

mental, especially without proper support from administrators. Most faculty cannot justify committing to these types of projects if they are not given credit towards tenure and promotion.

Civic engagement has been added to new Higher Learning Commission criteria, effective in September 2020, for determining whether an institution of higher education merits accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation. The new standards state, “The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement, in a diverse, multicultural society and globally-connected world,” and “encourages curricular or cocurricular activities that prepare students for informed citizenship.” Further, the new criteria require that institutions’ “processes demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations” and “foster a climate of respect among all student, faculty, and administrators from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives.” Our institutions of higher learning are being tasked with not only giving students the knowledge they need to be informed citizens, but also building

their civic skills and teaching the norms of engagements for a diverse and inclusive democracy. Who better to guide our institutions’ efforts to achieve these objectives than political scientists?

However, efforts by faculty to increase civic engagement on campus and in the community are often not supported by administrators. Civic engagement activities are not generally included in the criteria for promotion and tenure, and faculty engaged in teaching and research do not have the time or available resources to engage in projects to develop the civic culture of their campus. We should encourage administrators, in order to align with the new accreditation, to devote resources to building civic engagement and civic learning in and out of the classroom. Students may only take a few courses in the general education requirements that seek to develop them as citizens. Institutions should include credit towards promotion and tenure for faculty who create opportunities for students to develop into more informed and engaged citizens, and provide financial support for leading class and campus groups in service

learning projects and community engagement activities.

We are tasked with developing the civic skills of students who bring with them a broad range of dispositions and backgrounds. This includes finding new methods of presenting what is most important for students’ understanding of their role as citizens by facilitating dialogue and introducing active learning exercises that aid them in thinking beyond their own experiences, both in and out of the classroom. Our role in this effort is a form of public service. We are teaching for the health of our democracy, and developing citizens requires institutional support and recognition of efforts in service of this task.

Therefore, we call on APSA to issue a statement of support for these efforts that encourages administrations to recognize faculty work in developing informed citizens and creating a culture of civic engagement on campuses, and in communities, in the form of credit towards promotion and tenure, as it is in the interest of the institution to align with new Higher Learning Commission criteria for accreditation.

# Community Engagement and Experiential Learning

Clinton M. Jenkins, *Birmingham-Southern College*  
 Carl Cilke, *Northeastern University*  
 Bobbi Gentry, *Bridgewater College*

**I**n the Community Engagement and Experiential Learning track we focused on the intersection of these two impactful pedagogical practices. We addressed the challenges and concerns faculty encounter while developing opportunities for community engagement and experiential learning, but also focused on the tools and resources available to faculty and examples for success.

## THINKING ABOUT COMMUNITY

Our track’s first panel highlighted that political science is one of the disciplines best suited for getting students to think about community. Using introductory courses that serve majors and the general education curriculum, Claire Abernathy, Lauren Marie Balasco, and Jennifer Forestal demonstrate that focusing these introductory courses around different notions of

citizenship communicates course content and also pushes students to think conceptually about their communities and what makes them a citizen. In addition, this also prepares students to make political decisions and be a part of a community of learning. Further evidence of political science’s benefits to thinking about communities was Sun’s presentation of results from a series of quasi-experiments which demonstrate that we may be able to teach social capital—the bedrock of a community’s successful governance—to members of various communities, as well as in the classroom. Sun uses an empirical method to test three different techniques—motivational, analytical, and practical—and presents evidence for the effectiveness of these interventions at increasing social capital across both the US and China.

Communities can expand learning as

students experience cultures different from their own. Analyzing political science study abroad courses, Jennifer Ostojski and Carl Cilke presented a novel understanding about how students’ experiences during study abroad trips vary significantly based upon the sponsoring faculty member’s approach. They show that how much structure faculty impose on the study abroad experience—both in terms of the structuring of time abroad and in the assignments, such as reflections—affects the scope and type of experiences students have.

