

Student Social Platform Initiative

Sponsor:

Andrew Furco, associate vice president for Public Engagement

Overview of the Project

Currently, many University of Minnesota students (both graduate and undergraduate) participate in a broad range of community engagement experiences that include academically-based activities (e.g., service-learning, community-based research, learning abroad), professional development opportunities (e.g., internships), and volunteer service programs (e.g., community service through student clubs, Greek system, and residence halls).

For the most part, however, students' community engagement experiences are episodic; that is, a large number of students take part in several different community engaged experiences that do not build on and/or are not connected with prior engagement experiences. Research findings suggest that the true impact of community engagement occurs when students have multiple meaningful experiences over an extended period of time.

The University of Minnesota Public Engagement Social Platform Initiative is intended to help students use public engagement as a way to achieve their other goals and enhance their future. We will explore the use of a social platform as a means for students to build stronger connections across engagement experiences and to tie their community engagement experiences more closely to their academic programs and professional aspirations.

The intent of specifically exploring a social platform initiative as a means to this end is that it should spur for students more reflective planning that will help better articulate students' engagement experiences as they progress through their academic program at the University.

Therefore, the PEL project will assess the viability, interest, and feasibility of a social platform initiative as well as identify key issues and factors that will ensure the success of the program, if implemented.

The PEL project will explore existing programs (e.g., the Community Engaged Scholars Program, Global Leadership Minor, Multicultural Education Major, etc) that have in place engagement activities that are articulated horizontally (across disciplines and courses) and vertically (across years) and how a social platform initiative would interplay with these established and robust University programs. In addition, the PEL project will seek to determine if a social platform will facilitate students' accomplishment of key, University-wide educational goals including but not limited to:

- students' achievement of the Student Learning Outcomes;
- students' achievement of the Student Development Outcomes;
- internationalizing the University curriculum;
- enhancing undergraduate students' research abilities;
- enhancing students' understanding of course curriculum;
- cultivating students' talents, interests, and leadership
- preparing students for the workforce

About the Office for Public Engagement

The University of Minnesota has a strong foundation of public engagement. The Office for Public Engagement (OPE) was created to integrate and institutionalize public engagement. In efforts to identify a roadmap for meeting its mission, OPE introduced the *Ten-Point Plan for Advancing and Institutionalizing Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota* (see <http://engagement.umn.edu>); enhancing students' public engagement experiences is one of ten key goals articulated in the Plan. Regarding student experiences, the Ten-Point Plan presents a set of action steps that support the cultivation of emerging, engaged scholars who will serve as civically engaged leaders, researchers, citizens, and employees.

Project Team

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