Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL)
Program Review Dean's Response
Academic Year: 2021-22

Submitted by:
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Introduction
The Center for Community Engaged Learning dual reports to both the Provost's Office and the Vice President for Student Affairs office. This program review of the Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL) is the second for the program since its inception in 2007. Interestingly enough, both program reviews have taken place during transition periods for CCEL leadership. Some of the recommendations reflect this situational context, most notably the call for a national search to hire the executive director.

The CCEL executive director at the time of the self-study and site visit, Dr. Becky Jo Gesteland, and staff prepared and facilitated a comprehensive self-study and Program Review Evaluation Team site visit. The current Interim Co-Directors, Dr. Katharine French-Fuller and Teresa Martinez, prepared a thoughtful and realistic response to the Evaluation Team site visit report with next steps clearly articulated. The self-study was guided by a purpose to identify actionable ideas and opportunities for continuous improvement within the contexts of 1) the CCEL's alignment with WSU's strategic plan; 2) the CCEL's contribution to local community; 3) the CCEL's support of faculty and staff on campus; 4) evaluation of the CCEL's strategic plan; and 5) analysis of the CCEL's resources.

The Program Review Evaluation Team consisted of several experts in community engagement at the national, regional and local levels in addition to individuals who brought perspectives informed by an equity, diversity and inclusion lens, as well as individuals with institutional and community expertise. The Evaluation Team's careful review of the CCEL was informed by feedback from the Weber State University community of faculty, staff, students and administrators, as well as community partners and the expertise and experiences of the review team members themselves. The commendations recognize the excellent self-study produced by the CCEL team and the excellent engagement with the community and students overall. The recommendations varied but had a clear emphasis on hiring to bring the CCEL leadership team to full capacity, alignment and prioritization.

Both commendations and recommendations made by the site review team and the CCEL team's response to them are addressed below.

Site Visit Team Commendations

The Site Visit Review Team's commendations for the CCEL are consistent with our own observations of the CCEL, if not understated. First, the work in which the CCEL is engaged is clearly aligned with the goals of the university strategic plan, especially as it relates to students' participation in high impact educational experiences and faculty leveraging their teaching and research agendas to address challenges facing our communities. The Evaluation Team also recognized the CCEL continues to be an effective contributor to the community through meaningful partnerships with community organizations and specifically called out the CCEL's Research Extension as a stellar operation. Thirdly, the review team commended the CCEL for continuing to engage with faculty and creating a space that celebrates faculty diversity. Fourth, the CCEL was commended for having a robust strategic plan that compliments the university's strategic plan. And lastly, the review team commended the CCEL for creating a place of belonging for students. These commendations are well deserved and we appreciate the review team naming what we know to be true.

Site Visit Team Recommendations and Program Response

The recommendations from the Site Visit team were extensive and organized into categories by the program review goals. Several recommendations were made under each goal "category." Although the CCEL team response addressed each recommendation under each goal individually in the document titled, "2022 CCEL Action Plan," we have crafted a response to the recommendations under each goal category to address the recommendations under each category more collectively. A brief summary of the recommendations in each goal category is followed by our assessment of that set of recommendations and our commitment to supporting the CCEL team in implementing the plan of action they have outlined for each recommendation.

Recommendation Set #1: Alignment with WSU's Strategic Plan.

The recommendations in this set focused on: 1) the need for stable consistent leadership and the importance of conducting a search for a new executive director that draws from a local, regional and national networks; 2) encouraged the CCEL to embrace an additional aspect of the university strategic plan focused on creating a "sense of belonging" for students because the CCEL already excels at doing so; and 3) better alignment of assessment metrics used by the CCEL and those used in the strategic plan.

The recommendations in this goal area are on target and will help the CCEL and the university successfully achieve the outcomes outlined in _Amplified_, the university strategic plan. The plan of action proposed by the CCEL team to address these recommendations has our full support. In fact, we are already making progress on some of these recommendations. For example, we have successfully identified the funding that will allow us to conduct a national search for the CCEL executive director and hope to have the position posted no later than January 2023. Additionally, the CCEL's action plan to align with and fulfill the "sense of belonging" goal in the university strategic plan is thoughtful and thorough and a welcomed effort as we try to create a welcoming and inclusive experience for WSU students. This is an excellent opportunity to draw upon a strength of the CCEL that was clearly identified by the students - the CCEL excels at creating welcoming safe space for students. Finally, the alignment of metrics is critical for the

success of both the CCEL and the university strategic plan. We are in full support of this timely recommendation and plan of action, not only because of the benefits for alignment with the strategic plan, but also alignment with accreditation and the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement Classification metrics.

Recommendation Set #2: Contribution to Local Community.
The recommendations in this set focused on: 1) helping stakeholders better understand and utilize GivePulse, the matchmaking and hours tracking platform; 2) create thicker connections between faculty and community partners through speed networking; 3) share copies of course syllabi with community partners; and 4) provide greater structural support for the CCEL's Research Extension.

The recommendations in this goal area are also on target and will help the CCEL make stronger, more effective connections with its community partners that will result in significant and meaningful contributions to the community. The first recommendation regarding more training on GivePulse is absolutely necessary for community partners as well as faculty, staff and students. The action plan to accomplish this is comprehensive, timely and doable. The action plan for enhancing the already established speed networking experience for partners is completely appropriate and takes a very practical approach to addressing short-, medium-, and long-term goals. The third recommendation to share syllabi with partners is simple in its articulation and requires careful implementation. The CCEL team's action plan for sharing learning outcomes and course syllabi with community partners is spot on and clearly sensitive to the complexities of community partners as co-educators.

