

# Supporting and Growing Community Engaged Learning at MSU Denver: A White Paper (Final) October, 2024

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## Summary

Recent qualitative and institutional data from MSU Denver show a strong connection between community-engaged learning (CEL) and improved student retention rates, enhanced community partnerships, and increased faculty satisfaction. This evidence aligns with broader literature, which consistently highlights the multifaceted benefits of CEL in higher education.

- **Community-engaged learning supports students.** CEL increases retention, persistence, and builds essential skills through practice.
- **Community-engaged learning supports community.** CEL facilitates touchpoints where faculty, students, and community partners meet to bring their creativity, experience, and expertise to bear on practical problems and community-identified needs.
- **Community-engaged learning supports faculty.** CEL provides a framework through which busy professionals align teaching, scholarly/creative activity, and service to campus/community. CEL builds collaborative networks of reciprocity, strengthening interdisciplinary efforts, as well as the ties between MSU Denver faculty, civic and campus offices, non-profits, entrepreneurs and businesses.

In order to strengthen and grow CEL at MSU Denver, the FEEL team within C2Hub (led by faculty fellows, Nicole Predki and Christina Foust, and supported by Community Engaged Learning Program Manager, Nora Bashir) recommend the following:

- **Deploy “community-engaged learning” (CEL) consistently as a term, with definitions that represent the work being done at MSU Denver.** As this White Paper articulates, currently, the institution is characterized by 3 separate but related efforts to build community-engaged learning: “Service learning,” “civic engagement,” and “community-engaged learning.” We see these efforts as additive, and advocate that now is the time to coalesce the efforts under a “big tent” approach to CEL. Consistent use of “CEL” terms and definitions will help cohere the 3 threads and strengthen their practice on campus.

- **Centralize and Institute CEL at MSU Denver.** Now is the time to centralize CEL within an office at MSU Denver, providing a recognizable “front porch” where faculty/staff, community partners, and students, might seek answers to questions, resources for pedagogy, and support for assessing the effectiveness of efforts toward CEL.
- **Pursue more formal curricular pathways for CEL at the undergraduate and graduate levels.** Along with converting the “SL” attribute to a “CEL” attribute (including sample SLOs and assessment rubrics), this paper suggests a menu of options for integrating CEL more formally into curriculum at MSU Denver (e.g., via micro-credentials, within departments/colleges, and as part of “Experiential Learning for All.”).

## Definitions, History, and Institutional Context: CEL at MSU Denver

### *Definitions*

At MSU Denver, CEL is an integral part of our **experiential learning** framework. This approach ensures that student learning is deeply connected to real-world challenges, preparing students for life within and beyond the classroom. In Spring 2024, the reconstituted Experiential Learning for All (ELFA) Task Force produced the following definition for experiential learning at MSU Denver, which is now on its way to discussion and a vote in the Faculty Senate for widespread use: **Experiential learning at MSU Denver is a process wherein students learn by doing through practical and applied engagement in or out of the classroom. Experiential learning emphasizes collaboration, reflection, synthesis, and feedback to develop knowledge, skills, and critical thinking for post-graduation success.** Experiential learning can manifest in a variety of ways, including internships and field placements, practica, community engaged/civic engaged/service learning, problem-based projects in classrooms, and place-based intensives.

Experiential learning at MSU Denver reflects what experts tout about this type of learning: It supports critical thinking and analytic skills, as well as essential skills and knowledge. In contrast to “banking” models of education, where students are considered repositories for faculty knowledge, experiential learning brings the whole self into education.<sup>1</sup> Students

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<sup>1</sup>As Kolb (1984) describes, the process of experiential learning begins with active experimentation, as students are open to deploying new ideas and skills; then engages students in concrete experience, as they must navigate an authentic situation. Experiential learning prompts students to reflective observation, in which they must make intentional connections (e.g., between the new experience and a past experience, or between the new experience and knowledge outside of that experience). Finally, students translate experiences into concepts to inspire future connection, which Kolb (1984) describes as abstraction. This four-part process (active experimentation, concrete experience, reflective observation, and abstraction) is learning, a learning which centers students and not an authority figure telling them what to do, nor the voice

“engage intellectually, creatively, emotionally, socially, or/and physically” (Boston University Center for Teaching & Learning, 2024). As the Association for Experiential Education (2024) notes, experiential learning promotes strong outcomes, in part, because it changes the stakes and nature of learning. Students “take initiative,” “make decisions,” and are “accountable for results” of their work.

Done in place-based contexts, or/and in authentically established projects, experiential learning can become a way for students to encounter, practice, and become better at, the essential skills that are in demand across many sectors of employment (Danao & Main, 2024): Leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and time management, for instance, matter in ways that differ from a classroom in which information transfer and recall is the heart of learning. Such essential skills matter not only to employers, but also, to communities, families, partners, neighbors. MSU Denver is wise to prioritize experiential learning.

**Under the broader umbrella of experiential learning, three related but distinct terms have operated over the years at MSU Denver (reflecting different discourse histories outside and inside the university): Service learning, civic engagement, and community engaged learning.**

**Service learning** is a form of experiential learning that convenes students in performing service for/with community organizations and reflecting on that experience. As Swaner (2011) explains, service learning typically has volunteer connotations, involving students “in nonpaid work in a community setting” (p. 81). Because service learning has a history of volunteer labor that may or may not relate to course learning outcomes; and because “service learning” does not capture the robust ways that instructors and community partners work with students to develop projects; scholars have turned to “community engaged learning” as a preferred term.

**Civic engaged learning** is a form of experiential learning closely related to community engaged learning, in that both seek to address public concerns and uplift communities. Civic engaged learning seeks to make a change on local, state, national, or international scales, through non-political or political action. The term “civic engagement” is not as commonly used in the literature, especially on scholarship of teaching and learning. It is also a term that might exclude some efforts which are not concentrating on “change.” As the term “civic” connotes involvement with elected government, the term may not be as inclusive as its close cousin, “community engagement.”

**Community engaged learning (CEL)** is a form of experiential learning that brings community partner needs into alignment with course learning objectives and faculty expertise. It not only involves practical engagement but also emphasizes reciprocal

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of power or routine guiding their decisions. This relates well to Freire’s (2017) work, contrasting the banking model of education with more critical, democratic models.

relationships with community partners. It is a high-impact practice that “connect[s] coursework, academic research, and outside of the classroom experiences to enrich knowledge and inform action on social issues” (Ginsberg Center, n.d.).

CEL commences on a shared project that is led by a faculty member or staff, who coordinates with students in a class (or student organization), and a community or campus partner with whom they have established a mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationship. Community partners can be community-based organizations (like non-profits), civic or government institutions (like schools, hospitals, or neighborhood organizations), businesses, etc. For instance, in our Department of Communication Studies, CEL has evolved from traditional service learning activities like food drives to more complex community projects such as collaborative research with school district offices, nonprofits, and educational institutions. This shift illustrates the growing depth and impact of CEL at MSU Denver.

CEL Projects can take shape in any number of forms as built through collaboration between faculty members, students registered in a class, and community partners. Such projects may take shape as the following (University of Denver CCESL):

- **Research:** a class addresses a research question that is important to a community partner (or community in general). This research question is relevant to SLOs in a course.
- **Advocacy:** a class can raise awareness of, or promote action on, a public problem. This includes engaging a community partner through public projects or public presentations.
- **Direct:** A class is directly involved with community members or partners, often in place-based ways (e.g., help planning and executing an event).
- **Blended:** Projects combine any of the above in one class.

Over time, “service learning” has fallen out of favor in scholarship. “Community engaged” better captures the rigor of analysis, application, and production often involved in CEL; along with the reciprocal involvement of community partners, who are not only “served” through the learning that occurs, but whose experiences, expertise, and voice, are all welcomed in the process. As we articulate below, at MSU Denver, the diverse life experiences of our students, and their connections to community, also resonate more with CEL than affiliated terms.

### ***History***

Service learning (SL), civic-engaged and community-engaged learning (CEL) at MSU Denver have manifest in a rich ecology over the years. The development of CEL at MSU Denver can be mapped through key milestones: the establishment of the Service Learning Program around 2012-2013, the integration of civic engagement throughout the 2010s, and the recent coalescence of these efforts under the C2Hub (circa 2019). These milestones reflect our institution's commitment to community-centered education.

The Service Learning Program (SLP) at MSU Denver was originally housed within the Applied Learning Center (ALC). The ALC supervised the SLP, along with the Undergraduate Research Program, Community-Based Research Fellows Program, Internships, Civic Engagement grants and programming, Puksta Scholars, Alternative Break program, and 1Book/1Project/2Transform. The SLP included developing a curricular outlet for service learning, where faculty could apply for their courses to be designated with the “Service Learning” attribute. Some programs at MSU Denver have adopted an SL requirement, further deepening SL within the curriculum.

SL provided a strong case in meeting the university’s mission and commitment toward the public good (MSU Denver Core Component 1D, HLC Executive Summary, 2016): “MSU Denver continues to demonstrate its investment in and commitment to educating the greater community and providing a wealth of opportunities for collaboration and partnership. Some of these initiatives involve students from elementary, middle and high schools as well as individuals from companies and corporations of varying sizes, all of which contribute to enhancing the public good. Indeed, the University is a gateway of opportunity by transforming the lives of its students and serving the community as a courageous change agent” (p. 19). The ALC offered “course design assistance, training, and administrative and other program support to faculty; develop[ed] and sustain[ed] community partner connections; and collect[ed] data on all dimensions of service learning” (taken from ALC SLP Mission Statement, 2013).

Dr. Lori McKinney was the director and champion for service learning at MSU Denver, and convened a Service Learning Advisory Council each year, from 2015-2022, which included faculty members from a variety of disciplines (see Appendix A). Dr. McKinney also supervised Service Learning Faculty Associates and instituted a program for Community-based Research Fellows (in which student research assistants could earn stipends for working with faculty on projects). Dr. McKinney’s records indicate that her budget included (for the years 2015-2020 at least) \$1250 grants to be awarded to community-based research fellows by application (\$1000 for a student stipend, \$250 for research project expenses). Additionally, Dr. McKinney awarded \$250 grants (on a first-come, first-served basis, to encourage new SL course designations); \$500 course redesign grants; and \$1500 SL new course design cohort grants; as well as \$500 mini-grants. Alongside these resources, Dr. McKinney hosted luncheons for faculty (“Spotlight on Service Learning” gatherings for faculty who taught or developed an SL course), and kept a regular bulletin board of artifacts to celebrate the work faculty did with students and community partners.

Dr. McKinney advocated for departmental guidelines to change in order to assure that MSU Denver faculty were encouraged and rewarded to integrate service learning into their teaching, scholarly and creative activities, and service. She had worked with CHAS and COB faculty on template guidelines in 2019-2020—but as with so much else in higher education, the COVID-19 pandemic stalled SL on campus. The ALC split into what would eventually become the Classroom to Career Hub (C2 Hub). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and staff turnover deeply interrupted the work of SL on campus.

