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# Promoting Service-Learning through an Interdisciplinary and Decentralized Faculty Fellow Program

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## Abstract

The adoption of service and community-based learning can be a challenge across college campuses. Some units or departments might embrace the approach, while others believe it cannot be done in their discipline. Despite being shown to offer benefits for learning and retention, recruiting faculty participation in service and community-based learning (SL/CBL) can be challenging. This article describes the origination and first two years' outcomes of a decentralized Faculty Fellows Program (FFP) across six colleges at a metropolitan university. After collaborating with college administration to determine priorities, the first cohort of faculty recruited for the FFP was tasked with serving as a resource for fellow college faculty/staff. This paper utilizes the fellows' end-of-year reports organized around priorities and goals, activities planned or undertaken, and the fellow's reflections of the year to conduct a qualitative analysis. Results show the FFP allowed an individualized approach to address goals, determine tactics, and achieve outcomes across college units and offers an opportunity for implementation at any university because of its decentralized structure and ability to adjust to the needs of any specific college or unit.

**Keywords:** service learning, community-based learning, faculty fellow programs, case study

## Introduction

Service-learning and community-based learning (SL/CBL) are proven pedagogical approaches used across multiple disciplines and educational levels to bridge teaching and community engagement (*see* Billig, 2000; Kuh, 2008). Yet, despite decades of research that demonstrates the benefits of service-learning (SL) to student learning (Warren, 2012), satisfaction (Drinkard & Tontodonato, 2019), engagement and retention (Bringle et al., 2010), higher education institutions continue to struggle to engage key stakeholders in SL opportunities, including faculty. Indeed, while many faculty members have espoused SL's value to drive student engagement for more than a half-century (Eyler, 2009; Gelmon et al., 2018), others are skeptical of SL practices due to the challenges that come from delivering SL, such as limited time and resources, insufficient institutional support, and low student engagement, among others (Anderson & Pickeral, 2000; O'Meara et al., 2008; Weerts, 2007).

To increase faculty adoption of SL/CBL practices, one initiative university campuses have turned to is enlisting faculty members currently engaged in SL for support around recruitment and mentorship of future SL faculty (Bowen & Kiser, 2009). These efforts are often identified as faculty fellow programs, where fellows usually work within their unit to coach faculty peers in SL practices (Cazzell et al., 2014; Werder, 2005). However, little research exists on the implementation and effectiveness of these faculty fellow programs (FFP) (exceptions include Stevens & Jamison, 2012). Even less is known about implementing more decentralized FFPs involving interdisciplinary faculty from across campus. This article describes one such SL/CBL FFP, where outreach and mentoring of faculty occur not at a centralized campus administration level but at a peer-to-peer level and involves faculty of multiple disciplines from across a mid-sized metropolitan university.

In the FFP described in this study, faculty adherents of SL/CBL from each of the six colleges were tasked with serving as a resource for fellow college faculty/staff to advance this learning style from where it stood in their college. Unlike traditional FFPs, where a campus administrative unit often pre-determined goals, no programming was imposed on the FFP. Instead, fellows, in collaboration with their college's Dean, were given the discretion to determine college priorities related to SL/CBL. Campus SL staff acted as a resource to these fellows and worked to keep the fellows in active communication to encourage peer-to-peer learning further.

Thus, this article aims to describe this interdisciplinary, decentralized, peer-to-peer FFP as a case study of a novel approach to increase the SL/CBL curriculum across all colleges at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The paper also proposes a model representing the collective inputs and outcomes of the program during its first and second years. It offers considerations and

suggestions for those interested in creating a similar program to advance SL/CBL on a college campus regardless of discipline, experience, or administrative support.

In the next section, the paper reviews the theoretical underpinnings of the FFP in the SL and pedagogy literature. It then describes the specific case for the FFP, campus service, and community-based learning environment in which the faculty fellow program stems and the development of the first and second faculty fellow cohorts. Specifically, the commonalities and divergence of the program's operation and outcomes across the six colleges are discussed using a qualitative review of the fellow's end-of-year reflections.

## Literature Review

The Faculty Engagement Model (FEM; Wade & Demb, 2009) provides the theoretical underpinnings for this study. The model describes how faculty engage in academic tasks related to teaching, service, and research that meet community needs and fulfill the university's mission. For example, faculty might fulfill their research demands by publishing community-based research or engaging in SL as part of their teaching. In their proposed framework, Wade and Demb (2009) seek to examine the factors that encourage faculty to participate in those activities that meet their institution's service expectations.

