COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING WORKSHOP

Places of Consequence
A Rapid Assessment of Community-Engaged Student Learning
at the University of Arizona

Commissioned by
University of Arizona Office of Student Engagement

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Introduction

A "place of consequence," says Moses Thompson, former school counselor at Manzo Elementary School in Tucson, is a place where students can experience the direct results of their actions, putting to test what they learn in a real-world setting. For Thompson, the school garden he helped create for elementary school students, is such a place, as students witness first-hand how their efforts either contribute to the health of the garden or its demise. Real-world settings like gardens foster deep learning for students of all ages, as well as for their teachers.

This study looks at projects that involve "places of consequence" in higher education, providing learning experiences for undergraduate students within community settings that foster learning, mutual benefit, and partnership. Such projects, for the purposes of this report, are called community-based student learning (CBSL) projects.

In May 2015, the University of Arizona Faculty Senate implemented a policy of 100% Student Engagement, a campus-wide initiative designed to recognize and prioritize inclusion of learning experiences that engage every undergraduate student in taking action on authentic problems, integrating applied learning within and beyond the classroom, and reflecting meaningfully on those experiences. In support of that initiative, Student Engagement & Career Development invested in new faculty-proposed engaged learning projects, from the development of new course projects and study abroad programs, to research on engaged learning and scholarship with student support. These projects have become useful examples in how to leverage the resources of the University to align with the needs of the community.

In 2018, Student Engagement & Career Development received funding from the Agnese Nelms Haury Program to create a forum for dialogue and sharing of best practices through a community symposium on engaged teaching and learning. The aims of the symposium were, in part, to 1) strengthen the network of non-profits and faculty working together to create authentic, mutually beneficial partnerships that provide engaged learning experiences for undergraduates; 2) assess the needs that will identify opportunities to create University

and community infrastructure to best support strong engaged learning partnerships; and 3) develop tools and resources that address challenges in creating and sustaining meaningful partnerships involving organizations, faculty and students.

In tandem with the symposium, Student Engagement & Career Development also commissioned research to support aims 2 and 3 above. This report represents Part One of that research. Part Two of the research will present five (5) case studies of existing University community-based learning projects.

This report presents a basic framework for understanding courses, programs, and opportunities that engage undergraduate students in community-based projects to both enhance their learning and serve community needs. For the purposes of this study, "community" is defined as entities, organizations, neighborhoods, and people that exist outside of the University, within Tucson or other areas of the Southwest.

Methodology

When asked to help gather data about strengths and opportunities in the realm of community-based student learning, I wanted to get a "lay of the land" by speaking with experienced practitioners. My goal was to get a sense of some of the more successful models of CBSL at the University

to understand best practices and challenges. I knew capturing the "real" state of things would require more than a drive-by academic questionnaire, but more nuanced conversations.

My work at the Southwest Folklife Alliance is rooted in documenting the practices of folklore and cultural heritage, using methods that favor talking to people, listening to their stories, and practicing ethical, respectful observation. I have also worked as an artist in community for the past two decades, creating in collaboration with community partners literary and performance works that address community issues. Drawing on these methods and experiences, I set out to understand more about the state of community-based learning at the University of Arizona. My report offers a window into the ways of thinking and doing of a select group of generous and passionate faculty and staff, community members, and undergraduate students.

Of course, for every person I interviewed, I learned of additional people to talk to, so this report is not a definitive and all-inclusive survey of all community-based learning programs at the University. My focus was more modest. I specifically targeted experienced faculty collaborators who have led current and past programs, staff members whose work connects students with community-based opportunities, students who have participated in community-

based learning programs, and representatives from community organizations who have worked with students in a variety of capacities. My goal was to understand what contributes to successful student learning and community engagement.

The report draws from the expertise of the Southwest Folklife Alliance in utilizing Rapid Qualitative Inquiry (RQI) methods to canvass core questions affecting a community and exploring practical solutions quickly and effectively. The goal of RQI is to make "progress toward understanding a problematic situation from an insider's perspective." RQI can deliver useful results by documenting both what seems obvious to participants and stakeholders about a situation as well as what is assumed and undisclosed.

I conducted interviews with 25 people between January and September 2019. Narrators were identified with the help of Student Engagement & Career Development staff and through a criteria matrix designed by office staff and the primary researcher. The matrix identified Arizona programs and courses that fall within the 100% Engagement Initiative designation. While I focused primarily on programs that engaged undergraduate students, I did interview several faculty members who have designed and carried out programs for graduate students as I felt their

perspectives and experience was valuable to the study.

