UW Bothell Partnership Exploration with Imagining America
Overview and Frequently Asked Questions

What is Imagining America?

Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life (IA) is a national consortium of over 100 colleges, universities, and cultural organizations focused on the democratic transformation of higher education and civic life. Imagining America draws upon arts, culture, and design methods to catalyze change, advance inclusion, and contribute to community action and revitalization.

Central IA goals include:

- advancing diversity, inclusion, and intercultural dialogue as means for social equity on campuses and in communities;
- demonstrating the impact of cross-sector collaboration integrating humanities, arts, and design; and
- promoting publicly engaged scholarship and creative practice at all institutional levels (student, faculty, and administrative leadership).

Founded in 1999 by the White House Millennium Council, the University of Michigan, and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, IA’s structure includes a staff office and a diverse advisory board comprised of higher education, foundation, and non-profit leaders. The University of Michigan served as the initial host campus. In 2007, Syracuse University became the next institutional host. IA is now looking for its next institutional host, for a period of 5-10 years, in a proposal process overseen by a Transition Working Group.

What does Imagining America do?

IA advances its goals by networking, supporting, and organizing with change agents, leaders, and practitioners at all institutional levels—students, faculty, staff, administrators, and their partners. IA contributes resources to an expanding membership, offers opportunities for undergraduate and graduate student leaders, and provides significant leadership to the field of engaged scholarship in higher education.

IA fosters Policy and Practice Change through initiatives like…

- The Tenure Team Initiative, which seeks to change campus policies related to tenure and promotion to recognize publicly-engaged art and scholarship as legitimate scholarly and creative activity.
- Full Participation, which focuses on increasing access, success and full participation in higher education for underrepresented groups and communities.
- Integrated Assessment, which promotes collaborative, generative, and mutually reciprocal approaches to assessing community partnerships.
IA promotes Organizing, Professional Development, and Networking through opportunities like…

- **Cultural Organizing Institutes**, which convene teams of people representing community-campus partnerships to learn, share, and practice key organizing concepts and strategies
- **Publicly Active Graduate Education**, a peer network organized by students and alumni who design support and collaboration structures including conference summits, webinars, virtual dinner parties, that co-create programming, presentations, and other artifacts.
- **Annual Conferences.** Unusual in their cross-cutting participation from students, faculty, community leaders, practitioners, and high-level administrators, the national conference is a site of collaboration, dialogue, and problem solving.

IA supports Collaborative Action Research, through initiatives like….

- **Commission on Publicly-Engaged Design**, which seeks to leverage the IA consortium to meet continuing challenges and maximize breakthroughs and innovations.
- **Civic Science**, which seeks to address complex problems through participatory inquiry, collective action, and public policy
- **Civic Professionalism**, which integrates the traditional strengths of the liberal arts, the values of civic inquiry and reflection, and the practical work of sustaining and supporting communities.

Importantly, IA is committed to modeling democratic publicly-engaged scholarship and creative practice at its host institution as well as among its member institutions. That means that the host campus can expect 35% of its staff efforts to be focused on catalyzing and sustaining regionally transformative work.

**Why is UW Bothell interested in a possible partnership with IA?**

As UW Bothell builds its community engagement infrastructure and capacity, Imagining America’s presence on campus can catalyze and accelerate this development. Hosting IA allows us to partner with and lead a national consortium of institutions with similar mission-based commitments to diversity and engagement, while also focusing our efforts locally and regionally. We can expect that the national and regional visibility and networks that we will gain will yield benefits for our research and advancement. With these aspirations in mind, Yeigh and Jeffords charged a Working Group and Steering Committee to explore the possibility of hosting IA.

**Why is IA interested in possibly partnering with UW Bothell?**

Imagining America’s Transition Working Group has recognized and applauded the following in UW Bothell’s proposal:

- the strong integration of diversity, inclusion, and community engagement;
- the focus on undergraduate education and student engagement;
• the broad range of stakeholders convened in planning;
• the push to build IA membership (and reduce dependence on the host institution) and a staffing model to achieve this.

