These have been donated by friends of the Stevenson Center, including returned Peace Corps Volunteers Ann Wortham, Ralph and Louise Bellas, Beverly Beyer, Michael Brown and many alumni.

Admissions

Department/school admissions and financial award decisions are made by the graduate coordinator and chair/director. Fellows Program admissions—including eligibility for a Fellows Program internship or off-campus assistantship—are made jointly by the academic department/school and the Center's assistant director. Fellows are required to sign a letter of commitment that outlines the minimum academic requirements and financial awards, secures Fellows' commitment to an 11-month internship, and lists a timeline for on-campus and off-campus experiences that assumes satisfactory academic progress.

Billing

The Stevenson Center is not responsible for billing or account management, though staff is available to help answer any questions you may have about your bill.

Each semester, following registration, you will be able to access your Student Account and review your bill. Your bill will include student fees which are calculated based on the number of credits in which you are enrolled. It may also show insurance charges and sometimes tuition. As a Stevenson Center Fellow, you will not be responsible for paying tuition. You will also receive reimbursements for insurance costs during the fall and spring semesters (summer insurance charges are the responsibility of the student).

Fall charges will be added to your account on August 1. Spring charges will be added to accounts on January 1. Summer charges will be added to accounts on May 1. As of 2023, tuition waivers should be applied to your account before these dates. Therefore, you should not see tuition charges. In the event that you do see tuition charges, please reach out to Student Accounts so a note can be added to your account. Please also contact the Program Coordinator and inform them of the situation.

Students with pending loan monies should not make any payments if their tuition waiver and loan funds exceed the cost of their current/coming semester. Please be in touch with Shawn Rigsby in Financial Aid with any questions about your loans.

The Student Accounts Office does not have a way to notify students when their accounts have received financial aid and/or when waivers are applied. Students are expected to check their accounts regularly. It is possible that other charges (such as unpaid parking fines, unpaid library fines, health service charges, etc.) could be added even after you pay your fees. Please check your account often to avoid additional fees for late payments.

If needed, students will have the option of several different payment plans. If you need a payment plan, you must select one by Sept 15th for fall semester and Feb 15th for spring semester OR pay in full by those dates. Student Accounts will charge late fees for those who do not keep up on their payment plan installments. If you are on a payment plan, the system will send notifications about changes in your balance as well as reminders for upcoming installment due dates.

Each student has a Student Accounts (SA) Representative assigned to them. That information is located in the My Illinois State Portal. If you have specific questions/concerns about your student account, please contact your SA Representative.

More information about billing and Student Accounts please visit:

<https://studentaccounts.illinoisstate.edu/billing/>

Insurance

Stevenson Center Fellows are eligible for Student Health Insurance while enrolled full-time in the program.

Students who are registered for and participating in nine (9) or more hours of credit and are assessed general/mandatory fees are also automatically included in and assessed a fee for Student Health Insurance.

Student Health Insurance fees are reimbursed for all Spring and Fall semesters as part of the tuition waiver package. Those electing Student Health Insurance are responsible for costs (will not receive a refund of insurance costs) during both summer semesters. During the first summer, students are rarely enrolled in enough credits to be eligible for automatic enrollment and, therefore, must choose to enroll in health insurance using the certification form linked below. During the second summer semester, students will take a 498A90 course that should automatically enroll them in Student Health Insurance, but it is the student's responsibility to ensure that this process is facilitated correctly and they must fill out the form.

If you do not want Student Health Insurance, you will have to complete an online cancellation form with proof of other coverage (copy of insurance card may be required) each semester prior to the 15th calendar day of the Fall and Spring semesters. You can find the cancellation form and additional information here: <https://healthservices.illinoisstate.edu/insurance/keep-cancel.shtml>

Students are required to have health insurance during the professional practice experience. At the beginning of each semester in which you are engaging in a professional practice experience (your first summer semester – your second summer semester), students must complete a Student Health Insurance Certification Form. You can find these forms here: <https://healthservices.illinoisstate.edu/insurance/forms.shtml>

Please note that it is the student's responsibility to ensure proper completion of all forms, to maintain an understanding of their registration plan and current registration status and to manage their insurance coverage status. Please call Student Health Insurance at (309) 438-2515 for any questions about insurance.

