Imparting the Skills Employers Seek:
Community-Engaged Learning as Career Preparation

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the potential for postsecondary community-based educational experiences to impart the skills employers most desire from new college graduates. We gathered one U.S. university's community-engaged learning (CEL) stakeholders to collect detailed descriptions of the behaviors students practice during CEL. Students, faculty, and community partner participants had at least one semester of service-learning or nonprofit internship experience coordinated by the university's Center for Community Work and Learning. Qualitative responses generated from 46 participants were coded and then compared to the top skills business executives and hiring managers reported in 2018 as priorities for new college graduates. Data analysis yielded clearer understanding of the intersection between career readiness and CEL, as well as a potential tool to aid students in better articulating the skills they gain from CEL to future employers.

Keywords: career readiness, community-engaged learning, civic engagement, service-learning, nonprofit internships

A troubling dichotomy challenging American postsecondary education is the notion that either we must focus on career preparation through vocational training, or we can focus on developing students as intellectuals and citizens. Post-recession economic pressures and the increasing politicization of higher education issues have fueled polarization on the value and purpose of a college education (Parker, 2019). As Evans, Marsicano, and Lennartz (2018) observe, "Despite the civic purpose of colleges and universities, postsecondary policy discussions have prioritized private labor market outcomes over public benefits…suggest[ing] a higher education landscape in which civic engagement has taken a backseat to preparation for the labor market" (p. 1). Although this dichotomy has real consequences for colleges and universities, we argue it is false, especially when applied to the pedagogy of community-engaged learning (CEL). To do so, we captured what actual stakeholders in CEL—students, faculty, and community partners—report as behaviors practiced by students during their CEL experiences. Then, we compared these behaviors to recent reports on the skills employers seek from new college graduates. This work resulted in better understanding of the intersection between career readiness and CEL, an additional justification for institutional prioritization of CEL, and a concrete vocabulary to assist students in communicating career skills gained from CEL experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community-engaged learning (CEL) is a curricular or co-curricular model whereby students' academic learning is enhanced by institutionally-coordinated experiences in the broader community. While activity classified as CEL and related terminology can vary across institutions (Holland, 1999), this study focuses on CEL in two forms: 1) service-learning courses, and 2) community-based internships managed by our university's Center for Community Work and Learning.

There is a vast literature spanning multiple decades on service-learning, community-based learning, and other "high-impact" educational models (Kuh, 2008). Within this literature, findings have emerged concerning student and alumni perceptions of the influence of CEL on their professional development and career path (Engberg, Carrera, & Mika, 2018; Fullerton, Reitenauer, & Kerrigan, 2015). However, research focused specifically on the benefits of community-based learning for student workforce preparation remains nascent. This study builds on a small but growing body of literature that supports service-learning as beneficial to vocational outcomes (Weidner, Stone, Latimer-Cheung, & Tomasone, 2018), workplace skills (Peterson, Wardwell, Will, & Campana, 2014), and career development (Hart, 2016; Karlsson, 2016). While the aforementioned scholarship provides a justification for continued exploration of the relationship between CEL experiences and career preparation, to date no study has mapped CEL-fostered student behaviors onto the skills most valued by employers.

To do this mapping, we drew from two key frameworks, both published by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). The first is the Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric developed in 2009 for "institutional use in evaluating and discussing student learning [outcomes]" from participation in "community-based learning through service-learning classes, community-based research, or service within the community" (AAC&U, 2009, n.p.). One of 16 rubrics developed by AAC&U, this tool outlines criteria for assessing student achievement in the following learning outcome categories: 1) diversity of communities and cultures, 2) analysis of knowledge, 3) civic identity and commitment, 4) civic communication, 5) civic action and reflection, and 6) civic contexts/structures. The rubric is a useful and well-developed tool for evaluating an individual student's work. Yet, in order to understand the extent to which CEL facilitates student development of career-related skills, we needed more descriptive, behavior-based language generated directly from our institution's CEL stakeholders. As such, we used these six empirically-supported learning outcomes to create a research instrument to get at the unique manifestation and language of these outcomes as experienced by our CEL students, faculty, and community partners.

