DukeEngage challenges Duke undergraduates to apply what they have learned in lectures, seminars, and labs to explore and address pressing challenges faced by partner communities. With campaign support, we can strengthen and expand the reach of Duke’s signature civic engagement program.

Civic engagement is a cornerstone of the Duke experience. In 2007, we founded DukeEngage to empower students to apply knowledge in the service of society in unprecedented numbers and ways. Each summer, DukeEngage fully funds hundreds of select Duke students to address critical human needs through at least eight weeks of immersive service in U.S. and international communities.

In its short history, DukeEngage has become a hallmark of the Duke experience and a leading reason high school seniors choose to apply to and attend Duke. To date, almost 2,500 students have participated in DukeEngage programs worldwide. But demand for the program now exceeds our current funding capabilities, forcing us to turn away many qualified applicants. Philanthropic investment in DukeEngage through the Duke Forward campaign will allow us to expand the number of domestic program sites, enhance pre- and post-experience student development opportunities, and increase student enrollment.
Meeting Student Demand

Through immersive, hands-on experiences, DukeEngage participants forge deep connections between the subjects they study in the classroom and the crucial issues affecting people and communities near and far from our North Carolina campus. Students also develop insights during their service that inform their academic paths at Duke and life choices beyond—and they cultivate the talents and confidence they need to solve challenging problems.

Student response to DukeEngage has been overwhelming. Since its founding, the program has grown from just 89 participants during a pilot program in 2007 to as many as 450 students each summer. Collectively, they've served more than 500 community organizations in 70 nations on six continents. But student demand for this immersion experience exceeds current funding levels. In recent years, the program has had to deny as many as half of all applicants. Through the Duke Forward campaign, we hope to expand enrollment to deserving undergraduates while solidifying the program’s long-term financial footing. Gifts to this program will extend transformative educational experiences to students while also enriching partner communities served by DukeEngage.

Your expendable or endowed gift of $100,000 or more can help to fund student participation in DukeEngage programs throughout the United States or internationally.

Your gift of $1 million or more could establish an endowment that will support the participation of five students in international DukeEngage programs or seven students in domestic programs each summer.
Developing New Program Sites

DukeEngage has partnered with nonprofit, nongovernmental, and community-based organizations in more than 70 nations to support civic engagement projects in a range of fields. DukeEngage participants have contributed their talents to help construct a medical clinic in Honduras; develop museum exhibits in South Africa; map invasive plant species in both Oregon and North Carolina; teach art, dance, and music classes in China; and assist with voter registration in Washington, D.C. They have also assisted communities recovering from natural disasters and experiencing political upheaval, including post-hurricane New Orleans, post-earthquake Haiti, and post-Mubarak Egypt.

Whether they address ongoing civic issues or the recent consequences of natural disasters or political change, DukeEngage programs prepare undergraduates to confront the evolving challenges of our world. Many of our more than 40 group programs have a faculty leader or academic department connection, linking DukeEngage experiences directly to the undergraduate curriculum. New program sites will give students more opportunities to pursue experiences tied directly to their interests and studies back on campus. Through the Duke Forward campaign, we seek philanthropic support to establish new DukeEngage programs in the United States.

YOUR GIFT OF $100,000 OR MORE could create a named endowment to support the creation or ongoing operations of programs focused around broad themes such as the environment, community development, education and literacy, or health care.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE CLOSE TO HOME

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Duke alumni saw a need for hands-on help with children and youth at risk for school failure. They were instrumental in starting a DukeEngage program there for students who want to work on issues that can compromise young people’s schooling and health.

In consultation with DukeEngage leadership, alums helped select established, well-managed nonprofits for partnerships. Alumni currently make up a team that plans enrichment programming for students—often meetings or meals with other Duke alumni who are experts in working with the children DukeEngage Charlotte serves. Juvenile justice practitioners, school principals, museum directors, and others have shared their knowledge with Duke students. Students interview with partner nonprofits and are placed into the situation that best matches their skills. They work to support the organizations by teaching and developing curriculum, by creating resource directories and gathering data for program evaluation, and by writing grants, newsletters, and agency case studies.

“Duke students are contributing to these already strong and thoughtful local efforts, and they’re also learning about nonprofit management and thinking about how this impacts their lives back at Duke,” said Kathy Sikes, senior assistant director for student programs and outreach for DukeEngage. “They are a part of something really dynamic and important in Charlotte.”
MENTORING RESULTS IN ACADEMIC COLLABORATION

For Duke senior Sean Choi, the DukeEngage program based in Beijing, China, took him well beyond a meaningful summer experience teaching and mentoring at the Dandelion Middle School, where he served children of Chinese migrant workers. It deepened his academic experience and strengthened a relationship with a Duke faculty member.

Upon returning to Duke, Choi felt compelled to explore how to effect change at the policy level. This led him to double major in public policy and economics, and to design a study abroad experience in the United Kingdom at the University College London, which exposed him to developmental economics. Choi also pursued an independent study at Duke focused on the social history of migrant schools in Beijing with Ralph Litzinger, an associate professor of anthropology and women’s studies, who is also the program leader for DukeEngage in Beijing. With fellow Beijing program alumni and Litzinger’s colleagues in China, Choi traced the history of schools similar to Dandelion, including many that have been closed and demolished.

Choi was also instrumental in a team effort to create the first house course—a student-led, half-credit class taught in a residence hall—on Social Inequality and Education in China. “This course provides students accepted into the DukeEngage Beijing program with the broader context of education in China,” Litzinger says. Choi’s DukeEngage and Duke experiences proved both enlightening and meaningful. “Poverty and education are no longer distant concepts to me,” he says. “Once you have witnessed what is happening in certain parts of the world, you can never really quite detach yourself from it. DukeEngage has taught me that the world is indeed unfair, but we should not leave it to be that way.”

Ralph Litzinger and Sean Choi

Expanding Student Development

DukeEngage experiences influence students’ lives well beyond their eight weeks of summer service. Program alumni often return to campus inspired to pursue newfound passions and interests. They report greater self-confidence and leadership skills. And, they engage in civic issues and service projects more during the school year.

To foster student learning and growth, DukeEngage has expanded pre- and post-experience development opportunities. In 2009, we founded the DukeEngage Academy—the largest university-based civic engagement training program in the United States—to better prepare students for the logistical, cross-cultural, and ethical issues they may confront during their service.

Upon returning to campus, students have many opportunities to connect their experiences to academic interests and professional goals. Some participants receive course credit for working in collaboration with a faculty member to build on an aspect of their previous DukeEngage experience. DukeEngage also connects program alumni to mentors, internships, local service placements, and leadership programs that foster professional development and careers in civic service.

Through these pre- and post-experience opportunities, DukeEngage has become much more than a short-term service immersion experience. It’s become a valuable program for uniting civic engagement with academic, personal, and professional growth—enriching both the individual and the broader Duke community. Private investment in DukeEngage through the Duke Forward campaign will expand important pre-departure training programs, post-experience research funding, and additional opportunities to connect the DukeEngage experience back to Duke.

YOUR EXPENDABLE OR ENDOWED GIFT OF $100,000 OR MORE could fund pre-departure training that will help Duke students make the most of their time in the program.

YOUR EXPENDABLE OR ENDOWED GIFT OF $250,000 OR MORE can support post-experience professional development opportunities, including fellowships and civic leadership programs, that connect DukeEngage to the broader educational programming at Duke.