Contemporary challenges in community engagement and service learning for Catholic institutions

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DePaul University
What constitutes academically-driven community engagement in Catholic higher education?
Carnegie Definition

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

“as a method of teaching, learning and research [that] describes interactions between universities and their communities (business, industry, government, NGOs, and other groups) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity”
What about Equity and Justice?
How can Catholic universities inform what it means to work with communities to transform society through curriculum?
ACU and DePaul: Shared Philosophy

We build meaningful engagement initiatives through long-term partnership-building with organisations that support people living on the margins.

We apply a critical lens to how community engagement experiences are structured and implemented.

We explicitly focus on social justice - do not shy away from engaging students in political questions about rights and equity.
ACU and DePaul: Shared Philosophy

Our vision is bigger than temporary volunteering or transactional experiences.

We expect mutual benefits between students and community partners.

We strive for long-term relationships that promote systemic changes in communities.

We seek to create academically-embedded community engagement that provides students with opportunities to grow intellectually, personally and socially.
We are here to...

...learn to better facilitate ways of learning while transforming society.

...explore what it means to build meaningful relationships between higher education institutions and communities.

...identify ways to overcome the barriers to meaningful engagement between students, staff (administrative and academic) community partners.

...learn what academically-driven community engagement means at two mission-driven Catholic universities.
# Language/Cultural Differences at ACU with DePaul

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACU (Australia)</th>
<th>DePaul (US)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement</td>
<td>Academic Service learning/CbSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff / Academics</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community engagement at ACU
About ACU

ACU has seven campuses across Australia and an international campus located in Rome, Italy.

More than 35,000 students and 2,500 staff.

We pride ourselves on offering a welcoming environment for everyone. In 2016, 37.9% of our students were from equity groups (that is, had English as a second language, had a disability, were from a remote/regional area and/or were from a low SES background).

Within the Catholic intellectual tradition and acting in Truth and Love, Australian Catholic University is committed to the pursuit of knowledge, the dignity of the human person and the common good.

ACU’s Mission
ACU Engagement

- ACU Engagement are committed to ensuring that all staff and students have the opportunity to make a contribution to their community that is feasible and meaningful to them, and that meets community needs in a way that is valuable and respectful.
Community engagement at ACU

ACU Community Engagement is about

Building connections
ACU community engagement builds genuine connections with community through respectful and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Acting with humility
ACU community engagement acts with humility, looking ‘outward’ with equality to work collaboratively with community, not ‘on’ or ‘for’ community.

Developing understanding
ACU community engagement responds with empathy, aiming to understand the people we work with and interact in a considered, compassionate, and respectful manner.

Affirming dignity
ACU community engagement recognises the fundamental rights and worth of all human beings and is committed to affirming the dignity of all people in a holistic manner.

Pursuing Justice
ACU community engagement stands in solidarity with the most disadvantaged and marginalized, and works to realise a fair and just society for all.
Student community engagement

ACU’s Core Curriculum:

- two University Core Curriculum (UNCC) units
- a community engagement unit that is specific to each program.

- 21 units with community engagement placements
- 638 students in Semester 1, 2019
- 2723 student in Semester 2, 2019
Student community engagement

2018 survey School of Business

271 commencement and 161 completion surveys

85.3% Agreed or strongly agreed they got what they’d hoped for from their experience.

76.4% Agreed or strongly agreed that they were motivated to participate in future community engagement.

Significant increases in empathy (using a validated measure).
Types of community engagement at ACU

**Direct community engagement**
Students interact with community members through an existing program offered by ACU and/or an external partner organisation (e.g., tutoring youth from refugee and migrant backgrounds).

**Project-based community engagement**
Students (individually or in groups) work on a project with a tangible outcome for a community organisation (e.g., develop a website for a community organisation, develop a strategic plan).

**Community-based research**
Students conduct or contribute to a research project needed by a community organisation.

**Advocacy**
Students participate in/support one of ACU’s partner organisations with an ongoing campaign to address a social issue.
Staff community engagement

657 ACU STAFF RESPONDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing and Fixed Term</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2018 Staff Community Engagement Activity Survey
Community giving

Personal Hygiene Product Collection – 2018

Winter Woolies – 2019

Welcome Bazaar – 2019
Academic Service learning at DePaul
About DePaul University

Urban, Catholic, Vincentian (founded 1898).

