

Date	June 17, 2026
To	Kenneth Barish, Academic Senate Chair
From	Louie Rodriguez, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education
Subject	Proposed Guidelines for Community Engaged Learning Course Attribute

Summary

The Faculty Workgroup for Community Engaged Learning, in consultation with the Committee on Courses, the Committee on Educational Policy, and the Registrar's office, proposes a new process for identifying UCR courses that include valuable **community engaged learning (CEL)** opportunities for students. We request formal Academic Senate review and approval of this process.

This proposal specifically includes criteria for the Community Engaged Learning (CEL) course attribute and proposes a process by which courses may be "tagged" (assigned the attribute) as Community Engaged Learning (CEL) courses. A CEL Governing Board, including at least two members of the Academic Senate with expertise in community-engaged pedagogy, and with at least one standing member from the Committee on Courses, will convene quarterly to review all courses eligible for this attribute. The CEL Governing Board will not be responsible for approving new course proposals or proposals for course revisions, since that is the responsibility of the Academic Senate Committee on Courses, but simply to review the courses for eligibility for CEL designation. Course schedulers will work with faculty during the scheduling process each quarter to confirm the application of this attribute (described more fully below) to specific eligible course offerings. The Academic Senate and the Committee on Courses retains ultimate authority on curricular matters.

Background

Higher education is under increasing pressure to demonstrate its value. In many ways, UCR is excellently suited to address this challenge. UCR's success with social mobility means that we serve students representative of our region, including all its assets and challenges. We invite students to experience high quality research and teaching, and guide them through to graduation and successful careers.

Many UCR faculty have already successfully and innovatively integrated important experiences into their courses to promote connections between their course material and the real-world challenges of our surrounding communities. While we know this has been occurring, and contributing to students' success, our campus systems have lagged behind in recognizing the important work of community-engaged learning and making it visible to students who are increasingly seeking out these experiences.

Chancellor Hu has set a bold vision to expand experiential learning opportunities, including community-engaged learning specifically, with the goal that every undergraduate has at least one such transformative experience before graduation. To measure progress toward this goal, we must make visible the courses that provide these experiences.

Over the past two years, the Registrar's office has worked with faculty and departments to attach a **community-engaged learning (CEL)** attribute to courses that provide community-engaged experiences for students. An initial list of these courses were identified through campuswide surveys and analyses of the course catalog as part of larger self-studies resulting in national recognition through the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification in 2024. As interest in utilizing community-engaged pedagogies has grown among students and faculty, over the last two years, the CEL Workgroup (composed of Senate faculty members working in collaboration with relevant UCR administrators and staff) have been working on a proposal to advance this effort at UCR. We are ready to implement a new strategy with specific guidelines for applying this attribute that identifies specific experiences within existing and newly proposed classes.

Definitions and Criteria

The Carnegie Foundation's Elective Classification for Community Engagement defines community engagement as "the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership—of knowledge and resources—between colleges and universities and the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good."

At UCR, the Carnegie Community Engagement Advisory Committee and the CEL Workgroup proposed an operational definition of community engaged scholarship, teaching, and service includes work that: 1) establishes and sustains mutually beneficial, respectful, and sustained collaboration that creates a sense of collective ownership and reciprocal value for the campus (including students, faculty and staff) and community partners, 2) enriches the scholarship of the institution by by accessing community cultural wealth and expertise, 3) addresses community-identified needs and enhances community well-being, and 4) deepens students' civic and academic learning, and promotes connections between these through opportunities for critical reflection.

Specifically for community engaged learning (CEL), the more concise definition summarizes these principles above: *Through courses, students participate in community-based activities within mutually beneficial partnerships that enrich our scholarship, meet community-identified needs, and deepen student learning.*

When UCR received the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification in Winter 2024, the review committee recommended creating guidelines for clearly identifying community-engaged learning courses: “Adding a SLCE [CEL] course designator would also help track and monitor participation and quality in important ways as it might serve as an incentive for individual faculty and programs to expand the limited number of curriculum-based offerings. Finally, clearer tracking would clarify discrepancies in reported...participation rates.”

