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Advancing Excellence in Community-Engaged Research Through a Faculty Learning Community

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Advancing Excellence in Community-Engaged Research Through a Faculty Learning Community

Abstract

Presented at the annual meeting of the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement held September 29 - October 1, 2014

Keywords

CEnR, community-engaged research, research, community engagement, community, faculty, learning community

Disciplines

Higher Education

Comments

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VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Advancing Excellence in Community-Engaged Research Through a Faculty Learning Community

Annual Meeting of International Association for Research on Service-learning and Community Engagement

September 29 – October 1, 2014

We are a premier urban, public research university focused on academic success.



Established in
1838



Located in
Richmond, Virginia



More than
171,000
alumni worldwide



The VCU population

- » 31,288 students
- » 100 countries represented in student population
- » 11,388 employees
- » 2,170 full-time instructional faculty



VCU's Mission

As the premier urban, public research university in Virginia,

VCU's mission is to advance knowledge and student success through its commitments to:

- **an engaged, learner-centered environment** that fosters inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global setting
- **research** that expands the boundaries of new knowledge and creative expression and promotes translational applications to improve human health
- **interdisciplinary collaborations** that bring new perspectives to complex problems and mobilize creative energies that advance innovation and solve global challenges
- **health care** that strives to preserve and restore health for all people, to seek the cause and cure of diseases through groundbreaking research, and to educate those who serve humanity
- **diversity** that provides a climate of inclusion, a dedication to addressing disparities wherever they exist, and an opportunity to explore and create in an environment of trust
- **sustainable, university-community partnerships** that enhance the educational, economic and cultural vitality of the communities VCU serves in Virginia and around the world



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VCU's Quest for Distinction

Theme IV: Become a national model for community engagement and regional impact

- **Expand community engaged scholarship and service learning.**
- Create **university-community partnerships** with a focus on the key targeted areas of:
 - K-12 Education
 - Access to Health
 - Economic Development
 - Sustainability
- Provide strategic leadership in addressing **sustainability challenges** through curricular and service innovations and green facilities and operations.



Examples of Institutionalization of CE

Community-engaged teaching, research and service has been added to the revised university **promotion and tenure** guidelines.

Key strategies in **university level initiatives**.

Community service leave
(16 hours!)



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Recognition for Community Engagement



Recognized as 1 of 40 top community-engaged institutions by the Carnegie foundation

President's Higher Education Service Honor Roll, with highest distinction



CTSA Clinical & Translational
Science Awards

Recipient of a NIH's CTSA grant



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Division of Community Engagement

www.community.vcu.edu

Vision

- *VCU is a community of engaged citizens, working together changing lives.*

Mission

- *The VCU Division of Community Engagement **mobilizes university-community partnerships** that generate innovative solutions to societal challenges and prepares the engaged citizens of tomorrow.*



The Context

- Promotion and tenure policy change
- Advancement of community-engaged research (CEnR)

Partnership between:

Division of Community
Engagement (Provost's
Office)

Center for Clinical and
Translational Research
(CTSA-funded)

What is excellence in
CEnR at VCU?



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Faculty Learning Community (FLC)

- A cross-disciplinary group of 6 – 10 faculty who engage in an active, collaborative, and self-guided exploration of an identified topic.
- Prolonged exploration of an issue as “expert” learners in an attempt to
 - better understand the issue,
 - make modifications to their practice based on what they have learned and
 - promote better teaching and learning across the institution by sharing what they have learned with a wider audience (Cox, 2004).
- They are effective in:
 - building faculty competencies,
 - encouraging collaboration among faculty to support new institutional initiatives

Elements of FLCs

- mission and purpose,
- curriculum,
- administration,
- connections,
- affiliated participants,
- meetings and activities,
- scholarly process, assessment, and
- enablers/rewards.

