Salt Lake Community College

Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome ePortfolio Assessment Final Report Academic Year 2020-2021

By Lucy Smith

Purpose

Each year the Engaged Learning Office seeks to determine how well students meet the civic literacy student learning outcome (CLSLO) within designated service-learning classes at Salt Lake Community College (SLCC).

Sample and Method

For the 2020-2021 academic year, the study pulled a sample of service-learning designated sections that require service-learning, including but not exclusive to General Education. These sections totaled 767 graduating students receiving an AS, AA, or AAS degree by May 2021. Of the 767, a total of 343 students were pulled for assessment. Students were thrown out of the original sample for several reasons. Both Dental Hygiene and Occupational Therapy Assisting (OTA) students had up to five or six classes, but only two per student were reviewed. This is consistent with our general sample because most service-learning students take only one or two classes. In addition, since some instructors did not offer service-learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, additional courses were removed. Of the remaining 343, a total of 129 students had evidence of service-learning in their ePortfolio. A total of 143 did not have a service-learning course listed on their ePortfolio, so they were thrown out. There were 71 students who did not have an ePortfolio at all.

Three teams composed of two faculty or staff assessors each evaluated the service-learning assignments. Each team reviewed a portion of the sample. The teams met virtually to discuss each assignment and reach a consensus score. The assignments in a course received scores under the characteristic subcategories of each criteria, and then this score was averaged to create an overall score for each broad criteria. If a student uploaded multiple assignments within one course, the assessors reviewed all assignments and gave an overall score.

The CLSLO rubric (Appendix A) outlines each criteria and characteristic subcategories based on the SLCC Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome.

SLCC's Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome

SLCC's General Education CLSLO reads as follows:

Students develop civic literacy and the capacity to be community-engaged learners who act in mutually beneficial ways with community partners. *This includes producing learning artifacts indicating understanding of the political, historical, economic or sociological aspects of social change and continuity; thinking critically about—and weighing the evidence surrounding—issues important to local, national, or global communities; participating in a broad range of community-engagement and/or service-learning courses for community building and an enhanced academic experience.*

The current rubric operationalizes the CLSLO in the following manner:

- **Develop civic literacy/knowledge ("Civic Literacy")**
  - Students discuss their knowledge of political, historical, economic, or sociological aspects of social change. They describe or analyze the understanding of agencies and organizations that address social issues. They also discuss power structures, privilege/oppression, and/or systems when addressing a social issue or creating a plan to address it.

- **Critical thinking surrounding social issues/capacity to become a community-engaged learner ("Critical Thinking")**
    - o Students apply critical thinking to their civic knowledge. Students identify issues through a disciplinary lens and then identify, explain, or analyze facts and theories from their academic field and the impact on society. This category also includes a commitment to community engagement, which evaluates students' participation in service and intent. Students also reflect on personal values, attitudes, or beliefs, perhaps in relation to others.

- **Working with others ("Working with Others")**
    - o Students state, explain, or analyze their perspectives on cultural, disciplinary, and ethical issues. They express openness in interacting with others of diverse backgrounds or actively seek out interactions with diverse others.

- **Civic action/students act in mutually beneficial ways ("Civic Action")**
    - o Civic action includes the breadth or depth of community engagement and evaluates how students collaborate with community partners and identify community needs. Mutually beneficial relationships include perspective-taking and how a student expressed the value of the experience.

The scoring rubric has evolved in the past seven years. A modified version of the Civic Engagement Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubric from the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) was used from 2014-2017. Then components of the Civic-Minded Graduate Rubric 2.0 from Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis were incorporated in the 2017-2018 academic year. All revisions aligned with the language from the SLCC CLSLO. The SLCC assessment coordinator provided feedback during the revision process and then approved the rubric's 2017-2018 final version. The college-wide Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee evaluated the rubric in the same year, and its members suggested no changes. The assessment coordinator reviewed the rubric again in 2020 and suggested additional revisions. Some of the recent modifications include replacing Awareness of Democratic Structures with Awareness of Power Structures. The vocabulary of 3-Competent, 2-Developing, and 1-Beginner was changed to less value-laden language based on feedback. The rubric now uses a scoring system of 3-High, 2-Medium, 1-Low, and 0-no evidence ranking each characteristic subcategory.

