

FACULTY AGENDA ITEM

Date: August 21, 2019

Submitted by: Dr. Richard Ellis

SUBJECT: Change to WTE Community Service name and requirements

Description:

Name Change: The Community and Civic Engagement Transformational Experience

Purpose: Students who have engaged with faculty members and other students in significant, meaningful community and civic engagement activities, and who have been guided to reflect on the power and purpose of these experiences, graduate from the University as citizens who are not resigned to accepting the community as it is but have a vision for how they can help make the community better.

Students participating in the community and civic engagement transformational experience are required to complete 300 hours of combined community engaged activities and meaningful discussion in facilitated seminars, meetings and/or classes related to those activities. A faculty or staff mentor will guide each student or group of students through this WTE. The expectation is that the community engagement will complement their interests and academic pursuits. While engaged in direct service, capacity building or other projects that meet a community identified need, students will meet with a mentor and other students at least five times per semester to engage in civic dialogue and reflect on their experiences.

Each student will conclude the experience with a final presentation that not only describes the community engaged work, but what was learned from the experience, and how the experience has affected the students' view of the community and their role in it. This presentation of the experience and its impact on both the student and the community can take a number of different formats, but it is expected that it will be presented to an audience appropriate for the project.

Rationale: The name change of the Community Service WTE to Community and Civic Engagement WTE is to be consistent with the current language in the field of Community Engaged Learning. The changes in the number of hours is twofold: 1). As the assessment data has been reviewed it has become clear through the pre and posttest that those students completing 300 hours over at least a full year show a significant increase in their perception of their role in involvement in civic responsibility (i.e. voting, seeing the connection between the community issues and political involvement in change) 2.) Research in the field of community engaged learning shows that the amount of time the students can spend in reflection seminars (once a month for ten months vs only four months) has a significant impact on both retention and graduation rates.

In order to ensure that faculty across the campus are aware of these changes and how the various department might begin to include these changes the faculty members of LinC will reach out across campus to meet with the Departments as requested to update their faculty. Additionally, LinC will work with C-TEL to develop faculty development programs related to the community

and Civic Engagement WTE. These workshops will include ideas on reflection, how to include on campus lectures as trainings for the WTE students; as well as understanding the conceptual ideas related to community engagement. LinC will also produce a handbook on the process and procedures of the Community and Civic Engagement WTE.

Financial Implications: None

Proposed Effective Date: Spring 2020

Request for Action: *Approval by AAC/.FAC/FS/ Gen Fac, etc*

Approved by: *AAC on date 9/9/2019*

FAC on date

Faculty Senate on date 9/16/2019

Attachments Yes No

Proposed Changes to the Community Service Washburn Transformational Experience (WTE)

Submitted January 14, 2019

Rationale

In 2006, Washburn University implemented a new university requirement, the Washburn Transformational Experience (WTE). The WTE required all undergraduate students seeking a four-year degree to complete a project in at least one of four areas prior to graduation: Community Service, Creative and Scholarly Research, International Study Abroad or Leadership. Management and oversight for the Community Service WTE fell to Learning in the Community (LinC): The Center for Community & Civic Engagement. As the WTE was a requirement for all students on campus, LinC was tasked with coming up with parameters that any student could easily complete in one semester. This resulted in the following description:

Community Service: The objective of the Community Service WTE is to graduate citizens who have a vision for how they can help make the community what it could be and not be resigned to accepting the community as it is. Students engage with faculty members and other students in significant, meaningful community service and are guided to reflect on the power and purpose of these experiences. Students participating in the community service transformational experience are required to complete 150 hours of service. The students are also required to complete a pre and post experience survey related to their experience. A mentor will guide each student through this WTE. While engaged in direct service, students will meet with a mentor and other students at least four times per semester to reflect on their experiences.

(<https://washburn.edu/admin/vpaa/facultysenate/TE/WTETotalPacket18WithAttachments.pdf>)

While this was a reasonable description at the time, the culture and understanding of community service at Washburn University has significantly changed in the years since the WTE was implemented. This includes changing the WTE from a requirement to an option and the university's transformation into a high impact community engaged campus. The one thing that has not changed is the perception that the Community Service WTE is an easy way to get a medal to wear at graduation and that anything can count as long as it is a service to someone. It is this diluted view that we hope to alleviate through some minor changes to the wording of and requirements for the Community Service WTE.

