

Assessment of a Nebulous, Yet Critical Commitment:

A Table Topic Session on the Scope and Nature of Service Learning

**AIR Forum
May 27, 2008**

**Table Topic Facilitators:
Laura Coghlan and Jenni Minner
Institutional Research and Assessment
The Evergreen State College**

Photo of the leftmost "pillar" of interstellar hydrogen gas and dust in M16, the Eagle Nebula

Courtesy of NASA and NSSDC

Back down on Earth... Civic and Community Engagement is “solidifying”

- More than 1,100 colleges and universities represented on Campus Compact, a coalition uniting presidents from higher education institutions committed to civic and community engagement.
- Ninety-percent of the institutions who participated in the 2006 annual membership survey indicated that "service to the community" is a student outcome addressed in the institution's strategic plan

The Evergreen State College Mission

As the nation's leading public interdisciplinary liberal arts college, Evergreen's mission is to sustain a vibrant academic community and offer students an education that will help them excel in their intellectual, creative, professional and **community service goals.**



A Swirl of Nebulous, Inter-related Terms

- Service Learning
- Community-based Learning
- Community Service
- Volunteerism
- Civic Engagement
- Engaged Institutions
- Engaged Students

THE NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE ACT OF 1990

(23) Service-learning

The term "service-learning" means a method--

(A) under which students or participants learn and develop through **active participation** in thoughtfully organized service that--

(i) is conducted in and meets the **needs of a community**;

(ii) is **coordinated** with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community; and

(iii) helps foster **civic responsibility**; and

(B) that--

(i) is integrated into and **enhances the academic curriculum** of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and

(ii) provides structured time for the students or participants to **reflect** on the service experience.

Carnegie Foundation definition

- **Community Engagement** describes 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.

Source: Carnegie Foundation website, Documentation Framework FAQs

<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/sub.asp?key=1213&subkey=2530>

Motivations for Measuring Civic Engagement (Holland, 2001)

- Academic Legitimacy of Civic Engagement
 - “If we can describe and measure this work, as we purport to do for other forms of academic work... will engagement become more central to the work of more institutions; will it become more widely accepted as important scholarly work and a core responsibility of the academy?”
- Image and Reputation
 - “Do we envision a descriptive or comparative system that makes engagement a tool for identifying superior institutions...?”

Motivations for Measuring Civic Engagement (Holland, 2001)

- Accountability
 - “Do we seek to prove the work of a strong postsecondary system in our economy and society?”
- Different Civic Missions
 - “Do we believe that in an environment of greater accountability and attention to performance, colleges and universities must become more distinct and specific about their mission, priorities, and goals?”

Motivations for Measuring Civic Engagement (Holland, 2001)

- Quality
 - “Do we want to measure our engagement programs so as to describe their quality, capture best practices for dissemination, or identify areas for improvement?”

Holland writes that measurement strategies must consider the audience, purpose, and “potential uses and misuses of findings.”

Evergreen's Five Foci

Interdisciplinary education

Students learn to pull together ideas and concepts from many subject areas, which enables them to tackle real-world issues in all their complexity.

Linking theory & practice

Students understand abstract theories by applying them to projects and activities and by putting them into practice in real-world situations.

Teaching & learning across significant differences

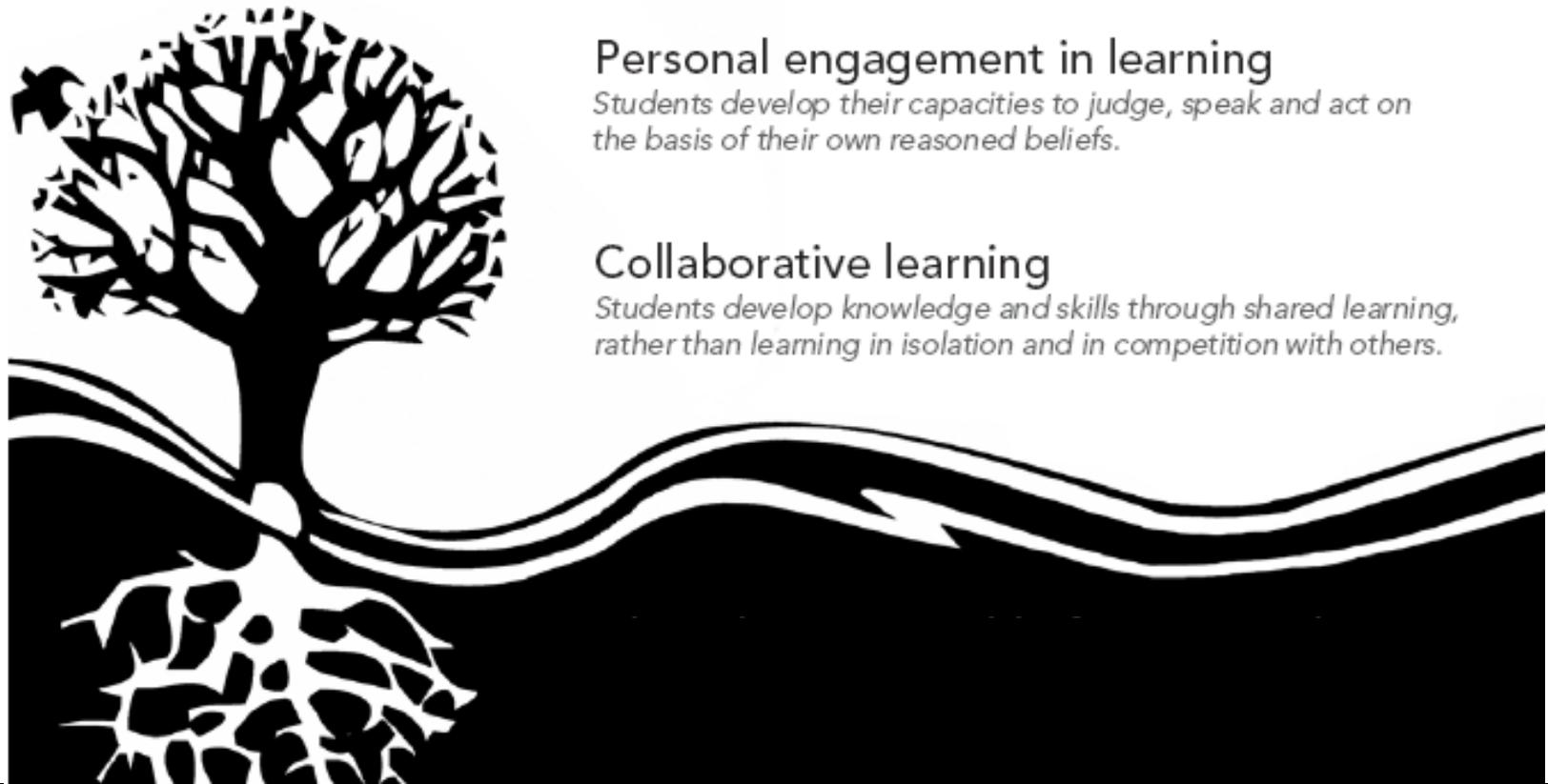
Students learn to recognize, respect and bridge differences — critical skills in an increasingly diverse world.

