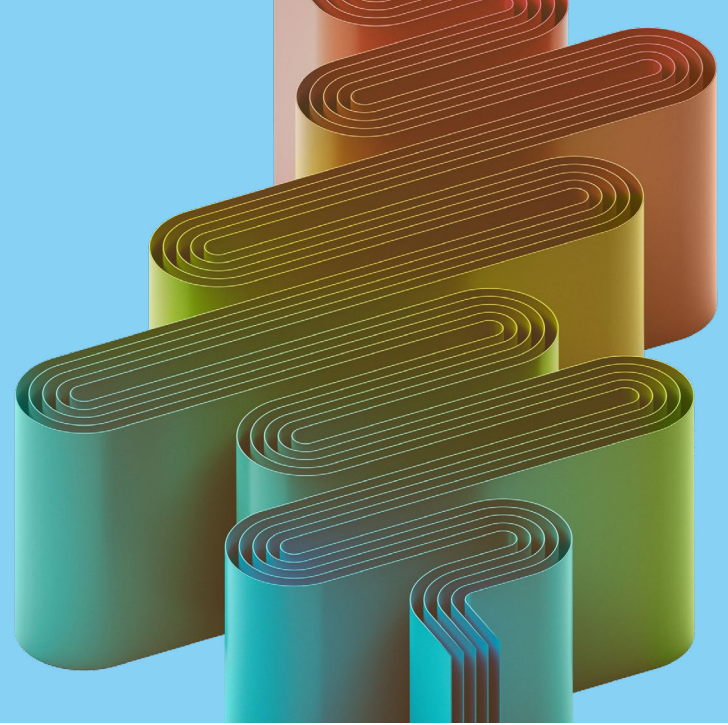




Transforming higher education training

Case study – *Building Capacity for Research with Impact at UNC Greensboro*

Emily Janke, Director of the Institute for Community & Economic Engagement and Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and co-author of **Epigeum's *Research with Impact*** program designed and led a pilot Research with Impact Masterclass for community-engaged scholars.

The four-session masterclass, delivered online and in hybrid formats, combined Epigeum's self-paced modules with facilitated discussion, reflection, and practice-based activities. Its goal was to build individual capability, introduction to campus resources, and interdisciplinary community-building among academics seeking to design, articulate, and communicate research with meaningful public impact.

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The problem

Faculty preparation and training, regardless of discipline and institution, tends to focus on a narrow set of academic outputs, namely journal articles, books, and presentations aimed at academic audiences. UNCG needed to modernize faculty development to expand and accelerate communications to diverse and targeted populations to increase impact and visibility of faculty scholarship. As a result, they faced two related challenges:

- **Limited preparation for public impact:** Faculty needed support to design and communicate research in more accessible, targeted, and publicly meaningful ways for non-academic audiences.
- **Fragmented awareness of support:** Although UNCG offered a wide range of resources for engagement, communication, and impact, these supports were distributed across the institution and not easily visible or connected.

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The solution

To address this, Emily designed a structured program that paired Epigeum's *Research with Impact* framework with workshop sessions. The hybrid format enabled self-paced module learning between sessions, supporting richer, more in-depth discussions in workshops. The sessions were designed to:

- Create a shared language and framework for research impact
- Surface existing expertise and assets across disciplines
- Connect scholars to people, resources, and support services across the university

Participants reflected on their own experience, worked through the module prompts in small interdisciplinary groups, shared actions they had taken between sessions, and completed a *Research Impact Navigation Guide* tailored to their work.

Emily described the model as a **hub-and-spoke approach**: the masterclass served as the hub, helping scholars identify and access the many "spokes" of institutional support available across UNCG. Sessions also brought together colleagues from units representing research development, information technology, digital media, and university communications, to share their expertise in contemporary research communication practice, including podcasts, infographics, and social media.

Outcomes

Strengthened Capability and Confidence

Survey feedback showed consistently strong agreement that the program helped participants think more strategically about impact and apply learning directly to their work.

- Respondents rated the overall value of the Epigeum modules at an average of 4.3 out of 5.
- The vast majority agreed or strongly agreed that the program gave them practical tools they could immediately apply to current or upcoming research projects
- Participants reported increased confidence in defining, planning for, and communicating research impact, particularly through the Impact Navigation Guide

Momentum and Accountability

Structured reflection and action-planning were central to the masterclass design. After each session, participants identified small, achievable "next steps" to move their work forward. Participants completed the modules, brought questions back to the group, and developed a concrete plan to advance their research impact.

Community, Networking, and Collaboration

Participants valued connecting with community-engaged scholars across roles and disciplines, developing a strong sense of camaraderie and shared purpose. Many continued conversations beyond the masterclass, including exploring potential collaborations and grant opportunities.

Increased Awareness of Institutional Resources

Guest speakers and facilitated discussion increased participants' awareness of previously unknown campus resources for digital, design, media, and engagement support. Many respondents noted that understanding who to turn to and when was a crucial outcome of the program, reducing barriers to pursuing more ambitious or collaborative impact activities.

A Broader View of Impact and Partnership

Participants described developing relationships with new stakeholders, within and beyond the university, to better understand intended impacts and how they might be pursued collaboratively. This reflects the program's success in expanding how scholars define collaborators and embed relationship-building across the research lifecycle.

Institutional profile

UNC Greensboro is a learner-centred public research university offering 150+ undergraduate and graduate programmes across eight colleges. Nationally recognised for supporting first-generation and lower-income students, UNCG serves nearly 19,000 students with 2,600 faculty. It is a Carnegie-classified high-research, community-engaged doctoral university, with strengths in health and wellness, arts and sciences, nursing, business, and education.



The modules provided the perfect shared text for our faculty learning community, new and seasoned scholars alike. Everyone benefits from being asked insightful questions that help them review their purpose, refine plans, identify resources, and improve articulation about the value of their work to society."

Emily Janke

Director of the Institute for Community & Economic Engagement, University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG)