



**Faculty Senate**  
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[www.uaa.alaska.edu/governance/facultysenate](http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/governance/facultysenate)

To: Provost and Vice Chancellor Elisha Baker,  
University of Alaska Anchorage

Fr: Kimberly Swiantek,  
UAA Governance Office

Re: Proposal for Designation Process for Community-Engaged Academic Courses

On December 5, 2014 the Faculty Senate approved the memo, brought forward by the Community Engagement Taskforce, proposing a process for the designation of courses. The proposal recommends that both designations be self-imposed by individual faculty for a period of three semesters: Fall 2015-Fall 2016. In Summer 2016, a CCEL research project will assess the workability of the self-designations with two semesters of data and make recommendations to both the Faculty Senate and the Community Engagement Task Force. This process was reviewed and approved by the Graduate and Undergraduate Academic Boards (UAB/GAB).

Please see the attached memo for more information.

If I may be of further assistance, please let me know.

**Provost**

☒ Approved ☐ Disapproved

Comments:

*Elisha Baker*

Elisha Baker, Provost and Vice Chancellor

*San Gingrich*

*1/15/2015*

Date

**Chancellor**

☒ Approved ☐ Disapproved

Comments:

*Tom Case*

Tom Case, Chancellor

*1/15/2015*

# Proposal for Designation Process for Community-Engaged Academic Courses October, 2014

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The Faculty Senate approved new definitions for community engaged academic curriculum in February 2014. The approved modifications will better distinguish between courses that generally include community engagement in the course objectives and more stringently-defined service-learning courses. The Community Engagement designation (CE) encompasses a broad range of ways that courses might engage students in learning about and taking action for the public good. Courses with the Service-Learning designation (SL) are a subset of that broad range meeting additional criteria. A course may be designated as either CE or SL but not both.<sup>1</sup>

This request addresses a deficiency noted in the CCEL's recent self-evaluation for the Carnegie Institute – the absence of accurate data on classroom engagement. The course designation process is critical to the CCEL's ability to adequately assess the efficacy of engagement at the course level. Absent course designation, there is no mechanism for capturing, assessing, and reporting these efforts. Capturing this data, assessing it, and reporting out are integral to UAA's accreditation reports and to our continued status as a Carnegie Engaged University. Assessment to date has been hampered by difficulty identifying classroom initiatives across campus; the alternative processes described below are suggested as methods that will allow data collection to begin as quickly as possible.

Following the October 2014 E-Board meeting, the Faculty Senate requested that the Community Engagement Task Force propose a process for the designation of courses. The following proposal recommends that both designations be self-imposed by individual faculty for a period of three semesters: Fall 2015-Fall 2016. In Summer 2016, a CCEL research project will assess the workability of the self-designations with two semesters of data and make recommendations to both the Faculty Senate and the Community Engagement Task Force.

## **Self-Designation for both Community Engaged (CE) and Service Learning (SL)**

The attribution of a community-engaged course may apply to a broad spectrum of courses that could include a wide variety of experiences and activities. There may be a portion of the course or set of assignments that require the students' interaction with community and/or community issues that does not carry throughout the semester. Activities might be indirect or direct service to a community organization or individuals and could potentially take place entirely in the classroom. This broad definition may sometimes capture work that is exploratory for faculty beginning to engage with community in their courses, brings an application of theory to practice that is appropriate for only part of a course, or requires a relatively low level of community interaction due to large course size or other practical considerations that make more intensive engagement difficult.

In any case, with the new Faculty Evaluation Guidelines (FEGs), we want to make it as easy as possible for faculty to document the work they are doing, describe it accurately, and to look for guidance in how to do the best engaged teaching and engaged scholarship that is possible in their individual circumstances. We suggest

<sup>1</sup>Definitions and parameters are taken and modified from University of Massachusetts Amherst Office of Civic Engagement & Service Learning (<http://cesl.umass.edu/>).

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that faculty can be thoughtful about the designator they choose for their courses, and in fact, that the FEGs and the preparation of their faculty files are best served by faculty describing accurately what they are doing that can be called engaged teaching and engaged scholarship.

The SL designation, by definition, asks more of the faculty and the students in designing a more significant experience based in the community and asks that issues of impact, sustainability and reciprocity be addressed with the community partner, in addition to the requirements that students be prepared for the service roles, that reflection be more structured, and that there be some attempt at evaluation of impact for students and community.

We propose that a pilot project of three semesters be established with self-designators for both CE & SL. Each semester, Fall 2015 & Spring 2016, the course schedule forms will be designated in concert with faculty by whomever in that department completes the forms, similar to the process for designating distance learning courses. In Spring and Summer of 2016, a faculty research project will begin to review the designations for each semester, assessing for the workability of self-designation and the validity and reliability of the process. A mid-term report of the pilot project will be submitted to the Faculty Senate and the Community Engagement Task Force in April 2016 with a final report in August 2016. It is likely that the process would not be able to be changed substantially in time for the Fall 2016 semester, which is the reason it was extended to three semesters, rather than the one academic year. Changes could be proposed, if needed, for Spring 2017.

The Registrar's Office is prepared to implement this process for Fall 2015 with the CE or SL designation being entered on the Final Schedule Proofs in the "attendance method" column. The final Fall 2015 Schedule Proofs are due to the Curriculum Office on 2/6/15. This will hold true for the main campus in Anchorage and for courses taught in Eagle River. If Mat-Su, Kodiak and Kenai Peninsula faculty wish to code their courses in this way, Lora Volden is willing to work with the appropriate office on adapting or adopting the process that we've set in place.

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<sup>1</sup> The two definitions that were approved by the Faculty Senate March 7, 2014 are:

**CE\*** A **Community Engaged course** involves the student(s) in some kind of work outside of the classroom that contributes to the public good. At a minimum, the course should:

- Design and implement the community work with appropriate community input so that the students' efforts will provide an identifiable public benefit rather than a community burden.
- Clearly link the community work to student learning outcomes in the syllabus.
- Engage students in some oral or written reflection that explores their experience of engagement and connects it with the course learning goals.

**SL\*** A **Service-Learning course** is a Community-Engaged course which integrates the service and learning more deeply and more intentionally. At a minimum, the course should have:

- Service: significant community-based work defined in response to a need or aspiration presented by one or more partnering community organizations and for which core issues of impact, sustainability and reciprocity have been addressed.
- Clear linkage between the service and student learning outcomes: both academic and civic learning are addressed, and this is communicated in the syllabus.
- Preparation for service: students are prepared for the roles they will play, including engaging respectfully with a community that may differ significantly in race, class, age, or other elements of social identity.
- Structured reflection: intentional, systematic reflection on students' experience in the community is integrated throughout the course, not added as a one-time or final assignment. Reflection activities may include talking, writing or other means, and may be individual, group-based, or both.
- Evaluation: assessment of student learning and community impact has been planned. This could consist of asking the CCEL to survey the community partner and students, or could be instructor-designed assessment activities.

\*Definitions and parameters are taken and modified from University of Massachusetts Amherst Office of Civic Engagement & Service Learning (<http://cesl.umass.edu/>).