## INTERNSHIPS

Internships are an increasingly common form of experiential learning for undergraduates and may benefit both providers and students. Using evaluations of intern performance by on-site intern supervisors, Shannon McQueen, Clinton Jenkins, and

Susan L. Wiley find that on-site internship supervisors generally report satisfaction with interns' work. However, a substantial portion of these supervisors expressed a desire for interns to exhibit more initiative, improve on their writing and communication skills, and to pay more attention to detail. The authors suggest these findings help us think more carefully about the sorts of skills educators and university internship supervisors should encourage students to develop as they prepare for internships. Arthur H. Auerbach finds that across three internship programs of varying resources, academic requirements, focus, and size, students reported generally high levels of satisfaction with their internship. Students also reported that their internships had a significant impact on them, with large portions of survey respondents indicating they gained new skills and knowledge, improved their ability to work with others, were able to apply skills they learned in the classroom, and gained a better sense of their strengths and weaknesses.

Concerns of equity and accessibility of internships still exist, particularly the difficulties posed by unpaid internships. Additionally, it is important that internships are more than simply employment training, and instead have an academic component integrated with them. The duty of institutions is to ensure the protection of students completing internships. One issue discussed for further research was looking at the long-term effects of these internship opportunities, and evaluating their benefits beyond simply the period during which a degree is completed.

#### STATE AND LOCAL

Jeff Dense presented a model for engaging students in their community with a project that asks students to identify an issue facing the local community and to address it with a policy proposal. This proposal would be taken to state or local political leaders in an effort to get the proposal adopted. Kelly Clancy presented a model pairing project-based learning with service learning. Students work with a community partner during the semester and are also asked to complete a project—or projects—throughout the semester related to the course topic and their work with the community organization.

Dense posits this model offers many benefits, notably the chance for students to apply material from their courses to completing the project. It additionally

provides students opportunities to develop and practice skills critical to entering the workforce and increases students' engagement with their local communities. Clancy identifies similar benefits, and also suggests these benefits can be reinforced by integrating community, project-based learning across an entire curriculum, from first year seminars to senior capstone courses.

Dense and Clancy highlight numerous challenges. Dense focused on the lack of buy-in from state or local officials and the slow speed at which the policy and political processes move, among others. Clancy demonstrates the substantial role of institutional buy-in and support in efforts to establish and continue project-based service learning with community partners. This may suggest a challenge for faculty at institutions without such buy-in or resources to aid in the effort.

Larger questions include how to integrate project-based learning without significant institutional support, concerns with access and equity stemming from students working for community partners without compensation and the need for students to physically get to those partners, and the challenges of integrating project-based learning into online education. Some suggested solutions to overcoming a lack of institutional support were to look for corporate donors and to start with smaller projects first, which often require less institutional buy-in or resources. Others suggested increasing accessibility for students that may have difficulty getting off campus by inviting community partners to campus.

#### INTERNATIONAL

Noting the many benefits to studying abroad, Jennifer Wallace focused on the substantial number of students who don't participate in those opportunities for a variety of reasons, including perceived or real institutional barriers. These barriers include credits taken abroad not transferring or credit equivalency issues for fulfilling degree or major requirements, issues with financial aid transferring to cover time abroad, and lack of faculty or department support for or recognition of study abroad experiences, among others. These barriers influence the behavior of political science students. This leads students to choose not to study abroad or to pick shorter term study abroad trips, and to a less diverse pool of students opting to study abroad in any form. Wallace suggests solutions including

political science departments more intentionally integrate study abroad experiences into the major curriculum and revisiting financial aid policies to allow financial aid to transfer to study abroad experiences, among others.

Jonathan Snow further highlighted the benefits of study abroad experiences through analysis of his experience taking students abroad to Israel and the West Bank. Snow reports that by the end of their trip students exhibited a significantly more nuanced understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as the extent of coexistence between the two cultures, than did students taking a traditional course on the subject. He documented a variety of study abroad pedagogical practices to achieve these outcomes. These included front-loading academic content before the trip, thus ensuring all students had a baseline understanding prior to going abroad, perceiving his role as a facilitator for students to gain experiences rather than as the interpreter of their experiences, and whenever possible providing access to multiple narratives on historical events, with the aim of providing relative balance in perspectives.