Summary of Findings
The assessment's primary findings indicate that few students are above a low level on the rubric, and signature assignments related to civic literacy are still not being uploaded consistently for service-learning courses.

Results

Figure 1 shows that 65% of students did not include their service-learning course in their ePortfolio, or they did not have an ePortfolio at all. Evaluation occurred for the remaining 35% that had their course listed and evidence posted.

Figure 1: Percent with no ePortfolio or no course listed versus those that had assignments posted and evaluated in the ePortfolio.

Percent with no ePortfolio or no course listed, versus those that had assignment posted and evaluated in the ePortfolio.
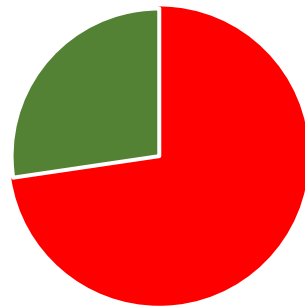
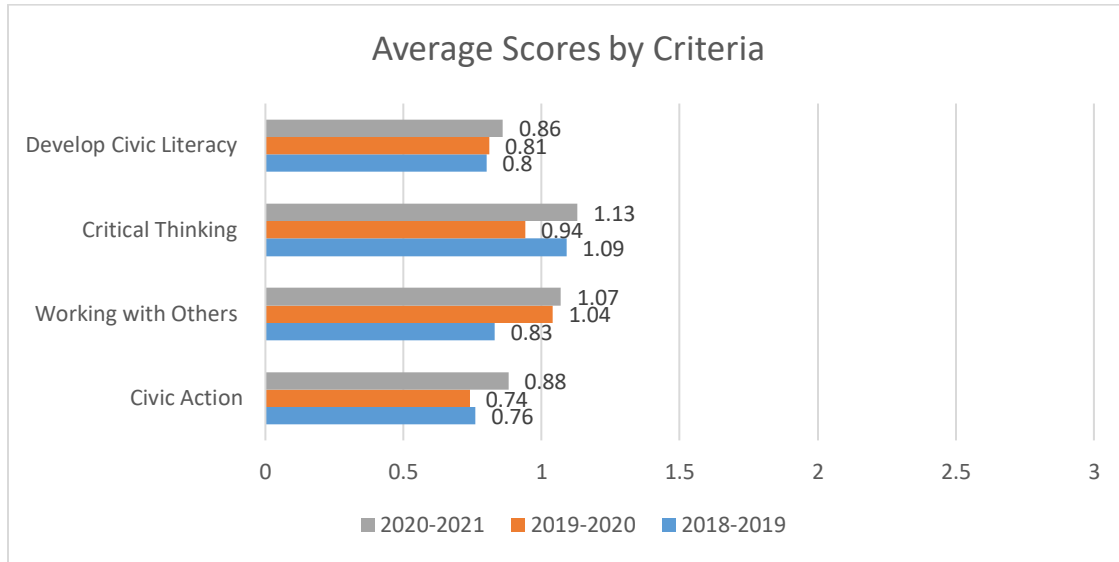■ No eportfolio or no course listed in ePortfolio   ■ Evidence posted

Summary of Scores by Criteria

Figure 2 shows the scores for assessing the broad categories of Civic Literacy, Critical Thinking, Working with Others, and Civic Action for the sample, drawn from the averages of the characteristic subcategories within each criteria.

Critical Thinking Surrounding Social Issues was the highest category with a score of 1.13. Working with Others was the second-highest-ranking criteria, with an average score of 1.07. Assessors gave students an overall score of 0.86 for the criteria focused on developing Civic Literacy. The lowest ranking criteria were for Civic Action, with an overall average score of 0.88. Scores for all criteria increased slightly from AY 19-20.

All the scores for the broad criteria averaged around a low level. Because these are averaged scores, some students may score relatively high, while others did not have any evidence. For many students, these service-learning courses may be the first exposure they have had to civic engagement. Hence, an average low-level score is a positive sign that students in service-learning classes are developing civic literacy on average. However, these scores also indicate that there is plenty of room for improvement before developing competency.