The second guiding framework is an AAC&U and Hart Research Associates (2018) report that surveyed 1,001 hiring managers and business executives to determine how this audience perceives the skills and abilities of new college graduates. The report concluded that:

> The skill and knowledge areas of greatest importance to both business executives and hiring managers when hiring include oral communication, critical thinking, ethical judgment, working effectively in teams, working independently, self-motivation, written communication, and real-world application of skills and knowledge (each ranked by large majorities as very important, with a rating of 8, 9, or 10 on a 0-to-10 scale) (p. 11).

This survey is not the only research suggesting that the skills today's employers want from new college graduates are also those that might traditionally be labeled as "soft skills" (Bauer-Wolf, 2019; Hom, 2019).

In a survey for Cengage Learning of more than 650 hiring managers and human resources professionals conducted online in September 2018, employers reported wanting new college graduates to possess "human skills" that can't be replicated by automation, with communication skills, listening skills, critical thinking skills, and interpersonal skills cited as the most important (Ashford, 2019). Another survey of 500 company executives conducted by High Point University in North Carolina in December 2018 reinforced the fact that employers want institutions of higher education to impart life skills such as motivation, emotional intelligence, and the ability to solve problems (High Point University, 2019). However, this same survey reported that 67 percent of executives believe that colleges are better at teaching technical skills than these desired life skills (High Point University, 2019; Hom, 2019).

Based on extant CEL literature and the AAC&U Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric outcomes, we hypothesize that the skills most valued by employers are those that students hone during CEL experiences. In an environment where higher education institutions must navigate "career-ready education" demands (Blumenstyk, 2019) in combination with practical criticisms from employers that undergraduates are unprepared for the workforce (Ashford, 2019), this study argues that CEL simultaneously offers both career preparation *and* civic and intellectual development.

<div align="center">METHODOLOGY</div>

Research Questions

We designed our study to answer the following research questions:

1. How do CEL students, faculty, and community partners describe the behaviors practiced by students during their CEL experiences?

2. Do these behavior descriptions align with the skills most desired by future employers?

Together, these questions address our larger research aim to explore the connection between CEL and career readiness.

Participants

To gather our data, we invited participation from our university's three CEL stakeholder groups: nonprofit community partners who supervise our service-learning and community-based internship students; faculty who teach service-learning courses; and undergraduate and master's students who participate in service-learning or our community-based internship program. Our inclusion criteria required CEL engagement for at least one semester during the past academic year; however, our Center for Community Work and Learning estimated that a majority of the students, faculty, and community partners invited had more than one semester's worth of CEL experience at the institution. After obtaining IRB approval to conduct this research with human subjects, we recruited participants via email using a list from our Center for Community Work and Learning of over 300 university stakeholders that met our inclusion criteria. Participants were offered a $10 gift card for taking part in the research.

Data Collection and Survey Design

Our first goal was to capture descriptions of the behaviors that our students practice when participating in community-engaged learning. To capture these descriptions, we designed and facilitated three one-hour, in-person data-gathering sessions on our university's campus in spring 2018. In these sessions, participants from all three stakeholder groups first engaged in a large-group introduction icebreaker. This icebreaker was followed by a priming activity completed in small groups, and then individual

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completion of our qualitative survey instrument on computers in an adjacent computer lab. Both the board game priming activity and the survey instrument were piloted in advance by approximately 20 students in a psychology service-learning class and four student workers in our university's Center for Community Work and Learning.

Priming Activity: A CEL Board Game

As we designed our survey instrument, our concern was that participants would not provide the descriptive language or specific examples we were seeking when they answered our computer-based qualitative survey. To address this concern, we developed a priming activity in the format of a board game. According to Lavrakas (2008), "priming works by making the activated concept accessible so that it can be readily used in evaluating related objects." Our hope was that by first engaging participants in a game thematically based on CEL student experiences, participants would be more prepared to provide detailed responses about CEL student behaviors when completing our survey.

When participants arrived at the session, we directed them to sit in tables of three to four, with at least one community partner, one faculty, and one student. Each table was provided a game board, dice, several player pawns, and scenario question cards. These scenario question cards were drafted by the researchers to correspond with the student learning outcome categories of the AAC&U Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric. For each of the six categories, six to eight scenario questions were developed (see Appendix A for examples). Once seated, all participants were instructed to pretend to be a CEL student while playing the game. For 25 minutes and without intervention from the researchers, participants took turns going through the following actions: 1) rolling the dice, 2) moving their player pawns the number of spaces rolled, 3) picking up a card with the color corresponding to the game board spot their pawn landed on, 4) reading the card scenario out loud to the

other players at their table, and 5) answering the question from the perspective of a CEL student to the best of their ability before a one-minute timer expired. When the 25 minutes were over, the researchers had participants stop the game and announce which player had gotten the furthest on the board from each table. Participants were then asked to gather their things and follow the researchers to a nearby computer lab where our online survey was preloaded on each machine. Participants completed the survey while on site, and then departed.