I asked six (6) primary questions:

1. What are the best ways to prepare students for community-based learning and engagement?

2. What contributes to "successful" student learning?

3. What are your core values for community engagement?

4. What contributes to "successful" engagement with the community?

5. What are the barriers to student-community engagement?

6. How do you evaluate or measure progress or success?

The report is organized via those overarching questions, which serve as a framework to consolidate the findings. Following the questions is a brief discussion of ethical and philosophical considerations and five (5) recommendations possible future investments.

 -Kimi Eisele

About the researcher

This study and report were led and written by Kimi Eisele. Eisele received a master's degree from The University of Arizona in geography. A multidisciplinary artist, she has directed numerous community-based projects in both the performing and literary arts.

Eisele draws from a deep understanding of how arts practices can intersect with civic engagement in community. Eisele currently works as the communications manager for the Southwest Folklife Alliance. Her extensive experience in place-based community cultural practices, research, and reporting inform this study.

1. What are the best ways to prepare students for working in community?

Offering in-class trainings, readings, discussions of related issues and scholarship, as well as of local context and community partners.

Narrators spoke of the value of preparing students in a variety of ways. For-credit programs used built-in class time for such trainings. Others incorporated initial training sessions and periodic gatherings throughout a project to ensure students had access to relevant information and knowledge.

"They learn the basics of gardening, managing kids, how to use the garden as learning space, and how to develop lessons from their own specialty for the kids. We also do a long session on how to listen, on white privilege, and what it means to support what the community wants and not go in with your own agenda." -Sallie Marston

Offering specific training in fieldwork, highlighting the importance of observation, empathy, and interpersonal communication.

Faculty members and program coordinators spoke of the importance of ensuring students had an understanding of

how to carry themselves in the field with respect and to understand as much about local context as possible

"In architecture, there's something called immersive observation and site analysis. We'd try to go to a site different times of day and year. You just sit and you draw, but you also photograph, video, audio record, it's about that immersiveness to really understand a site." -Anne Kurtin

"In the classroom, they do a lot of role play with me and in small groups. We try to present archetypes of people who might answer door, from a grandmother to a Wildcat fan to a conspiracy nut, just to be prepared in how to talk about the University's role." -Brian Mayer

Incorporating discussions of positionally and gaining clarity about various perceptions of a university's role in community.

It is critical for students entering a community to understand that multiple forms of knowledge exist, and that the University does not always represent the expert. Such awareness can prevent misunderstandings that might arise from an outdated "savior complex."

"Some discussions [in our workshop] were really valuable, particularly one about parachuting into a community with that assumption of conveying information. This ties in with

the savior complex, jumping in and jumping out and not really listening to the community about what the needs are. That's been a shift and a reframe for me, to listen to what's already happening in the community and then building off that work. Because there's already so much happening there, it's amazing." -Wesley Parks

"Students often want to have it their way. They're idealistic and young, saying, 'What do they know? We're the experts.' Well, often they are paying clients. Students don't always understand that. It's similar to the first job phenomenon; you're going to get shot down a lot." -Brooks Jeffery

**A CLOSER LOOK:
Orienting students to community partners**
Preparing students to work in community means making sure they understand the organizations they'll be working with and how those organizations approach their work.

Project SOAR places University mentors from the College of Education in community middle schools for 1-on-1 mentoring. Peggy Solís, head of Graduate and Family Support at Imago Dei Middle School, says all Arizona students participate in an orientation that outlines expectations, best practices, student and family demographics, student safety, mandatory reporting, among other things. "Some of our students are in foster

care situations or are being raised by grandparents. Those are things we share during orientation. We talk about middle schoolers, how they might overshare. It's definitely a learning experience for the Project Soar students. The majority have never worked with this age group," Solís said.

Habitat for Humanity similarly orients Arizona students to the many aspects of the organization before they begin working in the community. "We treat them like any new employee with an orientation about our philosophies and our mission. We see the students as colleagues. Whichever department the students will be working in agrees to take them on, do an evaluation, outline their job descriptions and tasks. We work with a lot of volunteers, so we're used to folks coming in on a regular basis," said T. Van Hook, executive director of Habitat for Humanity.

Such introductions go a long way in preparing students to work in community and with partners.

Creating solid and strong partnerships, which include clear goals and expectations with community entities. A strong and consistent faculty connection, or a knowledgeable community liaison is also helpful.

