

**Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome ePortfolio Assessment**  
**Final Report for Academic Year 2017-2018**

**Purpose**

The Engaged Learning Office sought to determine how effective designated service-learning classes were at facilitating students' demonstration of the Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) civic literacy student learning outcome (CLSLO).

**Sample and Method**

The study used a random sample of service-learning designated sections, including General Education courses. The sample included 181 undergraduate service-learning students who received an AS or AA degree by May 2018. Out of the sample of 181 students, 123 were selected because their service-learning course was included in the ePortfolio, thereby allowing reviewers to access it.

Two teams that included two assessors each evaluated assignments under the course work tab within individual ePortfolios. Each team reviewed half of the sample. Assessors met in person and discussed each ePortfolio, creating a scoring consensus for the team. Each course received scores under the characteristic subcategories of each criteria and then this score was averaged to create an overall score for each broad criteria. The CLSLO rubric (Appendix A) outlines the subcategories of each criteria. If there were multiple assignments within one course, the assessors reviewed all assignments and gave an overall score. Each unique course received individual scores for those included in the sample that took multiple service-learning courses.

SLCC's [General Education CLSLO](#) reads as follows:

***Students develop civic literacy and the capacity to be community-engaged learners who act in mutually beneficial ways with community partners. This includes producing learning artifacts indicating understanding of the political, historical, economic or sociological aspects of social change and continuity; thinking critically about—and weighing the evidence surrounding—issues important to local, national, or global communities; participating in a broad range of community-engagement and/or service-learning courses for community building and an enhanced academic experience.***

The current rubric operationalizes the CLSLO in the following manner:

- **Develop civic literacy/knowledge**
  - Students gained knowledge of political, historical, or economic social issues and/or social change. They developed knowledge of agencies/organizations that address social issues and had awareness of democratic structures, including key democratic text and/or principals.
  
- **Critical thinking surrounding social issues/capacity to become a community engaged learner**
  - Students gained the aforementioned civic knowledge and then critically analyzed it. This knowledge was filtered through a disciplinary lens where students defined, explained or analyzed facts and theories from their own academic field and identified impacts on society. This category also included a commitment to community engagement which evaluated students' intention to participate in service. Students also reflected on personal values, attitudes, and/or beliefs.

- **Working with others**
  - Students were able to state, explain or analyze their perspective on ethical and cultural issues. They expressed interest or discussed interacting with others of diverse backgrounds or actively sought out interactions.
- **Civic action/students act in mutually beneficial ways**
  - Student's role in addressing social issues looked at how they were involved in community; either through others' prompting, they actively sought out service opportunities or they took it one step further and took independent initiative and recruited others to address social issues. Students participated in one to three types of community engaged activities. The reciprocity and collaboration subcategory was focused on how students collaborated with community partners, meaning there was a self-centered perspective, learning from a third party, or they were actively collaborated with the partner, learning about community need, ideally on an on-going basis.

The scoring rubric has evolved in the past five years. Originally, we used a modified version of the [Civic Engagement Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education \(VALUE\) rubric](#) from the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). Then we incorporated components of the [Civic-Minded Graduate Rubric 2.0 from Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis](#) along with the verbiage from the SLCC CLSLO. The SLCC assessment coordinator provided feedback on each revision and then approved the final version of the rubric. The rubric was also evaluated by the college-wide Student Learning Outcomes Assessment committee and its members suggested no changes. The review teams checked inter-rater reliability with ten ePortfolios to ensure that the rubric was validated. The rubric uses a scoring system of 3-competent, 2-developing, 1-beginner, and 0-no evidence that ranks each characteristic subcategory.