Finally, Patrick McNamara continued highlighting the benefits of studying abroad and international study, presenting on the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, where young people from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations travel to the US to develop their civic engagement and leadership skills through a series of courses and other experiences. In this program, the young leaders are brought to the US and, through civic engagement, develop an action plan to fix injustice in their home countries. A higher goal of this program is to create a transformational experience for both these young leaders and the contacts they meet in the US. McNamara notes that the experience benefits American students at the host institutions, the students studying abroad in the US as part of the program, and the educators, by pushing all parties to view their experiences, and assumptions about society, civic engagement, and leadership in a new, broader context.

Integrating experiential learning and community engagement in different contexts poses a challenge, but we should embrace the variety of opportunities for students in the US and abroad. While concerns of a perceived trade-off exists between political science course content and engaging in experiential learning, the reality is that it's not the case—experien-

tial learning and study abroad opportunities often reinforce the content gained from coursework, they don't come at the expense of that content.

### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Clare M. Daniel presented a model for creating a service-learning internship experience, offering students paid internships with community partners engaged in providing reproductive health services or promoting reproductive rights. The program develops students' career readiness while providing the opportunity to engage in meaningful service learning and improves the institution's relationship with the community, as well as creating a community among participants. The program is entirely donor funded through fundraising efforts, which covers the pay for student interns. Jennifer Noe Pahre partners with members of the local justice community as co-teachers of an introductory undergraduate course on the law. During bi-weekly field trips, students attend legal proceedings and meet with various actors in the justice system, such as judges, attorneys of various types, and others.

Both papers demonstrated the advantages of working with community partners. Daniel demonstrates that developing relationships with a related set of community partners for students to intern at, as well as with community funders, can yield a program that permits students to have meaningful experiences with commu-

nity organizations, while also overcoming some of the challenges presented by unpaid internships. Pahre documents that working with community partners to provide students direct experiences with the subject matter yields higher levels of student engagement with, and understanding of, material that is often viewed as boring and difficult to grasp in traditional classroom settings. Additionally, Pahre reports high levels of buy-in and continued support from the community partners, suggesting community members are open to a variety of partnership types.

Discussion highlighted that evident in both presentations was the importance of group cohesion among participants—such as cohesion gained from sharing experiences—to enhancing the impact of the learning experience. The discussion also expressed concerns with equity and accessibility of internship and service-learning opportunities, including preventing interns from exploitation by partner organizations. In addition, the promises of donor-funded experiences to increase access was discussed, as were the potential downfalls if funders have political or other motives that may go against the broader goals of the program.

### CONCLUSION

One major theme was the challenge of the availability of resources necessary for faculty to successfully offer community engagement and experiential learning opportunities. The panels demonstrated

there are a variety of different pedagogical approaches to developing community and experiential learning opportunities. These approaches provide increased value to the learning process. But they require time and resources to be implemented. It is necessary that there be buy-in from both faculty and institutions. Second, appropriate recognition for faculty work in providing experiential learning opportunities when being evaluated, and for those on the tenure track, when coming up for promotion and/or tenure was a frequent concern. The time and effort involved in developing and managing experiential learning opportunities for students often comes at the cost of focusing more on other items, such as research, and often isn't counted more than a regular course. Finally, perhaps most strongly, our track called upon faculty, institutions of higher education, and the discipline to focus more on issues of equity and accessibility in the provision of opportunities for community engagement and experiential learning. Concerns were raised about the substantial financial and time commitments required of students by experiential opportunities. Other concerns raised were about ensuring access to students who may have difficulty leaving campus. As experiential learning and community engagement practices continue to become more common, exploring the ideas and themes will grow in importance.

