Portfolio and Certification Programs in Community Engagement as Professional Development for Graduate Students: Lessons Learned From Two Land-Grant Universities

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Abstract

Although growing numbers of graduate students nationwide express interest in developing and documenting boundary-spanning skills in community-engaged research, teaching, and outreach, formal opportunities to do so are often limited, especially at the large research institutions producing most future faculty members. This article focuses on initial steps being taken to provide professional development for graduate students through portfolio and certification programs at two large, public, land-grant, research-intensive, Carnegie-engaged institutions in different parts of the United States: Michigan State University and the University of Georgia. For each university, the authors describe the context and history; the specific steps being taken to support graduate students in community-engaged research, teaching, and practice; and the impacts, outcomes, and lessons learned to date from this work.

(If) graduate students do not have an apprenticeship of sorts in engagement *(Golde, 2008)* and if they do not develop professional identity as engaged scholars *(Colbeck, 2008),* they will not develop the knowledge, skills, and professional orientation *(Austin & McDaniels, 2006)* to truly become engaged scholars *(O'Meara, 2008).* What is needed are specific opportunities or "critical experiences" in masters and doctoral programs for graduate students to develop the knowledge, skills, and orientations most relevant to their future engaged work. *(O'Meara, 2011, p. 186)*

*G*raduate education continues to be characterized by narrowly focused training in a specific disciplinary area, with special emphasis on scholarship operationalized as research productivity. Although this may be effective in producing subject-area experts, it is not necessarily a model conducive to integrating engaged scholarship during graduate studies nor to

preparing graduate students for roles as engaged faculty members. In the past decade, over 70% of all doctoral degrees granted in the United States were from universities with the Carnegie classification "very high research activity, research university" *(National Science Foundation, 2012)*. Although a small percentage of these doctoral graduates typically end up in faculty roles at these same high-intensity research universities, much of the preparation and socialization that they experience during their graduate programs has been called "out of tune with the values and real work" of the higher education institutions that do employ most of these graduates—for example, a primary focus on teaching undergraduate coursework *(Gaff & Lambert, 1996, p. 38)*. Indeed, "limited national attention has been given to preparing and socializing graduate students and thereby new faculty to their public service role" *(O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006, p. 4)*. Issues relating to graduate students and community engagement, especially in the large research universities that produce the lion's share of future university faculty members, have been salient for the past several decades.

Boyer noted this lack of opportunity for such future faculty members to develop expertise in engaging with public issues in his calls for reconsidering how scholars are developed; he asserted in 1990, "The real danger is that graduate students will become specialists without perspective, that they will have technical competence but lack larger insights" *(p. 68)*. A decade later, Checkoway *(2001)* addressed the same concern and its continued impact on the professoriate:

> Most faculty are trained in graduate schools whose required courses ignore civic content, and they enter academic careers whose gatekeepers dissuade them from spending much time in the community. They are socialized into a culture—beginning with their first days in graduate school and continuing into their academic careers—whose institutional structures shape their beliefs and cause behaviors that are consistent with their conditioning. They perceive that public engagement is not central to their role, that there are few rewards for this work, and that it may even jeopardize their careers in the university. *(p. 135)*

Likewise, even more recently, O'Meara and Jaeger *(2006)* have highlighted several barriers to expanding community engagement's role in graduate education, including that "graduate students do

not learn to 'see' community engagement as a way of being a scholar," such that "history continues to repeat itself as graduate students become specialized, narrowly focused researchers and are not aware of knowledge as having a public purpose" *(p. 14)*. Students interested in pursuing scholarships of engagement or of application, then, are often left feeling isolated and may find themselves marginalized by their faculty mentors and committees who do not value such work *(Franz, 2013)*. Clearly, as Boyer *(1990)* himself stated, "if scholarship is to be redefined, graduate study must be broadened, encompassing not only research, but integration, application, and teaching, too" *(p. 74)*.

Admittedly, not all graduate students intend to enter a higher education career. However, there is still an important role for the scholarship of engagement. According to Bloomfield *(2005)*, a recent survey of thousands of graduate students in six disciplines identified a desire for learning more about public issues addressed by their discipline as the third most highly ranked concern (out of 21). As O'Meara and Jaeger *(2006)* noted, engagement adds value to multiple facets of graduate education:

> Integrating community engagement into doctoral programs across every discipline offers opportunities for students to more effectively acquire research and teaching skills, to learn the knowledge of their disciplines in ways that promote deeper understanding and greater complexity, and to make connections with public agencies and groups that enrich the quality of their education. *(p. 4)*

Although it is clear that calls for the graduate experience to "prepare future faculty for the classrooms and campuses of tomorrow" *(Gaff & Lambert, 1996, p. 43)* have not yet been fully realized, efforts such as the decade-long Preparing Future Faculty initiative (http://aacu.org/pff), sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities and the Council of Graduate Schools, have helped, as has recent interest in community engagement among research universities *(e.g., Adams, 2002; The Research University Civic Engagement Network [TRUCEN]; Curley & Stanton, 2012)*, including greater emphasis on graduate education.