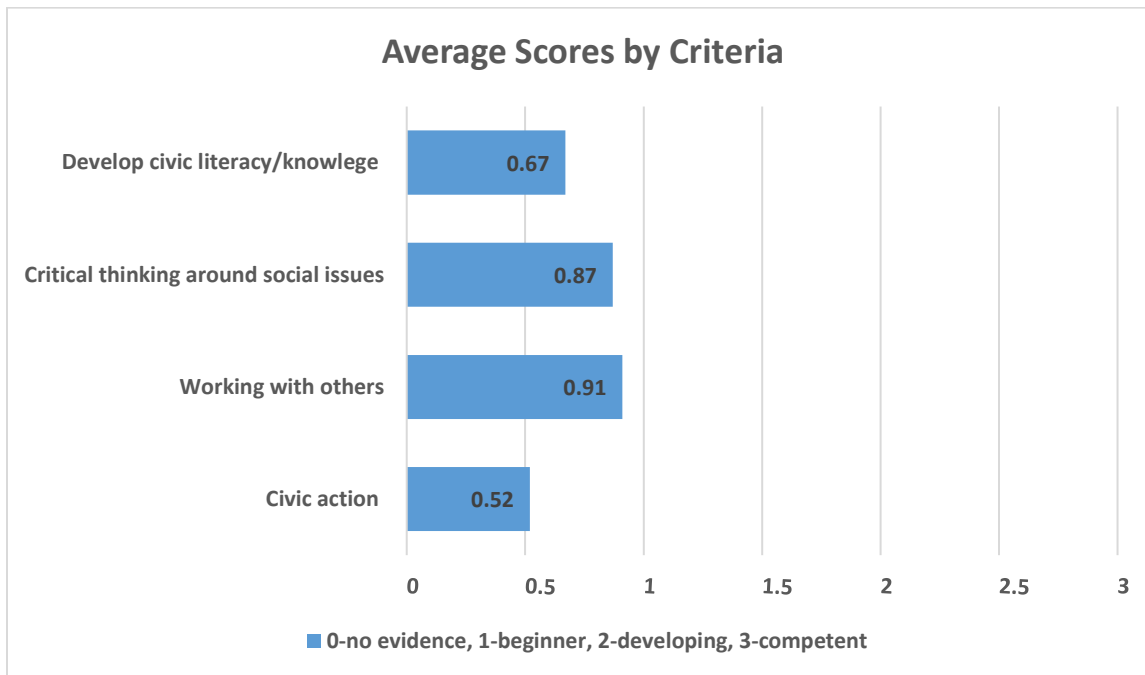
### **Initial Findings: Summary of Scores by Criteria**

Figure 1 shows the scores for development of civic literacy, critical thinking, working with others, and civic action for the sample drawn from the averages of the characteristic subcategories within each criteria. With an overall average score of 0.91, students ranked highest in the criteria focused on working with others. The second highest ranking criteria—average score of 0.87—was critical thinking surrounding social issues/capacity to become community engaged learners. Reviewers gave students a score of 0.67 for the criteria focused on developing civic literacy. The lowest ranking criteria was for civic action/students act in mutually beneficial ways, with an overall average score of 0.52.

These results may demonstrate that SLCC students are more often highlighting activities focused on how they are working with others as well as their awareness about social issues. They are also reflecting on their values, attitudes and beliefs surrounding these issues but often they are not showcasing their service.

Although all students are required to participate in service as a part of their service-learning course, they do not appear to be adequately highlighting this in their ePortfolios. This is an area where future development needs to focus in order to help increase both the quality and quantity of artifacts that highlight the civic action piece of service-learning in addition to the civic knowledge, critical thinking, and working with others components. This needs to occur prior to the next evaluation cycle.

**Figure 1: Student Scores for Overall Criteria Areas**



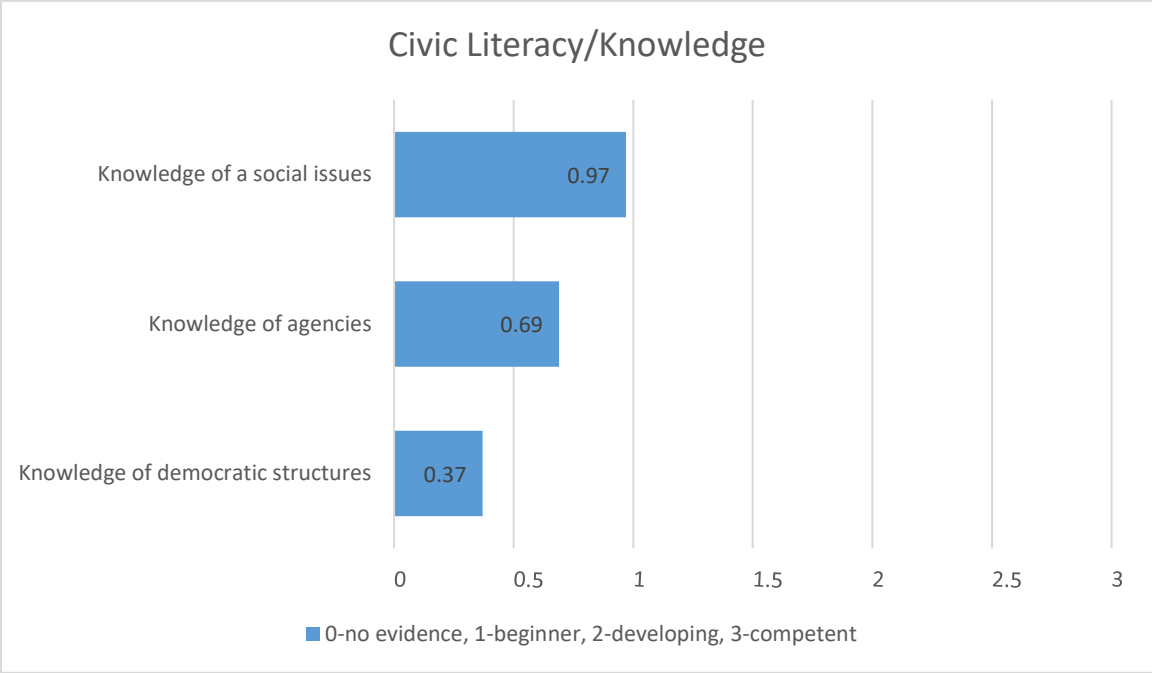
**Summary of Scores by Characteristic Subcategories**

