

Submission date: February 7, 2020 (revised template); January 31, 2020 (original)

Program/s in this review: Civic Engagement UC _____

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): N/A _____

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage _____

Members of the program review committee:

Donna Aguiniga, Interim Director, Review Committee Chair, Anchorage campus
Tracey Burke, Professor, Anchorage campus

1. Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role (700 words or less)

Community engagement is central to the identity and reputation of UAA, and UAA is recognized as the community-engaged university with the UA system. Since the establishment of the Center for Community Engagement & Learning in 2000, UAA has twice been affirmed for its commitment to community engagement through its designation as a Community Engaged University by the Carnegie Foundation. In the past three years, two faculty (Dr. Tracey Burke and Dr. Travis Hedwig) have been named finalists for national awards given to community-engaged faculty. In its 2019 accreditation reaffirmation, UAA received a commendation for “its commitment to community engagement and the Public Square.”

In the context of this community-engaged university, the Certificate for Civic Engagement provides a transcribed academic pathway for students to develop and demonstrate principles of civic engagement in tandem with their disciplinary major. The university plays a crucial role in helping citizens develop critical thinking and the capacity for civil discourse. The Certificate is designed to complement and extend students’ major-degree studies by requiring a few specific courses with the CEL prefix and steering students towards community-engaged courses in their majors. By design there is no fixed list of courses, as the options change regularly, and the Certificate is intended to provide students maximum flexibility in choosing their courses. The Certificate’s courses help students develop and refine the skills and knowledge necessary to engage with social issues through an informed, participatory lens. The program’s courses engage students in in service-learning experiences, a high-impact practice that connects students with the community and promotes students learning and success.

As one of example of how CEL courses collaborate with the community, the CEL A292 Introduction to Civic Engagement course has partnered with the Mountain View Boys & Girls Club and the Newcomers Program at East High School for years. Students participate in a community-based service-learning opportunity that requires them to apply class concepts, while the community partners benefit from the assistance that students provide for their programming.

The CEL A292 introductory class is a Social Sciences GER and was selected to be part of the packet of courses being submitted this spring to be designated as a Diversity & Inclusion GER. It is a selective for the Sociology and Journalism & Public Communication degrees and is a required class for the Environment & Society major. Students enrolled in the CEL A395 Civic Engagement Internship develop and refine skills and knowledge that will improve their employability. The Civic Engagement Internship is open to any junior or senior student seeking to earn academic credit for their internship with a government or non-profit organization. The CEL A395 course is a required class for the Legal Studies program.

2. Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity (7 year trend; 1400 words or less)

While the need for students to acquire the capacity to participate in civic life is high and the benefits of a service-learning curriculum are measurable, the number of certificates awarded through the Civic Engagement Certificate program is low. The current mechanism of a 30-credit certificate program has proven problematic. While there is at least one 2019 graduate who is not counted in the numbers provided, the reality is that the Certificate has never achieved a high level of

demand. A key factor that inhibits student participation in the certificate program is that they must make a separate application, including paying a separate application fee, to be admitted into the program. While students express interest in the program and there are students who complete all or almost all of the coursework, they do not apply for formal admittance.

Students enrolled in CEL courses have, in general, a high level of academic success. The numbers show that more than 84% of students who complete the one lower-division course (i.e., CEL A292 Introduction to Civic Engagement) and more than 77% of students who complete an upper-division CEL course successfully pass the course. While there has been a slight downward trend of student pass rates for the 200-level course since the beginning of the data, this variation may be explained in part by better standardization of the syllabus for the course and more experienced adjunct faculty who have more rigorous expectations of college-level grading.

Roughly 57% of student credit hours (SCH) in CEL courses are for students taking a CEL course to fulfill either a degree requirement for their discipline major or students earning the Civic Engagement Certificate. Similarly, 55% of students enrolled in a CEL course do so for their major or the Civic Engagement Certificate. These numbers illustrate the broad appeal of CEL courses, especially of CEL A292 Introduction to Civic Engagement, to students across the university and the role CEL courses play in supporting other programs. The CEL courses help students fulfill major requirements, complete GER requirements, and provide upper-division elective opportunities.

