Civic Engagement Student Learning Outcome ePortfolio Assessment

The Study

Purpose

The Engaged Learning Program collaborated with the ePortfolio Office to comparatively assess three groups of students with respect to Salt Lake Community College's (SLCC) Civic Engagement college-wide learning outcome. The purpose of this study was to see how increased involvement in a civic engagement honors program or a service-learning (SL) class impacted students' achievement of the SLCC civic engagement student learning outcome.

Sample

The groups of students included AS or AA graduating students with these characteristics:

1. 35 Civically Engaged Scholar (CES) graduates. Referred to hereafter as the CES group.
2. 35 randomly chosen graduates who had taken one SL course while at SLCC. Referred to hereafter as the One SL Class group.
3. 35 randomly chosen AS or AA graduates who had not taken any SL classes. Referred to hereafter as the Random group.

Method

A team of three readers scored the ePortfolios using a modified version of the civic engagement VALUE rubric from the *Association of American Colleges & Universities*. The rubric is appended to the end of this report. The rubric used a scoring system of 4-exceeds expectations, 3-meets expectations, 2-below expectations, and 1-well below expectations on the three dimensions:

- Analysis of Knowledge-how well students connected their service experiences to facts and theories within their discipline.
- Civic Action-to what extent students engaged in service in the community.
- Civic Reflection-how well students understood and expressed the value of civic engagement and reflected on what it meant to them.

Finding #1: Mean Rubric Score by Group

For all groups, the reviewers examined Welcome, Goals and Outcomes, and Learning Outside the Classroom pages in their ePortfolios for references to civic engagement. For the CES Scholars group, the reviewers examined signature assignment artifacts from their service-learning courses. They also did this for the One SL Course group, but in addition examined signature assignments from all Composition, American Institutions, and Humanities courses. For the Random group—which did not have service-learning courses—the reviewers examined signature assignments from all Composition, American Institutions, and Humanities courses.

Figure 1 shows the mean score for Analysis of Knowledge, Civic Action, and Civic Reflection for each of the student groups, and the results are striking. We note the significant difference in mean scores between the CES group and the Random group—in all cases the CES group scored considerably higher. We expected this result, given that Civically Engaged Scholars are immersed in more community

engagement experiences and opportunities for reflection on their service. Indeed, the pattern of the Analysis of Knowledge criterion—in which the CES group outscores the One SL Class group, which in turn outscores the Random group—is what we expected across the board. However, for Civic Action and Civic Reflection, we were surprised that the One SL Class group slightly outscored the CES group. It is heartening to see that the One SL Class students did so well, and the results for that group and the CES group attest to the positive impact of service-learning opportunities for SLCC's students. We would like to conduct further research into the differences between CES students and students who take only one service-learning course. One thing to note is that the CES group is heavily weighted with Occupational Therapy Assistant Students, meaning that the way those students engage with the community, create signature assignments, and reflect on their actions has a disproportionate effect on the results since they are an Engaged Department.