Civic and community engagement at MSU Denver has manifest in a variety of efforts shepherded by Undergraduate Studies and the Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies, Dr. Elizabeth Parmelee. In 2016, MSU Denver hosted the Campus Compact's Engaged Faculty Institute (including a 2-day professional development opportunity for faculty). Dr. Parmelee is spearheading the efforts for MSU Denver to obtain Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement, a process that is cohering and spotlighting the community- and civic-engaged work on campus (as the institution prepares for a 2025 submission and review). Along with the Carnegie Task Force, Dr. Parmelee has instituted awards to recognize MSU Denver faculty doing civic and community engagement and convenes a Civic & Community Initiatives steering committee—an umbrella committee of over 30 faculty and staff across the campus.

In 2022, Foust and Predki organized and facilitated the Community Engaged/Service Learning Faculty Learning Community (CESL FLC) with the Center for Teaching, Learning, & Design (CTLD). This 2-semester FLC convened deeper engagement with the scholarship on CEL, including its benefits to students, community partners, faculty, and institutions of higher education. The FLC also allowed peer conversations to name and navigate challenges in doing CEL work, building on the supportive networks established by Drs. McKinney and Parmelee.

CESL FLC participants discussed the needs for better recognition, rewarding, and supporting, of faculty and staff doing CEL work, notably, with tenure and promotion guidelines. They also discussed the need for stronger assessment of student learning, as well as community partner perspectives (i.e., are partnerships with MSU Denver faculty reciprocal and mutually beneficial, from the partner's vantage?). Lastly, they discussed need to track partnerships and connections across campus. Additionally, participants considered possible workshop and professional development opportunities (with CTLD and/or Faculty Senate), along with tabling or touring to get the word out about CEL.

In August of 2023, Foust and Predki moved their work to new roles as the inaugural Faculty Co-Fellows for CEL in the C2Hub (in Faculty Engagement & Experiential Learning or FEEL Team, led by Alyssa Marks), while continuing to practice CEL in their own classroom-based work (e.g., partnerships with Cleo Parker Robinson Dance, the Auraria Sustainable Campus

Program, and Denver Public Schools-Sustainability). During Spring of 2024, Foust also piloted, then expanded, an effort called Dialogue & Civic Engagement Week.<sup>2</sup> The C2Hub re-hired after a 1.5 year hiatus, a full-time Community Engaged Learning Program Manager, Nora Bashir, to support the administrative and resource needs of the CEL work at MSU Denver. Additionally, Dr. Ingrid Carter was awarded the C2Hub Engagement & Initiatives Faculty Fellow position and has worked closely with the FEEL Team, Foust, and Predki (see Appendix B for job descriptions) regarding experiential learning at MSU Denver.

## **Mapping the Terrain of CEL at MSU Denver**

Given the decade plus effort to grow and advance the SLP at MSU Denver, which has been joined by related efforts to pursue Carnegie Classification, as well as the CESL FLC and investment in faculty fellowships from the C2Hub, it is no surprise that service learning, civic, and community engagement are apparent in breadth and depth of the institution's programming. Mapping the terrain of CEL and related efforts will support our conclusion that CEL is so strongly within the institution's ethos, it can be a seamless transition to centralizing MSU Denver's CEL efforts now.

### ***CEL and MSU Denver's Mission, Values, and Strategic Plan: A Natural Fit***

CEL is a crucial form of learning to help MSU Denver realize its mission, vision, and values as an institution of higher learning. The mission of MSU Denver is "to provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, post-graduate education, and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global, and technological society." As this White Paper supports, CEL is a technique that allows this mission to be realized (see, particularly, benefits for students, below).

MSU Denver's core values—Community, Access, Diversity, Respect, and Excellence (CADRE)—are inherently supported by CEL initiatives:

#### **Community:**

- CEL fosters mutually beneficial relationships between the university and the broader community. Students engage with local organizations,

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<sup>2</sup>In 2024, with support from a CLAS Innovation Grant, Foust led a cohort of faculty from 8 different departments (Art, Communication Studies, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences, English, History, Psychology, Social Work, and Sociology/Anthropology) in Dialogue & Civic Engagement Week 2024 (DCEW24). DCEW24 brought a high impact practice to 8 classes and 1 student club, reaching about 160 students (registered) with CESL, diversity learning, undergraduate research, and/or collaborative projects. Over 460 people attended the 10 events of the week, with faculty taking this as an opportunity to begin partnerships with such community-based organizations as Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. The events also strengthened the network between faculty, students, and food/housing support through campus offices like SNAP and Housing. Finally, it resulted in the creation of assets, like the "Building a Culture of Care infographic" (see Appendix C).

addressing real-world issues and contributing to the public good. For example, students in the Social Work program have partnered with local nonprofits to provide services to homeless populations, gaining hands-on experience while making a tangible impact on community well-being.

**Access:**

- CEL provides all students, regardless of background, with opportunities to gain practical experience and engage in meaningful community service, thereby enhancing their educational experience. Data from the Office of Institutional Research shows that students involved in CEL have higher retention rates, particularly from the post-pandemic period. For instance, Service Learning designated courses had a 4.63% higher retention rate (at 73.36%) than the overall retention rate of MSU Denver courses (at 68.73%).

**Diversity:**

- Through CEL, students interact with diverse populations and viewpoints, promoting inclusivity and a broader understanding of societal issues. Additionally, students learn valuable skills in communicating across difference, modeling ways to establish mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationships through the CEL framework.

**Respect:**

- CEL emphasizes respect for community partners and their needs, promoting ethical engagement and collaboration. Feedback from community partners highlights the respectful and professional conduct of MSU Denver students in CEL projects.

**Excellence:**

- By participating in CEL, students strive for excellence in their academic and community-based projects, developing essential skills that prepare them for future success.

Likewise, CEL integrates well into the 2030 Strategic Plan. We highlight the ways that CEL aligns particularly well with selected pillars and goals.

**Pillar I: Student Access, Service, and Achievement**

- **Goal 1:** Attract, prepare, and graduate students equipped to succeed in the 21st century.
  - **CEL Contribution:** CEL provides hands-on learning experiences that enhance academic achievement and career readiness. Students gain valuable skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, which are essential for success in modern careers. We see



CEL as an important way to generate community and belonging in MSU Denver classrooms, which might further attract students to join the university. For instance, students in Dr. Randi Smith's Clinical & Counseling Psychology classes have worked with the CHARG Resource Center, providing "basic counseling skills like active listening and reflection" while CHARG consumers (who drop by this community mental health organization) interact with the students (per Dr. McKinney's records).

## **Pillar II: Student-Centered Academic Excellence**

- **Goal 1:** Produce rigorous and enriching learning experiences tailored to meet students where they are.
  - o **CEL Contribution:** CEL creates dynamic, real-world learning environments that challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills in practical settings.
- **Goal 2:** Build upon our distinct academic experience while providing the Roadrunner Difference.
  - o **CEL Contribution:** CEL distinguishes MSU Denver by offering unique, impactful learning experiences that connect students with industry and community leaders. Partnerships with organizations such as Denver Health and the March of Dimes provide students in Marketing valuable case studies and connections for brand management and multicultural marketing, as noted by Professor Sally Baalbaki (per Dr. McKinney's records).

## **Pillar III: Civic and Economic Catalyst**

- **Goal 1:** Be the indispensable and agile provider of talent and skill that drives Colorado's economy.
  - o **CEL Contribution:** CEL prepares students to meet the workforce needs of Colorado by providing practical experience, essential skills for workplace readiness and fostering community connections.
- **Goal 2:** Be the convener for problem-solving and forecasting community needs through civic discourse.
  - o **CEL Contribution:** CEL engages students in civic discourse and community problem-solving, enhancing their ability to contribute meaningfully to societal challenges. For instance, Professor Sara Jackson Shumate (Earth & Atmospheric Sciences) has worked with partners like the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Indigenous Resource Management (IIRM), engaging many important conversations with students, staff, and faculty on such urgent needs as flood and fire

mitigation, access to public transportation and parks (per Dr. McKinney's records).

- **Goal 3:** Enrich the greater Denver community through lifelong learning and engagement.
  - **CEL Contribution:** CEL initiatives enrich the Denver community by addressing local needs and fostering ongoing partnerships between the university and community organizations.

#### **Pillar IV: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

- **Goal 2:** Be an agent of healing by helping to convene and celebrate Denver's diverse communities.
  - **CEL Contribution:** CEL initiatives celebrate and support Denver's diverse populations through collaborative projects and community engagement.
- **Goal 3:** Become a model Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) for higher education.
  - **CEL Contribution:** CEL programs specifically support Latine students by providing culturally relevant learning experiences and community engagement opportunities. For example, the "Latinx Leaders in Action" program connects students with Latine leaders in the community, fostering mentorship and professional development. Additionally, Modern Languages professor (and former Service Learning Associate) Dr. Graham Ignizio aligns learning in Spanish courses with organizations that have large Spanish-speaking constituencies (such as Metro Caring and Mi Casa), providing opportunities for authentic conversations and essential skills that serve the organizations.

#### **Pillar V: Organizational Agility and Sustainability**

- **Goal 1:** Be Colorado's most desired place of employment.
  - **CEL Contribution:** CEL enhances the university's appeal by demonstrating a commitment to community engagement and experiential learning. The annual "Day of Service" event mobilizes students, faculty, and staff to engage in community service projects, benefiting numerous local nonprofits and service agencies.
- **Goal 2:** Diversify and grow the University's revenue streams for long-term sustainability.
  - **CEL Contribution:** CEL projects can attract funding from community partnerships, grants, and philanthropic organizations, supporting the university's financial sustainability.

Other data collected by the CEL team within the C2Hub’s FEEL office underscore the depth and breadth of CEL at MSU Denver. Indeed, we see through qualitative and quantitative snapshots that service learning, civic engagement, and community engaged learning, have taken root at MSU Denver over the last 10 years.

### ***Qualitatively Characterizing the Depth of CEL at MSU Denver***

The C2Hub FEEL Team hosted 3 open forums for faculty and staff to discuss CEL in the Spring of 2024. These forums gathered a diverse range of participants from across the university, reflecting together on what is working well with the practice of CEL at MSU Denver; what barriers exist, and how these barriers might be overcome. The CEL Co-Fellows and Program Manager, with other FEEL colleagues, conducted a thematic analysis, which resulted in the following characterizations of CEL at our university, from the lived experiences of those doing and supporting the work:

1. **Community engaged, civic engaged, and service learning at MSU Denver are diverse practices. So defining and assessing CEL should be broad enough to honor disciplinary differences, as well as recognize different levels of engagement, practice, and time.**
  - CEL looks different in different disciplines. Notably, CEL will likely differ between applied/professional (CHHS and SOE), business (COB), and liberal arts (CLAS) programs. For applied/professional programs, the clinical/field placement requirement allows a pathway or container for CEL that might not exist in the same way for liberal arts departments. Indeed, as our department chair survey results suggest, for some departments in the liberal arts and sciences, the connections to CEL aren’t readily apparent at this time. However, *we see experiential learning and campus partnerships as great opportunities to scaffold CEL work into what faculty are already doing in the classroom*—e.g., making use of YouTube video production or infographic assignments with practical problem-solving, informed by community-based or campus-based organizations. We also see untapped potential in convening faculty and staff from across disciplines, to talk and collaborate on their CEL practice.
  - CEL occurs on a spectrum at MSU Denver, where some departments have fully integrated it into the culture of their teaching, scholarly/creative activity, and service; and others may have 1-2 faculty starting CEL. *Recognizing this range, and valuing the work at various stages, can help spread a culture of CEL across the institution.* We share below two advanced department practices, to celebrate the deep CEL work being done at MSU Denver:
    - We note, for instance, the Social Work curriculum includes Service Learning coursework at the introductory (1000) level, with practica

and internship courses at later levels (courses which students often describe as a highlight of their learning). The capstone internship allows students to learn what faculty describe as “a professional use of self,” a whole-self learning experience that is mutually beneficial to community: “community needs social work students, as much as students need community partners.” The internship has become an opportunity for students to “leave a legacy” to an organization in which they are placed (a concrete artifact, like a training material). The Council on Social Work as an accrediting body guides the SLOs and coursework, so Social Work’s process will look different than, say, Sociology and Anthropology. We describe the Social Work series of courses here primarily to illustrate the depth of CEL work in some parts of MSU Denver.

