Western Carolina University | Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning

COMMUNITY PARTNER

HANDBOOK

Welcome to CCESL!

About Us

The WCU Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL) strengthens the relationship between the campus and the wider community. We serve as a centralized hub for university and community, providing resources and capacity-building as a catalyst for social responsibility and positive impact. We focus on three main pillars: 1) Community-Engaged Learning 2) Civic Engagement 3) Community Outreach.

WCU staff, faculty, students, and administration are committed to university's mission as a regionally engaged university and the work of creating collaborative connections that address critical community-identified needs. To that end, CCESL has the privilege of cultivating reciprocal partnerships with community organizations doing impactful work across Western North Carolina.

Our Mission

We serve as a centralized hub for university and community, providing resources and capacity-building as a catalyst for social responsibility and positive impact.

Our Vision

We envision community engagement at Western Carolina University as a key component of our regional promise so that all Catamounts contribute to active citizenship and a culture of belonging.

Our Values

- **Reciprocity:** we value the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge, expertise, and resources between community and university members.
- **Respect:** we value and embrace diverse ways of knowing, perceiving, and doing that stem from unique lived experiences.
- **Empathy:** we value connections that promote shared humanity and motive socially responsible action.
- **Cultural Humility**: we value the rich cultural heritage of Southern Appalachia, including the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian, and recognize the assets of our regional communities.
- **Equity:** we value equitable access to engagement pathways for the common good.
- **Innovation:** we value innovative action that collectively addresses community-identified needs.
- **Impact:** we value meaningful partnerships that foster intentional impact.

Our Commitment

To ensure that these values are realized, CCESL is committed to ongoing assessment and evaluation of our priorities, objectives, and outcomes. We recognize the importance of change and are dedicated to adapting in order to better uphold our regional promise.

Meet Our Staff

Dr. Theresa Cruz Paul, *Interim Executive Director*

Theresa oversees the programs, operations, and scope of CCESL. She serves as the liaison between faculty, the collaborator for internal university partnerships, and the representative at local, state, and national conferences.

Email: tcpaul@wcu.edu
Office Phone: 828.227.2643

Joy Mischley, *Interim Associate Director for Community Engaged Learning*

Joy acts as the connector between the university and the community for academic purposes. She oversees service-learning and community experience course designations, development opportunities with faculty, and connects with various community partners around project needs.

Email: jmischley@wcu.edu
Office Phone: 828.227.2595

Ally Schuenke, *Administrative Support Associate*

Ally oversees office operations and details. She offers community partners support with seeking volunteers and advertising educational events. She can also answer general questions and act as a connector to other staff persons.

Email: aschuenke@wcu.edu
Office Phone: 828.227.2091

Connection Opportunities

Community Partner Meetings

CCESL is always happy to meet with community partners. Please reach out to us via email or phone to schedule a meeting. Main office phone number: 828.227.2091, communityengagement@wcu.edu.

Monthly Newsletter

Stay up to date with CCESL by subscribing to our monthly newsletter.

Community Coffee Conversations

CCESL hosts bi-monthly Community Coffee Conversations for community partners to interface with CCESL staff, learn about new ways to connect with CCESL, network with each other, and enjoy light refreshments. Find this semester's schedule on our Community Partner website page.

Community-Engaged Learning

Service-Learning Courses

Service-Learning Courses (SLC) employ service-learning pedagogy throughout the instructional design of a credit-bearing course. These courses integrate critical reflection and purposeful community service as central teaching strategies to achieve the following goals.

Service-learning pedagogy has three main goals:

- Deepen students' knowledge of academic course content
- Create benefits for the public, addressing a community-identified need
- Strengthen students' sense of civic responsibility to local, regional, national, or global issues

SLCs require at least 10 hours applied to the service work during the term and more typically involve 15-30 hours. The service may involve direct, indirect, research, or advocacy approaches.

Community Experience Courses

Community Experience Courses are credit-bearing courses in which faculty meaningfully incorporate and contextualize one or more community-engaged components from a range of possibilities such as intensive field education placements to volunteerism, site visits, or other innovations. The common theme in CECs is that one or more of the course activities engage students with community partners in reciprocal, collaborative, and respectful exchanges around community issues.

- May be broad and/or diverse

- Expose students to issue and skills outside of the classroom
- Generate understanding about public issues from individuals with practical or lived experience

Interested? To begin a conversation about partnering with a service-learning or community experience course, reach out to CCESL's Associate Director for a consultation.

Community Outreach

Volunteer Support & Educational Event Advertising

Volunteer Support Opportunities

CCESL is committed to sharing your volunteer opportunities with our students, faculty, and staff. Fill out this survey to submit information to have your opportunity posted on Engage.

Valley Ballyhoo is a great way for community partners to interact with students during WCU's Week of Welcome at the start of each fall semester. Learn more here.

WCU offers year-round on-campus tabling opportunities for community partners to recruit volunteers. Contact with Campus Activities Guest Services at dcaguestservices@wcu.edu or 828.277.7222.

Educational Event Advertising

Having an educational event that you'd like students to attend as participants? Fill out this survey to have your event advertised on Engage. On-campus events will also be advertised on CCESL's social media platforms.

Professional Development

Lunch & Learns
CCESL will offer Lunch and Learn professional development opportunities each semester led by experts within WCU. These will be either in-person or virtual webinars. Find this semester's schedule on our Community Partner website page.

Conferences
Community Partners are invited to join CCESL at national community engagement conferences as both attendees and presenters. Find this semester's conferences on our Community Partner website page.

Resources & Scholarships
WNC Nonprofit Pathways provides free, public webinars on a variety of topics. They also offer professional development classes that can be taken individually or in a sequence to complete their Nonprofit Fundamentals Certificate Program. Classes are $50 for organizations with a budget above $50,000.