



Civic Learning and Engagement Institutional Definitions

Mission: Civic Learning and Engagement (CLE) supports partnerships among faculty, staff, students, and the wider community to develop engaged global citizen-leaders through transformational community engagement experiences.

Definitions

There are several terms related to the work of Civic Learning and Engagement, and the following definitions provide guidance for this work at Fort Hays State University.

Civic learning and engagement: Curricular and cocurricular activities that are designed to develop civic knowledge, skills, and values resulting in action that has a direct impact on the quality of life in a community.

This is a term defined in FHSU's Civic Investment Plan (2014, p. 3).

Civic learning: A category of learning in which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behaviors necessary to participate effectively in civic life.

Civic learning complements professional/vocational education. "We live more than a vocational life: we live a larger civic life, and we have to be educated for it." (Matthews, 1995, p. 70).

Civic learning encompasses understanding democratic principles, engaging in public problem-solving, and developing a sense of responsibility toward one's community and society.

Key components of civic learning often include:

- **Civic knowledge:** Understanding government structures, laws, history, and democratic processes.
- **Civic skills:** Abilities such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and deliberation.
- **Civic dispositions:** Attitudes like empathy, respect for others, and commitment to the common good.
- **Civic behaviors:** Applying knowledge and skills through participation in civic and community activities, advocacy, and public service.

Civic engagement: "Working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference... and promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and nonpolitical processes."

This term is described by Thomas Erlich (2000, p. vi). Civic engagement occurs when we integrate our civic learning with civic action.



FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY

CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement: Collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial creation and exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

This definition is provided by the Carnegie Foundation. The purpose of this engagement is to partner university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, enhance curriculum, prepare engaged citizens, and address critical societal issues. Community engagement can occur through various activities such as learning, scholarship, and service when aligned with principles of mutual benefit and reciprocity.

Community-engaged learning: A type of teaching and learning (both curricular and co-curricular) that occurs through partnership between community and university.

Service-learning: Both a pedagogy and change strategy that engages students, community members, and instructors/staff in co-creating relationships that integrate academic material, community-engaged activities, and critical reflection to advance public purposes and to achieve clearly articulated academic learning, civic learning, and personal growth goals.

This term is defined in Kniffin et al. (2023). It is a specific type of community-engaged learning, which has a robust set of literature, practices, and evidence to support its value. Service-learning is one of several high-impact practices and is a type of experiential learning. Sometimes these two terms are used interchangeably because many high-impact practices are forms of experiential learning.

However, the term experiential learning focuses more on the learning process whereas the term high impact practice focuses more on research evidence for learning. Examples include capstone courses and projects, collaborative assignments and projects, common intellectual experiences, diversity/global learning, ePortfolios, First-Year Seminars, Internships, Learning Communities, Service-Learning/Community-Engaged Learning, Undergraduate Research, Writing-Intensive courses.

Experiential learning: A pedagogical approach is rooted in a learning cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. This definition is based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. Experiential learning provides students with opportunities to apply knowledge and conceptual understanding to real-world problems and prepares them for future careers or civic engagement.

High-impact practices (HIPs): Teaching and learning practices that, based on research evidence, show significant educational benefits for students who participate in them.



FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY

CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Community service: The contribution of expertise, resources, or benefits to community individuals, organizations, or the public good.

Community service or public outreach is valuable in many contexts, especially when the service/benefit meets the real needs of the recipients. Community service is characterized by benefit flowing in one direction, which contrasts to the mutually beneficial and reciprocal nature of community engagement. Community service or volunteerism does not include pursuit of academic learning goals featured in community-engaged learning or service-learning.

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