WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

Civic engagement is a pedagogical learning experience within an academic course. It encompasses a broad range of ways (applied learning activities) that courses may engage students in learning about and taking action for the public good. The applied learning activity is directed toward the achievement of course learning objectives and also toward making meaningful contributions through collaborative active participation.

The applied learning activity is used to clarify, illustrate, challenge, or stimulate additional thought about the topics covered in the classroom. Structured written and/or oral reflection ties the applied experiences to the academic content of the course and also provides students with the opportunity to develop or strengthen their awareness of the relationship between the course material and societal needs, a service ethic, and their role as citizens.

The applied learning activity could take on a variety of forms. Examples may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Collaborative work that builds public consensus on a particular topic
- Community-based research
- Community outreach and education
- Direct service to a specific community
- Organization for action on relevant topics, such as social, health, safety, or environmental issues
- Policy analysis
- Program assessment and improvement of community resources
The applied learning activity should correspond with and must be appropriate to the student's level of academic preparation. If off the University’s campus, activities should take place only at sites approved by the instructor and under contract with the University in accordance with University risk management procedures.

STUDENT BENEFITS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE LEARNING

- Enhance both student academic development as well as their readiness to take up their responsibilities as adult members of a democracy
- Develop stronger relationships with faculty and the community
- Improve students’ satisfaction with college
- Increase likelihood of graduation
- Academic Improvement:
  - Information literacy
  - Fundamental understanding of civic involvement and improved sense of efficacy
  - Understanding of the connection between university and public life
  - Improved academic engagement
  - Positive perceptions of self individually and within society

SIX PILLARS OF AN “S”-DESIGNATED COURSE

1. Academic inquiry and active engagement focused on application of course work to applied practice and contemporary public issues
2. Emphasis in active learning in diverse environments
3. Explicit learning objectives and explanation in the syllabus of the role of the applied activity in attaining those objectives
4. Preparation in class for the applied learning activity to increase the students’ understanding of the community context that the students will be entering, needs and issues they may encounter, and standards of conduct expected of them.
5. Ongoing, structured, critical reflection with regular instructor feedback that ties the applied experience with the academic course content, thus enhancing both
6. A plan for sustainability and departmental support for offering this civic engagement course on a continuing basis (e.g. Department Chair’s support)

APPENDIX
A. CSU, Chico Executive Memorandum 11-046 (Policy on Risk Management Issues Related to Service Learning)

Definitions:

1. Civic Engagement, also known as Community Engagement, is “…the collaboration between higher education institutions 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.”

   a. 1.1 Community Service is “any work provided by individuals that contributes to the quality of life in the community. Community service work can be provided in several ways and for different purposes. Students may be involved in community service on their own, with a group or club, or through academic course work. When the community service is part of the academic course work, and when the service relates directly to the course content, it is considered service learning.”

   b. 1.1.1 Service Learning is “a teaching method that promotes student learning through active participation in meaningful and planned service experiences in the community that are directly related to course content. Through reflective activities, students enhance their understanding of course content, general knowledge, sense of civic responsibility, self-awareness, and commitment to the community.”

   c. 1.1.1.1. Civic Learning is a form of service learning that emphasizes active participation in efforts by members of a community to work together to make public decisions and establish public policies.

B. CSU, Chico University Strategic Priority

Policy

1. Believing in the importance of civic engagement for both individual fulfillment and the institutional commitment to serving the public good, we will educate generations of civically engaged, informed, and active students. We will engage students, faculty, staff, and community members through curricular and co-curricular experiences that actively involve them with the communities and the issues of the North State and beyond.

2. California State University, Chico recognizes the development of civically engaged and minded students, from a diversity of backgrounds and experience levels, as central to their broader education and effective participation in a democratic society. We recognize that dialogue between campus and community is beneficial for learning and community building. As an institution of higher education we are committed to the development of student agency. Through active engagement with our local and North State communities, our students will realize the benefits of these experiences in their lives and careers beyond their time with us.