FEM accounts for factors that play a role in faculty engagement, which are divided into three broad dimensions: institutional, personal, and professional. The institutional dimension encompasses the institution's culture and reward system for faculty's engagement in the form of leadership and mission (i.e., service is valued by the administration and acknowledged as part of the institution's mission); institutional policies (i.e., faculty engaged in service are promoted and receive allocated time for their service); budget and funding (i.e., service activities receive funding); structure (i.e., having a centralized body that supports faculty's engagement); community involvement (i.e., the community welcomes the faculty's engagement); and institutional type and prestige (i.e., different types of institutions value engagement differently).

The professional dimension highlights the faculty's discipline, socialization, and rank. These factors pertaining to the individual are relevant because institutions often do not reward faculty engagement in the community; thus, individual features can help explain faculty's participation despite their institution's lack of support. Faculty discipline highlights how some disciplines are typically more engaged with the community than others, e.g., faculty in health professions or social sciences are more likely to participate in SL than those in the humanities. Faculty socialization describes the social attributes or practices that faculty find acceptable or desirable. This orientation or socialization begins with an individual's professional training in graduate school. As previously discussed, more community-oriented disciplines socialize graduate students (and future faculty) into becoming more committed to the community. Finally, in terms

of rank, faculty most committed to participating in the community tend to have the lowest status and rank. However, exceptions exist among faculty seeking (or having already received) tenure and their motivation to engage with the community.

Finally, in the personal dimension, Wade and Demb discuss race/ethnicity/gender, values/beliefs/motivation, epistemology, and previous experience, which capture how personal characteristics and beliefs motivate faculty to engage in service work. Regarding race/ethnicity/gender, the authors allude to research findings demonstrating that faculty of color and women are usually more involved in SL activities. Values/beliefs/motivation account for faculty with a humanistic orientation and feel a responsibility toward their community, which is often in opposition to faculty with a social orientation status often connected to scholarship and intellectual prestige. Epistemology captures faculty's belief that knowledge is built through experiences, unlike those who support the construction of knowledge via inquiry. Lastly, faculty with a history of community engagement, personally or professionally, possess previous experience that impacts their response toward participation once in their roles as faculty.

In summary, the FEM is proposed as a model where faculty engagement is central. The institutional, personal, and professional dimensions account for multiple factors explaining why faculty engage with the community in their academic role. Several studies exemplify the use of FEM to explore faculty engagement. For instance, Dierberger (2021) investigated faculty's motivation and persistence in service-learning partnerships with P-12 teachers. The personal and professional dimensions best-explained participants' persistence in SL, namely, their commitment to community service and the value that such activities have in their profession.

Similarly, Russell-Stamp (2015) sought to shed light on faculty's motivations for engaging in SL in a regional and open-enrollment teaching university, where more than half of the faculty are contingent (e.g., part-time, and found that faculty with less SL experience found SL to be useful to the community being served while those with more experience saw more benefits for their students. In addition, faculty were aware of the support provided at the institution level for SL endeavors, which was congruent with the university's commitment to SL. However, contingent faculty were less informed than tenured/tenure-track faculty of resources, most likely because they are often excluded from meetings in which information is disseminated (e.g., department meetings). These results highlight how faculty's rank and prior experience with SL can determine their participation in SL.

Other investigations have also explored the topic of faculty's motivation for engagement, though not with the FEM framework. Moore and Ward (2014) describe elements impacting faculty decision-making to be influenced by both personal and professional motivators. This is illustrated by designing projects that positively impact communities within their sphere. In addition, administrative support for SL and community engagement weigh heavily when

considering pedagogical choices. Similarly, O'Meara & Niehaus (2009) described potential motivators for faculty integration of SL as “demographics, identity and life experiences; epistemology and personal goals; institutional contexts, disciplinary and department contexts, and faculty relationships with community partners” (p. 19). As such, SL pedagogy may be utilized to reflect elements of personal identity as well as the institution's stated mission. These results demonstrate the processes by which faculty consider how SL experiences will support students in gaining authentic experience to apply to future career settings.

Using structured, supportive faculty development programs have also been identified as a comprehensive strategy to increase the overall integration of SL pedagogy into campus culture. This could include support for course development, research project design, and/or establishing community partnerships. Additionally, collaboration among faculty has been identified as a strategy to enhance the experiences of faculty and students further engaged in service learning (Stevens & Jamison, 2012). Cazzell, Theriot, Blakey, and Sattler (2014) report on one such initiative to engage faculty: an SL faculty fellow program. In this program, university faculty from various fields worked together over one year to grow a community of SL educators. The program educated the faculty, supported them in developing SL courses, fostered research, and encouraged meaningful community partnerships. Besides seeking to work closely with these individual faculty members, the program hoped the participants would encourage and educate other faculty on SL. For the duration of the program, participants engaged in such tasks as critical (written) reflections and group discussions, which were qualitatively analyzed. Data were first separated into those produced prior to participation in the program and after. The analysis of pre-SL data identified recurrent themes, namely, anticipatory integration (i.e., nervousness for changes to come), the constant search for clarification (i.e., a search for an SL definition and implementation practices), and the move from “me” to “we” (i.e., finding practices that benefit all students). Post-SL data converged in three themes: conflict between expectation and reality (i.e., handling ambiguity and unexpected events in SL), searching for relevance in service-learning (i.e., identifying individual motivations for SL), and deconstruction of professional self (i.e., having less of a rigid role as a professor). This work highlights the transformative effect of the FFP as faculty grew and developed their knowledge of SL.

