



**UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA**

2021/2022 COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING ABRIDGED EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared by Kathryn Kincaid

Forward from the Director

The 2021/2022 academic year was another challenging one for CSL as we struggled with the pandemic. Our partners also experienced diminished human resources and increased demand for their services. The results in this evaluation report, prepared by our Evaluation Coordinator, Katie Kincaid (a PhD student in Psychology), are a testament to the innovation and resilience of our community partners, instructors, students and CSL staff. Of course, the numbers look terrific - 1495 students engaged in CSL in their academic courses in a pandemic! - but for me, it is the quality of the learning and community partner perspectives that matter the most. As Katie summarizes on the learning, 'There is a general consensus that community-service learning enhances student learning. 93% of students, 100% of instructors, and 94% of community partners reported that CSL enhanced learning. And on the community side, '[t]he vast majority of community partners (94%) reported that CSL students helped the organization accomplish some of their project needs' (p. 8).

Many thanks to all who supported and persisted in their CSL this past year. We are deeply grateful and honoured to facilitate this kind of learning among our partners. A special thanks for the stellar work of our Evaluation Coordinator, Katie, too!



Dr. David Peacock
Director of CSL

Methodology

The University of Alberta CSL program distributed the surveys at the end of the term to CSL placement-based students, classroom-based students, instructors, and community partners. The surveys were completed online through Google Forms. Students and instructors filled out their evaluations during class time at the end of term, and community partners were emailed a link to complete the survey on their own time at the end of term.

The CSL Evaluation Coordinator used the programming language R to analyze the quantitative data. The analysis included calculating descriptive statistics, summarizing response distributions, and comparing frequencies from previous years.

Statistics at a Glance

CSL Students	Instructors	Community Partners
<p>1,495 placement-based students</p> <p>958 responded to the evaluation survey</p> <p>72% female, 26% male, 2% non-binary</p> <p>83% are under 25 years old</p> <p>45% are first generation University students¹</p> <p>7% are international students</p> <p>73% in a CSL course for the first time</p> <p>17% are working towards a CSL certificate</p> <p>93% indicated that CSL is an effective teaching/learning strategy</p> <p>87% would recommend CSL to peers</p>	<p>47 different instructors</p> <p>29 responded to the evaluation survey</p> <p>34% taught a CSL course for the first time</p> <p>45% had 11-15 years of experience teaching university courses</p> <p>45% were contract academic staff</p> <p>100% indicated that CSL contributed to students' learning</p> <p>90% would recommend teaching a CSL course to peers</p>	<p>182 community partners</p> <p>92 responded to the evaluation survey</p> <p>26% of the organisations involved in CSL for the first time</p> <p>42% of the respondents mentored a CSL student for the first time</p> <p>94% indicated that the project contributed to students' learning</p> <p>98% would recommend CSL to peers</p>

Student Experiences with CSL

Satisfaction with CSL as a pedagogical process

93% indicated that CSL is an effective teaching/learning strategy²

87% would recommend CSL to peers

80% indicated that CSL helped them understand some of the complexities of social issues

¹ These are students with the highest level of parental education less than a baccalaureate degree. The reason for these questions was to evaluate the reach and inclusivity of the CSL program. The educational achievement levels of a student's parent(s) or caregiver is sometimes used as a proxy measure of socio-economic status.

² Percentages in this section represent the share of respondents who indicated that they "agree" or "strongly agree" with a statement about CSL.

Involvement with community organization fit well with interests in the course	82%
I had enough information about the requirements of CSL	83%
There was adequate communication between my instructor and me	90%
There was adequate communication between my community partner and me	79%
My project team and I received an appropriate amount of guidance from my community partner organization	73%

Student quotes on understanding of social change and social issues

"I definitely gained more insight and a better understanding of social issues and hardships lower SES schools face and in turn the students. It was fascinating to see what I learned in class be applied to reality."

"I gained a wider understanding of social justice issues and history of problems that I didn't previously know about. I gained the ability to talk about issues with an informed opinion."

"I gained a better understanding on the impacts intersectionality has had on newcomers and on the resources organizations provide to present a more equitable chance at newcomers having a chance to experience many things Canadians may take for granted."

Program structure and communication

Connections between course learning and placement learning

This experience provided the opportunity to use my academic knowledge in the community	87%
Course work and class instruction enhanced my ability to understand my community experience	84%
My community project experience provided a useful context to think through course material	82%
This experience in the community provided the opportunity to better contribute to class discussions and assessments	76%

Student quotes on learning from their CSL placement

"I believe this project really helped me get experience with translating documents that aren't just for the professor to correct and give back. This was like an actual job, the work we did this term is going out for people to read. It is truly great to be able to say I contributed to this."

