

Community Engagement & Leadership (CEL) Program in Liberal Arts



“CEL” Program Advising Information Handout

- Are you looking to expand the learning experience beyond in-class critical-thinking and discussions?
- Are you interested in opportunities that allow you to engage with the community and make positive contributions to society?

If so, consider taking courses linked to the **Community Engagement & Leadership (CEL) Program** in the College of Liberal Arts at UTEP!

UTEP is now offering “CEL” courses with community engagement and leadership components that allow faculty and students to engage in good works, develop leadership skills, and enhance the learning experience. Students who take such courses will now be able to see a new “CEL” designation appear on their transcripts, which is helpful for recruiters and employers looking for talented graduates with valuable experience and expertise in community-engaged and leadership activities. Such courses also help faculty to further invigorate their curriculum, fine-tune teaching and research skills in line with the Boyer model of scholarship, and maximize evaluation and recognition of their work. For those interested, below is a general outline of the key concepts, purpose, partnerships, activities, positive implications, and guidance that one can attain from participating in the “CEL” program.

Please also visit our “CEL” webpage at: <https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/resources/faculty-staff-resources/cel/index.html>

Some of the Basics of the “CEL” program:

What is community engagement and where does leadership skill-building come into play?

Engagement in the community serves the purpose of building knowledge, motivation, and participatory behavior in a democratic society. UTEP courses with a community engagement component allow students to have meaningful experiences outside of class connected to academic learning objectives.

The faculty create opportunities for engagement through a community partner and help students get connected to activities that create a mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationship that helps to serve the community in some way. In addition, many of the activities associated with community engagement are inherently tied to skill-building related to leadership qualities. Simply taking the initiative to engage with the community is a leadership choice and learning how to address critical societal issues and offer your time, energy, and critical-thinking abilities to help solve problems, make use of resources, and fulfill key services all lead to enhanced leadership development and performance skills. Thoughtful, constructive reflection is also a key desired outcome so that students may come full circle in learning from their experiences.

What is the purpose of getting engaged?

The main purpose of the CEL program is to strengthen students' understanding of their role in society as engaged citizens and to build the knowledge and competencies that will enable them to be socially responsible and participating community leaders. Expanding on that scope, there are many rewarding purposes for those seeking to become community-engaged faculty and students leaders:

- Enriches scholarship, research, and creative activities
- Enhances curriculum, teaching, and learning
- Prepares more educated, actively-engaged citizens
- Strengthens democratic values and civic responsibilities
- Provides opportunities to address critical societal issues
- Contributes to the overall public good

Who are some of the community partners that UTEP has connected and engaged with?

UTEP is well known for reaching out to the community and developing thriving partnerships with a variety of wonderful organizations in the region. While some faculty choose to develop their partnerships directly with key organizations, an increasing number of faculty and organizations are now also working in conjunction with UTEP's Center for Community Engagement to develop and document their events and activities through the CUE (Community-University-Engagement) Portal (see: <https://utep.galaxydigital.com/>).

Though there are far too many organizations to list in full, here is a sample of some of the agencies recently working with the Center for Community Engagement to partner with faculty and students using the CUE:

- The Opportunity Center for the Homeless
- Hispanic Women's Network of Texas
- Central El Paso Community Organization (CEPCO)
- El Paso Zoo Society
- YWCA El Paso del Norte Region
- Military Veteran Peer Network

What are some of the types of engagement activities that CEL courses offer?

CEL activities may be tied to one's research, teaching/learning, and service – and often there is quite a bit of overlap between all three! CEL activities may be tied to community-based internships, outreach, capacity-building and mentoring, practicum and clinical learning, field-based learning, student teaching, and various forms of community-based and public research opportunities. There may also be activities tied to the design, consultation, or creation of a community product or tool. Therein, community engagement placements in the community are those for which “direct service hours” are performed (20 hours+ per course, providing a significant amount of experiential learning each semester).

In addition, to learn more about the types of community engagement activities and programs at UTEP in recent years, see also the following edited volume written by UTEP faculty in partnership with the Center for Community Engagement:

Núñez, Gina M., and Azuri L. Gonzalez (eds.). 2018. *Community Engagement and High Impact Practices in Higher Education*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

*See: <https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/community-engagement-and-high-impact-practices-higher-education>

Help Maximize UTEP's Mission and Contribute to the Community!

UTEP is not only nationally and internationally recognized for its access and excellence in its educational programs on campus, but also for its exemplary accomplishments in having a direct, positive impact on the Paso Del Norte region and beyond. By being a part of the CEL program, you can also take part in and contribute to maximizing UTEP's impact on education and the region!

Seeking Further Information and Guidance?

How do I learn more about the CEL program and courses being offered?

Faculty, advisors, and students interested in CEL courses may contact Associate Dean Crystal Herman (ggherman2@utep.edu) who helps to oversee the program and process faculty applications, as well as Dr. José Villalobos (jdvillalobos2@utep.edu) who serves as the Dean's Chair for the Community Engagement & Leadership Task Force in Liberal Arts. **For students (and their advisors)**, when planning your course schedule be sure to ask about and search for our “CEL” designated courses in the course catalog. **For faculty**, getting your courses “CEL” designated is a straightforward process for classes with syllabi that meet key criteria and we offer a variety of informational workshop and training sessions ahead of every round of applications for adding new course sections to the program. Each semester, courses that are “CEL” designated will be listed and often with a short description of the type of activities to be offered. Look for courses with the “CEL” designation, such as with the following examples: **HIST 5390 (CEL)**, **ENGL 3374 (CEL)**, or **POLS 4315 (CEL)**.

For general guidance and links to key resources online, please visit our “CEL” webpage at: <https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/resources/faculty-staff-resources/cel/index.html>

And for further information on Community Engagement and Leadership Studies at UTEP, as well as information on UTEP's mission vis-à-vis best practices, UTEP Edge initiatives, principles of partnership, community organizations and sites, and the variety of ongoing training opportunities, you may also contact:

Cynthia Marentes (cmarentes@utep.edu), Director of Community Engagement for the Dean's Office in the College of Liberal Arts

Azuri Gonzalez (azurig@utep.edu), Director of UTEP's Center for Community Engagement

Dr. Areli Chacón Silva (achaconsilva@utep.edu), Director of UTEP's Leadership and Community Engagement Program

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