The Benefits of Community-based Learning & Research

Community-based Learning & Research offers a unique opportunity for the University of DC to put into practice three priorities for quality improvement: academic inquiry, student experience, and engagement with Washington, D.C., and global affairs. Students have the freedom to explore, examine (and re-examine) their own perceptions, curiosities, and worldviews by providing a real-world context supported by academic study. Community-based Learning & Research also strengthens scholarship and teaching because it is grounded in producing tangible outcomes or changes.

• **Benefits For Faculty.**
  According to studies Community-based Learning & Research can be a catalyst for faculty research and scholarly work (Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, and Kerrigan, 1996)
  - Increase students’ acquisition of course content (Ward, 2000).
  - Community-based Learning & Research has the potential to introduce new ideas and methods into traditional courses and can foster new synergy between students and faculty as teaching learning partners.
  - Long-term engagement with nonprofit agencies and organizations may lead to ongoing research and community development.

• **Benefits For Students.**
  According to studies, Community-based Learning & Research can help students develop both academically and personally. A Practitioner’s Guide to Reflection in Community-based Learning & Research: Student Voices and Reflections, by Eyler and Giles (1996), reveals the following:
  - A majority of Community-based Learning & Research students report that they learn more and are motivated to work harder in Community-based Learning & Research classes than in regular classes.
  - A majority of students report a deeper understanding of subject matter and a recognition of the complexity of social issues.
  - Students remember material better through experience and can apply the material that they learn in class to real problems.
  - Students report that the power of Community-based Learning & Research is rooted in personal relationships and in doing work that makes a difference in people’s lives.

• **Benefits For Community Partners.**
  Whether working with a school, a community-based organization, or a local or national nonprofit agency, students involved in Community-based Learning & Research can help an organization:
  - Meet immediate needs and contribute to its long-term goals.
  - Organizations experience the advantages of receiving critical support, building collaborative relationships with students and the university, and advancing their immediate or long-term goals. (Driscoll, et al., 1996).
  - Constituencies and staff of the organizations serve a critical role as teachers to students (Eyler and Giles, 1999).
  - Community partners create an important opportunity to share their work, vision, and goals with students, which produces a positive impact on students as they develop professionally and personally.