Graduate Assistantship Assignments

Assistantship duties, tuition awards, and stipends may vary for Fellows, as they do for all graduate students in these departments/schools. Assistantships generally require 20 hours of work per week. On-campus graduate assistantship assignments and financial awards will be determined by the department/school

chairs/directors and graduate coordinators, in consultation with the assistant director and based on the individual department/school's need and Fellows' abilities. Assistantships are what allow for the tuition waiver, so it is important to balance your Assistantship duties with your need to maintain a 3.0 GPA which is necessary to hold a GA. Please reach out to staff if you experience difficulty sustaining this balance.

The term "off-campus assistantships" refers to assistantships outside of an academic department/school. Off-campus assistantships, which may be hosted and/or funded by non-profit agencies, units of government, or other community or campus organizations, will be awarded on a competitive basis. Some may include AmeriCorps service. These off-campus assistantships may vary in pay and duties, depending upon the requirements of the funding source and host entity, but they generally carry monthly remuneration equal to the on-campus assistantships.

Assistantship Resignation/Termination

The following passage has been added directly from the [Graduate Assistant Handbook](#). Please consult the handbook first for any questions you have about your Assistantship experience. Resignation or termination from your assistantship may have tuition waiver, enrollment, taxes, and visa consequences, including but not limited to loss of all or part of your tuition waiver.

Resignation: If you need to resign your GA appointment, the resignation should be in writing or e-mail to the responsible administrator in your appointing unit indicating your last day of work. It is customary to provide as much notice as possible, but no less than two weeks, if you cannot fulfill your assistantship.

Termination:

Dismissal from your academic program, for any reason, will make you ineligible to hold a graduate assistantship and your appointment will be terminated. Your appointing unit, in coordination with the Graduate School, may terminate your assistantship for any one of the following reasons related to your role as a student:

- 1) failure to remain in good standing;*
- 2) failure to maintain enrollment in 9 credit hours of course work for each fall or spring semester, or 3 hours for summer, while on an assistantship unless an exception to the minimum academic load has been approved (See the section on Exceptions to Academic Load);*
- 3) default on a student loan which has not been cleared within 6 months of the date the GA appointment begins;*
- 4) failure to make satisfactory progress towards degree completion in a timely fashion; or*
- 5) failure to uphold Graduate School, unit/department, and/or University policies as it pertains to your role as a student, including, but not limited to, policies on academic integrity in your own academic work.*

Termination for any reason related to your role as a student other than those listed above can only be carried out with the approval of the Graduate School; furthermore, the student must be afforded due process.

If you are terminated for any reason related to your role as a student, you will be provided with a reason in writing and you will be provided an opportunity to respond before the termination becomes final.

Your appointing unit, after consultation with Labor Relations in Human Resources, may take disciplinary action, up to and including termination of your assistantship, due to conduct or work performance issues. Conduct and work performance issues include but are not limited to:

1. *failure to uphold Graduate School, unit/department, and/or University policies as it pertains to your graduate assistant role, including, but not limited to, policies on academic integrity;*
2. *failure to meet the performance criteria expected by the unit providing the assistantship;*
3. *failure or refusal to perform assigned duties or attend mandatory meetings;*
4. *violation of any Federal or State law or regulation in the performance of your duties or that has a negative impact on the University; or*
5. *engagement in any other misconduct in the performance of University duties or academic activities.*

Discipline due to conduct or work performance issues in your graduate assistant role may result from an accumulation of infractions as well as from a single infraction. Formal disciplinary actions include a written warning and dismissal; the University reserves the right to skip the written warning step based upon the severity of the infraction.

