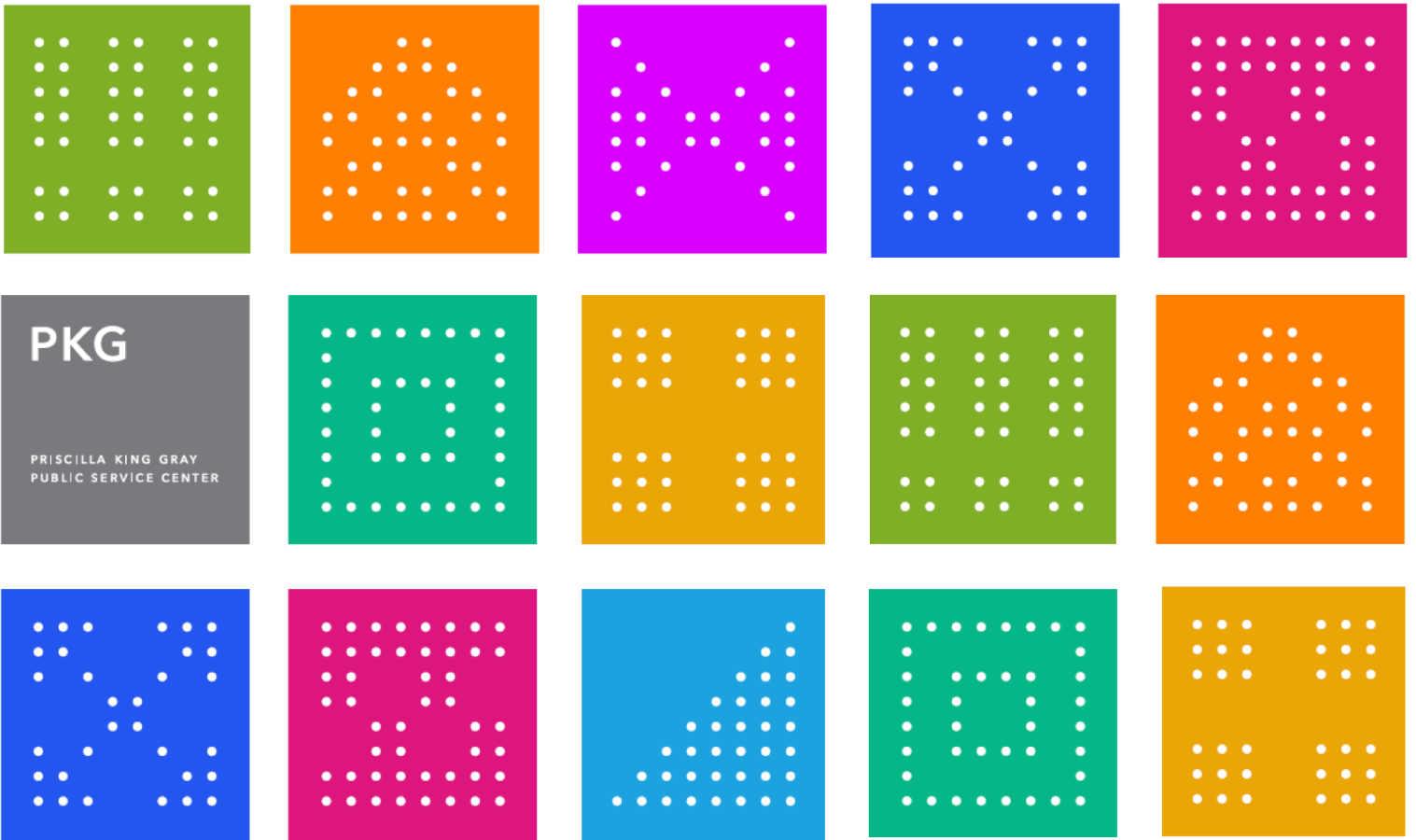


Faculty Guide to Community Engaged Learning



PKG Public Service Center's Faculty Guide to Community Engaged Learning

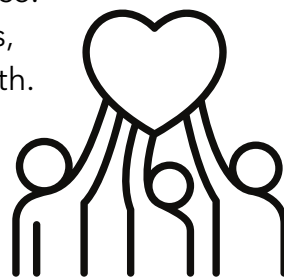
Introduction

The PKG Public Service Center at MIT is enthusiastic about supporting the integration of community-engaged learning into your course. Our center is dedicated to fostering meaningful connections between academic learning and real-world community impact. We are excited to collaborate with faculty to enhance the educational experience through structured community engagement. To assist you in this endeavor, we have developed a comprehensive guide outlining best practices for seamlessly integrating community-engaged learning into your course. This guide provides valuable insights, practical strategies, and examples to help you create a purposeful and impactful learning experience for your students. We look forward to partnering with you to make your course a dynamic and enriching environment that not only advances academic knowledge but also contributes positively to the communities we engage with.

What is Community Engaged Learning?

Community-engaged learning is an educational framework characterized by collaborative endeavors addressing specific community interests, problems, or public concerns. Key principles include:

- **Community Collaboration:** Actively engaging with and learning from community partners, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation.
- **Integration with Education:** Connecting experiential learning with academic content, bridging theory and practice to enrich the educational experience.
- **Critical Reflection:** Structured and documented reflection on experiences, encouraging a deeper understanding of social issues and personal growth.
- **Addressing Social Problems:** Engaging with communities to proactively address community-identified societal needs, contributing to positive change and reciprocal benefits for all stakeholders.



Why Should Faculty Engage In Community Engaged Learning?

Faculty engagement in community-engaged learning is imperative for fostering a more holistic and impactful educational experience. By integrating community-engaged learning into their teaching practices, faculty members can provide students with real-world contexts and experiences that enrich their understanding of course material and cultivate essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and empathy. Moreover, community-engaged learning promotes active citizenship and social responsibility among students, encouraging them to become agents of positive change in their communities. Faculty involvement in such initiatives not only enhances the relevance and applicability of academic content but also strengthens university-community partnerships, fostering mutual respect and collaboration.

