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

Valerie Holton
Virginia Commonwealth University, vholton@vcu.edu

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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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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
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!)
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

Recipient of a NIH’s CTSA grant
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?
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,
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- 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
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

Openness  Empowerment  Challenge
Responsiveness  Enjoyment  trust
Collaboration  loyalty-to-mission
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?
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?
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
Community-Engaged Research Institute

Presented by

Division of Community Engagement
www.community.vcu.edu

Center for Clinical and Translational Research
www.cctr.vcu.edu
My Reflections
Next Steps

• Evaluation
• Scholarship
• Continued advisory role
Thanks to the FLC Members

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- **Rebecca Etz**, PhD, Assistant Professor, Family Medicine, School of Medicine
- **Antonio Garcia**, Director of Jazz Studies, Music Department, School of the Arts
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- **Sarah Kye Price**, PhD, MSW, MS, PhD Program Director and Associate Professor, School of Social Work
- **Elizabeth Prom-Wormley**, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor, Division of Epidemiology, Department of Family Medicine and Population Health, School of Medicine
- **Carlin Rafie**, PhD, Clinical Research Affiliation Coordinator, Massey Cancer Center
- **Deborah Speece**, PhD, Professor and Associate Dean of Research, School of Education
Virginia Commonwealth University
Division of Community Engagement

Valerie Holton, PhD, LCSW
Director of Community-Engaged Research
vholton@vcu.edu

www.community.vcu.edu