Civic Learning and Community Engagement
Course Design Framework

Why would I design a course that includes community engagement?   What are the benefits?

A) Civic engagement benefits faculty because it provides diverse perspectives and wicked problems that are applicable to your discipline. It helps you achieve student learning outcomes. B) Students get to apply content to real social issues which is more engaging and helps retain students. C) It strengthens the communities we serve through the success of our students by helping to meet community needs.

What does community engagement look like in a higher education classroom?

 It is an experiential teaching strategy that helps students learn course content by participating in service in the community and while also gaining understanding of democratic engagement.

How do I begin?

You do not have to do this alone, there are people at SLCC who can help you with this work. Contact Lucy Smith at the Engaged Learning office at 801-957-4688 lucy.smith@slcc.edu or Rebecca Van Maren at 801-957-4674 rebecca.vanmaren@slcc.edu in the Thayne Center for Service & Learning.

Introduction

This document provides best practices to faculty who participate in the broad range of general civic and community engagement (outside of formal service-learning designation) as well as ideas for implementing the SLCC Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome (CLSLO). This can be a stepping stone to the full integration of service-learning, although there are many ways to participate in community engagement outside of service-learning. The CLSLO reads:

> *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 levels mentioned below are relative to the intensity of community-based learning (basic=relatively low levels of engagement, better=moderate levels of engagement, best=high engagement). These categories are interrelated and are simply listed separately for ease of preview.

- **Community-based experiences enhance academic content and course design**
  - **Basic**: Instructor includes a few community-based activities that enhance academic content. Students identify their own community events as a course requirement
  - **Better**: At least one or two stated learning outcomes addresses the community-based component and relates to the expectations for the course. The faculty member

identifies community events and/activities and provides a list to students from which to choose. Students may also have an option to choose their own activities as well.

- **Best:** Community experiences are related to multiple student learning outcomes. Community-based experiences are woven throughout the course (possibly via the six pathways to public service listed below) and ideally involve mutually beneficial service.

Note: Engaging in community can be a focus even if no service is completed. Examples of general community activities may include: community lectures or events, documentaries, community-based research, fairs, and museums. Attending conferences related to social issues and/or democratic engagement may also be a component. If community-based service is included, students can participate in different ways that are both beneficial to student learning and community needs. These include the six pathways to public service such as community engaged research, community organizing and activism, direct service, philanthropy, policy and governance, social entrepreneurship, and corporate social responsibility.

- **Intercultural learning**
  - **Basic:** Minimal learning about intercultural issues in the community is incorporated via readings, assignments, discussions and/or content.
  - **Better:** Moderate learning is incorporated focused on intercultural issues in the community through readings and/or course discussion and is linked to the discipline. Students increase their direct knowledge about oppression through individual acts, individual biases, and intercultural communication by interacting with diverse communities (may include attending cultural events, visits to religious organizations, or community lectures)
  - **Best:** Learning about systemic and institutionalized oppression, individual biases, and intercultural communication is woven throughout the course. Students productively engage in intentional dialog with those who are different than themselves (this may or may not include service).

- **Opportunity for analysis/critical reflection**
  - **Basic:** Students reflect after the experience in a free-form manner or don't reflect at all.
  - **Better:** At least one assignment requires students to reflect on experiential and/or service component of the course and how it impacts learning. Critical reflection around social issues is conducted in a semi-structured way.
  - **Best:** Critical reflection with guided reflection prompts happens throughout the course and are revised and compiled in ePortfolio. Critical reflection around social issues and experiences is explicitly connected to discipline-based content in a formal and intentional way.

  Note: Some reflection resources and prompts can be found through SLCC ePortfolio. Reflection can include in-class discussions, on-line discussion boards, written assignments, social media, video and/or creative expression.

- **Partnerships**

- **Basic:** Students identify their own partners and/or community events as a course requirement (a great first stop for this is the SLCC database for community partners [SLCCsync](#)).
- **Better:** The faculty member identifies partners and/or community events and provides a list to students from which to choose that may meet student learning outcomes. Students may also have an option to choose their own partners as well.
- **Best:** Faculty collaborates and communicates with official partners with the support of the Thayne Center for Service & Learning, the Engaged Learning Office, and/or SLCCsync. The faculty member collaborates with partners in advance and on a regular basis to develop scheduling and activities that mutually meet the needs of both students and partners. Faculty share their syllabus with partners as co-educators.

Note: There are many [benefits](#) to using official Thayne Center partners. Reciprocal engagement includes communication, and collaboration. This ensures that community identified needs are met as well as opportunities for student learning and growth.

- **Incorporation of civic learning**
  - **Basic:** Minimal civic learning is incorporated via readings, assignments, discussions and/or content that link highlights social issues.
  - **Better:** Moderate civic learning is incorporated via readings, assignments, discussions and/or content that link the course to the discipline with a focus on social issues, democratic engagement, and relevant community issues. Discipline-based learning is loosely linked to social issues.
  - **Best:** Civic learning is woven throughout the course via readings, assignments, discussions, and other content in an intentional manner. Discipline-based learning is explicitly linked to understanding the root causes of social issues.

  Note: There are [many readings and resources](#) focused on civic engagement that may be helpful.

- **Assessment**
  - **Basic:** Students are given participation credit for community-based experiences.
  - **Better:** Instructor uses tools to measure student learning outcomes occurring from community-based experiences.
  - **Best:** Instructor uses tools to measure student learning outcomes from community-based experiences and if feasible, feedback is received from the community partner on how students' presence impacted the organization and/or how the students performed on the assignment/activity.

If you find yourself landing in the "best" category, consider an official [Service-Learning Grant & Designation](#). There is funding for faculty and students!

Bibliography:

Dahan, T., Seligsohn, A. (2013) Assessing the Quality of Engaged Civic Learning courses. *Engaged Civic Learning Course Design Workbook.* Retrieved from*:* http://www.ccmountainwest.org/sites/default/files/Engaged-Civic-Learning-Course-Design-Workbook-2013.pdf

Stanford Haas Center for Public Service, Pathways to Public Service and Civic Engagement, accessed March 12, 2019, https://haas.stanford.edu/about/about-our-work/pathways-public-service

Resources:

SLCC Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome: http://www.slcc.edu/gened/learning-outcomes.aspx

Reflection resources and prompts: https://facultyeportfolioresource.weebly.com/reflection.html

SLCCsync

Benefits to using official Thayne Center partners: http://slccthaynecenter.blogspot.com/2017/04/why-use-official-thayne-center.html

Civic engagement readings and resources: https://slccbruins-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/jsmit931_slcc_edu/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7Bf808d5ef-219b-442b-bf9c-8bba8a7d985e%7D&action=default&CID=8e850264-6225-4627-9f14-5bcfa7994174

Service-Learning Grant & Designation proposal: http://www.slcc.edu/service-learning/faculty/index.aspx