Figure 2: Student Scores for Overall Criteria Areas

Average Scores by Criteria

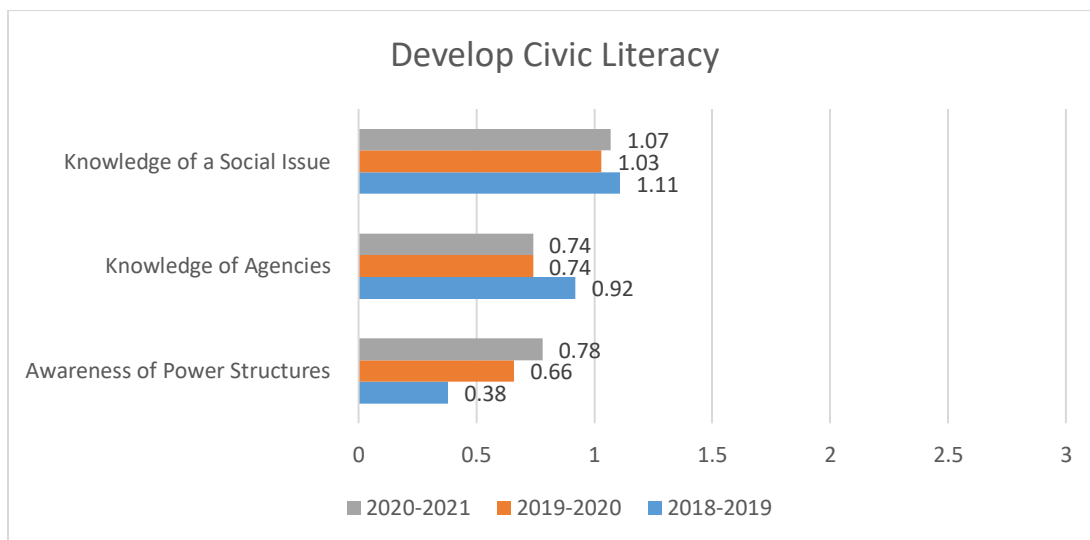|	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
Develop Civic Literacy	0.86	0.81	0.8
Critical Thinking	1.13	0.94	1.09
Working with Others	1.07	1.04	0.83
Civic Action	0.88	0.74	0.76

Summary of Scores by Characteristic Subcategories

Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 show the average scores for each characteristic subcategory within the broad criteria.
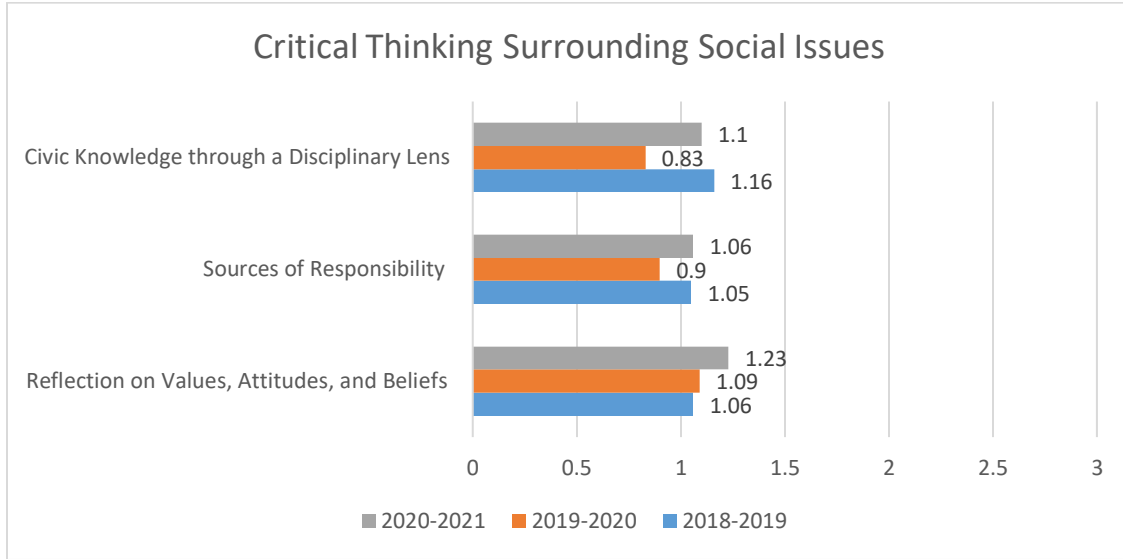
Figure 3: Student Scores for Civic Literacy Subcategories

In the Civic Knowledge category, students are evaluated on their knowledge of social issues and social change. For example, assessors determine if students discuss facts or issues focused on such things as civil rights, gender, race, disability, equity, law/order, fiscal responsiblity etc. Gaining knowledge of agencies and organizations that deal with these social issues is also a focus.

