Community-responsive capstone courses: Lessons from public policy and health behavior

ESC 2019

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Overview of session

• Introductions
• What’s a community-responsive capstone course?
  – Health behavior at UNC-CH
  – Public policy at UNC-CH
• What we’ve learned and common tensions
• Small group workshops
• Share out and discussion
Who’s in the room?

And why?
What’s a community-responsive capstone course?
What’s a community-responsive capstone course?

• A “hybrid high-impact pedagogy” (Bringle, 2017) – combining community-based learning/service-learning and capstone experiences to respond to a specific community request.

• Service-learning = field-based experiential learning with community partners... give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community (Kuh, 2008)
  (1) Traditional (volunteerism)
  (2) Project-based
  (3) Research-based
What’s a community-responsive capstone course?

- **Capstone** = culminating experiences require students ... to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they’ve learned (Kuh, 2008)

- “Community-responsive” – responding to request; engaged but not (necessarily) community-based
Testimonial!

Seth Saeugling
Co-Founder,
Rural Opportunity
Institute

HB Capstone Preceptor
2018-2019 &
2019-2020
Closer look: Health Behavior Capstone in the Gillings School of Global Public Health

- Latest iteration of **77 years of community-engaged field training**
- Who we work with: **nonprofits, health departments, local governments**; many areas (e.g., aging, children, food, rural economic development, health policy)
- Standard projects assessment, program development, and program evaluation
- **Roles**: architect, builder, inspector, developer analogy
- **Class content**: reflection sessions and team time only
• **Part of PP major** since inception; revamped in 2015

• Who we work with: *local government agencies*, *nonprofits* with 3-5 staff members, many areas (e.g., youth development, environment, health, economic development)

• Standard projects engage various points in policy-making process: *problem definition*, envisioning *new programs*, or *program evaluation*

• **Class content** includes professionalism, project management, data visualization, giving/receiving feedback, effective presentations...

• Importance of *on-campus partnerships*
Quick look at our examples from UNC-Chapel Hill

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<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of students</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Number of partners</strong></td>
<td>8-13</td>
<td>12-18 (per semester)</td>
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<td><strong>Credits</strong></td>
<td>6 (over two semesters)</td>
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<td>3 (Faculty, TAs)</td>
<td>3-7 (Faculty, TAs, Prof. staff)</td>
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<td><strong>Student team size</strong></td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>4-6</td>
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<td><strong>Partner involvement</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td><strong>Faculty involvement</strong></td>
<td>Formal advising</td>
<td>Consultation, as needed</td>
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What do you think would be best practices?
What we think works well

- Project selection – explicit criteria
- Instructional team – safety net
- MOU and work plan
- Support – focus on teambuilding and project management

- Feedback (360 evaluation)
- Public presentations
- Maintained relationships
- Culture of department
Common tension points

• How much risk do we take with projects that are exciting but unformed?
• What is the student identity? (Consultants, interns, employees, volunteers, or activists?)
• How do we manage student expectations?
• How does community partner input get factored in?
• How much does department/school/etc. value this work? Will it bring forward adequate resources?
Workshop

How could we address these tensions?

- **How much risk** do we take with projects that are exciting but unformed?
- What is the **student identity**? (Consultants, interns, employees, volunteers, or activists?)
- How do we manage **student expectations**?
- How does **community partner input** get factored in?
- How **much does department/school/etc. value** this work? Will it bring forward **adequate resources**?
Share back

What of this has been most useful?
What question was raised through this session that you hope to continue to consider?
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