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E&I Newsletter

American Cultures Engaged Scholarship Program: Chancellor’s Public Fellows

Undergraduate and graduate students selected as Chancellor’s Public Fellows explore the intentional intersection of campus, community, and diversity. A unique campus model that was developed as part of the American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES) program, Chancellor’s Public Fellows provide the support that faculty need in order to develop and implement a community-based component for new and existing American Cultures courses. In the process, they participate in the development of a course on campus, and gain perspective on the work of community organizations.

ACES, a collaboration between the [American Cultures Center](http://americancultures.berkeley.edu) and the [Cal Corps Public Service Center](http://publicservice.berkeley.edu/), supports faculty in incorporating community-based work in American Cultures courses. In addition to deepening student learning around core course concepts and challenging the campus/community divide, ACES explores the connections between community engagement and diversity. The program serves as a model not only for campus, but for institutions across the nation. Chancellor’s Public Fellows are key to the success of the ACES program.

Since January 2011, 25 Fellows have supported 18 faculty teaching 16 courses. Developing a community-based course requires a lot of effort above and beyond the already rigorous preparation required for a standard course. Faculty teaching community-based courses must establish relationships with community partners; re-invent syllabi to integrate community partner input, reflection time, and readings about community-based pedagogies; develop new assignments; and manage the logistics of student work with the community. In the ACES program, Chancellor’s Public Fellows are critical to the process, assisting with course and community partnership development, and serving as the liaison between the students in the course, the faculty member, and the community partner. Professor Irene Bloemraad (Sociology) says the community-based component “is only feasible with the Fellow.” Faculty member Erika Walker (Haas Undergraduate Business Program) adds, “The Fellow serving as liaison to the community partner made a huge difference. The Fellow [also] served as a thought partner and helped me work through the development of the course and partnership.”

The ACES program’s unique model of utilizing undergraduate and graduate student Fellows to support the implementation of the community-based work has provided a deep learning opportunity for the student Fellows.  Fellows have learned about the academy and the inner workings of the university, gained communication and organization skills, and explored their own assumptions and career and academic pursuits.  Fellows receive a stipend and training for their work, and have felt the impact of the role in multiple ways.

Kevin Escudero, a graduate student who studies immigration and is pursuing a joint degree (PhD in Ethnic Studies and JD at Berkeley Law), is working with Professor Irene Bloemraad (Sociology) on 2 sociology courses that focus on immigration. He appreciates the opportunity to work closely with a faculty member from a different discipline, noting that, “…learning from a faculty member with a different point of view…, a different theoretical/methodological background, teaching style, etc. was a very eye opening experience… it was good to learn about the ‘sociological’ way of approaching the teaching of immigration.” In addition, Kevin’s experience as a Chancellor’s Public Fellow has also showed him “how to integrate community engaged scholarship into my teaching to enhance the learning of my students. It also greatly helped in reinforcing learning goals/objectives of the overall course itself.”

Other Fellows had similar experiences. Margaret Rhee, PhD student in Ethnic Studies who supported a course in Gender & Women’s Studies taught by Professor Juana Maria Rodriguez, stated that, “ACES provided vital community engaged support and training, that deeply shapes my academic interests in community engaged scholarship. It was wonderful to work with ACES staff and fellow students and professors on the pressing questions of community engagement.”

Pamela Mardo, undergraduate student in the Haas Undergraduate Business Program, assisted in the development of faculty member Erika Walker’s “Diversity in the Workplace” course. After Pamela’s experience as a Chancellor’s Public Fellow, her perspective on teaching and scholarship shifted. Pamela states, “Now, I believe that it is also critical to continually re-analyze which models work well with different courses. Academia should not be stuck on one model or the other, rather as society's needs continual[ly] shift, so should the school's commitment to giving students a different learning experience.”

ACES continues to provide a venue for faculty and students to explore the connections between the campus, the community, and diversity. The 15 undergraduate and graduate students in the newest cohort of Chancellor’s Public Fellows are working with faculty on ACES courses for Spring and Fall 2013. To find out more about ACES, Chancellor’s Public Fellows, and developing community-based courses, see <http://americancultures.berkeley.edu/aces> and <http://publicservice.berkeley.edu/faculty>.