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.

## 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.

## 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

## 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

## Additional Resources

Visit the CESI Blog: [Visit CESI Blog](#)

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