

Sonoma State University Center for Community Engagement Strategic Plan

1. Vision/Mission

Sonoma State University's core values as expressed in the *Strategic Plan 2025: Building Our Future* at SSU include diversity & social justice, sustainability & environmental inquiry, connectivity & community engagement, and adaptability & responsiveness. Sonoma State's Center for Community Engagement (CCE) is charged with cultivating community involvement and civic engagement on the SSU campus and through its community partnerships. The CCE supports faculty in developing community-based teaching that integrates academic theory with community service and scholarship that is inclusive of community partners and students to address local problems. As these projects are incorporated into the curriculum, students experience active citizenship and learn how the theories taught in the classroom apply to real world issues.

1.1 Key terms and definitions

- Community engagement: describes the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange and production of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.
- Service-learning: Service-learning is a pedagogy that utilizes community service projects within the context of an academic course. Academic service-learning distinguishes itself from internships and other credit-bearing community experiences in several ways. First, the community experience is a component of an academic course, used as a "text" for student learning. Second, service-learning projects are designed in partnership with community to meet an expressed community need. Third, a structured reflection activity is utilized to help students understand how their community experiences link with the academic and civic learning objectives of the course.
- Equity: [in education] refers to the principle of fairness. While it is often used interchangeably with the related principle of equality, equity encompasses a wide variety of educational models, programs, and strategies that may be considered fair, but not necessarily equal. It has been said that "equity is the process; equality is the outcome," given that equity—what is fair and just— may not, in the process of educating students, reflect strict equality—what is applied, allocated, or distributed equally.

2. Approach

SSU and the CCE have adopted these five Campus Compact statements committing the university to the ideals of higher education for the public good.

- We empower our students, faculty, staff, and community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships in pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable future for communities beyond the campus – nearby and around the world.

- We prepare our students for lives of engaged citizenship, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in pursuit of the public good.
- We embrace our responsibilities as place-based institutions, contributing to the health and strength of our communities – economically, socially, environmentally, educationally, and politically.
- We harness the capacity of our institutions – through research, teaching, partnerships, and institutional practice – to challenge the prevailing social and economic inequalities that threaten our democratic future.
- We foster an environment that consistently affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education by setting high expectations for members of the campus community to contribute to the community.

2.1 Ongoing Efforts

The CCE's ongoing responsibilities are designed to promote greater civic engagement. These include supporting new and existing activities that engage students in active involvement with their community, promoting faculty development in, and opportunity to engage with, community-based learning, and cultivate community partnerships.

- The CCE works to establish and strengthen partnerships in the community, and helps faculty members integrate learning pedagogies for the common good into their curricula. Examples of integration include service-learning, community-based participatory and action research, public art, public service, civic engagement, problem-based learning, and activism.
- The CCE is the primary office for service-learning initiatives at SSU.
- The CCE supports faculty and students with community-engaged scholarship including community-based participatory research, action research, public scholarship, and creative activity for the common good.
- The CCE supports faculty as they develop an understanding of how to integrate community-engagement across teaching, scholarship, and service as part of reappointment, tenure, and promotion requirements.
- The CCE promotes, manages, and documents student engagement in the Community Involvement Program and, in partnership with the Office of Financial Aid, Federal Work Study opportunities at the CCE and with community partners.
- The CCE provides faculty training opportunities through on-campus workshops and information and support for off-campus conferences and publishing opportunities. The CCE also provides a 'Tips and Trends in Service-Learning' self-paced course for faculty via the SSU Learning Management System (LMS), Canvas, to further support these efforts.
- The CCE aims to coordinate efforts to procure support and funds for all faculty community engagement activities. Coordinated support and funds provide direct support for on-campus service-learning projects. They link the university into its local and regional social context by providing opportunities for faculty and community partners to meet and develop relationships.
- The CCE assists faculty and staff in connecting with leadership positions such as pro bono consulting, boards of directors, and committees, and, in partnership with the Career Center and JUMP, supports students in connecting with careers for the common good.

- The CCE helps nonprofit and governmental organizations working on diverse issues – such as social justice, poverty, homelessness/housing insecurity, education, environmental sustainability, the arts, the elderly, domestic violence, historical preservation, health, sexual assault, disabilities, and community organizing – to access the resources of the university, including faculty expertise.
- The CCE serves as the clearinghouse for community organizations to access the resources of the entire university and refers out accordingly to the appropriate offices (especially JUMP, Career Services, Alumni Services, the HUB Cultural Center, Outreach, etc.).
- The CCE works closely with community partners to ensure that they are involved in the development and implementation of projects. The CCE conducts training for community agencies on service-learning pedagogy and provides all community partners with resources for building strong and productive relationships with the university. The CCE also conducts visits and ongoing conversations with community agencies to ensure collaborative experiences are successful.
- The CCE documents faculty and community involvement with community-based activities and provides a mechanism for stakeholders to have input into the development process. It is a resource center, serving the university and community as a clearinghouse for community-engaged resources. Its physical library supports faculty, students, and the community with information and models to assist them in developing community-based learning programs. The library houses the latest research as well as sample syllabi and effective program models.
- The CCE works to integrate and develop assessment strategies for the university's institutional learning outcomes for civic engagement into programs throughout the university.
- The CCE supports civic education and any efforts to increase electoral participation with a variety of programming and partnerships with Sonoma County and the State of California.
- The CCE is responsible for managing the risk management process for internships and service-learning.