23,000 students; 39% self-identify as students of color
Academic Service learning at DePaul
What kind of college graduate?
Service-learning is not synonymous with community service.
• Credit for learning
• Academically rigorous
• Accomplishes learning objectives
• Uses critical analysis/thinking
• Views the community as co-educator
• Changes faculty role in the classroom
Co-Educators: Respecting communities as intellectual spaces
Mutually Beneficial: Building long-term partnerships
Asset-based Community Engagement

Local INSTITUTIONS

Citizens’ Associations

Gifts of INDIVIDUALS

Business

Churches/ Houses of Worship

Income

Parks

Older Adults

Hospitals

Youth

Schools

Artists

Labeled People

Community Colleges
Social Justice

Academic Service learning at DePaul
## DePaul’s service learning program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct service/community engagement</th>
<th>Students engage in service that directly benefits a community organization’s existing programming (e.g., tutoring, providing health screenings)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project-based service/community engagement</td>
<td>Students produce a tangible product by the end of the term (e.g., creating a website, PR plan, assessing organizational recruitment strategies).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based research</td>
<td>Students contribute to a research effort defined and driven by a community partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy and Solidarity</td>
<td>Students support an ongoing campaign to address a critical social, economic, and/or environmental issue in Chicago or internationally. It involves valuing the dignity of all people, respecting them as individuals, in the pursuit of justice, community-building and peace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Addressing the challenges
### Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>... for students</th>
<th>... for staff/faculty</th>
<th>... for community partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fitting community engagement activities into increasingly busy lives</td>
<td>may feel poorly equipped to provide meaningful community engagement</td>
<td>Community partners can find it challenging to take on student placements or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>opportunities for their students</td>
<td>projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>questioning the value of community engagement and how it contributes to</td>
<td>identifying community partners and suitable projects</td>
<td>Difficult to find meaningful and respectful ways for students to interact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their education in their chosen profession</td>
<td></td>
<td>with community members within the time constraints of university terms and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>class timetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>providing the effective formation and reflection components of the course</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ensuring that the time required for them to induct, supervise and debrief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>students does not exceed the benefits of the students’ participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilitating deeper discussions and learning that guide students to challenge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>existing structural and systemic social problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitting community engagement activities into already busy work loads</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community partner dissatisfaction themes
DePaul University 2006-2014

Acknowledgement: Annette Cowart
Gallagher, 2006
# Frequency of student complaints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Criticism</th>
<th>AY 03-04</th>
<th>AY 04-05</th>
<th>AY 05-06</th>
<th>Mean over 3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criticisms of site</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>128.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wkshops/ reflections</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>7.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>8.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-up</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>16.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steans org.</td>
<td>27.00</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>28.00</td>
<td>24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy work</td>
<td>34.00</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>28.00</td>
<td>29.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General organization</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>33.00</td>
<td>37.00</td>
<td>34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism of course</td>
<td>33.00</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>36.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to class</td>
<td>61.00</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>37.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>42.00</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>39.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community interact.</td>
<td>39.00</td>
<td>43.00</td>
<td>47.00</td>
<td>43.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction/goals</td>
<td>53.00</td>
<td>31.00</td>
<td>52.00</td>
<td>45.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random/?s</td>
<td>54.00</td>
<td>68.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>61.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Choice</strong></td>
<td>71.00</td>
<td>49.00</td>
<td>76.00</td>
<td>65.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise/not Critical/nothing</td>
<td>64.00</td>
<td>84.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>74.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scheduling</strong></td>
<td>79.00</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>78.00</td>
<td>77.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>627.00</td>
<td>669.00</td>
<td>756.00</td>
<td>684.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do we effectively communicate the *what* and *why* of CE/SL to our diverse groups of students while staying true to our institutional faith backgrounds?
How do we increasingly and effectively embed CE/SL learning into curriculum without it being seen as an 'add-on' or burden to staff/faculty and students?
How do we develop our CE/SL praxis in ways that are responsive to community realities, and the increasingly corporate nature of modern universities?
How do we build a sustainable partnership for learning, sharing and collaborating on community engagement between ACU and DePaul?