Figure 1: Mean Score for Analysis of Knowledge, Civic Action, and Civic Reflection for Each Group.
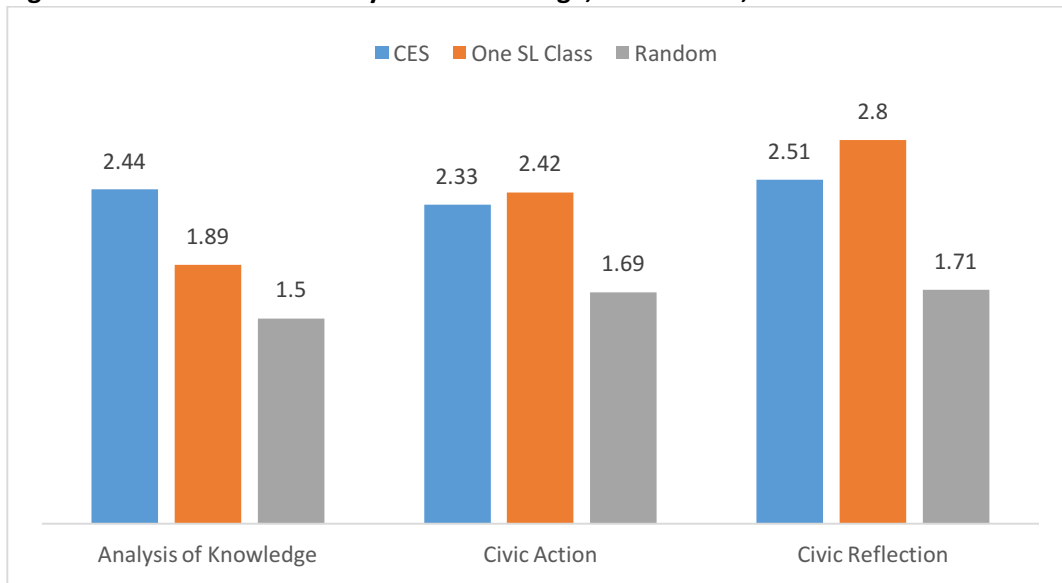
Finding #2: Artifacts Addressing Civic Engagement Learning Outcome
As Figure 2 indicates, fully three-quarters of the CES students had artifacts in their ePortfolios that addressed the three elements of Civic Engagement measured by the rubric. Much smaller percentages of students who had one SL course and students in the Random group had artifacts that addressed civic engagement. These results point to the civic engagement immersion that CES group experiences. However, we would have expected nearly 100% of CES graduates and students who took one SL course to have artifacts in their ePortfolios addressing civic engagement. The fact that they do not should be taken as an opportunity for us to have a dialogue with faculty who teach service-learning courses, because theoretically all of those students should have a civically-oriented signature assignment and reflection in their ePortfolio to represent that experience.

Figure 2: Percent of Students in Each Group That Had Artifacts Addressing Each Aspect of Civic Engagement.
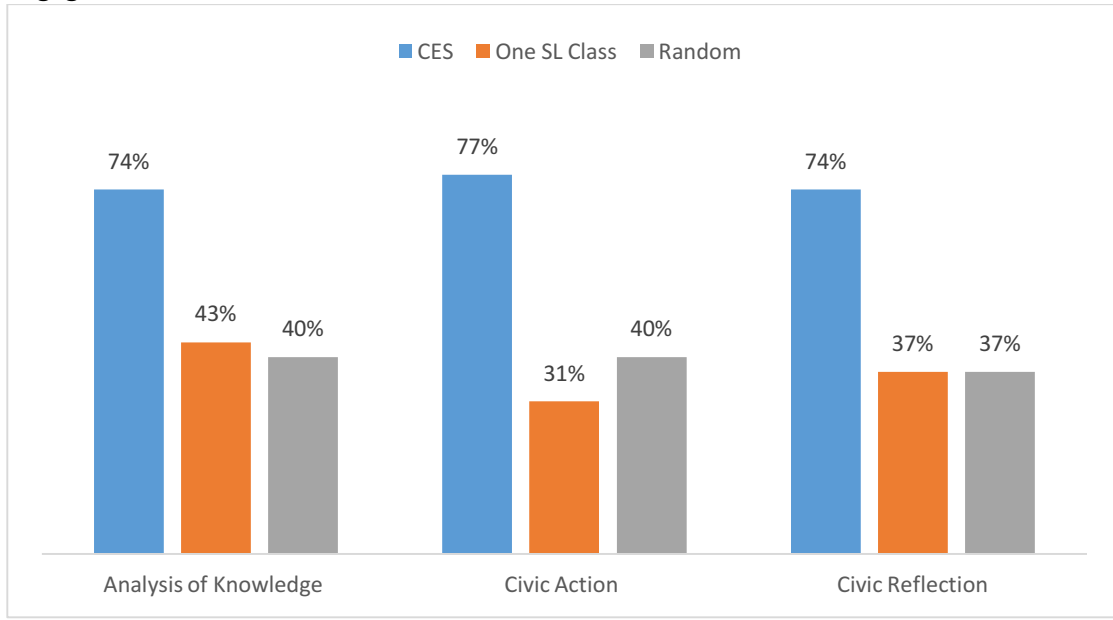
Finding #3: Mean Number of Artifacts Addressing Civic Engagement