## **Historical Background: Service Learning on Campus**

This article uses the case of one higher education institution, the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO), to demonstrate how the campus uses an SL-centered FFP as one way to achieve its institutional mission. UNO is the largest university in the state's largest city, with a metropolitan statistical area of over one million residents. Omaha is home to most of the large businesses in the state. It is a transport, finance, food processing, agriculture, healthcare, construction, and education hub between Des Moines, Kansas City, Chicago, and Denver. UNO enrolls more than 15,000 students, many of whom are first-generation. It is also the most ethnically diverse

campus, with many transfer and non-traditional students. UNO is a Carnegie R2 (High Research Activity) classification and a PhD-granting institution but is not the flagship land grant campus within the three-campus Nebraska system.

As a metropolitan university, UNO boasts a long history of connecting students to community partners, both for and nonprofit; however, a centralized approach to supporting and growing SL at UNO can be traced to 1999 when the campus earned a \$29,575 start-up grant from a statewide SL consortium (Leach & Bacon, 1999). To continue the work, the campus contributed resources to establish the Service Learning Academy (SLA), a unit created to support the development of academic SL courses that would engage students in the Omaha community in their classes while meeting the campus' metropolitan mission. This effort resulted in significant SL course growth, from eight courses in 1999 to 255 in 2021-2022, facilitated by a partially dedicated faculty director role and a full-time staff position to connect community agencies with faculty members.

Expanding the program to the P-12 school system brought another growth phase. Spurred by a community assessment (SRI, 2007) and culminating in the creation of a stand-alone nonprofit organization, many members of the Omaha philanthropic community began to focus their funding efforts on student disengagement, declining attendance, and graduation rates in P-12 community schools. The nonprofit organization Building Bright Futures identified and/or created a myriad of community resources and strategies to impact student trajectory (SRI, 2007). Among these strategies was one curricular intervention for P-16 SL, which provided private funds to further develop the university's SLA, including hiring a P-16 coordinator in 2008 (Dierberger, 2015). The coordinator aided in the development of many SL projects and seminars for both university faculty and P-12 teachers. These early efforts culminated in two SL curricular tracks that the SLA oversees: the "traditional" approach includes a university-level course and community partner. In contrast, the "P-16" model comprises a community partner and a university and P-12 (elementary or secondary school-aged) courses.

Today, over 255 SL courses are taught at UNO annually across six colleges. Tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty, lecturers, and adjunct instructors all teach SL courses, which provide opportunities to connect students with the broader Omaha community beyond campus. Support includes guidance on SL course design and implementation, graduate assistant support for faculty offering SL courses, and programming such as a weeklong summer boot camp to train faculty in SL course design and connect faculty with community partners and an SL showcase event to thank and highlight community partners.

### **A New Initiative: Faculty Fellow Program (FFP)**

The UNO SL FFP was born from the results of the campus' SLA academic program review, which integrated feedback from various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students,

administration, community partners, and SLA employees. While serving an integral role in meeting the university's mission, recommendations centered on the need to increase the impact of community engagement by increasing the number of SL courses, expanding faculty development opportunities, and enhancing community partnerships. Faculty-specific recommendations included reducing barriers to entry and incentivizing continued commitment. The FFP was re-designed to address each of these recommendations strategically. This re-design included the allocation of funds to support each fellow. Faculty currently integrating SL pedagogy and demonstrated leadership potential were identified in collaboration with university Deans and School/Department Directors and Chairs, shifting to a shared and collective responsibility model. In addition to identifying college-specific objectives, this interdisciplinary group collaborated to form a community of scholars to disseminate information related to community-engaged work via conference presentations and manuscript submissions.

After over two decades of work to engage faculty, staff, and students in the SLA's work, the staff and campus leadership determined strong pockets of SL existed on campus, but opportunities to increase knowledge of, and use of, the SLA's resources remained. As part of a campus-wide strategic planning process called "Big Ideas," it was determined that service learning was a strength of the campus, but growing it further required a new approach. And importantly, there was not one approach or solution needed across campus. Each college, and often, each department had a different experience and trajectory with SL.