Prior to making a determination to discipline a graduate assistant due to conduct or work performance issues in their graduate assistant role, the hiring unit supervisor or designee will hold an investigatory meeting with the graduate assistant. The graduate assistant will be given advanced notice of the meeting.

Please note that it is the Stevenson Center's desire to retain you as a student and graduate assistant. Please come to us early and regularly in the event of a concern or conflict with your Graduate Assistantship. We are here to support you.

Program and Course Evaluation

Fellows evaluate each of the ACED sequence courses and workshops during their on-campus stay. Fellows also provide evaluative feedback regarding the Fellows Program's training and support in reports during the off-campus internship. The Stevenson Center employs an undergraduate data management intern who supports our assessment efforts and staff request that Fellows complete a survey at the end of their first year and another at the end of their second year. The Stevenson Center also periodically solicits feedback on student performance from the community partners and hosts organizations. Feedback from students and community partners is welcome at any time.

An external evaluation of the Program has been conducted in the past, funded by an external grant or by Peace Corps. Like all other academic programs, the Fellows Program is subject to periodic program review by the university for the Illinois Board of Higher Education. The Stevenson Center has also engaged specific focus groups around important initiatives. All of these methods of evaluation assist the Stevenson Center board and staff in recommending to the academic department/school chairpersons changes in curricula, training, Program structure, and field support. Fellows may be asked by their respective academic departments/schools for additional feedback.

Capstone/Thesis Completion and Submission

Fellows whose degree programs require a thesis or capstone project are best served by starting to develop their research interests early. Each department has a slightly different set of guidelines around thesis and capstone requirements, so Fellows should consult with faculty and their graduate advisor while formulating research plans. Perhaps the most notable difference for those who have the option to complete either a capstone or a thesis (anthropology, political science, and sociology) is a capstone should utilize the theories and research skills gained from coursework to address a substantive problem encountered during the Professional Practice experience. Conversely, a thesis can address any academic research interest.

Fellows must submit their final capstone paper or thesis to the Digital Repository at Milner Library for permanent documentation of their work, and to allow others to access this work in the future (ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/scced). Include “Stevenson Center” as one of the keywords. So that the Stevenson Center may invite stakeholders, if possible, we request that Fellows who complete a thesis notify the Program Coordinator about the date and time of their defense and whether the meeting is open to the public. We request that Fellows who complete a Capstone project give a public presentation on its content; this is often scheduled at the end of the spring semester during one of the first years’ ACED core courses for the sake of convenience and an assured audience, but can be scheduled outside of this time as well. Please work with your faculty advisor and the AD/PC to schedule a presentation.

Internship Placement Process

A critical experience of the Fellows Program is the required 11-month professional practice internship. The terms “professional practice,” “placement,” and “internship” are used interchangeably, however “assistantships” specifically refer to on-campus employment during the first year. The placement is vital for the success of the service and applied learning missions of the Stevenson Center. It is so important to the Peace Corps that, without an applied service internship requirement, Peace Corps would not designate this Program a Peace Corps Fellows Program.

The purpose of these internships is threefold. The internships further the mission of the Fellows Program to provide economic and community development services to communities, especially those most in need. They also provide Fellows with professional work experience in community/economic development. Lastly, they enhance opportunities for research, including the completion of thesis or capstone requirements.

The placement decision is important to all the stakeholders in this experience, including:

- Communities and agencies, which fund and support Fellows in the field, and who depend on Fellows for technical help;
- Fellows, who are seeking an internship that continues their education and gives them experience that furthers their individual career goals; and
- The faculty and staff of the Stevenson Center’s affiliated academic departments/schools, who contribute to the education of these students and their preparation for internships and careers.

Current federal and state statutes regulating interstate educational programs require all colleges/universities to have approval from each state hosting interns. At this time, all states have approved Illinois State University.

