COUNCIL ON TEACHING
Follow-Up Report for
Teaching in Higher Education Conference Award

Name: Travis Kraus

Department/Unit: School of Planning and Public Affairs

Conference Attended: 2024 EPIC Network Conference

Date of Conference: June 23-25

Award Amount: $901

Briefly summarize how your attendance at the conference enhanced your professional development and allowed you to gain a better understanding of teaching in your discipline or trends in higher education in general.

- The EPIC-N conference brings together faculty and staff whose work involves forming meaningful collaborations around community engagement, connecting resources from institutions of higher education with external partners to solve real-world challenges. These collaborations emphasize co-creation and reciprocity- communities receive valuable support and partnership, faculty can explore community-based research opportunities, and students can benefit from unique learning environments. As both an associate professor and director of a community engagement program (the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities), I gain insight into new tools that can enhance my role and my support of University of Iowa faculty colleagues. Conference attendees came from both U.S. and international programs, offering unique perspectives from areas outside Iowa and the Midwest. This conference touched on multiple facets of community engagement, from teaching & learning to communicating our stories to measuring impact. For teaching, I was particularly interested in hearing about experiences from other attendees regarding inter- and transdisciplinary work "to generate comprehensive solutions to local challenges." We know that real-world challenges are often not encapsulated within individual disciplines, and I'm excited to incorporate interdisciplinary collaboration in my classroom and through our IISC partnerships.

How have you been able to share what you learned about teaching with your department, the University of Iowa, and/or beyond?

- Attending the EPIC-N conference gave me the opportunity to engage face-to-face with other community engagement professionals and to learn best practices. While our programs share much in common, we all have unique ways of implementing the basic model of place-based community engagement programs. In the few months since the conference, we have developed resources to support both faculty and community partners. The "How to IISC" guidance provides detailed information about our typical course-based community engagement process. For faculty members, they can better understand how to leverage our resources and implement best practices. The resource guide for community project leads who work with student teams helps them understand how best to contribute to the educational experience for students. Over the course of the year, IISC typically completes over 40 projects involving more than 200 UI students and dozens of faculty partners across campus. With new ideas and knowledge from the EPIC-N network, we can continue to bring useful practices and resources to these impactful collaborations. Thank you very much to the Council on Teaching for supporting this work!