2.2 Commitment to Action

To maximize the impact of engagement for students, communities, and our shared world, the CCE will:

- Foster an academic environment that furthers democracy, civic action, and commitment to racial and social justice.
- Increase community outreach, and strengthen community-university partnerships.
- Foster collaborative relationships within the University, and between the University and the community.
- Promote an inclusive approach that addresses the distinctive values, beliefs and cultures of the students and community partners.
- Build a campus environment that focuses on the environmental, economic, and racial and social justice implications of sustainability.

- Integrate community work into the curriculum to provide learning opportunities that are relevant and impactful.
- Provide coordination and resource development services across disciplines.
- Create awareness and enable the process of developing a civic perspective.

2.2a. Strengthen Ongoing Activities. The CCE will continue to strengthen its support for ongoing community service and civic engagement projects, partnerships, and opportunities. In order to maintain these efforts, the CCE currently has a director, a community partnerships coordinator, an administrative coordinator, faculty fellows representing each of the teaching schools and a lead faculty fellow, AmeriCorps VISTA members who are on campus one day a week and at community partner sites four days per week, student workers, a blogging intern, and a volunteer medical doctor who provides translation services. To further strengthen the activities of the CCE, future growth plans include the addition of several other staff members. New coordinator positions, designed to each have a more specific focus with related partners on partnership development and risk management, and a grant writer to bring in funding, would further enhance and allow for deeper engagement in the areas of growth on which the CCE focuses (as addressed above).

2.2b. Strategic Action Committee. The CCE's strategic action committee consists of faculty, students, and community partners. This committee serves as the advisory group to the CCE, and with the CCE it provides leadership in the university's civic action and community engagement initiatives. It promotes and illustrates civically engaged academic work on campus. It also supports the evaluation of the CCE's effectiveness in managing its own strategic plan.

2.2c. Information Access. The CCE's documentation of partnerships and activities is currently a mix of spreadsheets and databases. All paper non-copyright-restricted resources have been digitized and are available online through the CCE website. Copyrighted material is fully cataloged and continues to be available for checkout. These resources often give faculty members the jump-start they need to build community partnerships. The CCE library serves as a clearinghouse for community partners and peer community engagement centers at other universities. As the CCE continues cultivating new relationships with community partners, it will integrate these partners into SSUEngage, a database of community agencies interested in partnering with the university. SSUEngage manages the risk management process for both service-learning and internships. It supports CCE staff in providing assistance to members of the campus community interested in identifying and developing relationships with community partners, and helps community partners to identify partnering faculty and recruit students. In time, it will also support all co-curricular community involvement.

3. Outcomes

In 2020-21, in preparation for the development of this document, the CCE worked with Karli Cowman (Sonoma State University Organizational Development MA student) to

determine whether the CCE should take a [more active leadership role in the community](https://bit.ly/3h625JK) (HTML link - <https://bit.ly/3h625JK>). After interviewing internal CCE personnel and external community partners, the recommendation was that the CCE should continue to amplify and support the needs of community leaders rather than taking a “leadership role.” The CCE should continue to support the community through collaboration, receptivity to the needs of the community leaders, amplifying their voices, proactively attending to community needs and strengthening their work with resources, student involvement, creative thinking, and faculty expertise. Respondents expressed a desire for SSU to lead by example and action through changes and transformation in its own policies, practices, and culture, which could serve as a model for what may be necessary and desired in the community at large. In light of this recommendation, the Strategic Action Committee met and decided that a full planning effort was unnecessary for 2022-2027, and instead the Committee would update the existing plan.

In Fall 2016, the CCE worked with Susan Larson-Bouwer (Sonoma State University Organizational Development MA student) and Vic Liptak (volunteer) to administer an online survey for students, faculty, staff and community partners, and to conduct a series of targeted interviews (see appendices [1](#) and [2](#)). In February 2017, the CCE engaged university faculty, staff and students, and community stakeholders in a strategic civic engagement planning meeting (see [appendix 3](#)). Meeting participants, facilitated by eight graduate students in Organizational Development led by Susan Larson-Bouwer (see [appendix 4](#)), identified specific outcomes from SSU’s civic action initiatives. These outcomes are organized into the five thematic categories below, and further detailed in the table that follows. Data collection and analysis were completed independently of CCE Director, Merith Weisman, to maintain validity and reliability of the process.

3.1 Thematic Categories

3.1a. Collaborative relationships. The workshop participants identified the outcome of a cultural change toward establishing and sustaining collaborative relationships with local communities in the surrounding region to foster educational, social, cultural, and economic development.

3.1b. University-wide engagement opportunities. The participants supported the outcome of a policy change that provides strong community involvement and civic engagement opportunities for students and faculty in the curriculum and across all university programs.