"I think that I gained valuable experience by working with the CSL program. Community engagement, particularly at the university level, is very important for students because it gives them a reason to think beyond their grades. It helps to give them vision and a tangible goal that they can see for themselves."

"I think I gained a better understanding of how to conduct and convey information between my CSL project group and the organization. It enhanced my communication skills most definitely."

Student quotes about the impacts of COVID-19

"It limited my ability to interact with the children as much. Most of our sessions occurred through ZOOM and this greatly impaired my overall ability to fully immerse myself in the placement."

"[COVID-19] made our job significantly easier and more effective. Engaging with our community partner online allowed for flexibility and reduced our need to travel."

Instructor Experiences with CSL

Satisfaction with CSL as a pedagogical process

100% indicated that CSL enhanced student learning

90% would recommend CSL to peers

90% indicated that CSL helped students understand some of the complexities of social issues

Connections between course learning and placement learning

Course work and class instruction seemed to enhance CSL students' ability to understand their community experience	83%
During the course, I provided CSL students with opportunities to reflect on and learn from their community project experience	83%
CSL enhanced the learning environment	97%

Instructors' most commonly used strategies for integrating CSL into courses

Student assessment	76%
Check-ins with students	69%
In-class presentations/workshops by community partners	52%
Check-ins with partners	34%

Instructor quotes about the impacts of COVID-19

"There was a definite distance between students and the partners, professor and the TA."

"I don't think it complicated the work. I think students have really adapted to an online environment over the 2 years. I felt the COVID-19 pandemic offered more flexibility for students who preferred an online placement. Students have several clinical placements and not much flexibility in terms of their schedule. I believe having online placements allowed students to achieve the 20 hours easily compared with them needing to be in-person. However, some students did voice a greater need for in-person opportunities and wanted more in-person interactions."

"The pandemic continues to profoundly impact students, particularly their mental health. It adds a layer of stress onto students that can change CSL from something "I get to do" to something that "I have to do" when things are especially complicated and busy."

Community Partner Experiences with CSL

Satisfaction with CSL as a pedagogical process

94% indicated that CSL enhanced student learning

98% would recommend CSL to peers

90% indicated that CSL helped students understand some of the complexities of social issues

Community partner quotes on understanding of social change and social issues

"They begin to understand the challenges of the real world in connecting with other organizations, the complexities of working with smaller and larger non-profit groups or registered charities; the timelines of connection with people and the importance of listening to and understanding your target audience before creating something you think they need."

"In all cases I think students gained an understanding of social issues that they had not worked with/thought about extensively before."

"Students benefited from on the ground experience, first hand insight into the complexities and intersections of our work and how it correlates with other areas of community health and wellbeing. Students were able to see more clearly how high level policy impacts every day life."

Program structure and communication

There was adequate communication between community partners and students	92%
If needed, CSL staff provided assistance and support in integrating CSL into my work	92%
I knew enough about the aims of CSL	78%

Community partner benefits of participating in CSL

CSL helped me develop relationships with students, instructors, and the university	90%
CSL helped me develop mentoring skills	76%
CSL helped our organization accomplish some of our project needs	94%

Community partner quotes on benefits of participating in CSL

"Our CSL students were able to carry out projects that our organization would not otherwise have had capacity for, and in some cases brought skills and expertise that we don't have on our own. We now have a working web app that we will soon be able to implement in our project, which has moved us several months ahead, and our sociology students' research projects will help us contextualize our work in community."

"The students provided genuinely purposeful resources for our organization that will be a big benefit. Without their knowledge or support these things wouldn't exist due to staff capacity limits!"

"Students contributed their unique insights, experiences and creativity to the project. Contributing their diverse perspectives resulted in a richer project outcome."

"They brought a great new perspective and asked questions that helped us look at our organization in a new way!"

Conclusions

Key findings of the 2021-2022 CSL Evaluation at the University of Alberta include the following:

1. There is a general consensus that community-service learning enhances student learning. 93% of students, 100% of instructors, and 94% of community partners reported that CSL enhanced learning.
2. Of those who sought CSL staff support, 100% of instructors and 92% of community partners reported that CSL staff provided the support and assistance they were looking for.
3. Students were more satisfied with instructor communication than community partner communication. 90% of students reported that there was sufficient communication with instructors and 79% of students reported sufficient communication with community partners.
4. The vast majority of community partners (94%) reported that CSL students helped the organization accomplish some of their project needs.
5. Many students, instructors, and community partners reported that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected their CSL experience. Simultaneously, many respondents reported that the pandemic did not cause disruption, and in some cases even facilitated CSL.

To view the comprehensive 2021-2022 CSL Evaluation Report, please contact our Evaluation Coordinator at kincaid@ualberta.ca. To learn more about the CSL program at the University of Alberta, please visit our website at uab.ca/CSL