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## **2020-2021 Service Learning Report**

Southwestern Oklahoma State University

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## **2020-2021 Service-Learning Report**

Southwestern Oklahoma State University  
Campus Compact - National Inventory for Institutional Infrastructure on Community  
Engagement (NI<sup>3</sup>CE)



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## SWOSU Service Learning

In 2004, Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) joined the Campus Compact coalition, a partnership of over 1,000 colleges and universities committed to the public purposes of higher education. SWOSU shares the ideals of Campus Compact, building democracy through civic education and community service (Campus Compact, n.d.)

## Definitions

**Community engagement:** For the purposes of this survey, the definition of *community engagement* follows the one used for the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification: The collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.

**Community-based learning:** All credit-bearing learning experiences in which student action on behalf of community goals is a significant component of the learning process. Community - based learning includes practices such as service-learning and community -based research, along with other pedagogies through which students participate in advocacy, electoral processes, community dialogue, or other similar activities.

Campus Compact promotes student community engagement that is either **curricular** (occurring as an aspect of a credit-bearing academic experience) or **co-curricular**. At SWOSU, curricular community engagement is synonymous with the term **service-learning**. Co-curricular activities are synonymous with the term **community engagement**.

## Newman Civic Fellowship

SWOSU students are afforded many opportunities through our Campus Compact affiliation, including a one-year fellowship for community-committed students. Newman Civic Fellowship learning outcomes include 1) support for students in their personal, civic, and professional development to prepare them for the long-term work of public problem solving and building equitable communities, and 2) building a network of civically-oriented college student leaders and alumni characterized by vibrant and productive relationships (Campus Compact, n.d.).

SWOSU's Newman Civic Fellow for the 2021-2022 Campus Compact cohort is Elah Alcuitas. Elah is a junior Biomedical Sciences and Biochemistry major from Southwestern Oklahoma State University. Elah has been very active at SWOSU in campus and community-based projects. Elah has served as vice president for the SWOSU Honors Association and has served as a research assistant in the Biology Department. She is committed not only to her academic pursuits, but volunteer and support organizations. Elah incorporates her STEM expertise to assist the local Agape Free Medical Clinic, the Remote Area Medical Clinic, and the SAGE STEAM Camp, a cohort of middle school girls interested in STEM. Her focus on social issues has been the impetus for her work with a local elementary school reading program and the Weatherford Recycling Center. To promote student awareness of social justice issues, Elah is active in the

Student Government Association and has founded a new student organization on campus, the Student Diversity League. Elah's mentor is Dr. Rickey Cothran, Chair of Biological Sciences.

### **Institutional Information**

NSSE founding director George Kuh promotes the use of high-impact practices (HIP) of instruction to enhance the undergraduate experience. He specifically suggests that all institutions strive to incorporate one HIP during the freshman year and one in the context of major courses (NSSE, 2018). For the purposes of this report, HIPs include service-learning, a learning community, and research with faculty. SWOSU uses the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as an indirect measure of student engagement through service learning courses. The NSSE is annually administered to freshmen and seniors at SWOSU. The 2018 NSSE indicated that 48% of SWOSU freshmen reported participating in at least one HIP and 7% reported participating in two or more. A majority of senior students, 60%, reported participating in two or more HIPs, while 30% participated in at least one high-impact practice.

The University has recently implemented a new ERP system, one in which service-learning courses may be designated. Students have the ability to search by this criterion in order to discover service-learning courses more effectively. Faculty members may submit their course for service-learning designation by completing an online application which documents the following tenets: 1) There is an identified need on the part of a community partner; 2) Students in the course can address that need; 3) The service-learning project meets specific course objective(s) and students receive course credit for the activity; 4) The students are required to complete a reflective activity about the service learning experience and to complete the online SWOSU Student Report Form.

SWOSU's B.L.U.E. Cord Initiative – Bulldogs Learning, Understanding, Empowering – continues. Students may earn the graduation honor cord by completing 9-credit hours of service-learning courses. Since its inception in spring 2018, 24 university students have proudly worn this cord at commencement.

