

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

OFFICE OF INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE
AND BELONGING

Campus Community Circles Handbook



Campus Community Circles

The University of Hartford and the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging are committed to inclusion and belonging as core principles. To advance these principles, the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging supports the formation of employee-led Campus Community Circles. Campus Community Circles are groups designed to encourage meaningful dialogue, relationship building, and a greater sense of belonging among members of the campus community. Campus Community Circles recognize that every member of the University has valuable experiences and insights to contribute.

The guidelines, regulations, and procedures provided in this handbook are intended to provide general information and ordinances for Campus Community Circles at the University. Through participation in Campus Community Circles, campus leaders help to foster a positive work environment, create connections and build community across campus, and help to improve the campus culture and climate.

Please note that this is a living document that is subject to change and will be reviewed and revised continually. If you need additional information or have any questions, please contact the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging.

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Mission

The Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging's Campus Community Circles promote a campus culture of inclusion, belonging, and mutual respect by providing structured opportunities for faculty, staff, students, and community partners to engage in dynamic and authentic programming and community. Campus Community Circles encourage personal growth, strengthen relationships, and contribute to a welcoming and engaging campus community.

The Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging created Campus Community Circles to create a supportive environment where individuals can make connections across campus that grow interests, create ideas, and spotlight the achievements and accomplishments of UHart employees. Employee participation in Campus Community Circles provides opportunities for individuals to become more involved in campus life and to help foster a culture of respect, inclusion and belonging.

Structure

Campus Community Circles are voluntary, employee-led groups formed around shared interests, experiences, backgrounds, and/or identities. All groups share the common goal of building community and fostering inclusion and belonging in the broader campus community. Campus Community Circles **do not** exclude on the basis of sex, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression or identity, religion, or political opinions.

Each group must consist of two co-leaders who will manage the operations of the Campus Community Circle, attend leadership meetings, and complete semesterly reports on the circle. Community members may use these spaces to share resources and support, understand, and connect with members of the University of Hartford across colleges and schools and offices and departments.

Campus Community Circles are encouraged to collaborate with each other to amplify the work and message of the office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging

Requirements

Each Campus Community Circle determines their own mission and goals and provides a brief description of the circle. All information regarding the circle must be submitted in the proposal form in order to receive approval from the University.

To receive approval and remain in good standing with the University of Hartford and the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging a circle must:

- Be open to all UHart employees (staff and faculty)
- Be completely voluntary
- Promote inclusion and belonging
- Adhere to the University of Hartford's policies and procedures

Campus Community Circles Objectives:

1. Build and create a community of inclusion
 - Play a role in fostering a welcoming community of support, respect, and advancement
 - Create a space through programming for community members to meet and support personal and professional goals
 - Promote and celebrate University of Hartford community contributions and achievements
2. Advocate for and support the recruitment, retention, and advancement of faculty and staff
 - Assist the University in retaining and engaging employees
 - Support the growth and professional development of staff and faculty
 - Advocate for policies and procedures that are equitable
3. Network and collaborate
 - Provide opportunities for social and professional networking between staff and faculty
 - Be a collective voice for the work of belonging, inclusion, and social justice

Campus Community Circles Leadership Team Expectations:

Each Campus Community Circle will have a defined leadership team, which will:

- Lead and oversee the functioning of the circle
- Act as the main contact between the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging and Campus Community Circle members
- Hold meetings with their circle at least once a semester
- Organize and implement at least one program each semester. The details of all programs should be shared with the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging and uphold University branding. Programming from circles will be shared with other circles through a dedicated Teams page. All program flyers must include the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging
- Complete an end of semester report, including a membership list, to be submitted to the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging
- Attend an all-leadership meeting at the end of each semester

Leadership team members should be prepared to join University-wide initiatives including, but not limited to, tabling at the Semester Kick-Offs and the Cultural Fair.

Suggested Leadership Roles

Every circle is required to have at least two co-leaders, but larger circles often find it helpful to spread responsibilities across a few additional roles. Circles are welcome to adapt these to fit their group, combine roles for smaller circles, or use only the required co-leader structure.

- **Co-Leads/Chairs** – set the circle’s direction, run meetings, and serve as the circle’s main point of contact with the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging. **(Required — at least two per circle.)**
- **Communications Coordinator** – manages outreach, promotional materials, and the circle’s updates on the shared Teams page.
- **Program/Events Coordinator** – plans and helps run the circle’s semester programming.
- **Treasurer/Budget Lead** – tracks expenditures and submits receipts and reimbursement paperwork.
- **Administrator/Recorder** – takes meeting notes and maintains the membership list used in semesterly reporting.

