Introduction to Community-Engaged Learning

Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) is a form of experiential learning and community-engaged scholarship whereby students actively engage with course content through the combination of collaborations with community and facilitated reflection (known in some disciplines as analysis). The community (both on and off campus) is broadly defined and includes community groups, businesses, governmental and non-governmental agencies, industry, First Nation communities, etc.

At the core of CEL is the reciprocal, mutually beneficial partnership between community, faculty and students. This partnership facilitates an active interchange of knowledge both to the community from the student and to the student from the community. Additionally, the activities in the learning process contribute to community.

There are a number of ways that the engagement between the community, the student and the instructor can happen, including research, projects, outreach, participation, creative activity and business plans. The Spectrum of Engagement (see below) illustrates the levels and types of engagement, and the corresponding levels of reciprocity. The reverse side of this document provides some examples of activity along the spectrum.

Spectrum of Engagement:

- Inform: Students interact with community partners through the exchange of knowledge
- Consult: Students provide research or project support for community partners
- Involve: Students participate in community partner endeavours
- Collaborate: Students and/or faculty develop and implement mutual projects with community partners
- Co-create: Faculty and community partners co-create, co-deliver and co-evaluate community-engaged learning

The level of engagement is negotiated between students, instructors and community partners according to their needs, expectations, and capacity. Details of the CEL initiative, including the responsibilities and desired outcomes of all partners, are co-developed with support from the instructor or the CEL coordinator. For example, a poster presentation done by students as part of a class might be relevant for the outreach program of a community group. In this case, the instructor, student and community group would negotiate the desired deliverable according to course learning objectives and community needs, and the students' work would respond to that agreement.

For instructors, students and community who are interested in CEL, the CEL Office (celc1@uvic.ca or 250-472-5667) is available for support. Some of the key supports the CEL Office provides include: Faculty/Instructor/TA support for embedding CEL in the syllabus and assessment process; community partner identification and relationship development; project planning; student engagement/mentorship; supporting internal and external communications about your initiatives; CEL grants to support integration of CEL into curricula and student participation in CEL; strategic planning; and creating opportunities for instructors, community and students to learn from one another’s CEL experiences.
Examples of Community-Engaged Learning at UVIC

**Inform:** Students deepen their understanding of urban food security during conversations with Mayor Lisa Helps in the Growing Community Class.

**Collaborate:** GEOG 380 Community Mapping – Students support events and eco-cultural restoration activities throughout Greater Victoria.

**Involve:** Through participation in Science Venture, students share their passion for STEM in a reciprocal learning environment with children and youth.

**Co-Create:** Archaeology Field School - Students excavate at an ancient Tseshaht First Nation settlement in the Broken Group Islands unit of Pacific Rim National Park.

**Consult:** Students studying Comparative Electoral Systems hosted community outreach events around electoral reform in BC.