



Celebrating Undergraduate Research and Creativity

Community Engaged Learning (CEL) / Service-Learning (SL) Category

Student Poster Guide

What is CURC?

CURC is the annual Celebrate Undergraduate Research and Creativity showcase held each April at Colorado State University. The event culminates in an awards ceremony that recognizes all participants and honors exceptional work in various awards categories.

CURC is a hybrid event and is free to the public. All CSU undergraduate students are encouraged to participate in this event, and all CSU community members, family, and friends are invited to attend!

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for undergraduate students who are thinking about, or have decided to, submit a poster to the CURC Showcase **specifically in the Community Engaged Learning / Service-Learning Category.**

Community Engaged Learning /Service- Learning CURC posters can be created for completed projects, projects that are in progress, or project proposals. Your approach will be a little different if you are presenting a complete project versus one in its early stages.

See the “New Projects” section for an example of categories that can work for new projects.



Why present a Community Engaged Learning / Service-Learning poster?

- Practice presenting your work, talking about a project or issue you are passionate about, and sharing impacts and lessons learned - great practice for job interviews & graduate school applications.
- Learn or practice writing an abstract and creating an academic/ research poster that can also be used for future events.
- Connect with other students, or CSU faculty or staff who want to participate in or support your project.
- Help your community partner organizations by getting the word out about their work.

What Counts as Community Engaged Learning / Service-Learning?

These terms are used differently in different contexts and spaces. Here, we describe Community Engaged Learning and Service-Learning experiences as those that “combine academic coursework, research, and outside of the classroom experiences with community-identified concerns” in a way that produces a benefit for community partner/s and deepens student self-awareness and learning on a particular topic.

CEL and SL experiences have these key components:

- An outside of the classroom experience or engagement component.

This can look like but is not limited to: participant observation, informational tours, interviews or shadowing, doing work for or volunteering for a community group or



organization, working on a project or research question that has been requested by a community group or organization.

- AND, the experience or engagement component is clearly integrated into an academic course, or personal or professional development program, and is connected to specific learning goals.

**Examples of personal or professional development programs at CSU include but are not limited to: Puksta Scholars, Keys Communities*

- The experience or engagement component is designed in collaboration with community representatives and supports existing projects or meet a specific request from a community partner or organization.
- Students participate in structured reflection on the experience and can connect it to learning objectives and course content.

A strong CEL/SL Poster shows:

- How the project addresses a community need or request and clearly states the questions or issues being addressed
- Who the Community Partner/s are and what their goals were for the project or what they requested.
- How academic content and the engagement component were connected to and influenced each other (How did your studies/reading/theory shape what you did? How did what you did change or add to your understanding of what you studied/read/or theorized?)
- A few ways your personal perspective or understanding has changed or been enhanced over the course of the project.
- How the community partner benefited from the project

What to Include

The outline below can be used to create a strong and easy to follow CEL/ SL poster. Every project is different and CEL/SL projects often have unique elements. The categories below can be a useful way to organize your information. However, feel free to use this as a guide or starting point and order the information in whatever way best fits your project.

Community Engaged Learning /Service- Learning CURC posters can be created for completed projects, projects that are in progress, or project proposals. Your categories/ headings will be a little different if you are presenting a complete project versus one in its early stages. See the “New Projects” section for an example of categories that can work for new projects.

Title

- Your title should be clear, concise, and able to give the audience a sense of your project.

Introduction / Background

- A summary of the issue or challenge that is addressed by your project.
- The relationship to a course, research project, or personal or professional development program
- Relevant class or program learning objectives.
- Community partner/s
 - name, organization’s mission statement or relevant goals
 - what the community partner/s requested

Activities / Implementation

- Describe the engagement component – give a summary of what was done.
- Describe how the engagement component met the community-identified need/ request.



- How did you use or apply content, theories, or examples from class (or a personal /professional development program) in your project? How did what you were learning influence what you did?

Outcomes / Impact

- What was delivered to, or shared with, the community partner at the end? (examples might include, a report, a presentation, creative or artistic expression)
- What was learned?
- What has changed or is expected to change for the community or community partner as a result of your project? Or what was learned that will be used for a next step?

Discussion / Reflections

This section describes changes in your perspective or understanding as a result of the project.

