

Introduction

The 2014/15 academic year marks the 10th Annual Evaluation Report for Community Service-Learning (CSL) at the University of Alberta. As a new Executive Director, I took some time to see how the program has evolved over the past decade. In 2005/2006, CSL involved 42 partnering community organizations offering projects for 136 students from 12 courses. This past year, the program saw 187 community partners connecting with 1506 students through 58 courses. That represents an astonishing 1007% growth in student participation over the past nine years, or an average of 112% annual growth. Similarly, it represents a 43% average annual growth rate in courses and instructors, and a 38% annual average growth rate of community partners. This growth represents the tireless work of CSL staff, University of Alberta instructors and students, past and present, but also and most critically the generosity of community partners who have collectively opened their doors to our students and their hopes and dreams to contribute to a social good beyond their own narrow, personal reward.

Yet as my colleague Professor Jan Selman, Academic Director, has noted in her introduction to our Annual Report, this growth has also caused some growing pains for CSL and for its partners. Although there is much to be proud of in these pages, the evaluation report this year also suggests some areas for improvement and concerted effort in the coming years. Our communication systems are still not where we would like them to be – just as was suggested by the survey results from 2005! We are still working on new more effective ways to provide networking opportunities for our community partners.

We must always remember, however, that statistics such as these can only ever be proxies for the depth and breadth of the fundamentally human relations that sustain community service-learning. As these relations mature, and partnerships develop, we hope that our honesty with each other becomes as equally important as the satisfaction rates that these pages detail. This is the spirit in which we share our evaluation findings with you this year, with a humility that recognizes that the collaborative work for positive social change in our communities is always complex and never ending, and our successes, even when they occur, are often only partial, or incomplete. There is always room for program improvement, for greater equity, for better efforts to advance social justice. We look forward to your ongoing trust in us this coming year as we work together towards these goals. A priority for me, in my first year in this position, is to connect in person with as many of our community partners and instructors as I can, and I welcome and look forward to your phone calls and visits.

Finally, I would like to recognize and thank our Evaluation Coordinator, U of A Graduate student Sarah Jiwa, for her fine work in constructing and representing our evaluation program. A special thanks as well to Jill Flaman, Program Coordinator, for her design work on the report.

Dr David Peacock
Executive Director

Statistics at a Glance 2014-2015

PLACEMENT-BASED STUDENTS

1506

enrollments in CSL placements

GENDER
73% Female
25% Male
1% Other

AGE
71% are under 23 years

MEAN YEARS OF POST-SECONDARY
3.8 years

19% working towards a CSL Certificate
79% in a CSL course for the first time
24% intend to continue volunteering with their community organization

CLASSROOM-BASED STUDENTS*

714

enrollments in non-placement component

GENDER
69% Female
29% Male
1% Other

AGE
70% are under 23 years

MEAN YEARS OF POST-SECONDARY
4.0 years

66% have volunteered outside of CSL
75% in a CSL course for the first time

INSTRUCTORS & COURSES

58

unique instructors

GENDER
57% Female
30% Male

MEAN YEARS OF TEACHING
4.0 years

POSITION
35% Contract
15% Academic Staff
13% Assistant Professor
37% Associate Professor

9% teaching CSL course for first time
56% taught a course in which CSL was a mandatory component

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

187

community partners

MEAN YEARS IN NON-PROFIT SECTOR
10.5 years

SUPERVISED 4 OR FEWER STUDENTS
60%

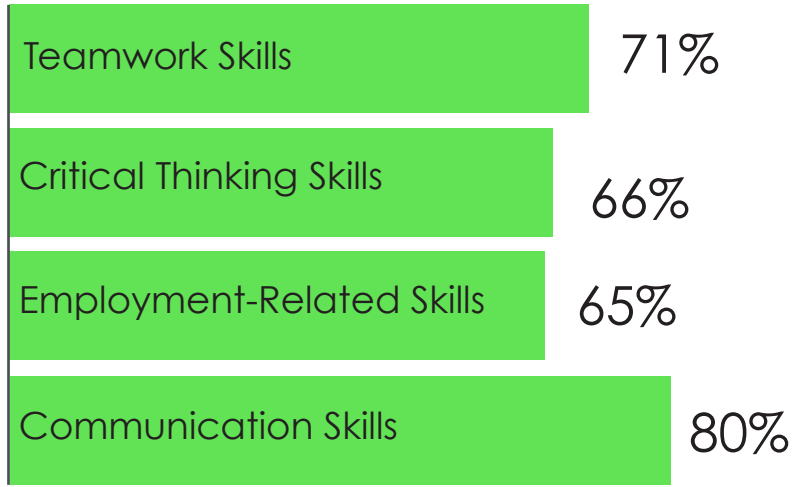
47% involved in CSL for first time
78% supervised university students prior to this term
81% CSL project completion rate

* students who enrolled in a CSL class but did not participate in the CSL component

Student Experiences with CSL

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

My involvement with CSL helped me develop...