There needed to be an interdisciplinary approach to advance all campuses toward greater SL utilization. To achieve this, a goal of embedding one faculty member in each of the six colleges was developed. Each faculty member would serve as a conduit between their home college and the SLA—an advocate/educator for SL among the faculty of that college and a connection for SL opportunities within the community to the college. With this idea, the SL FFP was born.

The specific goals of the program were two-fold for each faculty fellow. First, to work collaboratively with SLA staff, strengthen and expand service learning/community engagement connections and partnerships with specific Big Ideas (campus-wide strategic planning goals) and colleges. And second, to serve as a liaison/resource for faculty/staff in the college to initiate, strengthen, and/or expand service learning and community engagement instruction and scholarship.

As a resource to the college, each faculty fellow was asked to serve one to two hours per week for ten months and received a stipend. To recruit the fellows, each college's Dean was contacted asking for three individuals with 1) experience with SL/CBL; 2) interest in serving as a liaison/mentor to faculty to expand and/or deepen SL/CBL offerings within the college; and 3) experience with engaging faculty members in new initiatives and/or someone who has skills that the Dean believed would make this person successful. In practice, this e-mail communication



often was forwarded to chairs and departments, and self-nomination was standard. Upon nomination to the Dean, each candidate was asked to provide a CV and a letter of interest to the SLA director. The director then conducted interview conversations and made a recommendation to each college's Dean. Six faculty fellows, one from each college, began as the first cohort in late 2020.

Throughout the year, faculty fellows met regularly as a group, with members of the SLA and with members of their respective colleges to set goals, priorities, and discuss challenges and opportunities. The next section of this paper details the opportunities and challenges of each college upon beginning the FFP.

## **Opportunities and Challenges Prior to the Faculty Fellow Program**

Each college faced different opportunities and challenges before the faculty FFP, which informed each college's strategic priorities. The College of Business Administration (CBA) confronted a tumultuous relationship with the terminology of SL at the beginning of the fellow program. The college offered many long-standing live case projects partnered with various community and business organizations, including undergraduate and graduate-level capstone courses. However, at some point, the college believed they were not credited with doing SL-based work because it was not always in partnership with a nonprofit. Thus, reporting of these efforts was not up to date, which caused several challenges. For example, the lack of accurate reporting hindered an ongoing campus effort to detail this type of community-based work on a public website. In addition, a change in the college's accreditation process now required a focus on community impact. Thus, the primary goals for the college at the program's start were improving awareness, recognition, and reporting of SL/CBL in the college, and tactics revolved around faculty education and improved data collection.

The College of Public Affairs and Community Service (CPACS) has a historic and enduring commitment to traditionally defined SL and community-engaged research and teaching. Despite this culture, the faculty fellow began the fellowship by meeting with the college Dean to discuss service-learning priorities for the college. Ultimately, four key priorities were identified: to 1) better understand which teaching and research incentives would influence faculty participation in SL teaching and research; 2) tell the story of SL in their college through social media and other outlets to amplify the work CPACS is already doing; 3) talk to new and more experienced faculty about SL possibilities; and 4) learn from colleagues in other colleges about what initiatives have worked well. These priorities then evolved over the course of the year after conversations with faculty and staff.

Similarly, the process for identifying the priorities for the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences (CEHHS) began with communication with the Assistant Dean to identify how

SL was implemented throughout the college. Previous annual report data were utilized to determine the total number of SL courses being taught by CEHHS faculty. Priorities/goals were identified, including gathering data to determine faculty perceptions about the benefits of, and barriers to, integration of SL; highlighting student experiences with SL; discussing strategies to increase student awareness of SL courses within CEHHS as well as general education courses; and increase awareness of faculty development opportunities and support provided by the SLA.

The College of Information Sciences and Technology (IS&T) offered about a dozen SL/CBL courses, most through a single department. A long-running six-credit capstone course was the crown jewel with student ownership of real stakeholder problems and barriers to overcome. This capstone project facilitated community partnerships with small family businesses and nonprofits and utilized students to connect the college with outside partners. Beyond this course, obstacles remained in the college to grow the SL-based curriculum. Primary among these was finding community partners and identifying projects that mimic the development and work world the students encountered after graduation. Therefore, many of the college's SL courses utilized partners from campus-associated organizations or smaller departments within larger companies. College challenges to growing SL included: (a) overhauling the course syllabus and structure to accommodate service-learning or community-driven projects, (b) “culture shock” to work directly with community partners that have real needs, and (c) lack of collaboration skills among large groups of students working on a single project. The faculty engaged in SL within the college were committed, finding that SL helps students’ exposure to real-world data that is not pristinely curated and mimics the real world that students encounter after graduation. This makes SL projects much more exciting than the dry book project most of the STEM students are used to.