- Self-reflection/ self-awareness - how has a personal perception or understanding changed or been enhanced as a result of the project?
- How has your understanding of the topic, issue or challenge changed or been enhanced as a result of the project?

Permission To Use Photos or Community-Created Work

- It is important to get permission to take photos or to use images or work produced by your community partners or those they work with. There are several ways this might be done including consent forms, IRB proposal / approval for research projects, or other documented agreements. Make sure you cite or give credit to photographers or others whose work you might use and be able to explain how you got permission to include their work or examples. These examples often add a lot to a poster, and you are encouraged to use them – as long as you can explain your approach to getting permission and giving credit.

References

- Cite literature and media sources, following APA guidelines or guidelines appropriate to your academic discipline.



New Projects

Research posters are usually created to present work that is completed or has some initial outcomes to share. However, CURC CEL /SL posters can be projects that you are planning or are just beginning. There can be many advantages to submitting a poster for a project proposal or a project in the early stages. It is a helpful way to think through your plans, a good way to share initial ideas, get feedback, and find others who may want to work with you or support your project.

The categories and information you share will be a little different for new projects. You may need to make some adjustments to best show your work. Here are some guidelines for presenting new projects.

Title

- If you are presenting a project proposal or project in the early stages, use the title to clue the reader in! Let them know what phase of work you are in (proposal, initial phase, etc.).

Introduction / Background

- A summary of the issue or challenge that will be addressed by your project.
- The relationship to a course, co-curricular, academic, or research project
- Class or program learning objectives.
- Community partner/s - or your plan for finding and creating a partnership.

Activities / Implementation

- Describe the planned engagement component or activity and how you will carry it out.



- Describe how you think it will meet a community-identified need/ request or how it will support existing work.
- How will you or are you using content, theories or examples from class or other programs in your project? How is what you are learning informing what you are planning or doing?

Expected Outcomes or Goals

- What do you think you will have for a community partner at the end? What do you hope to learn? Is there a research or guiding question you will try to answer?

Discussion / Reflections

- Self-reflection/ self-awareness - how has the process so far challenged, changed, or influenced how you think about yourself and your role in this work? Is there anything you think will be a challenge? Is there anything you will have to get better at?
- How has your understanding of the topic, issue or challenge changed or been enhanced by the work so far? Or what questions have it raised for you that you hope to learn more about?

Permission To Use Photos or Community-Created Work

- It is always important to think ahead about how you will ask for permission to take photos or use community-created work. Even if you don't know all the details of your project, you should have a plan for how you will talk to your community partners and a draft of a consent form. If you are sure that you won't need this, be able to explain why it isn't necessary or how you made that decision.



Formatting and visual components

See the CURC website for the most recent guidelines and information on formatting and printing your posters. Make sure you check the requirements for poster size. You can find links to poster templates and information on where and when you can print your posters.

General Rules of Thumb

- **Minimum recommended text sizes are: 85 pt font for the main title, 36 pt for subheadings, 24 pt for body text, and 18 pt for captions.** Don't go smaller than this!
- Use Headings: Include a clear title, headings for each section and a heading or title for each chart, graph, or image.
- Limit the amount of text on a poster. This is tricky! There should be enough text for someone walking by to get a general idea of what is going on, but you also want to encourage visitors to interact with you about your work.
- Use no more than 2 fonts for the entire poster (e.g., 1 font for headings, 1 font for information).
- Images - use images and graphics (charts, graphs, diagrams, etc.) to enhance your poster, share relevant information, and give people a sense of the location or work. Make sure each image or graph has a clear purpose and label each one. Use high resolution images so they are clear when printed at full size.
- Print your poster EARLY! Poster printing services can get very backed up close to the event.

For additional questions or assistance contact

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Coordinator of Community Engaged Learning, The Institute for Learning & Teaching ([TILT](#)) & The Office for Undergraduate Research and Artistry

After School Community Garden Program, Statesboro GA

Poster Example, CURC Service Learning / Community Engaged Learning Category
Colorado State University

Poster Example



Background

Community gardens, land that is collectively cultivated, have many demonstrated health, social, and community benefits. Understanding factors like state and local food production, business and economic policies, environmental degradation, and cultural norms and values, are important to help communities create flourishing gardens. Even small projects can be impacted by complex food system dynamics.