However, there is clearly still a need for additional research and description of university efforts to incorporate the scholarship of engagement into graduate education in more systematized ways: "Limited research has been done in every discipline, but most pub-

lished accounts reflect a lone professor integrating service-learning and community-based research into a graduate program" *(O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006, p. 5).* Following Butin's *(2012)* assertion that a key next step for "institutionalization of community engagement in higher education [is] within academic certificates, minors, and majors" *(p. 7),* we focus especially on initial steps being taken in that direction for graduate students at two land-grant institutions in different parts of the United States: the University of Georgia (UGA) and Michigan State University (MSU). At each university, we describe the context; specific steps taken to support graduate students in community-engaged research, teaching, and practice; and impacts, outcomes, and lessons learned to date from this work. Through these examples, we hope to spark continued conversation about professional development for community-engaged scholarship *(Childers, Doberneck, Velde, & Woodell, 2011; Doberneck, Brown, & Allen, 2010; Doberneck, Brown, & Bargerstock, 2010; Doberneck, Brown, Van Egeren, & McNall, 2011; Doberneck, Williams, Childers, & Blanchard, 2010; Matthews, 2012; Matthews, Karls, Doberneck, & Springer, 2013).*

The University of Georgia

The University of Georgia (UGA) is a land- and sea-grant large public Research University/Very High Research Activity institution enrolling about 26,000 undergraduates and 8,000 graduate/professional students in 17 schools and colleges. UGA is located in Athens, a small city about 60 miles northeast of Atlanta, the state's largest metropolitan area and capital; Athens-Clarke County has one of the highest poverty rates of any county its size in the United States (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/13059.html). UGA received the 2010 Carnegie Foundation classification as a community-engaged institution and is a member of a number of national and international organizations focused on work for the public good, including TRUCEN, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and the Engagement Scholarship Consortium.

The university boasts a historically strong public service mission, with a vice president for public service and outreach, eight stand-alone units reporting to the vice president, and over 450 public service-track faculty on campus and statewide (http://www.outreach.uga.edu for additional information). Part of the institution's stated mission is "a commitment to excellence in public service, economic development, and technical assistance activities designed to address the strategic needs of the state" *(University of Georgia, 2014, para. 2).* Service-learning courses are available through

every school/college at UGA, with over 300 course sections offered annually at undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels (http://servicelearning.uga.edu/service-learning-by-the-numbers/).

Program History/Milestones

In 2010, the UGA Office of Service-Learning (OSL) expanded, adding a full-time assistant director, which allowed for enhanced capacity for additional professional development programs on campus, including periodic workshops focusing on service-learning course design, critical reflection strategies, and partnering with the community. Although these workshops were originally intended for faculty members, over the ensuing semesters the number of graduate students in attendance increased substantially so that in many cases, graduate students outnumbered faculty participants. After attending a presentation describing Michigan State University's graduate certificate program, OSL faculty began brainstorming with the UGA Graduate School and the UGA Center for Teaching and Learning to consider ways to provide a more formal support structure for graduate students, akin to the MSU program and/or the UGA teaching certificate and portfolio administered by the Center for Teaching and Learning. Over the following year, with additional input from a faculty member in the Department of Microbiology undertaking a semester-long Public Service and Outreach Fellowship, three steps were taken to begin formal support of graduate students: the development of two new courses and the launch of a noncredit portfolio program.

Graduate Coursework

Two graduate courses, focusing respectively on service-learning course design and on approaches to community engagement, were developed and offered for the first time during the 2012-2013 academic year. These courses were intended to allow a multidisciplinary group of graduate students to learn theory, history, and effective practices in designing and carrying out course-based service-learning as well as engaged research, outreach, and other partnerships with community organizations at any level. Additionally, course participants were included in informational sessions about the portfolio program, and in the Approaches to Community Engagement course, they were encouraged to conceptualize components of the portfolio as part of their class requirements.

UGA's Graduate Portfolio in Community Engagement

The Graduate Portfolio in Community Engagement was officially launched during fall semester 2012. Initial discussions had centered on a certificate, but investigation into UGA's guidelines revealed that certificate programs are operationalized as course-based, credit-bearing programs typically requiring at least 9 hours of coursework selected from a range of possibilities. In the absence of sufficient relevant coursework to meet these university guidelines for academic certificates, beginning with a noncredit portfolio program that did not require additional curriculum committee or university council approval was determined to be the best first step, with the intent of establishing a track record of graduate student interest. The portfolio, informed by UGA's long-standing teaching portfolio, is administered by the OSL and the Graduate School.

