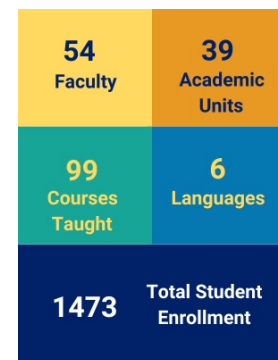


**Duke Service-Learning:
Context, Connections, Collaborations**

Community-engaged pedagogies intertwine community experiences, academic concepts, and critical reflection through integrative learning and thereby provide a unique opportunity to advance Duke’s mission of “transformative experiences that disrupt default ways of seeing, thinking, and doing” (“Duke University Strategy”, 2022, p. 25). Duke supports a rich network of virtual and in-person community-engaged opportunities that include: curricular and co-curricular programs, technical and cultural experiences, undergraduate research, and student organizations. Duke Service-Learning’s primary mission is to support faculty in their goals for transformative student learning in the context of community. In service-learning and community-engaged (SLCE) courses, faculty and students deepen critical consciousness about our local and global communities by engaging in critical reflection that connects course content to the SLCE experience.

In 2023, Duke University was ranked #3 in the nation among national service-learning programs ([US News & World Report](#)). Quality courses across disciplines resulted in 40% of Duke 2023 graduates completing at least one SLCE course during their undergraduate career. In 2022-2023, the Duke Service-Learning team supported 54 faculty and 1473 students within 99 courses taught. Of note is that over 200 students enrolled in more than one service-learning or community-engaged course. Providing our students with opportunities to integrate work across disciplines and to think deeply about the intersectionality underlying many of our social challenges, the courses span 39 academic units from Trinity College (including the Global Health Institute, Kenan Institute of Ethics, Nicholas School of the Environment, Sanford School of Public Policy) and Pratt School of Engineering and were taught in six languages, including English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Hindi, and Chinese.



2022-2023 By the Numbers

Contexts: Course Models

Our Service-Learning and Community-Engaged (SLCE) courses are designed to meet two criteria: to enhance the educational goals of the course and to serve the public good by providing a community-defined service or mutually beneficial interaction with individuals, organizations, schools, and other local entities. There are two strands of courses that Duke Service-Learning supports: service-learning courses and community-engaged courses.

Key components of the service-learning course model include: a minimum of 20-hours of service connected to course content and structured critical reflection. The service-learning component follows either the *direct* or the *indirect* service model. The direct service model creates opportunities for students to interact one-on-one with community members or staff at a community organization. For example, students in Professor Jehanne Gheith’s

Education 112FS course “Medical Ethics, Aging, and End of Life Care in the US” spent time with patients in hospice care. Students in Professor David Schaad’s Civil and Environmental Engineering 315-20 applied design principles and built prototypes for deliverables such as a pedestrian bridge. The indirect service model encompasses research, evaluation, creation of educational materials, design of websites, or other deliverables that are prepared by the students following the request of the community agency. Depending on the project, the deliverable might be presented to the organization or disseminated in print or online. The students in Professor Andrew Nurkin’s Public Policy 298 course, “Authentic Leadership in Private, Public, and Not-for-Profit Organizations” participated in direct service but also researched grants and concepts for the administrative infrastructure at Iglesia Emanuel, a local church that distributes food boxes to over 600 families each week and offers tutoring to K-12 Latinx students. Another example of indirect service are the educational modules that Professor Minna Ng’s students from Neuroscience 444S, “Neuroscience Service Learning: Brain Connections” prepared for the Durham YMCA. The educational modules provide instructions, handouts, and lists of supplies needed to complete the hands-on activity for “Brain Day” so that both Duke students and site coordinators may facilitate the modules.

The second type of course that Duke Service-Learning supports is a community-engaged course that includes meaningful interactions with community and critical reflection but does not require a minimum of hours nor does it require that students interact with community in a service partnership. The community relationship and the desired student learning outcomes in the course inform the frequency and types of interactions. For example, students may attend local government meetings to learn about community concerns or hear from local nonprofit leaders to ground their study of public policy, sociology, or cultural anthropology. Students also engage in cultural exchange, like a one night celebration with local community members for Chinese New Year. In this case, the community members are delighted to share their traditions and converse about the celebration and the students gain an opportunity to learn beyond the classroom walls. Another example of community-based learning is the two-course First-year Design sequence in Pratt School of Engineering in which students build engineering and technical solutions for client-based problems. These students learn professional skills to develop projects that benefit the community within Duke and beyond.



