Public Engagement Definitions

Public Engagement is "the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities" — including those of diverse interest, type, and place from local to global — "for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in the context of partnership and reciprocity.” The purpose is “to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good." ¹

Note: Public engagement includes varying degrees of involvement, ranging from community outreach and service (e.g., an event or exhibit offered to the public) to full engagement with two-way relationships focusing on addressing a public need or interest (e.g., research working with families to improve educational outcomes for their children).

Communities or Publics are individuals, groups, and/or entities, external to the university, including those from the public and private sectors and local to global geography who may share a common place, interest, affiliation, identity, occupation or profession (non-academic), faith or situation.²

Publicly Engaged Scholarship: "The scholarship of engagement is the collaborative generation, refinement, conservation, and exchange of mutually beneficial and societally relevant knowledge that is communicated to and validated by peers in academe and the community." ³ Such scholarship may entail varying degrees of engagement, such as community-focused research, participatory research, and community-based participatory research.⁴

Publicly Engaged Courses or Programs are educational experiences where students work with or for external communities in mutually beneficial collaborations or activities. Such interactions are intended to deepen students' knowledge, skills and civic awareness through academic, research, or other types of University credit-bearing learning while addressing community needs and enhancing public well-being. This work could entail direct or indirect service (e.g., assessing community nutrition needs). Often, some or all of this work occurs off campus but the use of technology can facilitate alternate interactions. It includes a range of approaches including service learning and community service courses.

Service Learning, a publicly engaged pedagogical approach, is a credit-bearing and faculty-led educational experience that integrates structured service activity and reflection into the academic curriculum of a course with a substantive topic. Designed to equally benefit the student and communities involved,⁵ service activities address identified community needs and
deepen students' understanding of course material, expand appreciation of the field, and help foster civic responsibility.  

**Student Community Service that is course-connected** provides students with opportunities to perform service to improve the quality of life or address other needs of the community. Academic credit may be received for providing direct services (e.g., advocacy, tutoring, and neighborhood revitalization) or indirect services (e.g., studying a community issue). Students play a large role in shaping the learning experience. Courses may include activities that foster reflection and critical thinking.

**Publicly Engaged Service** is the UAlbany-connected application and provision of professional expertise to address public needs and interest working with external groups for mutual benefit. Activities may entail direct and/or indirect services and range widely from clinical services, technical assistance and expert testimony to running community-oriented programs. There may be varying levels of engagement.

**Volunteerism** (not UAlbany-connected) refers to acts of assistance to address community needs, whether on a one-time or regular basis, without financial reward.

---

1) Quoted from the Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification definition and statement of purpose with the exception of a change to the communities phrase which was originally "local, regional/state, national, global."


