REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:
KENNETH COLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM
AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

BACKGROUND

Columbia College and The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science, in partnership with fashion designer Kenneth Cole, invite applications for internship proposals for the Kenneth Cole Community Engagement Program. Through this innovative program, college and engineering undergraduate students, named Kenneth Cole Fellows, gain academic as well as practical experience and insight in becoming community leaders and effective agents of change. The Fellows will work with community partners to address critical local problems, encourage social action, build community capacity, and implement initiatives that strengthen communities and promote social change.

The program culminates in a summer internship in which teams of approximately four Fellows will work on specific, community-based projects with local community organizations. These projects, the details of which shall be finalized through collaboration between the Fellows and the organizations with the oversight of University program administrators, will be designed to address a critical need in the community. The ideal project is action-oriented, provides hands-on community work for the Fellows, and produces specific deliverables.

Fellows will work approximately 30 hours per week on their projects, with regular input from professors as well as staff from the Division of Student Affairs, the Center for Career Education, Columbia College, and Columbia Engineering. The start date for internships is June 4, 2012; internships will be completed on August 9, 2012. All Fellows will complete a short report and presentation at the conclusion of their fellowships, which will include presenting meaningful and constructive solutions to the various stakeholders. Columbia University provides all Fellows with housing and a stipend during the internship period and no financial contribution is required of the community organizations that are selected to host the internships.
ELIGIBILITY

The Kenneth Cole Community Engagement Program is designed to benefit local community-based organizations and other not-for-profit entities active in New York City. Any not-for-profit entities—including arts organizations, schools and educational institutions, neighborhood associations, etc.—are thus invited to submit proposals for internship projects that will help them accomplish their missions. Columbia will also consider proposals from government agencies (such as local community boards) and social enterprises, provided that the proposed projects have a positive impact on the community and help the Fellows develop their skills as change agents. Throughout the course of the program, Fellows hone competencies in several areas that form the basis of effective community leadership, including community partnering, community understanding, relationship building, compassion, leadership and initiative.

Community organization clients are expected to commit staff time to liaise with the Fellows and Columbia administrators before and during the project, and to consult regularly and closely with Fellows throughout the summer internship period. Clients should be aware that the Fellows will work solely on their projects during the summer; they will not be available to support clients’ other administrative functions.

INVITATION TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

Columbia University’s Division of Student Affairs is eager to accept submissions in response to this Request for Proposals. This year, we are implementing a new framework in which we invite proposals that identify one to three critical community needs that could form the basis for a summer internship project. We are looking for ideas that have the potential to be transformed into projects that realize the objectives of the Kenneth Cole Community Engagement Program. These projects will have specific goals and deliverables that can be completed in 10 weeks by a team of approximately four students working around 30 hours per week. Projects including a component which draws on the specific talents of our engineering students are particularly encouraged, though all proposals will receive equal consideration. The Fellows and members of the community organization will collaborate to build a unique project that will address a social need, develop metrics for assessing successful outcomes, and identify long- and short-term goals.

The ideas proposed should be for original projects that are in line with the organization’s mission and will allow Fellows the opportunity to engage directly in the community. The Fellows should not be expected to staff projects that are already in existence or complete tasks that comprise the normal operation of the organization.

EXAMPLES OF A COMMUNITY NEED AND RESULTING PROJECT

In the summer of 2011, one group of Kenneth Cole Fellows worked with the Mary Mitchell Family and Youth Center (MMC) in the Crotona neighborhood of the Bronx. The critical need in this community identified by the MMC was the lack of access to affordable, healthy food, contributing to an epidemic of obesity and diabetes in children and adults of the community.
Working closely with the MMC, the Kenneth Cole Fellows conducted research on the viability of a social food business that would provide healthy food at a reasonable price to community members. The Fellows met with neighborhood members (consumers), suppliers and other local leaders to collect data on consumer preferences and supplier capabilities. They also distributed a sample food basket and conducted a focus group to assess reactions to the proposed business. Finally, the Fellows conducted research on how this business should be organized and delivered a comprehensive business plan for the MMC.

To take another example, consider a community in which a large proportion of residents are refugees, and in which these residents in particular are highly likely to be targets of crime in the neighborhood. Imagine also that these residents are hesitant to speak openly with the local police. In an effort to reduce crime against refugees, such a community could benefit from more open lines of communication between residents and law enforcement. Thus, one possible project for the Kenneth Cole Fellows could involve facilitating these lines of communication. Fellows could devise a research agenda that aims to determine why these residents are victimized. They might attend local community events (e.g., community block parties) in order to administer questionnaires to residents. They might also conduct drive-alongs with the local police. In the end, the Fellows could present their findings to community stakeholders including local politicians, law enforcement, and community leaders.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Proposals should not be longer than ten (10) pages and must contain the following elements:

A. Cover Page

1. The full incorporation name of your organization
2. Key contact person for questions and acknowledgement
3. Mailing address
4. E-mail address
5. Telephone number

B. Description of Organization

1. Full name of the organization
2. Organization’s mission statement
3. How long the organization has been in existence
4. Status as a New York State Not-for-Profit Corporation and Federal Tax identification number (if applicable)
5. Full description of your past experience working with interns and/or college students

C. Description of Ideas for the Internship Project

This section should include a detailed description of the critical issue which the internship projects would address. It should include the following:
1. Description of a critical local problem, including
   a. activities the Fellows might undertake to address the problem;
   b. how the potential project fits into the organization’s mission; and
   c. the intended impact on the organization’s constituencies
2. Staff member(s) (name(s)/title(s)/contact info) who will work with the Fellows from March through May to fully visualize the project, and during the June-August internship period
3. Staff member(s) (name(s)/title(s)/contact info) who will have primary responsibility for managing the organization’s participation in the proposed project
4. Other staff members (name(s)/title(s)) who will participate in the proposed project

SELECTION CRITERIA

Criteria on which Columbia University will base its selection may include, without limitation, the following:

1. The potential impact on the community
2. The quality of the opportunity for Fellows to learn about community engagement and change
3. The potential of the identified community need to be translated into a quality internship project manageable within a 10-week period
4. The quality of the proposal and the degree to which it demonstrates the potential client’s full understanding of the program
5. The proposed client’s commitment to providing staff time to liaise with Columbia administrators and work with Fellows

SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

Please submit proposals as an e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word or PDF format. Submissions and questions may be directed to Natasha Rossi at ntr2102@columbia.edu. For more information about the program, please visit http://www.studentaffairs.columbia.edu/ocae/kennethcole.

TIMELINE

The deadline for proposal submissions is Monday, January 30, 2012. Columbia University will announce which projects have been selected by March 1, 2012.