Community-Engaged Teaching in a COVID-19 Impacted World

Message from Center Director Shalom Staub:

If you have a spring quarter community-engaged course and would find it useful, the Center for Community Learning stands ready to offer you an individual consultation to brainstorm with you how you can best adapt your community-engaged course to the new restrictions needed for personal safety and public health. Please contact me with some possible times to connect with you. Either I, or Associate Director Doug Barrera, will get back to you asap.

I want to underscore that if you are scheduled for a community-engaged course for the upcoming spring quarter, please shift any original plans for on-site work to one of the following three options:

1. Projects that support community partners that students can do remotely
2. Other forms of civic engagement (such as having students assembling information for sub-populations on relevant topics, or having students develop informed letters to the editor of print/online news media, or writing informed advocacy letters to elected officials at the local, state or federal level, or having students think about and prepare well-researched information on social media)
3. Alternative course design, such as "[problem-based learning](#)" or "[case method](#)"

I can add the observation that our community partner organizations are themselves scrambling to figure out how they will operate and provide services. If you reached out to them last week and they had no answers for how your students' work could support them, you might want to circle back to them later this week. I'm seeing that more and more nonprofit organizations are quickly developing new systems to reach their clients. To be sure, there will be new and unanticipated challenges, such as how to build in safeguards and protections to vulnerable populations such as minors and senior adults in this rapid shift to virtual connections.

In my own course, Engaging Los Angeles, with 120 students and over 45 partner organizations, we have found that a growing number of these organizations are formulating meaningful remote work that students can do that will either help the organizations meet immediate needs or position themselves for the future. At the end of last week, we had responses that accounted for about 40 students' working remotely. By the end of day yesterday, we now have remote work for all of the students. We are responding to the growing number of our regular partner organizations who are identifying useful remote work, and we are also expanding the network of partners to include other organizations that are mobilizing to reach out to socially isolated seniors and other strategies for virtual engagement.

That need is growing. If you go to [laworks.org](#), click on "[Nonprofits still need your help](#)" on the homepage with the header: Social distancing can be social caring. Then, scroll down to the 2nd item: Volunteer from home. You'll see one link to [Virtual Volunteering](#) and another to [Social Connection](#). My sense is that the list of opportunities and identified needs on this page will

grow in the coming days. You may find, as I did, that you are able to find *new ways* to think about community-engaged opportunities for your students that link to course themes.

Here are some additional links that might be useful. Of the many, many such sites that are popping up, I have been impressed by the quality of these four in particular. Each of them is being updated regularly.

- Engaged Cornell: Supporting Partnerships in Changing Times
- Portland State University: Community Based Learning in times of Social Distancing, Isolation and Quarantine
- Campus Compact's site on Coronavirus and the Engaged Campus
- IUPUI's Center for Service and Learning on Continuing community-engaged teaching during COVID-19

Watch for more updates from me as I identify new resources. Moving forward, we are exploring mechanisms to connect colleagues at UCLA currently teaching community-engaged courses so that we can support each other, support our students, and support our community partners and their constituents.

Stay safe and healthy,
Shalom