

Establishing Goals & Learning Objectives for Community-Engaged Learning



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TO ADVANCE SCHOLARSHIP AND LEARNING

Think about the “meta-question” or overarching question, related to the community-engaged experience, that you want students to examine.

- A.** Read through the meta-question examples below and write a draft of a meta-question you might pose to students as the framework for your course.

A few examples of meta-questions:

Museum Studies: How do we as a community determine what is valued and deemed worthy of being collected?

Environmental Science: How can interpretation and signage increase state parks’ accessibility to people from under-served communities?

Communication: How does the mass media affect young people’s attitudes toward race and gender?

Liberal Studies: How does “high stakes testing” in schools affect under-represented students?

Computer Science: how does the “digital divide” accentuate historic, systemic inequities?

Your meta-question:

Now that you’ve framed your course through a meta-question, think about how you could revise your course goal in a way that incorporates the community-engaged learning component.

- B.** Course Goal(s)

Goals are broad statements identifying the education outcomes you want students to display upon completion of the course. The goal(s) might explain through what means (learning strategies) students will arrive at such outcomes. List your course goal below.

Learning objectives found in traditional courses often encompass two categories: course-specific academic learning and generic academic learning. Thinking about your course community-engaged learning component, if you are revising a class how could these objectives be strengthened? Are there additional objectives you might include? If you are developing a new course, how could you consider academic objectives in light of your service component?

C. Course-Specific Academic Learning

Learning objectives under this goal category include knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are particular to your course. Write your current course learning objectives in the numbered spaces below, reflect on how community-engaged learning might strengthen one or more of them or enable new ones, and then jot these revised and/or additional objectives in the unnumbered spaces below. (See Section D below to stimulate your thinking)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Revised Academic Learning Objectives

D. Generic Academic Learning

Learning objectives under this goal category include knowledge and skills that are learned in and are instrumental for all college courses. Which ones (or similar ones) are important in your community-engaged learning course? (Some of these may have been identified in the list above.)

1. Critical thinking skills
2. Problem-solving skills
3. _____
4. _____

Many traditional courses do not explicitly list any learning objectives from the additional three goal categories below: learning how to learn, community learning, and inter- and intra-personal learning. Objectives need to be explicit and show students how the service experience relates to academic content. Consider selecting at least one of these objectives from the three categories below (E, F and G), or developing your own objectives that fit within these categories.

E. Learning How to Learn

Learning objectives under this goal category include knowledge and skills that build learning capacity. Which ones of these (or similar ones) are important in your community-engaged learning course?

1. Learning how to become an active listener
2. Learning to be an independent learner
3. Learning how to extract meaning from experience
4. Learning how to apply academic knowledge in the real world
5. Learning how to integrate theory and experience
6. Learning across disciplines
7. _____
8. _____

F. Community Learning

Learning objectives under this goal category include knowledge and skills that can only be learned by working with the community. Which ones (or similar ones) are important in your community-engaged learning course?

1. Learning about/with a particular community or population in the community
2. Learning about a particular social issue (e.g. homelessness)
3. Learning about the provision of social services in a particular community
4. Learning about a particular agency or grassroots effort
5. _____
6. _____

G. Inter- and Intra- Personal Learning

1. Learning how to work collaboratively with others
2. Learning about other groups and cultures
3. Exploring personal values, ethics and ideology
4. Learning about self
5. Strengthening personal skills (e.g. listening, assertiveness, etc.)
6. Developing a sense of appreciation, awe, and/or wonder
7. _____
8. _____

Community-engaged learning must make an explicitly direct and purposeful contribution to the preparation of students for active civic participation.

H. Civic Learning Objectives

Civic learning is any learning of knowledge, skills, and/or values that contributes to student preparation for community or public involvement in a diverse democratic society. Consider the broad categories of civic learning listed below. What civic learning objectives might fit with your course goals?

Broadly speaking, civic learning helps students understand and be prepared for involvement in the community. This learning might focus on **democratic citizenship learning** that focuses on how to be an active citizen, **diversity learning** is cultural competency that prepares students for involvement in diverse communities; **political learning** is learning related to the political arena; **social responsibility learning** is learning about personal and professional responsibilities to others; and finally **leadership learning** that prepares students to work with others toward community accomplishments. Which ones (or similar ones) are important in your community-engaged learning course?

1. Understanding root causes of social problems.
2. Understanding that there is important knowledge only found in the community.
3. Becoming familiar with different conceptualizations of citizenship.
4. Developing competency in identifying community assets.
5. Developing an understanding that communities depend on an active citizenry.
6. Understanding individual versus institutional “isms”.
7. Developing cross-cultural communication skills.
8. Understanding that diverse voices are needed to make sound community decisions.
9. Learning about how citizen groups have effected change in their communities.
10. Developing advocacy or community organizing skills.
11. Understanding that citizenship is about more than voting and paying taxes.
12. Develop skills that facilitate the sharing of leadership roles.
13. Understanding that leadership is a process, and not a characteristic associated with an individual or a role.
14. Understanding one’s multiple social identities.
15. Understanding how individuals in a particular profession act in socially responsible ways.
16. Determining how to apply one’s professional skills to the betterment of society.
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

Once you have concluded this worksheet you are in a position to know whether student involvement in community-engaged learning can enhance academic learning in ways that you deem important for your course. If it can, then the next step is to identify methods to realize and assess students' academic learning.

If it cannot, then it is appropriate to question the advisability of community-engaged learning for this course. Perhaps another course that either you or a colleague teach would be a better fit for community-engaged learning.