The College of Communication, Fine Arts, and Media (CFAM) already had the strongest turnout of faculty teaching SL on campus, largely in the Schools of Communication and Music. Thus, in consultation with the Dean, the college prioritized sustaining existing SL teaching. Goals include: 1) promoting the roll-out of a Community Engaged Scholar Transcript Designation (CESTD) program to eligible students enrolled in SL courses; 2) backdating past courses which were delivered in an SL model but not designated as such; 3) more visible marketing of existing SL courses, especially newly designed SL courses developed for “totally online” delivery during the mandated online learning phase of COVID-19.

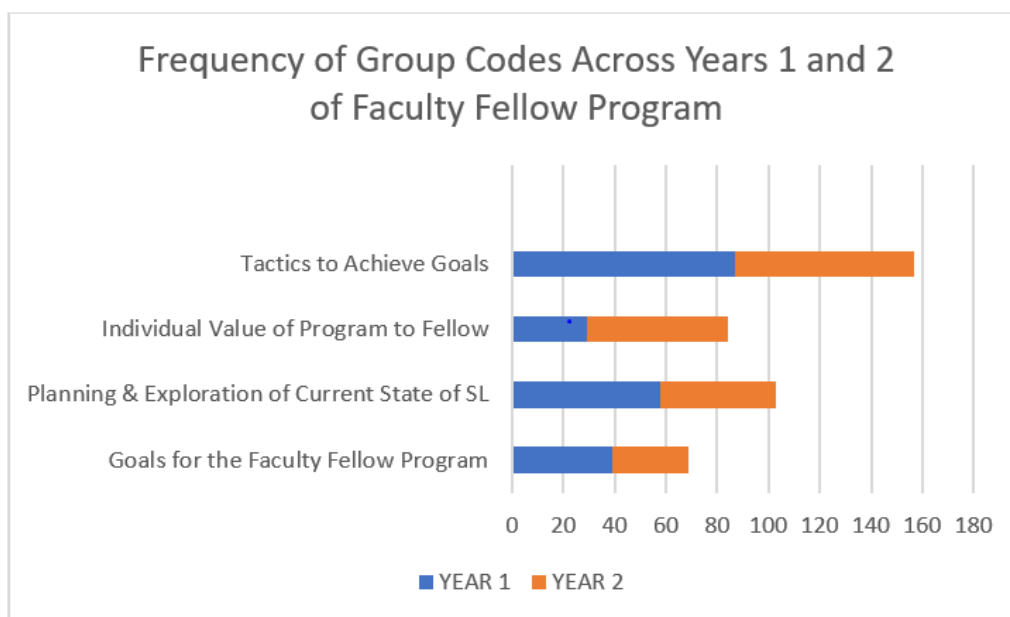
The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) is the largest college at UNO. It includes faculty from often unrelated fields, e.g., languages and math. With such large numbers of diverse faculty, at the launch of the FFP, there were many levels of commitment to SL among the CAS faculty. Some faculty had been involved with the community through SL for years; others were wary of being involved in activities often seen as time-consuming and less fruitful regarding promotion or tenure outcomes. Lastly, other individuals had had unsuccessful SL projects and did not want

to repeat the experience. Because of the COVID pandemic, many faculty felt that SL was not an option since many courses were offered online or remotely. Based on this context, in working with the college's Dean, it was decided that an excellent first step in the FFP was to promote SL. In particular, the Dean suggested highlighting stories of successful SL projects during the pandemic. Thus, an information campaign was designed to promote SL, which highlighted successful SL experiences in the college, and proposed new SL projects that could be easily incorporated into most undergraduate courses.

Finally, the College of Engineering is dually located between two universities within the state system: the flagship land grant university, the University of Nebraska Lincoln, and UNO. Due to the dual campus nature of the college, it was not until the second year of the SL/CBL FFP that an engineering faculty began participating in the program. Before they participated in the SLA, the College of Engineering had identified three SL courses. With assistance from the fellow, the college began to identify more courses that might be labeled as SL. This process was carried out by identifying classes that use real-world community projects as a backdrop to teaching fundamental engineering information. Both the community and students benefit from the students' analyses and participation. The college is also evaluating how to incorporate engagement into faculty apportionment so that the scholarship of engagement and community service is incorporated into the promotion and tenure process. This change could incentivize more involvement and buy-in from faculty.

