

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding ACE Experiences

What does “Community Engagement” mean when considering the ACE experience that is assigned by the professor?

Academic Community Engagement means that your students are required to apply what they are learning (course objectives) to address some sort of need in the community. In other words, the students do something or create something that **helps**--in some way-- a school, a church, an organization, a district, a community, a small group, or an individual. That’s the ACE experience, and the ideas for community engagement are endless.

Who finds the community partner?

This depends on the professor, the course, and the number of students. There are two ways:

In some cases, the professor assigns community partners:

1. To each student (One community partner per student.)
2. To small groups of students (One community partner for 4 to 6 students working together to coordinate their work.)
3. To the whole class (Best fit for large classes)
 - a. Guest Speaker(s): Community partner(s) comes to speak to the class and voices a need. The professor creates small groups to research and address the need. (Some deliverable.) The speaker returns to the class to hear possible ways to address the need.
 - b. Guest Speaker(s): Community partner(s) comes to speak to the class and voices a need. The students decide how they can help. Some may actually go to the location of the community partner and spend time helping hands on. Others may create something that is needed by the community partner to fulfill a need and then delivers the product to them.
 - c. Professor Presentation: The professor explains a need and the students either create a deliverable, or work on site with the community partner.

In other cases, the students find their own community partners. After direction from the course professor, the students find a way to apply what is being learned to meet a community need. The professor typically vets the collaboration based on student proposals and requests a contact person’s name, phone, and email address to allow for communication.

Do all the required hours for “community engagement” need to be working with people in some capacity?

NO! Working with community partners can take many forms:

“Feet on the Ground” = total hours. Professors require students to work directly with the community for the entire ACE experience. Examples: (1) Victimology class taught a self-defense class at a senior housing community; (2) Preservice teachers work directly with children in a school situation; (3) Health class mentoring students at the Boys and Girls Club.

“Feet on the Ground” + preparation time = total hours. Professors expect students to spend some of the ACE hours preparing for their direct work with the community partner. Examples: (1) Theatre Arts class perform interactive stories for elementary students; (2) Business students develop marketing plan for local businesses; (3) English students write oral histories for members of the senior centers.

Preparation time = total hours. Students have little direct contact with the community partner. Besides the time the community partner presents the need to the class and provides necessary information connected with the need, most all the students’ required hours are used researching, compiling, creating a product, etc. Examples: (1) Psychology students created pamphlets to place in doctors’ offices explaining specific issues that were written in “reader friendly” text more appropriate for the reading level of the general public; (2) Foreign Language classes translated important information into a variety of languages so that the text was accessible to all and distributed them to the nonprofit organization; (3) A Mass Communication class created Public Service Announcements for nonprofits.

How do we count the number of hours the students spend on their ACE experience?

Take into consideration preparation, transportation, meetings, etc. If they are working directly on site with the community partner, include those hours too. *Just estimate the number of hours* you think each student will spend doing what he or she needs to do to meet the community need. Although 9 hours is minimum for a 3-hour course, you will probably find the students spend many more.