



# Contemporary challenges in community engagement and service learning for Catholic institutions

**Prof Sandra Jones**

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Engagement  
Australian Catholic University

**Dr Howard Rosing**

Executive Director, Steans Center  
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

ACU (Australia)	DePaul (US)
Community engagement	Academic Service learning/CbSL
Staff / Academics	Faculty
Subject	Course
Administrative Staff	Staff



## 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.



## 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.

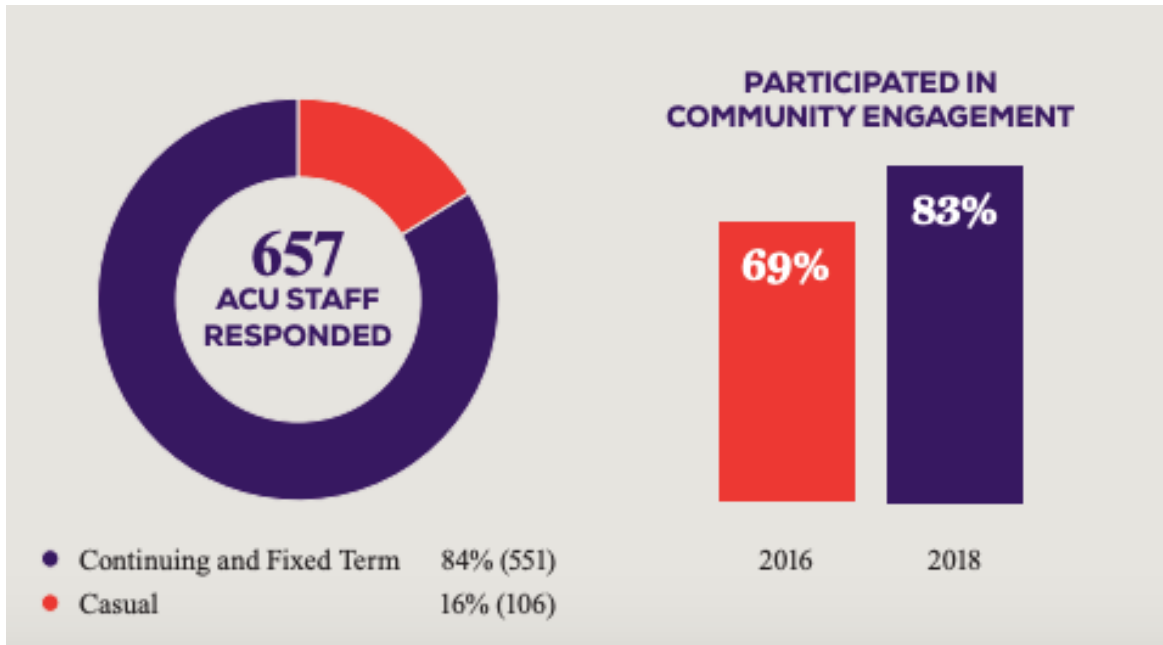


## Advocacy

Students participate in/support one of ACU's partner organisations with an ongoing campaign to address a social issue.



