Proposal for Community Engagement Faculty Learning Community
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The Community Engagement Faculty Learning Community (FLC) will facilitate faculty development relating to credit-bearing, experiential learning opportunities including, but not limited to, community-based learning, service-learning, project-based learning, and global service-learning programs. Recent campus events such as the RWUFA Faculty Showcase and the Community Partnership Center (CPC) year-end celebration indicate that the number of faculty teaching existing courses with a Community Engagement component is considerable. The continued growth of the CPC and the university’s recent emphasis on project-based learning are likely to further stimulate faculty interest and engagement in these types of learning opportunities. To this end, the Community Engagement FLC provides faculty with an opportunity to define the standards, expectations, and goals of community-engaged curriculum at RWU.

Community Engagement refers to “the 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”.¹ The proposed FLC seeks to enhance the quality of academic, credit-bearing Community Engagement opportunities at Roger Williams through faculty learning and collaboration. Through the FLC, we hope to create a model (or models) for developing new and refining existing credit-bearing Community Engagement opportunities across all RWU disciplines and programs. We view the dissemination and sustainability of the FLC initiatives as keys to the success of the program.

Currently, faculty interested in developing courses that incorporate Community Engagement components lack resources and mentoring to do so. Community Engagement courses require a unique set of faculty skills and techniques to maximize the educational experience for the students. Additionally, faculty must also learn how to build and maintain collaborative interactions with community partners to ensure the collaboration is reciprocal and mutually beneficial. In light of these particular needs for the effective delivery of Community Engagement courses, the proposed FLC seeks to accomplish the following goals:

1. Explore the feasibility of commonly shared learning goals for what students should gain from Community Engagement courses, and how they might be assessed, across the university.
2. Investigate best practices of peer and aspirant institutions to build resources that will assist faculty in effectively integrating community engagement within new and existing courses.
3. Develop model(s) for Community Engagement curricula that can be applied to any discipline or program at RWU, and which encourages and supports interdisciplinary curricula.
4. Establish tools for ongoing communication and collaboration amongst faculty with shared interests in Community Engagement opportunities,

To achieve these goals, the FLC will engage in several types of activities. The primary focus of the activities will be the professional development of the faculty participating in the FLC. Additionally, we will plan activities to facilitate the sustainability of the Community Engagement initiative. We anticipate that these will include but not be limited to:

2. Faculty attendance at conferences and seminars on Community Engagement initiatives.
3. Collaborative exchanges with university-wide programs and departments including the CPC, The Feinstein Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement, The Spiegel Center for Global and International Programs, as well as academic departments and programs, to develop recommendations for the effective delivery of Community Engagement experiences at RWU.
4. A survey of existing Community Engagement learning opportunities at RWU. This will be used to establish an interactive database of Community Engagement courses and faculty.
5. Curriculum development, by engaging each faculty enrolled in the FLC in the development or revision of a credit-bearing Community Engagement course of their choice (to be completed by the end of the program).
6. Dissemination of the collected findings, results, and products of the FLC to the university community.

¹ Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
http://classifications.carnegiefoundations.org/descriptions/community_engagement.php