

Community-Engaged Experiential Education at Carleton University

2010 Survey Results – Internal Report
November 4, 2010

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In March 2010, the Carleton Community-Engaged Pedagogy Group (CCEP), with the sponsorship of the Office of the Provost and the Educational Development Centre, launched a short survey of faculty members. Our goals were to provide a clearer picture of how many Carleton students currently work with community partners through the course of their studies, discover their community partners are, and to understand how best to support such activities. This survey was initiated alongside the release of a report, prepared by Kim Davis of SLALS on behalf of the CCEP, entitled “The Influence of Community Service Learning on Student Engagement, Retention, and Success: A Review of the Literature” as well as early drafts of Carleton’s new Academic Plan, which includes an emphasis on experiential learning in order to enrich the student experience.

This report highlights the aggregate results of that survey, supplemented with additional data from the co-operative education office at Carleton. Prepared by the CCEP, this report is intended for the Provost, the EDC, and the Carleton community. While these results cannot offer a truly comprehensive picture, the data provides a starting point for understanding the make-up of community-based teaching and learning at Carleton University. In total, 112 faculty members or staff filled in the on-line survey. Of these respondents, 59% employ community-based experiential learning pedagogies at the present time.

Community-Based Learning Opportunities

Faculty were asked to tabulate the average number of students in their courses, or under their supervision, who participate in community-based experiential learning opportunities at each level of study. The total number of students in each type of community placement or project is listed in table 1 and figure 1.

Community placements/projects	
No. Students	TOTAL
Practica	896
Community Service Learning	269
Studio/Workshop	522
Course projects	512
Independent Study projects	177
Internships	223
TOTAL	2599

Figure 1: Community placements/projects

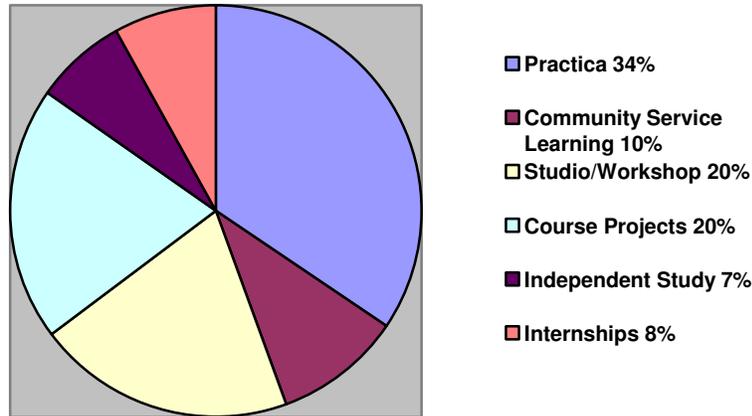
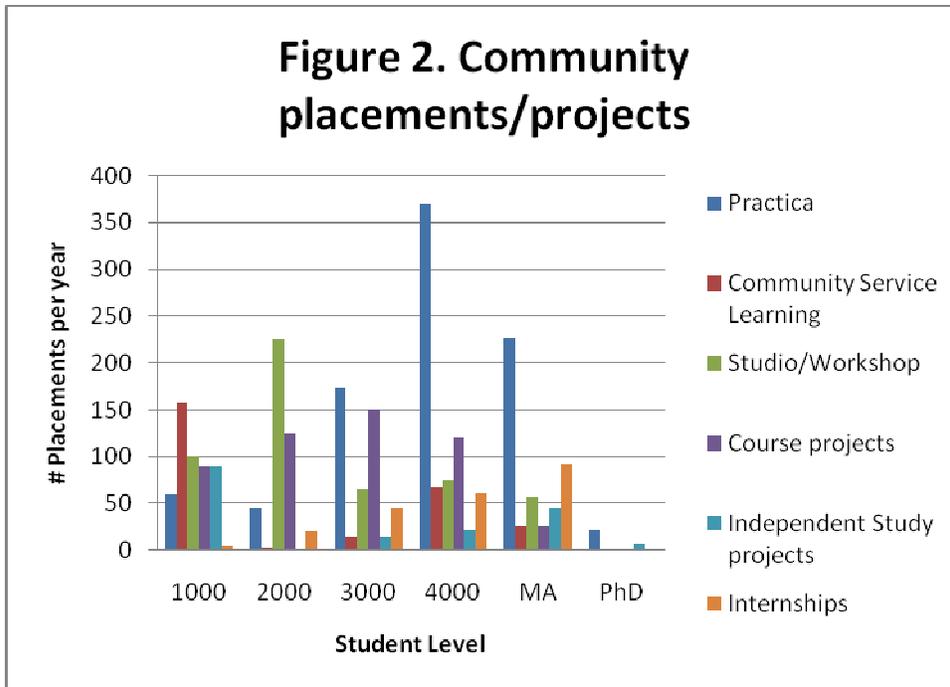


