Engaged Teaching & Research Toolkit
University of Central Arkansas
Conway, AR

Dr. Lesley Graybeal
lgraybeal@uca.edu

Dr. Debra Burris
dburris@uca.edu

Dr. Amy Hawkins
aamy@uca.edu
Engaged Teaching & Research Toolkit

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Engaged Teaching & Research Toolkit

Purpose of This Document

The Engaged Teaching & Research Toolkit was developed as part of a workshop presented at the 2016 Gulf South Summit on Service-Learning and Civic Engagement through Higher Education by Dr. Lesley Graybeal, Dr. Amy Hawkins, and Dr. Debra Burris. Drawing upon institutional and division/department policies at UCA and best practices benchmarked at other higher education institutions, this document is intended to assist faculty in articulating the impact of community-engaged teaching, research, and service in their promotion and tenure applications.

Faculty may use a variety of terms to describe community-engaged work in the areas of teaching, research, and service, including service-learning, civic engagement, scholarship of engagement, public scholarship, action research, and many more. This document offers recommendations for how to incorporate a variety of types of community engagement into a promotion and tenure application that provides a unified portrait of an academic career that makes a significant impact on one’s students, one’s field, and one’s local, state, national, and/or global community.

Rationale

Research over the past two decades has built a compelling case that perceived institutional barriers, including lack of recognition of service-learning pedagogy in promotion and tenure decisions, are among the greatest deterrents to faculty use of service-learning (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Hammond, 1994; Morton & Troppe, 1996; Ward, 1998). Furthermore, faculty members perceive these institutional barriers at every stage of implementation of service-learning pedagogy (Hou & Wilder, 2015). Knowing how to design a service-learning experience, then, with an awareness of the promotion and tenure application can help faculty not only create robust community-engaged courses and research projects, but also demonstrate the value of their work for an audience of academic peers.

UCA’s Mission, Vision, and Core Values

UCA’s vision, mission, and core values all explicitly underscore the relationship between the campus, students, and the wider communities in which we live, study, and work. As such, faculty community engagement aligns with this vision and contributes to the success of this mission.

According to the UCA website, the vision of the university is the following (emphasis added throughout):
The University of Central Arkansas aspires to be a premier learner-focused public comprehensive university, a nationally recognized leader for its continuous record of excellence in undergraduate and graduate education, scholarly and creative endeavors, and engagement with local, national, and global communities.

In support of this vision, the University of Central Arkansas has adopted the following mission:

The University of Central Arkansas, a leader in 21st-century higher education, is committed to excellence through the delivery of outstanding undergraduate and graduate education that remains current and responsive to the diverse needs of those it serves. The university’s faculty and staff promote the intellectual, professional, social, and personal development of its students through innovations in learning, scholarship, and creative endeavors. Students, faculty, and staff partner to create strong engagement with the local, national, and global communities. The University of Central Arkansas dedicates itself to academic vitality, integrity, and diversity.

UCA has furthermore adopted four core values: intellectual excellence, community, diversity, and integrity. The UCA website provides the following description of community:

We value and respect as our greatest asset the people who make up our community—students, faculty, and staff, as well as the people connected to us through ties to our local community and region, the state of Arkansas, our nation, and the world. That is, we believe people are the focus of our institution.

Collegiality: We believe in processes of shared decision making based on productive synergistic interactions among our students, faculty, and staff, and disciplines in the pursuit of institutional goals.

Partnerships: We are dedicated to promoting outreach activities, community education, and partnerships with surrounding entities. We believe in collaborating with the citizens of our region, the state, the nation, and the world as well as those organizations and constituents with whom we work.

Safe and Healthy Environment: We promote a safe, healthy, and sustainable environment where our community members can flourish personally and socially as whole beings with obligations to improve their environment.

Service: We believe in sharing our academic and cultural resources and expertise with the public, educational institutions, businesses, cultural centers, and public and non-profit agencies, when appropriate. We work to enable students to integrate into the larger world to promote a commitment to public service through experiential education. Faculty and staff serve our state and local constituents by sharing their energy, talents, and experience.

