

CSL Evaluation Report

2020-2021

Prepared by Majid Nikouee

Foreword from the Director

The 2020/2021 academic year will be remembered for the pandemic and, for CSL, the move to an exclusively online series of CSL course offerings. All students completing CSL in their courses did so by connecting virtually, with each other and with their hosting community partners. As we learned that we could no longer engage with communities in person, CSL prepared instructors, and then students, for *project-based CSL*: where students work collaboratively in teams on projects designed by partners in advance with our partnership coordinators.

We made the decision to suspend evaluations of community partners and instructors in the Fall, 2020, acknowledging that people were struggling with increased workloads due to the changed online requirements, and also from a generalized anxiety that left little energy for evaluations. For the Winter term in 2021, however, and with a term of online education under our belt, we decided that it was important to survey our instructors and partners as well as students, albeit with a slightly simplified version of surveys. We also thought it important to ask explicitly for feedback on the pandemic and its impacts on the CSL process and intended outcomes.

Overall, this was a very difficult year for all of us. But these pages, prepared by doctoral candidate Majid Nikouee, CSL's Evaluation Coordinator for the Winter of 2021, provide evidence that the CSL team was able to broker successful CSL learning experiences for over 1000 students. During a pandemic! For me, that's an extraordinary accomplishment; and one shared by our CSL staff, our instructors, students and community partners.

Thank you Majid for your work, and I encourage all of you to read the following report for evidence of the vitality and importance of CSL as an academic form of experiential learning. Clearly, CSL is both deepening student learning (in the classroom, and through our community based educators), as well as building the capacity of our local social sector to create a more just and inclusive Edmonton. We remain an important partner of Edmonton's social sector, and remain committed to its flourishing.

David Peacock

Methodology

The University of Alberta CSL program distributed the surveys at the end of the term to CSL placement-based students, instructors, and community partners. The surveys were completed online through 'Qualtrics' in the Fall 2020 and 'Google Forms' in the Winter 2021 terms. It was decided not to survey instructors and community partners in the Fall 2020 because of the extra demands of the pandemic. However, as we all began adjusting to our predicament, the CSL team decided to survey instructors and community partners in the Winter 2021 with slightly simpler, shorter instruments, and also include COVID-19 specific questions to understand how the pandemic was impacting our partners.

The CSL Evaluation Coordinator used SPSS Version 26 to analyze the quantitative data. The analysis included calculating and comparing frequencies in the survey data from the Fall 2020 and Winter 2021.

Results

Statistics at a Glance

CSL students	Instructors	Community Partners
1027 placement-based students**	Total of 46 instructors in Fall 2020 & Winter 2021	Total of 223 community partners in Fall 2020 & Winter 2021
504 responded to the evaluation survey	22 different instructors in Winter 2021	119 community partners in Winter 2021
71% in a CSL course for the first time	10 responded to the evaluation survey	48 community partners responded
Gender: 70% female, 23% male, 2% did not self-identify this way	18% taught a CSL course for the first time	25% of the organisations involved in CSL for the first time
Age: 87% are under 25 years	50% had 1-5 years of experience teaching university courses	35% of the respondents mentored a CSL student for the first time
Mean years of post-secondary: 2.5 years	60% Would recommend teaching a CSL course to peers	94% would recommend CSL to peers
Working towards a CSL certificate: 23%	50% were contract academic staff	Mean number of years worked in the non-profit sector: 8.1 years
8.3% international students		
52% identified as 'North American' and 'European'		