Connections: Course and Community-Building

To support our commitment to critical and equity-centered community engagement, Duke Service-Learning offers a variety of services and opportunities for professional and

personal development to faculty, staff, students, and community members. Faculty are invited to meet with consultants to design their curriculum, discuss their partnerships, learn about discipline-specific models, and explore questions about SLCE pedagogy. In addition to supporting the intellectual grounding and logistical planning, Duke Service-Learning also provides financial support to SLCE courses in two ways. In 2022-23 we awarded over \$16,000 in course enhancement grants to be utilized for items such as: honoraria, transportation costs, supplies, and food for events. We also hired, trained, and monitored 17 service-learning assistants, a cohort of undergraduate and graduate students that assist the faculty with different aspects of the SLCE courses. Our programming is designed to build an intellectual community of practice that explores community-engaged pedagogies and practices. Examples of programming in 2022-23 include: [Beyond the Discourse series](#), [Contexts and Connections series](#), and the [Community Partner Breakfast and Faculty Retreat](#).



To celebrate the work of our collaborators each year we give the [Betsy Alden Outstanding Service-Learning Awards](#) to one or more senior students, a faculty member, and a community partner who have excelled in leadership, on-going commitment to academic and personal development of Duke students, collaboration on needs identified by the community, and meaningful integration of service experience with course content, among other characteristics. Award recipients are recognized at the Duke Student Affairs' *In The Spotlight Award* ceremony, as well as a dinner hosted by Duke Service-Learning. In 2022-23 we recognized [five recipients](#) with the Betsy Alden Awards for Outstanding Service-Learning. We collectively recognize our community partners at the end of the year Community Partner Breakfast.

Impact

Service-learning and community-engaged experiences span academic, personal, and civic dimensions of students' learning outcomes and when done well, allow the student to integrate learning across multiple experiences resulting in a more transformative experience. (Cress et al, 2023) The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) identifies service-learning and community-based learning as high-impact practices (HIPs) known to have significant educational and developmental benefits to students. (Kuh, 2008) Duke incorporates these HIPs into many aspects of the college experience. A recent report from The AAC&U, [The Effects of Community-Based and Civic Engagement in Higher Education: What We Know and Questions that Remain](#) (Chittum, Enke, & Finley, 2022), reviews positive outcomes of community-based pedagogies in these areas:

- increased personal and social responsibility
- development of positive mindsets and dispositions
- learning gains
- improved intellectual and practical skills
- increased career-related skills

However, the AAC&U and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) contend that simple participation in high impact practices does not necessarily result in learning for undergraduates. Transformative and highly engaged experiences require what Kuh and O'Donnell (2013) define as quality dimensions and include high expectations of undergraduate performance, intensity and duration, experiences with diversity (where students are exposed to and must connect with people and circumstances that differ from those with which the student is familiar), and structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning. Further, opportunities to discover relevance of learning through real-world applications and public demonstration of learning are critical to student engagement outcomes. Evidence suggests that exposure to multiple high quality, high impact practices increases the likelihood of an engaged, transformative undergraduate experience. (Chittum, Enke, & Finley, 2022) Bringle (2017) states that service-learning offers three key elements to integrate high-impact educational practices: reflection, partnerships, and diversity. The partnerships and exposure to diversity allow students to explore their sense of belonging and adaptability in border-crossings both on and off campus. These key elements work well within the essential features of a liberal arts education such as epistemic humility and interpreting evidence, as identified by Duke faculty and documented by the Trinity Curriculum Development Committee (2023). Community-engaged pedagogy provides students with opportunities to examine multiple perspectives and to apply theory to the real-world. Critical Service-Learning demands a reflective process that meets the student where they are so that each student may engage in a multifaceted exploration of their positionality and systemic issues of our time and place.

Looking more closely at who enrolls in Duke SLCE courses, it is informative to see that Duke Service-Learning courses attract an overrepresentation of underrepresented minority students. Also, there is a higher rate of engagement by SLCE students who graduate with distinction, receive Latin honors, and enroll in research courses.

