

Proposed

Civic Engagement Student Learning Outcomes

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**Authored By the Civic Engagement Faculty Learning Community
-Sponsored Project of the Pew Faculty Teaching and Learning Center**

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Civic Engaged Student Learning Outcomes

In an effort to support the academic endeavors of civic engagement and community based learning at GVSU, the following pages include a summary of proposed **Student Learning Outcomes** (SLO).

These specific outcomes were compiled by an interdisciplinary group of faculty representing both the liberal arts and sciences as well as the professional schools. This work is shared with the GVSU community for the sole purpose of supporting preparation of students for a life of educated citizenship. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to consider these outcomes when planning learning experiences within courses as well as in the broad arena of student life at Grand Valley.

Our perspective recognizes the impact of civic learning and the necessity of inspiring students to align benevolent intentions with deep knowledge of context, history and policy. This knowledge balanced with skill, values, and awareness facilitates student growth and engagement. Our work relies upon respect for students as responsible citizens, catalysts for creating change in their own environments. At GVSU we aspire to teach students not only through formal curricula but also by engaging in the values and practices required to sustain democracy.

Tufts model, with four categories of Student Learning Outcomes, is adapted to the GVSU context. The model identifies categories of Civic Knowledge, Skills, Values, and Awareness, each organized by dimensions of scope for specific outcomes. For each category, we also add a list of Tools that offer practical learning approaches for realizing and assessing the SLOs. The Tools will vary and become relevant depending on how academic discipline and intellectual traditions choose to engage students in civic learning. (http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/wp-content/uploads/learning_outcomes_13.pdf)

Student Learning Outcomes

Civic Knowledge: Develops intellectual abilities to engage in building democratic societies		
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes 	Tools
Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate understandings and intellectual skills for-preparation for active participation in the community • Understand the conceptual/structural organization of societies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understand the social, economic, historical, cultural and political contexts of democratic foundations ○ Understand role and impact of government and public policy on society ○ Understand structures of capitalism, and the roles of nonprofits and citizen groups on the organization of societies • Reframe existing ways of seeing and doing by creating meaning and internalizing knowledge essential to building democratic societies 	<p>Collecting, managing and analyzing primary and secondary sources of information, including ethnography and first-hand observations, lab data, and archival resources</p> <p>Comparing and contrasting</p> <p>Literature reviews of disciplinary theory and frameworks</p> <p>Evaluating knowledge sources</p> <p>Problem solving</p>
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply discipline specific approaches and theories to civic engagement/community-based experiences. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate understanding of concepts and principles underlying systems of reasoning • Analyze the limitations and implications of ideas. • Evaluate context in problem solving processes • Identify multiple approaches for prioritizing and solving the problem within the given context 	<p>Concept maps</p> <p>Learning dyads</p> <p>Teaching others</p> <p>Linking pedagogy/PBL</p>
Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use disciplinary and civic knowledge to engage, assess, design, implement and evaluate community 	

	<p>action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage problem solving around community challenges considering social, economic, historical, cultural and political contexts. Contribute to civic solutions 	
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Civic Skills: Demonstrates proficiency in the skills of active citizenship through training or experience		
Domain	Outcomes	Tools
Planning/Implementation/Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate situation learning and critical thinking, recognizing the significance of reciprocity and mutuality develop abilities to conduct a needs assessment develop and/or practice skills to engage in community problem solving develop abilities to incorporate evaluation activities to determine successful achievement of goals, sustain civic engagement and future planning 	Community-based research Reflection assignments Needs assessment Grant writing activities Collaborative projects
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in dialogue with constituents Improve communication skills across settings/disciplines/cultures Develop reflection skills in order to challenge priori assumptions and examine causality Develop effective oral and written communication skills to share information with individuals, groups and the public Facilitate and participate in constructive dialogue grounded in research, science, and knowledge 	
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perfect/practice discipline specific skills and professional competencies in a variety of settings Inspire or facilitate others to build democratic societies demonstrate leadership in groups and organizations 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop skills to have a positive impact on local and global communities • Develop abilities to interact with teams and groups 	
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Civic Values: Possesses motivations, values ethics to effectively participate in building democratic societies		
Scope	Outcomes	Tools
Grounding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop values and ethics to effectively participate in building democratic societies and communities • Develop personal and intellectual curiosity • Reflect on and evaluate the importance of reciprocal relationships with community members. • Value and defer to strengths of community lifeways 	Community based inquiry Ethical Standards and professional values Journaling Self-reflection Focus groups Communication Skill Development
Responding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on disciplinary knowledge with understanding and analysis of civic engagement • Value interpersonal relationships and accommodate opposing points of view in order to build democratic societies • Work toward peace, equity and justice • Apply professional ethics when engaging with communities 	