- The Department of Marketing also illustrates how a departmental culture can support CEL, with the chair offering “shout outs” to faculty who do CEL work with their students; the use of Watermark to report CEL activities (that also support Marketing for accreditation); faculty encouraging students to use their CEL experience on the LinkedIn profile; and businesses eager to work with Marketing courses, who reach out to the department for support. Faculty doing CEL “get to learn something every semester...about businesses and clients. It’s not the same day in and day out as an instructor.” CEL supports networking and relationship building, which the department leverages with advisory professionals who review their curriculum, mentor, and support students.

**2. Partnerships at MSU Denver are also quite diverse and include “high stakes” partnerships that require a deep trust and gatekeeping; as well as partnerships which provide students “a safe place to fail.” MSU Denver faculty and staff note that all levels of partnerships are valuable.**

- As reported in the listening sessions, the Public Health program works with Denver Public Schools in what we’d consider more of a high stakes partnership, where students only engage in CEL after careful expectation setting and preparation.
- In contrast, departments like Communication Studies have collaborated with campus offices, e.g., the Auraria Sustainable Campus Program (ASCP), in essence providing students “a safe place to fail” as they begin practicing CEL. The ASCP has worked with COMM faculty to create a CEL syllabus for COMM 1100 Foundations of Oral Communication, which serves as both an introduction to majors/minors, as well as an oral communication general studies course. The ASCP meets with the class at

least 5 times during the semester, sharing more about what they do and why recycling and composting properly matters, as well as working with the class on observational data collection (through the bin audit and waste disposal observation process). Students work in teams to develop an infographic to inspire better waste diversion, which they pitch, draft, and revise, with input from the ASCP.

### ***Quantitatively Visualizing the Breadth of CEL Work at MSU Denver***

Data from the report, “Service Learning Courses Historic Data and Analytics” by Codi Whittington from the C2 Hub, reflects an impressive 10 years of data from all “SL” attributed courses running between Spring 2013-Spring 2023. This data underscores how much CEL is penetrating the teaching and learning of MSU Denver. It also suggests that some colleges have a widespread use of the “SL” attribute, but an uneven use of the designation in other parts of the institution.

From Spring 2013 to Spring 2023, 22,164 students have taken SL designated courses, in 338 total classes (894 sections) with 564 unique instructors. We note the steady growth in the number of SL courses until the COVID-19 pandemic disruptions of 2020. It is remarkable that even without a university curriculum requirement in place, so many students are taking SL courses.

Semester	# of Students	Number of Courses	Number of Sections	Unique Instructors
Fall 2013	918	1	23	17
Spring 2014	785	1	21	14
Summer 2014	125	1	6	5
AY2013 totals	1828	3	50	36
Fall 2014	905	3	27	18
Spring 2015	755	3	25	15
Summer 2015	136	2	6	5
AY2014 totals	1796	8	58	38
Fall 2015	892	6	26	17
Spring 2016	698	9	27	20

Summer 2016	119	2	6	5
AY2015 totals	1709	17	59	42
Fall 2016	1078	10	37	12
Spring 2017	1170	14	48	26
Summer 2017	224	5	11	7
AY2016 totals	2472	29	96	35
Fall 2017	1079	9	37	24
Spring 2018	1164	14	47	34
Summer 2018	290	6	15	11
AY2017 totals	2533	29	99	38
Fall 2018	1383	20	55	39
Spring 2019	1340	26	60	38
Summer 2019	300	6	16	13
AY2018 totals	3023	52	131	90
Fall 2019	1310	24	53	35
Spring 2020	1402	31	61	43
Summer 2020	278	4	11	10
AY2019 totals	2990	59	125	88
Fall 2020	1120	20	45	32
Spring 2021	958	24	44	31
Summer 2021	219	5	14	11
AY2020 totals	2297	49	103	74
Fall 2021	856	20	40	29
Spring 2022	974	24	46	30

Summer 2022	173	4	9	8
AY2021 totals	2003	48	95	67
Fall 2022	744	21	37	26
Spring 2023	769	23	41	30
AY2022 totals	1513	44	78	56
10 year totals	22,164	338	894	564

The report offers a college-by-college breakdown, which, when coupled with self-report data from the Spring 2024 Department Chairs/Program Director’s Survey, demonstrates that civic engaged, community engaged, and service learning, are practiced broadly across the institution. AY2022 data put the MSU Denver undergraduate registered population at 15,682, allowing us to estimate that 9.6% of undergraduate students are taking a SL-attributed course. Extrapolating the numbers of instructors from the data presented for the 2022 school year, 825 instructors taught classes at MSU Denver, meaning that about 7% of the faculty taught an SL-designated class in AY2022. These numbers are likely under-reported, given what our chair/director survey revealed: 35% of responding departments (9 total) reported that they offer CEL-related courses not designated through the “SL” process.

Participation with the SL attribute is not evenly spread across all colleges, but data show all colleges are represented in CEL-related work. The report concludes that the College of Letters, Arts, & Sciences (CLAS) “more than doubles the amount of any measured metric of any other college or school regarding [“SL”] engagement. This includes the number of students engaged in [SL] courses, the number of unique [SL] courses, the number of sections of [SL] courses taught, and the number of [SL]course instructors.” Though 9 CLAS departments have never taught courses with an “SL” designation, 11 others have or are still using the designation (Theater/Dance, Sociology / Anthropology, Psychology, History, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences currently offering SL courses; Art, Communication Studies, GITA, Journalism/Media Production, Modern Languages, and Political Science have in the past). Among the most engaged departments, Sociology/Anthropology offers at least one section of SOC 1010 each semester with the SL designation.

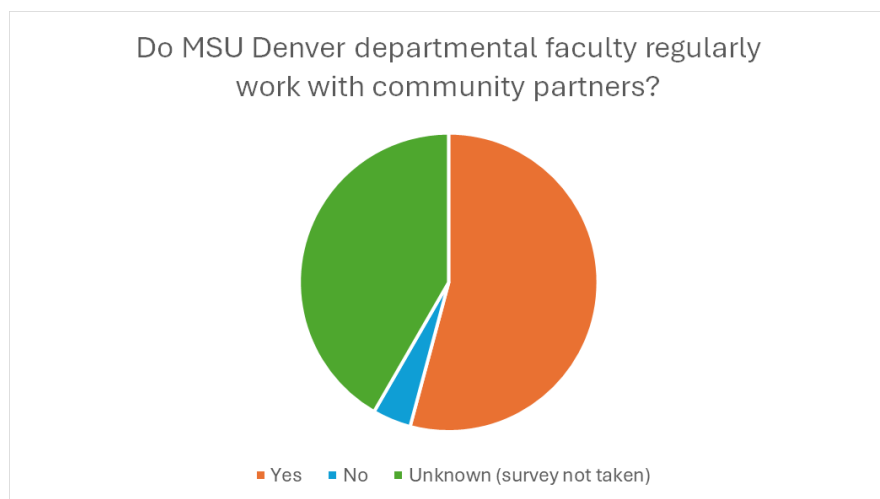
In terms of the number of students reached by SL courses, the large colleges of CHHS and COB have departments such as Human Services and Counseling, Nutrition, Social Work, and Management, which offer many SL designated courses. Though the Schools of Education and Hospitality may not serve as many students, these two units have had 100% departmental participation in SL-designated courses, with Secondary Education and Hospitality as important programs.

College/School	Percent of departments that have taught “SL” courses	Percent of departments that have NOT taught “SL” courses (# departments)	Number of current departments teaching “SL” courses
Letters, Arts & Sciences	55%	45% (9 total)	5
Health & Human Sciences	62.5%	37.5% (3 total)	3
Business	37.5%	62.5% (5 total)	1
Education	100%	0%	1
Hospitality	100%	0%	1
Aerospace, Computing, Engineering & Design	0%	100% (6 total)	0

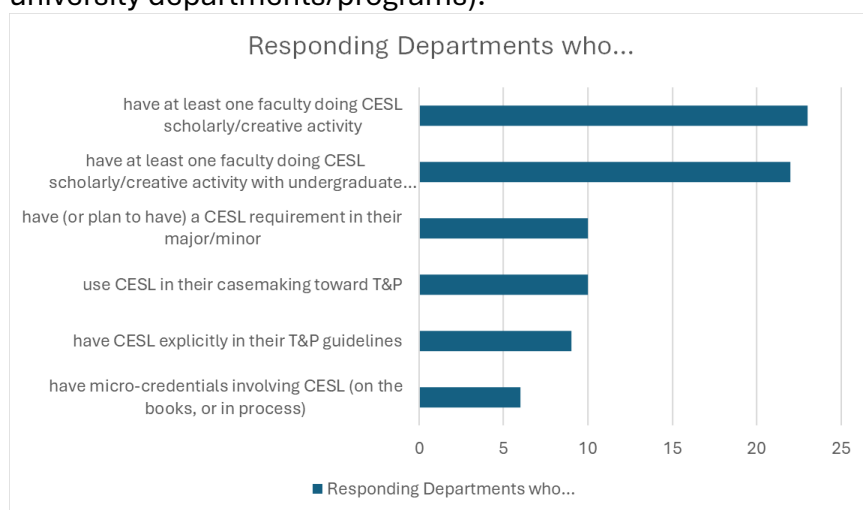
Interestingly, Aviation/Aerospace Science, Advanced Manufacturing Sciences, Computer Sciences, the Cybersecurity Center, EAET, and Industrial Design have *not* taught courses with an SL designation. Three department chairs/program directors from the College of Aerospace/Engineering completed the CESL survey, reporting that their programs (AMS, EAET, and ID) have worked with community and campus partners, require internships and do scholarly/creative activity using CEL-related activities. So, though Aviation/Aerospace is not represented in the ranks of SL-attributed courses, from the data we gathered, they are doing CEL-related work as a college.

We share next highlights from the survey that CEL Faculty Co-Fellows administered to department chairs and program directors in Spring 2024: 28 of the 48 total chairs and directors completed the survey following a visit with the Council of Chairs. Twenty-six departments (54%) regularly work with community partners, and only 2 (4%) answered that “no” they do not have faculty working regularly with community partners. We look forward to learning more about this self-reported data, though we are also encouraged that **more than half of departments/programs at MSU Denver report regularly working with community partners. Roughly 1 in 5 departments/programs reported requiring CEL-related material in the major or minor. And roughly 1 in 5 departments/programs report explicitly including CEL-related activities in their tenure and promotion guidelines. We believe this underscores the breadth of CEL at the institution.**





Nine respondents report requiring CEL-related coursework in their major or minor, while 19% of departments responding (5, or 10% of the total university) have micro-credentials involving CEL-type work (we note that, upon further review of the survey responses, 2 of the courses fit squarely within our understanding of CEL; the other 7 courses are internships and practica or field placements that might have a CEL component, but might not). Perhaps even more encouraging, 31% of responding departments (9, or 18% of the total 48 university departments/programs) report that they explicitly include CEL-related work in tenure/promotion guidelines, while 34% report that CEL-related work is at least implied in case-making and decision-making toward tenure and promotion (10, or 21% of the total 48 university departments/programs).