**Students who enrolled in a CSL course and participated in a CSL placement

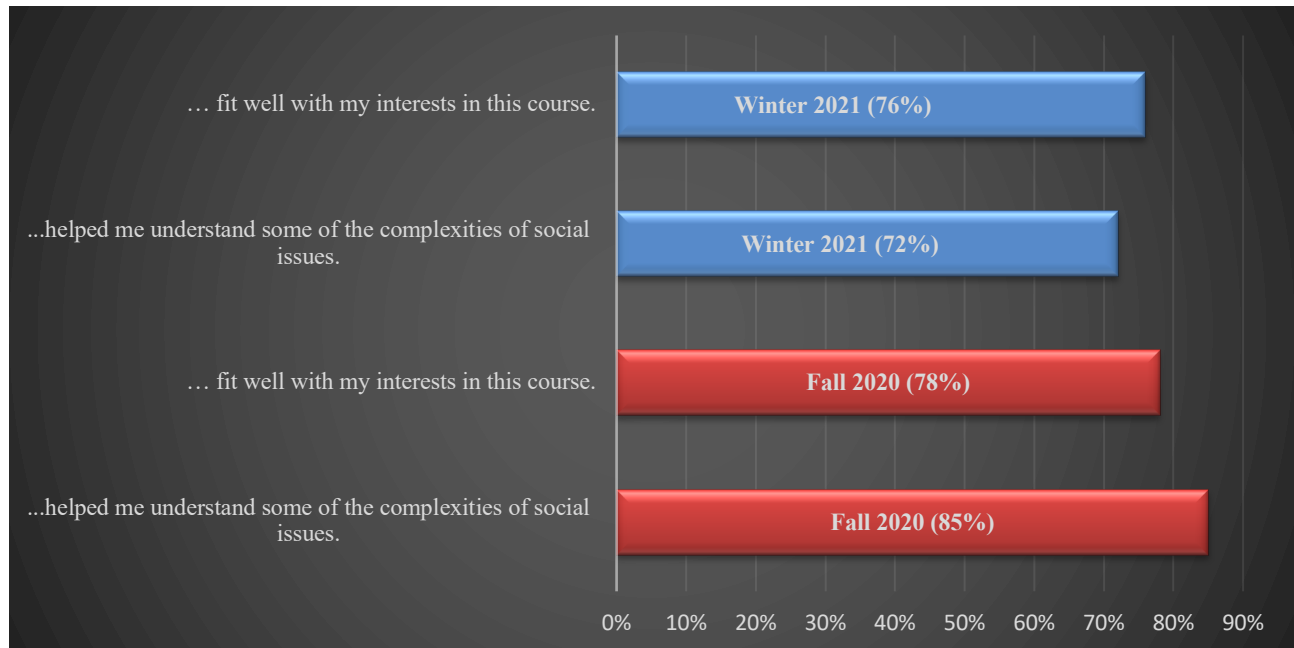
CSL Placement Student Experiences

Satisfaction rate as a pedagogical process

92% --- CSL is an effective teaching/learning strategy

86% --- I would recommend CSL to my peers

My involvement with CSL provided the opportunity to...¹



Student Quotes on Understanding of Social Change and Social Issues

"I believe I made incredibly educational posts about a plant based diet that are backed in scientific research but that are digestible."

"I think we were able to gather important information that will help EPE enhance communication between sectors regarding poverty elimination strategies."

"I believe I was able to provide perspective into how a younger generation looks at the marketing tools used by the [organization].. I was able to help them use social media more efficiently."

¹ The percentages indicated in this section represent the number of respondents who indicated that they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with a particular statement about CSL.

Program Structure & Communication

Involvement with community organization fits well with interests in the course **80%**

There was adequate communication between students and instructors **80%**

There was adequate communication between students and community partners **77%**

My project team and I received an appropriate amount of guidance from my community partner organization **71%**

Connections between Course Learning and Placement Learning

This experience provided me the opportunity to use course work knowledge in the community **88%**

Students' course work and class instruction enhanced their ability to understand community experience **82%**

Students' community placement experience provided a useful context to think through course material **80%**

This experience in the community provided the opportunity to better contribute to class discussions and assessments **74%**

Student Quotes on their Learning from CSL Placement

"I was able to apply some things that I learned in class into the community; the research component of the class is what really helped me learn more about my class and the topic I am interested in."

