



GUIDING PACKET

Spark Community Engagement Award Program

The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL) Spark Community Engagement Award Program was developed to encourage and reward students who participate in community engagement opportunities at WCU. The Spark Program is open to all students. This packet serves as a guide and resource for those working to complete the program.

Students can earn the Spark Community Engagement Award by participating in direct service and civic education events. Once these two components are completed, students will be invited to complete the Spark Community Engagement Award with Distinction by planning and completing a philanthropic project and submitting an Impact Focus Area presentation. From the Spark Award dashboard on Engage, students can monitor their progress and submit materials to complete the award.

Spark Award Components



1. Direct Service
2. Civic Involvement

Spark Award with Distinction Components



3. Philanthropy
4. Advocacy & Education

Spark Award Student Goals

- Students have incentive to get involved in community service.
- Students receive recognition for their involvement in community service.
- Students have meaningful community impact through service.
- Students cultivate a practice of social responsibility through service.

Get Started & View Progress in Engage

- Visit “engage.wcu.edu” and hit “sign in” in the top right-hand corner.
- Click on your profile (initials or picture) in the top right-hand corner and select “Paths”.
- Select “Spark Award” to view component requirements and to view your progress bar.

Students who complete the Spark Program will receive cords to wear at graduation, a certificate presented to them at the annual CCESL Impact Awards ceremony, and valuable experience to add to their resume and discuss with future employers.



Center for Community Engagement
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QUESTIONS?
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Spark Award: Direct Service

The Spark Award requires 50 hours of direct service work completed and logged into Engage.

What is Direct Service?

Direct Service is a type of community engagement that involves giving your personal time and energy to address immediate community needs. Direct service requires face-to-face volunteering opportunities and “on the ground” community work.

What Activities Count as Direct Service?

Direct service activities could include attending a volunteer opportunity that is posted through the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL) Engage page. Only direct service hours completed during your college years (transfer institutions included) will count towards this award. Any direct service hours completed before your time in college will not count towards this award. CCESL offers student days of service each month, service opportunities relating to our semester focus area initiative, alternative service break trips, and service opportunities with local community organizations. Any direct service work that is completed as part of a designated service-learning course can count towards your direct service hours.

You may also develop and facilitate your own service opportunity to count towards your direct service hours. Your own service opportunities are not required to be connected to a community organization, but they should be planned mindfully. The goal of direct service work is to be positively impactful on the community. One example could be conducting a road-side cleanup. While these do not need prior approval from the CCESL office, contact our office if you need assistance!

How Many Different Events Do I Need to Attend?

There are no requirements for how many events you need to attend or how many different organizations that you need to work with.

The following activities DO NOT count toward direct service hours:

Internships, monetary or item donations to an organization, caring for a family member, or any activity that you receive payment for.

Logging Service Hours in Engage

- Visit “engage.wcu.edu” and hit “sign in” in the top right-hand corner.
- Click on your profile (initials or picture) in the top right-hand corner.
- Click “Service Hours” in the drop-down menu.
- Click on “+ Add Service Hours” and fill out the form.
- When asked to select the organization, select the club or organization for which you completed the service. If they are not listed or your completed these hours outside of a WCU organization select “Student Involvement.”
- Hit “Create” to submit the hours. Hours will then be approved or denied by an administrator.
- When you have reached 50 direct service hours logged into Engage, upload a screenshot from your “Service Hours Dashboard” into the Spark Pathway. Ensure that the screenshot clearly shows 50 approved service hours to get credit.

Spark Award: Civic Involvement

The Spark Award requires attendance at 5 Civic Education events and a letter to a local or state representative.

What is Civic Involvement?

Civic Involvement is a type of community engagement that involves making positive impact through processes such as voting, protesting, and communicating with elected officials.

Attend Five Civic Education Events

Civic Education events are events in Engage that are tagged with the “Civic Education” category. The primary aim of these events are to educate participants on civic processes or social topics. Event types may include facilitated discussions on controversial topics, civic trivia nights, or events that explain the latest voting laws. Virtual events and educational videos are available on Engage to make this award component accessible to distance students. To get credit for event attendance, you **MUST** RSVP for the event on Engage and be marked as attended when the event is complete. After you have attended the five events, with credit in Engage, this component will be automatically completed in your Spark Pathway.

Writing a Letter to Local or State Representative

- **Step 1:** Choose one of the 15 [CCESL Impact Focus Areas](#) that you are passionate about. Then, choose a specific issue within this focus area to write to the representative about.
 - Ensure that the issue is something within the control of the representative you are writing to. For example, if you would like to write to them about Poverty & Food Insecurity, you could request legislative support for a local food bank in the district that they represent.
- **Step 2:** Research a representative in local or state government to write to through their website.
- **Step 3:** Write your letter. Be respectful in your word choices and phrasing. Address them by their title (ex. Senator Smith). See a sample letter here.
 - **Paragraph 1:** Introduce yourself and explain why you are writing to them.
 - **Paragraph 2:** Go into further detail about the issue and what you are requesting them to do about the issue. This paragraph should be the longest.
 - **Paragraph 3:** Close out your message by thanking them for their time reviewing your letter.
- **Step 4:** Send your letter.
 - Most representative’s email addresses can be found on their website.
- **Step 5:** Complete the component in the Engage Spark Pathway. Fill out the representative information and upload a copy of your letter.

Resources

- [Sample Letter](#)
- [Find A Representative](#)

Spark Award with Distinction: Philanthropy

The Spark Award with Distinction requires the creation and execution of one philanthropic event.