In conclusion, data show that the three streams of SL, civic-engaged, and CEL work have led to a robust ecosystem of practice that spreads far and reaches deep at MSU Denver. We see these efforts as iterative and additive, not in competition with each other. Under the bigger tent of experiential learning, and in support of CADRE values and MSU Denver's mission to provide a high-quality accessible education that will serve students in a number

of post-graduation outcomes, now is the time to amplify benefits and reduce barriers to CEL at MSU Denver.

## **Amplifying Benefits, Reducing Barriers: What Data shows about CEL**

Evidence from MSU Denver is starting to corroborate what we know from the literature, though we note that our ability to assess CEL at MSU Denver is constrained by its current state of decentralization. The data we accessed underscores a variety of benefits that CEL brings to its main stakeholders (students, community partners, and faculty), all of which add up to significant benefits for higher education institutions. We concentrate on the benefits articulated in the literature, introducing the evidence we know from MSU Denver as relevant.

### ***CEL Supports Students***

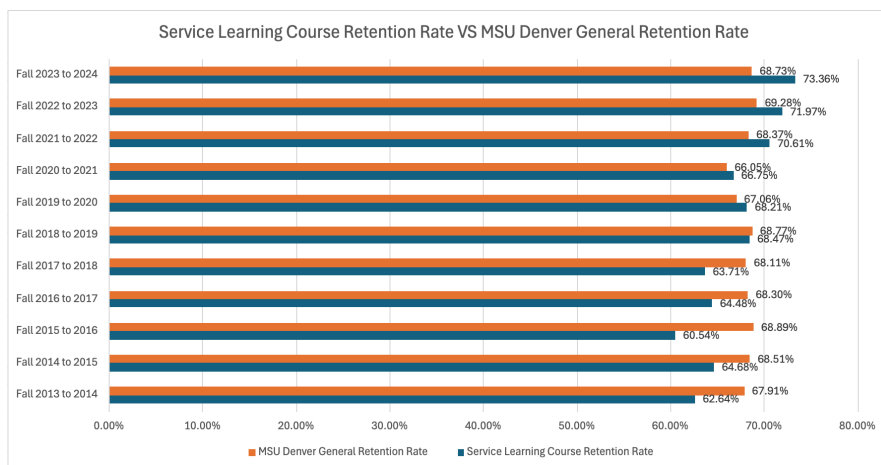
Chittum, Enke, and Finley (2022) summarize benefits to students in their meta-analysis focused on high impact practices (HIPs), and particularly, research related to CEL.

- CEL increases retention and graduation for students.
  - Much of the literature underscores the significance of multiple HIPs across a student's experience. However, the literature shows a more specific positive relationship between students taking SL courses at the upper division and graduation. Likewise, community-based HIPs (like SL or CEL) are associated with increases in 6-year graduation rates, regardless of student demographics (Chittum, Enke, & Finley, 2022).

At MSU Denver, data tell a similar story. Christina Foust has taught a number of CEL courses during her 5 years at MSU Denver (though not using the SL attribute). A report run by Institutional Research compared her sections of COMM 1100 Foundations of Communication (which has developed into a collaboration with the Auraria Sustainable Campus Program) and COMM 3000 Diversity & Communication in the US (host to Dialogue & Civic Engagement Week events). Data comparing 1100 and 3000 sections did not produce statistically significant results. However, semester-to-semester persistence was 5.7% higher in CEL sections of 1100 and year-to-year retention was 6.4% higher in CEL sections of 1100 than regular sections of the course. In COMM 3000, semester-to-semester was 13.6% higher and year-to-year was 15.1% higher, in persistence and retention compared to other sections of the course.

A similar pattern bears out in data from MSU Denver Institutional Research, particularly in the post-COVID-19 years. From Fall 2021 to Fall 2022, SL

designated courses saw a 2.24% higher retention rate than MSU Denver courses in general (70.61% compared to 68.37%). This grew to a high of 4.63% higher retention rate for SL designated courses (73.36%, versus 68.73% in general) for the period of Fall 2023-Fall 2024.



- CEL helps students practice, and grow in, essential skills.
  - Hoy and Johnson (2013) note that in CEL, the stakes are higher for student engagement, effort, and follow-through. Because CEL is often (though not necessarily) project- and/or team-based, students feel a greater responsibility to fellow students. Responsibilities to community partners, the practical or applied nature of CEL work lead enhance the practical competencies that are present.

DCEW24 provides evidence that experiential and CEL-related learning, civic-deliver essential skill benefits to Roadrunners. Students from the 8 courses affiliated with DCEW24 (160 registered students) were invited to take a brief survey that included 5 essential skill questions. 39 students (roughly 24% return rate) completed the survey, with the following means on a 5-point Likert scale for essential skills statements:

Statement (5=strongly agree)	Mean	Standard Deviation
“This class has given me <b>practice in communication</b> , such as active listening and clear expression of ideas.”	4.59	0.63
“This class has given me <b>practice in teamwork</b> , such as listening and seeking broad input from team members to contribute to a shared goal, delegating tasks, solving conflict, and realizing a shared goal.”	4.56	0.74
“This class has given me <b>practice in problem solving</b> , including the ability to define a problem, analyze it through evidence and reasoning, identify possible solutions, and implement solutions.”	4.49	0.75

“This class has given me <b>practice in time management</b> , including the ability to set priorities, organize tasks and devote appropriate time to task completion, as well as adjust as needed to meet goals.”	4.36	0.95
“ <b>I would take another class focused on dialogue and civic or community engagement.</b> ”	4.10	1.08

Though our survey is limited (e.g., through self-report data and design), that so many students strongly agreed to these essential skills questions shows the promise of CEL to benefit Roadrunners.

- CEL relates to positive attitudes and dispositions among students.
  - Scholarship demonstrates CEL’s positive relationship to such qualities as: “awareness of diversity,” “motivation,” “empathy,” “work ethic,” and “attitudes toward school and learning” (Chittum, Enke, & Finley, 2022, p. 5).
  - Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki (2011) note that SL leads to positive attitudes toward self and one’s community, which Taylor et al (2019) relate to first-generation college students and others underrepresented in higher education. In this way, Taylor et al (2019) conclude, CEL may be particularly important for folks in non-dominant identities, to understand their race and ethnicity, social class, or immigration status, outside a deficit model. What Taylor et al label “justice-oriented service-learning” sounds much like CEL, and offers particular benefits to first-gen students. Citing Conley and Hamlin (2009), Taylor et al describe these benefits as “bridg[ing] two communities otherwise seen as incompatible—home and university” (p. 352). Likewise, such CEL strengthens students’ relationships to their home communities encouraging students to “become agents of community change” through a better understanding of social structures (citing Wilsey et al, 2014; p. 352).
- CEL helps foster social and personal responsibility.
  - CEL helps build intercultural competence and knowledge, moral/ethical reasoning, and skills for lifelong learning.
  - Chittum et al (2022) contrast personal responsibility as reflecting on one’s needs and desires with social responsibility as demonstrating “one’s concern for others in the community of society” (p. 14). Service learning positively relates to “increases in civic attitudes and civic mindedness, civic and community-based engagement, ... civic learning, a sense of civic responsibility, and ethical and moral reasoning” (p. 16). Unfortunately, though many studies reviewed in Chittum et al’s report address social and

personal responsibility, they do not address outcomes for underserved groups.

The DCEW24 student survey also included 5 items related to civic and community engagement. With the same caveats mentioned above, and with slightly lower means, we still see promise in the survey returns. In an era characterized by polarization, apathy, and inaction, Roadrunner students in the DCEW24 classes are reporting greater feelings of civic/community engagement and agency:

Statement (5=strongly agree)	Mean	Standard Deviation
“This class helped me <b>identify political issues or community problems that matter to me.</b> ”	4.15	1.25
“I have <b>learned more about political issues or community problems that matter to me</b> as a result of being in this class.”	3.95	1.30
“Now that I’ve taken this class, <b>I feel like it is possible to respond in a meaningful way to a political issue or community problem</b> that matters to me.”	4.03	1.29
“ <b>I am more likely to act in some way on political issues or community problems</b> as a result of being in this class. (Actions might include voting in 2024 elections, joining or creating a protest, creating a petition, or talking with friends or coworkers about issues)”	3.90	1.32
“As a result of taking this class, <b>I now know of at least one new campus office, and/or community organization, addressing a community problem or political issue.</b> ”	4.26	1.23

- CEL supports students’ ability to learn, with growth demonstrated in terms of GPA, scores on exams and assignments, and engagement with courses.
  - Chittum et al (2022) review studies that connect CEL to higher GPAs following SL experiences, increases in test scores and grades. Additionally, students self-report gains in their learning.
  - As Taylor et al (2019) review, CEL is particularly important to first-generation students (and others underserved by higher education), because these methods of learning can help students “achieve their academic goals and feel better integrated into a college community” (p. 351; citing McKay & Estrella, 2008; Wilsey, et al, 2014).
- CEL supports students with post-graduation career skills and plans (e.g., job attainment and graduate school admission).

- Kuh's (1995) foundational work using the results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) support that "intentionally crafted experiences" by faculty—particularly "outside of the classroom"—help students "clarify vocational goals," while "develop[ing] practical competence from leadership responsibilities" (Hoy & Johnson, 2013, p. 3).

### ***Community-engaged Learning Supports Community***

CEL, as a subset of experiential learning, has the particular benefits of encouraging active, mutually beneficial, and reciprocal, *collaborations* between higher education institutions and community. Community can be defined in any number of ways, but for the purposes of CEL, it typically refers to an organization (non-profit/community-serving, government/civic, and for-profit business) whose mission is, at least in part, to serve the public. The following is a primer for how community partnerships work, followed by an articulation of benefits to community.

#### ***What is a community partnership?***

Hoy and Johnson (2013) identify stages of community partnership, recognizing the time commitment and work needed to create mutually beneficial, reciprocal, ethical collaborations. Beginning with points of contact (*exploratory*), partnerships move into a second stage where students, faculty, and community partners articulate goals together (*emerging*). Emerging partnerships become engaged following multiple semesters of work, where community partners and faculty collaborate on a long-term plan. *Exemplary* partnerships require three or more years of sustained engagement, with deep reciprocity between the CBO and higher education institution.

## STAGES / TYPOLOGY OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS (HIP, HOY, & JOHNSON, 2016)

Exploratory	Emerging	Engaged	Exemplary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Points of contact between university and community partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating goals together with students, faculty, community partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing <u>long term</u> plan (3 years+)</li> </ul>

The time and care needed to forge community partnerships, with the resulting benefits, relates to the ethics of approaching community partners with an asset-based frame. While service learning discourse can approach community with a needs-based frame (where higher education institutions assume a posture of “serving” community, which “needs help” from the privileged institution), CEL proceeds from an asset-based frame. Murthada (2016) describes the difference well: “...everyone at the table is a different knower. Different experiences, languages, and cultures become assets to build upon rather than deficits to fix. Universities can work with communities, creating the collective capacity to generate effective change, foregrounding collective efficacy applied to problem defining and solution finding. This may become an epistemological, democratic norm. Generating collective capacity suggests shifting power relationships to foster cohesion, a shared sense of being, and a group’s belief in its capacity for effective action” (p. 10).

