

## **Service Learning and Community Engagement Designation Approved by Senate March 7, 2023**

### **A. Service Learning and Community Engagement Overview**

Service learning entails active student participation in intentional and collaborative service experiences that help promote long-term community development and civic engagement. Service Learning projects significantly relate to course content as well as enrich student education through the acquisition of professional skills in a practical (or applied) setting while also satisfying the needs of partner institutions. Through distinctive various pedagogical activities involving reflection, students enhance their sense of civic responsibility, self-awareness, and commitment to the community. Community engagement describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

At SDSU, service learning (SL) and community engagement (CE) activities are supported by the Office of Academic Community Engagement (ACE), which is a part of Faculty Advancement and Student Success. ACE provides opportunities for civic engagement and leadership development at SDSU for students, faculty, staff, and community members by supporting high-impact pedagogical practices and active course-based learning in partnership with a range of community organizations. These practices often involve innovations in teaching and learning. All SL or CE courses must utilize the CSU Community Engaged Learning Tool (CELT) for approval of course designation. This ensures accurate reporting, fulfillment of syllabus requirements, and completion of mandatory risk management and partner agreements.

### **B. Service Learning (SL) and Community Engaged (CE) Course Designations**

o SL Course: An academic course that provides students opportunities to participate in organized service activities that align with community focus areas while linking the community service experiences to the course content. Service learning is a teaching method in which meaningful service is a critical component of course curriculum and assessment of student learning. It is characterized by critical reflection and a collaborative partnership among the instructor, students, and community, with a focus on both student learning and community impact. Given its distinct pedagogical approach, this makes service learning a very different experience than community service.

o CE Course: An academic course that includes a community service experience characterized by reciprocal partnerships that enhance student understanding, the outcomes of which benefit the common good.

### **C. Process for Obtaining New SL or CE Course Designations**

Faculty must complete a CELT for each SL or CE course. The SL or CE course attribute will be determined based on the faculty member's responses about their teaching and course community partnership practices. A course syllabus is needed to complete the CELT, and a copy of the syllabus should be provided to the Office of Academic Community Engagement (ACE). Completing the CELT will generate a report to the faculty member, copied to ACE with a determination of SL or CE designation.

The CELT should be completed at a minimum every three years, or when there is a significant course revision. Submission of a CELT will determine an attribute (SL or CE) but faculty members are encouraged to work with the ACE to discuss the course attribute process and their goals. The CELT assesses the implementation of six essential elements of community engaged learning:

1. Reciprocal Partnership: Reciprocal partnerships and processes shape the community activities and course design to enhance student understanding of the importance of community learning.
2. Student Community Involvement Benefits the Common Good: Student community involvement has a specific benefit to the material, cultural or institutional interests that members of society have in common. This specific benefit to the common good is intentional, planned for, communicated and assessed with community partners in mind. This may include the organizational capacity, student/client growth, social and economic benefits, and more.
3. Academically Relevant Community Involvement: Student community involvement is relevant to and integrated with the discipline-based academic content and assignments.
4. Explicit Civic Learning Goals: Civic learning goals are articulated and develop students' capacities to understand and address critical social issues.
5. Critical Reflection Facilitating Learning: Critical reflection activities and assignments integrate classroom and community learning.
6. Integrated Assessment of Student Learning: Student learning assessment addresses both the discipline-based and civic learning goals; including learning from community involvement.

#### **D. SL or CE Course Designation Requirements**

Designation as a SL or CE course requires that the following criteria be met, as demonstrated by the CELT process and an updated sample syllabus provided to the Office of Academic Community Engagement (ACE).

Syllabi for SL courses should include:

1. Justification that the SL component is integral to and supportive of the academic focus of the course. In the syllabus, this can be communicated in the course description, in a separate description of the SL component of the course, and/or in the learning outcomes. Make sure to define and describe the definition of service learning.
2. Description of the mechanism(s) used to introduce the SL component to the students. This may be done through various methods including class discussions, guided readings, and experiential class periods. For SL courses, course materials must reflect distinct pedagogic activities involving reflection, students enhance their sense of civic responsibility, self-awareness, and commitment to the community.
3. Description of the:
  - a. community partner(s) and location(s) where the SL assignment will be completed;
  - b. community partner needs and their relationship to the course learning outcomes;
  - c. expected professional skills and civic learning goals;
  - d. activities that will meet the service requirement;
  - e. length of time students will be required to serve (minimum of 15 hours during the semester, with 20 hours being optimal, regardless of the unit value of the course);
  - f. process for verification of service hours.

4. Description of the mechanisms and opportunities for ongoing student reflection on the integration of the SL component with course content (e.g., class discussions, journals, papers, presentations).

5. Weighted grading standards demonstrating that the service-learning component accounts for a significant portion of the total course grade (minimum of 15%, with 20% or more being optimal).

Syllabi for CE courses should include:

1. Justification that the CE component is integral to and supportive of the academic focus of the course. In the syllabus, this can be communicated in the course description, in a separate description of the CE component of the course, and/or in the learning outcomes. Make sure to define and describe the definition of community engagement.

2. Description of the:

a. community or communities engaged through this course, including geographic location, size, and demographics;

b. focus of engagement, i.e., historical or contemporary issues of consequence to this community (e.g., climate change, health disparities, language revitalization, economic development, etc.)

c. learning activities used to introduce the CE component to the students, e.g., readings, class discussions, experiential class periods, etc.

d. outcomes that may contribute to the mutual benefit of the University and the communities engaged: e.g., civic learning around issues important to the well-being of the community, advancing research, fostering networks and relationships, building pipelines for co-curricular student activity including internships or service; etc.

3. Description of the mechanisms and opportunities for student reflection on the integration of the CE component with course content (e.g., class discussions, journals, papers, presentations).

In accordance with the CELT course designation procedure, all SL and CE syllabi must be reviewed and approved by the Office of Academic Community Engagement (ACE) before referral to the AVPCAA for designation application via Curriculog.