

### **Introduction: What the Center will bring to UIC**

Collaborating to form this interdisciplinary Center should increase UIC's excellence and access in the area of violence research. Our intentional work together as an interdisciplinary group will provide us not only the opportunity to support and build on each other's work, but also create new opportunities for collaborative research that can place UIC at the forefront in this evolving area of study, and increase our local, state and national impact.

*Increasing Access:* Co-PI's from our center have a longstanding tradition of involvement with the agencies and institutions providing services and sanctions to the victims and perpetrators of violence, and have been instrumental in bringing these agencies and institutions into the university to help educate our students about violence prevention "on the ground." These agencies and institutions are the laboratories where our violence researchers apply science to service, but equally important are the classrooms where community practitioners help shape the foci of future science, send their staff for both education and continuing education, and advise our researchers about existing projects. With our Hull House tradition of town-gown collaboration, UIC is widely recognized in both the Chicago and larger Illinois violence prevention community as a source of practice-friendly research, enhancing both our future research opportunities and our ability to influence public policy. This center will formalize and expand these existing relationships. The interdisciplinary nature of our center will also greatly increase the links available for individual researchers who have their own community laboratories, but who will now also benefit from the community laboratories of their colleagues.

*Increasing Excellence:* Sharing resources and expertise between disciplines, sharing datasets, sharing ideas, developing interdisciplinary seminars and coursework will greatly enhance our contributions to the scientific community, improve and expand our usefulness to community partners and practitioners, and ultimately make us even more attractive to local, state, and federal funders. For example, by sharing expertise and data among violence researchers across disciplines, collaborative groups will be able to develop interdisciplinary projects to address problems of violence more effectively and to target interventions at individual, group, and community levels in an integrated fashion. Second, by coming together as a group and joining with community partners and practitioners, we will be more likely to develop creative solutions useful to practitioners working on the front lines to deal with violence, because they will be informed by a broader range of experience and expertise than are typically available in the single researcher-practitioner collaborations that more typically characterize the field. Third, funders are increasingly attuned to the need for multi-level interventions to effectively attack social problems such as violence. With a multidisciplinary team of investigators, we can develop studies integrating factors at multiple levels (e.g., individual, group, societal), that will be more likely to succeed in competition for external funds.