Table 1 and Figure 1 show that of the survey categories, practica are the most offered form of community-based learning, followed by studio/workshop courses, and community-based course projects. While this data is not included in the above results¹, the co-op office reported that 1094 students were involved in co-op placements in the past year, a number only 19% higher than faculty-reported data on practica. There are similarities and differences between co-op placements and practica. Co-op placements are part of a course of study, students have to prepare a report of their experiences and they are evaluated. However, co-op placements are voluntary. Practica in some programs are not voluntary and in other programs there are criteria based on merit for inclusion. Also, students have to enroll in practica and pay tuition. Co-op placements often offer the students remuneration.

The data also shows that different types of experiential learning opportunities take place at different levels. As illustrated in figure 2 below, Community Service-Learning and Studio/workshop assignments are more likely in first and second year courses, while practica and community-based course projects (often community-based research projects) are more likely in the third year. Practica are the most common form of community-based experiential learning offered at the honours and master's level.

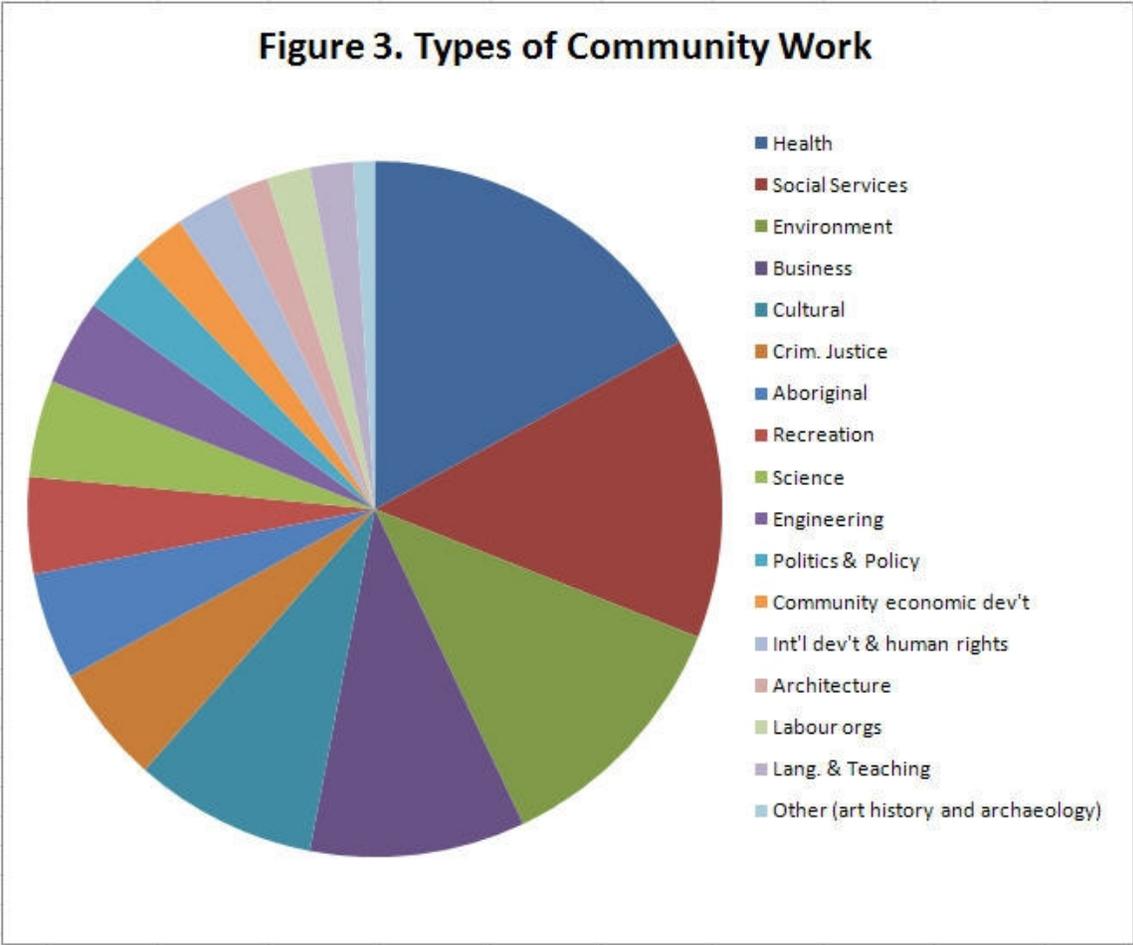
¹ Information from the Co-op office is not included in the survey results because the survey was completed by faculty members and at Carleton University faculty are not usually involved in co-op placements.