Figures 2, 3, and 4 show the average scores for each individual characteristic subcategory. The highest subcategory overall was reflection on values, attitudes and/or beliefs, in which students scored 1.0, which indicates that when students post to their ePortfolio, reflection usually accompanies it. The second highest subcategory was knowledge of a social issue at 0.97, demonstrating that students are learning about the social issues pertinent to their service, but at a relatively low level. This should be a focus of improvement. The category focused on perspective taking ranked third (overall score of 0.90), followed by civic knowledge through a disciplinary lens (0.85) and openness (0.76). Students do not have enough knowledge of agencies/organizations that address social issues (0.69), and awareness of democratic structures was at only 0.37. Student understanding of their role in addressing social issues (0.59) and their focus on reciprocal, collaborative engagement (0.49) could both be improved. Finally, reviewers scored the breadth of student community engagement activities at only 0.48, but this is less of a concern because students usually only highlighted one service activity.

**Overall, the findings demonstrate that faculty who teach service-learning courses need to be more cognizant of what the College hopes students take away from their experiences. Faculty also need to help students be more intentional about meeting these expectations. There is considerable variability in the types of assignments that students upload to their ePortfolio, which is only appropriate given faculty freedom to design the learning environment, but a more coordinated and intentional approach to the outcomes of service-learning should result in better student learning. Additionally, we should increase the use of ePortfolio to highlight signature assignments and reflection related to the civic literacy student learning outcome, because this is the best way to surface civic engagement among SLCC’s students.**

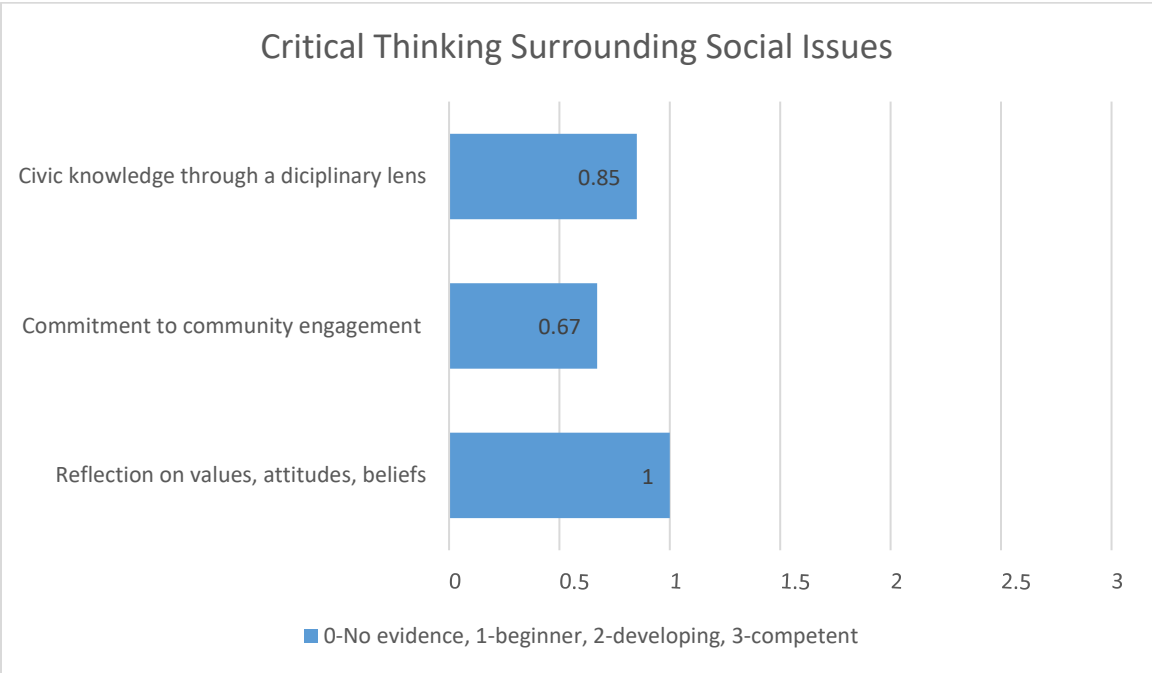
**Figure 2: Student Scores for Civic Literacy/Knowledge**