Key Takeaways of the Placement Process

The professional practice placement process has many moving parts. There are several key takeaways which are critical for Fellows’ understanding to ensure a successful placement process:

The Stevenson Center PC with oversight from the AD, facilitates the professional practice placement process, with extensive feedback from Fellows and host organizations along the way.

While it is important to the Stevenson Center that Fellows’ career goals are advanced, the Fellows Program must also meet the needs of the other stakeholders. The Stevenson Center must determine the overall direction and appropriateness of placements and must work under the constraints of funding and site availability.

The more specific a Fellow’s substantive interest, the more flexible that Fellow must be geographically. Conversely, the narrower a Fellow’s geographic need, the more flexible that Fellow must be in terms of the substance of the internship. A Fellow pursuing a particular type of internship OR an internship in a particular city or town to the exclusion of all other opportunities is unacceptable: it is not in the best interest

of our community partners, and it does not fit the spirit of public service that guides the Center. Such a search can also seriously detract from a Fellow's experience on campus and/or lead to delays in beginning the internship. The internship may or may not have an overt connection to the Fellow's academic discipline. If a Fellow is concerned by potential applicant organizations/communities, the Fellow needs to tell AD/PC as soon as possible and by the end of the fall semester by the latest.

The PC ultimately assigns placements based on the best mutual fit for the group. The goal is to facilitate the best outcome for the group, as a whole, based on available applications/information.

Fellows receive funds distributed by ISU, but for which the revenue is paid by the host community or organization. These internships are essentially contractual arrangements between the university and host community or organization, involving the Stevenson Center and the Fellow.

For many organizations, the cost of the Fellow's scholarship and administrative costs are considered a large financial investment, which carries weight in the placement process. Not surprisingly, organizations' expectations are very high, and Fellows have in nearly all instances exceeded these expectations.

Placement Process Timeline

The following timeline illustrates how the placement process typically progresses. This process is subject to change due to unforeseeable circumstances.

Prior to Fellows Arriving on Campus

Preceding admission, assistant director (AD) and Fellow briefly discuss placement process during interview, including any reason why Fellow might not accept a placement.

Students sign and submit a letter of commitment, which acknowledges:

The Fellows Program combines graduate study with applied community/economic development experience. This service-learning commitment is required of each student to help communities and to strengthen the educational experience of Fellows. I have read and understand the Fellows Program Manual.

I will work for 11 months in a community/economic development internship placement. The current monthly disbursement for the second-year internships is \$2162.00. The goal of the Fellows Program is to provide an experience that builds transferable skills in community and economic development; specific types of internships in specific locations are not guaranteed. To be clear, placements may be more tied to community and economic development than to your specific academic discipline or substantive area of interest. I know that, if my coursework is completed in the usual timeframe, I am scheduled to begin my placement between June 2024 and August 2025. It is my responsibility to notify Stevenson Center staff as soon as possible if I have any conflicts with these dates.

The Stevenson Center places Fellows in both urban and rural areas. Since our founding in 1994, many, but not all, placements have been in the state of Illinois. Peace Corps Fellows are required by Peace Corps to be placed in underserved communities in the United States.

1st Year, Fall Semester

New student orientation: new students receive program manual that includes description of placement process (as well as basic information about completing professional practice requirements). The Program Coordinator meets with Fellows as a group (September Placement Meeting) to discuss their interests and to answer the following questions:

- 1) What kinds of issues would students like to address during their placements?
- 2) What kinds of skills would they like to develop?
- 3) With what kinds of organizations would they like to work?

Throughout the process, Fellows, faculty, and staff are encouraged to submit suggestions of organizations/placements that could benefit all Fellows. Fellows are required to submit names and contact information of a specified number of organizations, or “leads,” that could be a good fit for themselves and/or their colleagues.

