Stetson University

Center for Community Engagement

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH HANDBOOK

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING

Community-engaged learning is a pedagogical tool used by faculty to help students bridge the gap between theoretical studies and prevalent social issues, bringing the outside world into the classroom. Students learn to address these issues in their communities through both theoretical and experiential means. Not only do students grow academically through their coursework, but the integrated component of community engagement allows them to develop understanding of both **personal and social responsibility.**

Academic Learning

Community Engagement and Reflection

Personal and Social Responsibility

WHAT DISTINGUISHES COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING?

Community-engaged learning is a **high-impact practice** which research has shown improves student retention of subject knowledge and practical skills, such as collaboration, event planning, critical thinking and analysis, reflection, and problem solving.

"Student learning through community impact"

WHAT IS COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH?

Like other forms of academic research community-based research (CBR) projects attempt to answer a specified research question through empirical and theoretical methodologies. The difference is that the **research question** is **generated by** and is **of importance to the community**. Thus, community experts outside of academia play an important role in creating this research.

Unlike primarily academic research, CBR has a **goal** beyond the information generation itself. The CBR projects should be useful for our community in such a way that leverages **social change**.

AVENUES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

-A project in an undergraduate course
-A senior capstone/research project
-S.U.R.E. Grant funded projects
-Independent study project

TYPES OF COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

Needs Assessment

This kind of CBR identifies areas of need for services or resources that are not already being addressed, often through surveying the community or through analyzing existing data to find gaps in services.

Best Practices

These projects often compile a literature review or existing data that outline best strategies for a given organization's need, such as fundraising, database management, marketing, etc.

Program Evaluation

This kind of CBR project tracks the impact and outcomes of a community partner's work or program, asking "Is this program meeting its intended goal? Is it creating change in the community?"

Note that these do not encompass all community-based research projects, but only serve as a guideline that can be widely applied across various community partner agencies.

EXAMPLE CBR PROJECTS

Water Quality Testing in DeLand

Adam Cooper and Alexa Fortuna conducted water quality testing for lead levels in the Spring Hill community, providing an important service for communities often underrepresented in governmental testing. Though they did not find significantly higher lead levels in this area, their research provides a guideline for future water quality testing procedures in vulnerable communities.

Sponsored by Stetson's Institute for Water and Environmental Resilience

FREE WATER QUALITY TESTING
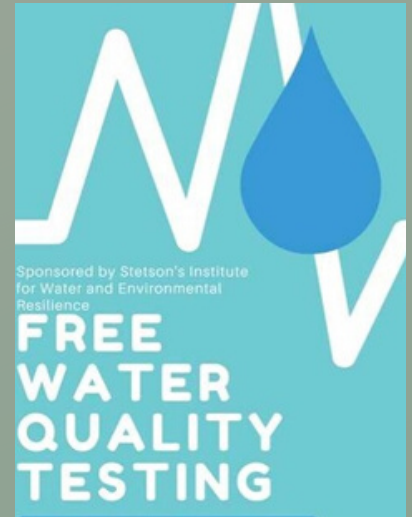
Students surveyed businesses in New Smyrna Beach to track the occurrence of blight, the deterioration of infrastructure that may be unsafe, unused, or may decrease property values. Businesses were asked the biggest challenges due to location, in order to consider how a community redevelopment agency (CRA) and plan may address those needs.

New Smyrna Urban Blight Project

Pierson Youth Development Program

Florencia Abelenda conducted surveys and interviews with community members and leaders 1n Pierson, FL--a low-income rural community--about the need to develop youth programs for academic and physical enrichment. Nearly all community members did not know of current youth programs, but felt children would greatly benefit from them, Florencia would later develop the Youth Empowerment through Sports Activities program to address this need after completing her research,

EXAMPLE LIFECYCLE OF A CBR PROJECT

Spring Hill Needs Assessment

A group of Stetson students, with the vision and guidance of the Spring Hill Neighborhood Association and Ms. Shilretha Dixon, surveyed community members in the Spring Hill area to identify their most pressing health and safety concerns. The survey was distributed at a local church and was completed by 180 community members, both residents and non-residents of Spring Hill. Dr. Asal Johnson, Professor of Public Health at Stetson, supervised and compiled the final report for this project.