Lastly, the action plan to address increasing structural support for the CCEL's Research Extension is exciting, forward thinking, and resource intensive. The concern is that the plan of action articulated here is more resource intensive than the resources either division, Academic Affairs or Student Affairs, can muster at this point in time. For example, the salary of the Research Extension Director is budgeted at 50% "hard funding" and 50% "soft funding" from grants secured by the Research Extension. This funding structure will not change in the foreseeable future as the university continues to experience budget cuts. However, the goal of increasing the percentage of "hard funding" to support the director position is worthy of consideration and continued conversation over time. The action plan also proposes PhD level researchers on staff and it suggests stronger ties to faculty in colleges. Until the funding necessary to bring something like this to fruition is secured, perhaps PhD level faculty in colleges can serve in the "on-staff researcher" role for a fraction of their faculty contract. This is not a perfect solution; however, it is something to consider in light of the current budget and declining enrollment challenge facing the university.

Recommendation Set #3: Support of Faculty and Staff on Campus.
The recommendations in this set focused on: 1) evaluate the tenure and promotion rewards structure for faculty to better incorporate recognition of community engaged work; 2) support and promote the faculty-in-residence in the CCEL; 3) create a faculty learning community; and 4) create a committee involving staff to help create greater impact of the CCEL.

In this recommendation set, the evaluation of the tenure and promotion rewards structure is probably the most challenging, yet most critical, of these recommendations. It is imperative that faculty get "credit" for the teaching and scholarly activities they produce through community engaged learning. About a decade ago, the tenure documents in several colleges were reviewed and revised to include community engagement under teaching, scholarship and service. This was an improvement from what had previously existed where community engaged learning activities were relegated to the "service" category only. Not all tenure documents in all colleges were modified in this way at this time. Therefore, it is time to review college tenure documents again and undertake a review of the university promotion document to ensure consistency with the tenure documents given the university's increased commitment to community engaged learning and its contributions to the university mission, vision and strategic plan. We fully support the action plan outlined to begin this process and strongly suggest this be a priority for the new executive director when hired.

The action plan outlined to better support the faculty-in-residence and the already established faculty learning community (which is a community of practice through the Teaching and Learning Forum) are again very methodical, well-planned, and will help the newest faculty-in-residence who is currently in their first semester in the role. With regards to the final recommendation in this section, creating a committee of stakeholders who are external to the CCEL that includes staff, we are in full support. Fulfilling this recommendation will bring back a concept the CCEL explored previously but did not execute well. The action plan for implementing this advisory board provides solid direction and purpose for making this board meaningful and impactful. Again, we are supportive with one suggested edit to the timeline for implementation: begin the work of creating this advisory board after the new executive director is hired.

Recommendation Set #4: Evaluation of the CCEL's Strategic Plan.
The recommendations in this set focused on: 1) create a theory of change that can buttress the CCEL's strategic plan; and 2) create tools to help the CCEL prioritize and accept or reject projects and initiatives.

Both of these recommendations are excellent and will guide the work of the CCEL in coherent and sustainable ways. Again, we support the action plan articulated for implementation of these recommendations and agree the bulk of this work must wait until an executive director is hired.

Recommendation Set #5: Analysis of the CCEL's Resources.
The recommendations in this set focused on: 1) identify and align priorities of the CCEL; 2) hire an executive director; 3) strengthen relationship between the CCEL and Student Affairs; and 4) find more coherent usable space for the CCEL.

We agree that the recommendations in this section are relevant, important and well addressed by the CCEL team's action plan. The issue of priorities, establishing them and evaluating them against university priorities, is well founded. The CCEL provides a lot of programs and services

and it is important to evaluate these against center and university priorities. Completing this process is expected to take some time as it will be important to hire the executive director and create the theory of change in order to successfully identify and evaluate priorities. The recommendation regarding strengthening the relationship between the CCEL and Student Affairs is ongoing, as noted in the 2022 Action Plan document. Mechanisms to keep lines of communication open have been established with the new Student Affairs leader, Dr. Dianna Abel, to take responsibility for helping guide the CCEL in partnership with Academic Affairs. In fact, Dr. Abel has been instrumental in helping the CCEL address the last recommendation in this section - creating more functional space for the CCEL. Renovations designed by the CCEL staff are currently underway and Student Affairs is the primary facilitator and funder of the project.

Recommendations of the "dean":
As the CCEL team implements this plan of action, we encourage you to continue to prioritize engaging, supporting and increasing the number of students who have been historically underrepresented in higher education, are 25 years of age or older, and are culturally and ethnically diverse. We know this is an area of focus for the CCEL currently but wanted to double down on the point that this is consistent with the priorities of the university. Additionally, increasing the number of CEL designated courses, especially in general education, is a priority for the Academic Affairs division. As we know, community engaged learning is a high impact experience that has a positive impact on the students' relationship with the institution. Helping students feel connected to Weber State early in their college career helps them reach their academic goals more effectively and efficiently. Lastly, we believe the CCEL has an important opportunity to contribute to the university's goal of becoming an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution. We challenge the CCEL team to explore how the CCEL programs and initiatives can contribute to this goal.

Conclusion
Overall, we are in agreement with, and support of, the recommendations from the program review team and the action plan articulated by the CCEL team. The commendations the review team noted are absolutely true and, from our perspective, understated. Although the CCEL team is undergoing tremendous change right now, the interim co-directors are doing an excellent job setting the team, the programs and initiatives on solid footing to maintain the core functions of the CCEL for now AND build a foundation for what comes next for the CCEL in the future. Right now, maintaining quality services and programming is the goal. With the hiring of an executive director, and at least one more full time professional staff position to replace the assistant director, the CCEL will be well positioned to develop a theory of change that will guide its work and how to prioritize it. We are committed to supporting this team through this period of transition and into the future where the CCEL reaches its "next level."