Develop Civic Literacy

|	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
Knowledge of a Social Issue	1.07	1.03	1.11
Knowledge of Agencies	0.74	0.74	0.92
Awareness of Power Structures	0.78	0.66	0.38

Figure 4: Student Scores for Critical Thinking Subcategories

Students take the knowledge gained in the Civic Literacy category and then critically analyze it in the Critical Thinking category, making relevant connections to learning in their course and their responsibility and commitment to community engagement. In this category, students also reflect on their personal values, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to others. All categories were slightly higher this year.

Critical Thinking Surrounding Social Issues

| Category	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
Civic Knowledge through a Disciplinary Lens	1.1	0.83	1.16
Sources of Responsibility	1.06	0.9	1.05
Reflection on Values, Attitudes, and Beliefs	1.23	1.09	1.06

Figure 5: Student Scores for Working with Others Subcategories

In this category, students are evaluated on their ability to work with others. Are students able to see beyond their perspective and identify the perspectives of others? Students' ability to interact with diverse others and discuss norms and perspectives is also a focus.

Working with Others

Category	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
Perspective Taking	1.13	1.16	0.92
Openness	1.02	0.92	0.73
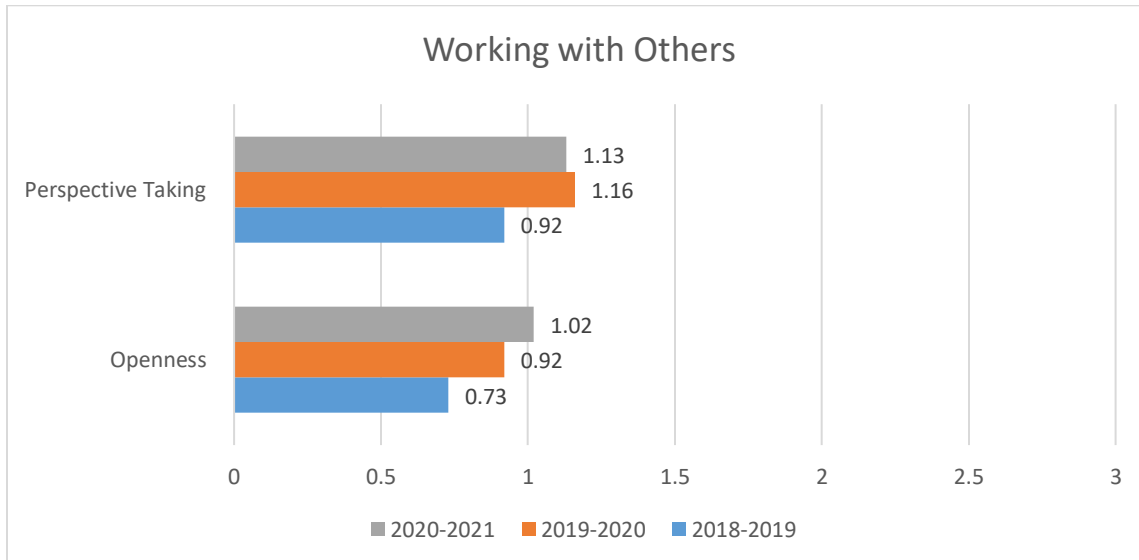
Figure 6: Student Scores for Civic Action Subcategories