Why Should Faculty Engage In Community Engaged Learning? (Cont.)

Ultimately, by embracing community-engaged learning, faculty members contribute to the creation of a more socially conscious and engaged student body, while also fulfilling their role as educators dedicated to the betterment of society.

Services Offered at the PKG Public Service Center

The PKG Public Service Center is committed to fostering community engagement within MIT's academic ecosystem, particularly through its dedicated support for faculty members. Recognizing the transformative potential of community-engaged learning, the PKG Center tirelessly provides an array of resources, comprehensive training workshops, and tailored consultation services to faculty members. By equipping educators with the necessary tools and guidance, the center empowers them to integrate community-based projects seamlessly into their curricula, enriching both student learning experiences and community impact. The following services are offered by the PKG Center:

Resources



Training & Workshops



Consultation



Resource Hub: Create a centralized resource hub on the PKG Public Service Center website that includes guides, case studies, and other materials to support faculty in designing and implementing community-engaged learning initiatives.

Training and Workshops: Organize lunch and learn workshops and training sessions to familiarize faculty with the principles and best practices of community-engaged learning, offering insights into effective pedagogical strategies.

Consultation Services: Provide one-on-one consultations with faculty members to discuss and tailor community-engaged learning approaches to their specific courses and disciplines.

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Timelines for Preparing Your Course

A good timeline for reaching out to community partners for a community-engaged learning course typically depends on the complexity of the project, the nature of the partnership, and any specific requirements or constraints. However, here's a general guideline:

1. Early Planning (6 months - 1 year before course start): Identify potential community partners and start initial discussions/outreach. This allows sufficient time for relationship building, discussion of projects, and alignment of goals. Early engagement also gives partners time to integrate the project into their own planning processes.
2. Mid-Planning (3-6 months before course start): Solidify partnerships and finalize agreements with selected community organizations. This phase involves detailing specific project objectives, responsibilities, and expectations for both parties. It's also an opportunity to discuss logistical arrangements and any necessary resources.

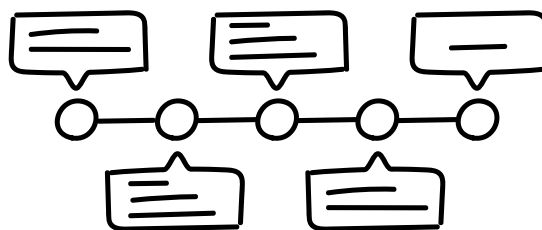


Starting early allows time for relationship building, discussion of projects, and alignment of goals.