In this category, students rank highest on knowledge of social issues. This makes sense since this is a common category of knowledge that would likely be covered in many classes.



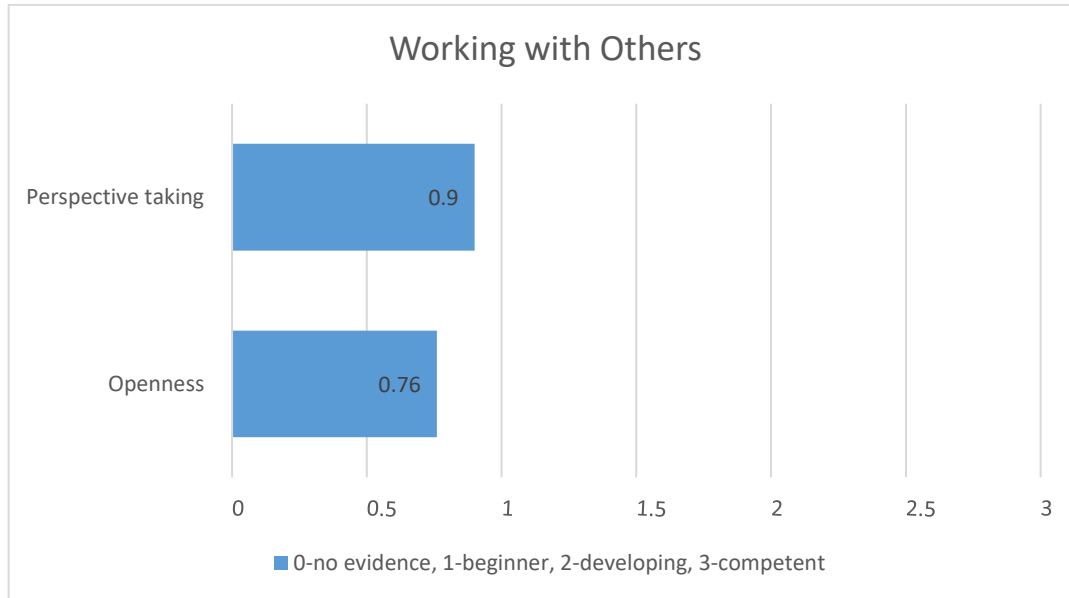
**Figure 3: Student Scores for Critical Thinking**

In this category students take the knowledge gained in the aforementioned civic literacy category and then critically analyze it, making relevant connections to one's own possible civic engagement and/or its impact on individuals/society. Overall some of the higher criteria scores are related to critical thinking. Taking into consideration all subcategories, students ranked highest on reflection on values, attitudes, and beliefs. This is followed by their civic knowledge as seen through a disciplinary lens. Critical thinking is also a unique SLCC student learning outcome (separate from civic literacy) and therefore may receive additional focus within courses.