In this category, service in the community is evaluated. Breadth and depth are assessed based on the frequency of service and the ability to identify multiple civic engagement activities. Students can participate in direct or indirect service, advocacy, activism, research, philanthropy, policy, governance, or corporate social responsibility (Stanford Haas Center for Public Service, 2020). All categories were slightly higher this year.
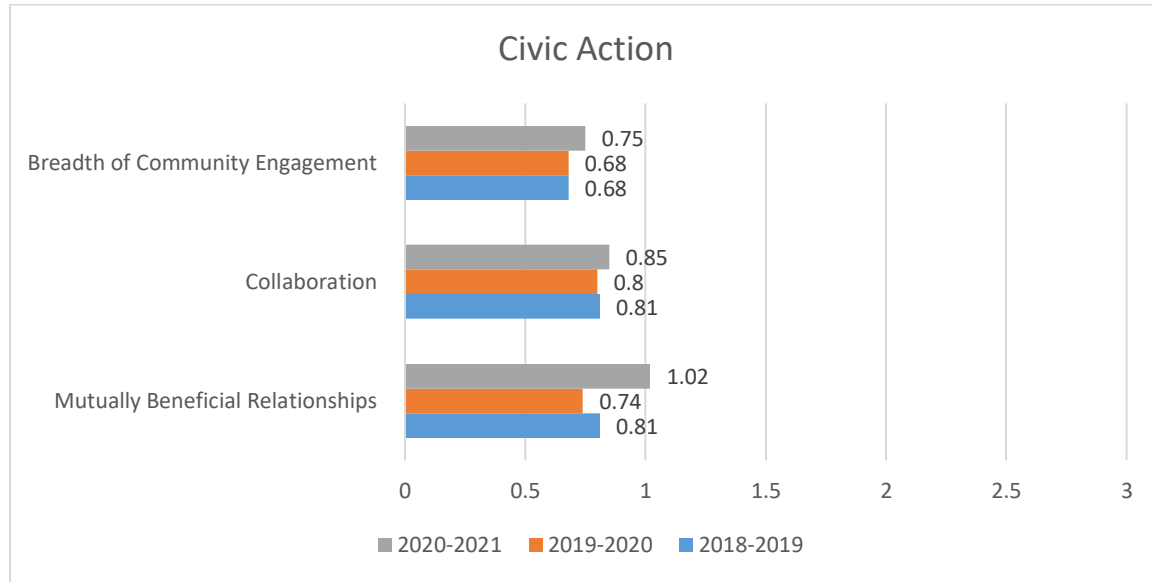
Analysis of Findings and Recommendations

Findings

- Overall, many students are still not posting to their e-portfolios, and those who do often are not posting assignments or reflections specific to their service-learning course. Only two classes for Dental Hygiene and OTA students were reviewed since this compares to the general sample of students who only take one or two service-learning courses during their time at SLCC. The ePortfolio is required for both programs, and therefore it is assumed that if the additional courses were included, the percent of ePortfolios evaluated would increase. The scores may also likely be impacted.
- Student scores remained relatively consistent with last year's scores and hovered around the low range, suggesting plenty of room for improvement. One explanation for these low scores is that students are not demonstrating their civic knowledge acquired through their service-learning, either because they are posting assignments and reflections focused on other aspects of the course or not articulating their knowledge well in their projects and reflections. Alternatively, this may be the first opportunity students have to engage civically. A low level may be accurate and possibly even appropriate for introducing college students to civic engagement.
- The Critical Thinking Around Social Issues (1.13) was highest this year in examining the scores by criteria. The second-highest category was Working with Others at 1.07. Civic Action scored at 0.88, and Developing Civic Literacy was the lowest (.86).
- The highest subcategory overall was Reflection on Values, Attitudes, and/or Beliefs. Students scored 1.23, indicating that when students post to their ePortfolio, they are reflecting. The

second highest subcategory was Perspective Taking at 1.13. The category focused on Civic Knowledge through a Disciplinary Lens ranked third (1.10), followed by Knowledge of a Social Issue (1.07) and Commitment to Community Engagement (1.06). Students received slightly lower scores on Openness (1.02), Mutually Beneficial Relationships (1.02), and Collaboration (0.85). Awareness of Power Structures rankings is 0.78, and the Breadth or Depth of Community Engagement Activities is 0.75. Students scored an average of 0.74 on Knowledge of Agencies and Organizations that Address Social Issues, the lowest of all the subcategories.

- Overall, the Civic Action criteria were the second-lowest ranking category of scores on the rubric (0.88), but the scores were slightly higher from last year (0.74). Given that all students are required to do service as a part of their service-learning course, most students in this sample likely participated in some community engagement. Therefore, it appears that these students are not effectively highlighting their service work via their ePortfolio. The uploaded assignments did not focus on civic engagement for some service-learning courses but instead concentrated on discipline-based content.

