

Evidence for Community-Based Learning

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National Academic Organizations Call for Civic Engagement as a Priority in Higher Education

American Academy of Arts & Sciences. (2017) “The future of undergraduate education: the future of America.” Final report and recommendations from the Commission on the Future of Undergraduate Education. Cambridge, MA.

From National Priority One: Excerpt, page 24. “All college credentials—certificates and associate’s and bachelor’s degrees—should incorporate academic, career, and civic knowledge and skills as a foundation for rewarding and productive lives and careers. In workplaces continually impacted by technological advances, employers value graduates who possess a broad technical, social, and entrepreneurial skillset, as well as the ongoing motivation to develop and apply new skills. Employers have a key role in helping graduates obtain these capacities. At the same time, the complexities of contemporary society demand citizens who understand the values and behaviors that lead to active civic engagement and contribute to a healthy democracy. Undergraduate learners need meaningful opportunities to develop and integrate knowledge and skills in the classroom and through cocurricular experiences such as co-op programs and internships, research, international study, or service that can help them improve their economic prospects, effectively navigate their personal and public worlds, and continue to learn throughout their lifetimes. Even in short-duration certificate programs, technical and academic knowledge should be augmented by curricular redesign that strengthens practical skills such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork.”

Higher Learning Commission. “Policy: Criteria for Accreditation”, Criterion 1.D. and Criterion 3. <http://policy.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-for-accreditation.html>, Accessed 12/11/2017

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has instituted a special focus on civic engagement through “Quality Initiatives,” which are major initiatives that certain institutions may elect to take on. While Gustavus is not part of the Quality Initiatives, this special focus by HLC demonstrates civic learning and civic engagement as priorities for higher education. An excerpt from the Higher Learning Commission website states:

“In support of its Guiding Values that states ‘every educational institution serves a public purpose,’ HLC will feature Quality Initiatives that promote civic learning on campuses. Institutions that select projects for their Quality Initiative that promote civic learning and civic engagement will be recognized for their commitment by HLC publishing their Quality Initiative Proposal on qi.hlcommission.org.”

National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. (2012) “A Crucible Moment: College Learning for Democracy’s Future.” Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

“This report from the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement calls on the nation to reclaim higher education’s civic mission. Commissioned by the Department of Education and released at a White House convening in January 2012, the report pushes back against a prevailing national dialogue that limits the mission of higher education to workforce preparation and training while marginalizing disciplines basic to democracy.” –AAC&U website, <https://www.aacu.org/crucible>, Accessed 12/11/2017.

https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/crucible/Crucible_508F.pdf

Our Communities and Our Democracy Depend on Civic Learning

Stokamer, S. and Clayton, P.H. (2017) “Civic Learning.” Invited Blog post, Center for Engaged Learning. Elon University. Accessed 12/11/2017.

Presents “civic learning” as the most important reason for service learning and community engagement. Defines categories of associated learning outcomes and four research-based conceptual frameworks.

<http://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/civic-learning/>

Civic Engagement Supports Student Access and Success in College

Cress, C. M., Burack, C., Giles, D.E., Elkins, J., Stevens, M.C. (2010) “A Promising Connection: Increasing College Access and Success through Civic Engagement.” Campus Compact.

A monograph emerging from the 2010 Campus Compact Presidential Leadership Summit. Quote from the article, “This paper has been developed to provide a research-based exploration of the promising connections between civic engagement and college access and success. It offers examples of programs that improve students’ access to and success in higher education that can be replicated by institutions across the country. Informed by theory, research, and best practices, it provides recommendations to campus leaders on how to create and sustain effective programs. Finally, it identifies areas where further research and follow-through are needed.”

<http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/A-Promising-Connection-corrected.pdf>

Cress, C.M. (2012) “Civic Engagement and Student Success: Leveraging Multiple Degrees of Achievement.” AAC&U’s Diversity and Democracy, Fall 2012, Vol. 15, No. 3.

Highlights from the monograph by Campus Compact, “A Promising Connection...” An overview how civic engagement works to produce educational outcomes, such as higher

graduation rates, learning more academic content, learning higher-order thinking skills, increased emotional intelligence, and encouraging actions that benefit the public good. Also include short discussion of best pedagogical practices and action steps colleges can take to encourage civic engagement across the curriculum.

<https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/civic-engagement-and-student-success-leveraging-multiple-degrees>

Jacoby, B. (2015) Service-Learning Essentials. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA. Chapter 1: Introduction to Service-Learning, Section 1.4: What are the Benefits of Service-Learning? (p.11)

Summarizes benefits of service-learning for students, faculty, staff, the community, and the institution.

Excerpt from High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter, by George D. Kuh (AAC&U, 2008). Accessed 12/11/17.
“Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based “experiential learning” with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.”

<https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips>

Employers Value the Real-World Skills and Experiences Gained through Community-Based Learning

By Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. (2008) “How Should Colleges Assess and Improve Student Learning? Employers’ Views on the Accountability Challenge.” A survey of employers conducted on behalf of The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).

This survey of 301 employers found that as a means to determine likelihood of success on the job employers strongly favor assessments of real-world and applied skills. Employers reported that the most effective assessments for ensuring college graduates have the needed skills and knowledge to succeed were, “supervised/evaluated internship/community-based project where students apply college learning in a real-world setting.” A total of eight-three percent (83%) of employers reported this as a very effective (69%) or fairly effective (14%) indicator.