Notably, there are several forms of community-based experiential learning not captured in these figures, including extra-curricular activities (such as the Sprott Charities Tax Clinic, the extra-curricular Community Service Learning programs offered by the Student Experience Office, and the work of Journalism students for local newspapers organized by their professors). Further research is warranted to understand the impact of these extra-curricular experiential education activities for students and the University.

Types of Community Partners

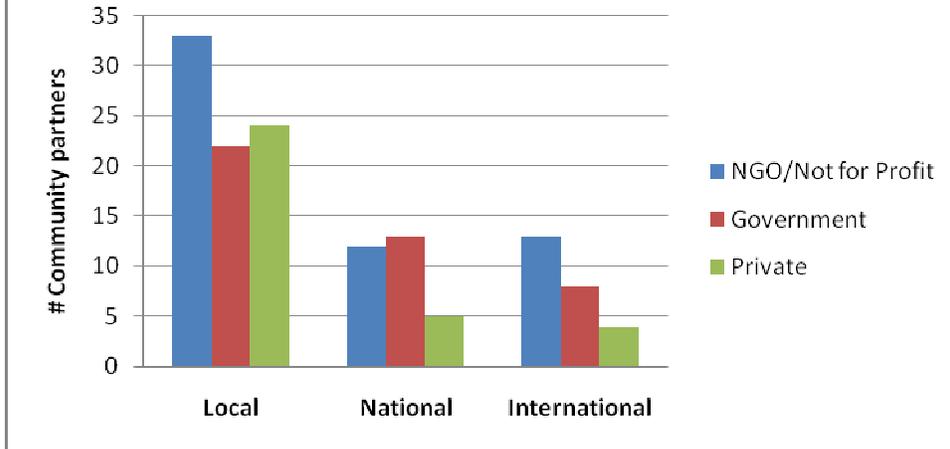
Faculty were asked to identify the scope of work of their community-based teaching partner organizations and whether their work was local, national or international (picking as many categories as apply). Figure 3 reveals a wide spread of sectors, with an emphasis on health, social services, environment, business and the cultural sector.



Particularly interesting are the number of partnerships in the health sector given that Carleton has no medical school. These partners include hospitals, community health centers, NGOs and community agencies that focus on health issues.

Figure 4 shows that although partners tend to have a local focus, they also work at national and international levels. Similarly, while more of our partners work in the non-profit sector, Carleton also has strong links with the public and private sectors, especially in the Ottawa area.