Reciprocity is the shorthand for establishing projects and processes in which faculty, students, and community partners give and receive equitably. As Murthada (2016) describes, this is not a legalistic or contractual obligation, so reciprocity is not guaranteed. Rather, it must be carefully built with trust. Jameson, Clayton, and Jaeger (2011) describe it as “shared voice and power...collaborative knowledge construction...joint ownership of work processes and products” (p. 264).

Community self-determination builds from the justice principle that those who have the most at stake in a decision are centered in decision-making processes. CEL is about doing work *with* and not *for* community partners. Again, such an approach requires time and care, the willingness to listen “to those who live *their* experiences everyday in *their* neighborhood, all the while educating and mobilizing resources” (Murthada, 2016, p. 10). Building on Taylor et al (2019), in the context of an urban institution whose majority

population are first-gen students, we might also see that MSU Denver students share their lived experiences as part of community self-determination.

Key to this endeavor is recognizing the baseline of social justice. That is, bearing in mind “unequal circumstances of marginalized groups, and taking actions directed towards eliminating inequities” (Murthada, 2016, p. 11). Strong partnerships between MSU Denver and metro Denver CBOs might work together in “identifying and undoing...oppressive and unjust practices and replacing them with more equitable, culturally appropriate ones” (Furman, 2012, p. 194; quoted in Murtadha, 2016, p. 12). Though social justice is not a prerequisite to doing CEL work, it is an important value or compass point toward which faculty should strive. Here, ethical partnerships are characterized by *mutuality*, that is, a state in which benefits and risks are dispersed evenly, which includes “human and fiscal resource allocation” (Murtadha, 2016, p. 13).

### **Benefits of CEL to community**

CEL facilitates touchpoints where faculty, students, and community partners meet, to bring their creativity, experience, and expertise to bear on practical problems and needs. This results in benefits to community as a whole, as well as specific community partners. We note that data collection from MSU Denver community partners is nascent; but we share anecdotally the voices of MSU Denver campus and community partners, to help underscore the importance of this work from a partner perspective.

- Working with faculty and students on collaborative projects allows partners to meet their own missions.
  - CEL provides people-power. Becca Rathburn (SNAP Coordinator) noted that the collaboration with COMM 3000 “help[ed] our office reach students on campus during their Resource Fair,” while “asking thoughtful and introspective questions.”

For smaller CBOs and non-profits, as well as underfunded government and civic organizations, CEL can be a tremendous difference maker. Malik Robinson (of Cleo Parker Robinson Dance) noted (on the partnership with Nicole Predki and Leslie Merrill Schmidt): “Throughout the 52-year history of Cleo Parker Robinson Dance (CPRD), **we have been highly cognizant of the collaborative partnerships that are necessary between educational and performance entities as a means of accessing and benefiting the widest range of the artistic student community. The reality is that for both to flourish, each must be ready to support the other....The impact on Colorado’s arts community overall has been powerful and beneficial to a myriad of students and audience members, reinforcing the philosophies we share.**”



- Partners benefit from having a “student perspective” on their endeavors and simply getting to know them and their work. For instance, Cassy Cadwallader (ASCP) described how the partnership between her campus office and COMM 1100 provided a “fresh perspective on how the general public performs their waste management practices before and after educational intervention.” The courses also “provided our agency with this valuable data,” and helped extend the mission of sustainability as students “felt empowered to take the tools that they learned into their personal lives and educate their communities further” on how to recycle/compost, and why that matters.
- CEL gathers and strengthens bonds in a community, helping to organize networks “anchored” in universities.
  - The university is a space with more permanence, becoming the literal gathering site for community partners and university stakeholders. Vortuba et al. (2002) explain this potential of CEL as facilitating multidirectional “interaction with communities and other external constituencies through the development, exchange, and application of knowledge, information, and expertise for mutual benefit” (cited Hoy & Johnson, 2013, p. 9). Events and other gatherings in an institution strengthen networks not only *between* university and community partners, but between networks *of* community partners.
  - CEL connects to universities’ potential as “anchor institutions” or “large, place-based organizations” that “invest in their communities as a way of doing business” (Koh et al, 2020). As Sladek (2023) writes, “the anchor mission” is “a commitment to intentionally apply an institution’s place-based economic power and human capital in partnership with community to mutually benefit the long-term well-being of both.” Though anchor institutions are often considered from economic standpoints, we see the ways that anchor institutions serve as a hub for civil society, business, families, and individuals.

## Areas of focus for Anchor Institutions include:

[credit: CUMU & Democracy Collaborative, 2008]

### Focus & Frame: Anchor Assets



We see promising signs that MSU Denver is adopting the ethos of an anchor institution. For instance, the MSU Denver Institute for Public Service sees its “social impact” within the mission of “democratiz[ing] our democracy by getting more of OUR students (high percentages of low income, minoritized, and first-generation) into the halls of government at all levels (local, state, federal) where policy is shaped and created” Additionally, the Undergraduate Studies website articulates the many assets that anchor institutions provide, which include community partnerships, civic engagement, academic research, and communications (see above).

Strengthening connections across local communities will only become more important given the “wicked problems” facing contemporary and future generations, problems including misinformation and stress for democracy, environmental injustice and catastrophe, etc. The time is right to institute CEL in MSU Denver, to “level up” our commitments and our strengths as an anchor institution and hub for community in the Denver metro.

For more stories of community partnerships growing from MSU Denver, see the following stories in RED:

<https://red.msudenver.edu/2024/taking-steps-to-promote-seniors-physical-and-cognitive-health/>

<https://red.msudenver.edu/2024/cleo-parker-robinsons-legacy-to-be-honored-at-msu-denver/>

### ***Community Engaged Learning Supports Faculty***

As should already be clear through the articulation of benefits that CEL brings to students and community, CEL supports the mission of higher education. It *is*, in many ways, the faculty enterprise, a practice through which busy professionals can align teaching, scholarly/creative activity, and service to the campus and community. CEL builds collaborative networks of reciprocity, strengthening interdisciplinary efforts, as well as the ties between MSU Denver faculty, civic and campus offices, non-profits, entrepreneurs and businesses.

The literature articulates further benefits to faculty, which are (or have potential) to manifest at MSU Denver:

- CEL supports, or adds to, faculty research interests (particularly when job descriptions, tenure and promotion guidelines, value CEL)(Hoy & Johnson, 2013). CEL provides an outlet for scholarly and creative activity that matters, including public scholarship, as faculty work together with students and community partners to produce knowledge that solves real-world problems (Hoy & Johnson, 2013).

CEL becomes the pathway through which faculty can cultivate and practice their work as researchers and creatives in at least two main ways: First, working with community partners and students to address challenges can be an opportunity for faculty to flex expertise, resulting in scholarly or creative products. Second, CEL has a robust literature of its own, part of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL), where faculty might produce expert knowledge as practitioners of CEL for other faculty. Each of these products is valuable, advancing knowledge production and the arts. Unfortunately, a barrier to the growth of CEL can be found in stolid views of research that rely on “counting publications” as the explicit or hidden metric for faculty knowledge production.

Here, we underscore the importance of revising departmental tenure and promotion guidelines to explicitly value scholarly and creative works that serve a public audience (e.g., literature reviews created with students and shared with community partners; grant applications created together with community partners; artistic exhibitions convened in collaboration with community partners; “talking point” documents or plans that serve community partners’ missions and needs). We also underscore the importance of educating tenure and promotion committees, department chairs, deans, and others, on the ways that CEL scholarly and creative works matter, though not in ideologies of research in which many academics were socialized.

- CEL helps faculty achieve their goal of supporting students (Hoy & Johnson, 2013), and faculty find the teaching within CEL classrooms to be satisfying if demanding.

Many faculty members with whom we speak at MSU Denver express both a feeling of overwhelm from the high teaching load at the institution; as well as a deep appreciation for being able to work with students who are hungry for education, who bring diverse life experiences and rich knowledge / perspective to our classrooms. CEL can become a way to teach toward one’s passion, while also trying to prioritize what matters in a busy work schedule—particularly if CEL is supported by structures that value it.

CEL, like other forms of experiential learning, helps faculty organize their teaching, prioritizing assignments and assessments that will serve community partner needs and the learning outcomes of the course. **Here, we see the power of the CEL lens to cut through forms of education that matter less, and to allow time to be spent on education that matters more.** Additionally, faculty report greater satisfaction in teaching engaged students. As noted in the podcast on experiential learning and CEL, Predki and Foust discuss with Dr. Sam Jay the ways that the stakes change for students doing CEL work: Students do not want to fail community partners or each other, and they want their learning and efforts to matter in ways that will weigh in on problems in the real world (<https://www.msudenver.edu/early-bird/new-roadrunner-exchange-podcast-episode-available/>). Experiential learning can lead to a more engaged student, and it’s more satisfying to teach engaged students.

- CEL provides an avenue to faculty for serving the campus/community.

Just as CEL becomes a pathway to realize faculty scholarly/creative activity and teaching, it provides a pathway for service. And as has already been underscored in the other 2 domains of faculty labor, service that aligns student learning and faculty expertise while working with community partners, often feels more satisfying than either volunteering for community, or spending one’s time on another committee.

We share the results of the DCEW24 faculty cohort survey (8 participants) to provide at least some data that confirms benefits to faculty.

Statement (5=strongly agree)	Mean	Standard Deviation
“I leave this semester with a better understanding of what civic and community engaged learning is (than I had before).”	4.00	1.50
“I leave this semester with a better understanding of how I might ‘plug into’ civic and community engaged learning in future classes that I teach.”	3.88	1.54
“I am more likely to use civic or community engaged learning in a future class (than I was before).”	3.75	1.48

In summary, CEL benefits students, community, and faculty, and as these are the main stakeholders for university mission, CEL benefits institutions of higher education and the higher education enterprise more generally. As we have established in this White Paper, the currents of service learning, civic and community engagement have been working at MSU Denver for at least 10 years, thus, it is worth exploring the barriers that faculty and staff have shared with us. As we present in the following section, some are common within the CEL literature, but others are more particular to MSU Denver.

### ***Barriers to CEL and How to Overcome Them***

We begin by accounting for the barriers that reflect common trends in CEL work outside of MSU Denver. These themes emerged in the open forum sessions from Spring 2024, and echo what we see in the scholarship on CEL.

- 1. The institution is missing a consistent, transparent valuing of CEL, particularly through faculty work.** As Sdvizhkov et al (2022) note, tenure and promotion guidelines are critical to the success of CEL, along with structures that promote and reward CEL. Missing and inconsistent reward structures, especially tenure and promotion guidelines, stalls CEL from its potential.

