Growing community-university engagement through food system study

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Overview

**Context**
- Community-university engagement (CUE)
- Food systems as lens

**Collaborate**
- Case study: UBC-based Community Food Assessment Project

**Communicate**
- Feedback (students, teaching team, community partners)
- Best practices for CUE in large classes

**Celebrate**
- Systemic change is possible!
Community University Engagement (CUE)

“Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.”

- The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching carnegiefoundation.org

Adapted from: University of Louisville, Office of CUE
Calls for CUE & Growth

Examples
• UN Decade of Ed. for Sustainable Development (2005-14)
• Canadian: McConnell Foundation
• US: Carnegie Foundation

Issues
• Managing quality while increasing quantity
• Balance of needs (students, community) to be met
• Time & resources
Food Systems as Lens & Grand Connector
Case study: UBC-based Community Food Assessment Project

- Collaborative, community food security project in Faculty of Land & Food Systems, UBC, Canada; 3rd year of required Land, Food & Community series

- Dietetics; Food, Nutrition & Health; Food Science; Food & Environment (Agroecology); Global Resource Systems

- Facilitated by teaching team: 1+ faculty, coordinator, TAs (grad students in Integrated Studies & 1-2 undergrads who have taken course) → Human resources allow for a modular approach

- CFAP: 200 students & 30 projects / year; community partners from 10 regions of BC, inc. urban, suburban, rural perspectives. Projects are iterative.

- Mandatory, team-based Community-Based Research
- Optional, individual Community Service-Learning

- Microcosm of broader theoretical & praxical investigations into community-university engagement due to its size, scale, and scope
Map of BC, Canada's westernmost & 3rd largest province with an area greater than California, Oregon and Washington states combined and a population of 4 million. About 75% of the province is mountainous; 60% is forested; and only about 5% is arable.
Outcomes of UBC-based CFAP

✓ Provincial perspective on food system sustainability
✓ Direct connections: info & experience across urban-suburban-rural

■ Education:
  • High school curricula impacts in Vancouver, Quesnel, Bella Coola
  • Urban Aboriginal Community Kitchen Garden Project extension

■ Health:
  • Community garden research: Vanc., Richmond, New Denver, Bella Coola
  • Increasing access to affordable, nutritious food: Vancouver, Comox Valley

■ Production:
  • Farmer network development: Pemberton; Increased urban ag: Vancouver

■ Economics:
  • Social enterprises: Richmond, Vancouver
  • Marketing strategies: farm/farmers' markets in Surrey-White Rock

■ Policy:
  • Abattoir regulation: Bella Coola, New Denver

■ Resource Use:
  • Increase composting: Vancouver, West Vancouver
Iterative Processes

Evolution in response to formal and informal input from students, community partners, and teaching teams:

- Student feedback
- Annual teaching team reviews
- Community partner interviews
Student Surveys

• (%age agree/strongly agree, avg. 2008/2009):

• Learned a lot about community issues (76%)
• Projects were valuable for the community or organization (78%)
• Understanding of food systems & food security improved through CBL (74%)
• Community partners were a valuable part of student learning (68%)
# Student Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce formal option of Community Service-Learning (alongside CBR)</td>
<td>Developed partnership with UBC-Community Learning Initiative → OPTIONAL 10% for reflective essay linking 12 hrs. service with academic materials</td>
<td>* Could/ should CSL be worth more?                                                             * Uptake over years of CSL is huge (20 to &gt;70%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>More marks should be assigned to the UBC-based CFAP</td>
<td>Playing with grade designation</td>
<td>Striving for balance between team &amp; individual work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide more diverse reading set to accompany plenary sessions</td>
<td>Intro more diverse reading set; offer workshops Still improving here...</td>
<td>Diverse projects require diverse resources, as well as “common experience”</td>
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## Community Partner Feedback

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| Focused research question is key to success – AND – Can take time (weeks to years) to formulate such questions | • Continue developing multi-year partnerships  
• Support partners in developing focused questions | Aligns with our approach to keep 1st-year questions broad, then get more specific over multi-year partnership |
| Students provide new energy and enthusiasm                               | Great! Be sure that UBC provides orientation for students                | Clearer protocols of engagement                                            |
| Hands-on service provides key opportunity for students to learn about organization for research projects | • Encourage students to begin CSL early in the semester  
• Continue formalizing CSL component | Be sure each team has participants engaged in CSL                        |
| Hold presentation & networking events off of the UBC campus              | • Will do!                                                               | – Desire for networking opportunities!  
• UBC is at the edge of Vancouver                                           |
## Teaching Team Feedback

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| Utilize experience of teaching team more effectively | • Group projects by theme & with experienced TA  
• Determining how best to group projects  
• TAs better positioned to act as resources | Could TAs assume an even larger role as contact for community partners? |
| Ensure “big picture” and “common experience” is available to all students | • Developed “student integrators” to make & share links across class  
• Feedback from class to teaching team through integrators; web presence for CFAP is initiated | Transition to student journalists? |
| Be cautious in doubling up teaching team members as community partners | • Proceed with caution; case-by-case analysis | Too much time/work on same student project. Sometimes differing priorities to weigh. |
Broader Significance

• Uniting a diverse student body via hands-on involvement in communities, dealing with real food system issues

• Interacting with community members, practicing professionals and interdisciplinary student teams → valuable experience

• Requires institutional commitment to support instructor with TAs & coordination to establish & maintain community relationships

• Community partners as co-educators; Students as fresh energy & new perspective for community partners

• May provide important networking opportunities for food system leaders & potential for lessons learned in different communities to be shared more broadly
Best Practices: Community-University Engagement in large (>50 person) classes

• Modularize the class
• Human resources (teaching team)
• Appropriately scaled CBR projects & CSL opportunities
• Clear expectations & adaptive management
• Multi-year partnerships with community organizations allows for “collective memory”
• Feedback cycles to enable projects to build
• Integration across projects & communities
• Effective communication
• Student contact for partners
Next steps?

• Succession planning with teaching team
• Continue with urban-suburban-rural focus
• Web presence
• Student journalists
Thank you!

- UBC-Community Learning Initiative
- SSHRC
- LFC 350 teaching teams, community partners, and of course, students!
Success Criteria

• Effective feedback loops

• Strength of community partnership

• Clear expectations for all

• Focused questions, scaled to student timeline

• CSL must be represented in grading scheme

• Project “collective memory” allows iterations
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Food System Scenario examples</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Yr. initiated</th>
<th>Outcomes?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Food scrap recycling demo project</strong></td>
<td>Food Resources: assessment and recovery</td>
<td>West Vancouver (municipal government)</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Higher uptake of composting program with W. Van residents due to increased people power &amp; enthusiastic students</td>
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<td><strong>Policy options to increase agriculture &amp; food security</strong></td>
<td>Food Production</td>
<td>Bella Coola (sustainable ag. society (health agency))</td>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>Contribution to community forum on policy alternatives to allow community abattoirs</td>
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<td><strong>Investigating outcomes of a classroom food systems project over time</strong></td>
<td>Food Education</td>
<td>Terra Nova Schoolyard Society (NGO)</td>
<td>2007-2009</td>
<td>Design &amp; delivery of questionnaires to all students in the program. Relevant for planning &amp; grant-writing</td>
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