While the core value of community is clearly relevant to community-engaged faculty, connections can be found between community engagement and other core values as well. The UCA Service-Learning Program, for instance, uses student evaluations and faculty rubrics to assess the impact of the service-learning project on students’ knowledge of the academic discipline, their ability to collaborate with peers, and their understanding of diversity.
Definitions

Community Engagement

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching defines community engagement as "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity." The Carnegie Foundation further elaborates the purpose of community engagement is “to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.”

Service-Learning

UCA has adopted the following definition of service-learning from the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse: “Academic service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” Service-learning, then, narrows community engagement for a specifically pedagogical focus.

Engagement vs. Outreach

Community engagement and community outreach are both valuable enterprises, but while outreach typically seeks to share university resources with the community and disseminate knowledge, engagement is defined by relationships. Community engagement, whether in one’s teaching, research, or service, centers around the establishment and growth of reciprocal partnerships in which the university and community exchange knowledge, skills, and ideas for the benefit of all stakeholders. Such partnerships have the potential to be transformative rather than merely transactional, and often open the door to additional opportunities for engagement. For instance, a partnership between a faculty member and a nonprofit agency for a service-learning course might also lead to a participatory action research project meeting research goals set collaboratively by the faculty member, students, and nonprofit partner.

Rationale

In examining UCA’s mission, vision, and core values, we find evidence for the importance of community engagement to sustaining institutional priorities and achieving institutional goals. No higher education institution can adequately demonstrate its impact on the community without having mechanisms in place that recognize and reward individual faculty for their engagement work. Recognizing faculty community engagement in teaching, research, and service does not only serve UCA’s institutional mission and help to capture UCA’s impact on the community, community engagement in the form of service-learning is also a best practice for improving
student success (Kuh, 2008), and as such should be recognized as an important part of efforts to improve retention and academic outcomes as well.

Resources

In order to do successful community-engaged teaching, research, and service, faculty members need a supportive institutional environment with resources and recognition mechanisms in place for community engagement. To assist faculty in utilizing these resources, we have listed some of UCA’s current resources and recognitions here. If you are aware of others, please contact the Service-Learning Program Coordinator to have them added to this document.

Service-Learning Seed Grants

The Service-Learning Program offers ten $250 seed grants annually to faculty for the development and implementation of service-learning projects. Typically, five grants will be awarded in the fall, and five in the spring/summer. The purpose of these seed grants is to help faculty establish reciprocal partnerships in the community and/or cover start-up expenses for ongoing projects. Complete criteria, application deadlines, and the online application form are available on the Service-Learning Program website.

UCA Foundation Grants

The UCA Foundation provides faculty grants for creative programs. The grants may be for ongoing programs or one-time events and activities, and preference is given to programs that encourage campus and community involvement. More information, application deadlines, and the downloadable application form are available on the UCA Foundation website.

Center for Teaching Excellence Faculty Development Grants

The Center for Teaching Excellence makes grants to faculty from the Faculty Development Fund on a competitive basis multiple times per academic year. Faculty may apply for funds for instructional or curricular development projects, which could include participation in a service-learning workshop or conference, among other projects. Applications are reviewed and grant awards determined by the Faculty Development Committee 10-14 days after each deadline. More information, including the application and deadlines, is available on the CTE website.

University Research Council Grants

The University Research Council provides support for faculty research projects, artistic endeavors, and other forms of creative activities within their disciplines, which could include community-engaged or participatory research as well as community-engaged creative projects. The URC encourages faculty to use funds as seed grants for long-term projects for which external funds will also be sought, and does not fund curriculum development. For complete guidelines and application timelines, please visit the University Research Council website.
External Grants

Faculty members may also have service-learning or community-engaged research projects that are eligible for grants for outreach in a specific discipline, such as STEM fields or the fine arts. Contact Sponsored Programs for assistance locating and applying for external funding for your discipline.

Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program

UCA’s Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program is a campus-wide initiative that includes commitments from the President’s and Provost’s offices, the Center for Teaching Excellence, the Division of Outreach and Community Engagement, and the academic colleges. The Faculty Fellows Seminar is held annually during a five-week summer session and provides faculty an in-depth professional development opportunity to learn how to successfully integrate service into their curricula and ultimately serve as advocates for service-learning at UCA. Additional information and the online application are available on the Service-Learning Program website.