Results

- 90.5% of respondents reported concern about a lack of access to fresh produce
- 84.1% of Spring Hill residents reported concern about drug/crime problems
- Spring Hill residents expressed concern about poverty (58.8%) and unemployment (78.4%).
- For every health condition listed on the survey, over 60% of residents expressed concern about its prevalence.

Impact

Several projects have been developed with the guidance from local community leaders, such as Ms. Shilretha Dixon, in order to address one need identified through this data: Facilitating access to healthy food options for Spring Hill residents.

- Spring Hill Community Garden
- SNAP and Fresh Access Bucks programs initiated at the Artisan Alley Farmers' and Makers' Market

Both of these programs individually assess their impact for increasing access to fresh, healthy foods.

BENEFITS OF CBR PROJECTS

Students

- Concrete research experience
- Fosters obtainment of General Education outcomes: Critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, knowledge of human cultures and natural world, and personal and social responsibility
- Retention of course material through real-world application and reflection
- Fosters independence and agency
- Allows students to interact with culturally diverse individuals and experience the community as a source of academic learning
- Gives students a competitive advantage when entering the job market or applying for graduate school

Faculty

- Grants faculty the opportunity to engage and collaborate with students in more interactive settings
- Faculty can use their disciplinary expertise to create social change
- Creates new potential for community-based research and publication as well as grants and funding related to service-learning

Community

- Research provides information that allows organizations to build their capacities
- Research is leveraged to create social change in the community
- Research may spurn other projects or areas for growth
- Partnership with university allows the community to better utilize Stetson's assets and resources
- Partners are co-educators and important sources of knowledge for the community

- Consult the Stetson Center for Community Engagement Website's sample ideas by discipline
- Consult past examples located in archives on CCE Website
- Consider the different types of CBR and potential community partner organizations
- **Working WITH community partners to narrow down the question and ensure that it is meeting a community need**

Any "systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge that involves obtaining information about living individuals through intervention or interaction with those individuals" requires IRB review to ensure that ethical standards for research are upheld.

The portal for IRB procedures can be found at MyStetson > Resources > MentorIRB

For more information and to confirm if a CBR project will require IRB approval, please consult www.stetson.edu/other/institutional-review-board/

DESIGNING A CBR PROJECT STEP-BY-STEP

1 Read Handbook and example projects

2 Research community partners and issue areas

3 Identify a community partner (CP)

4 Communicate and schedule a meeting with a CP

5 Identify topics and questions to be addressed

6 Create an agreement with the CP about each party's roles and the goals for the project

7 Optional: Build the project into course syllabus, determine assignments and grading weight, and connect to learning materials

8 Determine research methodologies and accountability mechanisms

9 Create deadlines and schedule meeting times with all stakeholders

10 Use our website's resources and data sets to incorporate into project

11 Finished project is assembled into a research report

12 Employ assessments after the project is complete to compile feedback from all stakeholders

BEST PRACTICES

Service Agencies Are Partners
It is important that faculty members and community partners communicate and find projects that can fulfill the needs of both parties. A successful CBR project requires an equal and reciprocal relationship: Community partners are acknowledged an asset to us just as we are to them.

Inclusion in Syllabus
Both the learning outcomes and goals for the course should should recognize the community engaged-learning aspect and have a clear focus on it. Course materials may coincide with themes from the CBR project.

Academic Credit is Awarded for the Learning
Community Engaged Learning is a new and innovative approach to academia; however, it is still an academic practice. Students should be graded not simply for their service work or community theory work, but instead on what they learn from it. This is why the reflective piece or proposed solution piece must be graded.

Research is Connected Directly to a Course
Course readings, assignments, presentations, and projects should connect to the community-based research project. The material taught should advance the students' knowledge of their community-engaged learning focus.

CERTIFICATE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Certificate of Community Engagement allows students to receive accreditation for taking classes and meeting requirements that integrate community based knowledge and experiences with formal academic settings.