Proposed Changes

The proposed wording and requirement changes, as well as the details for why these changes are being submitted, are included below. If accepted, these changes would take place starting with the 2019-2020 academic year. Any student who started this WTE prior to August 2019 would be grandfathered in under the previous requirements.

Community & Civic Engagement Washburn Transformational Experience (WTE)

The objective of the Community & Civic Engagement WTE is to graduate citizens who have a vision for how they can help make the community what it could be and not be resigned to accepting the community as it is. To achieve this, students engage with faculty, other students and the community in significant, meaningful engagement and are guided to reflect on the power and purpose of these experiences. Students participating in the Community & Civic Engagement WTE are required to complete at least 300 hours of engagement and training/enrichment/reflection activities in not more than three years.

In order to ensure that faculty across the campus are aware of these changes and how the various department might begin to include these changes the faculty members of LinC will reach out across campus to meet with the Departments as requested to update their faculty. Additionally, LinC will work with C-TEL to develop faculty development programs related to the community and Civic Engagement WTE. These workshops will include ideas on reflection, how to include on campus lectures as trainings for the WTE students; as well as understanding the conceptual ideas related to community engagement. LinC will also produce a handbook on the process and procedures of the Community and Civic Engagement WTE.

Please see the Appendix attached to this document for the information that will be included on this webpage as text and links. While it is presented here as an outline, we will be turning the information into a short handbook for faculty and students as a reference to help them successfully navigate a meaningful Community & Civic Engagement Washburn Transformational Experience (WTE).

Detail of Changes

1. Change the name from Community Service WTE to Community & Civic Engagement WTE – This change reflects both the current language used across the campus to describe interactions with the community as well as the correct name of the unit that oversees this WTE area.
2. Change the hour requirement from 150 hours to 300 hours – This change is being proposed for several reasons:
 - a. True transformation and understanding cannot happen in one semester. This is true for all of the WTEs. For example, Creative and Scholarly Research projects are the culmination of years of study within a discipline, Leadership projects are richer with more depth of understanding after multiple semesters of study and practical experience, and International Study Abroad experiences are more life changing when they include a semester of context and research before travel occurs and follow-up reflection mentored by a faculty member.
 - b. The original number (150 service hours) was chosen when the WTE was mandatory so that someone who waited until the last semester of their senior year could still finish it by doing not more than 10 hours of service a week for a semester. It was, therefore, set up to

be the “catch-all” for students who put off doing the requirement for one reason or another. Additionally, because of this, there was pressure to get those students through with a Community Service WTE so that they could actually graduate which led to a sometimes-watered-down experience with no benefit to the student or the community. In fact, at times it could be argued that it had a negative effect on all involved. This perception of lack of rigor, depth and meaningfulness is one that seems to persist among the faculty as we receive submissions from students with faculty mentors from other units that do not meet the spirit of the WTE on a regular basis.

- c. The original number was strictly for direct engagement hours and did not include things like trainings, reflection and mentorship. While this does not constitute the entirety of the extra 150 hours, it will constitute between 10-20% of the total hours depending on how long the student takes to do their community/civic engagement project (i.e. someone who completes the project in one year will have fewer opportunities to receive trainings, reflection and mentorship time than a student who takes three years to complete).
- d. Currently, the majority of students completing this WTE are already meeting or exceeding 300 hours. This includes LinC Bonner Scholars who complete at least 1100 hours in three to four years, LinC Community Corps members who typically complete between 300 and 400 hours per year, Social Work Practicum students who complete at least 350 hours per year, and Civic Engagement-Poverty Studies Minor students who complete at least 310 hours in a year. For the minority of student projects that would have previously counted under the old requirements, it has been determined that they could easily be adjusted to meet the new requirements through both the training/enrichment/reflection requirement and extending their work to more fully meet a community need and/or ensuring the sustainability of a project.
- e. This will bring the three one hour classes associated with this WTE into compliance with the requirements for the Poverty Studies Minor Internship which requires 300 hours of community engagement work and training related to that work. The catalog copy currently indicates that a student completing the minor may either take the internship class for 3 credit hours or take each of the three 1 hour WTE classes to meet the internship requirement. The issue with this is that the 1 credit hour courses list the requirement as only being 50 hours of community engagement work.