3.1c. University leadership role in regional collaboration. Participants endorsed the outcome of an institutional cultural change toward strong leadership in developing, strengthening, and coordinating partnerships and collaborations across the six county service areas, its municipalities, and among the range of stakeholder groups in the university’s service area.

3.1d. Commitment to mission-driven partnership development. Participants advanced the outcome of a policy change supporting facilitation and coordination of outreach to P-12 school systems and community colleges, and reciprocal

partnership development with governmental, nonprofit, and other stakeholding organizations that serve underrepresented populations.

3.1e. Civic and community engagement requirements. Participants recommended the outcome of a policy change supporting a civic engagement graduation requirement, starting with the creation of Institutional Learning Outcomes that include civic engagement.

3.2 Outcomes Table

	OUTCOME (change type)	COMMITMENT	MEASURES	INDICATORS
a	Collaborative relationships (cultural change)	We empower our students, faculty, staff, & community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships in pursuit of a just, equitable, & sustainable future for communities beyond the campus—nearby and around the world.	a1m. Number of students engaged in community projects a2m. Number of faculty participating in civic engagement	a1i. Increase of service-learning opportunities a2i. Increased student participation in community engagement activities a3i. Students know how public good impacts their lives
b	University-wide engagement opportunities (policy change)	We prepare our students for lives of engaged citizenship, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in pursuit of the public good.	b1m. Number of service-learning classes taught b2m. Number of students who actively participate in civic engagement activities	b1i. Increase in service-learning classes across all disciplines b2i. Increase the number of students in service-learning classes and other civic engagement activities
c	University leadership role in regional collaboration (cultural change)	We embrace our responsibilities as a place-based institution, contributing to the health and strength of our communities socially, economically, environmentally, educationally, & politically.	c1m. Faculty, student, and community partnerships built	c1i. Community partnerships are tracked for their success
d	Commitment to mission-driven partnership development (policy change)	We harness the capacity of our institution through research, teaching, partnerships, and institutional practice to challenge the prevailing social and economic	d1m. Graduates who are committed to social justice, career ready and engaged with the community d2m. Number of	d1i. Measure of alumni impact in their communities d2i. Increased presence of community partners on campus

		inequalities that threaten our democratic future.	service-learning courses initiated by community partners d3m. Number of students participating in social justice activities	d3i. Students protected from anti-immigration actions
e	Civic and community engagement requirement (policy change)	We foster an environment that consistently affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education by setting high expectations for members of the campus community to contribute to their achievement.	e1m. Support students in community-engaged research for a lasting change e2m. Develop ILOs to include civic engagement e3m. Develop civic engagement graduation requirement	e1i. Increase in number of students doing community-engaged research e2i. Adoption of ILOs including civic engagement e3i. Adoption of civic engagement graduation requirement

4. Implementation and Communication Table

Step	Tasks	Who	When	Communication
Strengthen Ongoing Activities	Appropriately staff the CCE	CCE, Academic Affairs	Ongoing	CCE website
	Build awareness of current opportunities	CCE	Ongoing	CCE website, student advising, faculty development, email
	Share expertise/knowledge throughout staff	CCE director, faculty fellows	Ongoing	CCE website, CCE internal documents
	Maintain and support valued faculty opportunities e.g. fellowships in CCE	Provost, Deans, CCE leadership	Ongoing	CCE website, email
Strategic Action Committee	Support committee	Stakeholder reps	Ongoing	email
Information Access	Digitize/post CCE resources	CCE staff, Faculty Fellows	ongoing	CCE website, Google Drive, Canvas
Collaborative relationships	↑ faculty participation	CCE, AA	ongoing	Email, faculty development workshop, Senate
	↑ student participation in community projects	CCE, faculty	ongoing	Social media, academic advising
University-wide engagement opportunities	Increase # service-learning classes	faculty, deans, CCE, AA	ongoing	SSU & CCE websites, department/school meetings

	↑ student participation in civic engagement activities	faculty, CCE, student government	ongoing	Social media, academic advising
University leadership role in regional collaboration	Make policy to encourage/reward this	President, cabinet, Senate	Sum/Fall 2017	SSU online, external
	↑ partnerships, track them, publicize them	CCE, all SSU divisions/departments	ongoing	SSU online, external
Commitment to mission-driven outreach	Policies that support institutional culture shift	Cabinet, Senate	ongoing	SSU online, external
	Graduate students with civic/community commitment	AA & schools, SA, CCE, faculty, partners	AY 17-18 start	SSU online, external
	Protect students from anti-immigration actions	Chancellor, President	Ongoing	SSU online, social media
	↑ action/theory-oriented service-learning classes	CCE staff including Faculty Fellows, faculty	ongoing	SSU & CCE websites, dept. meetings
	↑ community partner presence on campus	deans, faculty, CCE, partners	ongoing	SSU & CCE websites, social media
Civic & community engagement requirement	Policy change proposals	Strategic Action Com, all campus constituencies	Fall 2017 start	SSU & CCE websites, social media, meetings at all levels
Note: "external" in Communication column indicates opportunity for public relations media campaign.				