

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FAQ

Joseph Heathcott, Faculty Director

Department Summary

The Office of Civic Engagement (OCE) reports to the Dean and is primarily responsible for connecting students to community-based learning through public service opportunities in New York and beyond. Most civic engagement programming unfolds through carefully delineated partnerships with non-profits, community groups, grass roots organizations, and government agencies. Programs developed by the OCE reach beyond the framework of traditional service internships to promote interdisciplinary curriculum, long-term social investment, and mutual student-community action. The day to day functions of the office include: establishing and maintaining community partnerships; developing and evaluating civic engagement programs; creating courses and new curriculum rubrics; recruiting and supporting full time faculty to incorporate civic engagement in their teaching; recruiting new part-time faculty; consulting with organizations, centers, and institutions at local and national levels; and raising funds to support ongoing initiatives.

What is Civic Engagement?

Civic engagement in the university context is the active involvement of students in the life of communities at a variety of scales (local, national, international) through organizations, institutions, and government agencies, supported by broad-based curriculum development.

What kinds of activities does the Office of Civic Engagement promote?

1. Courses mounted to advance the programming and mission of partner institutions, either as part of the routine functions of the organization or as special projects undertaken for the course.
2. Joint public programming with community partners: speakers, artists, film series, concerts, and other events.
3. Practicum opportunities for Lang students who might assist community partners with organization building, research, service provision, exhibitions, special projects, media action, and outreach.
4. Scholarships for students interested in coming to Lang College around a particular interest, theme or subject matter.
5. Group or individual senior work around a particular theme or topic in partnership with a community organization.
6. New curriculum initiatives around focused interdisciplinary areas of study such as food security, housing and shelter, immigration, critical literacy studies, and human rights

What is Project Pericles?

Project Pericles is a national consortium of colleges and universities dedicated to placing civic engagement at the core of Liberal Arts education. Headquartered in New York City, Project Pericles was founded in 2001 by businessman and entrepreneur Eugene Lang. Eugene Lang College is a member of Project Pericles.

What is Service Learning?

Service learning involves a course or internship devoted to a specific project that serves the need of a community organization or institution. This is the most basic and common model adopted by universities for student learning beyond the classroom, and it tends to be organized around short-term projects and partnerships.

What is the difference between an internship and a practicum?

At Eugene Lang College, an internship is defined as the placement of an individual student at a site such as a museum, gallery, agency, or organization, with the primary focus being on the vocational and skill development of the student. A practicum is defined as the placement of a student or group of students at a site where the primary focus is public service or community activism. Often the practicum is linked to a seminar taken by the same students, either in a sequence with the practicum (one in the fall and one in the spring) or simultaneously with the practicum.

What is a studio course?

Many civic engagement courses take the form of a project-based studio. A studio is a method of instruction geared toward process learning, problem solving, continual feedback and critique, and group work. The studio usually revolves around a common problem that students work on both individually and in groups over the course of the semester.

What kinds of organizations does the Office of Civic Engagement work with?

The OCE works with a wide variety of entities, including but not limited to non-profit organizations, community development corporations, grass roots groups, government agencies, political offices, public interest groups, coalitions, cultural institutions, and other universities.

Who do I contact about forming a community partnership?

Contact: Joseph Heathcott

Who do I contact about new curriculum initiatives with a civic engagement component?

Contact: Joseph Heathcott

Who do I contact about budget or payment issues related to civic engagement programs?

Contact: Joseph Heathcott

What are Civic Engagement Course Grants?

Contact: Joseph Heathcott

Funds are available on a competitive basis for full-time faculty in any concentration, and may be used for retooling existing courses or for developing new ones. The primary objective of this program is to create a roster of project-based courses connected to community partnerships that will rotate through Eugene Lang College on a regular basis.

Who do I contact about faculty opportunities in civic engagement?

Contact: Joseph Heathcott

Who do I contact about the Minor in Civic Engagement?