Service-Learning Faculty Practitioner of the Year Award

UCA’s Service-Learning Program presents awards each spring to three outstanding students, one community partner, and one faculty member. The Faculty Practitioner of the Year is recognized for the following criteria:

- Meaningful integration of the service experience with course content (structure of the service experience, selection of community partners, use of critical reflection)
- Consideration of, and ongoing commitment to, the needs of community partner(s)
- Impact of community partnership(s) at UCA or in the local community
- Involvement in service-learning activities and active participation on and off campus
- Fostering reciprocal partnership(s) with community service-learning partner(s)
- Advocating for service-learning on campus and in one’s department
- Enhancing higher education’s contribution to the public good

Criteria and online nomination forms for the Service-Learning Awards are available on the Service-Learning Program website.

UCA Service Excellence Awards

UCA presents three annual awards to faculty for exemplary contributions to teaching; research, scholarship, and creative activities; and public service. While community engagement could certainly be included as evidence of exemplary teaching and scholarship, the Public Service Award provides the most comprehensive opportunity for recognition in this area. According to the Faculty Handbook, the Public Service Award recognizes faculty who, “through service work such as volunteering for charitable organizations, serving on advisory boards, donating professional expertise, serving on committees, and conducting outreach programs...have improved conditions within the community and enhanced the quality of life for all citizens.” More
information on award criteria and nomination forms are available on the Academic Affairs website.

*Thomas Ehrlich Civically Engaged Faculty Award*

The Thomas Ehrlich Civically Engaged Faculty Award is presented annually to a faculty member at a Campus Compact member institution. Applicants must be a senior faculty member (post-tenure or middle-to-late career at institutions without tenure) appointment. The selection criteria include evidence of deeply engaged, high-quality academic work, evidence of community collaboration and change, and evidence of institutional impact. As a Campus Compact member institution, UCA may nominate one faculty member for this award each spring.

**Documentation**

Even in an academic culture that values community engagement, engaged teaching, research, and service must be accurately and comprehensively documented in a way that demonstrates the impact of this work. While institutions and departments may be slow to actively embrace community engagement in promotion and tenure guidelines, documenting community engagement rigorously will assist others in recognizing its value to students, the institution, and the field in addition to the community.

**Teaching**

For many faculty members, their first experience with community engagement is teaching a service-learning course. Whether one’s courses are officially designated as service-learning or not, there are many ways to document the use and impact of community engaged pedagogy.

- **Center the teaching statement around the theme of engagement**, which may include student engagement on campus and with the community.
- **Read department promotion and tenure guidelines** carefully for language referring to student success, student engagement, experiential learning, innovative teaching, and active/participatory teaching and learning, and frame your community engaged teaching using this language.
- **Document the impact that service-learning has on your own students:**
  - Begin with a clear(ish) idea of the impact you want the project to have on students.
  - Document how the service-learning project is integrated into the course in syllabi and course descriptions.
  - Modify course objectives as needed to include the purpose of the service-learning component (e.g., “Development of public scholarship” or “Communication of complex scientific concepts in straightforward terms”).
  - Use pre- and post-project reflective essays for students as well as those impacted by the project.
- Have a service-learning mentor conduct a pre- and post-project interview with you to debrief on how the project went and how it impacted your teaching.

- **Understand and articulate how service-learning aligns with the institutional mission and core values.** Examples of language relevant to community engagement within the core values include:
  - **Core Value: Intellectual Excellence**
    - Educated Citizens: We believe in student success and in preparing students to engage complex issues and express informed opinion through critical thinking, writing, and speech.
    - Cultural Competence: We believe that students should experience cultural activities as they grow in their appreciation for the diversity of ideas and peoples.
  - **Core Value: Community**
    - Partnerships: We are dedicated to promoting outreach activities, community education, and partnerships with surrounding entities. We believe in collaborating with the citizens of our region, the state, the nation, and the world as well as those organizations and constituents with whom we work, both inside and outside the classroom.

