

**We used Steven Mills' article "The Four Furies: Primary Tensions between Service-Learners and Host Agencies" to help us brainstorm about the ways we can both procedurally and philosophically help students deal with the common tensions they encounter when working in the community.**

Procedural strategies we discussed included:

- Create an application system for your engagement program so students need to explain their motivations for wanting to participate.
- Provide engagement opportunities as electives/options—that way more motivated students choose to be included.
- Create a "funnel" system that begins with low-impact/commitment at first and builds in intensity and commitment over time. This allows students to build a relationship at their own pace.
- Create a multi-term structure so that true relationships can evolve.
- Create a project charter/plan that all parties involved sign to establish commitment.
- Create a system where students can get credit for observing and interacting with an organization, not only for "doing" something for them. This might be especially appropriate for young/new students with few skills to offer and little knowledge of local community.
- Share a list of the common tensions in service-learning (like the one in Stevens' article) with both students and host organizations, and let them brainstorm their own ways of overcoming them.
- Make measure of success not hours, but rather demonstration of learning and/or a product.
- Ensure students have several interactions with host organizations to enable them to ask better questions and apply and critique the theories in their course more deeply.
- Give host organization representatives ample space and time to explain their needs and their institution.
- Put students in pairs or teams, so that they have direct peer support when the going gets tough.
- Explain clearly and consistently how engagement activities are essential for your course learning goals.
- Provide a list of common complaints or comments that you hear from students that you feel express a misunderstanding of the purpose of engagement activities. Use this to launch a discussion around avoiding these misunderstandings.
- Share challenging scenarios with students before engagement activities, and role play to discover effective responses. This helps them be responsive, not reactive, as challenging situations arise.

- Schedule regular check-ins between faculty and students (not just the end of the quarter).
- Have students teach the organization which skills and perspectives they have to offer—this is good for both parties to calibrate how they should interact.
- Have students complete a survey at the beginning of the course to explain their learning goals, skills, and personality so that you can create appropriate teams for engagement activities.

Strategies for philosophically framing the experience for students:

- Use language that moves students away from “volunteerism” mindset and toward “engaged learner and community member” mindset.
- Help students think of themselves as a part of the host institution, if only for a limited time.
- As faculty, represent both idealism and realism and help your students navigate this balance. Sharing a powerful personal story that reveals your struggle to find this balance can be valuable.
- With reflection assignments, help students articulate the potential value of their experience in the community toward their long-term development (not only the learning/skills for the course).
- Frame the common tensions as part of the learning experience, not as something to be overcome completely.
- Use language and literature around “mindfulness” to help students be present even in repetitive, tedious, or stressful situations; avoid the “rigidity trap” in which we shut down and stop learning when under stress.
- Lean into and expect the unknowns; allow emergence.
- Learn from students about how they learn and how they see the world.
- Help students see how and why you’re pushing them and allowing them to be uncomfortable. Awkwardness and discomfort in new situations fades with practice and exposure.
- Give students tools for communicating under stress (i.e. non-violent communication methods).
- Explain to students that a diversity of tactics is important for addressing any social problem, and that it is important to work alongside people who think and act differently than you.
- Help students think about how incremental steps are required in order to make meaningful institutional changes.
- Help students see that passion is necessary but not sufficient for creating social change.
- Remember that peer-learning is a higher form than teacher-student learning; set them up to be able to teach each other with you out of the way.

- Remember that each student and each organization is unique and complex. In a short time period we are only able to “help” each other tangibly in small ways, but the perspectives and inspiration shared can be powerful and life-changing.

We then reviewed the Ways to Engage flyer and discussed which of the characteristics in the right hand column (which represent sustainable, high-impact engagement methods) we found most daunting as a result of our institutional context. For some issues we tried to brainstorm solutions, and others we simply acknowledged as real limits.

The range of responses included:

- **Humble/Routine:**
  - Our system reinforces the perception that engagement work is above and beyond our regular obligations as faculty.
- **Collective and Collaborative:**
  - Many faculty see themselves as individuals heroically fixing broken systems (isolated, deficit model of engagement), and they don't want to play with others.
  - I don't work closely with any other faculty members—the structures aren't there.
  - It's not clear who owns the relationship and who is committed—is it the faculty member, or the department? Who is really invested and accountable, and on what level?
  - It's hard to establish a balance of power between campus and host organization—feels like campus has too much control for true collaboration to happen.
- **Long-term:**
  - I have little predictability in what courses I teach
  - The quarter system makes it feel like we're starting over all the time.
  - I only teach my engagement course every other year, and I'm not sure how to partner with other faculty to keep the relationship going more consistently.
  - Mistrust of higher ed can be high among organizations that have been burned in the past—it takes a long time to show you can be relied upon.
  - Because I'm an adjunct, it's hard to scale up efforts or make deep commitments.
- **Team-based:**
  - I'm not sure how to evaluate work done in student teams.
- **Core Requirement:**
  - My colleagues and students need to be trained to see the value of this pedagogy before it can become a central part of our curriculum.
  - Engagement work is seen as tangential, fun stuff.
  - All of my department's required courses have at least 35 students, and it's hard to imagine how to get them all engaged in the community meaningfully.
- **Appropriate Expectations:**
  - It is hard not to overpromise to community partners, because I want them to be excited to work with my students.
- **Celebrated and Supported:**
  - There is no extra pay or promotions to encourage engagement work.

- My institution only wants to count the number of student service hours, and doesn't seem to care about learning outcomes or sustaining relationships.
- Instead of being celebrated, I fear that my colleagues will judge me negatively or stop me from doing the work.
- It's hard to build in time to talk about work and encourage more institutional support.
- As NTT faculty, I'm not compensated at all for engagement work or student mentoring (which results from engagement activities). This makes it hard to stay motivated.
- **Integrated into Objectives:**
  - Our curriculum is directed by professional accreditation requirements, so there is little room to include objectives relating to engagement activities.
- **Part of a shared strategy:**
  - The faculty in my department have very different priorities.

**We concluded taking about our Project Plans, which are due on January 8 and will be posted on Canvas!**

**Happy Thanksgiving to you all!**