What is Philanthropic Giving?

Philanthropic giving is a type of service that includes the organizing of fundraising efforts, donations of funds, or donations of needed items that benefit an organization. Philanthropic events for the Spark Award must be an organized event that includes a fundraising effort and/or a donation collection component. There is not a specific time frame that your philanthropic event needs to be completed within. The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL) is here to help you plan your project! Please contact our office if you need assistance.

Philanthropic Event Process

- **Step 1:** Choose an organization that addresses a community-identified need that you are interested in impacting through philanthropy.
- **Step 2:** Contact the organization to determine what their fundraising or donation needs are and what event would be best suited to their needs. If you need assistance contacting an organization or answering an organization's questions, please contact the CCESL office.
 - Could you fundraise for a specific project or program? Do they have a wish list for item donations?
- **Step 3:** Communicate with the organization about how raised funds or collected goods will be distributed to them.
 - Do they have the capabilities to receive monetary donations? Are you able to transport donated goods to their location?
- **Step 4:** Create an event and marketing plan.
 - Where will this event take place? How will you get people to participate? Will you need volunteers?
- **Step 5:** Conduct the philanthropic event.
- **Step 6:** Disperse the funds and goods to the benefiting organization.
- **Step 7:** Submit the philanthropic event form in the Engage Spark Award pathway.

Spark Award with Distinction Philanthropic Event Submission Form

PROJECT INFORMATION

Student Name:

Project Name:

Project Date Range:

Project Description:

ORGANIZATION & CONTACT INFORMATION

Community Organization Name:

Impact Focus Area/Community Need:

Contact Name:

Contact Title:

Contact Phone Number:

Contact Email:

DONATION INFORMATION

Donation Drive Type (Circle):

Donation Total (Dollars or # of Items):

Financial
Donations

Item
Donations

Spark Award with Distinction: Advocacy & Education

The Spark Award with Distinction requires the submission of a 7-10 minute presentation for the Advocacy & Education component.

What is Advocacy & Education?

Advocacy and education are service types that involve people using their voices to persuade decision makers to make choices that benefit a community. Advocacy can take place on small or large scales to influence decision makers at many levels. Decision makers could include public officers, community leaders, or an organization's leadership team. Advocacy and education are powerful tools that allow information about community-identified needs to be accessible to large amount of people and inspire them to take action.

Presentation Requirements & Goals

This presentation is required to be 7-10 minutes in length. A PowerPoint or other visual component is required to be a part of the presentation. You may record a video of yourself presenting or submit a screen recording of the presentation with a voiceover. There are no requirements for the number of sources you need to gather information from. Any information quoted or adapted from a source needs to be cited in the format of your choosing and displayed in a citation slide at the end of your presentation.

While you are conducting your research and creating your presentation, keep the following two goals of Advocacy & Education in mind:

- Educate yourself on a pressing issue in the Western North Carolina region
- Reflect on impactful advocacy strategies to address the issue

Presentation Evaluation

Once your presentation is complete, submit the recording on Engage under your Spark Pathway. Your presentation will then be reviewed and evaluated based on the rubric on page 7. If you have met all of the outlined requirements, you will receive confirmation that you have successfully completed the Advocacy & Education component of the Spark Award with Distinction.

Spark Award with Distinction: Advocacy & Education Presentation Guide

The Spark Award with Distinction requires the submission of a 7-10 minute presentation for the Advocacy & Education component.

Presentation Outline & Guiding Questions to Consider

- **Opening Statement**
 - What is a piece of information that will immediately grab the attention of the audience?
- **Present the Issue**
 - Which Impact Focus Area does this issue relate to? How does this issue impact the community? How long has this issue existed?
- **Share a Story or Example that Highlights the Issue**
- **Connect the Issue to the Audience's Values**
 - Why should the audience care about this issue?
- **Describe Advocacy Opportunities**
 - What organizations work to combat this issue? How could you and other students work to address the issue? Are there volunteer or donation opportunities?

General Tips & Resources

- The target audience is college students.
- Create a visually appealing PowerPoint to engage the audience's attention.
 - Do not include too much text or white space on your presentation slides.
- Do not include video clips in your presentation.
- [Screen Recording with WCU Panopto](#).
- [Purdue Owl Citation Guides](#).
- [Ten Simple Rules for Effective Presentation Slides by Kristen M. Naegle](#).
- [Hunter Library Student Resources](#).

Spark Award with Distinction

Advocacy & Education Presentation Rubric

Criteria	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory
Content	Some presentation sections are missing, or they are not fully completed.	All presentation sections are included and completed.
Organization & Layout	The presentation does not follow the outlined guide. It does not flow well and cannot be easily understood by the audience. The presentation does not follow the outlined length - it is shorter or longer than 7-10 minutes.	The presentation follows the outlined guide. It flows well and can be easily understood by the audience. The presentation follows the outlined length - it falls between 7-10 minutes.
Design	The constructed visual is not visually appealing and it takes away from the overall presentation.	The constructed visual is visually appealing and it enhances the overall presentation.
Research Quality	The information in the presentation is strictly factual, and does not exhibit elements of reflection.	The information in the presentation is both factual and exhibit elements of deeper reflection.
Citations	In-text citations in the slides and a full citation slide at the end of the presentation are not included.	In-text citations in the slides and a full citation slide at the end of the presentation are included.
Overall	Not all elements are present and more work needs to be completed before passing this component of the award program.	All elements are present. This component of the award program is now completed.

Reviewer Comments: _____