"When you learn about something in class, it is a subject to memorize for a test. Here, it was applicable, real, and even scary to see how class concepts materialized into real world issues"

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

67% There was a good fit between the placement

59% I knew enough about the aims/requirements of CSL

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CHANGE & SOCIAL ISSUES

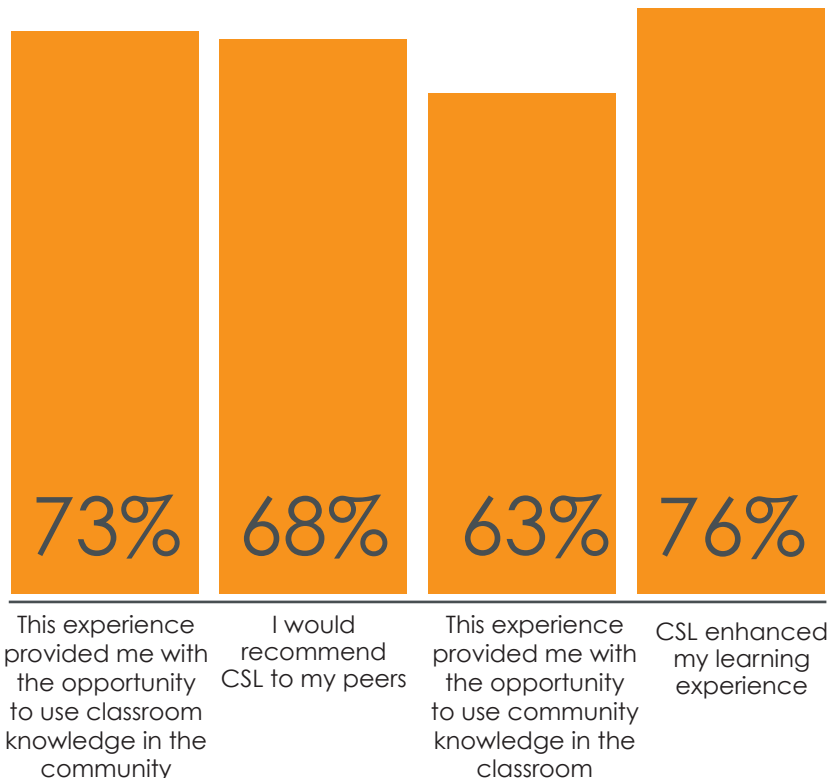
"Gaining a better understanding of social issues not just from a theoretical stand point but from a direct community implication. Also seeing how social issues have a direct and often everyday impact."

"Recognizing the systemic, structural, and patriarchal dynamics that sustain the non-profit industrial complex, and the role I play in perpetuating the oppressive nature of our present-day society."

COMMUNICATION

73% There was adequate communication between myself and my instructor

64% There was adequate communication between myself and my community partners



Instructor Experiences with CSL

SATISFACTION RATE AS A PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS

CSL enhanced student learning experience

85%

I would recommend CSL to my peers

100%

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN CSL

74%

Including a CSL component helped me to improve my teaching skills

70%

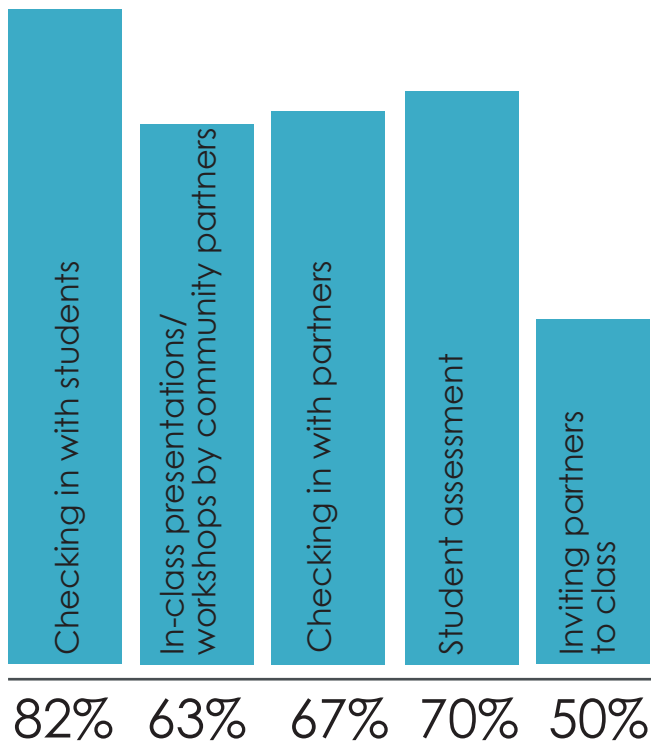
CSL helped me deepen relationships with my students