Recommendations

Overall, the findings demonstrate that faculty who teach service-learning courses should be more explicit in linking their course to the CLSLO and corresponding rubric. Recommendations include that faculty help students be more intentional about meeting these expectations and consistently posting to the ePortfolio. Also, there is considerable variability in the types of assignments students upload, which gives faculty the freedom to design the learning environment. Still, a more coordinated and intentional approach should result in a better program-wide assessment of student learning. A more intentional approach will also help SLCC achieve its vision of strengthening the communities we serve through the success of our students as well as live our value of partnering with our community in the transformative, public good of educating students.

Given that all criteria and characteristic subcategories rank below or slightly above a low level, there are several additional recommendations based on the data in this report:

- **Collect, Connect, Reflect in ePortfolio:** With the limited number of ePortfolios containing service-learning assignments (35%), the assessment does not represent the general SLCC service-learning student population. More students need to upload relevant assignments related to the CLSLO rubric to have an adequately large sample. Currently, existing service-learning faculty do not always require that the signature assignment posted in ePortfolio for their class focus on the CLSLO. Faculty should have students upload multiple assignments to include civic-focused items as well as discipline-specfic items. All service-learning courses, even those that do not carry a General Education designation, should incorporate the ePortfolio into their curriculum. All existing service-learning courses undergoing a review starting in AY 21-22 are required to utilize ePortfolio.
- **Progress:** The average scores by criteria increased from AY 19-20 to AY 20-21. This may indicate that service-learning faculty are starting to adopt the CLSLO rubric for their service-learning assignments.
- **Faculty Professional Development:** While recognizing faculty freedom to design service-learning assignments as they see fit, SLCC should continue to develop a more coordinated and intentional approach to service-learning faculty professional development. In-person faculty development workshops focusing on the CLSLO rubric have been offered but are limited. An online course in

Canvas has been created and hopefully will reach more faculty because of a multi-pronged approach.

- **Reflection Prompts:** We provide [suggestions for prompts](#) designed to encourage reflection on civic engagement that are aligned with the CLSLO rubric to facilitate student reflection. We should consider that student reflections may rely heavily on the specific prompts provided on the ePortfolio web page. Often these prompts are focused on other student learning outcomes besides civic literacy and civic action. Therefore, the assignments evaluated may not adequately reflect the students' acquisition of these learning outcomes in their scores.
- **The Need:** The other methods for assessing student learning outcomes on a course level through faculty submission through our institutional assessment office have not focused on the civic literacy learning outcome. Therefore, this learning outcome is not assessed in any other manner. It is essential to establish a method to evaluate this learning outcome via the service-learning program hoping that the methods can be more broadly adopted to courses that generally focus on civic engagement in the future.
- **Confounding factors:** In March 2020, all courses moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some service-learning instructors moved in-person service to remote service. Some classes focused more on helping students develop civic knowledge, and some put civic action (e.g., the service component) on hold entirely. Overall, the service-learning program changed during COVID. There were fewer classes assessed since the service option was not offered.
- **Desegregate Data:** During the next assessment cycle, the Dental Hygiene, Occupational Therapy Assisting, and English students could be assessed separately since scores may differ for those in Engaged Departments versus those who are not. Data disaggregation should also include reviewing ethic and racial categories to determine if scores differ between these groups.

Guiding Resources:

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2009). Civic Engagement VALUE rubric. Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/civic-engagement-value-rubric

Stanford Haas Center Pathways to Public Service. Retrieved from https://haas.stanford.edu/about/our-approach/pathways-public-service-and-civic-engagement

Weiss, H.A., Hahn, T., and Norris, K. (2017). Civic Minded Graduate 2.0: Assessment Toolbox

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Appendix A: <u>Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome Assessment Rubric</u>