The requirements for earning the Certificate of Community Engagement are:
- Two service-learning courses
- Two community engagement theory courses
- 100 hours of voluntary community engagement work
- A critical reflection essay on their community engagement work

Service-Learning

Service-learning is a way of learning through combined academic instruction and direct community service. In order to have a meaningful experience, students reflect on their service as a part of their academic work. Students are required to engage in critical, meaningful reflection on the intersection of theory and practice and demonstrate that critical reflection in graded work.

Community Engagement Theory

Community Engagement Theory courses rely purely on critical, theoretical, and academic teachings in order to provide students with the means to propose their own solutions to given problems. Students will use the academic concepts and materials learned in class to understand the subject matter and then use that knowledge to find their own solutions to problems in the community.

Contact Dr. Greg Sapp, the Hal S. Marchman Chair of Civic and Social Responsibility, to complete an application process for a course with a CBR project to be approved for the Certificate of Community Engagement curriculum.

www.stetson.edu/other/marchman/certificate-community-engagement.php

OUR RESOURCES

On our website you will find an inventory of resources helpful for preparing a CBR project:

- **Introduction** to Community-Based Research

- **Archives:** This section includes brief explanations of past CBR projects completed by Stetson faculty, staff, and students, as well as provides the full reports when possible.

- **Ideas Inventory:** This section is organized by discipline and offers a few examples for each, in order to provide ideas of what a community-based research questions in a particular field might look like.

- **Resources for Data and Post-Assessments:** This section includes data sets from county, state, and federal agencies that collect data potentially aligned with a CBR projects. In addition, we have provided template assessment forms for all involved stakeholders.

FUNDING SOURCES

- Bonner Program Community Fund for select community partners
- The Brown Center at Stetson University
- Center for Community Engagement Summer Nonprofit Internship Fund
- College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Fund for Student Research
- Nina B. Hollis Research Impact Awards
- Sarah George Trust Fund, Hal S. Marchman Program
- SURE Grant
- United Way of Volusia-Flagler Counties Social Innovation Fund

Arts

- African American Museum of the Arts
- Xpress Yourself

Disability Advocacy

- The Center for the Visually Impaired
- My Angel With Paws, Inc.
- New Horizons Service Dogs
- Southeastern Guide Dogs
- Special Olympics Florida Volusia/Flagler Counties

Economic Development

- Artisan Alley Farmers and Makers Market
- Mainstreet DeLand Association
- Spring Hill Community Resource Center- Spring Hill Neighborhood Assoc.
- United Way of Volusia-Flagler Counties
- University of Florida Board of Trustees
- West Volusia Habitat for Humanity

Education

- Community Education Project
- The Early Learning Coalition of Flagler and Volusia Counties, Inc.
- FUTURES, Inc./Take Stock in Children Volusia
- La Casa Cultural Latina
- Mid Florida Community Services, Inc Head Start/Early Head Start
- Volusia County Public Schools

LIST OF OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Environment

- Green Volusia/Volusia County Department of Environmental Management
- Marine Discovery Center
- The Spring Hill Gardeners Association

Health

- AdventHealth Community Care
- Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida, Inc.(HPCNEF)
- Hispanic Health Initiatives, Inc. (HHI)
- The House Next Door
- Stewart Marchman Act Behavioral Healthcare

Hunger & Homelessness

- Children's Home Society of Florida
- The Neighborhood Center of West Volusia

Youth Empowerment

- Boys & Girls Clubs Of Volusia/Flagler Counties, Lacey Family/Spring Hill Club
- Chisholm Community Center
- Florida United Methodist Children's Home
- Guardian ad Litem, 7th Judicial Circuit

REFERENCES

O'Mahony, C., Burns, K., & McDonnell, C.. "Community-Based Research: An Introductory Guide for Higher Education Staff." CampusEngage.

Strand, K., Marullo, S., Cutforth, N., Stoecker, R., & Donohue, P. (2003). *Community-Based Research and Higher Education: Principles and Practices*. San Francisco (CA): Jossey-Bass.