Contact: Joseph Heathcott

The OCE is developing a college-wide minor in civic engagement to supplement students' major areas of study. The curriculum examines the nature of social action in a democratic society, the history of movements for reform and social change, and the possibilities for civic involvement in an increasingly global age.

Who do I contact about Institute for Urban Education programs?

Contact: Tara Niarula

The IUE is an interdisciplinary center for engagement related to youth development, public education, and college readiness. The goals are to develop and leverage university resources to prepare young adults for college, train college students as civic leaders through experiential learning, and support exchange among educators and youth-serving organizations.

Who do I contact about the Ruane Practicum in Literacy?

Contact: Robert Perry

Through the Ruane Practicum in Literacy, students have the opportunity to participate in a literacy program for first-grade students attending schools in Harlem and/or Washington Heights.

Who do I contact about the I Have A Dream Program?

Contact: Ella Turenne

Through a range of courses and internships, The I Have A Dream Foundation Program allows students to work with elementary school aged youth at the Chelsea-Elliott School in the areas of theatre, dance, documentary filmmaking, psychology and community gardening.

Who do I contact about the New School Debate Team?

Contact: Ella Turenne

The debate team is an especially apt way of promoting engagement and dialogue at the New School. Debate at Lang College bridges students' lively interest in discussion of issues of social importance and their desire to have a greater connection to the New School community.

Who do I contact about civic engagement opportunities in the sciences?

Contact: Bhawani Venkataraman

The Office of Civic Engagement is working closely with Interdisciplinary Sciences to build opportunities for students and faculty to apply scientific modes of inquiry toward the public good. For example, through collaboration with the New York Stem Cell Foundation, students examine the science of genetic engineering and formulate policy reports and action plans around specific issues.

Who do I contact about civic engagement opportunities in environmental studies?

Contact: Nevin Cohen

Initiatives under development include food studies and agricultural policy, sustainable design practices, and environmental action. A new collaboration with Parsons School of Design introduces a "Watershed Lab" in partnership with the Black Rock Forest Research Station and the City of New York's Water Division.

Who do I contact about Teaching English as a Second or Other Language?

Contact: Joseph Heathcott

Language and literacy are key elements in the health of a democracy, and given the historic commitment to democracy by the New School, critical literacy studies will become a key area of programming. Through a new program called "New City, New Words," Lang students will learn methods of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) while also examining the contemporary immigrant experience of the city's Lower East Side neighborhood.

Who do I contact about the Women in Need partnership?

Contact: Joseph Heathcott

Through a partnership with Women in Need (WIN), students can engage in the issue of homelessness via courses and field experiences. WIN is a major non-profit organization that operates a range of programs including shelter, supportive permanent housing, job training, domestic violence refuge, substance abuse treatment and childcare.

Who do I contact about the Lang Prison Initiative?

Contact: Ella Turenne

Eugene Lang College is involved with two programs based in carceral institutions. At Island Academy, the high school at Rikers Island, Lang Students and faculty have the opportunity to work with incarcerated youth on specific content-driven course material. At Arthur Kill Correctional Facility, Lang College offers courses to inmates on a credit basis, and provides them with space in the New School student newspaper.

Who do I contact about the New Orleans Katrina Recovery Program?

Contact: Ella Turenne

This course examines the events surrounding the Hurricane Katrina disaster, its aftermath, and the long-term recovery of Gulf Coastal communities. Students read background material on the history, politics, social landscape, and economy of New Orleans. They work collaboratively on research, advocacy, and social action projects. During Spring Break, students travel to New Orleans to complete field research and engage in efforts to rebuild the city.

Who do I contact about civic engagement opportunities beyond Lang?

Contact: Bertha Peralta

Eugene Lang College promotes national and local service opportunities including City Year, AmeriCorps, VISTA, Teach For America, Peace Corps, New York City Teaching Fellows, and New York City Public Service Corps.