2021-2022	All Duke Students	SLCE Students
African American Students	7.9%	11.9%
Hispanic Students	10.3%	11.3%
Caucasian Students	44%	39.7%
Graduation with Distinction	23%	26.1%
Latin Honors	31.5%	1 SLCE course: 30.3% 2 SLCE courses: 33.5% 3+ SLCE courses: 36.2%
Enrollment in Research courses	11.8%	13.1%

Examining these trends are important since emerging research focuses on the ways in which student identity impacts learning and thus, reinforces the importance of community-engaged pedagogies. According to Finley & McNair (2013) first-generation students are less likely to participate in high impact practices than non-first-generation students due to lack of familiarity with the environment and resource limitations, among other reasons. Also

informative is the National Survey of Student Engagement (Kinzie, et al. 2020) that indicates that traditionally marginalized students participated in civic engagement programs such as service-learning as often as traditionally privileged students but participated less frequently in mentored research with faculty. Given that there is often overlap and synergy between the high impact practices of academic or co-curricular community-engagement programs and mentored undergraduate research, dialogue about the quality dimensions or evidence-based practices among community-engaged and SLCE faculty could lead to a more transformative and deliberate experience for a wider range of students.

Collaborations: Future Directions

Duke Service-Learning will continue the important work of supporting Duke faculty as they innovate the intentional integration of high-impact, community-engaged practices. curriculum. SLCE courses complement the campus' renewed and emerging interests in understanding our place and time, expanding a sense of belonging and well-being, and deepening critical reflection, as they are foundational themes and practices in community-engaged



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curricula. The integrated learning opportunities and meaningful relationships formed through the SLCE experience have great potential to inform the network of interdisciplinary learning communities that explore the “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom.

Moving forward, and of particular interest to us, is how service-learning can form more connections with undergraduate research. By incorporating more research-inflected activities in select SLCE courses, it will deepen how we *partner with purpose* so that we strengthen “...relationships in Durham and serve as a collaborative catalyst in our region to our research ecosystem while improving community health, housing, and education”. (Duke University, “Partner with Purpose”, n.d.) SLCE courses are part of that research ecosystem and community-based learning offers students a direct pathway to connecting theory and praxis. Experiences in community-based research have the potential to increase understanding of human differences, confront the root causes of social issues, and through reflection and example, instill the importance of ethical and collaborative research methodologies. We support the University’s commitment to increasing research experiences in introductory courses and since approximately 50% of SLCE courses are 100 or 200 level courses each semester, we are poised to contribute to that effort. In addition to our SLCE course curricula exploring different modes of community-based research, we have been invited to collaborate with the Duke Office of Civic Engagement in Duke’s Office of Durham and Community Affairs through their Community-Engaged Scholarship Collaborative to support the community of practice in related scholarship. This partnership also includes co-authored trainings and evaluations with the Social Sciences Research Institute.

Another on-going initiative poised for growth is collaboration with our STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) departments. Duke Service-Learning has identified opportunities to expand our interactions with colleagues in STEAM who are interested in community-based learning. We created a new position in spring 2023 for a faculty member who is knowledgeable about community-based pedagogies in STEAM to network with colleagues in those fields. Professors Genna Miller and Minna Ng have worked with Duke Service-Learning as Faculty Ambassadors and their conversations have resulted in new interest in collaborating with our office. We have added new STEAM courses to our portfolio including STA 470S: Introduction to Statistical Consulting and EGR 101L: Engineering Design and Communication, a course required of all first-year students in the Pratt School of Engineering. In addition, the new course series in Climate Design, a collaboration between the Nicholas School of the Environment and the Pratt School of Engineering carry the SLCE label. Finally, we are in discussions with the emerging engagement center in Pratt to share resources and align strategies.

With the future launch of the Center for Community Engagement through Duke's Office of Durham and Community Affairs, we look forward to seeing more systematic communication and a deeper coordination among the university's undergraduate and professional schools' network of community-engaged initiatives. Duke has a strong history of many types of community-based experiential learning --DukeEngage, Bass Connections, Duke Immerse, Global Education, just to name a few—and Duke Service-Learning will continue to offer context, connections and collaborations to enrich that ecosystem.

Increasingly, institutions of higher education are advancing their public purposes and embracing a broad vision of student engagement that extends into a range of partnerships with their communities. [Duke's Strategic Vision](#) names community engagement in a local context as part of Duke's vision, and service-learning and community-engaged courses play a critical role in enacting that goal. In line with President Price's determination to "partner with purpose in service to our community," (Price, 2023, para. 2) Duke Service-Learning will continue to look for innovative and impactful ways to support faculty, staff, students, and community members involved in curricular-based community engagement.

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