

Redefining Student Success and DEI Thinking through Crisis Learning

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ALLEGHENY COLLEGE
MEADVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

LEARN OUTSIDE THE LINES

Virtual Community Engaged Learning Project Tied to U.N. SDG on Gender Equity

20 incoming first-year students from Cohort IV of the Global Citizen Scholars (GCS) Program, at Allegheny College, worked to develop resources for the Women's Shelter Inc. in our college town of Meadville, PA. The theme for this cohort ("Empowering Women Globally") was related to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goal 5 (gender equity). The productive disruption of doing *virtual* community-engaged learning (CEL) challenged students to make DEI a priority, both within their teams, as well as in their work for the vulnerable clientele -- survivors of domestic violence who were doubly compromised by COVID-19. Focusing on an "ethics of care" approach (Gilligan, 1982), students had to rethink certain pedagogical dispositions when doing the CEL project work. The learning was captured by pre-and post-CEL surveys that addressed their 'doing time' mindset, implicit biases, a 'savior' complex, privilege and motives for helping, and whether there was a tendency to perform rather than develop empathy (Donahue and Plaxton-Moore, 2018).

GCS CEL Objectives and Elements

Course Objectives for Students:

- Practice active listening, build professional empathy and inclusionary practices, to earn the trust of community partners and vulnerable populations.
- Develop an eye and ear for detail. Noticing the smallest cues can be critical when working on sensitive projects.
- Sharpen team-building and collaboration abilities, being especially mindful to welcome diverse perspectives, and create equity in relationships and participation.
- Seek and use feedback for personal and professional growth.
- Incorporate the multiple perspectives from the course content to produce informed, thoughtful, and audience-focused work.
- Practice the skills outlined in the Allegheny College Statement of Community.

CEL Project Products for Women's Services Inc. in Meadville:

- Children's book (3rd-5th graders).
- Religious workshop videos and handouts
- Web schematic for community resources
- Job Search Video Tutorials

Results of Student Survey: Excerpts

"I guess I'm used to working with community partners in a volunteer based, like relationship. And this was more like your level, like actual collaboration, like equal to equal. And I really, really enjoyed that."

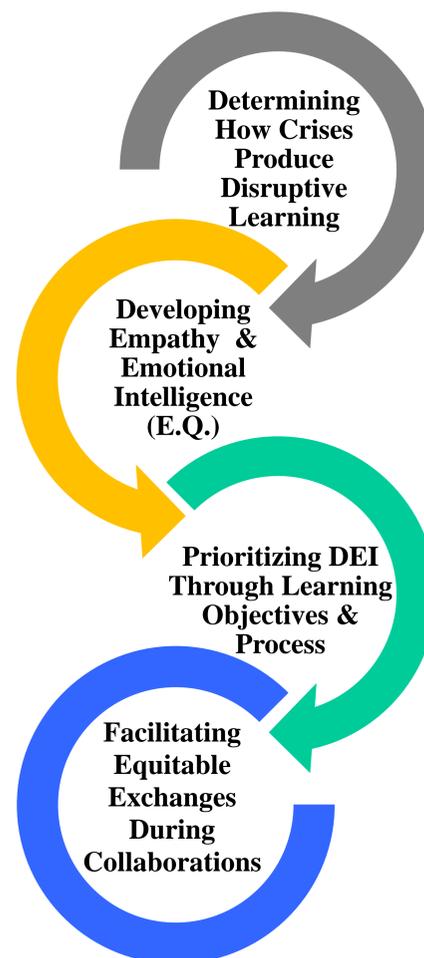
"... I'm proud of us. We're freshmen in college, like, who does this? Yeah. And then, as I said before, the moment, when I was like, 'Oh, my God, I'm so happy, like we're done,' was when we had like the meeting with the College Chaplain, other women from the community, and the clubs on campus. And they saw the final product, and they were like, 'Wow, it's amazing.'"

"I know that when a lot of people work for their community, it's all about, 'Okay, I'm here to teach these people,' like, 'How can I help these people?' And I think that this has really taught me to step back instead, and say, 'Okay, this is not really a community that I'm familiar with, and I want to be involved in this community. So how can I learn from other people around me? How can I see what other people are going through and try to help by seeing things through their point-of-view?'"

ABSTRACT:Redefining Student Success and DEI through Crisis Learning

A virtual poster session with case study presentations -- one on a STEM course, and the other on virtual community-engaged learning in an interdisciplinary global learning course -- by Allegheny College faculty. The presenters invite discussion on how disruption can create an experiential learning space in which alternative approaches to access learning, rethink pedagogical and assessment strategies, and complex systems thinking are valued as much as traditional classroom practices. Also, prioritizing the learning/teaching process and people can facilitate a more nuanced understanding of inclusive excellence

Consideration of Crisis Learning = Inclusive Environment



STEM: Alternate Pedagogies and Assessment Strategies

Inclusive STEM learning spaces that strive for diversity, equity, and inclusion must address holistically the realities of how disruptions and crises can affect the process of learning. A holistic learning environment can be fostered by the incorporation of alternative pedagogical approaches that consider students' various learning needs and assessments strengths. Successful implementation of these strategies must work in concert with the learning objectives of the course. For example, STEM courses can model the scientific process with content as well as with assignment assessment structure. Students are tasked to reflect on scientific principles during problem-solving and reflect on assessment feedback. Each experiential component holds value for the successful completion of the course.

STEM: Course Objectives and Elements

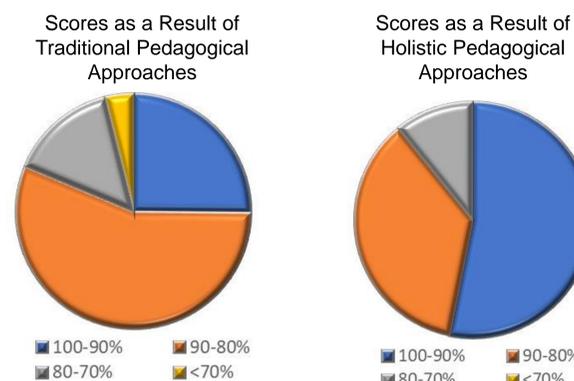
Course Objectives for Student

- Gain proficiency in problem-solving and critical thinking skills
- To encourage independent learning and scientific reflection
- Practice working in teams to accomplish tasks and develop an appreciation for science as a creative endeavor.

Instructor Key Elements

- Sense of Control and Self-Advocacy
 - Workload consideration (Structure vs Flexible Environment)
- Utilize reflective learning in STEM as a model for the scientific process
- Consider inclusive alternative assessments (Ex. Final Exam)

STEM: Results of Holistic Change



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