Committing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, clarify and reinforce use of self through civic engagement • Engage personal value system to create a just and democratic world • Nurture citizenship and participation in the community 	
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Civic Awareness: Awareness of self, including empathy with individuals and communities, power and privilege as citizen in democracy		
Scope	Outcomes	Tools
Self-Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand one's own identity and background in relationship to self and others • Consider and explore values, motivations, and passions when working to create change in society • Recognize and address perception and personal bias 	Reflective Practice Build self-efficacy Deep listening
Empathy & Understanding of Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish and relate with individual identities and backgrounds different from own • Appreciate and articulate influences that shape life experiences including structural inequalities and power differential • Integrate a culturally empathic posture 	Dialogue
Cultural Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibly engages with community, societal and global values • Functions effectively in a pluralistic society • Embrace cultural humility as a lifelong process. 	

Future Plans Civic Engagement

Members of the CE FLC plan to share this work in Fall 2017. Additional plans include:

- an outreach project in which each academic unit on campus will have the opportunity to consider their current use of CE student learning outcomes. The above document will build in live web links to descriptions of coursework activities that support student attainment of the specific SLO.
- Panel presentation and discussion with historic leaders at GVSU, sharing examples of structural civic partnerships and academic units at GVSU.
- Continued opportunity for faculty discussion related to integration of CE SLO.

History and Context of Civic Engagement at GVSU

I. Public Education rooted in Democracy

America, founded in an inherent belief in democratic equality, requires that education prepare youth for competent citizenship in society. Citizen training and the creation of the early “common schools” situated education as a way to grow citizens of the republic, required for its early survival. Education aimed at improving social mobility allows individuals to seek and secure educational opportunities for their social and economic benefits (Larrabee, 1997).

Early 19th century efforts requiring all children to have seats in publicly funded schools for elementary education soon expanded to include high school. After World War II, access to higher education became a larger emphasis (Larabee, 1990). The GI Bill became law on June 22, 1944, providing educational benefits for returning soldiers, expanding once again access to education across social class. The civil rights movement of the 1960’s called into question issues of access for women and racial minority groups. While early higher educational institutions in the US modeled themselves after their European counterparts, the creation of public institutions of higher education in the US codified ideals supporting access, academic freedom, and a commitment to social responsibility.

Today within the spectrum of private liberal arts colleges, large research institutions and regional comprehensive universities, the intrinsic tensions between educating for the professions, research, and traditional liberal arts are still alive and well. President Truman’s Commission on Higher Education in 1947, charged with the first full scale examination of the state of higher education in the U.S revealed strength and challenges. This work further solidified the future of collegiate learning as central to democratic values and purposes, stating that educating for democracy “should come first...among the principal goals for higher education.”

A. Grand Valley State University

The existence of educational needs, warranting the creation of a regional university near Grand Rapids, resulted in the inception of Grand Valley State University as an institution in Allendale Michigan. Created in 1960, the core value of public ownership in higher education was codified into original charters, structures, fundraising, geography, and governance. Community partnerships guided the societal, economic, and cultural benefits of education in and for the community of West Michigan.

[\(https://www.gvsu.edu/anniversary/history-colleges-history-1958-1963-13.htm\)](https://www.gvsu.edu/anniversary/history-colleges-history-1958-1963-13.htm)

The academic history at GVSU formed in the liberal arts tradition, quickly expanded to include professional education. By 1968 general education requirements were approved, working to insure a liberal arts foundation for all students. GVSU’s selected Arend Lubbers as its second president. Named one of the one hundred most important young men and women in the U.S. in 1962 by Life magazine, sharing the honor with luminaries including Edward Albee, Ted Sorenson, John Updike and others, President Lubbers partnered with visionary Grand Rapids community leaders in West Michigan to create the foundation for Grand Valley today. As the growing faculty and leadership debated the direction of GVSU during the social upheaval occurring during the late 1960’s,