CEL courses tend to have low enrollments. There are several factors that should be considered when evaluating class size and class utilization. First, service-learning courses require planning and coordination that is absent from a traditional lecture or discussion-based class. In addition to the increased demands on the instructor's time, the experiential nature of the coursework is different than many students have experienced. To facilitate student success, a smaller class size helps ensure the instructor is able to provide support for students, which is reflected in the academic success students have historically found in CEL classes. Second, the overall numbers provided reflect all CEL classes offered by the program, including the CEL A395 Civic Engagement Internship. The class is offered every term; however, particularly in the fall and spring semesters, enrollment in this class is low. Historically, the internship course has a higher enrollment in the summer, as students are better able to incorporate an internship's required hours into their schedule. CCEL's Director often serves as the instructor for this course in the fall and spring semesters when enrollment is low so that no additional instructional costs are accrued in the center's budget. Offering the course regularly helps facilitate student achievement and graduation. For example, it is not uncommon for Legal Studies students to complete the internship their final semester. Ensuring that students can take the course year-round helps prevent delays in their graduation date. Finally, there are two upper-division CEL courses (i.e., CEL A392 Civic Engagement: Learning by Giving and CEL A450 Civic Engagement Leadership Capstone) that have historically low enrollment. These classes are required for Civic Engagement Certificate students but do not attract sufficient numbers of students from outside the program. These courses have been offered as Directed/Independent Studies or classes with low enrollment in prior semesters.

The cost of instruction for the CEL program is covered by its incorporation into the duties of the CCEL's Director and the percentage of tuition revenue the center receives. CCEL's Director teaches one course per semester. In addition to the workload course assignment, the Director teaches the CEL A395 Civic Engagement Internship if enrollment numbers are low and has offered directed studies for CEL A450. Other courses or class sections are taught by adjunct faculty. The dramatic increase in cost of instruction in the IR-Report for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years is erroneous. A personnel change in the Center's Director occurred in the 2018-2019 academic year, and it appears that the entirety of the Director's salary is being tagged as an instructional cost rather than 10% per semester. Any revenue that exceeds the instruction costs is used to support CCEL programming, including faculty mini-grants, Think Tanks, and the annual Urban & Rural in Alaska: Community Engagement Conference.

3. Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success (1500 words or less)

The Civic Engagement Certificate program incorporates several high-impact practices to better help students have a meaningful and successful college career. All students in the Certificate program are required to complete several classes that incorporate service-learning pedagogy. In addition, all students in the program are required to complete a 6-credit civic engagement internship (CEL A395). Finally, the recent addition of a Books of the Year (BoY) text in the CEL A292

Introduction to Civic Engagement course helps students share a common intellectual experience and provides a platform for them to more fully engage with the related programming that the BoY committee brings to campus.

The Civic Engagement Certificate is unusual in that there are no dedicated faculty-lines for the program. The lack of a tenure-track or even term line means that the program is dependent upon adjunct faculty. The lack of dedicated faculty has likely played a role in inhibiting program growth and reduces the program's capacity for course innovation. In addition, a reliance on adjuncts reduced the number of class sections that can be offered during the work-day hours. Despite the challenges, CCEL has had strong success in working with and retaining adjunct faculty to help ensure the highest quality courses possible. For example, the four adjunct faculty who have taught CEL A292 Introduction to Civic Engagement in recent years all have earned doctoral degrees. Two adjuncts are experts in civic engagement, one is a tenured UAA professor whose time was bought-out, and the fourth has a strong community engagement background and research focus on helping students transition from high school to college. This high caliber of adjunct faculty is found among all those who teach CEL courses. Due to the use of adjunct faculty, CCEL has taken measures to better assure standardization and quality occurs across class offerings. In Summer 2019, the CEL A292 syllabus was reevaluated to ensure that students in different sections were receiving a comparable experience. The updated syllabus has uniform, current readings to establish a foundation of core civic engagement concepts and terms for all students, while still allowing faculty room to draw upon their subject matter expertise for more topic-specific weeks. As previously mentioned, to help support a common educational experience for students, a Books of the Year text (i.e., *Drawdown*) was added to the course in Fall 2019. The CEL A395 Civic Engagement Internship course uses a base syllabus across instructors to ensure that students again have a comparable in-class experience that includes appropriate assignments to assess student learning outcomes.

The Civic Engagement Certificate program is exploring online and innovative way to offer its courses. The program is testing the use of 8-week short courses that may serve to assist students who need an additional class to retain full-time status or who were uncertain about their schedule. In a Spring 2019 meeting with First Year Advising, they indicated that these short, late-start classes are needed. CEL A292 has been offered this way twice in an online format. The online format allows students to incorporate a late-start format into their semester schedule, while the service-learning assignment was tailored to allow flexibility but still require student partnership with a non-profit organization and demonstration of course concepts using a Civic Dinners model. An 8-week CEL A390 elective course is being trialed this spring semester in partnership with the Anchorage Museum. This class will be held at the Anchorage Museum, bringing the class into the community. The program is continuing to determine what is the best way to provide more flexible scheduling while still being attuned to enrollment needs and deadlines.

