TOWARD COLLABORATIVE, EQUITABLE, AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS IN WORLD LANGUAGES FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

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ABSTRACT: This chapter addresses issues of collaboration, equity, and sustainability in the design of community service learning (CSL) projects through a discussion of the Creating Communities, Engaged Scholarship (CruCES) project. This 2015–16 partnership involving students from an advanced Spanish for the Professions and Community course, University of Memphis faculty, local not-for-profit cultural organizations, and community members sought to empower and create community among the ethnically and linguistically diverse population of West Binghampton in Memphis, TN. It did so through the development of sustainable microeconomy projects centered on the arts. In hopes of providing a model for instructors integrating CSL projects into WLSP courses, this chapter considers how the design of the CruCES project helped maximize student and community partnerships in meeting student and partner goals and objectives.

KEYWORDS: collaboration, community service learning, CSL design, equity, microeconomy projects, sustainability, World Languages for Specific Purposes
GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What benefits did CSL in the CruCES project bring to the university and the community with which it partnered? Describe the benefits of implementing CSL in curricula for academic institutions and the communities they serve.

2. What considerations were paramount to the implementation of the CruCES project? What are important considerations to take into account when universities collaborate with community partners? How can WLSP instructors develop their own collaboration skills while establishing and sustaining these inter-institutional partnerships? In what ways could CSL students hone their collaboration skills through participation in this project?

3. According to the author, what is the difference between transactional and transformative relationships? How can transactional relationships be made into transformative relationships? Provide specific details in your answer.

4. What factors helped the CruCES project to survive and thrive over time? What factors increase or threaten the sustainability of collaborative projects?

5. Have you participated in a CSL partnership as a student or as an instructor? What benefits and challenges arose from that partnership? What advice would you give a WLSP instructor who would like to establish this type of partnership for students?

INTRODUCTION

Coursework in World Languages for Specific Purposes (WLSP) provides students with a unique opportunity to contextualize their language skills and knowledge of culture relative to everyday lived experiences (Long, 2017). In response to the needs and challenges of students and local communities in the 21st century, WLSP practitioners propose to develop students’ translingual and