Finding #2 showed that a greater percentage of CES students had artifacts in their ePortfolios that addressed civic engagement. If we set aside all students who didn't have artifacts, we can look at the average number of artifacts submitted by students in each of the groups. The CES students had on average almost six artifacts per category compared to the One SL Class and Random groups that only had an average of one artifact per category.

Figure 3: Mean Number of Artifacts—For Students Who Had Artifacts in the ePortfolio
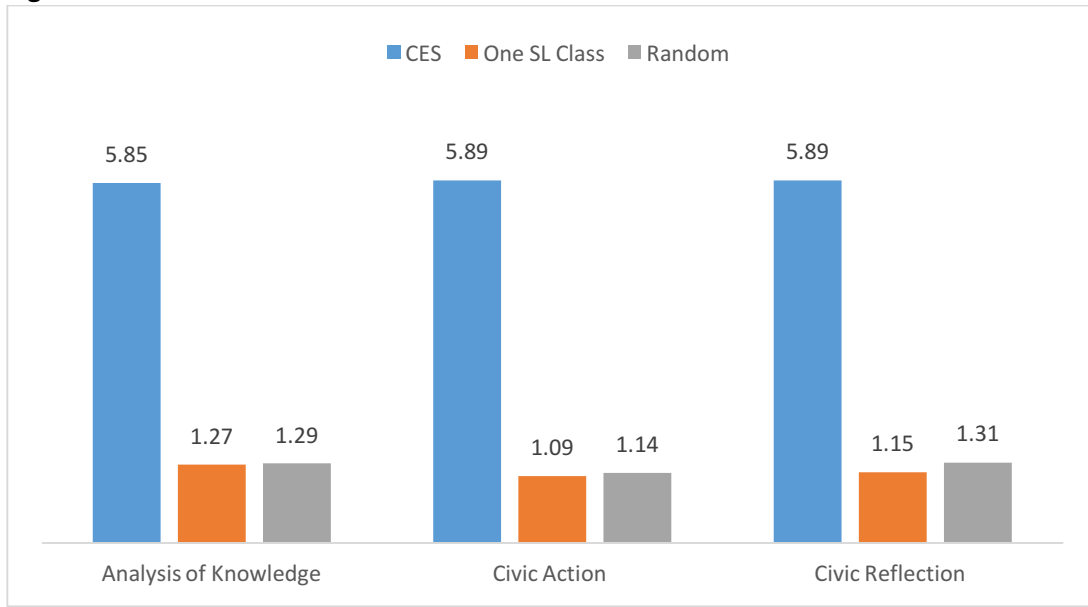
Welcome Page, Goals and Outcomes, and Learning Outside the Classroom

Our reviewers looked at Welcome, Goals and Outcomes, and Learning Outside the Classroom pages of student ePortfolios. They were interested in how students portrayed their civic engagement on these pages. Thirty-seven percent of CES graduates met or exceeded expectations on the Welcome page, while 0% of the One SL Class group did and only 2% of the Random sample did. Twenty-two percent of CES graduates met or exceeded expectations on the Goals and Outcomes page, while 2% of the One SL Class group did and 11% of the Random sample did. Thirty-one percent of the CES graduates met or exceeded expectations on the Learning Outside the Classroom page, while 5% of both the One SL Class and the Random groups did. Clearly, civic engagement broadly permeated more of the CES student ePortfolios than it did in either of the other two groups.