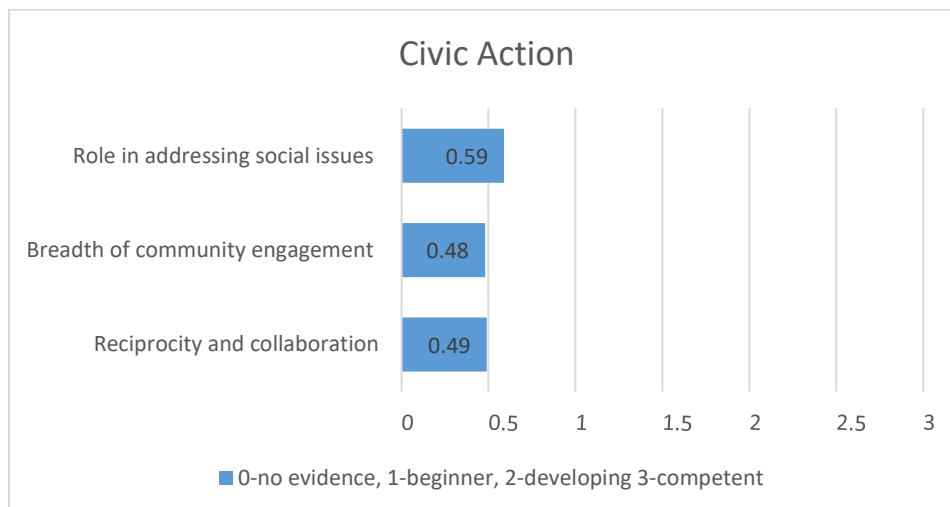
**Figure 4: Student Scores for Working with Others**

The second highest ranking for all the criteria falls within the working with others subcategory. Specially, students in service-learning courses are beginning to understand perspective taking, meaning that they were starting to transcend a self-centered perspective.



**Figure 5: Student Scores for Civic Action**

The Civic Action criteria was the lowest ranking category in terms of student scores on the rubric. All students are required to do service as a part of service-learning courses, so it does not appear that they are effectively highlighting their service work via ePortfolio. For service-learning courses, sometimes the assignments posted to the student’s ePortfolio do not focus on civic engagement (it may focus just on discipline-based content). In addition, the other criteria are broader and therefore, may be easier to identify. This is the case for other General Education student learning outcomes such as communication. It was also difficult to assess whether students were participating in multiple service projects because courses usually focused on one project.



## Learning Outside the Classroom

We also wanted to see how civic literacy manifests in other areas of the ePortfolio such as the *Learning Outside the Classroom page* which is separate from the aforementioned academic course work pages. Our reviewers looked at the *Learning Outside the Classroom* pages of student ePortfolios since this is the primary area where co-curricular service activities may be highlighted. The assessors did not look at student's *Welcome page or Goals and Outcomes page* as previously done because these areas rarely highlight student's service. The *Learning Outside the Classroom* tab is an overall requirement when creating an ePortfolio as a part of a students' General Education experience.

After examining the Learning Outside the Classroom pages in the sample, we conclude that students may not be reporting service work in this area effectively and/or regularly since the average score is 0.27 in this category. On this tab, students are asked to highlight internships, travel, hobbies and talents, family and friends as well as volunteer work. Since volunteer work is only one component of a large list of items that students can include, it may get overlooked. This shows students are adding content to their ePortfolios more often when they are required to do so for their General Education courses. That said, students who are heavily engaged in the community such as Civically Engaged Scholars or Student Government participants often have well-developed co-curricular material in this area that could be further analyzed qualitatively.

## Recommendations

There are several recommendations based on the data in this report:

- Faculty Professional Development: While recognizing faculty freedom to design service-learning assignments as they see fit, SLCC should develop a more coordinated and intentional approach to service-learning professional development. Faculty should come to a consensus informed by the civic literacy learning outcome and rubric. What knowledge, skills, and attitudes do we want students to develop as the result of participating in a service-learning course? How can we prompt them to demonstrate those abilities?
- Collect, Connect, Reflect in ePortfolio: The Service-Learning and ePortfolio programs should continue to encourage service-learning faculty to require that students consistently upload signature assignments focused on civic literacy, critical thinking, working with others, and especially civic action in their ePortfolio. Currently, existing service-learning faculty do not always require that the signature assignment posted in ePortfolio for their class focus on the aforementioned categories. In addition, some service-learning courses do not carry a General Education designation which means that ePortfolio may not be prioritized. We should also consider that student reflections are heavily reliant on the specific prompts that are provided. Often these prompts are focused on other student learning outcomes besides civic literacy. Therefore, the assignment that is evaluated may not adequately reflect the service-learning students' acquisition of the civic literacy goals in their scores in each category. This is especially true regarding the lack of evidence in the scores for civic action. Although civic action in the community is required for all service-learning courses, this is not reflected in students' ePortfolios.
- Collaboration: The Service-Learning and ePortfolio programs should continue to collaborate to ensure that all faculty teaching service-learning courses also receive training in ePortfolio pedagogy.
- Reflection Prompts: It would be helpful to further explore the areas that received lower scores (i.e. awareness of democratic structures, knowledge of agencies/organizations that address social issues etc.) and create additional prompts that help focus student reflection on these areas.

