

Division of Student Affairs  
 East Carolina University  
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 Assessment, Research & Retention

# Building a Methodology for Monitoring and Measuring Civic Engagement

## Abstract

The Division of Student Affairs contributes to achieving the public service goals of ECU through a range of programs and services that engage students in community-based learning and service. However, a systematic and coordinated approach to monitoring and measuring the scope, scale, and impact of student engagement has been limited to a just a few functional areas of practice. During the 2012-2013 academic year, the Division of Student Affairs launched a comprehensive effort to foster the understanding of “civic engagement” among Student Affairs Educators along with building an inventory of programs and co-curricular experiences. A SWOT analysis of aggregated departmental inventories will inform the development of a Divisional strategy for monitoring and measuring civic engagement experiences and outcomes.

## Project Rationale

Nine Student Affairs Educators participated in the “Measuring and Monitoring Community Engagement Symposium” sponsored by the Office of Public Service and Community Relations in June 2012. This experience served as a catalyst to identify the what, who, where, when and how of community engagement in the Division of Student Affairs.

### Why:

- Divisional Strategic Plan has specific goals, outcomes, and key performance measures that focus on the broad concept of civic engagement.
- Need for deeper understanding among Student Affairs Educators regarding the theory to practice connections in their specific areas.
- Need for a systematic approach to coordinating, monitoring, and measuring impact on student learning and development in the context of civic engagement.
- Need to plan for alignment with the new 2013-2018 UNCGA Strategic Plan and related community engagement measures.

### Guiding Questions:

- What programs, activities, and services constitute the broad concept of civic engagement in departments?
- What is our level of commitment to civic engagement within departments and the division as a whole?
- How do we know and demonstrate that level of commitment? What is the impact on student learning and development?

### Inventory Exemplar

Name of Event/Activity	Recurrence of Activity (annual, weekly, etc.)	Years of program	Time of Impact	Scale and Scope of Staff Engagement	Student Engagement (students x hours)	Collaborators	Assessment? Y/N	Civic Issue(s) addressed (if applicable)	How is this civic engagement? (outcomes, impact, etc.)	Comments	Applied Resources
Campus Kitchen at ECU	Weekly	3	Meals delivered Fridays and Mondays	40 hours/week: Vista and Supervisor	10 students, 5 hrs/week:	Aramark, RMH, LWC, Op Sunshine	Y: meals delivered	Hunger	___ meals served to youth and families; Civic problem solving; Leadership roles	Grant received, ending 2012	Money, staff time, Food
Tunnel of Oppression	Annual	3 of the last 20 years	1 day, 3 hours	15 staff, 5 hours	200 Partic., 3 hrs 80 leaders, 5 hrs	Counseling, RHA	Y: Closing discussions, surveys	Social Justice	Empathy and social responsibility		Staff time, Money
Senior Games	1/year	16	Friday & Saturday	Staff volunteer, 1 primary contact	50 Student staff, 16 hours at event each	Senior Games, Pitt County	Y: Economic Impact Assessment	Healthy Aging	Access to shared resources, intergenerational engagement and partnerships	Engagement on a voluntary basis; staff encouraged to participate	Facility, staff time, \$ co-sponsorship

## Process

- **Convened Working Group Summer 2012:** A diverse array of Student Affairs Educators representing the major departmental clusters was identified based on their practice and/or interest associated with civic engagement. Three sub-groups were identified to work on content development of 1) process approach, 2) discussion guide, and 3) inventory.
- **Planning Issues:** Based on a preliminary scan of known departmental activities, a review of the relevant literature, and ECU definitions of engagement activities, the working group decided to utilize “civic engagement” as a common concept to focus discussions and reduce potential confusion. It was also determined that preliminary discussions should focus on identifying current activities with emphasis on student engagement before exploring future possibilities.
- **Departmental Discussion Protocol and Materials Finalized January 2013:** A member of the working group facilitates one or more discussions in conjunction with regular staff meetings during February and March. A discussion guide and inventory was distributed to every Student Affairs Educator in the Division in advance of staff meetings as preparation for focused discussions.
- **Discussion Guide Content:** Purpose and intended outcomes, definitions, national need for evidence, alignment to strategic plan, basic language for outcomes, pedagogies that promote civic learning, inventory review, next step discussion questions, and references/further reading. A copy of the discussion guide is provided.
- **Discussion Steps:** 1) Read definition of civic engagement, national need for evidence of civic engagement, and Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan connections. 2) As a team, discuss how your department or unit incorporates civic engagement outcomes and frameworks in practice, service, etc., Then, complete the inventory. Next step preparation: Consider discussion questions for future planning.
- **Departmental Inventories Completed by March 28, 2013:** All inventories are submitted to Student Affairs Assessment, Research, and Retention for analysis preparation.

## Analysis

- **UNC System Community Engagement Metrics:** Each departmental inventory is initially being reviewed to provide evidence for pilot metrics due in early April. The five metrics will be worked into the long term monitoring and measuring strategy and protocol.
- **Document Review of Departmental Inventories:** Inventory categories that lend themselves to numeric summary will be completed for each departmental inventory then the Division in aggregate by Student Affairs Assessment, Research, and Retention. A qualitatively focused document review guide designed to focus on each major inventory category will be utilized by the working group. Tracking and Measuring Engagement Purposes worksheet and Levels of Commitment to Community Engagement (Holland, 2011) will also inform the aggregate document analysis. Each inventory will be reviewed, then document reviews will be analyzed in aggregate.
- **SWOT Analysis:** The working group will convene in May having completed their individual review process followed by a group analysis. The final step of the group review will be organized as a SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses (gaps), Opportunities, Threats.

## Intended Outcomes

- A summary report will be completed in July 2013. This report will include recommendations for a Divisional strategy and protocol for monitoring and measuring civic engagement.
- Departmental inventories and an aggregate Divisional inventory will be produced to provide evidence to inform both assessment outcomes and strategic plan progress for the 2012-2013 reporting cycle.
- Direction for next steps and long term planning.

## References and Further Reading

A focused review of the literature informed the working group’s process and materials development. Student Affairs Educators are also being encouraged to seek out the references to further their understanding of theory to practice associated with community-based learning and engagement.. References are available in the discussion guide.

## Working Group Composition

**Representative of all major areas of Student Affairs and programs currently offering community engagement experiences to students.**

**Chair:** Kathy Hill, Student Affairs Assessment, Research & Retention

**Campus Recreation & Wellness:** Nance Mize, Janis Steele, David Gaskins, Karen Warren, Tywana Purkett

**Student Involvement & Leadership:** Dennis McCunney, Laura McMaster, Austin Robey, Justin Janak

**Campus Living:** Gretchen Brockmann

**Dean of Students:** Diane Majewski

**Student Transitions:** Angela Marshall