# ENGAGED DEPARTMENT FINAL REPORT

Department of African American & African Studies
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**African American & African Studies Final Engaged Department Report**

The Engaged Department grant received by the Department of African American & African Studies opened a space for renewed outreach and vision. It is clear to the faculty involved in the initiative as well as other colleagues that new possibilities for strengthening our community engagement work are advanced because of the Engaged Department Program. We recognize that having a clear and identified commitment to integrating engagement into the strategic direction of the department has made a difference. We have also learned some key lessons about the process.

**Lessons Learned**

1. We have acknowledged that it will take some work on the part of our faculty to make engagement viable. Our faculty are committed to the process but are stretched thin. A small Department depends on a small number of people to do the work of the unit. We have found that working as a collective is best.

That is, we have learned that we must continue to work as a team to fully achieve the Engaged Department goals we have crafted.

2. It is important for us to have a community outreach person working closely with our faculty team. We are looking forward to building with our new outreach person. She has a number of important community connections, and we will be able to extend outreach and research through new community partnerships.
3. We will need to seek out additional funding to support our engaged department work. It is important for us to have additional resources to support faculty course releases as well as fund research related to departmental engagement.

**Next Steps for the Department of African American & African Studies to Continue the work of the Engaged Department**

While the core vision of our public engagement plan is informed by our past history rooted in community service and a commitment to community engagement, our next steps will involve:

1. Fully integrating community based learning into select courses.
2. Rebuilding our Teacher Institute, bringing public school teachers into a summer institute to deal with issues such as the achievement gap. We are planning to have things in place for the Institute in the summer of 2013.
3. Connecting our outreach work to African immigrants/refugees and their children.

4. Continuing to renew the commitment for public engagement within our own unit among faculty and students, as well as in collaboration with our key constituents, colleagues across the campus and community members. This includes forging deeper connections to the new African American Museum and the Givens Foundation.
5. Extending our community based learning on the principle of developing undergraduate skills as "community researchers" enmeshed in the everyday and working to advance the needs and interests of community. This will occur in conjunction with our commitment to make service learning experience central to what we do. We will begin the process of institutionalizing the requirement of a study abroad learning experience and internships for African American & African Studies undergraduate majors and minors.

Thus our next steps cut across multiple levels for the institutionalization of our engaged department goals, making sure engagement is core to our mission and scholarly activities.

**Recommendations for the Engaged Department Program**

In general, the program has been quite helpful. It allows a department to focus very specifically on a plan and move the process forward. We do think it is important that additional resources be made available for course buyouts. The work is time consuming and having a faculty course release component to the program would be a great addition.

The other recommendation would be to move some of the meetings to the regional campus sites. It would be stimulating to visit these programs on the campuses on which they are located. Obviously this will be more costly, but it would be an interesting addition to the overall program.