

Academic Civic Engagement Student Survey Report

Executive Summary

Summary and Analysis of Questions One Through Five

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Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation

August 8, 2011

*This document is an executive summary only. Please contact Nate Jacobi, Center for Experiential Learning, if you would like a copy of the full report.

Introduction

This report examines the experiences of St. Olaf students enrolled in select courses with an Academic Civic Engagement (ACE) component during the 2010-2011 academic year. The survey instrument was developed by staff from the Center for Experiential Learning (CEL) and faculty participating in a grant project which aims to assess the impact of academic civic engagement on student learning and vocational development. The following results come from 14 courses from the Fall, Interim, and Spring Terms. A total of 239 students completed the survey out of a total 264 who were either enrolled in one of the relevant courses or participated in the ACE component of the course in question (90 percent response rate).

There were three versions of the survey administered, and faculty were responsible for administering the survey in their respective course. Ten of the 14 courses took place during the Spring Term of the 2010-2011 academic year, had the same format, and were administered on paper, with the exception of one survey from ES 399 which was administered online via Form Creator. The courses from the Fall Term (SW 254 and IS 216) and Interim Term of the 2010-2011 academic year (PSCI/AS 245 and PSYCH 224) had a version of the survey that did not ask them to identify their class year or course, and that did not ask them to identify the most meaningful aspect of the course.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

- For those who were asked to indicate their class year, juniors were the most common student type in the survey, with 32 percent of the respondents.
- Nearly one-quarter of the sample population (56 students) were given surveys which did not include a question regarding class year.
- The single most populous course surveyed was BIO/ES 288 – Environmental Health, with 14 percent of the sample population (33 respondents).
- The single most populous subject area surveyed was psychology, with a total of 74 respondents (31 percent of total respondents) from four different courses.

IMPACT OF ACADEMIC CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COURSE COMPONENT

- Ninety percent or more of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed when asked if participation in the ACE component of their course:
 - increased their ability to apply academic knowledge or proficiencies to address a community or civic goal (224 respondents/94 percent).
 - increased their understanding of course theories and concepts (214 respondents/90 percent).
- Between 86 and 88 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that participation in the ACE component of the course:
 - increased their confidence in their ability to contribute effectively to community and civic endeavors (209 respondents/88 percent).
 - increased their interest in pursuing civic community or work roles that foster the common good (208 respondents/87 percent).
 - increased their awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses (205 respondents/86 percent).
- Less than 70 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that participation in the ACE component of the course:
 - helped them identify or develop their personal interests or passions in life (162 respondents/68 percent).
 - increased their awareness of possible work roles or careers (159 respondents/67 percent).

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, INTERESTS, AND OTHER

- When asked to identify a strength, weakness, or interest learned about a result of participation in the ACE component of the course, 88 percent of students (210 respondents) could identify something they had learned.
- Strengths were the most frequently identified, with 28 percent of students (68 respondents) specifically referring to a strength.
- An “other” category, created for those students who did not identify a strength, weakness, or interest, yet still conveyed that they had learned or gained something from the ACE component of the course, was the second most populous category, with 27 percent of students (65 respondents).
- Thematically, the most commonly mentioned topics (regardless of status as a strength, weakness, interest, or other) were:
 - **Communication**, defined as “*general communication with others, oral presentations, public speaking, or interviewing*” (51 respondents/21 percent).

- **Community**, defined as “*working or interacting with local community members or children in the community*” (50 respondents/21 percent).
- **Group work**, defined as “*working collaboratively with others in a team setting*” (48 respondents/20 percent).
- **Career**, defined as “*possible career opportunities, interests, goals, or non-interests*” (37 respondents/15 percent).

MEANINGFUL ASPECT OF ACE COURSE OR PROJECT

- Community was the most frequently mentioned topic. Fifty-seven percent (93 students) said that working with, being engaged in, or building relationships with the local community was the most meaningful aspect of their experience with the ACE course or project.
- Thirty-one percent (51 students) of all respondents said that helping others was the most meaningful aspect of their experience with the ACE course or project.
- All 37 respondents who said that working with children was most meaningful came from 3 classes: PSYCH 230A, ART 238, and BIO/ES 228.
- Sixteen percent (26 students) of all respondents said that working with real data in the real-world that could help address real problems was the most meaningful aspect of their experience with the ACE course or project.