Program Components

The Graduate Portfolio in Community Engagement was construed as an opportunity for graduate students in any discipline to document and develop skills and experience in community engagement, operationalized into three potential "pathways": community-engaged teaching (service-learning), engaged research, and/or public service and outreach efforts. The program is publicized through online information on the OSL website (http://servicelearning.uga.edu/graduate-portfolio-in-community-engagement/), through flyers in the new graduate student orientation sessions each fall, and through e-mails to graduate students and to faculty and departments; each semester, OSL also hosts a 2-hour workshop session for interested students and meets with students upon request. The workshop includes an overview of community engagement tenets and in-depth characterization of community-engaged research, service-learning, and engaged public service and outreach, as well as specific guidance on the portfolio requirements. Examples of successful portfolios are also provided, and individual and small-group brainstorming, work time, and question/answer opportunities are incorporated.

Once students have attended the overview session, they are encouraged to submit a formal indication of interest (a PDF form including their contact information and likely engagement pathway) and to confirm (with help from OSL as requested) a faculty mentor who can help guide their work. They are encouraged to enroll in either or both of the graduate courses, to consult with OSL

faculty, and to take advantage of OSL workshops as appropriate for their area of interest. In addition, a rubric for evaluation is provided to guide preparation of the portfolio. Once they have developed, implemented, and documented their community-engaged project or activity, students submit a PDF portfolio to the OSL for review and feedback, and portfolios meeting or exceeding stated requirements are recognized each semester.

The portfolio guidelines for submission request a relatively concise portfolio of 15 pages in an assembled PDF, along with any appropriate appendices supporting the project. The required components include a standard cover sheet; a personal engagement philosophy statement (two pages); the description and self-assessment of the particular community engagement project/activity, including a narrative overview/description of project (one page), consideration of actual or anticipated project impact (one to two pages), and a reflective assessment of the project, linked back to the stated tenets of engagement in the student's philosophy statement (two pages). (This section is intended to mirror the frequently described "What? So what? Now what?" heuristic of service-learning reflection.) Next, students include a short curriculum vitae (two to four pages), which should also highlight any additional community-engaged work not focused on for the portfolio project and a letter of support from their faculty mentor confirming the work that was done, contextualizing its significance, and commenting on the processes and outcomes of the work. Finally, students include in the appendix a letter or other feedback from the project's community partner as well as any supporting material documenting the activity and its outcomes or impacts. Students are also given the opportunity to indicate whether their submissions may be shared with others as example portfolios. See Projects 1, 2, and 3 for examples of successful portfolio projects at UGA.

> **Project 1: Creating a Public Art Inventory**
> In collaboration with the Cultural Affairs Commission, a public administration student created a comprehensive inventory of local public art through research, interviews, database design, and data entry. Database entries included a photo of each work; its known or estimated creation date; artist information; location; and additional information on value, ownership, and/or history. This public service and outreach project was based on a request from the city's mayor and commis-

sion and is expected to be used by government offices for economic development, and for future scholarship.

Project 2: Documenting a University Partnership Startup Process

In collaboration with UGA's Archway Partnership—a Public Service and Outreach unit that establishes intensive, multiyear partnerships with particular communities across the state to bring university resources to bear on identified community priorities—a public administration student created a decision chart and step-by-step process summary for establishing a new Archway Partnership community site. As current communities "graduate" from the program, new communities are identified, and partnerships are created. The materials produced through this portfolio project are intended to help standardize, streamline, and support the process of establishing these future partnerships.

Project 3: Refining and Extending a Service-Learning Course

A doctoral student taught, reflected on, and refined a service-learning course in the Counseling & Human Development department for four semesters. In this course (Supporting Children & Families in Vulnerable Situations), she developed partnerships to involve students in camps for people from diverse settings (e.g., teens with cancer, refugees). Undergraduate students developed professional skills and gained a better understanding of adolescent development in specific populations; in turn, these adolescents benefited from student involvement in program development and implementation.

Outcomes

During the program's first year of existence (fall semester 2012 through fall semester 2013), some 38 graduate students attended information sessions (either individually or the once-per-semester workshop). Five students submitted portfolios, all during spring semester 2013; of these, three were approved, and two were not approved and were returned to the students with feedback. Four

other students submitted their official declaration of intent to participate. See Table 1 for information on these submissions.

