**POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING**

As you begin to think about integrating community engaged learning into your courses, it’s important to consider the potential barriers you, your students, and your community partners may encounter along the way, as well as the benefits you may enjoy and the outcomes you may achieve. When reflecting on their community engaged learning experiences, past participants have identified the following potential barriers.

**Students** may:

* Find it hard to make time for community work or match their schedules to the organization’s, given the demands of school, the need to work, family responsibilities, etc.
* Lack convenient transportation options to get to the community organization
* Be hesitant about traveling to unfamiliar neighborhoods and/or working with people they’ve never had experience interacting with
* Experience uncertainty about what’s expected of them – in class and/or at the community organization – and reluctance to ask for clarification, direction, or guidance
* Have difficulty making connections between the community experience and the course content
* Focus on providing a service to the community and miss the chance to engage in a reciprocal partnership and maximize their learning

**Faculty** may:

* Encounter more questions from students that you don’t readily know how to answer
* Find it difficult to allow time and space in the course curriculum for consideration of unexpected learning occurring in the community (community engaged learning often requires flexibility and a willingness to adapt the course as it progresses in response to students’ community learning experiences)
* Be reluctant to change and/or cut down on readings or other assignments and/or revise course learning objectives to accommodate community engaged learning (which can lead to treating community engaged learning like an add-on and not an integral part of the course)
* Feel unsure about how to assess students’ community engaged learning
* Worry that there will be no professional reward or recognition for teaching with community engaged learning, which others may view as “soft,” non-rigorous, or non-academic, and not as valuable as research

**Community partners** may:

* Be reluctant to take on students with such a limited time commitment, or to offer them meaningful work opportunities (they need to balance their investment of time and energy with the likely return, and consider whether short-term volunteers could actually do more harm than good)
* Experience challenges recruiting community engaged learners due to location, schedule, and transportation issues
* Have difficulty matching students’ and instructors’ hopes/expectations for students’ experiences with the work the community needs done
* Find it difficult to allot staff time for training and supervising students and engaging them in reflection
* Feel hesitant about engaging in a partnership with the University because of past experiences of being “used” by researchers

Community engaged learning staff can help you develop strategies for minimizing these barriers up front, and will work to resolve any difficulties that arise throughout your course.