

Memo Date:	July 14, 2022
To:	Village Board
From:	Gabe Altenbernd – Communications Manager
Re:	Participation in the UniverCity Year Program

Background

The UniverCity Year program connects students across the University of Wisconsin, Madison campus (UW) with municipalities. The goal of the program is to connect local governments in Wisconsin to university resources to solve community – identified challenges. Through this partnership, UW Students gain real world experience and make connections and the communities are able to innovate and kickstart new projects and/or ideas.

Overview

By participating in the UniverCity Year Program, the Village would be committing to a three-year partnership:

- **Year 1** – Village Staff, alongside consultants and various stakeholders, would identify five to seven projects that would benefit from UW. Upon the identification the projects, the UniverCity Year staff would work to match those projects with UW-Madison faculty, staff and graduate students.
- **Year 2** – UW faculty, staff, and students conduct research through courses, independent projects, and internships. Cottage Grove would then receive project presentations on the big ideas and feasible recommendations that speak momentum towards our goals.
- **Year 3** - UniverCity Year staff support the community with resources and tools to move projects from idea to implementation.

Financial Impact

In order to partner with the UniverCity Year Program, it would cost the Village between \$25,000 to \$35,000, spread out over three years, for a total of five to seven projects.

Most of the staff time will be involved in the front end of the projects through the drafting stage. Once the projects are underway, the time commitment is roughly 1 hour per week.

Initial Project Ideas

- **Arts & Culture** – Explore new ways to engage and promote the Arts & Culture of the Villages past, present, and future. Especially through a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion lens.
- **Cottage Grove Road Revisioning** - Explore the idea of creating a new welcoming/green entrance to the Village.
- **Internal Communications** - Explore the best strategies and opportunities for recruitment and employee onboarding through a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion lens.
- **Library Programming** - Explore the best programming strategies and opportunities for a potential library.
- **Tourism / Centennial** - Explore the best strategies to engage in tourism and promotion of the Village's future Centennial event.
- **Walking Park** – Explore new and innovative ways to pursue a designation as a Walk Friendly Community.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Village Board endorses the participation in the UniverCity Year Program and directs staff to actively engage in the development of this partnership, subject to final approval in the Annual Village Budget.