# Staff community engagement



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

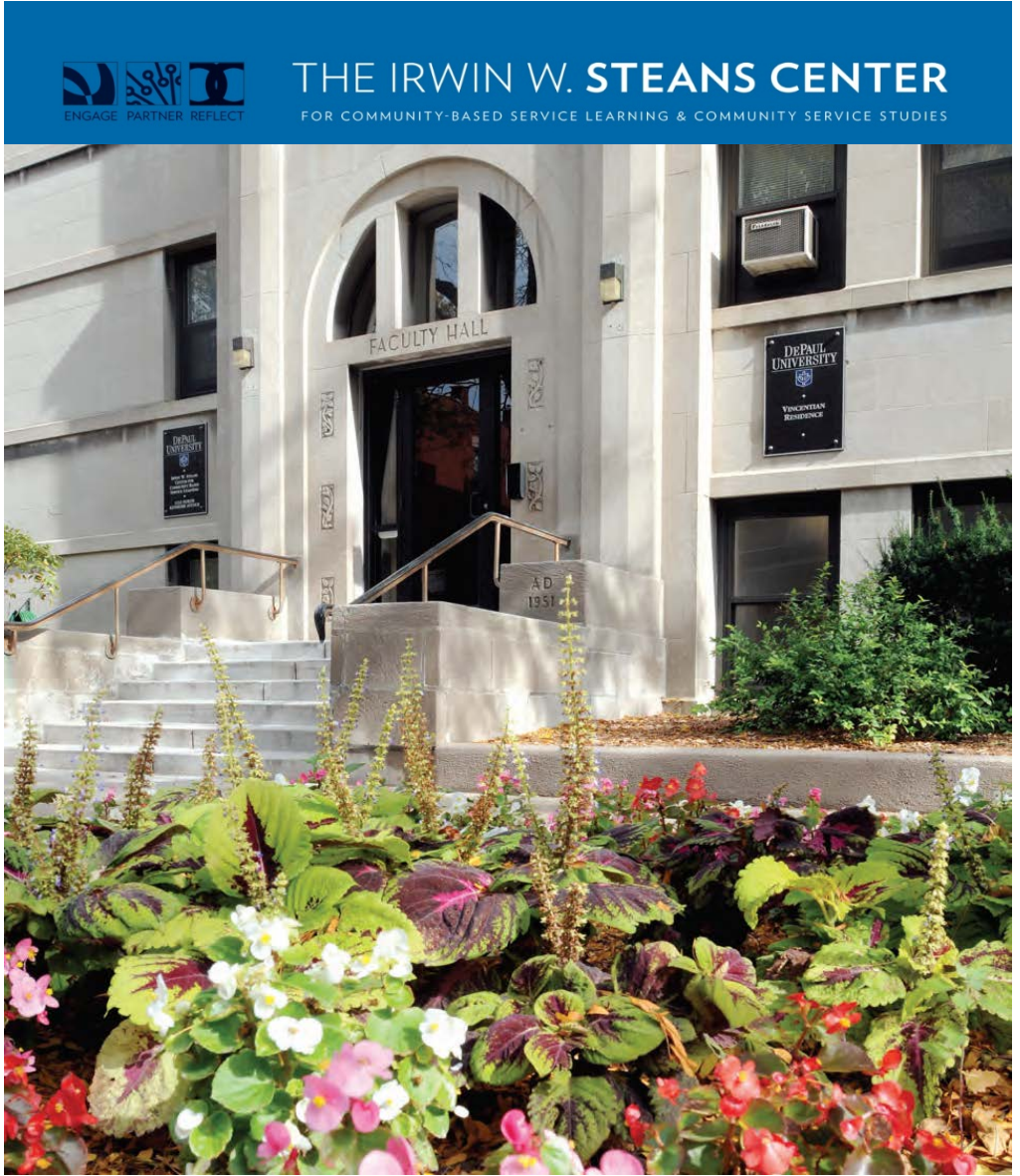


Urban, Catholic, Vincentian  
(founded 1898).