Fellows review and submit résumés, which the PC will later share with host organizations. Fellows are strongly encouraged to consult with Career Services (CareerServices@IllinoisState.edu) for assistance with résumés and other preparations during the placement process.

Each Fellow submits a statement of professional interest to the Program Coordinator. This statement, no more than three pages in length, addresses what the Fellow hopes to learn from the professional practice experience as well as what kinds of organizations and work environments will be most enriching. The statement also relates the Fellow’s career goals and current studies (and, if applicable past experiences) to the professional practice placement. Basically, the prompts are: what do you hope to achieve in a placement and how does this relate to your career goals? This document aids the Program Coordinator in the site development process and in matching students to host organizations/communities. It is an internal document not viewed by host organizations.

While the search process focuses on the Fellows as a group, PC also initiates periodic one-on-one check-ins with Fellows to learn more about their goals and ensure they understand next steps in the placement process.

The Program Coordinator solicits applications from organizations/communities based in part on above discussions and suggestions (creating internal records and drawing on existing relationships).

Early Spring Semester

Fellows may revise their résumés and statements of professional interest (to reflect skills and experiences gained during the first semester) and submit them to the Program Coordinator. The PC continues to solicit applications from organizations/communities until the application deadline in early spring.

Soon after the application deadline, PC shares all host applications received with Fellows. Fellows rank and submit feedback on the applications to PC. Though the Fellows’ exact rankings won’t be shared, the PC may share general feedback with the applicants.

PC shares Fellows’ résumés with applicant organizations/communities at this point or sooner.

PC arranges interviews where there is mutual interest. In most cases, students can expect to participate in 3-5 interviews. PC sits in on interviews to continuously assess fit between hosts and Fellows. Students revise and resubmit their feedback on host organizations after each interview.

Late Spring Semester

Host organizations and students receive placement notifications by the end of the spring semester. PC provides Fellows with checklist of items to complete before leaving campus. PC completes contract process with host organizations and assists Fellows in completing checklist items.

Summer Semesters

On an ongoing basis, but particularly during summer months, the Stevenson Center addresses larger issues affecting the placement process including marketing, building alumni relations, raising coordination/policy issues with four academic departments/schools, grant writing, and fundraising.

Host Organization/Community’s Experience of the Process

The process of contacting, negotiating, and finalizing placement sites usually takes three to six months, but, for some community partners, it has taken over a year. The process may differ for sites funded by specialized contracts or grants.

Stevenson Center staff connect with potential host applicants in a variety of ways, such as phone calls, emails, social media, the Stevenson Center's website, and referrals. Following initial contact, the PC and applicant organization discuss the organization's goals, the potential role of a Fellow therein, and the organization's obligations to support and supervise the Fellow.

Once applications are reviewed and interviews completed, the Stevenson Center uses all information received to make the most appropriate matches of organizations' needs with Fellows' interests and skills. The Stevenson Center PC notifies Fellows and the applicant organizations of the final decisions. The host organization signs an agreement with the Stevenson Center, facilitated by the Graduate School, which outlines broad expectations for the relationship including financials.

Host organizations invest time and effort in the placement process, without a guarantee of being matched. In recognition of the contribution of applicant host organizations, the Stevenson Center requires that Fellows: carefully review and provide feedback on all applications; accommodate—and dutifully prepare to participate in—all interviews for which they are selected; and acknowledge and cultivate the professional development opportunities of their placement sites.

Internship Policies and Preparations

Note that, to be eligible for an internship, Fellows must be making satisfactory progress in the degree program, including a C or better in all required classes.

While completing off-campus assistantships AND/OR professional practice, Fellows must adhere to the following requirements:

- Student will adhere to all applicable policies, procedures, and standards established by the host organization and the University.
- Student will be responsible for housing and transportation to and from host organization during placement.
- Student is required to have adequate health/accident insurance coverage in place during the entire placement. Student must provide proof of insurance.
- Student will be responsible for adhering to established schedules and notifying host organization of any absences or necessary schedule changes.