3. Preparation Phase (2-3 months before course start): Begin collaborative planning and preparation activities with community partners. This may include scheduling times for community partners to discuss the organization and project during the course, and sharing timelines and milestones that students will need to complete. Ensure that communication channels are established and that all parties are clear on their roles and responsibilities.

4. Community Engaged Learning Implementation (during the course): Continuously engage with community partners throughout the course duration. Regular check-ins, progress updates, and feedback sessions can be helpful to maintain momentum, addressing challenges, and adjusting strategies as needed. Flexibility and responsiveness to evolving needs are key during this phase.

Continuously engaging with community partners helps maintain momentum, address challenges, and allows for adjustment of strategies as needed.



Timelines for Preparing Your Course (Cont.)

5. Reflection and Evaluation (after the course): Following the completion of the course, allocate time for reflection and evaluation with community partners. Review project outcomes, assess impact, and gather feedback from both students and community partners. This phase not only helps to gauge the success of the collaboration but also informs future engagement efforts.

6. Long-term Engagement (ongoing): Cultivate ongoing relationships with community partners beyond the immediate course duration. Explore opportunities for sustained collaboration, capacity building, and shared learning initiatives. Regular communication and follow-up demonstrate commitment to the partnership and contribute to its long-term sustainability.

Adhering to a structured timeline ensures that community partners are engaged effectively throughout the entire process, from initial outreach to post-project evaluation. Flexibility is also important to accommodate unforeseen challenges or adjustments that may arise along the way.

Developing Your Syllabi

Syllabi development for a community-engaged learning course is vital as it outlines the roadmap for integrating academic content with real-world experiences. A well-crafted syllabus not only communicates course objectives and expectations but also establishes a structured framework connecting theoretical concepts with practical applications in the community. It fosters meaningful interactions, reflection, and collaboration among students, faculty, and community partners, ensuring the course meets educational objectives while addressing authentic community needs.

Community Engaged Learning Syllabi Should Include:

- Community Partnership Information
- Learning Objectives and Outcomes
- Assessment and Reflection Components



Community Partnership Information: Clear details about the nature of the community partnerships involved in the course, including the goals, expectations, and responsibilities for both students and community partners. This section should outline how the course connects with and benefits the community, emphasizing mutual respect, collaboration, and ethical considerations.

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Developing Your Syllabi

Learning Objectives and Outcomes: Explicitly stated learning objectives that highlight not only the academic content but also the skills and competencies students will develop through community engagement. These objectives should reflect the course's commitment to experiential learning, critical reflection, and social responsibility, aligning with both academic standards and community needs.

Assessment and Reflection Components: A comprehensive outline of assessment methods, including both traditional academic evaluations (e.g., exams, papers, progress reports) and reflective components that encourage students to critically analyze their experiences, learning, and contributions to the community. This section should emphasize the importance of ongoing reflection, dialogue, and feedback to deepen students' understanding of course content and their role in community engagement.

Examples of Syllabi:

[Public Health for An Aging Society](#)

[American Politics](#)

[English: Mapping Greenwood](#)

[Ecology and Evolution: Tides](#)

Reflection Activities:

[Reflection Resource Document](#)

Reaching Out to Community Partners

Early engagement with community partners is pivotal for the success of a course with community involvement. Initiating timely communication facilitates the collaborative development of shared objectives and a nuanced understanding of community needs. This proactive approach builds trust, enabling community partners to actively shape the educational process and ensuring that the course aligns authentically with community priorities.

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Reaching Out to Community Partners

Genuine engagement involves recognizing and valuing the expertise, perspectives, and contributions of community partners. Consideration of their time, understanding of their context, and acknowledgment of the diversity within the community form the basis of a collaborative and ethical partnership. This approach establishes a foundation for a mutually beneficial and inclusive learning environment that upholds the dignity and agency of all participants.