Costs and Benefits of the Changes

Costs: The primary cost of these changes is that it will likely reduce the number of students who complete the Community & Civic Engagement WTE each year. We anticipate that this reduction in numbers will be minimal as it will only affect short-term, one semester projects that were many times not meeting the spirit of this WTE. While the potential reduction in numbers of completers is a concern given that our unit has been given an expectation of increasing the number of students that graduate with this WTE each year, we believe that it is offset by the benefits of these changes. As our unit has been told that credit hour production is not a priority for our unit, and we made the credit bearing class optional for this WTE based on this approximately three years ago, there is no anticipation that there will be a loss of tuition bearing credit hours to the university.

Benefits: Benefits include a more meaningful experience for students related to their academic major and professional goals that creates a sense of responsible citizenship; and a greater impact on the community because more time in the community and mentored reflection translates into understanding, ongoing commitment to issues and more capacity for the organization.

Appendix:

Community & Civic Engagement Washburn Transformational Experience (WTE) Requirements

I. Pre-WTE

- A. Declare a Community & Civic Engagement WTE
- B. Complete the Community & Civic Engagement WTE pre-engagement survey*
- C. Identify an appropriate community/civic engagement experience and/or project
 1. the engagement experience and/or project must primarily be for the benefit of the off-campus community
 2. the engagement experience and/or project must meet a community identified need
 3. the engagement experience and/or project must affect a social justice issue, an underserved population or the environment, and/or a community need (pre-engagement discussions to determine the experience or project the student will engage in and/or an interview with the identified community partner may count toward the 300-hour requirement)
 4. the engagement experience and/or project cannot violate Washburn University's EEO statement and/or requirements for federal or state funding
- D. Complete the Community & Civic Engagement WTE Activity Plan
- E. Ensure that the Community & Civic Engagement WTE Activity Plan has been approved by both the Mentor and WTE Area Director before starting the engagement experience and/or project

II. During WTE

- A. Complete at least 240 hours of documented direct engagement activities related to the identified experience and/or project (not more than 90% of these hours can be used to meet the requirement of this WTE—i.e. at least 10% and not more than 20% of the total hours must come from training/enrichment/reflection activities associated with the experience and/or project)—allowable activities include, but are not necessarily limited to:
 1. pre-engagement discussions of the experience and/or project and/or required interview process to be at a site
 2. site orientation and/or regular check-ins/mentorship time with a site/project supervisor
 3. direct service
 4. research or data collection/organization/analysis
 5. fundraising/obtaining in-kind donations
 6. developing program materials/curriculum, social media posts, awareness campaigns, newsletters, events, etc.
- B. Engage in at least 30 hours of documented training/enrichment/reflection activities associated with the experience and/or project that occurs throughout the entire time the direct engagement activities are occurring (at least 10% and not more than 20% of the total hours must come from training/enrichment/reflection activities associated with the experience and/or project; and it is unacceptable to stop engaging in this part of the WTE partway through just because the maximum allowable has been met) —allowable

activities include, but are not necessarily limited to:

1. approved seminars offered through the LinC office
2. conference sessions/workshops related to the engagement experience and/or project
3. classroom time directly related to the engagement experience and/or project (must include at least 50% of time on reflection, understanding of civic responsibility and/or training on community issues—i.e. cannot solely be about preparing students to be professionals in the field)
4. campus or community lectures or panels on a topic directly related to the engagement experience and/or project
5. in-service trainings offered by the organization

III. Post-WTE

- A. Complete a final presentation of learning with either an oral or poster presentation
- B. Complete the WTE Final Assessment and Completion form
- C. Complete the Community & Civic Engagement WTE post-engagement survey*

*Social Work Practicum students are exempt from this requirement. In 2009, when the WTE changed from a mandatory graduation requirement to an optional opportunity, the Social Work Department saw the benefit of having their undergraduate students engage in the Community Service WTE and made it a graduation requirement at the departmental level. Through an agreement between LinC and the Social Work Department at that time, and based on the ongoing training and reflection that these students receive both before and during their practicum experience, there are some requirements that are waived. Specifically, the pre- and post-engagement survey results would be skewed unless all Social Work majors declared and took the pre-engagement survey when they enrolled in SW100 (they currently declare the WTE at the beginning of their practicum experience) so they do not do this.