Personal engagement in learning

Students develop their capacities to judge, speak and act on the basis of their own reasoned beliefs.

Collaborative learning

Students develop knowledge and skills through shared learning, rather than learning in isolation and in competition with others.



Expectations of an Evergreen Graduate

- **Articulate and assume responsibility for your own work.**
- **Participate collaboratively and responsibly in our diverse society.**
- **Communicate creatively and effectively.**
- **Demonstrate integrative, independent, critical thinking.**
- **Apply qualitative, quantitative and creative modes of inquiry appropriately to practical and theoretical problems across disciplines.**
- **As a culmination of your education, demonstrate depth, breadth and synthesis of learning and the ability to reflect on the personal and social significance of that learning.**



Related Principles from Long Range Strategic Plan

- The preparation of students in their academic fields with the skills to communicate, solve problems, and work collaboratively and independently as responsible global citizens who can act locally in communities and support the practices of democracy, social justice, and sustainability.
- Active, engaged learning environments: study abroad, field studies, and community service opportunities.
- A commitment to public service and reciprocal local, regional, and national partnerships. Our six Public Service Centers disseminate the best work of the college and bring back to it the best ideas and practices of the wider community.
- A commitment to building a learning community that preserves Evergreen's distinctive and long-standing values, including:
 - The traditions of a liberal arts education that produces thoughtful, knowledgeable, conscientious, and active citizens
 - A determination among faculty and students to make a difference
 - An environment of cooperation and respect for one another and for cultural differences
 - Shared governance, open access to governance processes for all
 - A willingness to solve grievances by responding to conflict in compassionate and constructive ways
 - Accountable decision-making

The Center for Community -Based Learning and Action (CCBLA) supports the partnership of academic programs, students, and faculty, with community organizations. We aim to meet mutually agreed upon community needs to strengthen and enhance student learning through critical engagement.

www.evergreen.edu/communitybasedlearning/



Accountability Measure

- Institution-specific quality performance indicator for Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Held accountable for percentage of seniors who have completed community service or volunteer work

Campus Compact Framework

SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC FOR THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Project of Campus Compact at Brown University (Rev.2002)

- *Dimension I: Philosophy and Mission of Service-Learning*
- *Dimension II: Faculty Support for and Involvement in Service-Learning*
- *Dimension III: Student Support For and Involvement in Service-Learning*
- *Dimension IV: Community Participation and Partnerships*
- *Dimension V: Institutional Support for Service Learning*

Dimension V: Institutional Support for Service Learning

STAGE ONE <i>Critical Mass Building</i>	STAGE TWO <i>Quality Building</i>	STAGE THREE <i>Sustained Institutionalization</i>
---	---	---

EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT	<p>There is no organized, campus-wide effort underway to account for the number and quality of service-learning activities taking place.</p>	<p>An initiative to account for the number and quality of service-learning activities taking place throughout the campus has been proposed.</p>	<p>An ongoing, systematic effort is in place to account for the number and quality of service-learning activities that are taking place throughout the campus.</p>
------------------------------------	--	---	--

Institutional Research and Assessment Tools

- **End-of-Program Review (Faculty Survey)**
 - Did your program include community-based project(s) and/or service learning?
- **National Survey of Student Engagement**
 - Participation in community-based project as part of a regular course
 - Participation in community service or volunteer work
 - Participation in practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, or clinical assignment
 - Institutional role in students' growth in contributing to the welfare of their community

Institutional Research and Assessment Tools

- **Alumni Surveys**

- Satisfaction with participation in community service and internships while a student
- Satisfaction with Evergreen's contribution to growth in the following:
 - **Recognizing your responsibilities, rights, and privileges**
 - **Functioning as a responsible member of a diverse community**
 - **Work in a culturally diverse environment**
- Current Volunteerism

- **Enrollment Analysis**

Discussion Questions

- What are the motivations for understanding service learning at your institution? How is institutional research involved?
- What counts as service-learning? Which activities and pedagogical practices are included?
- How is information collected about these activities?
- How is information shared internally? How is it shared externally?