Survey Instrument

We designed six survey questions based on the Capstone-level descriptions of the six AAC&U Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric student learning outcomes. For each of these questions, we asked participants to provide three examples of what a CEL student says when demonstrating the outcome, and three examples of how a CEL student behaves when demonstrating the outcome. For example, to address the VALUE Rubric category *Civic Contexts and Structures*, the survey asked participants:

> Describe what it looks like *when a student collaboratively works across and within community contexts and structures to achieve a civic aim.* What does the student say and do? What are 3 examples of what a student might say? What are 3 examples of how a student would behave?

All six questions had a similar structure, prompting examples of spoken and action-based behaviors participants viewed as demonstrations of these outcomes (see Appendix B for the full list of questions).

A unique Qualtrics survey composed of three of the six questions was created for each data-gathering session. Limiting the surveys to three of the six total questions ensured that participants had enough time to draft comprehensive responses to each prompt.

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Every question was included in either one or two of the three total sessions. In each data-gathering session, participants answered survey questions from the same three categories of the VALUE Rubric that their priming board game scenario questions addressed.

Identifying Alignment with Employer-Valued Skills

As we were using the AAC&U Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric as our framework for designing survey questions, we opted to also use the AAC&U and Hart Research Associates (2018) employer survey for consistency in perspective. Specifically, we utilized data on the top eight "learning priorities that executives and hiring managers value most highly across majors" (Hart Research Associates, 2018, p. 12). These abilities were ones that over 75% of respondents identified as "very important skills for recent college graduates we are hiring" (Hart Research Associates, 2018, p. 12).

Data Analysis

Analysis of the survey data involved two stages. The first was an inductive coding stage where both researchers independently analyzed the data to identify the qualitative themes and key behavioral terms associated with each question category. We had strong convergence on our perceptions of themes after our initial review using this method. This convergence in our themes suggested that we could proceed to our second stage of data analysis, which utilized a deductive method to code the themes and terms from the first round according to the eight career skills employers most desire from new college graduates per the AAC&U and Hart Research Associates (2018) report.

RESULTS

The study had 46 participants, with 21 community partners, 16 faculty, and nine students. The surveys administered during the three data-gathering sessions yielded approximately 16 single-spaced pages of descriptions of the behaviors students practice in CEL experiences. After completing both stages of data analysis, we identified six of the Hart Research themes present in our data:

- The ability to communicate effectively orally
- Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills
- Ethical judgment and decision-making
- The ability to work effectively with others in teams
- Self-motivated, initiative, proactive, ideas and solutions
- The ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings

We must note that two categories from the Hart Research study did not seem prominent in our data: working independently and written communication. While we believe that these skills are practiced by students in some community-engaged learning experiences, we set aside these categories to focus on the six top-tier college learning outcomes that are most strongly supported by our survey responses.

As we organized our data into the six categories listed above, we noted that one top-tier learning outcome listed in the Hart Research Associates (2018) report seemed different from the others. The outcome labeled "Self-motivated, initiative, proactive, ideas and solutions" seemed to list specific qualities rather than providing a more abstract description of learning outcomes. We concluded that these qualities are strongly associated with leadership, and labeled our data category associated with this top-tier college learning outcome accordingly.

The organization of data into six categories corresponding with the top-tier learning outcomes reported by Hart Research (2018) yielded an additional pattern within the data. We found that we could identify

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behavior-based subcategories of skills in the survey responses in each of the six categories (Table 1.)

In the data we coded as related to oral communication, we could clearly place responses into two specific behaviors: listening and talking. For example, survey responses that clearly supported *listening* as a subcategory of oral communication included: "Listen attentively, wait for others to get their ideas together, 'lean in'" and "Actively listen to the cares and concerns of those they are in relationship with." In the same oral comm-

unication category, examples of survey responses that support the subcategory related to *talking* included: "Speak at community meetings articulating their position and ideas" and "A student would initiate conversations with stakeholders, beginning with representatives from the community."

