

# Exploring Service Learning at The University of Michigan: *Year One For A New Task Force*

## Introduction

### INTRO

The University of Michigan's growing emphasis on service learning is part of a larger teaching and learning trend that we're defining as engaged learning. A few different developments made the library take notice of service learning as a greater focus in our community:

- A New Center for Engaged Academic Learning (CEAL)
- A Vice Provost Position was named for Global and Engaged Education

With the emergence of this new focus, the library decided to charge a task force with an exploration of engaged learning and by default, service learning.

On a campus this large it's often necessary to take a survey of the activities and figure out where we can be part of the conversation. The task force initially took an information gathering approach to this growing campus (and national) trend.

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## Part 1: Define

The first thing we decided to do is to try to define a little more clearly how our campus was defining engaged learning, and what types of learning were included in this definition.

Our definition:

*Engaged Learning foregrounds authentic, participatory, problem-based learning and community engagement in academic settings, connecting universities and their communities to form a collaborative partnership. In these instances, students often define their own learning outcomes; engage in structured experiential learning opportunities; reflect on how those experiences connect to their knowledge, skills, goals, and values; and assess their own success. Examples of Engaged Learning may include service-learning, academic internships, undergraduate research, and civic arts engagement.*

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## Part 2: Explore

The next thing we did was invite a several campus partners to the library to participate in a series of talks about the various initiatives happening across campus.

Some of the programs were with our study abroad programs, our office that coordinates service learning projects locally, specific faculty who were leading their students through service learning projects or other engaged learning curricula, and students who had completed projects that had an engaged learning component.

The major takeaway for the library by inviting these different groups to talk is that this type of learning for students is highly effective and that the library needs to continue to find ways to tailor our instruction, services and collections to meet the needs of faculty and students in this new landscape.

## Part 3: Engage

By creating the Task Force and broadly publicizing our series across campus, and by attending campus talks about engaged learning, we made the library a more visible campus partner. Some of our task force members were invited to be part of our Provost's organization of about 10 task teams charged to look at engaged learning on our campus and make recommendations on how to further implement new ways of teaching and learning at UM. This helped us gain an even greater understanding of the environment and make additional contacts among faculty.

Issues identified by the teams:

- Faculty want a central location to help with media aspects of engaged courses.
- Faculty want an organized list of faculty and programs on campus and their various projects.
- Faculty want to figure out what the right balance of engaged activities vs. more traditional classes should be.
- Faculty want a way to track the experiences of students with tools like eportfolios and badging.

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## Part 4: Contribute

Some additional outcomes for the library due to our task force's work were:

- We created a webpage for the library's engaged learning outward facing presence.
- We hosted a program entitled Creating as a Way of Learning to give students an opportunity to discuss media rich products they created during some of their courses.
- We are currently developing an exhibit for the types of student work we saw during the previously mentioned event.
  - A group of libguides for the top 10 countries our students visit during study abroad programs.
  - Increased partnership with CEAL and other groups on campus.

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## Part 5: Partner

Now that we have a little bit more context and understanding of the current campus climate, the partnership opportunities are where we are headed next. We'd like to become embedded in faculty/program projects, and specifically try to work with classes with service learning components. We think we can offer some specialized learning opportunities, such as:

- Introduction to entry points to data and information that will help prepare students for entering and exiting a community and making sustainable connections.
- Training on tech tools that may help them with the more reflective components of their project.
- Identification of appropriate ways to store and share data they gather.
- Assistance in implementation of a media product to share their work more broadly with the university community.

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