Student learning is facilitated when partnerships run smoothly. Faculty members, community

partners, and students are all responsible for upholding and tending to the partnership, but if possible, a dedicated liaison between all three entities can be helpful.

"We need teachers [community partners] who know how to collaborate with students or it's not meaningful. When teachers were not yet on board, our students would have bad experiences. We also now have a knowledgeable liaison, someone who knows the school, the garden, the students, and the whole family situation."
-Sallie Marston

2. What contributes to "successful" student learning in the field?

When work is carried out in "places of consequence," i.e. applied to real-world learning situations.

Narrators spoke frequently about the power of learning and working in the real world in authentic settings where the stakes were high and actions had real consequences. Students tend to want to deliver in such situations, putting their skills and knowledge to use. This kind of learning not only offers students subject-matter knowledge but also builds their skills as communicators, leaders, collaborators, and compassionate human beings. Such learning

also offers students a place to test their knowledge. Applying theoretical concepts to community settings allows students to experiment and apply what they know to various situations.

"A garden is a place of consequence, for example. Things live and die; crops either succeed or fail. The more scientific you are about how your run your garden, and the better you keep records, the more you'll grow in the next seasons. This is science and math in action. Traditional education really misses the boat on this." -Moses Thompson

"There's nothing I can say to my students in the classroom that will impact them like walking through a muddy estuary, finding an octopus in a tidepool or seeing how happy someone is after they designed them a logo or website. It's that one-at-a-time connecting, the fact that the work they are doing is benefiting a cause they care about." -Ellen McMahon

"Translators" for student learning objectives

Community-based learning is not just volunteering or providing a service to a community organization. Rather, it's about connecting community needs and ideas to student resources, knowledge, and curiosities. Faculty mentors or project directors can help translate project deliverables, scope, and variables into student learning objectives.

Reflexivity

Creating intentional reflection time for students working in community is essential for tracking student progress and learning. Reflection should be iterative and happen on a regular basis.

"Students reflect on their time in the schools every week and debrief. There can be a lot of struggles with students who have no experiences with this. Some students, the more privileged ones, struggle because of deficit perspectives. Our curriculum has evolved to include more social justice discussions. A few weeks ago, in discussion section, one of mentors said she didn't think a mentee's parents cared about the student she was mentoring. Another mentor said, 'Wait a minute. My mentee has parents who both work. It's not about not caring.' So, undergrads talk through these issues with each other. Sometimes we have to step in. It's a huge learning curve for some of them." -Mary Irwin

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Meaningful Student Engagement: Engagement in which students are being asked to utilize their skills, develop new skills, learn from community partners, collaborate, and contribute to a larger purpose (or project) in tangible ways.

There are many ways to "engage" students in community-based learning projects. Learning and transformation is often more powerful when the engagement is meaningful for both students and community partners/participants. Not that all projects need be fun all the time (community work is sometimes messy and repetitive!). But ensuring the basics of meaningful exchange is critical.

Diane Austin, Professor and Director of the School of Anthropology, who works with student interns at the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, recalls a study she did with a community organization working with refugee community.

"We found so many problems on both sides," she said. "When we looked at what was going on, we found that the organization needed to report a match, they needed a certain number of volunteers in order to get a certain amount of funding. So, they would take students to do anything. Some students got into good positions; others didn't. But the primary motivation was numbers and hours." This kind of students-as-volunteers placement is less likely to bring about student learning or meaningful engagement with the community partner.

Multiple ways for students to learn and develop knowledge and skills

When students are involved in problem-solving that requires them to engage in multiple ways, using and developing various skills, learning happens. Processes that allow them to reflect upon and evaluate their experiences are part of this learning.

"Successful learning happens when students can have that a-ha moment. It's equally valuable for them to say, 'Wow I hate this work and I really don't want to do it,' as, 'I'm so passionate about this and it's ignited me and I'm going to look for more of these opportunities and summer jobs and more courses.' Successful learning is when students can connect some dots and see a path ahead and feel confident in the path they've taken to that point." -Anne Kurtin

Ample time for students to gain experience, meet learning objectives, and contribute in meaningful ways

Sustained student involvement yields more learning for students and more meaningful outcomes for communities. Making sure programs are long enough for students to fail, try again, and connect in meaningful ways with community partners and constituents is essential.

"The partnership is really good. It's a valuable experience for Arizona students and such a valuable service to K-12 schools. The chaos within K-12 schools is real, so for those schools to get a consistently trained workforce really provides stability, whereas gardens could just come and go." -Moses Thompson

Collaborative working situations

Many acknowledged that working in group settings contributed to learning. From group problem-solving to coordinating multiple parties for a task to coming together to reflect on different scenarios, such collaborations can enrich student learning and help develop leadership, listening, and planning skills.