Recommendations

Based on the data in this report, we make the following recommendations:

- Both the SL program and ePortfolio program should encourage SL faculty to require students to upload a signature assignments focused on Civic Engagement in ePortfolio (ideally faculty would also use prompts that reflect the rubric for guidance). Currently SL faculty do not consistently require that the signature assignment posted in ePortfolio for their class focus on civic engagement. Therefore, the assignment that is posted in ePortfolio may not adequately reflect the SL students' scores in analysis of knowledge, civic action, and civic reflection. In some cases, no assignment is posted at all.
- The SL program and ePortfolio programs should continue to collaborate to ensure that all faculty teaching SL courses also receive training in ePortfolio pedagogy. We look forward to aligning ePortfolio and service-learning training.
- The AAC&U rubric needs to be further adapted to better reflect SLCC's academic goals and evaluate the civic knowledge that is present in American Institution or general Humanities courses.
- A comparison of an engaged department such as OTA or English (on track to be an engaged department) and a non-engaged department (Business or Humanities) with prompts that require students demonstrate the civic engagement learning outcome may be helpful to see differences on a departmental level.
- A comparison of a designated SL class and a non-designated SL class (i.e. a SL English 1020 and English 1020 that does not use SL pedagogy) with similar or same ePortfolio prompts will allow a better or more parallel analysis of learning outcomes.
- Incorporate civic engagement language into departmental goals and/or learning outcomes and reward its use in the departmental promotion and tenure process, to encourage increased use of this high-impact pedagogy (i.e. ideally within an engaged department).

Assessment Team

Lucy Smith-Engaged Learning Coordinator
Jen Seltzer-Stitt- Government and Community Relations Director
Daniel Poole-Assistant Professor, Sociology

Civic & Community Engagement	Exceeds 4 (demonstrates deep personal commitment & how he/she will use connections to…)	Meets 3 (demonstrates commitment and describes what connection is about)	Below 2 (may participate in civic action or service and makes simple connections)	Well Below 1 (may minimally participate in civic action or service but describes or defines civic engagement abstractly)
Analysis of Knowledge-*Based on assignment content only.*	**Connects and extends** knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline to civic engagement and to **one's own participation** in it. *Creating new knowledge, proposing new solutions and/or ways to engage based on what they have learned. Understands why it is important to be engaged.*	**Analyzes** knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline making relevant connections to civic engagement and one's own participation in it. *Putting together facts and knowledge from the discipline and connecting this to civic action/ service and how it impacts individuals and communities.*	**Connects** knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline to civic engagement and to participation it. *Some connections made between civic action/service and course content.*	**Identifies** knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline and also discusses civic engagement. *Rote description of civic action/service but no connection to course content.*
Civic Action	Demonstrates **independent** experience and/or *team leadership of* complex or **multiple** civic engagement activities. *Served and then continued to serve after the experience.*	Demonstrates **independent** experience and/or team leadership within civic action or activities. *Showed up and served, demonstrates intent to continue to serve.*	Has clearly **participated** in civically focused action or activities. *Required for a class, expresses little or no intent to continue.*	Has **experimented** with some civic action and/or activities. *Credit for doing service, but not clear what they have done, how long, service is minimally mentioned.*
Civic Reflection	Provides reflective insights or analysis about the aims and accomplishments of one's civic actions connecting multiple experiences to **personal action**. *Evaluate what civic action/service means to them and they apply to their life and/or how they have acted as a result of it.*	Provides reflective insights or analysis about the aims and accomplishments of one's actions connecting and analyzing experiences. *Evaluate what the civic action/ service means to them.*	Begins to reflect or describe how civic actions may benefit individual(s) or communities. *May be phrased in third person. May see value in civic action/ service. They may or may not apply the experience to their life but also could be applied third person to communities in general.*	Shows little **internalized** understanding of civic aims or effects and little commitment to future action. *Phrased in third person. Does not see value in civic action/service. Rote expression of facts about serving/civic action. Writing to fulfill assignment only.*