

# **Integrating Community Engaged Learning (CEL) into Your Courses: A Faculty Guide**

## **What is Community Engaged Learning?**

Community Engaged Learning (CEL) connects students to the broader community through project-based learning that addresses social problems in partnership with community organizations. CEL courses take students beyond the classroom to engage with issues such as poverty, food insecurity, climate change, and health disparities while developing workforce skills.

## **Quick start guide for adding cel to existing courses**

### **1. Partnership Development**

- Identify local community partners whose work aligns with your course content
- Approach partners from an asset-based perspective (focus on strengths, not deficits)
- Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) **before** the semester begins
- Include partners in curriculum design (joint meetings recommended)
- Have students sign liability waivers at the beginning of the semester

### **2. Project design principles**

- Organize around a specific social problem or issue related to course content
- Use a project-based learning approach for deeper engagement
- Aim for tangible outcomes that benefit community partners
- Design projects that can be completed within your course timeframe
- Consider your course level when determining scope (100-level vs. 400-level)

### **3. Integrating into your syllabus**

- Be transparent about the CEL component in your syllabus
- Clearly state time commitments and expectations (10-20 hours is recommended)
- Replace an existing assignment rather than adding CEL as an extra component
- Consider using class time for CEL activities when possible
- Offer flexible options (individual/group work, in-person/electronic CEL)

### **4. Assessment strategies**

- Integrate structured reflection throughout the semester (not just at the end)
- Use reflection as an assessment tool (tie to learning outcomes)

- Consider using the Civic Minded Graduate (CMG) Tool (pre/post assessment)
- Gather feedback from community partners
- Conduct ongoing assessment to address issues promptly

## **5. Reflection Best Practices**

- Structure reflection with specific prompts (avoid vague instructions)
- Implement multiple reflection points (pre, during, post)
- Connect reflection to disciplinary learning outcomes
- Use varied reflection formats (journals, discussions, presentations)
- Evaluate reflection as part of course grading

## **Electronic CEL (e-CEL) Options**

- Consider online alternatives for students with scheduling constraints
- Choose appropriate digital collaboration tools (Google Suite, Slack, Zoom)
- Ensure students and partners have necessary technology access
- Establish clear digital communication guidelines
- Provide training on digital tools if needed

## **Interdisciplinary Opportunities**

- Consider partnering with colleagues from other disciplines
- Explore co-teaching possibilities for complex social issues
- Allow students to take connected CEL courses across semesters
- Recognize that real-world problems transcend disciplinary boundaries

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Remember: Focus on creating meaningful community partnerships, set realistic expectations, and integrate CEL components thoughtfully into your existing course structure.

For additional support, contact the CEL committee.