As noted previously, 32% of respondents to the department chair/director survey reported that they explicitly include CEL-related activity in tenure/promotion guidelines. These 9 departments (Communication Studies, English, Modern Languages, Political Science, Sociology & Anthropology, Theater and Dance; Management, Entrepreneurship; Advanced Manufacturing Sciences) are joined by 10 total departments responding (for 36%) who stated that CEL-related activity appears in their case-making and decision-making (Communication Studies, Economics, English, Modern Languages, SOAN; Marketing; Nutrition; Elementary Education; AMS). So, 13 (out of 48 total) unique departments/programs either include CEL-related activity explicitly, or in the practice of, tenure and promotion arguments and decisions, for 27% total at the institution.

As participants shared in the third forum, faculty tend to complete work that they are rewarded for, and presently, CEL isn't clearly rewarded. By our count following the department chair survey, nearly three-fourths of departments and programs neither explicitly include CEL in their guidelines, nor integrate CEL into the case-making and decisions toward tenure and promotion. As participants expressed, many faculty are confused as to whether or not doing CEL work "counts" toward tenure and promotion for tenure track faculty; and if it does indeed "count," where should faculty report it? Namely, should this be reported on Watermark under teaching, service, and/or scholarly and creative activity?

*We recommend that future efforts on CEL clarify the practicalities of where faculty and staff should report CEL, as well as greater valuing of CEL toward tenure and promotion.* More specifically, a committee or center on CEL might take the following phased approach: first, update tenure guidelines to explicitly recognize CEL activities; second, provide training for tenure committees on assessing CEL contributions; and third, integrate CEL achievements into regular faculty review processes.

For lecturers and affiliate faculty, whose work is typically not defined by anything but teaching, there are serious questions about how to ensure their efforts to integrate CEL into their teaching will matter for them. *The CEL team suggests more data gathering on this issue, particularly about whether or not faculty across categories of labor feel supported in doing CEL, and how we might ensure that such labor is valued in all categories. We also suggest a center or committee on CEL advocate with academic leadership on appropriate workload considerations.*

With pay equity and workload concerns, the valuing of CEL work is even more important. As noted above, we recommend educating departments about the importance of public scholarship, and deliberating together on its impact (e.g., when an applied department does research for or with the City/County of Denver and presents it, should this be valued as much as a peer-reviewed journal article in terms of impact?). As well, participants recognize that MSU Denver's identity as a teaching-center institution could be leveraged more to build a culture of support for CEL work, again, allowing busy professionals the opportunity to focus their labor on consequential work that not only matters and aligns teaching/scholarly activity/service—but also is rewarded for jobs, tenure, promotion, and perhaps pay and other resources.

2. **CEL-related work is dynamic and takes more resources to do well.** Whether it is because CEL demands more (and sometimes more intense) relational and organizing work, or/and because CEL brings about unexpected or additional challenges that arise when serving community and students, it demands more resources to do well. Hoy and Johnson (2013) identify that time and money support faculty development (especially connections to pedagogy, scholarship), allowing CEL to flourish.

Forum participants shared interesting examples that demonstrate why CEL takes more time. For instance, one faculty from the School of Education described a course in which students were required to identify a community partner and write a grant proposal with that partner, a mutually beneficial exercise, but one which requires more intentional work and time for support than traditional classroom teaching. Faculty are experts and can support the grant-writing, but one can

imagine the extra time involved in researching a grant proposal for the unique context (mission, stakeholders, history) of a community partner, versus completing a lecture and classroom activity that one has used before. *The faculty co-fellows recommend that any committee exploring CEL, and perhaps experiential learning more broadly, gather data concerning the workload of experiential learning like internships and independent research projects—particularly when these intersect with CEL, as in the above example.* As the literature suggests, the work of finding-tuning and problem-solving may be a barrier for entry into CEL work.

3. **Community partnerships can be challenging, because community partners are often over-stretched, too.** Community Partnerships require deep relationship and trust building which necessitates patience and capacity at a time when faculty and partners are both stretched thin. Hoy and Johnson (2013) confirm that “episodic connections with community partners” (p. 16) are a common barrier to CEL work.

We talked in Forum #1 about the variability in supervision for advanced field placements (e.g., in SOE and CHHS programs). This conversation underscored the importance of reflection and guidance from MSU Denver faculty, as even bad experiences in the field are learning experiences—and sometimes the most powerful ones. However, mentors/supervisors in the field are not consistent in the quality of education they provide, and perhaps a professional development training for community partners could be warranted. We also note the possibility of using Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and other tools to set expectations with community partners, as well as community partner professional development support opportunities, as possible ways to overcome this barrier.

4. **Class format and size can affect the types of CEL projects possible—notably, large classes, and/or asynchronous classes.** How might a program serving 200 students across 10 sections per semester in an introductory course integrate CEL into their program? *A CEL Center or Committee could help assist in such practical matters.*
5. **Students are busy, too.** Balancing the expectations of CEL—especially when place-based (off-campus), and/or when the work of CEL exceeds that of other courses—can be challenging. Faculty and staff took part in a rich conversation about possible ways to reduce this barrier, including the use of badges, certificates, or perhaps whole degrees to organize CEL credit to ensure students/ time and energy is valued; using immersives to allow students access to site-based , focused time to mutually benefit them and partners; intentionally scheduling CEL coursework across a student’s college career, such that they might limit themselves to 1-2 CEL experiences in an academic year (or up to 4 over their time at MSU Denver); locating funding, especially for graduate students and those doing internships within CEL; and finally, expectation setting, to ensure students know, for instance, what time and energy commitments may be involved in their work

(toward this end, marking CEL courses involving high stakes partnerships as “permission by instructor,” and bringing in alumni to talk with students in CEL classes, are other creative ways to set expectations). *A CEL Center or committee would do well to regularly engage the faculty and staff at MSU Denver, who have a wealth of creative solutions to reduce barriers.*

We turn to other barriers that we see as more particular to MSU Denver, allowing us to conclude the White Paper with additional targeted suggestions to overcome these barriers.

6. **Unclear definitions / lack of shared vocabulary related to experiential learning, service learning, civic- and community-engaged learning.** Hoy and Johnson (2013) note that “departmental and program silos” (p. 16) are a common barrier to CEL. Whether it’s due to siloing, or simply, busy faculty and staff using terminology that makes sense to them, we note a lack of shared vocabulary on CEL-related work at MSU Denver. This can include a lack of awareness on the part of students about what “service learning” is, but exceeds that, as various efforts related to CEL might not be reported or thought of in those terms. *As we elaborate below, the CEL team advocates adopting CEL as a consistent term, and educating the campus on why.*
7. **MSU Denver is characterized, presently, by a lack of a centralized location (a “first stop” or “front porch”) for CEL.** Presently, Student Affairs has an FTE to support CEL, with some in Academic Affairs devoting their capacity to civic and community engaged learning. However, data make clear the need and desire for an explicit, centralized “first stop” for CEL. *We recommend that this CEL office is a strong collaboration between Student and Academic Affairs, building on the leadership from the FEEL team and the connections from Industry Partnerships team within the C2Hub, as well as Undergraduate Studies.*

Here, we unpack why the lack of a centralized location for CEL is a barrier to this form of experiential learning at MSU Denver. In the absence of this lack of a central location, departments are doing their own outreach and communication for community partners. While such an approach is a good response to growing CEL within a department, unfortunately, this does little to share CEL institutionally. Some expressed concern that MSU Denver is unnecessarily siloed, especially when it comes to CEL happenings. There is no communication mechanism to share news about what others are doing and invite folks to opportunities (Forum 3). Having a CEL Office could also help avoid “stepping on toes” between departments or parts of the institution: Imagine, for instance, the ways that too many requests for collaboration coming from different parts of the institution may affect a community partner’s perceptions of MSU Denver. Or, imagine the confusion or frustration that might arise if a faculty member or program sought a partnership, without knowing that a partnership with an MSU Denver representative already existed. Having a centralized place for CEL would build from the recruitment and career engagement work started with the Industry Partnerships team in the C2 Hub, and focus on the



community partnership efforts more focused on reciprocal relationships between faculty, classrooms and community.

While some might say that Collaboratory serves as a kind of nexus for CEL at MSU Denver, participants at the open forums expressed concern about its utility, particularly for engaging community partners. And while the C2 Hub hosts the Career Link database, the focus remains on industry partnerships for employment purposes and has less functionality to support CEL partnerships. Additionally, as voiced at Forum #1, there is worry about duplication of effort with these interfaces. There is also confusion around when data should go into these systems—are they spaces for fully established partnerships, or partnerships in the early relationship-building phase? How will the data be used, and might that affect partnership building in process? *Creating a centralized location for CEL helps address the current barriers, while also easing needs, e.g., for assessment, frequently asked questions, training and support.*

8. **Faculty at MSU Denver are overworked, which brings complexity to the ability to manage time and resource commitments for doing CEL.** For instance, overworked faculty may need more investment from the beginning, especially to establish community partnerships. Likewise, the general environment characterized by a lack of trust between central administration and the faculty is a constraint.
9. **Faculty expressed concern that the grant dispersal infrastructure at MSU Denver is untrustworthy, and thus, prevents faculty and staff from pursuing grants.** Grants can be crucial to the ability to do CEL work, particularly for graduate departments. *We recommend that a CEL Center or Committee gather more data on faculty/staff experiences with grants at MSU Denver, to begin addressing this barrier.*

## Recommendations and Practical Steps Forward

In order to strengthen and grow CEL at MSU Denver, the FEEL team within C2Hub (led by faculty fellows, Nicole Predki and Christina Foust) recommend the following:

- **Deploy “community-engaged learning” (CEL) consistently as a term, with definitions that represent the work being done at MSU Denver.** As this White Paper articulates, currently, the institution is characterized by 3 separate but related efforts to build community-engaged learning: “Service learning,” “civic engagement,” and “community-engaged learning.” We see these efforts as additive, and advocate that now is the time to coalesce the efforts under a “big tent”

approach to CEL. Consistent use of “CEL” terms and definitions will help cohere the 3 threads and strengthen them into practice on campus.

We suggest the term *community* engaged learning as an alternative to service and civic engaged learning for a few important reasons. Initially, as noted above, a number of scholars and practitioners have departed from the term service learning due to its volunteer connotations. The move to community engaged learning was built around recognizing the complexity of seeking out, forming, and maintaining partnerships with community; of working with community partners on projects that align with their needs/mission and the faculty’s SLOs in their course. The old referent of students staffing a fundraising walk/run, or students cleaning up trash (as valuable as both of these activities can be!) did not live up to the depth of planning and reflection involved in CEL. As Lawson notes, the connotations within service learning as volunteer work are an unfortunate hold-over within the term: volunteering involves “one-way giving,” often through which a “volunteer performs an act that benefits a needy person” (p. 193). CEL as a state of the art term has the benefit of centering community engagement, instead of “service for” partners (that may be invoking a deficit framework).

In the MSU Denver context, as this White Paper has articulated, students don’t always understand what “service learning” means (including that these opportunities are unpaid but for academic credit). We believe the consistent use of CEL will allow for better expectation setting with students (e.g., that this course may require more, and more intense, participation).

In their meta-analysis, Chittum et al. (2022) describe their use of the term “civic” as “referencing those experiences, behaviors, and attitudes directly related to an individual’s role as a citizen and an agent of democracy” (p. 9). We appreciate the term civic-engaged at MSU Denver, because of its relationship to uplifting community and attempting to inspire students as change agents. However, as noted above, the term “community” is preferable in its breadth, its ability to capture projects that don’t necessarily rely on the category of “citizen” to carry them out. As Chittum et al. continue, “community-based” refers to “those experiences, behaviors, and attitudes pertaining more broadly to an individual’s engagement in a local, national, or global community and as an actor within communal space” (p. 9). Civic engagement can be viewed as a subset of community engagement, but community engagement captures more potential activity.