In the data related to critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills, we could identify the behaviors of analysis, connections, and knowledge. Examples of survey responses that we included in the subcategory *analysis* were: "Students might

Table 1. *Learning Outcomes and Specific Behaviors Present in Data*

Top-Tier College Learning Outcome	Subcategories Within Data
The ability to communicate effectively orally	listening
	talking
Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills	analysis
	connections
	knowledge
Ethical judgment and decision-making	empathy
	self-awareness
	evidence-based decisions
The ability to work effectively with others in teams	collaborating
	motivating others
Leadership*	self-motivated
	initiative/proactive
	ideas and solutions
The ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings	improved class performance
	application
	future decisions

* This category is the one with the abstract label for the top-tier college learning outcome that we applied, with the skills associated drawn from the way this category was described to employers in the Hart Research Associates (2018) report.

say that they went into the site to analyze the meaning of place and space at the community site" and "Students would be able to analyze the challenges, barriers, and successes that their initiative has had and would be able to problem-solve potential new solutions to try in the near future." We created the subcategory called *connections* to identify the common theme in survey responses like these: "Find connections and linkages between the things they care about and what others care about. (i.e. racial and environmental justice)" and "Look for connections between different ideas and areas of work in their experiences." The *knowledge* subcategory in the critical thinking group of survey responses includes these and other similar examples: "A student might claim their knowledge by citing knowledge" and "Do research on the systems and structures that interact with that civic aim (or influence issues in the community)."

A grouping of responses related to ethical judgment and decision-making yielded three specific behaviors: empathy, self-awareness, and evidence-based decision-making. Responses that supported the *empathy* subcategory include: "They were able to humanize complex issues" and "A student would be less likely to judge others who have different beliefs and values than she does." Examples of the survey responses grouped into the subcategory *self-awareness* include: "Students might say that they need to assess their own assumptions and biases, they might say that their world view has expanded" and "When I was in my class, I learned that there were differences in my views and the people I worked with from a different community. I never thought of a position like that before until I took this class." *Evidence-based decision-making* was created as a subcategory to group survey responses like these: "Students would help make decisions of their actions at the site based off of facts or theories they have learned in their program of study" and "Might become well versed in key statistics surrounding the issue."

The data related to the ability to work effectively in teams could clearly be separated into the two behavior areas of collaborating and motivating others. Examples of comments from survey respondents that supported the subcategory of *collaborating* included: "They confer with other team members to make decisions that affect the whole group. They always solicit feedback from the group and site leaders. They respond to feedback after some reflection" and "Being able to work well with other team members in a group." The subcategory of *motivating others* includes comments like these: "They encourage others to be open and reach out to different communities and activities outside of their comfort zone" and "Students might talk about the civic activities that they are engaged in and encourage others to get on board with their activity."

For the category we labeled leadership, the behaviors were apparent in the Hart Research (2018) description of the category: self-motivated, initiative/proactive, and ideas and solutions. The subcategory of *self-motivated* was supported by survey responses like these: "1) confidence in leadership ability 2) self motivated" and "I have grown as a leader and student based on the responsibilities I was given and welcomed new situations and issues I have not been exposed to before." Examples of responses in the subcategory *initiative/proactive* include: "The student showing leadership would jump up and dive right in—not sitting back and waiting for someone else to take charge. She would be very interested and open to learning about the goals of the organization, asking questions" and "Present strong leadership skills by taking charge, having owner-ship/accountability for matters and having a strong work ethic to carry out an effective and successful team." The subcategory of *ideas/solutions* includes responses like these: "The student may offer an example of how he/she/they were presented with a problem or obstacle at a service-learning site and how they overcame that obstacle" and "She would volunteer insights and observations at the close of the activity about its impact which show thoughtful integration and analysis."

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In the data related to the ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings, we identified three specific skills outcomes in the data: improved class performance, application of class concepts, and future decisions. Responses that led us to create the subcategory *improved class performance* include: "They would be more attentive in class knowing that there is a practical use for what they are learning. They would be more engaged in the class" and "A student may show more interest in a particular subject matter in the classroom." Examples of survey responses grouped in the subcategory *application of class concepts* include: "1) I'm taking a class on x this semester, and I've been able to use a lot of what I'm learning here. 2) It's really helpful to practice the ideas we're learning in class. 3) I love seeing how what I'm learning applies in the real world" and "I was able to apply what I was learning in class to a real world situation." The *future decisions* subcategory includes survey responses like these: "Adapt their current or future career to incorporate the greater awareness they developed in their service-based learning" and "Take the learning with them into their future career path as a stronger advocate and ally."