In response to these recommendations, the Community Engaged Learning workgroup has worked for the past two years to define our principles, identify these courses, and propose structures for recognizing and supporting faculty and students doing community engaged research and learning.

Courses across many disciplines incorporate these principles into their syllabi. This could occur through off-campus class sessions co-led by community partners, through students volunteering and reflecting on their experiences, through client consulting, or through co-creating research or creative projects with community members.

All courses with the CEL attribute should demonstrate evidence of integrating community-engaged work into the course design. This is consistent with the [model of community-engaged learning through courses at UCLA](#). We propose this rubric for analyzing courses for eligibility for the community-engaged learning attribute:

Criteria	Examples of Evidence
Establishes and sustains mutually beneficial, respectful, and sustained collaboration that creates a sense of collective ownership and reciprocal value for the campus (including students, faculty and staff) and community partners	Community partnership integrated in one or more of the following locations: • Catalog course description • Student learning outcomes • Hours/activities (if applicable) • Consistent course topics, texts & activities throughout the quarter • Assessment of student learning
Enriches the scholarship of the institution by by accessing community cultural wealth and expertise	Course materials include speakers, texts, and/or visits from voices outside traditional academia
Addresses community-identified needs and enhances community well-being	Course activities show added value for students and community partners Students hear directly from community members throughout the course

Deepens students' civic and academic learning, and promotes connections between these through opportunities for critical reflection

Presentations, papers, portfolios, or other assessment mechanisms require integration of a community-based experience with academic content

Benefits

For students:

- Community engaged learning is recognized as a high-impact practice that increases retention and career readiness
- Embedding authentic experiences promotes critical reflection and civic engagement

For faculty:

- Connect public impact research to the classroom and community
- Opportunities to receive recognition (e.g. through community-engaged teaching awards at UCR or nationally)
- Visible recognition for high-quality teaching experiences in the merit and promotion process

For the campus:

- Meet strategic plan goals for improved student experience and increased visibility
- Participate and lead national efforts in these areas (AASHE STARS, Carnegie Community Engagement Classification)

For the region:

- Access to UCR's talent pipeline
- Collaboration toward shared goals

Proposed Responsibilities and Stakeholder Groups

One of the highest values in this proposed process is to not add additional administrative burden to faculty who are already working hard to implement experiential learning pedagogies. The CEL governing board will request a syllabus to complete their review for initial eligibility, but will not otherwise make suggestions or inquiries. This is similar to the procedure for designating community-engaged experiential courses at UCLA, which is based on a review of the course syllabus.

Faculty who wish to request additional support for implementing experiential learning pedagogies can find ready and willing collaborators within XCITE, CUREL, Career Center, and the Office of Sustainability. Here are a few concrete resources available:

- DUE staff support faculty in:
 - Matching with community organizations
 - Tracking student participation
 - Logistical support for waivers, transportation, MOUs (if applicable)
 - Evaluation of progress toward mutual goals and community impact
 - Support for merit & promotion materials (how to highlight community-engaged learning in efile plus)
 - Website with resources, glossary of terms, FAQ

- XCITE Center for Teaching and Learning:
 - Supports faculty in course development, syllabus development, project-based learning, and assessment
 - Assessment of student learning from community-engaged opportunities
 - Sample syllabi and course activities

Community Engaged Learning Governing Board:

The CEL Governing Board is charged with providing direction and oversight for integration of community-engaged learning into UCR academic courses. The Board will meet once during each regular academic quarter. At these meetings the board will review courses *only* for the criteria established for the CEL attribute. For courses with structural changes (to hours, catalog description, etc.) they will batch and send them to the Committee on Courses for a batched review. They will communicate all eligible courses for the attribute to the Registrar's office.

The Governing Board's structure is similar to the existing R'Courses Governing Board. Given the primary role in curriculum oversight, Senate representation on the Governing Board is crucial. The Governing Board's membership is composed of at least three members of the Academic Senate, and at least two ex-officio staff members with expertise in community engaged learning. The faculty from the Academic Senate have voting privileges, and the rest of the membership is nonvoting. The Committee on Committees will appoint the three faculty and designate which of the three members from the Academic Senate is the Board's Chair. Two of the Senate appointees should have expertise in community-engaged learning pedagogy, and it is highly recommended that at least one of the appointees serves on the Committee on Courses. The primary role of the ex-officio members is to coordinate resources and support with other offices on campus (Division of Undergraduate Education, XCITE, Student Affairs, etc.). All appointments are for one year with the expectation that the faculty appointments will be renewed for a total term of three years. Additional non-voting staff can be appointed by the VPDUE if workload or expertise warrants it.