## **Methodology and Results**

Each faculty fellow filed an end-of-year report for the program resulting in 13 reflections across the program's first two years (2020-2022). These were open-text documents organized around three aspects of the program specific to each college: 1) priorities and goals, 2) activities planned or undertaken, and 3) the fellow's reflection on the year. Each college report was analyzed in Atlas TI qualitative software using thematic open coding, resulting in 91 coded quotations in year one and 129 in year two. In total, 44 unique codes were created. Next, codes and corresponding quotations were reviewed, and related codes were combined into groups. Figure 1 shows the code grouping frequency across both years of the program, and Table 1 details the types of sub-codes in each group. Themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of the fellows' reflections. The following section explores these thematic breakdowns across colleges and program years.



**FIGURE 1.** Frequency of group codes across years 1 and 2 of the FFP.

**TABLE 1.** Description of group codes

Goals for the Faculty Fellow Program	Understanding SL in the College, Impacting SL Awareness and Perceptions, Growing SL, Student Focus and Perceptions
Planning and Exploration of Current State of SL	Understanding Faculty Perceptions, SL Data Collection, Current State of SL in College, Planning, Ongoing Process, Pandemic/Difficulty of SL
Individual Value of Program to Fellow	Impact on Personal Motivation, Personal Growth, Personal Value, SL Scholarship, Faculty Fellow Cohort/Program Value, Institutional Learning
Tactics to Achieve Goals	Communicating with Stakeholders: Faculty, Staff, Community Partners, Chairs & Directors, Advisors, Students; Creating Publicity Materials, Incentivizing Faculty, Determining Best Practices, Collecting Data, Improving Resources, Creating Course Templates, Liaising to SL Resources

## Year One Themes

The analysis pointed to seven relevant and frequent themes for year one: focus on faculty, chairs, and directors; ongoing efforts; cohort effect; publicizing success; personal connections; differences among colleges; and personal value to fellows. Each theme is explained below.

### Focus on Family, Chairs, and Directors

Only a handful of codes related to student-focused priorities or actions in year one, such as recruiting students for the SL graduation designation. Instead, fellows focused on the faculty's needs and administrators' goals.

### Ongoing Efforts

The codes showed a balance between current activities and forthcoming actions, clearly showing that the goals outlined were in progress and specific activities were to continue beyond the program's first-year end date. Much of this was likely due to all the first-year fellows agreeing to continue in the role for a second year at the time of report writing.

### Cohort Effect

The codes show a cohort effect, with many references to adopting actions learned from other fellows, intentions to explore SL practices from other colleges, or reflections of prior bias or presumed college SL superiority before the program. This speaks of the benefit of working with colleagues from other disciplines who can infuse new ideas.

### Focus on Publicizing Existing Success

Most tactics are related to leveraging existing SL work and successes to grow interested and awareness of SL among constituencies. These tactics varied widely from creating social media posts and other forms of publicity (the largest category) to hosting webinars; highlighting existing projects at college or department meetings; or adding projects to an existing university database. Clearly, all fellows believed the work of SL in their colleges was not well understood or appreciated, and there was an opportunity to address the lack of knowledge of SL across campus.

### Personal Connections

Each fellow detailed the strategic planning process undertaken with the college administration to impact SL adoption meaningfully. While some actions were large-scale (e.g., presentations to the entire college, college-wide data collection surveys, etc.), all fellows relied on personal approaches. Meetings with individual faculty, administrators, staff, and community members drove specific gains, including enhanced resources, new class projects and partners, publicity materials, and scholarship outputs. The reports indicate that fellows relied on personal sales as a tactic to drive goal achievement.

### Differences Among Colleges

While the goals across colleges were often overlapping, sometimes they were unique. For example, one college focused heavily on improving data collection. Another narrowed in on student recruitment and advising for SL courses. The tactics were widely divergent, but all employed some form of publicity for existing SL work in the college to grow awareness and interest.

### Personal Value to Fellows

While the role was envisioned as a service to the college and university, fellows noted their satisfaction and growth due to involvement. Multiple fellows noted scholastic publications or projects undertaken due to their involvement. Others noted their pride and increased motivation after encountering student and faculty SL success stories. Yet others noted the professional growth from being better connected across campus to people and resources.

### Year Two Themes

The analysis of reflections for the second year of the FFP resulted in these themes: strategic shift to one-on-one meetings; enlisting campus SL staff; focusing on students; fellow continuity; and tracing similarities across colleges. Each theme is described below.

#### Strategic Shift to One-on-One Meetings

The second year brought new strategies. One faculty fellow spoke of changing her approach from “top-down,” utilizing college channels of communication (e.g., newsletters, meetings, chairs), to “bottom-up,” meeting one-on-one with faculty, potential community partners, and serving as a liaison between these groups and SL staff and resources. For example, one fellow created personalized suggestions of SL projects for faculty based on the next semester’s teaching schedule. Another personally recruited new faculty for an SL learning program. This theme is consistent with year one’s *personal connection* theme, where the benefit was found in personal outreach to meet program goals.