Table 1. UGA's Descriptive Information on Portfolio Submissions

Degree objective	Major	Engagement pathway	Status
M.P.A.	Public administration	Engaged public service & outreach	Submitted and awarded
M.P.A.	Public administration	Engaged public service & outreach	Submitted and awarded
Ph.D.	Recreation & leisure studies	Engaged teaching	Submitted and awarded
M.S.	Marine science	Engaged research	Submitted, but not awarded
Ph.D.	Adult education	Engaged research	Submitted, but not awarded
M.A.L.	Agricultural leadership	Engaged research	Declared intent to submit
Ph.D.	Geography	Engaged public service & outreach	Declared intent to submit
Ph.D.	Microbiology	Engaged public service & outreach	Declared intent to submit
Ph.D.	Mathematics	Engaged public service & outreach	Declared intent to submit

Early Lessons Learned

Based on the first year of implementation, several elements of the portfolio program changed, in some cases due to particular policies of the university, and in other cases in order to address aspects of the submission requirements that were not clearly communicated to students. For instance, the original intent had been to include portfolio recipients in the graduate commencement program bulletin; however, this was not approved by the university administration. This change then allowed a change in stated submission dates for the portfolios from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester.

As shown in Table 1, the two portfolio submissions that were not approved were both posited by the students as community-engaged research; however, in each case, the submissions instead seemed to be traditional research studying a community organization or partnership that did not involve the community in ways typifying engaged research. In order to help clarify the tenets of

engaged research, additional details and examples were added to the orientation workshop.

The first year of submissions also showed that establishing actual impact from recently completed projects was difficult, as in many cases the project deliverables had not been placed in use by the community partners; therefore, the impact component was changed to allow anticipated impacts as well as actual impacts, and additional ideas for documenting this were added to the informational workshop. A requirement to include a letter from the community partner was added with specific guidance on speaking to impact. Finally, emphasis was added to more closely linking the student's stated engagement philosophy to their discipline as well as to the write-up of their project activities to show that the student's understanding of what community-engaged practice should entail was being incorporated in their actual work.

Next Steps

As it moves into Year 2 and beyond, UGA's Community Engagement Portfolio continues to attract student interest. Although the initial submissions were primarily from graduate students at the end of their degree programs, a positive step has been the noticeable uptick in the number of students who have just started their degree programs and are interested in considering what sorts of portfolio projects they can incorporate into their programs. We anticipate that this change will continue to enhance the quality and depth of the projects submitted and will also allow the graduate students more opportunities to intentionally link their course of study to community-engaged practice. As additional graduate coursework in service-learning and community engagement is offered on UGA's campus, one eventual goal is to transition from the non-credit-based portfolio to a more rigorous, course-based certificate model—a transformation that has already happened with UGA's teaching certificate and portfolio. Campuswide, our hope is that the portfolio and certificate will be joined by other institutional supports for graduate students, including an enhanced set of courses (such as a possible new course in community-engaged research); potential additional recognitions for graduate student engaged work (e.g., a dissertation award); and continued growth in collaborations between graduate programs and other Public Service and Outreach units through graduate fellowships, internships, and other opportunities.

Michigan State University

Known as "the nation's pioneer land-grant university" *(Beekman, 2005, p. 21)* Michigan State University (MSU) has a strong commitment to community engagement. This large public Research University/Very High Research Activity institution is home to approximately 36,700 undergraduate and 10,250 graduate students, as well as 5,000 faculty and academic staff. In 2005, MSU became one of the first institutions to receive the Carnegie Foundation classification as a community-engaged institution, and it continues to collaborate with a number of organizations that focus on engaged scholarship as central to their mission: Campus Compact, TRUCEN, APLU, and the Engagement Scholarship Consortium.

President Lou Anna K. Simon continues to call for excellence in community-engaged scholarship at research-intensive land-grant universities. They "collaborate with their partners to play critical roles in empowering individuals and the communities in which they live and work" *(Simon, 2010, p. 99)*. She also noted that the main challenge for higher education today is to improve quality of life "for all people through clean and sustainable energy, access to quality education, safe and plentiful food, affordable health care, an enduring sense of humanity, and undaunted hope" *(p. 99)*. At MSU, the reciprocal goal of using cutting-edge knowledge to power and empower communities and to engage with and be empowered by the ideas, energy, and support of communities is at the heart of partnership development and community engagement.

Program History/Milestones

MSU's Office of University Outreach and Engagement (UOE) fosters the land-grant mission by connecting university knowledge with community knowledge in mutually beneficial ways. UOE provides resources to assist academic departments, centers, and institutes, as well as MSU Extension, on priority issues of concern to society by encouraging, supporting, and collaborating with MSU faculty and academic staff to generate, apply, transmit, and preserve knowledge. UOE advocates for a model of outreach and engagement that fosters a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship between the university and the public and promotes the scholarly aspect of community engagement by emphasizing both the scholarly foundations that inform community engagement and the scholarly and public products that are generated as a result of community-engaged work.

