

Summary of Active Social Engagement PLO
Department of Political Science
2013-14

1. Assessment Method. We modified and applied the AAC&U's "Value Rubric" to assess six final papers in Prof. Knecht's POL 190: *Political Internships* course. The "Rubric" uses a scale of 1 (Developing) to 4 (Capstone) to assess student work along four criteria: (1) Diversity of Communities and Cultures, (2) Analysis of Knowledge, (3) Civic Identity and Commitment, and (4) Connection to Christian Service. Our goal was that our students would average a 3 or better on each criterion.

2. Findings. The average results from our coding are as follows: (1) Diversity of Communities and Cultures = 3.2, (2) Analysis of Knowledge = 2.5 (3) Civic Identity and Commitment = 3.2 and (4) Connection to Christian Service = 3. Our department has learned several things from the data. Overall, we are pleased that our students are committed to and understand the importance of service and civic engagement. Many students remarked that they plan to continue their public-spirited work after graduation and believe there is a strong biblical call to serve others. We are happy with these results, but there are things we can improve upon. We can do a better job linking service back to theories in the discipline. Collectively, our students had the lowest score in the "Analysis of Knowledge" category (2.5 average on a 1-4 scale), which asks students to connect theories in political science to civic engagement. Part of the problem is the prompt that we used to assess engagement: the prompt did not expressly ask students to link their service back to their political science major (discussed below). Nevertheless, the internship course will pay greater attention to connecting service and service-learning back to issues and theories in political science.

3. Effectiveness of our current assessment methods. We are planning to revise the assessment prompt for future cycles.

4. Potential changes as the result of our assessment. We are examining the possibility of adding more service-learning components to our existing course schedule. We are encouraged by our student experiences in internships, and we hope to make community-based learning a larger part of our curriculum. We are committed to sharing our knowledge with the Westmont faculty. Tom Knecht served on the service-learning taskforce and gave a faculty forum presentation on service-learning and internships. In addition, he just had a paper on service-learning accepted for publication by the journal *PS: Political Science*. In short, we are always willing to share our experiences with the broader Westmont community.