Lubbers chose to frame the problem in terms of academic relevance during his inaugural address,

"I am not here to take sides," he declared. "I see the office of president of a college as a place where the inevitable human conflicts are arbitrated and issues settled. Let me bring some issues to bear to illustrate what I mean. I have been told by some that this college must choose between liberal arts and specialized or technical training. How many colleges have been fooled or pushed into a bifurcation of this issue? Is this college to take up the sword for liberal arts while ignoring a society that demands from its schools the trained personnel to keep our economy alive? Or are we to man the barricades for technical training at the expense of educating the critical and historically conscious minds that a healthy democracy demands? I will endorse neither such approach. This college was built on a solid liberal arts basis and there it will stay."

[\(https://www.gvsu.edu/anniversary/history-colleges-history-1964-1969-26.htm\)](https://www.gvsu.edu/anniversary/history-colleges-history-1964-1969-26.htm)

During the 1970's GVSU Institutes were established with strong community involvement in Environmental and Urban Studies, International Studies, Educational Studies and Religion Studies. This connection to creating and providing education grounded in community realities continues today. Between 1970 and 1990, GVSU encountered what has been described as a "near death" experience. Recession and drops in student enrollment demanded that GVSU revisit its structure and financial realities. Upon reorganization, which included drastic cuts, enrollments began to rise again, and by the mid-1990s Grand Valley was regularly included on rankings of America's 100 Best College Buys, and by 2000 had become the fastest growing university in Michigan. Efforts within the university to connect to the larger community, national issues, and global concerns are evident within colleges, and beyond campus geography. Sustainability, global studies, design thinking, study abroad, information technology, online learning are only a few examples of high impact initiatives reliant upon innovation. These efforts are tightly bound to emerging challenges in society. [\(https://www.gvsu.edu/anniversary/history-colleges-history-1981-2000-28.htm\)](https://www.gvsu.edu/anniversary/history-colleges-history-1981-2000-28.htm)

II. Education to Strengthen Democracy: A Crucible Moment

Formal conversations across campus at GVSU regarding the role of universities in democracy were re-invigorated in 2012, as many institutions across America reflected on their broad mission and vision. National conversations centered on the publication and Call for Action published by the American Association of Colleges and Universities in the revised and updated publication of The Crucible Moment. *For reference to this work, please see text below from the AAC&U website*

"This report from the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement calls on the nation to reclaim higher education's civic mission. Commissioned by the Department of Education and released at a White House convening in January 2012, the report pushes back against a prevailing national dialogue that limits the mission of higher education to workforce preparation and training while marginalizing disciplines basic to democracy..."

A Crucible Moment calls on educators and public leaders to advance a 21st century vision of college learning for all students—a vision with civic learning and democratic engagement an expected part of every student's college education. (<https://www.aacu.org/crucible>):

Campus Compact, a national organization states their mission as follows:

“Campus Compact advances the public purposes of colleges and universities by deepening their ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility. Campus Compact envisions colleges and universities as vital agents and architects of a diverse democracy, committed to educating students for responsible citizenship in ways that both deepen their education and improve the quality of community life. We challenge all of higher education to make civic and community engagement an institutional priority.”
(<http://compact.org/who-we-are/mission-and-vision/>)

A Crucible Moment charges the nation's colleges and universities to:

- Develop cohesive, intentional strategies for fostering democratic engagement and civic learning across an institution's culture, structures, and learning environments.
- Prepare students, regardless of discipline, to be civic problem solvers by embedding the goals of civic literacy, civic inquiry, and civic action into their college experiences.
- Develop a robust schema of civic learning that supports a central priority of educating students to be what A Crucible Moment calls “knowledgeable, public spirited, and engaged” citizens who “rehearse citizenship daily” (p. 2). This explicitly acknowledges that offering one civic experience is not the same as developing a pervasive strategy of civic learning.
- Differentiate community service from civic learning. Some engaged learning strategies, such as service-learning, might enhance civic learning as one part of an integrated program of civic learning.
- Develop transformative partnerships— domestic and international—with the institution's wider community. Such partnerships are critical to rallying diverse stakeholders around public problems, thus converting civic knowledge into civic action.

