ACES

Academic Community-Engaged Scholarship

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
Naming and Claiming:

Making space for community-engaged scholarship

To name and claim community-engaged scholarship at Duquesne University, we look to our experienced community-engaged colleagues at the University and to the national dialogue about engaged scholarship. ACES makes space for these resources to coalesce. Hosted by faculty, highlighting innovative CES projects, and co-sponsored by Academic Community Engagement and the Office of Research, ACES gatherings encourage the development of a community of engaged scholars at Duquesne.

The Faculty Handbook (2012, p. 3) relates scholarship as an expectation of Duquesne faculty and goes on to describe how scholarship (along with teaching and service) is oriented to benefit the communities the University serves: “a basic goal of Duquesne University is to support a community dedicated to the discovery, enhancement, and communication of knowledge and to the free and diligent pursuit of truth, in order to provide society with men and women able and willing to act as wise, creative, and responsible leaders.”

Thus, at Duquesne, community-engaged scholarship could be described as the discovery, enhancement, communication of knowledge, and pursuit of truth in mutually-beneficial collaboration with the larger community in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching defines community engagement as “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.”
The relationship and difference between service-learning and community-engaged scholarship

Though community-engaged scholarship and service-learning are both forms of academic community engagement, they are not synonymous.

At Duquesne, service-learning is defined as a teaching method that combines meaningful service, critical reflective thinking, and academic instruction to enhance student learning and social responsibility. Designated service-learning classes are offered at the undergraduate level.

Community-engaged scholarship is not a teaching method, but an orientation that generally describes community-based inquiry that may, or may not, include students at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Certainly, within Duquesne’s teacher-scholar model, service-learning and community-engaged scholarship can enliven one another. A faculty person can use these activities to thread community engagement throughout his or her teaching, research, and service.

The relationship between the two lies in their undergirding values: participation in and with the larger communities of which Duquesne is a part, reciprocity as a means and end of collaborative work, responsible action that is achieved by working with partners to align university efforts with the community’s agenda and vision rather than insert our own, and an orientation toward systemic change as Duquesne is a Spiritan Catholic institution that seeks to be an agent of justice in this world.

In the fall 2012 Duquesne Magazine, President Charles Dougherty writes, “As a Spiritan institution, we are uniquely positioned for leadership in community-engaged scholarship.”

Let us consider two scenarios: one that can be labeled service-learning and one that can be labeled community-engaged scholarship:

Scenario A: Students enrolled in an undergraduate education class are given their first introduction to teaching by working in a local community devoid of formal schools. They develop reading circles at an out-of-school evening program. They reflect on the role of literacy and educational achievement within class assignments, drawing examples from their service-learning experience.

Scenario B: A faculty person works with the providers of an out-of-school program to understand the reading habits (daily news, children’s books, magazines, fiction novels, online publications, etc.) of its families and the link between family literacy habits and youth reading comprehension. The results of their study are used to design curriculum that encourages child and adult at-home reading. Faculty, out-of-school providers, and the faculty’s doctoral students collaboratively developed the study design, means of data collection, and analysis.

Questions for consideration:

Within the first example, is the faculty member engaged in scholarship?

Might the work of the doctoral students be service-learning? What would make it so?

How might undergraduate students be included in the second scenario?

How does the difference between skilled and unskilled student contributions influence the type of engagement that is possible?

Do the labels of service-learning and community-engaged scholarship change if it is the same faculty person in Scenario A and Scenario B?

Is it still community-engaged scholarship if community is seen as “client” rather than partner?
Thank you for joining us at ACES (Academic Community-Engaged Scholarship). For many reasons, we know that our community of scholars will continue to grow:

The complex urban challenges that exist within our local communities require interdisciplinary approaches and contextualized, concerted inquiry.

Increasingly, community-engaged faculty are drawn to Duquesne because its mission endorses orienting one’s work toward service and social action.

Many of the communities of which Duquesne is a part have clear visions and agendas for cultural, social, and economic development and within these communities there are talented and strategic-thinking community leaders and residents who welcome Duquesne collaborations.

Institutions of higher education are reclaiming their democratic purposes: to be collaborative participants within ecosystems of knowledge production that tackle pressing issues relevant to today’s communities. Democratic ideals infuse community-engaged work with purposeful inclusion of diverse participants, engaging deliberation of multiple sources of knowledge, and problem solving (from within and outside of the academy).

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Share comments; be connected to other community-engaged colleagues; access additional resources (such as associations and conferences that support ACES):

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