Only the two required co-leaders need to be listed on the online application; additional roles can be filled by other members once the circle is up and running. For faculty members, serving in any of these leadership roles is recognized as service to the University.

Campus Community Circle Operating Guidelines:

1. Members must be employed by the University of Hartford.
2. Membership and participation in Campus Community Circles is voluntary. University of Hartford officers, administrators, anyone in a supervisory capacity, or members of the group may **NOT** coerce an employee into joining or participating.

3. Membership and participation in Campus Community Circles must be open to all interested employees.
4. All programs sponsored by Campus Community Circles must have a financial plan to support the activity.
5. Campus Community Circles are not intended to and shall not duplicate or replace the activities of the recognized bargaining units at the University.
6. Employees may join as many Campus Community Circles as they wish.
7. All Campus Community Circle meetings are considered University of Hartford sponsored activities. Campus Community Circle members are eligible to request for release time to attend network meetings up to two (2) hours monthly. Additional release time requests may be considered and granted at the discretion of the supervisor.

Meeting Guidelines

1. Campus Community Circles must hold at least one (1) meeting each semester.
2. Meetings are encouraged to have an agenda and to make decisions based on consensus.
3. All marketing and promotional materials must be shared with the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging.
4. Leaders of new Campus Community Circles are required to attend an orientation prior to the first official meeting.
5. The University logo is the strongest link to our brand. It is important to use only approved logos in all communications. Please refer to the University brand guidelines located on the website.

Funding:

At the discretion of the leadership of the University, and with the approval of University's Chief Financial Officer, approved Campus Community Circles will obtain limited funding of \$150 each academic year.

- Leadership teams are required to keep track and produce accurate records of expenditures. When a purchase is made, leaders must submit original receipts and proper

paperwork for reimbursement in a timely manner to the Inclusive Excellence and Belonging.

- Purchases \$25 and under, leaders should complete a petty cash voucher.
- Purchases over \$25, leaders must complete a Travel Expense Voucher (TEV) and submit.
- If a Campus Community Circle group dissolves, the University of Hartford **will not** be responsible for any debts incurred by the Campus Community Circle.

Accountability

The Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging oversees Campus Community Circles and supports leadership teams in meeting the expectations outlined in this handbook. Accountability is maintained through the following structure:

- Leadership teams are the first point of accountability for their circle and are responsible for meeting the requirements in this handbook, including semesterly reports, meeting minimums, and financial recordkeeping.
- The Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging reviews semesterly reports and the annual circle evaluation from each circle to confirm the circle is meeting expectations and to identify circles that may need additional support.
- If a circle does not meet a requirement (for example, a missed report or no meetings held during a semester), the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging will notify the leadership team in writing and offer a one-semester improvement period, with guidance on how to return to good standing.
- Continued non-compliance after the improvement period may result in a circle being placed on probationary status or dissolved, as described under Dissolving Campus Community Circles.

The Vice President for the Division of Student Success and Inclusive Excellence and Belonging provides overall oversight of the Campus Community Circles program

Dissolving Campus Community Circles:

Campus Community Circles may be dissolved when:

1. The group chooses to dissolve itself. Such dissolution should be reported to the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging.
2. The Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging concludes that the network no longer has clear relevance, has become insufficiently accountable for its activities, or presents a legal or ethical liability to the University of Hartford.

Closing Statement

Community Campus Circles reflect the University's commitment to cultivating a campus where positive relationships, respect, and belonging are fundamental to the educational experience. By creating intentional opportunities for individuals to build authentic relationships, share their stories, and interact with other community members, Campus Community Circles strengthen the fabric of the University and contribute to a culture of inclusion, collaboration, and belonging.

The success of Campus Community Circles depends on the collective commitment of every participant to engage with integrity, empathy, and openness. Together, we create a community where every voice matters, and every individual has the opportunity to contribute to a more connected campus.

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Campus Community Circle Proposal

1. Proposed name of your Campus Community Circle:
2. Name (s) of leadership team (at least two required) with contact information:
3. **A Description** – a brief statement of who the Campus Community Circle and what it strives to accomplish.
4. **Mission and Goals** – clearly define what members will gain from participation in the proposed Campus Community Circle.

Application Approval

Following the successful submission and review of the application, the leadership team will be contacted by the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Belonging to discuss the next steps.

I understand that membership and participation are voluntary, and the group must be open to everyone. As a leader, I play a vital role in ensuring an inclusive campus environment where all are valued, included, and empowered to succeed.

Applicant Name _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Send questions or requests for more information regarding your Campus Community Circle application to Jordan Brown (jorbrown@hartford.edu).