63%

CSL helped me develop relationships with the community

STRATEGIES I FIND MOST EFFECTIVE FOR...

...INTEGRATING CSL INTO MY COURSE



...ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO REFLECT ON THEIR COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

"The blogging experience was very useful in creating discussion; encouraging dialogue and personal reflection. Also providing me with the opportunity to connect content/themes from blogs with course material and discussion."

"Having them talk to one another about their seminars and then having them share their writing about their experiences has worked well."

COMMUNICATION

I was well informed about CSL before I began teaching this course **100%**

CSL provided me with enough support in integrating CSL into my course **85%**

Overall, there was a good fit between the goals of this course and the community placements **83%**

There was adequate communication between instructors and community partners **56%**

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN COURSE LEARNING & COMMUNITY PLACEMENT

87%

Course work & class instruction enhanced students' ability to understand their community experience.

82%

CSL enhanced the classroom learning environment

"Placing the right organization is always the hardest part, either to find the right organization or the right person within that organization"

Community Partner Experiences with CSL

SATISFACTION RATE WITH THE PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS

80% CSL enhanced student learning experience

82% I would recommend CSL to my peers

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN CSL

76% CSL helped me develop relationships with students, instructors, and the university.

27% CSL helped me network with other community organizations.

69% CSL helped our organization accomplish some of our project needs.

56% CSL helped my organization build capacity.

58% CSL helped me develop mentoring skills.

"The CSL students were very helpful by contributing to new ideas within the organization and provided new energy for the children and were great at relationship building and being positive role models."

"Students completed a project that provided us with information on a population that we did not previously have much information about. Their insight provided us with clear next steps for initiating programming."

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CHANGE & SOCIAL ISSUES

"I am so committed to the CSL program and what it offers to both the students and the organizations. On a broader scale, I believe it brings a deeper understanding of the social needs of our communities to the professors and the university, as a whole"

81% Involvement in CSL made students more aware of the knowledge generated by community organizations.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE & COMMUNICATION

62% CSL staff provided assistance and support in integrating CSL into my work.

74% I knew enough about the aims/requirements of CSL.

79% There was adequate communication between community partners and students.

61% There was adequate communication between community partners and instructors.

Community partners find that checking in with students is the most useful strategy for helping CSL students get the most from their experience.

Conclusions

Key findings of the 2014-2015 CSL Evaluation at the University of Alberta include the following:

Community service-learning continues to be seen by most students, instructors, and community partners as an effective pedagogical tool that they would recommend to others.

The CSL program continues to grow at a rapid rate. Over the past two years, the number of CSL placement students has increased by 60% and the number of CSL courses has increased by 22%.

There is a significant increase in the percentage of instructors that feel supported in integrating CSL into their work.

For placement students, communication with community partners is the most commonly stated challenge of participating in a CSL learning experience.

The fit between the placement and the course, along with differing expectations among students, community partners and instructors, continue to be challenges for the CSL program.

For CSL placement students, the most commonly stated benefit is the opportunity to meet and work with different people.

For community partners, the most commonly stated benefits are developing relationships with students, instructors and the university, along with helping their organizations accomplish project needs.

Methodology

The University of Alberta CSL program distributed surveys at the end of the Fall, Winter and Spring/Summer academic terms to CSL placement-based students, classroom-based students, instructors, and community partners. Students and instructors filled out their evaluations during class time at the end of term. Community partners were emailed a link to an online survey using the Campus Labs survey tool. The CSL Evaluation Coordinator used SPSS to calculate frequencies of the quantitative data. The quantitative results were also compared to those from previous years. Qualitative results were coded for themes using NVivo.

To view the comprehensive 2014-2015 CSL Evaluation Report, please contact our Evaluation Coordinator. To learn more about the CSL program at the University of Alberta, please visit our website at uofa.ualberta.ca/community-service-learning



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