

## 2014 Robert L. Sigmon Service-Learning Award Recipient

### Dr. Jim Cook – UNC Charlotte

In 1980, JAMES (JIM) R. COOK earned his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Indiana University, and he started his position in community psychology at UNC Charlotte. Prof. Cook integrates student and community engagement purposefully across his teaching, research and service aiding those in need, creating university-community partnerships that serve the needs of the community, and engaging students in those partnerships so they can learn how to assist others at the system, neighborhood, agency and individual levels. One of his students, now working at Yale University School of Medicine, shared that “In 2 short years I completed a class requirement with a community agency, was on the board of directors at another, and became connected to the UNC Urban Institute . . . I know that Jim provided me with an excellent foundation in community psychology and community-engaged work which I still draw upon.” “His impact is inestimable,” wrote his provost who presented to Dr. Cook her first Faculty Award for Community Engagement.



Dr. Cook invests the planning and efforts required because he believes students learn best through efforts to effect change, and need to learn to work collaboratively to identify issues and implement interventions. Students become empowered as change agents. Partnerships have been developed in the contexts of public housing, education and child welfare. As a founding member of Mecklenburg County’s Homeless Services Network which now includes 45 member agencies, Dr. Cook helped create a Continuum of Care and Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, raising millions of dollars in supportive housing funds, and building community capacity to meet the challenges of mental health reform. He worked through Parent University to engage parents in their children’s education and insisted on consumer-oriented measures to evaluate the clinical impacts of reform. He also developed MeckCARES, a partnership among local child-serving agencies, families and community stakeholders, and helped write a SAMHSA grant application which raised \$18 million in federal and community funds to support multi-systemic services for families of and children with serious emotional and behavioral health issues. Scores of students worked on these efforts, learning firsthand how to apply their education, collaborate with the community and make an impact as both a professional and citizen.

An active scholar, Dr. Cook has nearly 40 publications, over \$3.4 million from 60 grants/contracts, roughly 120 conference presentations, and almost 2 dozen professional reports, and regularly supervises students in applied research efforts – all involving community and student engagement and application. Community stakeholders, agency professionals and university colleagues comment on the preparation, competence and contribution of “the next generation of community partners.”

At UNC Charlotte Dr. Cook has lead the development of cross-unit collaboratives as well as multiple curricular, programmatic, or infrastructure building efforts. He led the planning efforts for a Ph.D. program in health psychology, Community Psychology M.A., and a Community Psychology Learning Community for undergraduates – each integrates service-learning. Among the awards Dr. Cook has received are the UNC Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Public Service and the President’s Award of the North Carolina Mental Health Association. For his entire higher education career, Dr. Cook has demonstrated the value of

integrating significant service-learning experience for deep and lasting community, student and institutional impact.