- **Discuss professional development related to service-learning that you have participated in.** Some options include:
  - Development of new curriculum/courses: You can start small, use service-learning as a project within an existing course, and then decide how to adjust and/or scale up the project for a new course as needed.
  - Faculty Fellows Program: Faculty from all colleges can apply to this stipend-supported summer program; explore this and other faculty development options through the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE).
  - Service-Learning Awards: Nominate yourself or another faculty member, recognize an outstanding community partner, and/or use as an incentive to reward students and demonstrate the success of a project.
  - Grants to support a service-learning project, including grants from the UCA Service-Learning Program or external funds from foundations, charitable organizations, and/or state agencies.

- **Use service-learning projects as evidence of cross-disciplinary collaboration:** for example, work with a faculty member in a different department to fulfill multiple needs for the same community partner organization.

- **Share student evaluation data,** as service-learning courses tend to receive positive evaluations from students and include the following additional questions:
  - The service-learning portion of this course helped me understand how this academic discipline can serve the needs of the community/nation/world.
  - The service-learning experience helped me achieve course objectives.
  - The service-learning portion of this course helped me understand and appreciate local, national, and/or global diversity.
  - The service-learning portion of this course helped me understand my role as an engaged and informed citizen.
The service-learning portion of this course helped me understand the importance of UCA’s responsibility to help address the needs of the community/nation/world.

The service-learning portion of this course helped me learn to work well with others to achieve common goals.

Research

Many faculty become interested in community engagement because they would like to use service-learning as a teaching and learning strategy, but research represents another significant aspect of the faculty role that can respond to a meaningful community need. Community-engaged research, or scholarship of engagement, may include a range of options depending on both faculty and community partner interests and needs.

- **Participatory action research (PAR)** is a research methodology in which researchers and community partners collaborate to jointly produce knowledge and create change within an organization or a community.
- **Scholarship of teaching and learning** might include presentations or articles outlining the development and implementation of a specific service-learning course as a curricular example, addressing an issue of service-learning pedagogy or theory, or reporting findings about service-learning outcomes for students and/or the community.
- **Co-authored presentations and articles**, regardless of discipline or methodology, may offer an opportunity to add nuance and depth to research findings, as well as to value the expertise of community partners.
- **Research and evaluation deliverables** for community partners are frequently produced by students in research-based service-learning courses, but faculty may also choose to offer such deliverables as a form of reciprocity for a community partner who collaborates on a larger research project.

Service

In addition to teaching and research, the area of service offers opportunities to expand community engagement activities. Below are several types of service activities to consider.

- **Participating in direct service with students / clinical service**: Never underestimate the potential of using your disciplinary “powers” to serve the greater good.
- **Offering professional skills or expertise to a nonprofit community partner**: With limited budgets, many nonprofits cannot afford to obtain professional services ranging from graphic design to website development. Serving as a consultant to a nonprofit organization offers value the organization would not otherwise enjoy.
- **Serving on the board of a nonprofit community partner**: In areas such as accounting and marketing, nonprofit boards are often seeking board members with specific areas of expertise and corresponding skill sets.
On-campus guest lectures or presentations on service-learning: There are ample opportunities on campus to attend, participate in, and even share your experiences with other faculty and staff.

Participation in Outreach events/panels: Gain the bigger picture and impact the larger community by being a part of the ongoing conversation Outreach is facilitating.

Mentoring other faculty in service-learning course development: Beginning a service-learning endeavor is a daunting task; you can provide insight to faculty colleagues who are just starting to plan service-learning activities.

Letters from community partners: Letters documenting service activities can provide support for claims made in your service narrative.

Service-Learning Advisory Committee: Represent your college on the Service-Learning Advisory Committee and be a part of the larger UCA conversation on all things service-learning related.

