

Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate

To: The UVM Faculty Senate

From: Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Laura Almstead, Chair

Date: April 4, 2019

Re: Approval of a proposal from the Office of Community-University Partnerships and Service Learning (CUPS) to 1) revise the criteria for Service Learning designation of courses, and 2) establish a Civic Learning course designation

At its meeting on March 7, 2019, the Curricular Affairs Committee approved the actions recommended in the following memo.

The Curricular Affairs Committee approved a proposal from the Office of Community-University Partnerships and Service Learning (CUPS) to revise the criteria for the existing Service Learning (SL) course designation and to establish a Civic Learning (CL) course designation. The proposed designation criteria are described in the table at the end of this memo. Please note that the types of Civic Learning courses listed in the table are not separate designations, but rather are intended to help faculty think about what kind of role the course is filling in preparing students or introducing them to communities

Overview

The CUPS Office proposes to revise the Service-Learning (SL) course designation and establish a new CL course designation to reflect 1) their strength in community-engaged teaching at UVM, 2) developments in the field of service-learning and civic engagement, and 3) their increased attention to assessment, especially in the area of student learning outcomes.

The proposed changes will simultaneously raise the standards expected of SL courses and expand opportunities and incentives for community-engaged pedagogy overall. The CUPS office will accompany this change with faculty development activities designed to support newly-designated CL courses as pathways into rigorous service-learning, undergraduate community-based research, and faculty community-engaged scholarship. In a separate action, the CUPS office is proposing to the Provost that their name be changed to the "Office of Community-Engaged Learning" to reflect and augment this transition.

Rationale

The proposed new CL designation comes from expressed needs of faculty members, who indicated they were teaching courses specifically intended to prepare students for strong service-learning later in the curriculum, but that there was no method for recognizing these courses. In addition, faculty communicated to the CUPS office that they wanted to create community-engaged experiences in the first or second-year, but they believed their students were not yet prepared to offer work or service of a caliber that would benefit community partners. Thus, they were teaching courses that introduced students to community issues or to civic participation or sending them "out in the community" without working directly with community partners. Based on this faculty

input, the CUPS office decided that a single SL course designation made it difficult for their staff to support faculty who wanted to build community-engaged work into the curriculum in ways that would not burden community partners and that would prepare students to be more effective when they did service-learning.

The idea to create a separate designation for courses that would prepare students for service learning courses also made the CUPS office aware of an increased expectation of rigorous attention to community partner benefit (Welch and Saltmarsh 2016) in service learning courses. That is, courses should address community needs as defined by the community partner. They also recognized an increased attention to assessment and a focus on articulating the intended learning outcomes of the service-learning portion of courses. Under the current designation criteria at UVM, courses that have only a very small service-learning project are able to receive a SL designation. Additionally, the most recent NSSE results revealed that service-learning was not having the impacts they would have expected on students. Thus the CUPS office felt it would make sense to concurrently increase the rigor of the criteria for service-learning designation. The new designation criteria have higher expectations for 1) the community need; 2) the course learning goals; 3) and the scope of the service-learning component. They also intend to revise the process, requiring faculty to share their syllabi in addition to reporting their community partners.

Evidence of Support

Letters of support were provided from the individuals below. All writers are from units with significant numbers of service-learning courses.

- Jane Kolodinsky, Chair, Community Development & Applied Economics, CALS
- Kimberly Wallin, Associate Dean, RSENR
- Kathy Fox, Associate Dean, CALS
- Katie Shepherd, Associate Dean, CESS

Summary

The proposed new CL designation and revision of the criteria for SL course designation are intended to both incentivize and recognize the broad range of community-engaged and preparatory coursework being offered, and to make service-learning a more rigorous designation. The CUPS office believes this will benefit faculty by expanding the number of courses that they can support through consultation, project implementation grants, and other resources. Additionally, they feel it will benefit community partners as they help faculty think about how to better prepare students for service-learning and hold service-learning to a more rigorous standard. Students will be able to find community-engaged or civically-oriented courses more easily, and will hopefully be better prepared for rigorous service-learning experiences, facilitating deeper learning. As an institution, the new CL designation will highlight the breadth and variety of academic community engagement, and a more rigorous SL designation will likely demonstrate stronger effects on our students.

Designation	Types	Description	Criteria
Civic Learning (CL)	Civic Foundations	Explicitly prepares students for civic or community engagement. Covers reflection, power/ privilege, modes of social change, and/or active citizenship.	Credit-bearing course that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addresses the common good, social inequality and/or environmental sustainability. • Includes student meaning-making and analysis of the civic/community portions of the course. • Connects civic/community portions of course to course learning goals. • Assessment and academic credit are based on demonstration of learning and caliber of work (as opposed to completion of service or project tasks).
	Community Exploration	Introduces students to specific communities	
	Community Case	Introduces students to a local / place-based case of broader civic, social or environmental issues	
	Community-Embedded	Takes place off-campus and includes significant interaction with community members or time in the community	
	Small-Scale Service	Includes a day of service, or small project.	
Service-Learning (SL)	Direct & Indirect Service	Students engage directly with organizations' served populations or provide other needed services	In addition to above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes a significant community-engaged component • The component responds to community need(s), as identified by the community partner • Engages students' academic competencies to meet the community need and connects this engagement to the course learning goals. • Addresses the role of the discipline in relationship to the common good, social inequality, and/or environmental sustainability.
	Project / Consultant Model	Students produce deliverables for a community partner (also called problem-based SL)	
	Community-Based Research	Students engage in research driven by a community partner's needs	