The history of the creation and implementation of the Graduate Certification in Community Engagement begins with UOE's creation in 2006 of an undergraduate curriculum for community engagement called Tools of Engagement (ToE). This curriculum outlined five key components of MSU's view of community engagement by addressing the history and importance of community engagement at MSU, issues of power and privilege, methods of quality collaboration, successful negotiation, and introduction of the concept of capacity building. During the final months of collaboration, the creators of ToE began to think of creating an advanced set of tools for juniors/seniors, and this idea led to discussion of a graduate program, which in turn led to collaboration with the Graduate School and a proposal patterned after the existing Graduate Certification in College Teaching. In 2008, the Graduate Certification in Community Engagement was approved by Academic Governance as a transcriptable, not-for-credit certification program. Since it is not-for-credit, no tuition fees are charged for the program.

MSU's Graduate Certification in Community Engagement

Michigan State University's Graduate Certification in Community Engagement is an initiative of University Outreach and Engagement and the Graduate School; it is based on decades of practical experience working with community partners and is aligned with nationally recognized core engagement competencies. UOE faculty and staff have developed the certification to strengthen and enhance the multidisciplinary skills needed for exemplary community-engaged scholarship and practice.

The certification is designed to help graduate and professional students develop systemic, scholarly, and respectful approaches to their community-engaged work. With approval from their guidance committee chairperson and University Outreach and Engagement, students tailor their program of study to strengthen their scholarly and practical skills in community-engaged research and creative activities, community-engaged teaching and learning, community-engaged service, and/or community-engaged commercialization activities. To complete the certification, students must show mastery of core engagement competencies, complete a 60-hour mentored community engagement experience, and write and present an engagement portfolio. Students who fulfill all requirements receive a letter of congratulations from the associate provost for university outreach and engagement, an official nota-

tion on their academic transcript, and a certificate of completion from MSU's Office of the Registrar.

Program Components

Core competency seminars. The first requirement is mastery of the core engagement competencies. In Years 1, 2, and 3 of the program, the six required core competencies were based on the wisdom of UOE faculty and staff with years of practical experience as community-engaged scholars and on evaluation data and feedback from students in the program. Between Years 3 and 4 of the program, the core competencies were brought into alignment with core engagement competencies described in the professional development literature for community engagement *(Blanchard et al., 2009; Blanchard, Strauss, & Web, 2012; Jameson, Clayton, Jaeger, & Bringle, 2012)*. The number of required core competencies expanded from the original six to 14. The two cross-cutting themes—ethics and diversity—are addressed in multiple seminars and are required in students' portfolios. Table 2 summarizes these changes over time.

Table 2. MSU's Changes in Core Engagement Competencies Over Time

Core competency by year	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Foundations of community-engaged scholarship	●	●	●	●	●
Variations in community-engaged scholarship				●	●
Initiating community-engaged partnerships	●	●	●	●	●
Sustaining community-engaged partnerships	●		●		●
Techniques for community engagement				●	●
Community-engaged research and creative activity	●	●	●	●	●
Community-engaged teaching and learning					●
Capacity building for sustained change	●	●	●	●	●
Systems approaches to community change				●	●
Evaluation of community partnerships	●	●	●	●	●
Critical reflections on identity and culture				●	●
Communicating with public audiences				●	●
Scholarly skills—grant-writing and publishing				●	●

Ethics and community engagement		●	●	cross	cross
Working with diverse communities		●	●	cross	cross

Students usually fulfill the core competency requirement by attending 2-hour workshops coordinated by UOE. The workshops are offered on an annual basis, Friday afternoons during fall and spring semesters. Students who have completed coursework that addresses a particular core engagement competency may ask to have the syllabi, reading lists, and assignments evaluated as potential alternatives to the required seminars.

Mentored community engagement experience. The second requirement is the mentored community engagement experience. This experience is an opportunity to collaborate with a community partner and a faculty mentor on a community engagement project. The goal is to implement core engagement concepts and practices introduced in the core competency seminars and to gain practical experience collaborating with community partners. Students may use any form of community-engaged scholarship including community-engaged research and creative activities, community-engaged teaching and learning, community-engaged service, and/or community-engaged commercialization activities. To receive approval for the Graduate Certification in Community Engagement requirement, the proposed experience must

- meet MSU's definition of community-engaged scholarship;

- be based on a body of scholarship and generate academic and public products;

- be collaboratively undertaken with community partner(s) and a faculty mentor;

- involve significant, direct interaction between the student and community partner;

- include reflection on communication, collaboration, and partnering skills with a faculty mentor or member of UOE faculty and staff;

- include critical feedback from the community partner about the collaboration;

- be 60 hours at the minimum; and

- be approved in advance by the program coordinator.

For the majority of students, the mentored community engagement experience is associated with their graduate degree program and may be a practicum, internship, thesis or dissertation research, graduate assistantship, teaching responsibilities, or work experience—as long as it meets MSU's definition of community-engaged scholarship. The mentored community engagement experience may be, but does not have to be, a new or additional community-based project.