Email Example For Reaching out to Community Partners:

Subject: Potential Community Partnership with MIT [Insert Course Name] Course

I hope this message finds you well. My name is [Insert Name], and I am a [Faculty Position] in the Department of [Department Name].

I am the course instructor for [Insert Course Name], which focuses on [Brief description of the topics covered in the course]. As an integral part of this course, students will have the unique opportunity to apply the concepts they learn in the course by engaging with a community partner. This course will take place in the [Term and Year] and we are hoping to finalize our cohort of community partners by the end of [Month and Year].

Upon thorough consideration, we believe that your organization's mission and initiatives resonate strongly with the objectives of this course. Consequently, we are keen on extending an invitation to your organization to join us as a community partner. By doing so, our students would be assigned to collaborate with you, contributing their skills and efforts to develop a project based on your organization's needs.

Should this proposition align with the interests and goals of your organization, we would be delighted to arrange a meeting at your earliest convenience. This meeting would serve as an opportunity to delve deeper into the potential collaboration and discuss the specifics of your role as a community partner.

Thank you for considering this collaboration, and I look forward to the possibility of working together to create a meaningful and mutually beneficial partnership.

When reaching out to the community partners, it is helpful to attach the syllabi or include a course description so that the community partners have a better understanding of how their organizations might be relevant. Past examples of collaborations and projects can also be used to highlight the types of projects that students have participated in.

Information for Community Partners

When initiating contact with community partners, it's essential to offer comprehensive details regarding the course and the responsibilities expected of them. This approach fosters transparency and mutual understanding, ensuring that all parties involved are fully informed and aligned. By clearly outlining expectations, community partners can assess their fit within the project, enabling them to commit more effectively and plan resources efficiently. Moreover, transparent communication builds trust and facilitates open dialogue, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings or conflicts. Ultimately, providing thorough information about the course and role expectations establishes a solid foundation for successful collaboration and shared goal achievement.

Important Information to Communicate to Community Partners Include:

- Course Description
- Timeline
 - When does the course take place?
 - At what point is the community partner involved?
- Milestones
 - When are the partners introduced?
 - When are projects and assignments finalized?
 - When will students work with the community partners?
 - Are progress reports needed/required?
 - Is there a final presentation/report?
- Time Commitment on Project
 - How many hours should the community partner expect of the student each week?
- Mentor Expectations
 - How often should the community partner and course instructor be meeting prior to the start of the course?
 - When are projects finalized?
 - When are the community partners available to present their organization/project to the course?
 - How many check-ins should the mentor and students have?
- Course Final Project/Report Expectations for Students
 - How is success in the project measured?
 - Are there reports and presentations that the students need to prepare?
 - Will the mentor have any role in providing evaluations of the student?
- Student Stages and Majors
 - Who are the students that take this course?
 - Are the students mainly undergraduates or graduate students?
 - What majors are the students?
- Examples of Past Projects

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Problem Statements

Problem statements in community-engaged learning projects are succinct articulations of specific challenges or needs within a community, serving as a foundational guide for project planning. These statements ensure that the project addresses authentic, identified community needs, aligning with the learning objectives of the educational program. Defined collaboratively with community partners, problem statements empower the community to actively contribute to the educational process, fostering a reciprocal relationship. They delineate the scope of the project, prevent unfocused efforts, and enable the measurement of impact. Well-crafted problem statements enhance communication, collaboration, and ethical engagement, promoting projects that are respectful, responsive, and beneficial to all stakeholders. Ultimately, problem statements play a pivotal role in shaping the purpose, direction, and sustainability of community-engaged learning endeavors.

Key Questions to Consider and Include in Problem Statements:

- Who is the best contact for the organization?
- What is the organization and their mission.
- What would help the organization build capacity to address or research a current or future need?
- How might the community engaged learning project help address the opportunity or need?
- What level of collaboration is the organization looking for?
- How much time can the organization commit per week to this?
- Is there a possibility to extend the project or collaboration beyond the course?

Other Resources

For more information on community engaged learning and best practices, visit:

- Campus Compact: <https://compact.org/>
- Teaching + Learning Lab at MIT: <https://tll.mit.edu/>
- American Association of Colleges and Universities High Impact Teaching Practices: <https://www.aacu.org/trending-topics/high-impact>