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Building Civic Participation of Undergraduates: UMass Boston's Civic Engagement Scholars Initiative (CESI)

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Background
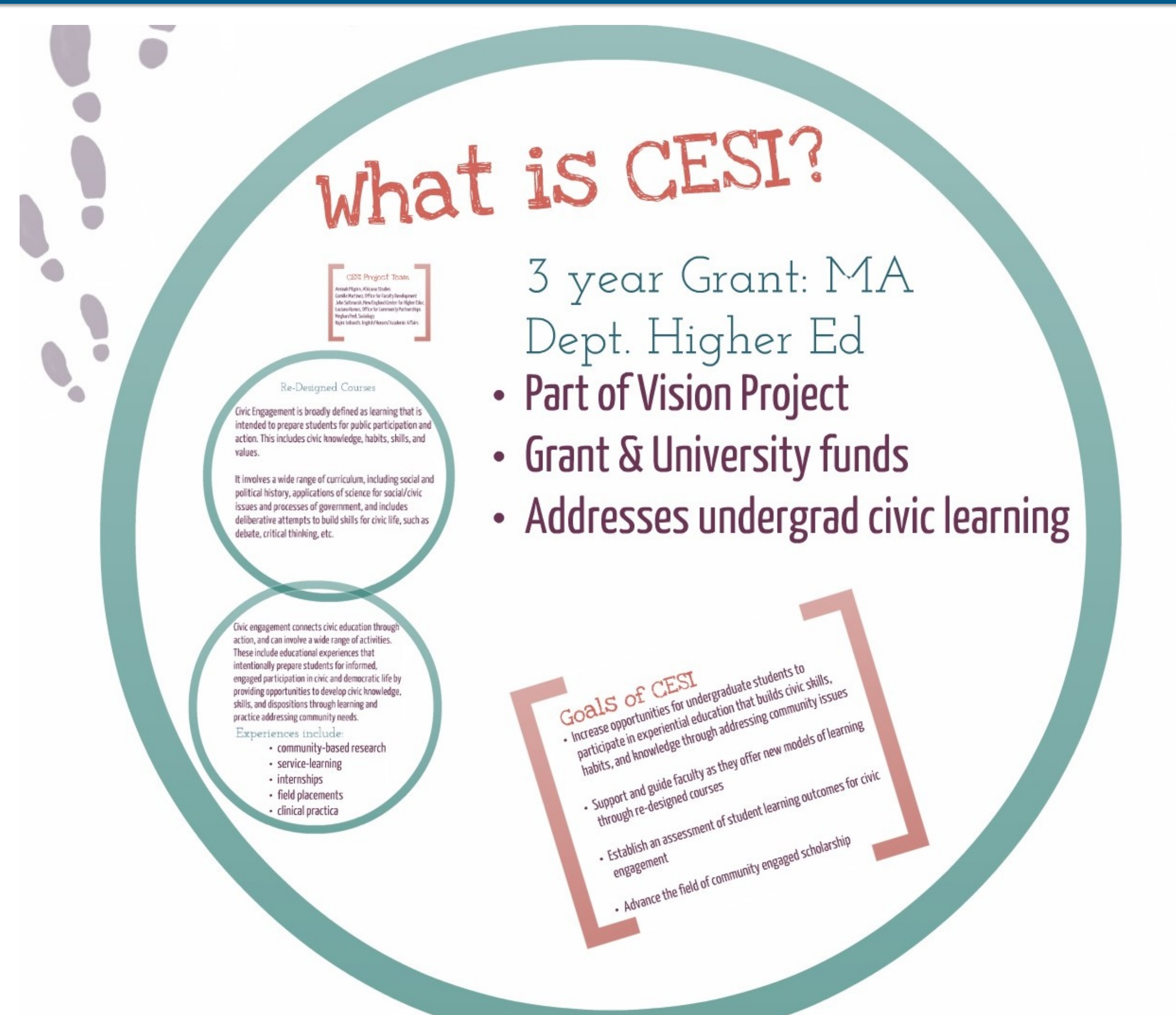
The Civic Engagement Scholars Initiative (CESI) is **a professional development program** that supports faculty and community partners to effectively **engage undergraduate students in service-learning and community-based research activities**. CESI aims to reinforce classroom learning, foster civic habits and skills, and address community-identified needs.

CESI Ambassadors, undergraduate students who are supporting program activities and faculty projects.

Goals

CESI seeks faculty/department-community partner teams to re-design or create a new syllabus for a course so as to:

- Increase opportunities for undergraduate students to participate in meaningful **experiential education** (i.e. internships, service-learning courses, participatory action research);
- Builds **civic skills, habits, and knowledge** of students through addressing community issues;
- Increase students' knowledge of and ability to critically **examine public policy issues** and/or civic concerns;
- Establish an **assessment of student learning** outcomes and performance indicators for service-learning and civic engagement; and
- **Advance the field of community-engaged scholarship** through publication of innovative practices.

Approach

- Faculty submit proposals and an application packet
- Accepted faculty participate in the three-semester cohort model:
  - Semester One: Course Design
  - Semester Two: Course Implementation
  - Semester Three: Writing Circles
- Cohort model builds learning community while offering professional development workshops
- Offer a one-semester introductory course in Spring 2013 and Fall 2014
- Develop and implement assessment tools to measure student skills, knowledge, and values, and faculty learning

Results

In three semesters (Spring 2013, AY 2013-14):

- **27 workshops** and discussion sessions facilitated
- **5 online modules** produced
- **34 participating faculty** : 21 in cohorts and 13 in introductory semesters
- **19 departments** and their chairs in 6 colleges engaged
- **424 undergraduate students enrolled** in **29 redesigned, new, or adapted courses**
- **11 CESI Student Ambassadors** are supporting faculty projects
- **CESI pre/post student assessments** approved by Institutional Review Board and currently in pilot phase

Next Steps

- Develop a **flipped version** of CESI program through online and in-person hybrid model
- **Assess effectiveness** of flipped model and incorporate adjustments
- Secure **institutional support** and identify opportunities that ensure program's sustainability
- Support faculty and CESI team with **publishing scholarly works** on CESI experience
- Continue to **refine assessment tools** with goal of developing effective measures

Additional Resources

Visit the CESI Blog:

For questions contact: camille.martinez@umb.edu