Students are expected to keep an activity log of hours and tasks they complete as part of their mentored community engagement experience. This log is included in their written engagement portfolios. In addition, students are expected to reflect critically on their experience with their community partners and faculty mentor and gather feedback from them. This critical feedback may take different forms depending on the circumstances (e.g., dialogue, letter, e-mail) and is included in the written engagement portfolio.

Written engagement portfolio and presentation. The third requirement is the written engagement portfolio and presentation. In Years 1, 2, and 3 of the program, guidelines for the written portfolio and the presentation were the same and were based on the scholarship on outreach portfolios for faculty and administrators *(Driscoll & Lynton, 1999; Johnson, Sabrina Mims-Cox, & Doyle-Nichols, 2009; Jordan, 1997; Michigan State University, 1996; Seldin & Higgerson, 2002; Seldin & Miller, 2008)*. In essence, the portfolio and presentation were intended as opportunities for students to

- reflect on the scholarship and practice of community engagement;

- document their community-engaged scholarship methodically, including processes, outcomes, and evidence related to their collaboration with community partners;

- solicit critical feedback from community partners and faculty mentors on their perspectives about their community collaboration;

- gather new and supporting materials to present for peer review;

- generate new insights through reflective writing; and

- practice talking about their community-engaged scholarship or practice.

Between Years 3 and 4, the UOE faculty committee and project coordinator decided to make an explicit distinction between expectations for written portfolios and portfolio presentations. As a result, portfolio guidelines were changed, and a core competency seminar about critical reflection was added to the list of required core competency seminars. In the critical reflection seminar, students are asked to relate to concepts and ideas in their fields/disciplines and to reflect upon how they view themselves as part of a larger community and tackle issues such as power and privilege. Engaging in reflective practice is important as a process by which students can learn through and from experience and move toward gaining new insights into themselves and their practice *(Boud & Fales, 1983; Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Jarvis, 1992; Mezirow, 1981).*

Since Year 4, the engagement portfolio has been composed of two parts: written portfolio and portfolio presentation. For the written portfolio, students are expected to demonstrate mastery of all core engagement competencies, document their mentored community engagement experience (including feedback from their community partners and faculty mentor), critically reflect on their experience, and support their reflections with additional materials and evidence as appendices. For the portfolio presentation, students are expected to tell their personal engagement story, discuss two core competencies that were particularly meaningful, document their mentored community engagement experience, critically reflect on their experience, and discuss future directions for their community-engaged scholarship or practice. The autobiographical approach embodied in the portfolio presentations is guided by the scholarship on professional identity formation in graduate education *(Applegate, 2002; Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Ellison & Eatman, 2008; O'Meara, 2011).*

Portfolio presentations take place at the end of each semester, during the summer, or at ad hoc times throughout the year. Written portfolios are due to the program coordinator and UOE committee one week before the presentation date. The program coordinator works with students to schedule portfolio presentations when UOE faculty, staff, and students are available to listen to the students' presentations and reflect with them on their experiences. See Projects 4, 5, and 6 for descriptions of successfully completed portfolios at MSU.

Project 4: Central Michigan Restorative Justice Project

Focusing on community-engaged service, a master's degree candidate in community services from the Department of Family and Child Ecology (now the Department of Human Development and Family Studies) collaborated with eight local school districts to offer a restorative justice program. This program is a facilitated intervention process designed to help students, parents, teachers, and others resolve conflicts and develop a sense of community. This graduate student then conducted an evaluation of the program's success and because of this work is now working with the local Department of Education to rewrite the State Board of Education's school discipline policy and model code of student conduct.

Project 5: Improving Girls' Sports Programming With Detroit Police Athletic League

Responding to a community partner need and request, a Ph.D. candidate in kinesiology used the tenets of community-engaged research to partner with the Detroit Police Athletic League and the Institute for Youth Sports. She conducted four focus groups with girls to explore why they were not participating in the sports programming as much as boys. She shared these findings in briefings and newsletters for coaches to change the messages that girls received to encourage participation. This collaboration resulted in the year 2013 becoming the "Year of the Girl."

Project 6: Service-Learning With the Capital Area Community Media Center

Teaching an undergraduate service-learning course, a Ph.D. candidate in writing, rhetoric, and American studies implemented core concepts of community-engaged teaching and learning. He partnered with the Capital Area Community Media Center, where his students investigated and analyzed the place of community media in American culture as well as making media projects to serve local community organizations. Their team projects included a website redesign plan, a video about a community garden, short video clips with

garden tips, advertising materials, and a Powerpoint presentation with briefing materials.

Outcomes

During the MSU program's first 5 years, over 100 graduate and professional students and other approved learners applied for admission to the program. In Year 1, 18 learners were admitted into the program through an application process with a strict September deadline. In Year 5, 39 learners were admitted into the program through a fall application process coupled with a rolling admissions basis for learners who heard about the program after the September deadline. Annual enrollment has more than doubled in 5 years. Table 3 summarizes each cohort by degree, college, engagement pathway, and portfolio status. The few students who submitted portfolios but were not awarded the certification were invited to revise and resubmit their portfolios.