We believe that consistent use of the term community engaged learning can help align the three different streams of work, strengthening our collective endeavor. *Next steps might include, following the success of the ELFA Task Force, convening a working group to define a standard of CEL and passing this through the Faculty Senate, while also disseminating the term and definition to campus offices. It should also include changing the “Service Learning” attribute for courses, to “Community*

*Engaged Learning,” with new terms in the SLOs. Alternatively, the CEL fellows may draft a definition in conversation with the Carnegie Task Force and share this with the institution. We recommend initiating a campus-wide CEL terminology campaign by Spring 2025. This campaign will include faculty workshops, a dedicated webpage with CEL resources, and the integration of CEL terminology into course catalogs and syllabi.*

- **Centralize and Institute CEL at MSU Denver.** Instituting CEL on campus requires “a commitment to asset-based understanding, cocreation of knowledge, and viewing the university as part of an ecosystem addressing public problem solving” (Hoy & Johnson, 2013, p. 20). CEL centers on campus are critical to support faculty learning and development, which, in turn, supports student and community partner connections, creativity, learning, and problem solving. CEL centers also support “consistency, reliability, and reciprocity” for community partner relations (Hoy & Johnson, 2013, p. 20), making CEL more than simply providing organizations with a list of students to be “volun-told” what work needs to be done. Welch and Saltmarsh (2013) assert that “centers propel institution-wide commitment to civic engagement.” In their study of Carnegie classified institutions, the CEL centers have claims to the faculty enterprise (of teaching and learning, scholarly creative activity, and service), “operate on hard dollars” with “support of a critical mass of influential faculty” (p. 22).

Now is the time to centralize CEL within an office at MSU Denver, providing a recognizable “front porch” where faculty/staff, community partners, and students, might turn to for answering questions, getting resources, and assessing the effectiveness of efforts toward CEL. Data within this White Paper underscores the breadth of CEL, as well as its depth in programs across different colleges. Data also reveal that a “critical mass of influential faculty” is calling for a center for CEL and have already demonstrated their willingness to champion and support CEL work to arrive at this point. We have shown how creating a CEL office would reduce barriers to this work and support shared goals to see MSU Denver’s potential as an anchor institution that serves students in experiential learning.

Additionally, with the revitalized ELFA working group, and the recognition of experiential learning as a key component of the Student Success Launch, help support CEL as a crucial subset of experiential learning. Likewise, the Carnegie Task Force and application, along with the data gathering from the CEL Faculty Co-Fellows, have revitalized the conversation around CEL at MSU Denver. Students are clearly benefitting from CEL, and centralizing an office for CEL could help support programs in meeting student interest with curricula, micro-credentials and badges, and tenure and promotion guidelines, that value CEL.

*Given the assets of MSU Denver, which include strong support for Student Affairs as well as Academic Affairs, the CEL Team recommends that a CEL Center at MSU Denver be a strong collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs—in essence, an intentional coalescence of the 3 threads of service learning, civic engagement, and CEL, that have emerged somewhat independently on campus over the last 10-20 years. Student Affairs is poised to support CEL with a rich engagement and awareness of community partners, as well as the ethics of doing CEL work. Academic Affairs is poised to support CEL through resources on teaching practices and supports for scholarly and creative activity.*

*Representatives from the FEEL team (via Alyssa Marks as representative), and Undergraduate Research (via Elizabeth Parmelee as representative) should meet before October 30, 2024, to establish what a deep collaboration might look like, and how faculty and leadership can be involved in centering CEL at MSU Denver. By the end of fall 2024, we suggest that CEL stakeholders in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs convene to develop an initial proposal for how a front porch could manifest at MSU Denver; including budget, personnel, and expected outcomes.*

In the meantime, we propose leveraging the expertise and resources already available through Nora Bashir in her role as the Community Engaged Learning Program Manager within the C2 Hub and the C2 Faculty Fellowship for Community Engaged Learning. Nora will serve as the primary initial resource for faculty, staff, and community partners, offering support in course design resources, partnership development, and CEL project management. Additionally, Nora will showcase successful projects and foster new collaborations, ensuring that all stakeholders have the guidance and support needed to fully engage with community-engaged learning.

- **Maximize curricular “valuing” of CEL at the undergraduate and graduate levels.** Presently, the CEL team is revising the “SL” student learning objectives to fit “CEL” language and outcomes. We suggest taking this momentum to imagining how CEL might be more present and valued within curriculum at MSU Denver. Hoy and Johnson (2013) note in their review of CEL practices that curricular requirements anchors CEL in institutions and allow for creative cocurricular connections to grow.

*Perhaps the Task Force convening around a Student Affairs and Academic Affairs collaboration for a CEL Center may consider this question. As they do, we might suggest that anyone pursuing greater curricular valuation for CEL consider how requirements can pose barriers to MSU Denver students (we are the #1 destination of transfer students in Colorado, per the 2022 MSU Denver Fact Sheet). How would we have to adjudicate “CEL” from other institutions, especially those which do not have a CEL requirement?*

Valuing CEL within curriculum does not have to be a direct CEL requirement for graduation. Building on the framework of this White Paper, CEL is a subset of experiential learning—so perhaps it is one of a limited menu of options to meet an experiential learning requirement for graduation, thus realizing the benefits of curricular valuation without imposing too many barriers on students (who could fulfill an “EL” requirement via an internship or practicum, a field-based experience, or a CEL-designated course)? Here, CEL joins other forms of experiential learning in being a “learning by doing” with reflection on that learning, which engages students in the practice of essential skills, AND roots their learning in contexts outside of the classroom.

Greater curricular valuation for CEL would help achieve a lot of benefits, including supporting MSU Denver’s potential as an anchor institution, a convener, a strengthener of local networks of community partners. It could also support the development of more specific micro-credentials and curricular innovations specific to CEL that are housed within a department or program—or, better still, are the results of interdisciplinary collaborations at MSU Denver. *We encourage a CEL Center or Committee to interface with the university digital badge and micro-credential committee to explore possibilities (see: <https://www.msudenver.edu/badging/>).*

## Conclusion

In conclusion, CEL is a form of experiential learning that benefits students, community, faculty, and the institutions of higher education that convene them. CEL is not just a teaching strategy; it is a vital component of our educational mission at MSU Denver. By uniting classroom knowledge with community action, CEL prepares our students to be informed, engaged community members and leaders. As we move forward, it is imperative that we continue to build on our successes and address the challenges that lie ahead to fully realize the potential of CEL at our institution.

CEL at MSU Denver has been an ongoing convergence of work manifesting through the Service Learning Program (and course attribute); Civic Engagement (manifesting now in the Carnegie Classification Task Force and related efforts) and Community Engaged Learning (building from the Faculty Learning Community and supported in the C2Hub’s FEEL team). Now is the time to streamline these 3 threads into 1, through shared definitions and terminology (which we recommend as CEL); through a dedicated “front porch” center on campus (which can start through a task force as soon as Fall 2024); and through a curricular valuing of CEL.

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## Appendix A: SL Advisory Council Faculty Members with Departments

### *2021-2022*

Bill Carnes	Management
Johann Snyman	Management
Barbara Decker	Social Work
Nicole Predki	Dance
Brian O'Hara	SOAN
Sara Jackson Shumate	EAS

### *2019-2020*

Johannes Snyman	MGT
Rachel Sinley	NUT
Michelle Baum	JMP
Graham Ignizio	ML

### *2018-2019*

Johannes Snyman	Management
Brian Bagwell	Human Services
Graham Ignizio	ML
Maria Rey-Lopez	ML
Kathryn Young	Secondary Ed

### *2017-2018*

Brian Bagwell	Human Services
Graham Ignizio	ML
Maria Rey-Lopez	ML
Kathryn Young	Secondary Ed

### *2016-2017*

Brian Bagwell	Human Services
Graham Ignizio	ML
Maria Rey-Lopez	ML
Kathryn Young	Secondary Ed

### *2015-2016*

Melissa Masters	NUT
Graham Ignizio	ML
Maria Rey-Lopez	ML
Sheila Rucki	PLSC

Kathryn Young                      Secondary Education

*2014-2015*

Christine Kuglin	Accounting
Jane Broida	Recreation Studies
Jane Chapman-Vigil	English
Bethany Fleck	Psychology
Ting Jiang	SOAN
Sheila Rucki	PLSC

*2013-2014*

Clayton Daughtrey	Marketing
Jane Broida	Recreation Studies
Jane Chapman-Vigil	English
Bethany Fleck	Psychology
Ting Jiang	SOAN
Sheila Rucki	PLSC

*2012-2013*

Darrin Duber-Smith	Marketing
Alexis Newton	Nursing
Sheila Rucki	PLSC
Randi Smith	Psychology



### **Community Engaged Learning Program Manager (Updated Dec 2023)**

The Community Engaged Learning Program Manager leads the efforts within the Faculty Engagement & Experiential Learning Unit (FE&EL) of the Classroom to Career Hub (C2 Hub) in identifying opportunities for students and faculty at MSU Denver to engage in impactful experiential learning, focusing on service learning and community-based research. This role will manage administration of the service-learning program, along with faculty leadership via faculty fellowships, to ensure there is alignment across campus with the goal of increasing accessibility to service learning opportunities for students and faculty alike. The Community Engaged Learning Program Manager will also work in tandem with MSU Denver's Director for Undergraduate Research to identify partnerships to build and nurture community integrated research opportunities for our students.

This position will be a key role in the Faculty Engagement & Experiential Learning (FE&EL) team within the C2 Hub in offering resources and collaboration between our academic and student affairs units. The FE&EL unit's overall mission is to collaborate holistically with faculty & academic affairs partners in co-creation and/or promotion of experiential learning opportunities, graduate studies support, and career readiness initiatives focusing on equitable access for all students. This role will be pivotal in helping MSU Denver reach our big goal of having 100% student engagement in career-ready activities, with its strong focus on hands-on, community-connected learning.

The Classroom to Career Hub is the latest innovative venture from Metropolitan State University of Denver, connecting students and employers, facilitating real-world learning experiences, and upskilling homegrown talent for Colorado's workforce pipeline. More than a traditional career center, the C2 Hub strengthens students' academic and professional acumen through strategic and robust partnerships with local industries and communities to ensure an equitable and prosperous future for all Coloradans.

This position reports to the Director for Faculty Engagement & Experiential Learning in the C2 Hub.

