

How to Integrate Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) into an 80-100 Student Undergraduate Class V161 Urban Problems and Solutions



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What is Community-Engaged Learning

According to the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning at the IU Bloomington Campus key features of community-engaged learning consists of:

- Engagement with a community, addressing a community-identified need and giving opportunities to address and examine social and civic issues arising from the engagement
- Reciprocity guiding partnerships and undergirding course design to achieve benefits for students, faculty, and community
- Complete Integration of the community engaged experience throughout the course to enhance student learning
- Reflection that is regular, ongoing, and critical to help students link community-engaged learning experiences to their understanding of course content, community, and themselves
- Opportunities to examine and develop civic skills and competencies (civic knowledge; analytic skills; and participatory and involvement skills) and civic engagement (motivations, attitudes, and efficacy; democratic norms and values; and participation and activities)
- Assessment for course improvement and to document effect of student learning experiences on community

Tips for Leading a Successful CEL

Develop a workbook for the students to follow throughout the course – in conjunction with the community partner. The workbook should include:

- An overview of the community engaged project, a summary of the issues and the community to focus on, and how the project aligns with the course outcomes and learning objectives
- A guide to conducting research
- A breakup of the assignments, along with a description of each assignment, and grading rubric
- A grading table and schedule for completion of each assignment

Theory of Change

In mapping the course, the Theory of Change model was used to help structure how the course and CEL :

1. What is the problem you are trying to solve?	2. Who is your audience?	3. What is your entry point to reaching your key audience?	4. What steps are needed to bring about this change?	5. What is the measurable effect of your work?	6. What are the wider benefits of your work?	7. What is the long term change you see as your goal?
Students are not connected to a real-world problem and to identify solutions.	Students and the community partners	Finding a community partner	Identify a problem that can benefit the community partner. Design a project that aligns with the course description and learning outcomes	The students will submit drafts of their work; along with a presentation and final report to the client meeting the specific client and course objectives.	Client gains additional knowledge around how to address their problem. Students gain real-world experience identifying and addressing a community-identified need through the engagement with the community.	Client develops a long-term relationship with IU Bloomington. Students can use their experiential learning experience to gain greater critical thinking skills. Students can use their experience to showcase to potential future employers.
Spring 2024: Understanding what assets exist within Morgan County to address k-12 mental health and career readiness.	Students and community partners	Partnering with Morgan County Community Foundation	Having students identify assets within Morgan County around these issues; and identify solutions to addressing these problems.	The students will submit drafts of their work; along with a presentation and final report to the client meeting the specific client and course objectives.	Client gains additional knowledge around how to address their problem. Students gain real-world experience identifying and addressing a community-identified need through the engagement with the community.	Client develops a long-term relationship with IU Bloomington. Students can use their experiential learning experience to gain greater critical thinking skills. Students can use their experience to showcase to potential future employers.
Fall 2024: Understanding what assets and gaps exist to address immigration issues around housing, access to healthcare, and transportation.	Students and community partners	Partnering with Hendricks County Community Foundation	Having students identify the assets and understand the socio-economic demographics of the county and identify comparable counties to identify what gaps in service exist to better service the immigrant communities in Hendricks County.	The students will submit drafts of their work; along with a presentation and final report to the client meeting the specific client and course objectives.	Client gains additional knowledge around how to address their problem. Students gain real-world experience identifying and addressing a community-identified need through the engagement with the community.	Client develops a long-term relationship with IU Bloomington. Students can use their experiential learning experience to gain greater critical thinking skills. Students can use their experience to showcase to potential future employers.

Lessons Learned

- If utilizing groups assign no more than 6-8 students per group
- Balance work with individual assignments before having group discussions to mitigate and avoid those that want to “free ride” or not participate within their group
- Assign a mid-term and final individual and peer assessment, and allocate points within each group assignment based on group participation
- Invite a person from the IU Library to come speak to your class about how to conduct research
- Utilize a GTA and a UTA, preferably the UTA should have taken the course before or one that is familiar with your teaching methods

Testimony from Students from the Spring V161 Course

“This project helped me better understand the unique problems that communities face and how we must approach them differently. Rather than try to force the processes and social infrastructure that cities use on these communities, we can leverage their strengths and existing social capital to create sustainable solutions that address their problems.” - Leila Faraday

“I learned that a community’s ability to solve a problem is heavily dependent on the resources available to them. Problems facing urban communities are often so layered that their solutions require the help of multiple outside sources and the use of various types of capital. The assignments we completed in preparation for the completion of the project encouraged me to dig deeper into the roots of a problem, examining not just where and how it exists, but why it exists” – Anjani Dent

Link to the Workbook



<https://go.iu.edu/8rOg>