23,000 students; 39% self-identify  
as students of color

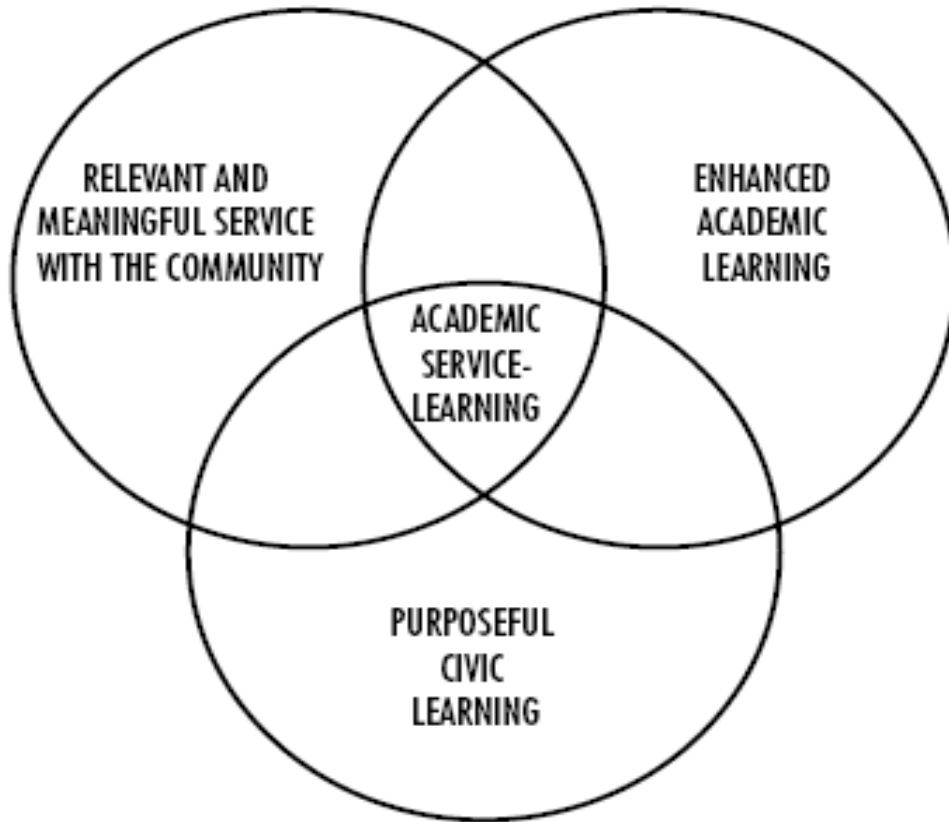








# What kind of college graduate?



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

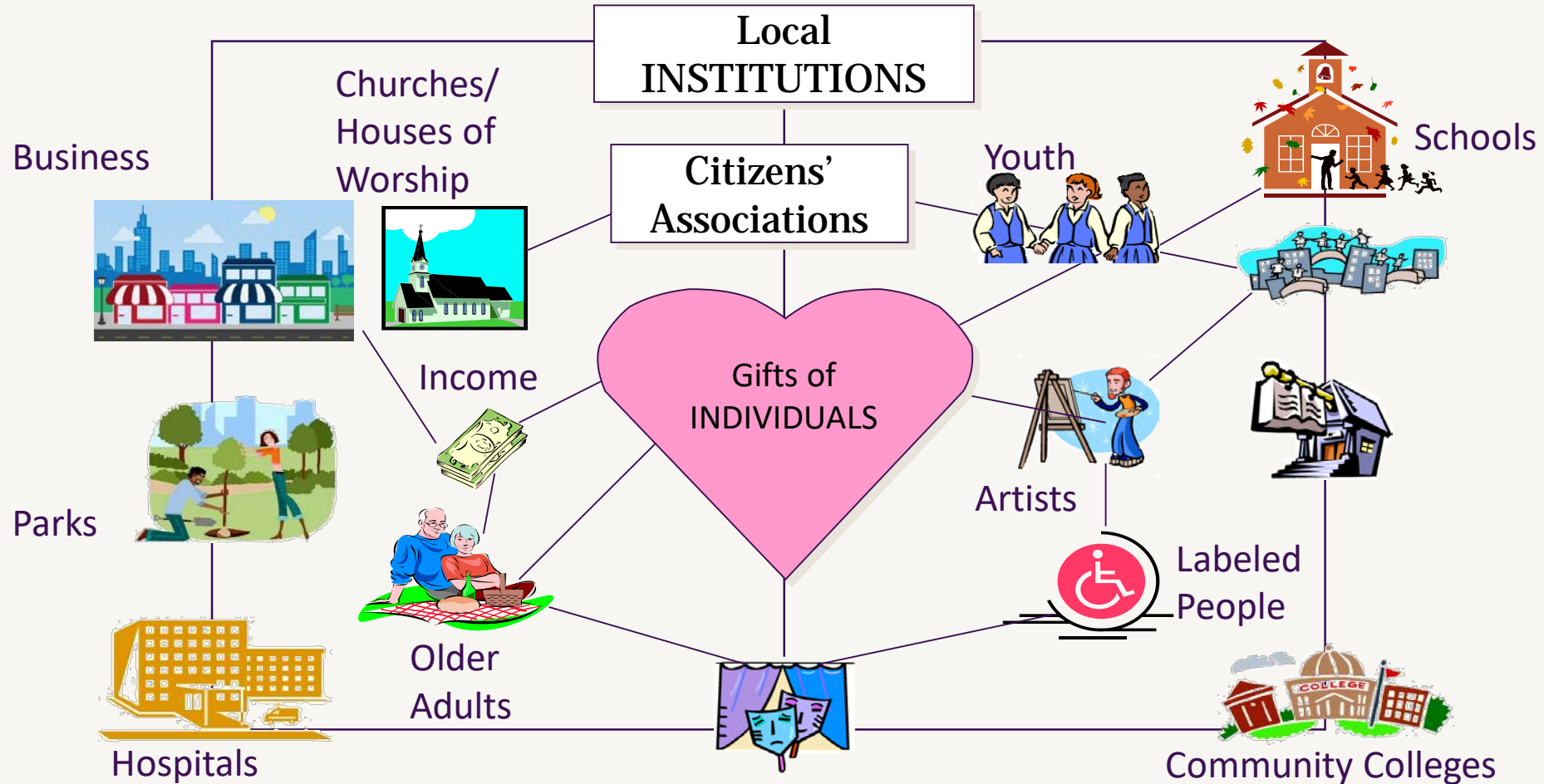




## Mutually Beneficial: Building long-term partnerships



# Asset-based Community Engagement





## Critical Reflective Practice





## Social Justice



## DePaul's service learning program

Direct service/community engagement	Students engage in service that directly benefits a community organization's existing programming (e.g., tutoring, providing health screenings)
Project-based service/community engagement	Students produce a tangible product by the end of the term (e.g., creating a website, PR plan, assessing organizational recruitment strategies).
Community-based research	Students contribute to a research effort defined and driven by a community partner.
Advocacy and Solidarity	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.





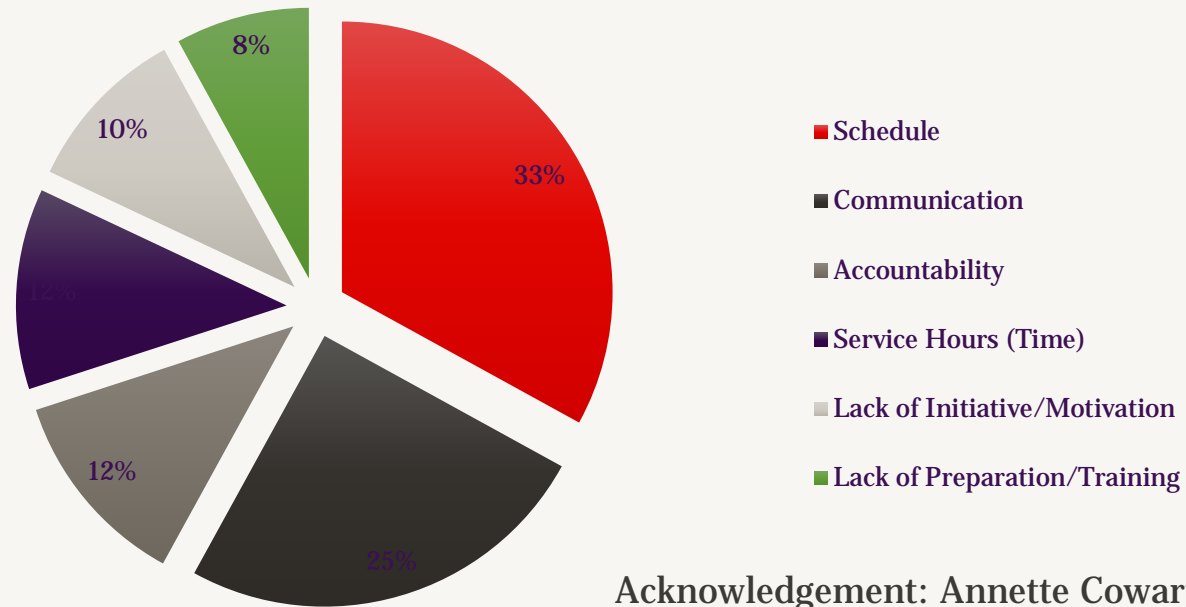