Overall, the responses to our survey from CEL students, faculty, and community partners described the behaviors practiced by students during their CEL experiences as being relevant to both personal growth and preparation for career. These behavior descriptions clearly align with the skills that recent reports identify as the ones employers are seeking from new college graduates. Therefore, we have answered our two research questions and achieved our larger aim of producing evidence of the connection between student learning outcomes from CEL and the abilities employers regard as essential to career readiness.

DISCUSSION

Employers are calling for higher education institutions to better prepare students for the labor force by facilitating their development of soft skills. In fact, a report from LinkedIn Learning (2018) suggests that soft skills, including communication, leadership, and collaboration, are the most important skills that employees at any level should develop in today's labor environment. Our findings suggest student learning outcomes from CEL are closely aligned with the soft skills that employers most desire from new college graduates and all employees. Therefore, we argue that further support for and development of community-engaged learning opportunities for students is one way postsecondary institutions can answer calls to improve students' career readiness.

Limitations

An obvious limitation of our study is that we collected data from only one institution's stakeholders. Related limitations include the inability to generalize findings due to the scale and qualitative design of the study. We recommend researchers at other institutions collect data from their own stakeholders to confirm the findings of this study. A first step toward confirming our findings is to follow our method of using the AAC&U VALUE Rubric Capstone categories as a template for creating survey questions about what students say and do when they participate in a given institution's CEL programming. Another step would be to ask open-ended behavioral questions about what students gain from community-engaged learning without relying on the VALUE Rubric regarding civic engagement as a framework. As we work to gather more data to confirm our findings, we also encourage others to gather stakeholders to generate more evidence regarding student behaviors practiced during CEL and the benefit of CEL for career preparedness.

Implications and Applications

One advantage of CEL as career preparation is that it can be incorporated into curriculum through credit-based internships or service-learning. As Ellerton et al. (2014) note:

> If [higher education institutions] wish to answer the government's call to prepare the modern workforce, we contend that career and technical training work best when supported within the framework of service-learning... [U]nlike internships, service-learning can be readily incorporated into "hard skills" coursework without impacting the program's course or credit load (p. 221).

In other words, community-engaged learning, especially in the format of service-learning, has the advantage of being inclusive of all students who complete the coursework for a program of study.

Of course, community-engaged learning has value as career preparation only to the extent that students recognize the skills they gain from CEL and are able to describe these as evidence of their readiness in career-related communication. The role of faculty and staff should be to name the vocabulary of skills students gain from CEL clearly, and then to coach students on using that vocabulary as students describe their CEL experiences as evidence of their suitability for employment. For example, students who may struggle to think of a specific example of a time when they used effective oral communication during their CEL experiences may be more capable of identifying times when they effectively *talked* or *listened* during their service-learning. Students who encounter employment interview questions about their ability to work effectively in a team can offer specific examples of how they *collaborated* and *motivated others* as part of their community-based internship. When they describe critical thinking experiences as times when they used *analysis, made connections*, or *applied knowledge*, students can provide more behavioral evidence of their critical thinking qualifications for employment. Each of the specific skill areas related to the subcategories found within our data can provide students with an expanded terminology for identifying their own learning outcomes after completing CEL, and a more concrete vocabulary for describing their skill proficiency. Faculty and staff overseeing CEL may support their students' use of and fluency with this vocabulary by integrating these subcategories into CEL reflection activities (see Appendix C for an example).

Work related to VALUE Rubrics by other faculty confirms this suggestion that vocabulary facilitated by instructors is necessary for students to gain the ability to give clear and meaningful answers to questions. Vanover (2018) describes the importance of consistent language in the application of the Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric in history courses at his institution:

> We learned that it was of dire importance that history instructors develop a common and clear language related to citizenship. For example, students struggled to grasp the phrase "social institution" consistently across different sections of the course, and this often led to vague responses to some aspects of the questions. We identified developing a common language among instructors as an area to focus our improvement efforts in the future (para. 8).

If a common, clear language is essential to facilitating effective student responses in classes, a vocabulary for describing career readiness skills is likely to be equally essential to a student's ability to describe community-engaged learning experiences as meaningful evidence of suitability for employment.

