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**Title: “Advancing Community Engaged Research through Partnership Development:
the Scope and Impact of a Mini-Grant Pilot Program”**

Authors(role): Margaret Hargreaves(Academic Partner), Celia Larson(Community Member), Leah Alexander(Academic Partner), Erica Mitchell,(Community Member) Susie Adams(Academic Partner), Paulette Coleman(Community Member) , Derek M. Griffith(Academic Partner), Lexie Lipham(Academic Partner), Clare D. Sullivan(Academic Partner), Yvonne Joosten(Academic Partner)

The Meharry -Vanderbilt Community Engaged Research Core (CERC), a joint program of the Vanderbilt Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (VICTR) and the Meharry Translational Research Center (MeTRC), serves as a cornerstone for facilitating community-academic research partnerships. The mini-grant program, a key feature of CERC since 2008, is a flexible tool for promoting the development of mutually beneficial collaborations that build upon each partner’s unique strengths. This poster describes the program’s structure and process, and how it has catalyzed a continuum of educational and support services that improve the scope and design of community engaged research in middle Tennessee communities.

Inherent to the program’s overarching approach are systematic and structured methods that facilitate partners’ proposal applications, project development, evaluation and dissemination. Proposals are reviewed by a team of peers representing both academia and community organizations using standardized processes that assure integrity, rigor, fairness and community health impact.

Revised in 2015, the mini-grant program now incorporates two approaches: 1) Partnership Development Awards which focus on the development of relationships and capacity among the partners; and 2) Community Engaged Research Awards which enable the partners to pilot a research project. As the mini-grant program has matured, other services have been created to educate both community members and researchers about community engaged research. Partners are submitting more sophisticated research designs on a broader array of health and social concerns.

This poster will illustrate innovative grant guidelines, review criteria, outcomes, and the framework of CERC services that support community –academic research partnerships.