Community-Based Learning Courses
Community-Based Learning (CBL) classes contribute to Drew’s commitment to prepare its students not only with content knowledge and research skills, but also with the capability and experience to contribute to their communities, country, and world. In doing so, they foster the ability to connect academic learning with action in the world while addressing a community need or strengthening a community capacity. In order for CBL courses to benefit both students and the community, they should include the following components:

- Students spend a substantial amount of time at the community organization or working on projects for the organization (generally 18-25 hours in a semester).
- A substantial percentage of the class grade (approximately 15%-30%) is based on quality of students’ community work and their ability to connect that work to the course’s academic content.

CBL Best Practices
1. The community work is relevant to and integrated into the academic content and grading of the course.
2. The community work done by the class addresses a real need expressed by the partner organization and communicated to students in the context of the organization’s mission.
3. The partner organization(s) have been involved in planning the course with respect to the community work and play an explicit role in evaluating student performance in this aspect of the course.
4. Structured reflection on the community work and its relationship to academic content is integrated into the course schedule.
5. All students participate in the community work undertaken by the class. It should not, in other words, be an optional course component.

Working with Community Partners
The Center for Civic Engagement can discuss potential community partners with you and may be able to connect you with an appropriate partner. If you locate your own community partner, contact the Center for information on establishing a formal partnership agreement with the partnering organization(s). CCE has established formal partnerships with over 20 non-profit programs in the area, and we encourage participation in existing partnerships. If you have a relationship with the partnering organization, a formal partnership agreement must still be signed in order for students to work with this organization as part of a CBL course. Here are some important pointers for working with community organizations:

1. Contact the partnering organization well ahead of the semester in which you will teach your CBL class to discuss its needs and how they might mesh with the learning objectives of your course.
2. Discuss the schedule and logistics of your students’ community work with the organization. Find out what days and times they require students and how flexible they
can be in accommodating student schedules. This information is crucial for students to have prior to registering for your class.

3. On-going communication between the partnering organization and you is crucial to the success of CBL courses. Expect to check-in several times prior to and during the semester and to help troubleshoot any problems that arise.
   - identify the individuals who will provide an on-site orientation and supervision for your students and meet with them
   - invite these people to participate in developing the description of the community work to be accomplished by students (include discussion of scheduling, work products expected, and time commitment expected)

**Center for Civic Engagement Resources for CBL Classes**

- Transportation subsidies for students and faculty to travel to community site(s) of up to $100 per semester for each individual
- Consulting and trouble-shooting prior to and during the course
- Publicity to assist with enrollment and share accomplishments of courses
- Student course assistants are sometimes available and CCE work-study students deliver and collect required paperwork (student participation agreements)

**Why teach CBL classes**

Community-based learning, also known as service learning, is one of the most researched forms of pedagogy currently practiced in higher education. In their review of the research Jayne E. Brownell and Lynn E. Swaner report that service learning benefits students both academically and personally. Among students taking these courses, evidence points to

- Higher grades and academic engagement
- Higher persistence rates in college
- Gains in critical thinking, writing skills, and moral reasoning
- Increases in social responsibility and civic behavior
- Increases in sense of self-efficacy, tolerance, and interest in service-oriented careers

Characteristics of both classroom and community experiences are important to achieving these gains. These include reflection activities that ask students formally to connect community work with academic learning, strong connections between academic course content and community work, the number of hours of community work, and the quality of community supervision.