<http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Praxis.pdf>)

III. Recent Context of Civic Engagement GVSU

Efforts to explore and reclaim a civic mission at GVSU have taken many forms in a variety of places across campus. A sample of GVSU activities and efforts since 2012 include the following summary:

- Most centrally in 2012-2013 a large group of faculty and staff came together in a group, calling themselves the **Big Tent**, working to define terms like civic engagement and community-based learning at Grand Valley.
- This group evolved into the current **Civic Engagement Collective**, and the leadership of this group is currently writing the **Civic Action Plan** in response to

President Haas signing the **Campus Compact 30th Anniversary Action Statement on Civic Engagement in 2016**. <http://compact.org/actionstatement/>

- Leadership across Student affairs, Inclusion and Equity including changes at the **Community Service Learning Center** has increased their focus on civil discourse, civic engagement and sustainable partnerships. <https://www.gvsu.edu/service/>
- The College of Community and Public Service hired an Assistant Dean, who directs the **Office for Community Engagement**, which works closely with the Michigan Campus Compact. This leadership position will move to the Provost Office beginning 2017. This work includes a variety of campus wide efforts including facilitation of partnerships and communication within and outside the university, and a grant program to grow **Engaged Departments**. <https://www.gvsu.edu/community/>
- The **Strategic Plan 2016-2021** incorporates a number of goals and objectives related to civic engagement, and community based learning, utilizing terms and definitions clarified within the civic engagement constituency groups.
<https://www.gvsu.edu/strategicplanning/>
- In 2016, President Thomas J. Haas signed Campus Compact's 30th Anniversary Action Statement of Presidents and Chancellors, committing GVSU to creating and implementing a Civic Action Plan. Over the past few months, more than 75 faculty, staff, students, and community members have come together in teams to develop the plan, articulating a framework, outcomes, and action steps to help us achieve the public purposes of our university.
- Both the **Pew FTLC and Center for Scholarly and Creative Excellence** clarified and fortified support for faculty interested in community based teaching and scholarship, with designated grant money and Faculty Fellow time allotted for the support of faculty working with CBL. <http://www.gvsu.edu/ftlc/civic-engagement-201.htm> ;
<https://www.gvsu.edu/csce/>
- With the support of the Pew FTLC, multidisciplinary faculty formed and sustained a learning community for 5 semesters beginning in 2013 entitled "**Community as Classroom FLC**", hosting training, discussion, and authoring a best practice document for GVSU faculty. This group also served as a sounding board for strategic planning efforts related to civic engagement and community based learning.
 - The proposal in Fall 2015 to University Curriculum Committee to create the **Community Based Learning Designation** for courses in Banner was created within this group.
 - Currently, the Pew FTLC is supporting a separate **Civic Engagement Faculty Learning Community, which is working to propose student-learning outcomes** available for use by faculty teaching civic engagement, and or community based learning.

Community Based Learning

Within the umbrella of Civic Engagement broadly defined, a specific focus has been given to the work of community-based learning in academic coursework. Within this

pedagogy, GVSU embraces the value of high impact teaching practices as outlined by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).
https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/HIP_tables.pdf

Resources directed to undergraduate research, first year seminars, capstone courses, writing intensive courses and global learning are all familiar examples of GVSU's support of these high impact practices. The work related to community-based learning is grounded in this framework.

It is important to note that many colleges and departments at GVSU have historically offered and supported community-based learning in courses at GVSU. It is not unusual to find examples of sustained partnerships with national and international community members that have been in place for 10-15 years. While these courses and partnerships are scattered across the campus, perhaps unknown to one another, these community relationships are deeply rooted and a source of pride for many faculty, staff, students, alumni as well as academic departments. While the practices surrounding these endeavors may have been informally implemented, they likely incorporate the following CBL criteria, as each piece ensures the sustainability of that partnership.

1. **Learning objectives:** The learning objectives in the syllabus articulate the types of interaction with the community partner, as well as listing potential partners.
2. **Application and integration:** Guided by their instructor and working with a community partner, students engage with a community issue, integrating theory and practice.
3. **Reciprocity:** The community experience seeks to offer value to the community partner as well as to the students.
4. **Reflection:** Students participate in an articulated reflection process around the community experience including the ethical, professional, and civic dimensions of the experience.

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