Table 3. MSU's Descriptive Information on Cohort and Portfolio Submissions

Year	Degree	n	College	n	Engagement Pathway	n	Status	n
2009-2010 n = 17	Master's	8	Ag. & Nat.Res.	5	Engaged research	5	Did not complete program	3
	Ph.D.	9	Arts & Letters	2	Engaged creative activity	0	Declared intent to submit	0
	Other	1	Education	3	Engaged teaching and learning	5	Submitted, not awarded	1
			Social Science	6			Submitted, awarded	13
			Other	1	Engaged service	3		
					Engaged commercialized activity	0		
2010-2011 n = 18	Master's	11	Ag. & Nat. Res.	5	Engaged research	3	Did not complete program	11
	Ph.D.	6	Arts & Letters	3	Engaged creative activity	0	Declared intent to submit	
	Other	1	Com. Arts & Sci.	1	Engaged teaching and learning	1	Submitted, not awarded	0
			Education	3			Submitted, awarded	0
			Nursing	1	Engaged service	3		7
			Social Science	4	Engaged comercialized activity	0		
			Other	1				
2011-2012 n = 16	Master's	10	Ag. & Nat. Res.	4	Engaged research	1	Did not complete program	7
	Ph.D.	6	Education	3	Engaged creative activity	0	Declared intent to submit	5
	Other	0	Social Science	9	Engaged teaching and learning	2	Submitted, not awarded	0
					Engaged service	1	Submitted, awarded	4
					Engaged commercialized activity	0		

2012-2013 n = 26	Master's Ph.D. Other	12 8 6	Ag. & Nat. Res. Arts & Letters Education Human Medicine Music Social Science Other	7 1 2 1 1 8 6	Engaged research Engaged creative activity Engaged teaching and learning Engaged service Engaged commercialized activity	1 0 2 3 0	Did not complete program Declared intent to submit Submitted, not awarded Submitted, awarded	7 13 0 6
2013-2014 n = 38	Master's Ph.D. Other	15 17 6	Ag. & Nat. Res. Arts & Letters Education Engineering Music	8 2 10 1 1	Engaged research Engaged creative activity Engaged teaching and learning Engaged service Engaged commercialized activity	0 0 1 3 0	Did not complete program Declared intent to submit Submitted, not awarded Submitted, awarded	0 34 0 4

Early Lessons Learned

When the Graduate Certification in Community Engagement was originally designed, the faculty committee and program coordinator expected that the majority of our learners would be Ph.D. students aspiring to tenure-track faculty positions. In Year 1, readings, examples, and seminars focused on community-engaged research, particularly in the social sciences. However, it became clear almost immediately that our expectations did not match the learners attracted to the program. Since Year 1, the program coordinator has worked to broaden the perspectives and examples to better reflect the career aspirations and disciplinary backgrounds of our learners. For example, seminars now include presentations by MSU Extension faculty, service-learning professionals, and community partners from nongovernmental organizations. The curriculum incorporates examples of community-engaged creative activities to accommodate our community-engaged artists, musicians, and writers. Examples of international community engagement have been expanded to address cross-cultural and ethical issues raised by domestic students who aspire to work overseas and by the international students studying at MSU. At the beginning of Year 5, the program coordinator instituted a preprogram survey for incoming learners to better understand their interests and aspirations. The results of this survey are shared with seminar teams so that they may modify their presentations to accommodate the learners.

Over time, the faculty committee and program coordinator have improved the approach to teaching and learning. In Years 1

and 2, the curriculum relied heavily on assigned readings, stand-and-deliver lectures during the seminars, and postseminar assignments as ways of stimulating learning about community-engaged scholarship. By Year 5, the seminars have transitioned to more active learning strategies, with the Friday sessions seeming more like workshops than traditional graduate student seminars. The seminars continue to have assigned readings, but they have been refocused to ensure that connections between theory and practice are clearer. As a result, the core competency seminars include active learning strategies such as think-pair-share, small group activities, scenarios or case studies, and dialogue circles. The program has discontinued postseminar assignments and now relies on students to provide their own evidence of learning core competencies in their portfolios.