1. Lead programming and partnerships to support faculty, staff, and administrators to advance community-engaged learning and research opportunities at MSU Denver. (60%)
  - A. Service Learning Support:
    - Build deep knowledge and understanding of the process for course designation, working closely with Academic Affairs partners to meet semester and yearly process deadlines;
    - In partnership with a faculty fellow, lead learning and development opportunities (e.g., workshops, Faculty Learning Communities) focused on community engaged learning for faculty & staff;
    - Liaise between service learning faculty and relevant community partners;
    - In partnership with a faculty fellow, stay abreast of best practices in service-learning programming within Higher Education and communicate this expertise to faculty & staff at MSU Denver;
    - Develop and implement strategies to increase service learning at MSU Denver;
    - Stay abreast of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives with respect to community-engaged learning and diverse learners.
  - B. Community-Based Research Support:
    - In partnership with the Director for Undergraduate Research, support learning and development opportunities (e.g., workshops, Faculty Learning Communities, trainings) focused on community-based research for faculty/staff;
    - Stay abreast of best practices in community-based research programming within Higher Education and pass on this expertise to faculty & staff, in collaboration with the Director for Undergraduate Research, at MSU Denver;
    - Develop and implement strategies to increase community-based research at MSU Denver;
    - Stay abreast of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives with respect to community-based research and diverse learners;
  - C. Capacity building for Community Engaged Learning:
    - Bridge relationships within the MSU Denver & Colorado community to support facilitation of partnerships for community engaged learning & research;
    - Redefine and re-engage the Community Engaged Learning Faculty Advisory Council in work to encourage community-engaged learning & research collaboration, as needed;

- Promote and evaluate service learning faculty grant applications;
- Promote and evaluate community-based research faculty grant applications;
- Support Academic Affairs in promoting and implementing the use of Collaboratory across campus

## 2. Assessment, Reporting, & Strategy (20%):

- Support aligned usage and updates for the Community Engaged Learning website & SharePoint documentation;
- Prepare contributions to C2Hub annual reports, assessment reports, marketing and design work, communications/ PR outreach, etc.;
- Track and manage all data regarding service learning designated course participation (student & community partners) and support development of learning assessments, in partnership with faculty leadership;
- Identify strategies for expanding programming & resources to innovate initiatives for the program;
- Manage Community Engaged Learning budget;
- Oversight of faculty fellows, including goals & program outcomes in collaboration with the Director of Faculty Engagement & Experiential Learning.

## 3. University Collaboration & Service (20%):

- Serve on MSU Denver's Carnegie Classification Taskforce and support the efforts in applying for the Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification for the 2026 cycle.
- Engage in public relations efforts to showcase the Classroom to Career Hub and service learning/ community-engaged work on campus (e.g. presentations to campus stakeholders);
- Support the annual Career Catalyst & other events hosted by the FE&EL Team to highlight faculty and student involvement in experiential learning & career readiness.
- With Office of Undergraduate Studies serve as liaison between MSU Denver and Campus Compact and/or other national and local organizations that support community-connected research and learning.
- Collaborate with the C2 Hub Industry Navigators, Director for the Undergraduate Research Program, and Experiential Learning for All (ELFA) to encourage engagement in experiential learning.
- Leads and/or contributes to special projects and/or initiatives, as requested, that relate to community engaged learning or support the FE&EL team/C2 Hub.

- Contribute to local/national conversations on community engaged learning, specifically for HSIs/MSIs through participation in professional organizations (i.e. IARSLCE) and present findings/ideas where appropriate.
- Is an innovator, a disrupter, and a change agent for racial equity and student engagement. Strives to recognize inequities in the work and in oneself and commits to address them. Seeks out opportunities to take calculated risks in support of a more engaged and equitably supported student community at MSU Denver.

### Required Qualifications

#### Master's Degree

Ability to build strong partnerships; ideally - proven relationship building experience with community agencies and/or research entities and educational organizations

Experience with assessment and data analysis

Experience in program development and/or strategic planning

Experience working with and sensitivity to the needs of a diverse urban student population including (but not limited to) students of color, LGBTQIA students, students from low-income backgrounds, first-generation students, students with disabilities, undocumented students, non-traditional students, student veterans, and English language learners

### Preferred Qualifications

Terminal Degree in area of study, plus two years of teaching experience incorporating research and/or community-engaged programming

Experience working at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) or Minority Serving Institution (MSI)

Recognized knowledge or expertise in community engaged learning program management

Experience marketing a program or initiative on a college campus

Experience with coalition building or advisory board oversight

Experience using databases to track information and produce reports

Experience with program budget management

### Work Hours

Mon-Fri 8am-5pm (Currently hybrid in-person & virtual); some evening & weekend commitments as necessary

### Diversity Statement

Metropolitan State University of Denver is a unique, access-oriented campus community that values diversity, equity, and inclusion in all its forms. Our student population consists of nearly 50% first generation students and over 45% students of color. We are a designated Hispanic Serving Institution located in downtown Denver.

We create an equitable learning and working environment in concert with individuals who consistently demonstrate commitment to equity and inclusion. We greatly value the

diverse identities and perspectives of our students, faculty, and staff and recognize that in order to achieve a just and equitable society, diversity must go beyond simple representation. It requires critical inquiry and dialogue and a commitment to action. We strive to provide a culture of belonging for all community members to achieve personal and professional success.



## **Faculty Fellow – MSU Denver Community Engaged Learning**

*This fellowship will be compensated -pending Dean & Chair approval- through a course release for Spring 2024 and Fall 2024 and a \$4000 stipend over Summer 2024.*

*This is a yearlong fellowship with the option to renew for another year.*

### **How to Apply:**

Email Alyssa Marks at [amarks5@msudenver.edu](mailto:amarks5@msudenver.edu) with your statement of interest included in the body of the email and an attached CV. **Apply by EOD Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023.** Selection to be complete no later than Thursday, October 5<sup>th</sup> with *intent to communicate decisions as early as possible.*

### **Anticipated Initiatives:**

- Conduct community engaged learning (service learning & community-based research) listening tour/roadshow to map baseline needs and opportunities for further build out across MSU Denver.
- Using feedback from the roadshow - in partnership with the C2 Hub Experiential Learning Program Manager - lead learning and development opportunities (e.g., workshops, Faculty Learning Communities) for faculty/staff and share best-practices, as well as resources, around CEL.
- In partnership with the Experiential Learning Program Manager, provide training and technical support for the current service learning designation curriculum process;
- Serve as a consultant for individual faculty on development and implementation of community engaged learning pedagogy;
- Support the Experiential Learning PM in redefining and re-engaging the Faculty Advisory Council to support community-engaged learning & research collaboration;

- Work with the university curriculum office and the faculty senate curriculum committee to establish criteria and/or rubrics to review and approve new community engaged learning designation proposals;
- Production of a white paper to advise on next step solutions for community engaged learning access and adoption at MSU Denver;
- Identify monthly highlights of best practices in community engaged learning programming within Higher Education and support in passing on this expertise to faculty through inclusion in regular faculty facing communication from the C2 Hub;
- Identify monthly highlights of best practices regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives with respect to community-engaged learning and diverse learners to be included in regular faculty facing communication from the C2 Hub;
- **Commitment to serve on advisory board the year following the fellowship;**
- **Commitment to supporting the training of new faculty fellow in first month of their new hire (January 2025 or 2026)**

**Required Qualifications:**

- Current full-time faculty at MSU Denver
- At least 2 years' experience teaching at the post-secondary level using community engaged learning pedagogy
- Experience developing curriculum and navigating the curriculum review process

**Preferred Qualifications:**

- Recognized knowledge or expertise in community engaged learning programming
- Experience marketing a program or initiative on a college campus
- Strong background in collaboration between student affairs & academic affairs partners
- Experience with assessment and data analysis
- Experience with coalition building or advisory board oversight

*Metropolitan State University of Denver is a unique, access-oriented campus community that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are a designated Hispanic Serving Institution located in downtown Denver. Our student population consists of nearly 50% first-generation students and over 45% students of ethnic/racial minority backgrounds.*

*We create an equitable learning and working environment with individuals who consistently demonstrate commitment to equity and inclusion. We value the diverse identities and perspectives of our students, faculty, and staff and recognize that to achieve a just and equitable society, diversity must go beyond simple representation. It requires critical inquiry*



*and dialogue and a commitment to action. We strive to provide a culture of belonging where all community members feel valued to achieve personal and professional success.*

**Appendix C: Infographic created Spring 2024 for COMM 3000 Resource Fair**

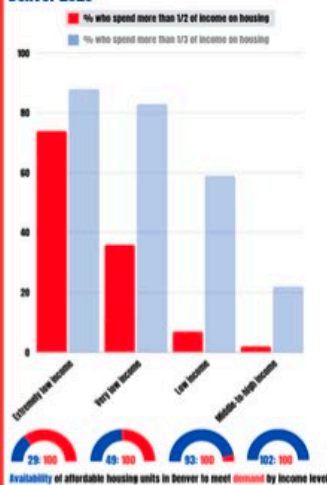
# 5 ways to build (a culture of) care at MSU Denver for students experiencing housing instability

## 1 Educate yourself on the housing crisis and its possible effects on students

Colorado is the 8th most unaffordable state for housing, and faces "a dual crisis—one of affordability and one of availability."<sup>14</sup> There is a deficit of 250,000 affordable homes for individuals who make \$41,050 or less per year in the Denver area. 74% of individuals who earn below \$24,650 spend more than half of their income on housing. For families that earn \$35,150 per year, 36% of them spend more than half of their income on housing. It's no wonder that students might be doubling up (living in overcrowded conditions) or couch-surfing to make ends meet.

College students face multiple challenges. Because of their status as students, they are not eligible for Section 8 housing support from the federal government. For extremely or very low income students,<sup>15</sup> students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, as well as survivors, unaccompanied students, and veterans, the effects of this crisis are even worse.

Cost burden by area median income level, Denver 2023



Availability of affordable housing units in Denver to meet demand by income level

Cities with Highest Population of Unhoused, January 2023 (HUD)	Unhoused in Point-in-Time Count	Metro Area Ranking in Geographic Size
1: New York	88025	1
2: Los Angeles	71320	2
3: Seattle	14948	15
4: San Diego	10264	18
5: Denver	10054	19

## 2 Help students stabilize basic needs

Does your department provide free, "no questions asked" nutritious snacks in your office? How about basic hygiene items in nearby bathrooms?

Make referrals to the MSU Denver Student Care Team as appropriate.

Share information about free or very low-cost resources available at MSU Denver, the Auraria campus, and Denver area, to support students' ability to meet basic needs.

- Campus Food Resources:**
- Rowdy's Corner Food Pantry
  - Share Meals App (under construction)
  - SNAP Benefits

- Transportation Resources:**
- Access Center, RTD Eco-Pass

- Health:**
- Health Center at Auraria
  - MSU Denver Counseling

- Clothing and Stuff:**
- Auraria Sustainable Campus Program Free Store

## 3 Build community in your classrooms and campus offices

On a commuter campus like MSU Denver, classrooms and office spaces are critical to helping students feel connected. Facilitate classroom activities and student-centered events to allow students to get to know each other, share contact information, maybe even become friends. You never know when a connection made in classes and around departments will come through for students in need.

You might also destigmatize homelessness and food insecurity in conversation around campus. These are structural problems with structural solutions, but individuals are affected and can affect change!

## 4 Set students up for success

- Provide materials needed to do work, and consider flipping the classroom to allow more time for work to be completed in the space (and time to view things after class)
- Be available to mentor and help students navigate the institution;
- Share timely reminders, like FAFSA and help students find departmental scholarships

## 5 Level Up with Trainings, Partnerships, and Politics

Consider networking, or even building community-engaged/service learning projects with community organizations that support students and youth facing housing insecurity and homelessness.

Complete trauma-informed practice training as appropriate to your discipline.

Support institutional policies to ensure adequate funding and staffing levels for the safety net.

VOTE and consider RUNNING FOR OFFICE