#### Move to Enlist Campus SL Staff

Also evident in year two was a move to involve the campus SL staff and campus SL events in college-based programming. Most fellows tried connecting faculty with the SL staff and resources to further the college’s SL goals. Among the most common tactics were inviting SL staff to webinars, meetings, and other promotional/educational events and advertising SL-hosted events like the summer seminar to college faculty and staff. Also noted by multiple fellows were benefits incurred from attending campus SL events, such as a spring showcase, lunch and learns or other programming. The benefits were often personal—awareness of opportunities or

resources—then applicable to others in the college through the fellow. There was also an increase in SL scholarship among faculty fellows personally and in their planning and tactics, indicating an increase in awareness and willingness to connect classroom engagement to engaged scholarship. These initiatives ranged from a fellow working to create an SL lab space from grant funding to multiple conferences and papers published based on fellows' SL experiences.

### Increased Focus on Students

Year two also saw an increased focus on students. This was primarily driven by an effort to increase awareness and applications for the SL student transcript designation—where students who participate in SL/CBL learning and volunteerism can be awarded a graduation designation. Efforts to promote the designation to students, educate and liaise with college-based advising, and create listings and handouts to designate eligible classes were among these efforts. Moreover, other student-focused efforts emerged in year two, including creating C modules in the university's learning management system to explain the motivation and buy-in for SL projects among students and efforts to improve diversity, equity, access, and inclusion for students in SL courses.

### Fellow Continuity

Finally, year two reflections provided robust support for the continuity of fellow appointments into a second year. Many noted the increased institutional and personal benefit of working with and learning from the same set of faculty fellows from year one. It was pointed out that personal growth and value came from developing relationships across colleges. A group SL scholarship project was a tangible outcome of this continuity and regular fellow zoom meetings. This theme is very similar to the *cohort* theme in year one.

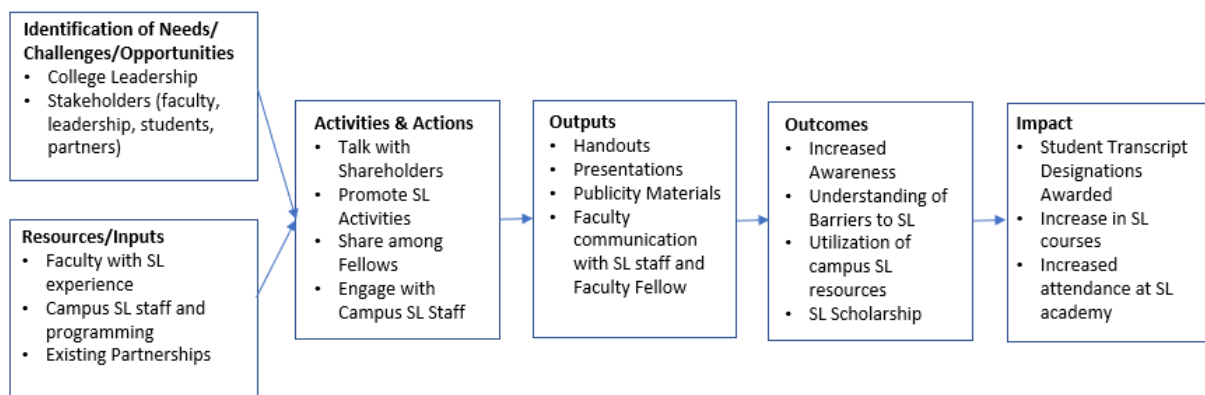
### Similarities Among Colleges

Akin to year one, no two colleges shared the exact same goals, tactics, or outcomes; however, year two did see increased overlap. Many colleges worked to advance the transcript designation and provide templates or best practices to faculty, increase data collection, and better understand current SL practices in their college. While differences were present, the regular contact of the fellows via Zoom meetings and their increased connection to the SL staff via campus-wide SL programming impacted strategies and actions. Fellows noted that they learned and borrowed from each other, evident in reflections, with more continuity among colleges than in year one. In effect, the fellows were developing and sharing best practices for the Fellow program in year two with each other.

Overall, the thematic analysis of fellows’ reflections demonstrates changes in strategies and collaboration patterns across the two years of the FFP. In the early days, fellows’ activities were guided mostly by administrators’ goals for their units. Over time, there was a shift where faculty fellows turned their attention to their peers’ and students’ needs and tried to work with them on a more personal level. Fellows also shared and learned from each other. Thus, although they were from divergent disciplines, they found commonalities with each other when working together for a common goal.