### **Institutional Highlights**

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the types of service-learning and the extent to which students could be involved in service-learning activities during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Collaborative efforts between SWOSU New Student Orientation and the Service-Learning Coordinator resulted in the first-year experience course, SWOSUConnect, conducting a virtual day of service. Planning for this implementation began during the summer of 2020. The service-learning team pulled academic literature on service-learning in distance education courses and began researching various websites for ideas. Students were given a choice of projects in which to engage. The top five projects selected included: 1) Strengthening Your Skills, online suicide prevention training for students, sponsored by Kognito; 2) Show Your Appreciation, preparing a "thank-you" video, which was sent to former high school teachers who made the transition to virtual learning enjoyable; 3) Make a No-Sew Fleece Blanket, donated to local crisis units and a women's shelter; 4) Operation Gratitude, writing a letter of appreciation to a deployed service member in the United States armed forces; 5) Participation in a Diversity Book Club, to promote awareness of social justice issues on campus and on the state/national level.

Surveys provided the means for data collection from the SWOSUConnect students. As Jacoby (2015) has stated, surveys are the “most commonly used quantitative methods of service-learning assessment” (p. 158). The survey was administered by the university Assessment Center, via institutional student email and consisted of ten items, ranked on a 5-point Likert scale. The response rate was approximately 59%.

Survey questions were grouped into three categories, each meeting one component of General Education Goal 5: Developing Professional Dispositions. The results of these components, collaboration, community connection, and relevance, are listed below (Boyd et al, 2021).

	<b>Strongly Agree 1</b>	<b>Agree 2</b>	<b>Neutral 3</b>	<b>Disagree 4</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree 5</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>
<b>Collaboration. As a result of my experience with service-learning:</b>						
I feel a sense of responsibility for the outcome of the project.	24%	49%	22%	4%	1%	<b>2.11</b>
I enjoyed collaborating with my classmates for a good cause.	28%	47%	21%	3%	1%	<b>2.04</b>
I feel more confident in my ability to work as a team in order to achieve positive results.	26%	46%	22%	4%	2%	<b>2.10</b>
I appreciate how my university collaborates with community partners.	35%	47%	17%	1%	0%	<b>1.86</b>

	<b>Strongly Agree 1</b>	<b>Agree 2</b>	<b>Neutral 3</b>	<b>Disagree 4</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree 5</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>
<b>Community Connection. As a result of my experience with service-learning:</b>						
I am motivated to become more civically involved in the future.	26%	49%	20%	3%	2%	<b>2.06</b>



I believe it is my responsibility to seek out community connections.	27%	48%	20%	4%	1%	<b>2.05</b>
I feel a greater sense of belonging to the campus community.	27%	41%	25%	5%	2%	<b>2.14</b>

	<b>Strongly Agree 1</b>	<b>Agree 2</b>	<b>Neutral 3</b>	<b>Disagree 4</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree 5</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>
Relevance. As a result of my experience with service-learning:						
I have increased my knowledge about social issues.	24%	50%	21%	3%	2%	<b>2.07</b>
I expect to be civically engaged throughout my lifetime.	28%	49%	20%	2%	1%	<b>2.01</b>
It is important to me to improve society through my career.	42%	44%	12%	1%	1%	<b>1.74</b>

In total, 37 sections of coursework received service-learning designation during the fall 2020 semester; 12 additional sections were approved during the spring 2021 semester.

### **NI<sup>3</sup>CE**

Previously, Campus Compact partnered with the National Inventory for Institutional Infrastructure on Community Engagement (NI<sup>3</sup>CE, NIIICE), administered by Brown University's Swearer Center. The Swearer Center built upon community strengths by engaging scholars, students, practitioners, and community members (Brown University, n.d.).

As of July 2020, Albion College became the new administrative and research home of the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification and NI<sup>3</sup>CE resources. As stated on their website, "Once updated, the NI<sup>3</sup>CE tool will continue to be available to all campuses. Campuses are encouraged to utilize the results of NI<sup>3</sup>CE to begin strategic action planning for the institution...inform program review and assessment...[and] as a 5-year assessment tool" (Albion College, n.d.).

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