Criteria	Characteristic	0-No evidence	1-Low	2-Medium	3-High
Develop civic literacy/ knowledge	Knowledge of a social issue	No evidence.	**Lists** some social issues or states basic details of a political, historical, economic, or sociological aspect of social change.	**Explains** social problem(s) or the political, historical, economic, sociological aspects of social change-or lack of change based on research with a social issue.	**Compares and contrasts** different perspectives and/or ideas detailing social problems or the political, historical, economic, sociological aspects of social change.
	Knowledge of agencies/ organizations that address social issues.	No evidence.	**Identify** agencie(s)/ organization(s) focused on addressing social issues.	**Describes** surface level characteristics agencie(s)/ organization(s) responsible for addressing social issues.	**Analyzes** relevant agencie(s)/ organization(s) by **explaining** in depth how they address a social issue.
	Awareness of power structures, privilege/ oppression and/or systems when trying to address a social issue.	No evidence.	**Describes** a few actions or processes (e.g., advocating, voting, boycotting, contacting elected officials, protesting) that can be taken to address social issues. Or **little to no mention** of the role of power, privilege/oppression, or systems (e.g., economic, administrative, social).	**Compare and contrast** the multiple actions or processes (e.g., advocating, voting, boycotting, contacting elected officials, protesting) that can be taken to address social issues. Or **describes** current or different power, privilege/oppression, or structures and systems (e.g., economic, administrative, social).	**Creates a plan** that involves multiple actions or processes (e.g., advocating, voting, boycotting, contacting elected officials, protesting) that can be taken to address social issues. Or **analyzes** current or different power structures, privilege/oppression, or systems (e.g., economic, administrative, social) in depth.

Criteria	Characteristic	0-No evidence	1-Low	2-Medium	3-High
Critical thinking surrounding social issues/ Capacity to become community-engaged learner	Civic knowledge through a disciplinary lens	No evidence.	**Identify** issues (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline to civic engagement or its impact on society.	**Explains** own perspective and may also identify with one other perspective on issues (facts, theories, etc.) from one's academic study/field/ discipline making relevant connections/implications to civic engagement or its impact on society.	**Analyzes multiple perspectives** on issues (facts, theories, etc.) from one's academic study/field/ discipline to civic engagement or its impact on society.
	Source(s) of responsibility or commitment to community engagement	No evidence.	Mentions that they are required to do service for a class or as a part of a group. There are **little to no statements of responsibility** to commit time, talent, or resources to make a difference.	Mentions that they are required to do service for a class or as part of a group and expresses value in it. Student states that **responsibility to serve is derived from external norms**, authority, or expectations from others.	Mentions that they want to do service to support the community or society at large. Source of **responsibility is from internal motivations**.
	Reflection on values, attitudes, and/or beliefs	No evidence.	**Little to no reflection on personal values**, attitudes, and beliefs.	**Aware of personal values**, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to others.	**Critically examines personal values,** attitudes, and beliefs in relation to others.
Working with others	Perspective-taking	No evidence.	**States** own perspective (i.e., cultural, disciplinary, and ethical).	**Explains** own perspectives and identifies perspectives of others.	**Analyses** multiple perspectives for points of commonalties and differences.
	Openness	No evidence.	**Expresses willingness** or participates in interaction with diverse others.	**Demonstrates a willingness** to interact with diverse others and discusses norms and perspectives of themselves and/or others.	**Actively seeks out interactions** with diverse others and expresses the value of other perspectives or explains how their perspective has shifted.

Criteria	Characteristic	0-No evidence	1-Low	2-Medium	3-High
	Breadth or depth of community engagement (e.g., direct, indirect, advocacy, activism, research, philanthropy, policy and governance, social responsibility)	No evidence.	Participated in **one type** of community-engaged activity. Or completed minimum hours without any mention of continuation.	Participated in **at least one type of community engagement and identifies one additional type(s)** of community-engaged activities. Or completed additional hours or multiple types of projects.	Participated in **at least one type of community engagement activity and explains two or more types** of community engaged activities. Or describes plans for continued civic engagement.
Civic Action/ Students act in mutually beneficial ways	Collaboration	No evidence.	**Does not identify a community need** or only talks about the partner or community from a personal perspective.	**Cites information about the partner(s)** or community need collected from a third-party or web research.	**Describes personal communication with the partner** or the community where they learned about a community need.
	Mutually beneficial relationship with partners or the community	No evidence.	Discusses experience from **one perspective** and/or is only doing it because it is required.	**Expresses limited value for themselves AND can express limited value for the community** partner/community.	**Expresses how the experience influenced them AND impacted the partner** and/or community on a larger level.

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