During the placement, the University will provide a tuition waiver, excluding fees for the student, who will be enrolled as a graduate student at Illinois State University.

Fellows should expect to begin their professional practice internship between mid-June and late August of their second year. The Fellows' community supervisor and the Fellow must mutually agree upon this date, preferably the 1st or the 16th of the month. The internship will extend 11 calendar months after the start date. Host organizations pay the Graduate School, and the Fellows receive remuneration from ISU and remain full-time Illinois State graduate students for the duration of the internship. The Fellow generally receives the first paycheck at the end of the first month in which the Fellow works two or more weeks at the internship site.

Fellows have significant professional responsibilities during this internship experience, and must also submit reports, work samples, and other documents to the Stevenson Center. Assignments and tasks due to the Stevenson Center, along with site supervisor's evaluations, serve as the primary basis of internship grades. The Professional Practice (498A90) syllabus includes an explanation of these requirements and guidelines for their completion. These reports will not only provide information to the Stevenson Center about your experience, but will also give you the raw material for a résumé and work portfolio to show to

prospective employers. Finally, the reports and evaluations will help the Stevenson Center make future decisions about Program curricula and placements.

Note that any Fellows in grant-supported placements and/or with AmeriCorps status will have some additional tasks to complete, particularly in regard to initial paperwork submitted and the frequency and type of reporting. For those with AmeriCorps status, information about these tasks is included in the AmeriCorps Member Program Manual at www.stevensoncenter.org/aced/forms.

Also note that if your host organization asks you to sign any document (e.g., confidentiality statements, contracts, liability waivers) about which you have questions or concerns, Illinois State's General Counsel should review the text BEFORE you sign. Contact the PC for details. \

Pre-Internship Tasks

Fellows must complete the checklist posted at www.stevensoncenter.org/aced/forms before they begin their internships. Examples of items to complete are provided below.

Registration for Professional Practice Hours

The number of credits for the professional practice experience vary by department/school and by Fellows' individual plans of study and financial aid status. Please consult the PC and your academic graduate coordinator. General guidelines follow.

A letter grade will be assigned each semester of a Fellow's internship provided that the Fellow enrolls in 5-8 hours of ANT 498A90, ECO 498A90, KNR 498A90, POL 498A90, or SOC 498A90 in total over the life of their internship. Note: No more than 20% of a master's degree plan of study may be earned from professional practice hours. Plans of study for each degree track are available at www.stevensoncenter.org/aced/degrees.

Contracts and Preparation

Fellows will not need to apply for a GA posting for your practicum. Fellows will be treated as a Fellow receiving payment via a scholarship. If you will be completing an AmeriCorps term, you may also need to complete a background check in conjunction with applying to a special posting. The AmeriCorps application processes may be different, but all student pay will be the same. An additional memorandum of cooperation with the host organization may be signed to outline more specific responsibilities of each of the parties, as well as the work hours expected. Keep in mind that there may be times in the internship when a Fellow needs to work a slightly higher average of hours per week than required, especially for AmeriCorps placements. This may be especially true in the beginning of the internship due to additional orientation sessions, social events, night meetings, networking, etc.

Identification during Professional Practice

You will encounter opportunities to introduce yourself to organizations, stakeholders, and communities during your placement. If your host organization plans to supply you with business cards, please request that you be identified in some way with the Stevenson Center (e.g., Peace Corps Fellow, ACED Fellow, Community Development Fellow at Illinois State University). Please also identify yourself with the Stevenson Center in organizational bios, reports, presentations, etc., as well as in your email signature. Such identification can give you the chance to tell others about your graduate program and could lead to placements for future Fellows and/or applications from prospective students.

Conflict Resolution

We recognize that our students can sometimes experience conflicts in many forms, whether it is interpersonal, familial, academic, or professional. Different conflicts require varied responses. If you do find yourself in some sort of conflict during your time as a Fellow, we encourage you to follow the guidelines outlined below.