As the Hart Research Associates (2018) found,

> Majorities of executives (59%) and hiring managers (53%) say that their companies partner with colleges and universities in some way, most

commonly to offer service-learning opportunities, internships, and/or apprenticeships—underscoring the weight that employers place on applied experience and real-world skills when evaluating college graduates (p. 20).

Since employers value applied experience, job applicants who are able to clearly describe their skills in a community context are likely to have advantages in interviews and other career-related communication. Students who engage in CEL can learn to describe those experiences with a specific vocabulary that highlights the outcomes employers most desire. Therefore, students can gain the maximum possible benefit from participating in CEL by improving their ability to articulate their career readiness resulting from CEL experiences.

This vocabulary of outcomes from community-engaged learning may also have value as another assessment tool to gauge the proficiency of students with skills associated with CEL. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers 2018 Job Outlook Survey, "a high percentage of students indicated in almost every category that they thought they were proficient. Employers disagreed" (Bauer-Wolf, 2018). Students may be overestimating their abilities because of a lack of understanding of what specific skills are associated with general outcomes such as critical thinking or working in teams. For example, a student who may give a quick positive answer when asked if she can apply "ethical judgment and decision-making" may be forced to reflect and consider more carefully when asked to provide examples of times when she showed *empathy,* exhibited *self-awareness*, or used specific *evidence to inform a decision*. Thus, the specific vocabulary of career readiness skills from CEL can serve as a tool to help students discern which skills they have learned or practiced and which skills they have yet to develop, thereby prompting students to recognize more accurately their own strengths

and shortcomings regarding skill proficiency related to career.

CONCLUSION

If those of us who integrate CEL into our work and curriculum do not seek to find evidence-based arguments regarding its value, we leave this high-impact practice vulnerable to losing support from those who seek a stronger emphasis on career training in higher education. Future research should further establish that community-engaged learning is not an "either/or" practice that takes time away from vocational training. Rather, CEL is a "both/and" practice that allows students to enhance their academic learning while at the same time developing the pragmatic soft skills that make them valued members of today's labor force.

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Appendix A
[(Click here to return to text.)](#)

Examples of Board Game Scenario Card Questions

Diversity of Communities and Cultures: *Demonstrates evidence of adjustment in own attitudes and beliefs because of working within and learning from diversity of communities and cultures. Promotes others' engagement with diversity.*

Corresponds with AAC&U Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric Category 1. Questions aimed to get participants thinking and talking about differences in culture and identity.

Example: Another classmate seems reluctant to participate in the community-engaged learning assignment because she's unsure how to talk to someone from another cultural background. What do you say to her?

Analysis of Knowledge: *Connects and extends knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline to civic engagement and to one's own participation in civic life, politics, and government.*

Corresponds with VALUE Rubric Category 2. Questions aimed to get participants thinking and talking about how what is learned in school is connected to other contexts.

Example: During the Thanksgiving break, one of your family members asks you, "How's school going? Are you learning anything that will help you in the 'real world'?" You feel annoyed by this question, and you want to help this person understand that what you do at school is very relevant to being a productive and engaged person in the "real world." What do you say about how your field of study is relevant to living in society?

Civic Identity and Commitment: *Provides evidence of experience in civic engagement activities and describes what she/he has learned about her or himself as it relates to a reinforced and clarified sense of civic identity and continued commitment to public action.*

Corresponds with VALUE Rubric Category 3. Questions aimed to get participants thinking and talking about a clear sense of civic identity and obligation formed from accumulated experiences.

Example: In one of your classes, you are assigned to write an essay describing one experience when you played an important role in your community and did something concrete to make your community better. What do you say in this essay?

Civic Communication: *Tailors communication strategies to effectively express, listen, and adapt to others to establish relationships to further civic action.*

Corresponds with VALUE Rubric Category 4. Questions aimed to get participants thinking and talking about audience analysis and adapting communication to be effective in activism.

Example: As a class assignment, you are spending a few hours tutoring adult English as a second language learners. One of the people you're tutoring notices a button on your backpack

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indicating your support for DACA recipients, and he points at it and smiles. You're not sure if he's indicating that he is himself a DACA recipient or if he just supports the program. What do you say to start a conversation with this person about DACA? How do you respond in that conversation?

Civic Action and Reflection: *Demonstrates independent experience and shows initiative in team leadership of complex or multiple civic engagement activities, accompanied by reflective insights or analysis about the aims and accomplishments of one's actions.*

Corresponds with VALUE Rubric Category 5. Questions aimed to get participants thinking and talking about what it takes to get things done in civic contexts.