Evaluation

High Quality Community Engagement

A variety of quality standards are available to serve as benchmarks for community engaged academic work. The National Youth Leadership Council (2008) has established the following evidence-based criteria for high-quality service-learning in the K-12 setting, but which are also relevant to the higher education context:

- Meaningful service
- Reflection
- Youth/student voice
- Progress monitoring
- Link to curriculum
- Diversity
- Partnerships
- Duration and intensity

Michigan State University (2008) offers another set of criteria for high quality community outreach, paraphrased below:

- Concern with access to outreach programs
- Articulation of a focus area
- Scholarly dimensions
- Attention to sustainability, capacity building, and mutually beneficial relationships
- Connection with department- or institution-specific interests or priorities

Different standards may be developed within departments or disciplines, but regardless of the standards used as a benchmark, articulating how one’s own work meets a particular set of standards can provide additional evidence of high quality academic work.
Assessing Impacts of Community Engagement in the Classroom and Community

The UCA Service-Learning Program follows an assessment plan created by the Service-Learning Advisory Committee and reviewed by the Office of the Provost. The assessment plan includes several data sources and types, and measures impacts for the following groups:

- **Students**: Designated service-learning courses have specific service-learning related evaluation questions delivered to students through SmartEvals.
- **Faculty**: Service-learning faculty are asked to use an appropriate reflection artifact from their service-learning courses and the assessment rubric to assess service-learning outcomes. Faculty are also asked to submit their responses to a short survey at the end of each semester in which they teach a service-learning course.
- **Community Partners**: The Service-Learning Program Coordinator follows up with all community partners at the end of each semester to seek their evaluations of the service-learning program.

The assessment plan also includes focus groups of students, faculty, and community partners to be conducted annually. The complete assessment plan is available on the Service-Learning Program website. Institutional data from the assessment plan are available for service-learning faculty members to use in their own research projects upon request.

Designing Community Engagement with Promotion and Tenure in Mind

One of the most important pieces of advice for new tenure-track assistant professors is to begin with the end goal in mind: earning tenure and promotion. Consequently, plan community engagement strategies with that desired outcome at the forefront of decision making. Study closely your department’s tenure and promotion guidelines to determine how to situate community engagement activities. Dialogue with senior faculty members about potential community engagement opportunities. Frame community engagement activities within the larger vision, mission, and values of UCA. Most importantly, say “no” to projects that do not fit into the plan that leads ultimately to being successfully tenured and promoted.

Ethical Considerations in Community-Engaged Research

While community-engaged research can be extremely beneficial to all stakeholders and provide useful avenues for addressing ethical concerns such as reciprocity towards research subjects, it also brings unique challenges in research ethics (see, for example, Anderson, et al., 2012). Some challenges to keep in mind when designing community-engaged research include:

- **Unequal power and access to resources**: Researchers should be sensitive to community partners’ limited resources, particularly time, when requesting documents, data, and research participation.
- **Different types of expertise and communication styles**: The expertise and communication styles of both researchers and community partners should be valued.
- **Risks to communities**: While IRB procedures take measures to protect individual research subjects from harm, community-engaged researchers must also consider the harm that a study may cause to a group or community; for instance, by disrupting the community’s structure or causing disagreement within the group.

- **Control over results and dissemination**: While researchers typically write up results and locate publication outlets, researchers may co-author publications with a community member and should always member-check research results with community partners.

Community-engaged researchers who view their research as being *with* rather than *on* a community partner and who approach research with sensitivity to these issues can produce successful scholarship that demonstrates how academic knowledge can serve the public good.

**Outlets for Publishing Engaged Scholarship**

The following list captures some of the peer-reviewed journals focusing on community-engaged research, including research related to civic engagement and service-learning in higher education. Disciplinary journals are often also receptive to scholarship of engagement, and may publish special issues or sections devoted to service-learning and community engagement.

- [Advances in Service-Learning Research](#)
- [Education, Citizenship, and Social Justice](#)
- [The International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement](#)
- [The Journal for Civic Commitment](#)
- [Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education](#)
- [Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship](#)
- [Journal of Experiential Education](#)
- [Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement](#)
- [Journal of Public Scholarship in Higher Education](#)
- [Journal of Service-Learning in Higher Education](#)
- [Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning](#)
- [Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement](#)
- [Reflections](#)

In addition to peer-reviewed research journals, [Compact Current](#), a newsletter published by Campus Compact, and the [Community Works](#) online magazine are two publication options for community-engaged researchers and educators.
References and Resources

Guides and Toolkits


References


Appendices

Case Statement for Departments
Example Community-Engaged CVs and P&T Applications