Elements of FLCs

- **mission and purpose,**
 - curriculum,
 - administration,
 - connections,
 - affiliated participants,
 - meetings and activities,
 - scholarly process, assessment, and
 - enablers/rewards.
- Goals for institution and FLC program
 - Objectives for FLC

Elements of FLCs

- mission and purpose,
 - **curriculum,**
 - administration,
 - connections,
 - affiliated participants,
 - meetings and activities,
 - scholarly process, assessment, and
 - enablers/rewards.
- Which FLCs to offer (cohorts, topics, issues/opportunities)

Elements of FLCs

- mission and purpose,
 - curriculum,
 - **administration,**
 - connections,
 - affiliated participants,
 - meetings and activities,
 - scholarly process, assessment, and
 - enablers/rewards.
- Leadership and facilitation
 - Criteria for membership selection
 - Financial support

Elements of FLCs

- mission and purpose,
 - curriculum,
 - administration,
 - **connections**,
 - affiliated participants,
 - meetings and activities,
 - scholarly process, assessment, and
 - enablers/rewards.
- Community within the FLC
 - Partnerships (connections to other programs)
 - Engagement (serving broader community)

Elements of FLCs

- mission and purpose,
 - curriculum,
 - administration,
 - connections,
 - **affiliated participants,**
 - meetings and activities,
 - scholarly process, assessment, and
 - enablers/rewards.
- Faculty or staff partners
 - Student associates

Elements of FLCs

- mission and purpose,
 - curriculum,
 - administration,
 - connections,
 - affiliated participants,
 - **meetings and activities,**
 - scholarly process, assessment, and
 - enablers/rewards.
- Seminars
 - Retreats
 - Conferences
 - Socializing

Elements of FLCs

- mission and purpose
 - curriculum
 - administration
 - connections
 - affiliated participants
 - meetings and activities
 - **scholarly process, assessment**
 - enablers/rewards.
- Grounding in literature
 - Outcomes
 - Scholarship development/
Dissemination
 - Assessment



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Elements of FLCs

- mission and purpose
 - curriculum
 - administration
 - connections
 - affiliated participants
 - meetings and activities
 - scholarly process, assessment
 - **enablers/rewards**
- Release time
 - Professional expenses
 - Recognition

Key qualities of the experience

Challenge
Openness Empowerment
Responsiveness Enjoyment
trust loyalty-to-mission
Collaboration Respect
Relevance Safety

(Cox, 2004; Furco & Moely, 2012)

Additional characteristics of effective FLCs

1. goals are clear and consistent with faculty values,
2. members have opportunities to gain expertise and explore questions,
3. members perceive an institutional commitment to support the work of the FLC and
4. members see rewards for their participation in the FLC (Furco & Moely, 2012).

What is **CEnR** and is
our work CEnR?



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Community-Engaged Research (CEnR)

VCU's official definition states that CEnR is:

- *“a **collaborative process** between the researcher and community partner that **creates and disseminates knowledge and creative expression** with the goal of **contributing to the discipline and strengthening the well-being of the community.**”*
- *CEnR identifies the **assets of all stakeholders** and incorporates them in the design and conduct of the different phases of the research process.”*

For more definitions, see

<http://www.community.vcu.edu/files/2011/12/CER-Definitions-with-References.pdf>

What is **excellence**
and who are we to
decide?



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Compendium of Case Studies

Aim: Highlights high-quality CEnR at VCU

Format: Stand alone and together

Intended use: professional development, development of future scholars, telling VCU's story

Target Audience: Faculty, staff, students



Excellence in Community-Engaged Research at Virginia Commonwealth University: A Compendium of Case Studies Developed Through a Faculty Learning Community

Edited by Cynthia George, MSSW, Doctoral Candidate, VCU School of Social Work
Graduate Research Assistant
Center for Clinical and Translational Research and Division of Community Engagement



Make it real.

Community-Engaged Research Institute

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My Reflections



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Next Steps

- Evaluation
- Scholarship
- Continued advisory role

Thanks to the FLC Members

- **Rosalie Corona**, PhD, Associate Professor, Psychology, College of Humanities and Sciences
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- **Carlin Rafie**, PhD, Clinical Research Affiliation Coordinator, Massey Cancer Center
- **Deborah Speece**, PhD, Professor and Associate Dean of Research, School of Education



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