Four Georgia Southern University entities partnered with 3 community partners to develop an After School Garden Program at 5 area elementary schools. First program evaluations were positive, but included concerns about coordination, maintaining the gardens, and keeping all partners involved.

My senior capstone project was designed to address these concerns. I improved garden maintenance processes and piloted a new Community Garden Coordinator position to see if it could be an annual role and program support.

Class & Capstone Project

Sustainable Food Systems 3631 Senior Capstone Course

- 1) Identify and assess sustainable food practices in a variety of settings, including universities, schools, and businesses.
- 2) Identify legislation and policy impacting the sustainability of our food system.
- 3) Explore personal and cultural values motivating community investment in local gardens.
- 4) Contribute to an existing project in Statesboro focused on expanding support for sustainable food systems.

Project Partners

- Center for Sustainability
- Department of Biology
- Department of Health Sciences
- Jainn-Ping Hu College of Public Health

Mission Statement: To prepare students for success and enhance community value.

A family owned & operated farm and producers of Georgia Grown produce.

Mission Statement: To provide quality, diversity, wholesome parks and recreation services to meet the needs of the citizens of Bulloch County.

Community Garden Coordinator: Job Responsibilities

- Act as primary point of communication between 7 campus & community partners.
- Develop a volunteer database & recruit volunteers
- Work with Farm Mentor to cultivate and maintain garden sites at 5 elementary schools.

Irrigation Project

Miscommunication and lawn mower accidents led to broken sprinkler systems. Created tension between school groundskeepers and After School staff. Farm Mentor and interns were struggling to water by hand.



Students at Marlie Jewell Elementary help with irrigation. A volunteer goes after a day at the garden!

Passed remaining groundskeeper suggestions on to the new Garden Coordinator to consider for next season.

The irrigation system and backup plan worked through the season. Groundskeepers gave positive feedback, and one even joined our Harvest Celebration at the end. They said they felt like it was their project too!

Outcome / Impact

- Researched and discussed irrigation systems with Farm Mentor
- Selected automated drip irrigation system. Sent options to Center for Sustainability and school groundskeepers for feedback
- Groundskeepers suggested changes and a backup plan for broken equipment. Added a backup plan and used their suggestion to use the same equipment as the campus garden so we could get help if needed.
- Organized 2 service days to install irrigation. 23 GSU students volunteered over 2 days to install irrigation systems at all 5 sites.
- Installed automated irrigation system. Improved plant growth, eliminated issues with sprinklers, reduced tensions between groundskeepers and program staff, reduced pressure on Farm Mentor and interns to water regularly
- Increased volunteers from 18 to 38 with 16 repeat volunteers.



Discussion / Reflection

This project showed me that things that don't seem relevant to me can be very important for community partners and that paying attention to that dynamic has a big impact on my ability help community gardens be successful. I shared my irrigation plan with school groundskeepers before starting because in class we saw that projects designed by people who don't live there can cause problems or break and become a burden. When I was asked for a backup plan, it was discouraging but when I took it seriously, it became something we worked on together. School staff and groundskeepers were much more excited about the gardens after that. And I was grateful because I needed to use the backup plan and was able to resolve the issue without creating more work for the Farm Mentor.

As a small-scale family farm operator, our Farm Mentor had a lot to say about pesticide use, water efficiency and mass food production and transportation. We had extensive conversations about policies that affected his business and our respective thoughts on the environmental impacts of agriculture. I began to see many issues are more complicated than I realized. He helped me understand that farmers have many reasons for not getting their operations certified as organic. The cost and time for certification is often a barrier and not being certified doesn't mean a farmer doesn't use some organic practices or experiment with alternative practices.

In my future work with community gardens, I will start by asking people why things are important and ask for feedback before providing solutions or plans.

Activities / Implementation

- Visited and learned about each organization. Asked about and listened to concerns, needs, & goals.
- Researched background information and possible actions and solutions.
- Acted as a central point of coordination. Notified and communicated processes to all parties. Including talking about mistakes or delays.
- Drafted program manual to create continuity and program sustainability.
- Worked with Farm Mentor to install irrigation and create new processes for garden maintenance.

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