- ePortfolio Templates: In the *Learning Outside the Classroom* tab, perhaps prompts could encourage students to highlight volunteer work and service outside of their academics more.

### **Guiding Resources:**

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2009). Civic Engagement VALUE rubric. Retrieved from <https://www.aacu.org/civic-engagement-value-rubric>

Clayton, P.H., Bringle R.G. & Hatcher, J.A. (2013). *Research on Service-Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Assessment. Volume 2A: Students and Faculty.* 3-111

Maki, P. (2015) [Assessment That Works: A National Call, A Twenty-First-Century Response.](#)  
[Washington DC:](#) Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Sullivan, D. F. (2015). *The VALUE Breakthrough: Getting the Assessment of Student Learning in College Right.* [Washington DC:](#) Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Weiss, H.A., Hahn, T., and Norris, K. (2017). Civic Minded Graduate 2.0: Assessment Toolbox

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Appendix A

**Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome Assessment Rubric**

Criteria	Characteristic	0-No evidence	1-Beginner	2-Developing	3-Competent
<b>Develop civic literacy/knowledge</b>	Knowledge of a social issue	No evidence.	Lists some social issues or states basic details of a political, historical, economic, or sociological aspect of social change.	Explains social problem(s) or the political, historical, economic, sociological aspects of social change-or lack of change based on research with a social issue.	Compares and contrasts different perspectives and/or ideas detailing social problems or the political, historical, economic, sociological aspects of social change.
	Knowledge of agencies/ organizations that address social issues	No evidence.	Emerging awareness of agencies/organizations focused on addressing social issues.	Lists agencies/organizations responsible for addressing social issues.	Recognizes relevant agencies/organizations and explains how they address a social issue.
	Awareness of democratic structures	No evidence.	Lists key democratic text and universal democratic principles.	Explains key democratic text and universal democratic principles	Analyzes one or more key democratic text and/or universal democratic principles



Criteria	Characteristic	0-No evidence	1-Beginner	2-Developing	3-Competent
<b>Critical Thinking surrounding Social Issues/ Capacity to become community engaged learner</b>	Civic knowledge through a disciplinary lens	No evidence	Lists or defines issues (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline to civic engagement or its impact on society.	Explains issues (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline making relevant connections/implications to civic engagement or its impact on society.	Analyzes issues (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline to civic engagement or its impact on society.
	Source(s) of responsibility or commitment to community engagement	No evidence.	Mentions that they have to do service for a class or as a part of a group.	Mentions that they are required to do service for a class or as part of a group and expresses value in it.	Mentions that they want to do service to support the community or society at large.
	Reflection on values, attitudes, and/or beliefs	No evidence.	Little to no reflection on personal values, attitudes, and beliefs.	Aware of personal values, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to others.	Critically examines personal values, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to others.
<b>Working with others</b>	Perspective taking	No evidence.	States own perspective (i.e. cultural, disciplinary, and ethical).	Explains own perspectives and identifies perspectives of others.	Analyses multiple perspectives for points of commonalities and differences.
	Openness	No evidence.	Expresses willingness to interact with diverse others.	Discusses a plan to initiate interactions with diverse others.	Actively seeks out interactions with diverse others.

Criteria	Characteristic	0-No evidence	1-Beginner	2-Developing	3-Competent
<b>Civic Action/ Students act in mutually beneficial ways</b>	Role in addressing social issues	No evidence.	Others prompt their involvement in the community or service.	Actively seeks opportunities to be involved in the community or service.	Recruits others to be involved in the community or service or assumes a responsibility (e.g. takes the initiative) in addressing a social issue through involvement in the community or service.
	Breadth of community engagement (e.g. direct, indirect, advocacy, research, fundraising/ philanthropy, in-kind contributions)	No evidence.	Participated in one type of community engaged activity.	Participated in two types of community engaged activities.	Participated in three or more types of community engaged activities.
	Reciprocity and collaboration	No evidence.	Only talks about service activity from personal feelings or through the lens of the course assignment.	Provides evidence that they learned about the partner or partners needs from third party (includes web research).	Personally spoke to the partner and learned about the community need, perhaps on an on-going basis.