Personal growth and transformation

While students tend to deepen their knowledge of a subject matter and gain important interpersonal skills in a community-based project, they also can experience tremendous personal growth and transformation. Working in the unknown and becoming familiar with new situations can, over time, contribute greatly to students' sense of self and confidence.

"For me as intern, I grew a lot in my interpersonal skills. I learned how to speak to new people with backgrounds different from mine, people who've never been to [the University] and who come from different walks of life. I learned to interact with people in a way that you're not disrespecting their place, their food, their way of problem solving; you're not just bringing up your situation right away, but instead, you're having 'learning conversations.' You're open to changing your mind about a situation. You're listening to perspectives and

being open to changing your opinion." -Rachel Wehr

"Community engagement activities made my college career enjoyable. Those are the moments I remember the most. I'm not necessarily going to remember all my lectures. The community work completely changed my career path. I went from law enforcement to social work. My goal was to go to the police academy, but I found this passion and changed my career path. I found that I worked so well with kids. I still want to be in public service. But not the one that regulates and protects, the one that encourages children to be what they want to be, even if they have disadvantages. We can overcome these barriers." -Lexi Austin

3. What are your core values for working in community partnership?

Responding to a clear and stated community need

Experienced community engagement practitioners agree that any community-based learning projects carried out by universities must be responding to a clear and expressed community need. Top-down approaches in which institutions of higher learning enter communities with the aim of "helping" or "serving" without

a clear invitation from community will undoubtedly backfire, fail, or perpetuate power dynamics that don't serve communities in meaningful or lasting ways.

"The first step is to really pay attention to the community, what it really needs and wants and cares about and not just let's impose something on this neighborhood. We also need need to be really clear about who we mean by community." -Ellen McMahon

"I'm not hostile to the University, but a lot of projects we think are shiny are not shiny projects to the community."
-Maribel Alvarez

Reciprocity

Any student project that happens in community should be part of a reciprocal process. It should benefit students and the community organization or entity. Co-designing a project with community members is one way to ensure this.

"If you're working in a community that you're not from, it's critical to see that community then as partners in the work. It can't just be about getting a grant and fitting them into it. The community needs to be a part of everything. Not just the doing, but the planning and the evaluation. That's really key." -Josh Schachter
"It's a two-way situation. We're learning from them, as they're learning from us. It's about

genuine partnership. We're not making up work for them to do, so they can learn something. We see them as a force multiplier. There's a mutual need. They need to place students and we need an expansion or enhancement of what we're doing that we can't do without the support of the University."
-T. Van Hook

A CLOSER LOOK
The Ivory Tower Syndrome
As a neuroscience and cognitive science major, Wesley Parks enrolled in the Community & School Garden Program looking for an opportunity to teach science. Originally from Phoenix, his only experience of Tucson was driving through town on the way to Mexico. Becoming an intern at the school garden in Manzo elementary school, he says, "opened my eyes to people living and working and dying here." Throughout the project, he learned about gardening and gardening education as well as how to communicate to large audiences made of people from diverse backgrounds.

He learned, too, about the "Ivory Tower Syndrome." "As college student I remember thinking I had to translate the information that I was gaining from the University into something more understandable to the general public. Occasionally that can be challenging, especially if you're not from the community itself. Being here a few years now, I've gained so much from

the communities. In this case, I think the communities have a lot of knowledge themselves about gardening. There are parent volunteers that grew up on farms and they have a ton of experience that really helped me out with sustaining the program. It's also their program."

After graduating from Arizona, Wesley was hired to work for the project as a garden manager at Tully Magnet School. As a manager, he now continues to collaborate and learn from teachers, students, administrators, and community members.

Listening

Nearly all narrators named listening as a key value in community partnership as a way to respond to community need and foster equity between collaborators.

"Listening is a huge [part of this work]. Being open to having uncomfortable conversations. Stepping out of your own comfort zone. And then listening for opportunities to have conversations."
-Wesley Parks

Collaboration

Faculty members, program directors, community partners, constituents, and students can learn to navigate project dynamics and complexities together. Often creating agreements about how collaborations will happen

can be helpful. Also, making sure understandings of "ownership" of project data, findings, products, or solutions are clearly communicated.