"I got firsthand experience working with kids, and although it wasn't my first time doing this, I was able to contextualize my experience differently thanks to EDU 100. It gave me a chance to understand what my future would look like as a teacher and presented challenges that I hadn't previously realized. In essence, it was the real deal."

Placement-Based Students: First Generation Status and Ethnicity

First generation students **44%**

Students identifying as 'North American' **39.5%**

Students identifying as 'European' **12.5%**

Students identifying as 'East Asian' **10.9%**

Student Quotes about the Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

“First, we had to get used to scheduling virtual meetings instead of in-person meetings. Second, our social issue involved community gathering, so COVID-19 made our issue unpredictable and we had to come up with a campaign that would maximize certainty and that would still be useful even if health protocols became more strict.”

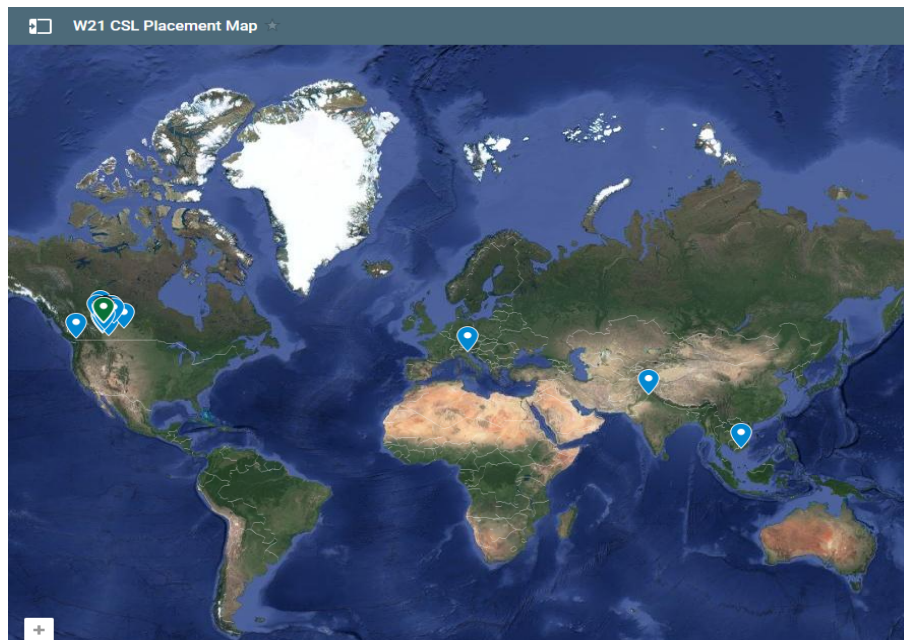
“My partnership's activities were supposed to take place in person and our final project, a scavenger hunt around campus, was unable to happen because of COVID restrictions.”

“Not exactly. Overall the pandemic has just had an impact on work in general. Otherwise, this placement was easily done online.”

“It really didn't, besides enhanced safety measures, I was able to do my volunteering essentially the same way others in past years would have.”

Locating Placement-Based Students

All CSL students do work for local (Edmonton) not-for-profits, but in the pandemic, they did most of these CSL projects from their computer, and from where they were located at the time. Online courses meant CSL students could work on projects for Edmonton based NGOs from anywhere in the world, as the following map displays.



These data have been gained at the level of the town or neighbourhood from an optional question on their CSL completion forms. While most students were located in Edmonton, there were more

than a few living across Western Canada, and a few were even living abroad (India, Vietnam, and India).