# Addressing the challenges



# Challenges

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

# Community partner dissatisfaction themes DePaul University 2006-2014



Acknowledgement: Annette Cowart  
Gallagher, 2006

# Frequency of student complaints

Type of Criticism	AY 03-04	AY 04-05	AY 05-06	Mean over 3 years
<b>Criticisms of site</b>	134.00	150.00	102.00	128.67
Follow-up	3.00			3.00
Wkshops/ reflections	3.00	9.00	3.00	5.00
Safety	6.00	11.00	6.00	7.67
Transportation	10.00	7.00	9.00	8.67
Start-up		11.00	22.00	16.50
Steans org.	27.00	17.00	28.00	24.00
Busy work	34.00	26.00	28.00	29.33
General organization	32.00	33.00	37.00	34.00
Criticism of course	33.00	29.00	47.00	36.33
Connection to class	61.00	30.00	22.00	37.67
Communications	42.00	30.00	47.00	39.67
Community interact.	39.00	43.00	47.00	43.00
Direction/goals	53.00	31.00	52.00	45.33
Random/?s		54.00	68.00	61.00
<b>Site Choice</b>	71.00	49.00	76.00	65.33
Praise/not Critical/nothing		64.00	84.00	74.00
<b>Scheduling</b>	79.00	75.00	78.00	77.33
<b>TOTAL</b>	627.00	669.00	756.00	684.00

**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?**