

## Community-Engaged Learning Standards Proposal

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Community-Engaged Learning...

- Integrates course objectives and community-based experiences
- Provides opportunities for student preparation and on-going critical reflection
- Is engagement that addresses societal needs identified by a community
- Produces reciprocal benefits for faculty, students, and community partners

Community engagement pedagogies combine learning goals and community service in ways that enhance both student growth and the common good. Or, to quote Vanderbilt University's Janet S. Eyster (winner of the 2003 Thomas Ehrlich Faculty Award for Service Learning) and Dwight E. Giles, Jr., it is

*“a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students. . . seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves. In the process, students link personal and social development with academic and cognitive development. . . experience enhances understanding; understanding leads to more effective action.”*

Community engagement is incorporated into a course as a project or activity that has both learning and community action goals. This project is designed via collaboration between faculty and community partners, allowing the faculty member to identify existing needs in the community and make connections for students to meet those needs through the application of course content. This gives students experiential opportunities to learn in real-world contexts and develop skills of community engagement while affording community partners opportunities to address significant needs.

We are proposing a standard of Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) at Lindsey Wilson College that any course seeking to do CEL work must meet. Standards would include the above-bulleted points, including:

- Clear connections between course objectives and community-based experience(s)
- Adequate preparation for the community-based component as well as guidelines and requirements for student critical reflection on experience
- That the community-based component is with, not for, a community partner
- That the community-based component is reciprocally beneficial

Courses that meet these standards, then, would have a designator that identifies them as CEL Courses. This would provide the opportunity for students to identify courses with this type of learning component when registering for classes, as well as for faculty to be recognized for the important work they are doing.

### **Student Benefits of Community Engagement:**

1. Learning Outcomes:
  - a. Positive impact on students' academic learning
  - b. Improves students' ability to apply what they have learned in "the real world"
2. Personal Outcomes:
  - a. Greater sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, and moral development
  - b. Greater interpersonal development, particularly the ability to work well with others, and build leadership and communication skills
3. Social Outcomes:
  - a. Reduced stereotypes and greater intercultural understanding
  - b. Improved social responsibility and citizenship skills
  - c. Greater involvement in community service after graduation
4. Career Development:
  - a. Connections with professionals and community members for learning career opportunities
  - b. Greater academic learning, leadership skills, and personal efficacy can lead to greater opportunities.
5. Relationship with Institution:
  - a. Stronger relationships with faculty
  - b. Greater satisfaction with college
  - c. Improved graduation rates

### **Faculty Benefits of Community Engagement:**

1. Satisfaction with the quality of student learning
2. Providing networking opportunities with engaged faculty in other disciplines or institutions

### **Institutional Benefits of Community Engagement:**

1. Improved institutional commitment to the curriculum
2. Improved student retention
3. Enhanced community relations

### **Community Benefits of Community Engagement:**

1. Satisfaction with student participation
2. Valuable human resources needed to achieve goals
3. New energy, enthusiasm and perspectives applied to community work
4. Enhanced community-institution relations

*(Adapted from [Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching Resources](#))*