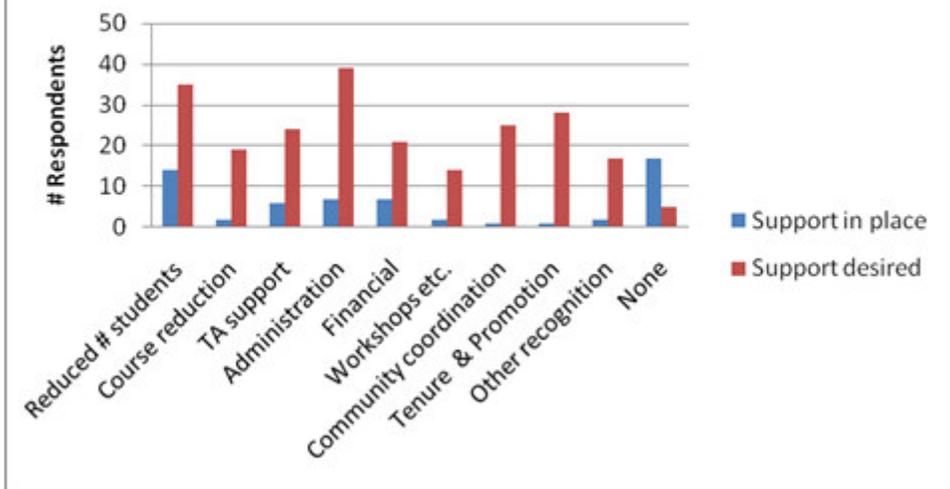
Figure 4. Organizational affiliation of community partners



Faculty Support/Incentives

Faculty were asked to identify the departmental or university supports that are in place to help them provide community-based experiential learning for their students and what they would like to see in place to better support these activities. Figure 5 reveals a significant gap between the supports that faculty believe are in place already and what they would like to see in place.

Figure 5. University support for Community based learning



Administration and community coordination was the support most often cited by faculty as something they need. This can involve a brockage function and support in building and maintaing community relationships. At the university level faculty see the need for tenure and promotion procedures that support the effort it takes to offer community-based

teaching and learning, as well as other forms of recognition for this kind of work such as dedicated teaching awards for experiential educators. At the departmental level faculty would like to see course reductions, TA support and reduced number of students to enable them to engage in community based pedagogy. Perhaps surprisingly, workshops and training were not seen as strong needs. However, we believe that this is because the respondents were mostly faculty already engaged in community based learning rather than those contemplating engaging in the is type of pedagogy. Finally, it is also notable that while direct financial support was of interest to faculty members for this work, which can often take more time than other approaches to teaching, it did not rate as highly as most of the other forms of support noted above.

Interest in learning more

Finally, although 71% of respondents felt that it is not the norm in their department to offer community-based experiential learning opportunities, about the same percentage (74%) indicated that they were interested in learning more about these teaching methods, whether or not they use them right now. “Other” comments show that this includes interest beyond the social sciences and public affairs extending for example into the natural sciences and engineering. However, this interest was often coupled with requests for further information/discussion on how to incorporate such pedagogies in disciplines as diverse as Biology, English and Computer Systems Engineering.

Conclusion

The results of this survey show that community-engaged experiential education is already well advanced at Carleton University, with over 2500 students working with what are likely hundreds of community partner organizations in Ottawa, across Canada and beyond. In a few units, these practices are widely accepted, while in many others they are being led by a few innovative faculty members with limited administrative support. Finally, in some units there is clearly interest among faculty in these pedagogies, but uncertainty about how they can be employed successfully in their disciplines.

The results of questions on University support structures appear to back the recommendations of the CCEP made in response to the first draft of the Provost’s Academic Plan on 29 March, 2010. Those recommendations included:

- (1) providing coordinated support for faculty who wish to engage in CEP practices. This may include maintaining contacts with community partners, soliciting and developing projects, informing the community partners about faculty research and teaching interests;
- (2) incentives to give faculty the time, effort and knowledge needed to incorporate CEP into their courses. These incentives should include ensuring tenure and promotion policies that adequately value teaching and community engagement, and other forms of recognition such as a specified community-engaged teaching award; grants for curricular development to assist in the establishment of sustainable partnerships; prioritization in assignment of teaching assistants to those courses with a CEP component; limits on the numbers of students in courses that have a strong emphasis on community engagement;
- (3) developing further initiatives that encourage faculty members to link community-engaged teaching and research across disciplines, such as the Batawa project.