"What we value is that our students learn something. This is the context that we're learning in. Can we co-create something that might be useful to you all that would teach my student these skills?"
- Jen Nichols

Quality, long-term relationships

Community partnerships require time and energy. Relationships build and deepen over time. Zipping in for short-term projects, while sometimes convenient, may not result in quality learning, service, or success.

"Our prior relationships with partners didn't involve service learning but they knew us. The College of Public Health has a good reputation for walking their talk. We're long term. The work is part of a bigger picture. Don't even think about this kind of work for a just a partial project, you have to develop long-term relationships." -Jill Guernsey de Zapien

Flipping the notion of expert

Given the uneven power dynamic that sometimes exists between universities and the communities where they are located, many spoke of the need for university partners

to "flip the notion of the expert." This means valuing a variety of ways of knowing that might be different from how faculty and students recognize knowledge.

"We have to understand that knowledge is everywhere, there are cultural funds of knowledge in every neighborhood. Nobody has a lock on science. Science is everywhere and community members have access to science and skills that universities don't." -Sallie Marston

4. What contributes to "successful" engagement with the community?

Strong partnerships

Many agree that programs are successful for everyone when the partnerships are strong and valued. This means that the relationship is built with trust, clear communication, and transparency. It might also mean that immediate project objectives can be revised or let go of in order to prioritize the partnership relationship.

"The goal of service learning is to strengthen those community relationships, and if you're not doing that part, you're missing that part that will benefit the college. A piece of it is the student learning, but that's just one component."
-Jill Guernsey de Zapien

"Interpersonal relationships are everything. Developing relationships with the supervisor and classroom teachers has to happen before you start working in the garden. Doing observation with teachers, seeing how you can support them—that's where trust comes in. It's not just about going and showing up and working in the garden. From the front office—signing in, making conversation— on." -Moses Thompson

Clear roles and expectations

Successful programs happen when roles and expectations between participants are clear and communicated. University faculty members and students as well as community partners need to be transparent about what they can offer to a program, in terms of time, knowledge, and resources. Some also spoke of the need to take care in crediting project work, to ensure that more powerful partners don't take sole credit for ideas or projects that initiated or are rooted within community.

"We get feedback from the community that says, 'Once the University gets involved, they act like they've created it.' No. Many times someone else came up with these ideas and we are following. Being able to say we are working with partners and give credit to local partners is key." -Diane Austin

Letting communities lead

Narrators stressed the importance of letting communities lead the process to ensure that University projects were responding to clear community needs. Letting communities lead helps avoid the "colonial model" of service work. Some pointed out, however, that inequity exists in how communities can "access" the University, in that not all community organizations or endeavors have University contacts or relationships. And there is no central office to go to make such connections.

"Being willing to ask, 'What do you need?' That's the hard part. You think of all the grassroots work on Tucson's Southside, organizations constantly being asked to let students get involved or study or extract stuff that's happening there. A feeling they get a lot is that we're being exploited, extracted from, not power-shared with. I love the idea of students being tapped to help solve a problem or leave a benefit to a community, but it's important that that problem or benefit be identified by a community or community-based organization." -Kylie Walzak

Relational, not transactional work

Successful engagement means moving away from transactional work to relational work, narrators said. This means not just performing a

service for the community, rather, investing time and energy into relationships that evolve and grow and allow for deeper transformation. The work does more than simply sustains what already exists; it creates value that didn't exist before.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Meaningful Community Engagement: Engagement in which students are offering their skills and ideas, while learning from community partners to collaborate, and contribute to a larger goal or need in the community.

Living Streets Alliance has had varied experiences working with Arizona students, some more successful than others, said the organization's lead program manager Kylie Walzak. Students who have come to the organizations as student interns, and who receive course credit for their time, are valued, but their learning and service depends largely on their own initiative. "Being self-reflective, we fail to provide the students with support they deserve," Walzak said. "We need them to be self-directed, focused. It's a problem. Not everyone is like that. But we don't have the capacity."

Walzak cites a more successful experience, however, of worked closely with a CAPLA class on a specific project. Living

Streets Alliance was interested in understanding how people experienced a particular street as either a healthy or a dangerous place. As a small organization, LSA didn't have the capacity to measure people's experiences, which 'required intercept surveys where you just walk up to someone and ask questions," Walzak said.

But it happened to fit perfectly into a traffic planning class. "I met with the professor and went to two of the classes to set up the problem. They really tackled the work as a class. It worked out because the professor was there to manage it."

Valuing students' service

Some narrators spoke of the importance of charging money for student work in order to establish a proper value for that kind of knowledge and service in the community. This tended to be the case in projects where students are offering a clear service, such as creating architectural designs or conducting anthropological surveys and assessments.

