

Community Engaged Education: Combining Academic Learning with Public Benefit

A. Khan, *McMaster University*, C. Tortora, *San Jose University*, and P. D. McNicholas, *McMaster University*

ABSTRACT: Community engaged education (CEE) is an experiential pedagogy through which students learn about course concepts by interacting with a specific community to produce public benefit. It offers a wide range of positive outcomes such as the deeper understanding of course content [1], the enhancement of leadership skills, increases in self-confidence, and the awareness of civic responsibility [2,3]. Despite the benefits of CEE, little work has investigated its impact in science students. For example, one survey noted that community-engaged curriculums are most common in the faculties of Arts and Social Sciences [4].

We investigated the impact of a community engagement project on undergraduate students in a high enrollment (190 students) second-level neuroscience course in the Faculty of Science at McMaster University (Canada). This course was offered during the winter term (2016). A pre-course-survey was administered in January and a post-course-survey was administered in March following students' community engagement experiences. Our survey used a 5-point Likert agreement scale to assess student experience with their academics, civic responsibility, and professional and personal skills. Students' responses were grouped into three categories: those that reported 'more disagreement' or 'no change' or 'more agreement' over the term. Students who agreed that community engaged projects should be incorporated in university courses also felt that this project increased their interest in course content. Whereas those that increased in their disagreement about whether a community engaged project leads to better understanding of academic content also did not plan to enroll in future CEE courses. Alternatively, other students remained neutral. Our data indicate that the experience of students that participate in CEE is complex and varied. Through our poster, we will provide strategies for how to incorporate CEE education in large enrollment courses and make recommendations about what types of courses might be best suited for the inclusion of community engaged pedagogies.

REFERENCES

- [1] Mpofu, E. (2007). Service-learning effects on the academic learning of rehabilitation services students. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 14 (1), 46.
- [2] Astin, A. W., & Sax, L. J. (1998). How Undergraduates Are Affected By Service Participation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 39, 251-263.
- [3] Battistoni, R. M. (1997). Service learning and democratic citizenship. *Theory Into Practice*, 36(3), 150-156.
- [4] Hayes, E., & King, C. (2006). Community Service-Learning in Canada: A Scan of the Field Table of Contents, 1-41.