

Knowledge Unit Establishment Proposal Cover Sheet



Proposed Knowledge Unit Name Center for Middletown Studies

NOTE: If the proposed KU's name is to contain the name of an individual or a private organization, please refer to BSU's rules and regulations concerning naming rights.

University Official to whom KU reports Robert Morris, Associate Provost

Name and title of individual(s) submitting this proposal

Name	Department	Title/University Position
James J. Connolly	Center for Middletown Studies	Director

I have read, understand, and agree to the terms and conditions set forth in ["Supporting Collaborative Knowledge Creation at Ball State University."](#)

Knowledge Unit Representative _____

The final proposal document has been reviewed by the Dean or Vice President responsible for providing oversight to this KU prior to its submission.

Signature of University Official _____

Sponsored Programs Office

Signature of Director _____

Signature of Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate School _____

Executive Summary: Please provide a one-page summary of your unit proposal in the space provided below.

The Center for Middletown Studies was established in 1980 and became a permanent academic unit at Ball State in 1984. Its purpose is to capitalize on the attention generated by *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (1929), Robert and Helen Lynd's seminal account of modernization in Muncie during the 1920s, and on the wide array of research that has followed it. The Center is multidisciplinary in nature, promoting collaboration among faculty and students from Sociology, Anthropology, Urban Planning, Journalism, History, Economics, and other departments.

While its principal focus is research on Muncie, it also sponsors investigations of similarly situated communities both in the United States and abroad as well as on topics related to the evolution of modern American society. This research agenda allows the Center for Middletown Studies to pursue several of the objectives identified in BSU's Strategic Plan. It has sought and received numerous external grants, supported or sponsored several immersive learning projects, provided undergraduates with opportunities for hands-on research experience, and created new graduate assistantship positions with external funds. It has also worked in tandem with several local groups on events and projects that benefit the community.

The Center's structure includes a Directory, an Advisory Board, and (temporarily) affiliated faculty. The Director is the sole faculty member permanently assigned to the Center. (One graduate assistant and one part-time undergraduate assistant work for the Center as well.) The sixteen-member Advisory Board is made up of community members and BSU Faculty. There is no formal membership or affiliation with the Center among faculty from BSU or other scholars, although there are occasional faculty fellows, drawn from scholars both on and off campus.

Research grants constitute the principal source of external funding for the Center. It will continue to seek support for its efforts to deploy digital resources online and in virtual contexts, to document the impact of deindustrialization in Middletown, and to promote research on small cities. An avenue for developing a more sustainable revenue stream is to widen the Center's agenda to focus on urban studies. Such a move would capitalize on the Center's success in staging conferences and producing publications devoted to the study of small cities. The broader program would not only create a wider range of grant opportunities, but also make fund-raising from local sources more viable by reducing the potential for conflicts of interest.

Middletown Studies also provides other benefits to the University. While it is not directly connected to a particular degree or certificate program, it supports academic programs in several colleges through guest lectures, research assistance to students, graduate assistantships, and fellowships. It collaborates with community organizations such as Minnetrista, the Muncie Public Library, and voluntary groups. It also sponsors and produces a range of publications by scholars working in a variety of fields, both at Ball State and other institutions, and works with journalists from around the world who are interested in the city. An accounting of these activities provides an additional metric by which to judge the Center.