The Princeton community and Princeton University share more than just a name. The town and the campus intersect in many ways, each supporting the other. For a complete list of Princeton University’s contributions to the town and region, visit www.princeton.edu/community.

Financial Contributions to Princeton

For decades, Princeton University has made voluntary contributions to the Municipality of Princeton. In 2020, the University’s voluntary contribution to the municipality was $4.03 million, including a $550,000 contribution to support the hiring of career personnel for the Princeton Fire Department.

In late 2020, the municipality and the University agreed to a two-year extension of the existing 2014 contribution agreement. Under the new 2020 agreement, the University will contribute nearly $8.5 million to the municipality in the next two years.

The University is the largest property taxpayer in the municipality, paying $11.7 million in 2020 property and sewer taxes. This includes about $6.4 million in voluntary tax payments for properties that are eligible for tax exemption; for decades, the University has left many potentially exempt holdings, including graduate student housing, campus roads and some athletic facilities, on the tax rolls. In addition, Princeton University is the largest single contributor to the Princeton Public Schools and paid $4.7 million in school taxes in 2020.

Moody’s AAA rating of the municipality cites the University’s “stabilizing presence,” noting that “Princeton University contributes to the municipality’s strong local economy.” This reduces the town’s borrowing costs below those of many other municipalities.

Building Community Capacity

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Campus Dining provided more than 43,000 meals to at-risk families, children and adults in the Mercer County region. This included more than 21,000 meals to the Princeton Public Schools for students eligible for the free/reduced price lunch program and more than 2,500 meals to Meals on Wheels that were delivered to home-bound individuals in Princeton, East Windsor, West Windsor and Hightstown.

The University has long committed to supporting initiatives that enrich the quality of life in Princeton. The University has contributed to an array of local projects and non-profit organizations, ranging from the construction and endowment of the Princeton Public Library and building of new Princeton Public Schools facilities, to the renovation of community resources such as the Princeton Community Pool, Princeton Battle Monument and the YMCA/YWCA. Through its ownership of the Princeton Garden Theater, the University ensures that Princeton enjoys a movie theater in town.

Strengthening Community Infrastructure

The University operates the TigerTransit bus system, which is free and open to the public, providing more than 500,000 passenger rides per year. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, ridership dropped by almost 90%, reflecting national trends. TigerTransit adopted new, stricter daily cleaning protocols including a mask and social distance requirement.

The University owns approximately five miles of local roads, such as Faculty Road and College Road, which are open to the public. In addition to paying relevant taxes, the University maintains these roads at its own expense. In September 2020, the University modified Lawrence Drive and College Road to include bicycle/pedestrian advisory lanes to create safer pedestrian access.

Princeton University contributed $250,000 to Mercer County toward the reconstruction of aging bridge infrastructure on Alexander Street that was completed in 2020.
Excellence in Education

Princeton University extends its education and research mission to community members through numerous initiatives. Students at local high schools, including Princeton High School, can take coursework at the University. Various University programs provide tutoring to public school students and Princeton runs a rigorous college preparatory program for economically disadvantaged students in the area. Almost 40% of Community Auditing program participants are Princeton residents, who enroll in University classes for a modest fee, and thousands more attend hundreds of free public lectures each year on campus. The Cotsen Children’s Library is also open to the public at no cost. In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the lectures and programs transitioned to a virtual format that was open to the public. Additionally, the Princeton Online Tutoring Network was created to provide virtual tutoring to local students, and was staffed by Princeton University faculty, staff and students.

Additionally, through TigerChallenge, Princeton students engage with local officials and organizations to tackle some of the community’s most challenging issues.

Cultural and Athletic Resources

The Princeton University Art Museum is free, open to the public and provides numerous community programs and educational events. In addition the University Chapel, Music Department, Lewis Center for the Arts, Princeton University Concerts and McCarter Theater provide a wide variety of arts and cultural performances. In 2020, most of these events transitioned to a virtual setting.

Civic Engagement

Princeton’s teaching and research mission has service at its core, and students, faculty and staff volunteer with many community organizations. This local engagement begins for many students before they even take their first class through the Community Action program during Orientation. The University has long worked with the Princeton Nursery School, Arts Council of Princeton and numerous other organizations that meet the needs of local residents and create a fully inclusive and supportive community. Initiatives developed in 2020 in direct response to COVID-19 range from food insecurity to educational support to racial injustice.

The University committed $1 million to the Princeton University Relief Fund to provide direct support to community organizations working to alleviate economic distress related to COVID-19. In 2020, the fund contributed $400,000 to the Princeton Area Community Foundation COVID Relief Fund, $100,000 to the Coronavirus Emergency Relief Fund coordinated by the Princeton Children’s Fund, and $350,000 to launch the Princeton Small Business Resiliency Fund.

Promoting Public Safety

The University’s Public Safety department has a staff of 118 including sworn police officers, non-sworn security officers and fire marshals, and operates 24 hours per day/365 days per year in close collaboration with the Princeton Police Department to foster campus and community safety.

The University supports the Princeton Fire Department with annual financial contributions and major capital gifts. In 2020, the University contributed $550,000 to support the hiring of career personnel. University employees respond to fire calls during their workday as associate members of the fire department.

Likewise, the University supports the Princeton First Aid and Rescue Squad (PFARS) through annual contributions and in-kind services such as housing and telecommunications support. University students are counted among the squad’s top responders.

The University collaborates regularly with the municipality and Mercer County to support emergency communications systems and training exercises. During the earliest months of the COVID-19 pandemic the University contributed thousands of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the municipality and held 10 community blood drives on campus.