We will always encourage you to communicate openly about any conflicts you are experiencing to the extent you feel comfortable doing so. We want our students to feel heard when they believe they are being negatively impacted by someone else. If you and another student are in conflict, please reach out to the Program Coordinator or Assistant Director. We can listen and provide you with a variety of conflict resolution strategies, both formal and informal, including the facilitation of a restorative conversation as outlined in the next section.

If you wish to discuss an issue with a faculty member, please do so. Faculty-student connections are one of the pleasures of graduate school! If the issue is about a grade or problematic comments made by the instructor, it is likely best to discuss this during office hours or a scheduled appointment. It's okay to take a friend with you, but you may need to assure the faculty member that it's okay to discuss confidential FERPA issues in front of the other person. If no redress is possible from a visit with the instructor, the next step is to discuss the issue with the department's graduate coordinator or department chair/director. Whatever the circumstance, we strongly encourage students to complete end-of-semester course evaluations. If desired, you can also talk with Stevenson Center Staff.

If you feel a situation requires a more formal response, please visit <https://illinoisstate.edu/complaint-resolution/> for the university's formal complaint resolution instructions and resources. This includes complaints related to academic concerns, student affairs concerns, harassment and discrimination concerns, and student access and accommodations concerns. There is also information on how to bring any concerns that are not resolved at the university level to the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Regardless of the type of conflict, we encourage you to document your experience by saving electronic communications and making contemporaneous notes. Our focus is on your overall success as individuals, so please know we wish to support you by whatever reasonable means necessary.

Restorative Practices

The Stevenson Center values restorative practices. These practices encourage each of us to acknowledge that our presence in the world will inevitably affect others, and we will in turn be affected by them. Sometimes the words and actions of others are harmful to us. Sometimes our words and actions are harmful to others. In short, conflict exists, and it is important to address it in a way that maintains or restores each person's dignity and repairs harms to the extent possible.

Restorative practices give us the structure to do just that. By asking the restorative questions listed below (or variations of them), individuals or groups in conflict can come to a shared understanding of what happened, who was impacted and how, and what needs to be done to make things right.

For those who caused harm:

What happened?

What were you thinking/feeling at the time?

What have you thought about since then?

Who was affected by what you did? In what way?

What do you think needs to be done to make things right?

For those who have been harmed:

What happened from your perspective?
How did you feel when you realized what had happened?
What impact has this had on you and others?
What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

By allowing people to openly discuss harmful incidents and what needs to happen to address them, restorative practices can reduce defensiveness in us and encourage active accountability when we harm others. The focus is always on relationships and respect rather than revenge or reprimand.

We encourage you throughout your time as a Fellow and after to utilize restorative practices in resolving your conflicts. The Assistant Director and Program Coordinator are well trained in restorative practices if you would like to learn more or engage these practices during your time in the program.

Class Talks

Fellows must complete one Class Talk during their first or second semester on campus. Class Talks allow Fellows to share their past, current, and anticipated future service experiences with Illinois State University undergraduate students. In doing so, Fellows promote outreach and campus awareness of the Stevenson Center and its programs. The Fellow must identify a class, contact the instructor for permission to conduct the talk, and then submit details to the assistant director, which will allow Stevenson Center staff to thank participating faculty. The Fellow must also submit a contact sheet for students who wish to receive more information to the assistant director, after the Class Talk.

Conclusion

Thank you for choosing the Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development. We are excited and honored that you have chosen to pursue your graduate studies with us. We are hopeful that your experience with the Center will be rewarding and meaningful, and that your career in community/economic development will be significantly bolstered by your time here. We want you to know that we are dedicated to your success as well as ongoing improvement of our programs. Please do not hesitate to contact any Stevenson Center staff member regarding any questions, comments, or concerns.