The Civic Engagement Certificate continues to develop and refine its assessment measures. New practices were implemented in Fall 2019 to better ensure that students enrolled in CEL A292 complete the Community Engagement Course Assessment survey and a new brief survey was created for students enrolled in the Civic Engagement Internship. Qualitative assessment measures have been more successful in the program. Students enrolled in CEL courses have provided consistent comments that illustrate achievement of the program's objectives.

In 2018, nine Civic Engagement Certificate graduates were interviewed to share their perspectives about the program. Analysis of the data found that students grew in values, skills, and preparation for their careers. Representative quotes from the interviews include:

- *I got to do things that made the world a better place . . . I got to apply things I was learning in school in real life, and that enriched my overall college experience.*
- *I care about advocacy and participating in democracy. I want people to know their voices at the table are important and valued. The Certificate Program helped me foster this.*
- *Anybody who works mindfully towards the Certificate will be better prepared for the workforce. The program ties your academic field to the community's needs.*
- *The Certificate program is a friendly and safe place to learn critical skills for engaging as a citizen in your community . . . learning from peers and people with experience is priceless.*

All students in the Civic Engagement Certificate program receive academic advising from the CCEL Director, who also serves as the Civic Engagement & Learning Chair. In addition, any student interested in completing the CEL A395 Civic

Engagement Internship class meets with the director to assess their readiness for an internship and to help them articulate what they would like to achieve in their placement.

4. Program Duplication / Distinctiveness (300 words or less)

The Civic Engagement Certificate program and its courses are unique in Alaska. Neither of the other two universities in the UA system nor Alaska Pacific University offer a civic engagement program of study. CCEL is ideally situated to continue to serve as the academic home for the program with its expertise in developing civic engagement and community partnerships.

In this time of political and civic upheaval and discord, it is incumbent that UAA fulfill its responsibility to prepare citizens to engage with important issues with civility and thoughtfulness. Individual majors prepare students for disciplinary and professional pathways; the distinctive contribution of an interdisciplinary academic civic engagement program is to help students think broadly about how their chosen fields shape our common society.

5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)

The Certificate in Civic Engagement reflects the university's larger focus on and commitment to community engagement. The certificate serves an academic pathway for students to demonstrate their ability to participate in civic life as active, educated leaders. The certificate can be earned with any baccalaureate degree and fosters leadership and civic participation among students enrolled in its courses. Graduates of the program are ready to address public problems at multiple levels and to have a vision for the future as active citizens in their communities.

The individual courses within the program incorporate high-impact practices (i.e., community engagement and service-learning, internships, common intellectual experiences) that support student achievement. The required community-engaged and service-learning elements in classes strengthen UAA's visibility within the community. The CEL A292 course, in particular, lays an early foundation for student engagement and is well-positioned as a Social Science GER, and prospective Diversity & Inclusion GER, to serve student needs across the university.

One challenge of the Civic Engagement Certificate is that there are no assigned tenure-track or term faculty to the program. With the exception of the courses taught by the CCEL Director, all courses are currently provided by adjuncts. While the program has had great success in nurturing long-term adjuncts, the lack of dedicated faculty inhibits program growth. To better facilitate the growth of the Civic Engagement program, it is recommended that a faculty line be established.

A second, and more critical, challenge of the certificate is that there has been insufficient recruitment for the program. While recruitment efforts were expanded beginning in 2019, growth has been insufficient. A key factor in poor retention are the barriers associated with a certificate program, including the need to make a separate application to the program and student concerns about the number of hours required. While the certificate is designed to include discipline-specific service-learning classes and courses with civic-education content towards the required hours, students are often confused about the requirements.

To put it simply, the idea of a civic engagement program is sound but the current 30-credit certificate mechanism does not work. Therefore, to reduce barriers and increase participation in the civic engagement courses, it is recommended that the Certificate in Civic Engagement become a Minor in Civic Engagement with an evolving list of appropriate interdisciplinary courses that will supplement the CEL courses for 18 credit total to facilitate navigation. Reducing barriers to student success will decrease student drop-off in interest caused by the cost and time of the certificate program, and allow students to more easily receive recognition for their civic engagement coursework on their transcripts.