"It's important not to give services for free. It doesn't have to be very much, but there has to be skin in the game for community entities. What we found was we had more success in the partnership when there was money involved. Something significant enough that they

understood that this doesn't come free. Students saw that their skills and work had value and nonprofits saw the value of the exchange." -Brooks Jeffery

Understanding context and systemic issues

Because communities and universities are complex places, understanding context is critical for success. Clearly communicating necessary University protocols as well as the systemic challenges faced by both communities and institutions will help partners and participants work together effectively.

"People say, 'Ugh, why don't teachers ever respond to emails?' or 'Why don't schools value this work? When we leave why don't they do the work?' But it's disrespectful to say that. The amount of work and pay and compensation that teachers have, it's a big systemic disadvantage that we can be more sensitive to." -Moses Thompson

Foregrounding community assets

Viewing community-university partnerships solely as "service learning" can sometimes uphold a deficit mentality that can harm a community or contribute to an unhealthy dynamic. Rather than working from the notion that "the community needs help from the University," it is about foregrounding

community assets to be more effective at problem-solving.

"Three quarters of students that take these courses, they're walking into these communities seeing them with a deficit mindset, and they walk away so impressed with all that these are communities are doing in spite of those realities. It helps to turn it around and see it from an assets-based position." -Jill Guernsey de Zapien

Investing time

"One-off" outreach engagements or projects that don't build in enough time will not result in student learning or meaningful community engagement, many narrators said. These projects require a substantial investment of time to be successful.

"We've had engagement in the community since 2009, but we're still figuring it out. To expect that that will have a deep impact with a one-off community project is ridiculous. A semester a year isn't even that much. We need to talk in terms of 5, 10, 20 years." -Moses Thompson

Ongoing training opportunities

Preparing students is often a part of community engagement programs. Some programs also incorporate training for community partners or faculty members. This helps partnerships run smoothly, can improve

student learning, and helps maintain consistent community engagement throughout a program. Such training can also support faculty members who are often learning as they go.

5. What are the barriers to successful student-community engagement?

Time and continuity

People have busy lives! While rewarding, this kind of work is labor intensive and time consuming. Staff of community organizations are often already overworked. Students are juggling full schedules. And faculty members often don't get released from other commitments to manage these projects. Additionally, the semester system doesn't always lend itself to continuity in community.

"It's labor intensive to do it right. Time is an obstacle, to do it right in terms of doing something meaningful, and you have to spend time." -Jill Guernsey de Zapien

Language barriers

Because we live in a region where different cultures co-exist, language barriers can sometimes exist within communities. If projects don't have access to translators, this can pose

obstacles to clear communication and effective collaboration.

Access barriers

While the University protects disability access, some fieldwork settings present scenarios that can be difficult for students with disabilities. Ensuring that all students can access course requirements, including fieldwork, is critical.

Few, if any, professional incentives from academia

Incentive systems within higher education often don't value community engagement work, which can make it difficult for faculty members to justify the commitment, especially if they have high teaching and research demands.

"Community engagement is not considered when you're evaluating a tenure candidate. I think this trickles down in terms of culture and mindset to students in terms of what is valued. The policies and structures of higher ed just don't create incentives. There are then implications for that, from department heads to faculty on down." -Josh Schachter

Fieldwork risks and liability

Working in new environments brings with risks and liabilities. In some cases, visiting the University presents the risk (e.g. for K-12 students). In other cases,

visiting communities presents risks. Faculty, students, and community partners find ways to work around these risks, but sometimes have to forgo certain activities because of them.

"Students often want to bring their [K-12] mentees to visit campus. We'd have to get parental permission. Their school staff would have to host. If I could, I would bring students on campus to spend time here. That would be a big impact. Many of them have never even been on campus." -Mary Irwin

Funding

Most faculty members or program directors spoke about the lack of funding for their programs. Those that have brought in external funds have often been able to expand their programs, conduct evaluations, organize trainings, and hire more support.

"The University has cache. All these community organizations can't give you more time without some resources. When I got here [to the University] I realized we are so resource rich compared to the community we live in. We're always talking about no money, and that may be true, but in comparison with many of these communities, we have so much. How can we leverage that to serve?" -Jennifer Nichols

Institutional support and leadership

Though the University recently launched a 100% engagement campaign, there is little institutional support or leadership for such programs. Many commented that with more support, programs could improve, expand, replicate, and serve both students and communities more effectively. Some commented that returning to the land grant mission of the University and redefining it to support community engagement work could go a long way in solidifying support.

