

Engaging Undergraduates in Community-Based Research

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CBR

- is a collaborative enterprise between academic researchers (professors and students) and community members.
- validates multiple sources of knowledge and promotes the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination of the knowledge produced.
- has as its goal social action and social change for the purpose of achieving social justice.

Strand et al. 2003. *Community-Based Research and Higher Education: Principles and Practices*. Jossey-Bass. p. 8

Getting started on CBR

- Start with a good partner and partnership
 - Trust
 - Accountability
 - Responsiveness and clear communication
 - Shared power
 - Understanding students a plus
 - Plan for working together

Who are your community partners?

- City or state departments
- Community action agencies
- Government service agencies
- Neighborhood associations
- Advocacy organizations
- Schools
- Non-profit organizations
- Interest groups
- Others?

Getting started, 2

- Start with a community question or goal
- Respond to community need for knowledge and information
- How much data collection or analysis?
- Is project brand new or ongoing?
- Consider how the partner will receive and use the information

Some kinds of CBR projects

- Program evaluation
- Data compilation
- Needs assessment
- Asset mapping
- Oral history
- Policy research
- Risk assessment
- Promising practices
- Short films
- Business planning
- Website construction
- PR campaigns
- Grant writing
- Literature reviews
- Curriculum development
- Archival research
- Case studies

See Cooke and Thorne 2011. *A Practical Handbook for Supporting Community-Based Research with Undergraduate Students*.. Council for Undergraduate Research, Washington, D.C.

Students can do CBR

- in *courses*
- in *internships* (summer or during the term)
- as an *independent study*
- for their *senior thesis or capstone*
- as part of a *faculty-led CBR project*
- as part of their *service or volunteer work*

CBR projects in courses

- Finding a disciplinary connection
- Building CBR into the curriculum
- Aligning CBR project with course learning objectives
- Ensuring student readiness
- Structuring the CBR experience

See Stocking, V.B., & Cutforth, N. 2006. A framework for assessing the challenges of teaching community-based research: Insights from two instructors. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 13(1), 56-65.

Alignment of project and course

- Integrated into course, not tangential
- Project helps students attain learning goals for course.
- What are some of your learning goals for courses?

Ensuring student readiness

- Students have necessary research skills already
 - You or they assess.
- Students learn skills over course of project
 - Close supervision required.
- Extra training
 - Community issues; skills needed but not covered in class, such as working in groups and public speaking.

Structuring the CBR experience

- Scheduling and time constraints
- Managing the class projects
- Troubleshooting
- Evaluating students

CBR assignments

- Clear question to be answered
- Important to community and of significant interest to academic discipline
- Work proceeds in stages, include a draft
- Multiple opportunities to reflect (discussions, writing assignments, journaling)
- Reflection can be done by student alone, with other students, or with community partner
- When CBR is an option, it should be parallel to other choices

Assessment

- Grade CBR projects in same fashion as other papers
- Take into account extra work
- Group work
 - Can have students describe contribution they made to project, as well as the contributions others made
- Role of partner in providing feedback

Our assessment tool

- Wanted to develop assessment tool for wide use
- Course-based versus cumulative effect of multiple CBR projects
- Each iteration is shorter, now 3 minutes
- Online or on paper



See Lichtenstein, Thorne, Cutforth, and Tombari. 2011. *Development of a National Survey to Assess Student Learning Outcomes of Community-Based Research*. 2011. Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement 15(2):7-33.

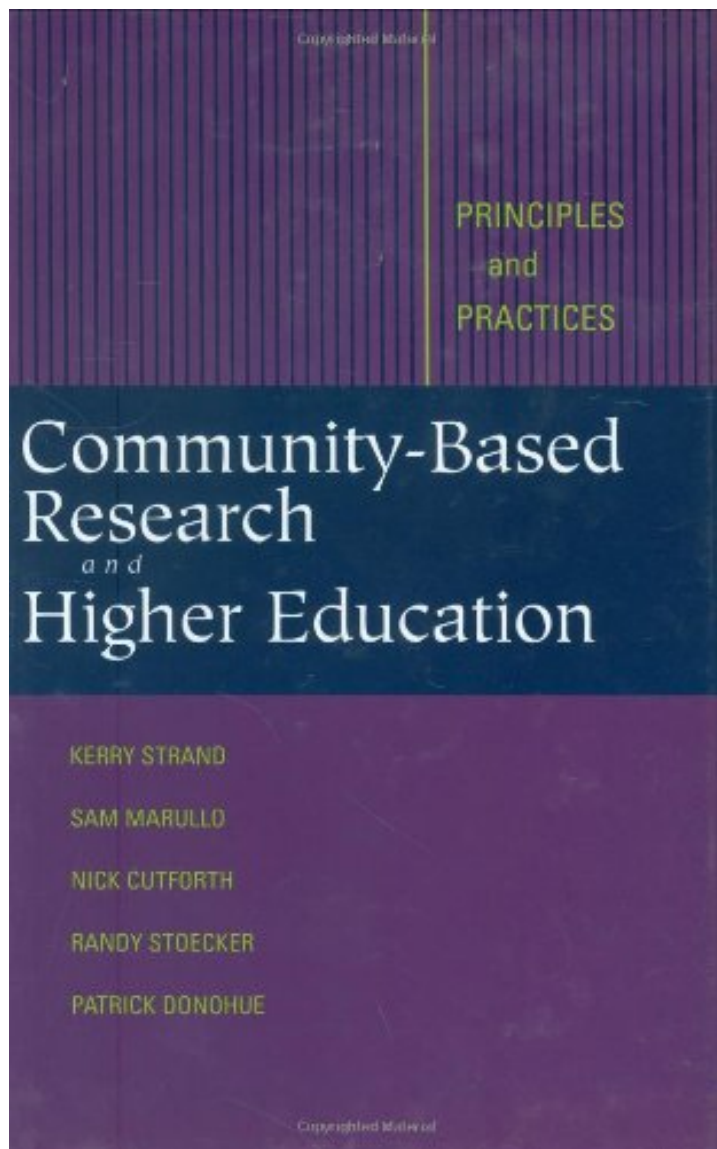
General student learning outcomes

- Academic skills
- Educational experience
- Civic engagement
- Professional experience
- Personal growth

Keys to positive student outcomes

- There was sufficient time in the term to execute my CBR project.
- CBR tasks and/or expectations were clear.
- The amount of time required for the CBR course was realistic for the credits I earned.
- CBR project(s) was/were integrated into course content.
- I felt supported in my CBR experiences by college faculty/staff.
- Interactions with community partners and community members were positive.
- My CBR activities were useful to my community partner.
- I had some voice/control over the CBR activities in which I was involved.

Useful Publications



A Practical Handbook for
Supporting Community-Based Research
with Undergraduate Students



Deanna Cooke and Treisha Thomas

Center for Undergraduate Research

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Web & Other Resources

National CBR Network Wiki

<http://cbrnet.pbworks.org>



Community-Campus
Partnerships for Health

Promoting Health Equity & Social Justice

<http://ccph.memberclicks.net>



<http://www.livingknowledge.org>