Next Steps

As MSU's Graduate Certification in Community Engagement moves into Year 6 and beyond, the faculty committee and the program coordinator have identified three main areas for continued attention and improvement. First, the faculty committee and program coordinator are committed to developing authentic and constructive ways for community partners to provide critical feedback on the students' mentored community engagement experiences and their portfolio presentations. Parallel to the national conversation about how to incorporate community partner perspectives into peer review processes in publishing and promotion and tenure, the program organizers believe that community partners' views are crucial in determining quality, excellence, and impact of community-engaged scholarship in our graduate certification program. Our current process is loosely organized and generates supportive but vague feedback. If the program is serious about authentically partnering with community members, a more purposeful community partner feedback process will need to attend to power differences and be sensitive to time commitments. Second, almost from the beginning of the program, the program was in demand from non-campus-based learners. Some requests come from MSU students at other campuses in Michigan and beyond; other requests come from community partners who are interested in earning a credential in community engagement. The faculty committee and program coordinator will need to consider how to accommodate these learning requests in ways that do not compromise the important learning that comes from in-person dialogue about experiences, situations, and contexts that shape authentic and respectful

community-engaged scholarship. Finally, as the program continues to recruit and certify graduate students, an intentional strategy will be needed for keeping alumni connected to the program and to one another and to support them as they transition from engaged scholars or practitioners to positions of influence and leadership within their organizations and institutions.

Considerations for Your Institution

Through conversations between UGA and MSU, the authors have come to realize that professional development in community-engaged scholarship for graduate students may take many forms and may emphasize different aspects of partnership, collaboration, and scholarship. The authors offer the following reflections and questions for you to consider at your own institution.

- **Build upon what already works at your institution.** At UGA, the Office of Service-Learning took the lead in developing for-credit courses coupled with a written portfolio modeled after a teaching portfolio. In contrast, at MSU, the certification was modeled after an existing not-for-credit certification program for college teaching, approved by Academic Governance. Consider: What is the appropriate format, given your institution's organizational structure and culture? What office(s) might be the best place to house your professional development program?

- **Start small and grow the program over time.** At both UGA and MSU, a small number of learners entered during the first few years, followed by increasing enrollment from many departments across campus. This gradual program launch permitted program leaders to focus on formative evaluation and responsive curricular improvements. Consider: What is an acceptable number of learners to start with? How fast do you want to grow your program? Is there a limit on enrollment in the program, especially to maintain excellence and quality? What is your plan to collect feedback and make necessary changes?

- **Identify and involve key supporters from the start.** At UGA, a faculty member from a STEM discipline was involved from the beginning. At MSU, University Outreach and Engagement partnered with the graduate school to ensure the program's success. Consider:

Who are key collaborating units on campus? Who are your champions within the faculty and staff?

- **Connect with other program leaders and with the scholarship.** At both UGA and MSU, program leaders benefited from conversations with others who lead professional development programs in community engagement. UGA's program leaders held multiple conversations with MSU colleagues to learn what was working and to vet ideas. At MSU, significant revisions in the core competencies helped to align with best practices in the scholarship. Consider: With whom can you compare notes? Who has set up a similar program? What unanticipated issues did they deal with? How might you avoid them at your institution? What are currently published best practices? Do they make sense at your institution, with your learners?

- **Clarify your expectations of the students.** At UGA, the development of a portfolio rubric helped to clarify the differences between failing and exceeding the requirements. At MSU, important distinctions between the written portfolio and the presentation were clarified. MSU added a seminar on critical reflection to reinforce the importance of critical reflection in the portfolios. Consider: What do quality, excellence, and impact look like in your program? How will you know it when you see it? How can you make those expectations explicit to your learners? How will you resolve disagreements?

- **Build in flexibility.** Graduate students' learning journeys are not linear or lockstep. At both UGA and MSU, the program coordinators had to build in flexibility regarding length of time in the program, type of engagement project, and opportunities to revise submitted portfolios. Consider: Can your record-keeping system accommodate students who participate some of the time and then return to complete the program? How are you balancing high standards of excellence with opportunities to learn and grow through your program, especially if a portfolio is required?

- **Employ principles of engagement.** At both UGA and MSU, program coordinators gathered input from

various faculty and potential students during the design phase. Continuous constructive feedback has improved both programs, especially during the first few years. Consider: How might you involve potential learners, community partners, and organizational champions in the design and implementation of your program? Once your program is launched, how might you continue to involve them in evaluation and ongoing learning?

- **Celebrate graduate student success.** At both UGA and MSU, graduate students who complete the respective professional development programs in community engagement receive recognition for their achievements. Consider: How might you formally recognize successful students' excellence in community engagement? Does your institution permit notations in the graduation program or on the transcript? What kind of letter of congratulations is possible?

O'Meara and Jaeger *(2006)* asserted that "[e]ach department and discipline must ascertain what integrating engagement into their doctoral programs should look like and find critical experiences and windows that make the most sense for the content and framework of that discipline" *(p. 5)*; by the same token, no "one size fits all" solution for graduate student professional development programs is appropriate across all institutional contexts. Nonetheless, we, the authors, hope that descriptions of our two professional development programs for graduate students spark your thinking and help you envision what might be possible at your institution.

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development, and implementation of the Graduate Certification over the past 5 years.

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