Committee on Courses: Applies a check box to new course worksheets to allow faculty to note their requests for attributes (with registrar and school/college/departments staff); as new courses are approved that request the attribute, sends them to the CEL governing board; consults as necessary with the CEL governing board.

Department Chairs: Work with faculty to identify courses eligible for this attribute to send to the CEL governing board; communicate with faculty about opportunities for recognition and support.

Department Course Schedulers: Each quarter, incorporate into the normal process of scheduling with faculty a request for confirmation of the course attribute; toggle the eligible attribute "on" or "off" based on responses.

Registrar's Office: Assigns the attribute to each eligible course; integrates any requested and approved changes by the Committee on Courses to catalog description, hours, activity, etc.

Faculty: Submit course syllabus to the CEL Governing Board to receive the eligibility for the attribute.

Proposed Process for Existing Courses

1. Any faculty member may submit a revised syllabus for an established course, with a brief narrative explanation of the ways it meets the CEL criteria, directly to the CEL governing board. Informing and working closely with the department chair is recommended. Additionally, the CEL governing board, with support from the ex-officio staff member(s), may contact faculty and departments to request submissions.
2. The CEL governing board reviews the syllabus only for the CEL criteria delineated in the rubric. When courses change the catalog description, hours, and/or activities, they will be batched and routed to the Committee on Courses (CoC) for a batched review. Courses without structural changes requiring CoC approval will be sent to the registrar.
3. Governing board members/staff communicate approval to the registrar's office as well as the department chair and faculty member.
4. If the course does not have community engaged learning written into the catalog description (requiring any faculty member teaching that course number to include it), the department course scheduling staff will work with faculty each quarter to toggle the attribute on or off.

Proposed Process for New Courses

1. Faculty/department select a check-box on the new course intake form used by each school and college for instructors who would like their course to be considered for the attribute.
2. When the check-box is marked, the course scheduling staff within the schools/college/departments will send the course(s) to the CEL governing board, while continuing their review through the normal new course process with the Committee on Courses.
3. If the attribute is approved (and upon the full course approval from CoC), the governing board communicates approval to the registrar's office as well as the department chair and faculty member.
4. If the course does not have CEL written into the catalog description (requiring any faculty member teaching that course number to include it), the department course scheduling staff will

work with faculty each quarter to toggle the attribute on or off.

Future Course Attributes

This structure and process for applying a community-engaged learning attribute could also allow space for other types of attributes to develop in the future, subject to Senate consultation, review, and approval. For example, courses emphasizing career integration, leadership development or innovation/entrepreneurship within the course design could also be considered as groups of faculty with those areas of expertise wish to propose those additional attributes.

CEL Faculty Workgroup Members (2024-2026)

- Louie Rodriguez, Vice Provost & Dean, Division of Undergraduate Education
- Beth Claassen Thrush, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Chancellor & Provost
- Samantha Eastman, Senior Learning Experience Designer, XCITE Center for Teaching & Learning
- Dana Simmons, Associate Professor & Chair, Society, Environment & Health Equity
- Larry Rodriguez, Community Engaged Learning & Leadership Coordinator
- Marie Martin, Associate Dean, University Extension
- Ellen Reese, Director of Labor Studies and Professor, Society, Environment & Health Equity
- Raquel Rall, Associate Dean and Associate Professor, Strategic Initiatives, School of Education
- Juliann Allison, Director of Global Studies and Professor, Society, Environment & Health Equity
- Gladis Herrera-Berkowitz, Director of Student Engagement, Division of Undergraduate Education
- Amanda Rupiper, Assistant Professor of Teaching, Chemical & Environmental Engineering
- Hayden Schill Hendley, Assistant Professor of Teaching, Psychology
- Qingfang Wang, Faculty Director of the Center for Community Solutions, and Professor of Public Policy