This suggests a good fit between IA and UW Bothell’s mission, institutional priorities, organizational structure, and interdisciplinary culture.

*What is our basic partnership proposal?*

UW Bothell’s proposal to host Imagining America frames a four-fold agenda for its partnership with IA, as follows:

1. **Develop local CE infrastructure for UW Bothell.** This local development will be greatly enhanced and informed by the presence, circulation, and knowledge of IA colleagues and networks.

2. **Develop and expand membership as a sustainable/sustaining revenue source and organizing base for IA.** This change offers significant opportunities for increasing the reach and influence of the consortium.

3. **Develop a regional consortium (UW Bothell and IA).** This provides an opportunity and a mechanism for linking and actualizing the preceding two agenda items. It dovetails with the recommendations of our Community Engagement Task Force as well. If successful, it build an infrastructure that continues to serve both organizations after IA has moved on to its next host institution.

4. **Be student-centered (UW Bothell and IA).** Student-centered is a long-standing value of UW Bothell, and IA has nurtured vibrant graduate student leadership and networks. We anticipate that further involving undergraduates in the work of IA will also expand the reach and impact of the consortium, nationally as well as locally.

*What does the UW Bothell investment and return look like? How can we expect to benefit?*

In some ways, UW Bothell’s proposal looks like a matching grant. Our proposal commits temporary funds of $230k/year for the first five years. While the proposal makes the upfront commitment, there is an assumption of efforts by advancement to achieve those funds through external fundraising rather than from core UW Bothell activities. 35% of these funds will be committed to IA staff who will be helping us develop local projects, partnerships, and infrastructure. In raising the national and regional visibility of UW Bothell, and increasing our capacity to partner effectively, we can also expect the partnership with IA to yield financial benefits in new grant resources. This commitment also assumes a matching investment of permanent funds in UW Bothell Community Engagement programs and infrastructure.

The campus receives a direct and immediate return in the 35% effort that Imagining America staff will be making to help us develop local projects, partnerships, and infrastructure. In raising the national and regional visibility of UW Bothell, and increasing our capacity to partner
effectively, we can also expect the partnership with IA to yield financial benefits in new grant and gift opportunities.

**What might partnership with a national consortium mean for me here locally?**

- **For faculty**—a diverse and cross-disciplinary network of scholar-practitioners, models for documenting and representing the impact of community-engaged scholarship in tenure and promotion, and support for transforming local tenure and promotion processes to promote the success of publicly-engaged scholar-educators. Enhanced opportunities for cross-campus and inter-institutional research and development grants.

- **For students**—enhanced opportunities to network local organizing with students at other campuses in cross-campus dialogues. More robust community-based learning and research offerings. Anticipated fellowship opportunities associated with CBLR and leadership development. Affiliation with a project focused on higher education’s accountability to diverse students and communities. Visiting artists, scholars, and movement leaders.

- **For community partners**—the convening/organizing possibilities of a regional consortium, and enhanced campus capacity for partnership.

**What is the partnership exploration process moving forward?**

Sharing the proposal to host IA with the campus, our community partners, as well as IA is the next step in exploring this possible partnership. The Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs have posted the proposal online, and members of the IA proposal development working group will be arranging campus opportunities for further discussion. We also anticipate receiving feedback from Imagining America.

Through these dialogues, we seek to clarify the campus’s vision, goals, and plans regarding community engagement and diversity, and assess how a partnership with IA might advance them. We can expect the IA Transition Team to visit our campus April 7-8 to discuss the possibilities of partnership further.

Members of the IA Proposal Working Group, and other individuals who have direct knowledge of IA, can be contacted for further discussion:

- Kara Adams, Interim Director of the Office of Community-Based Learning and Research
- Miriam Bartha, Director of IAS Graduate Programs
- Jonathan Cluts, Director of Strategic Initiatives
- Scott Kurashige, IAS Faculty and Special Advisor for Faculty Diversity and Development
- Ron Krabill, IAS Faculty and Director, MA in Cultural Studies
- Keith Nitta, IAS Faculty and Director, MA in Policy Studies
- Terryl Ross, Director of Diversity