



Information for Community Engaged Courses

Dear colleagues,

Are you or someone you know teaching a Community Engaged Course this semester? If so, please read on and share with those who would benefit from this information.

As you all are working to make adjustments to move your classes online, I wanted to reach out to you to offer support on issues specific to your Community Engaged and Community Connected Courses. Of course, we are all working to figure these things out as we go, but I am confident that you all are particularly adept at adjusting in quick time given that Community Engaged Teaching and Learning often requires us to make real time adjustments to what is “happening on the ground.” And, there will be a wealth of wisdom for us to tap into as we make our way through these changes together.

Here are a few things that we at the Gephardt Institute and our colleagues have been thinking about. Of course there will be other things to think about that are not included here and so please reach out to me to share your insights, perspectives, and challenges so that we can build and share the wisdom of our communities.

Please reach out to your community partners: If you have not yet contacted your community partners, please do so ASAP.

- Let them know that students will no longer be able to participate in-person at their sites and that any end of semester in-person celebrations with students are cancelled. Discuss the student work at their site and what this interruption in that work means for the community partner.
- If they are willing to share, ask them how Coronavirus/COVID-19 is affecting them and the populations they serve. Please share this with the Gephardt Institute if time allows. We are strategizing ways to continue supporting our partners at this time.
- Cautiously consider inquiring about whether students might be able to support your partners' work through projects that students could do remotely (E.g. social media, advocacy, research, storytelling, data organization, phone calls), so that you can work together to figure out your next steps. WashU is working to send student computers and academic materials that have been left on campus, but be mindful that students may not have these things by March 23.

Be honest with yourself and be careful to not overpromise to your partner. Because you all care deeply about the work of your partners, you may want to do things that you will find are beyond your capacity given the time-intensive adjustments that you are making to move your class online with little preparation time.

Similarly, your partner may feel pressure to say yes to any ideas you propose in order to maintain your relationship. Make sure to say explicitly that it is okay for them to say no to this kind of student work. It is possible that the time that it will take for partners (and you) to support this work would

outweigh the benefits they will receive. In short, be transparent and honest with yourself and your partner. Working through this *together* is a wonderful relationship building/strengthening opportunity. [Here](#) is an article that, while not about community engaged courses, reminds us that we cannot teach our courses as if we and our students (and our partners) had planned for them to be online.

And, if you feel that you and your partner have the capacity to adjust your work to be online, there are many alternatives that you could explore for online projects. [Here](#) is one resource that you could look through for ideas from the United Nations.

Stay in contact with your community partner by phone, email, Zoom, as time and technology allows for both of you. Things are changing quickly and thus, continued connection and sharing of information may be important.

All Gephardt Institute travel funds are suspended for the remainder of the semester (CarShare, Busses, etc.) since students should no longer be attending off-site placements for Community Engaged Courses.

Resources for instructional continuity:

- Resources abound and are growing. You all received an email from the WashU Center for Teaching and Learning, and [here](#) is their website with helpful resources. Here are a few additional resources from our colleagues at: [CNDLS](#), [Barnard](#), [Harvard](#), [Stanford](#), and [Iowa](#).

Please reach out to us at the Gephardt Institute when your time allows.

- We are here to support you all through this transition. Please reach out to me to talk through options once you have talked to your partners. I am happy to talk with you by Zoom, phone, and email. Is there anything we at the Gephardt Institute should know about your partners needs right now? In the future, we would also appreciate know how you adjusted your Community Engaged Courses, how those adjustments worked for you and your partners.

Care for your students and yourselves.

- Do take a moment to individually or collectively check in with students on how they are doing. If you have not already, consider making space in class to write or talk together about how the spread of coronavirus is affecting your community partners and the populations with which they partner and serve.
 - It may be helpful to share your own concern, as well as your own trust in the community partner organizations with which you partner if students express heightened anxieties about separation from/the well-being of the people they were getting to know through the Community Engaged work.
 - Remind students that social distancing is not the same as social isolation. Consider this quotation from Sandra Bass the Director of the Public Service Center at UC Berkeley: *“this tiny little virus is an immediate reminder that not only are we deeply connected to each other, but also that we are only as strong as the most vulnerable among us.”*
 - Strategize together about what you *can* do to stay connected to your community partners, and work to support the most vulnerable during this time.

Additional alternative assignments.

In addition to writing about how coronavirus is affecting the communities with which you work, you might also consider critically reading media, corporate, political, or university-wide communications about this issue as a class, and discussing whose voice and well-being are being addressed, ignored, or centered.

Remind everyone to take care of themselves, to do their best to stay [healthy](#), to check [WashU's Emergency Covid-19](#) webpage to stay informed, and to respond to others with care and compassion.

I leave you with one more [resource](#) that your non-profit partners might find interesting and that might help us remember the challenges that our partners face in their work.

We are in this together.

Cassie

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