Effective practices for Community-Engaged Learning

A short list of practices to make your CEL course as ethical and effective as possible:

- Include an explanation of the CEL dimension of the course in **your syllabus,** including how CEL will help advance the larger goals of the course and how it will be valued in the grading system. Here's a Bates example.
- Ground the CEL in **an assets-based approach** (rather than a deficit-focused one) to the off-campus community.
    - For more on this, check out this short article about Community Cultural Wealth.
        - NOTE: Harward Center staff would be delighted to do a quick presentation and discussion on this topic with your students.
- **Scaffold the CEL into your course** through a series of assignments with deadlines. For example:
    - "Complete a Site Preference Google Form by x date."
    - "Peruse your community partner's website and take notes about their mission, goals, and primary programs; jot down questions, concerns, affirmations, etc."
    - "Complete your first CEL visit (or first stage of CEL research) by x date."
    - Here's a Bates example.
- **Integrate reflection on CEL experiences** into the class through regularly scheduled, in-class activities. For example:
    - A 5-minute Pair Share, ideally followed by a 5-10 minute full-class discussion of insights/themes from the Pair Share
    - A Peaks + Valleys exercise that invites students to identify a recent high point and low point of their CEL experience
    - A no/low-stakes writing exercise responding to a prompt
    - You can also check out this nifty resource from the Harward Center for your use.
    - Or invite us to lead reflection in your class if you'll be gone for any reason.
- **Establish and return periodically to a metanarrative** about the CEL in your course.
    - Why are you asking students to do CEL in this course? (What is your "why"?)
    - What are you hoping they will get out of the experience?
    - How can negative or disappointing CEL experiences be just as valid from a learning standpoint as positive ones?
- Remember that at the heart of CEL is **a twofold commitment** — to student learning and community benefit/well-being, as defined or affirmed by community. If you're ever concerned that one might be outweighing the other, we're always available as thought partners and to support in managing partnerships.
- Your **students crave connection to their community partner**. If your CEL is low-connection in nature, let us brainstorm ideas for enhancing connection. Students will thank you!
- **Set aside 10-15 minutes in one of your final classes for in-class completion of the online CEL survey.** We will send it to you. Your course-based survey results will be seen only by you and Harward Center staff who support CEL.

Finally, don't forget that **the Harward Center is here to support you, your students, and your community partner(s)**. The sooner we know what you need or what challenges you or your students are facing in their CEL, the better, so please don't hesitate to reach out to us: Ellen Alcorn - ealcorn@bates.edu, Morgan Kinney - mkinney2@bates.edu, Darby Ray - dray3@bates.edu. Thank you!