Example: A friend of yours insists that there is nothing that can be done about a particular social issue. He says that lobbyists have paid our government leaders so much money that citizens have little ability to influence government leaders. How do you respond to encourage your friend to be socially active despite these factors?

Civic Contexts/Structures: *Demonstrates ability and commitment to collaboratively work across and within community contexts and structures to achieve a civic aim.*

Corresponds with VALUE Rubric Category 6. These questions aim to get participants thinking and talking about the experience of collaborating to advocate for and support a civic issue.

Example: You live in an apartment building with a diverse population of people of different ages and from different cultural communities. You learn that the city council proposes to restrict parking in front of your building, a change that will negatively impact the building's residents. How do you let your neighbors in the building know about this proposed change, and how do you motivate them to act?

Appendix B

Survey Questions for Participants

Question 1. Written to correspond with AAC&U Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric Category 1: *Diversity of Communities and Cultures*

Describe what it looks like when a student demonstrates evidence of adjustment in own attitudes and beliefs because of working with and learning from diverse communities and cultures. What does the student say and do?

- What are 3 examples of what a student might say?
- What are 3 examples of how a student would behave?

Question 2. Written to correspond with VALUE Rubric Category 2: *Analysis of Knowledge*

Describe what it looks like when a student connects and extends knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from the student's own academic field to participation in community engaged learning. What does the student say and do?

- What are 3 examples of what a student might say?
- What are 3 examples of how a student would behave?

Question 3. Written to correspond with VALUE Rubric Category 3: *Civic Identity and Commitment*

Describe what it looks like when a student is able to describe what he/she/they have learned about self from civic engagement, and when a student has a continued commitment to civic engagement after course requirements are complete because his/her/their identity has been changed by community engaged learning. What does the student say and do?

- What are 3 examples of what a student might say?
- What are 3 examples of how a student would behave?

Question 4. Written to correspond with VALUE Rubric Category 4: *Civic Communication*

Describe what it looks like when a student tailors communication strategies to express, listen to, and adapt to others to establish relationships to further civic action. What does the student say and do?

- What are 3 examples of what a student might say?
- What are 3 examples of how a student would behave?

Question 5. Written to correspond with VALUE Rubric Category 5: ***Civic Action and Reflection***

Describe what it looks like when a student shows initiative in team leadership of civic engagement activities and can articulate insights or analysis of the success of these engagement activities. What does the student say and do?

- What are 3 examples of what a student might say?
- What are 3 examples of how a student would behave?

Question 6. Written to correspond with VALUE Rubric Category 6: ***Civic Contexts and Structures***

Describe what it looks like when a student collaboratively works across and within community contexts and structures to achieve a civic aim. What does the student say and do?

- What are 3 examples of what a student might say?
- What are 3 examples of how a student would behave?

Appendix C

**Reflection Questions to Develop Students' Familiarity with
Career Readiness Vocabulary to Describe CEL**

Example questions faculty or staff may use to emphasize career readiness in student reflection assignments regarding community-engaged learning experiences:

- Describe a time during your CEL experience that you used good oral communication skills. In your answer, please give examples of how you practiced asking questions, engaged in good listening, or spoke with others effectively.

- Describe a time during your CEL experience that you worked effectively with others in teams. In your answer, please give examples of times when you effectively collaborated with others or when you motivated or encouraged others to work well together.

- Describe a time during your CEL experience that you applied your knowledge and skills to real world contexts. In your answer, please give examples of times when your experiences in your CEL assignment helped you to perform better in class, times when you applied something you learned in class to what you were doing for your CEL project, or times when your CEL project influenced decisions you made about your major or your career.

- Describe a time during your CEL experience when you practiced ethical judgment and decision-making. In your answer, please give examples of times when you learned or practiced empathy for others, you gained a greater awareness of your own standpoint or the perspectives of others, or you used evidence for arguments you made.

- Describe a time during your CEL experience that you used critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills. In your answer, please give examples of times when you analyzed a situation to know what to do, when you made connections between your knowledge from different contexts, or when you strengthened your knowledge of a subject.

- Describe a time during your CEL experience that you showed leadership. In your answer, please give examples of when you were self-motivated, when you showed initiative or were proactive, or when you contributed ideas and solutions.

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