Instructor Experiences with CSL

Satisfaction rate as a pedagogical process

90% --- CSL is an effective teaching/learning strategy

80% ---I would recommend CSL to my peers

Benefits of Participating in CSL

The Student Completion Form increased my knowledge of how students met community partner expectations **70%**

I feel more confident about my use of CSL pedagogy as a result of this course **70%**

Overall, I was able to effectively assess the CSL component of the course **70%**

Connections between Course Learning and Community Placement

Students' course work and class instruction enhanced their ability to understand community experience **80%**

CSL enhanced the online learning environment **70%**

Most Effective Strategies in Integrating CSL into the Course

Checking in with students **89%**

Student assessment **78%**

In class presentations/workshops by community partners **67%**

Instructor Quotes about the Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

"It was challenging to make the learning meaningful and relevant without actually meeting [Sic] the children and seeing them play. The resource we created for 4 different organizations was effective and much appreciated by the partners but there was definitely something missing without the in-person interaction."

"In some ways, yes. While it's easier to schedule virtual meetings with partners, they're also easier to miss or blow off. Being in placements bolsters student engagement because of the energy and enthusiasm of being in a placement. This is not as easy during the pandemic."

"Yes. A lot of my students are not in a good place mentally, so sometimes they struggled to balance everything."

"Yes. Mental Health issues which led to poor class attendance."

Community Partner Experiences with CSL

85% --- CSL is an effective teaching/learning strategy

96% ---I would recommend CSL to my peers

Benefits of Participating in CSL

CSL helped me develop relationships with students, instructors, and the university **83%**

CSL helped me develop mentoring skills **77%**

CSL helped our organization accomplish some of our project needs **94%**

Understanding of Social Change and Social Issues

CSL helped students understand some of the complexities of social issues **89%**

CSL made students more aware of the knowledge generated by community organizations

91%

Benefits of CSL beyond Student Learning

CSL helped me develop relationships with students, instructors, and the university **83%**

CSL helped me develop mentoring skills **77%**

CSL helped our organization accomplish some of our project needs **94%**

Community Partner Quotes about the Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

"Absolutely. Our organization exists to provide hands-on services. It's difficult to understand what you can't see or experience. However, I'm still impressed at their ability to go out and learn independently, then come back with clarifying questions."

"Yes, many of the projects had to be modified so that they could be completed remotely. A few students reported that they felt disconnected and did not learn as much about the organization as a result."

"No. Our entire office has moved successfully to virtual work so we knew how to accommodate the CSL students."

"Our project is in the early stages, so it didn't really complicate the process. Could easily do this all online."

Conclusions

Key findings of the 2020-2021 CSL Evaluation at the University of Alberta include the following:

1. In the Winter 2021, the student response rate was higher by 7% than that in Fall 2020.
2. 8% of the CSL-based respondents in Winter 2021 were international students.
3. In ethno-cultural terms, students identifying as 'North American' and 'Europeans' constituted 41.2% of the respondents in Fall 2020 and Winter 2021. They constituted half of the respondents in Winter 2021.
4. In Fall 2020 and Winter 2021, students identifying as 'East Asian' (8.6%), 'South East Asian' (6.2%), 'South Asian' (5.6%), 'Latin' (4%), 'West Asian' (3.8%), and 'African' (2.8%) constituted 31.2% of the respondents.
5. A high rate of overall satisfaction with CSL in Winter 2021 was reported by students (95%), instructors (90%), and community partners (85%).
6. Overall, students in both Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 expressed high satisfaction with their communication with instructors and community partners.
7. Most of the community partners responding to the survey in Winter 2021 (94%) indicated that participation in the CSL was beneficial for their organisations.
8. There were more first generation CSL students responding to the survey in Winter 2021 than in Fall 2020.
9. With regard to the effects of COVID-19, there were students, instructors, and community partners who reported that the pandemic negatively affected different aspects of the CSL. On the other hand, some of the respondents indicated that the pandemic did not cause any disruption and even in some cases facilitated CSL.

To view the comprehensive 2020-2021 CSL Evaluation Report, please contact our Evaluation Coordinator at nikouee@ualberta.ca To learn more about the CSL program at the University of Alberta, please visit our website at uab.ca/CSL