"Right now, Arizona is known for sports, research, and maybe a few signature programs. What we should reinstate is that land grant ethic. We can transform from its traditional connotation from agriculture into what's needed for the 21st century. We can improve the lives of community in Southern Arizona. We can change the paradigm and then own it. We can brand this in our core set of values. We need to own the land grant mission. We're not leveraging it." -Brooks Jeffery

Culture of university experts

Many spoke about the importance of listening to communities, designing programs that respond to community needs, and re-examining the sense of expertise that often accompanies institutions of higher learning so that it doesn't prevent other forms of knowledge from being seen and heard. When University programs enter communities with humility, the changes of success for student learning and meaningful and effective engagement are greater.

"I feel the whole system is designed to become an expert in something. You learn from all the people who came before you, and you take a test to prove you've read everything and know it. You can never just be in a space of newness. That's not really valued in this system." -Jennifer Nichols

Equity

As community engagement programs expand, there is a danger of saturating certain communities or over-asking some community organizations to participate. This can be based on funding, capacity, or even popularity. One challenge is making sure a diversity of communities and organizations can equally access the University and vice versa in order to build meaningful partnerships and create student learning opportunities.

"Everyone wants to work with the Southside or with the Food bank. The projects that are really visible that might not be what the community loves. There may be others that the community really loves that are not that visible." -Maribel Alvarez

"The University is still going to the community saying, "We need to

do this thing," or "Can we come and do this?" It doesn't always happen in the opposite direction. The University is not a porous, helpful place for the community. There's no central place to go to make the connections without being plugged into the right person." -Jennifer Nichols

Lack of awareness of programs

Some students spoke of not knowing what kinds of community engagement opportunities exist for them and mentioned the lack of access to information in general about community organizations.

"A big challenge is that students don't know a lot about community or community organizations. There's not a lot of places to find out general info about organizations. Students would use internet as a resource, but not all community partners had a great web site or one that informed or promoted their goals in a way that students could break into or understand." -Katie Beauford

6. How do you evaluate/measure progress and success?

Reflective process

Most evaluations for students happen through a self-reflective process, where in students

reflect on their experiences in the community. These reflections help students track their progress and communicate challenges, growth, and rewards. "How do we measure what? That they understand causes and consequences. Can we ask if they care more? Part of the engagement experience is that we assume they will but we can't grade them more on caring more. I hope for it. We ask them to reflect. If I were to grade for that, I would say about 75% say that." -Brian Mayer

Site visits

Site visits form part of an evaluative process for some projects, particularly those with many moving parts. Such visits can offer a sense of how activities are carried out and how both students and community participants are engaged.

"I try to do one to each site, sometimes two. I interact with teachers and interns on site while there are working to be able to know what it looks like. Oftentimes, I'll get a lot of feedback from teachers live. In person interaction is important for me to assess." -Rachel Wehr

Community feedback and continuity

Narrators spoke of measuring success from community feedback, shared in both formal and informal ways. A continued presence in a community can

often be an indication of both success and progress. For students, direct feedback from community members and organizations reveals the stakes of their work and is often gratifying and motivating.

"In formal architecture critiques, [students] get slammed by the professors. Part of that is to train them, to build thicker skin, to give them an opportunity to practice defending their ideas. We replicate that in the community and they do these presentations, and the community applauds and is blown away by the depth and breadth of their approach, their ability to communicate architecture. That's really gratifying." -Brooks Jeffrey

"We know the program is successful in part because of its longevity. There's a waiting list of schools that want to be a part of it. People, ask 'Can you put your program in every school?'" -Mary Irwin

Transformation in students

Given the reliance on self-reflective evaluation in these projects, measuring success and progress by students' personal transformation is common. Many students readily share that experiences in community partnership and in real-word learning settings changed not only their understanding of relevant issues, but also their understanding of themselves.

"The students who visit CEDO, do a full tidepool tour where they handle animals, find things, go to estuary, pick up estuary eels. This first-hand experience into the real world really builds their environmental ethic and their sense of responsibility to the planet. They sleep outside under the stars and for some students that's really a shocking thing. I've taken 3 or 4 each year who've never been outside the US." -Ellen McMahon

"We measure how students become managers of themselves, how they respond to the particularities of generalization they're learning. They say things like, 'I now know not just about environmental degradation, but I know what it looks like to go in a community and look at soils that are depleted because of pollution and how to restore those soils." -Sallie Marston

Formal evaluation

Some programs perform formal evaluations, which are conducted by student interns or by professionals funded by specific grants. These evaluations allow for more nuanced understanding of student learning, community interaction, and community impact.