## Discussion

After analyzing the end-of-year reflections of two years of the faculty fellow program, a model of the program was created (see Figure 2). This model shows the process of determining the program's goals for each college coupled with campus and college-specific resources resulting in specific actions and activities taken by fellows and the resulting outputs, outcomes, and impact of the program. Following this model, specific outcomes are described within each college to illustrate the decentralized approach to the FFP further.



**FIGURE 2.** Faculty fellow model at UNO.

## Outcomes of the Program

Various outcomes were accomplished within the first two years of the pilot. The program’s first goal was to work collaboratively with SLA staff to strengthen and expand SL connections within the colleges. Two colleges were able to identify courses utilizing SL but not designated as such. These courses were backdated with an SL designation to better assist students working toward the Community Engaged Scholar Transcript Designation (CESTD) and to help faculty market the SL they were already doing. Colleges doing community engagement were also brought to SLA staff attention to better capture the breadth of engagement occurring on campus. Fellows also collaborated with SLA staff to conduct original research in the field of SL and community engagement ranging from manuscripts to regional and national conference presentations.



The program's second goal was to have each fellow serve as a liaison for faculty and staff to initiate, strengthen, and expand SL within their college. Most of the program's outcomes were nested under this goal. Three colleges distributed a survey to all faculty to solicit SL perceptions and used the data to steer goals for the program's second year. Three colleges also conducted presentations to faculty about SL teaching opportunities as well as the transcript designation (CESTD) program for students, and one college did a community presentation on its college engagement. All colleges could spotlight active SL courses and SL pedagogy tips in various mediums, including college newsletters, social media campaigns, and word-of-mouth marketing and outreach to non-SL faculty. Notably, two colleges also found the benefit of spreading SL course awareness directly to academic advisors in searching for SL courses, enrolling in the CESTD program, and discussing SL with first-year students during orientation. Two colleges also accomplished monetary outcomes. Once considered the possibility of incentivizing faculty to teach SL in future SLA iterations, another applied for and was awarded a grant in community engagement to continue a course-based community project begun during the program's first year.

## Impact of the Cohort Approach

While the faculty fellow program at UNO was designed to be decentralized and college-specific, it was also designed as a cohort-based program. Cohort approaches learning have been evaluated in graduate education. However, few studies assess the efficacy of cohort-based learning for faculty development. Nevertheless, many of the same benefits from student cohort learning experiences are expected to apply to faculty. Those benefits include the development of peer networks and the construction of opportunities for collaborative learning (Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2020).

In this cohort-based approach, SL fellows met monthly via Zoom. At each meeting, fellows had an opportunity to provide updates on their progress and receive feedback from other cohort members and the SL academy staff. This peer networking allowed fellows to consider new ideas and learn about other community needs. One of the outcomes across the colleges was developing a shared understanding and definition for SL, which allows colleges to recognize that some ongoing activities could be classified as SL. These regular meetings influenced the tactics and accountability of the fellows and increased the output. All original fellows elected to serve a second year, generating an increased sense of unity, willingness to share and learn from each other, and multiple scholarly projects among fellows. Multiple fellows noted that their goals and tactics shifted in year two in direct response to other fellows' actions, successes, and challenges.

## Conclusion

The SL Faculty Fellow Program at UNO is distinct from other programs because its decentralized structure is intended to tailor an approach to the needs, challenges, and opportunities of each campus' college units. This structure allowed for great variety among goals, tactics, and outcomes. Yet, across two years of the program, evidence of increased conformity emerges, with fellows learning from each other and adopting common behaviors such as one-on-one mentoring and faculty and staff outreach. The program, as described, could be implemented at any university because of its decentralized structure and ability to adjust to the needs of any specific college or unit.

To be successful at other sites, the support of the campus to fund and prioritize faculty engagement is critical. Each fellow received a stipend for their work, and campus SL staff provided a regular meeting schedule to ensure motivation and group accountability. Without a program owner to recruit fellows, act as a resource for fellows, and ensure buy-in from college leadership, the program could not achieve its end goals as effectively.

The cohort-based impact of the program also proved important. Most initiatives undertaken were not completed in a single year. Retaining faculty for a second year allowed faculty to learn from each other, adjust tactics, re-evaluate goals, and achieve measurable results. Campus SL leaders emphasized the measurability of results. The ability to show increased SL courses, grants, publications, meetings, publicity, and attendance at SLA programming was viewed as a means of showing the value of the faculty fellow program and ensuring its continued existence. After two years, the program was funded again, speaking to the success of the endeavor and its fellows.

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