"We train interns to do community-based research. It's an extra unit. They meet once a week to learn how to develop survey questions, approach community, and present results. They did interviews and surveys with kids in the schools, with their parents' permission, of course. Those evaluations are important for us for funding. That's what donors want to see." -Sallie Marston

Considerations & Reccommendations

My conversations with narrators led to three basic and underlying philosophical and ethical considerations that shape five (5) recommendations. These considerations are:

Acknowledging a spectrum of community engagement models.

While 100% engagement is a lofty, well-intentioned goal, it is not always straightforward or singular in scope. Some forms of community engagement require hours and hours of collaboration, others might not. From an academic perspective, in some fields, student engagement with community organizations and entities can be straightforward with clear mutual benefit; in others, such engagement may not always be relevant, possible, or appropriate. In some instances, engagement can actually cause harm to both student and community interests and jeopardize university and community relationships. Not all student learning may benefit a community practicum or field experience. Often, we place value on "outreach" or time spent "in community," while overlooking inherent community benefits of certain academic disciplines and professions. For example, for the ballet student whose main goal is to join a professional ballet company, spending time in class and rehearsal may be more important than offering ballet lessons in afterschool community centers. But that prioritization need not mean said ballet student leaves the University without having learned something about "engagement." As Maribel Alvarez notes, "A robust conversation about engagement includes conversation about what it means to be in a ballet company and where one performs and for whom."

In short, outlining and defining meaningful community engagement, with levels of reciprocity that benefit community entities and University students is critical, and should include considerations of who does it, to what end, for whom and with what kind of support.

Ensuring equity and inclusivity for communities and students.

Placing a value on "serving the community," is admirable, but without clear definitions of "community" and who benefits, such a value may not serve anyone well. It is not unusual for some communities to receive

multiple offers or requests from University initiatives, either in research or learning scenarios. Tending to the ways in which relationships are initiated, fostered, and carried out is critical. Does the University "go into" the community? Can the community make requests of the University? How are relationships established and garnered? How can community entities be made aware of student learning opportunities and services?

Understanding student limitations is also essential. Are we fostering equal access for students in community-based learning programs? If community-based projects require students to access transportation and put in extra hours, are we privileging some students' participation over others? Ensuring equity in student access to such programs must also be considered.

Recognizing from the start the role and positionality of the university.

Engaging with communities is a noble and important thing for a university to do. For a land grant institution, such engagement is considered part of a university's original mission. That said, new and existing partnerships should also be aware of perceived power dynamics, given the legacy of extractive research, false promises, and perceived "savior mentality" that might have once impacted or could still shape some relationships.

Understanding this positionality and being transparent about roles, expectations, ownership, authorship, and mutual benefit will serve university-community partnerships and deepen student learning.

Given these considerations, I offer five (5) recommendations for Student Engagement & Career Development in moving forward towards the development of a both a toolkit and community of practitioners that includes Arizona faculty/staff, students, and community representatives.

1. Advocate for and require institutional support and incentives. Such support could create faculty incentives and rewards for CBSL projects (e.g., course releases, tenure consideration); raise funds to support new and existing programs; and re-brand and leverage the "land grant" institution to incorporate the ethics and practices CBSL into its mission.

2. Create and adopt a clear list of defined core values or competencies for meaningful community engagement. This list, which should be created in collaboration with community representatives, faculty/staff, and students

(and could draw from findings in this report) would both expand the seven Activities and Competencies of the 100% Engagement initiative, extending the focus beyond student learning to include best practices and behaviors to help guide the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of CBSL projects.

3. Design and implement trainings for Arizona colleges and departments on how to co-design and carry out CBSL projects. Trainings should share effective methods, ethics, and approaches based on a variety of models and should themselves be designed and implemented in collaboration with community representatives, faculty, and students

4. Create a CBSL clearinghouse for CBSL accessible to students, faculty, and community organizations/entities. Such a site (virtual or actual) would help prospective participants and designers learn about existing projects; connect

with one another; access tools and resources; research and share best practices; reinforce ethics, values, and competencies; support newcomers to the processes and more.

5. Create and host quarterly a CBSL advisory board to guide the above recommendations and serve as an ongoing sounding board for how to deepen, expand, and uphold best practices. Include participation from Arizona faculty, staff, students, and administrators and representatives from community organizations and entities. Include automatic compensation for community representatives.

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