

# External Review Report on the Engaged Learning Office at Salt Lake Community College (SLCC)

The following is a report from the external review team (see members below) that took place virtually on May 5-7, 2021. The report opens with an executive summary, followed by driving questions organized in four focus areas: 1) Strategic Alignment; 2) Processes, Services, and Programs; 3) Structure; and 4) Serving Clients. The report closes by summarizing the response to the driving questions and offering recommendations derived from stakeholder input and external expert experience. Detailed notes and recommendations from participants in the six focus groups (Students, Strategic Alignment, Administrative Support, Engaged Learning Staff, Provost, and Faculty) are included as Appendix A.

External Reviewer	External Reviewer	External Reviewer (External to the Engaged Learning Office, Internal to Salt Lake Community College)
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# Executive Summary

The Engaged Learning Office (ELO) currently oversees Service-Learning, Study Abroad, and Domestic Study programs and supports Undergraduate Research. Three external reviewers facilitated discussions with six focus groups in May 2021 to review the strategic alignment, processes, services, and programs of the ELO. Participants in the focus groups find the work of the ELO to be effective and attribute the success to the passion and energy of its staff. Of note, many (nearly all) participants suggested that given the centrality and importance of ELO's programs to the core values of SLCC, the work load of the office warrants the promotion of the Coordinator 3 position to a Director-level position, or equivalent, as well as an increase in the size of the staff and number of internships to keep pace with the rapidly growing programs. Privacy and FERPA/HIPAA concerns were raised resulting from the limited office space and the sharing of offices.

The Service-Learning (SL) program is the largest and most established program of the ELO portfolio though there is room for expansion and growth, particularly among adjunct faculty. There is a need to create a less rigorous SL designation process to accommodate faculty who are interested in community-engaged learning, but may not have time to create a fully developed SL designated course. Clear information about SL classes needs to be more widely disseminated to students so they can find SL class options, and do not unintentionally register for an SL course. While the SL program runs well, some participants expressed concern that, given the ELO portfolio growth without commensurate staff growth, the SL program no longer receives the attention of the ELO that it once did, potentially resulting in reduced quality.

The Study Abroad program is also established and courses have successfully run for several years. Students find the office staff highly responsive to their questions and the staff's assistance with both the application process and with applying for scholarships is invaluable. There is concern over the inaccessibility of the Study Abroad programs as the costs can be prohibitive. Because of this, it is imperative to build the Domestic Study program. Partnering with local universities may be a way to expand study abroad options without further burdening staff.

The Undergraduate Research program is the newest and least developed; several participants were unaware that this program was supported by the ELO. Within the past year, the ELO has worked with stakeholders to create a broad definition of undergraduate research and has created a webpage. There is widespread concern that the ELO currently does not have adequate staff to provide appropriate services and processes needed for this program to grow and thrive. Specifically, there needs to be oversight of undergraduate research and processes developed to assess liability and reduce risk to students, research subjects, and the College. Because of the enormity of this task, some interviewees suggested that substantial investment be made to support this initiative. If not, removing this program from the ELO portfolio could be explored.

The ELO prioritizes equity, diversity, and inclusion in alignment with the College's Mission, Vision, and Values. This is especially evident with the disbursement of funding to students. Inclusive programming could be improved through regular review of websites, programs and materials with the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Coordinator. The participants would like to see all programs available to all students. Current barriers include: 1) cost of Study Abroad and, to a lesser extent, Domestic Study; 2) time necessary for service-learning; 3) lack of understanding of Undergraduate Research; and, 4) limited adjunct faculty participation, especially for Study Abroad, Domestic Study, and Undergraduate Research.

# Driving Questions

## Strategic Alignment

- Overall, how well is the Engaged Learning Office meeting its stated purpose in the context of SLCC's Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Goals?
- How is the department ensuring equitable and inclusive program and services? How is it addressing the needs of historically marginalized populations?

## Processes, Services, and Programs

- What changes and improvements should be made in the Engaged Learning program to improve services and programs and advance College goals?
- Are the services offered meeting current best practice standards?
- Do program/services contribute to clear systems/processes at the institutional level?
- Does the program have adequate processes in place to continually assess its services and respond to assessment data?

## Structure

- How effectively is the unit/department structured and administered? Is the unit sufficiently resourced? What is the climate of the working environment?

## Serving Clients

### Students

- How effective and efficient is the Engaged Learning Office at serving students?
- What is working/not working regarding student support systems (e.g. navigating SA application/paperwork, applying for scholarships/SL student project fund)?
- How do we get more students involved in our programs? What are obstacles?

### Faculty

- What is working regarding faculty development and faculty support systems and what is not?
- How efficient or effective is the Engaged Learning in providing services and programs to faculty? Are there potential faculty who are not being served who should/could be considered for future services (specifically for the service-learning program)?

### Community Partners

- What is working regarding departmental and community partner interactions and collaboration?

# Summarized Responses

## Strategic Alignment

Overall, how well is the Engaged Learning Office meeting its stated purpose in the context of SLCC's Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Goals? How is the department ensuring equitable and inclusive program and services? How is it addressing the needs of historically marginalized populations?

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The general opinion was that the ELO and their work fit with SLCC's Mission, Vision, and Values; collaboration and inclusivity were specifically lauded. The Service-Learning (SL) program is the most-developed in supporting college goals followed by Study Abroad. The ELO does an excellent job in mentoring faculty in the development of SL courses and in the development of civically engaged departments.

The work around issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion is ongoing, especially in updating the website language, in making programs more accessible to all faculty and students (especially adjunct faculty and non-traditional and underrepresented students), and in increasing diversity among students engaged in programs, among community partnerships, and among office staff. The student population that participates in the SL program currently mirrors the SLCC student population in general, though several participants were unaware of this. Diversity in the Study Abroad program has increased but further analysis is needed to compare the specific demographics in these programs to that of the general SLCC population. The office successfully addresses the needs of underrepresented and underserved populations through the awarding of funding and the hiring of interns. However, the programs, especially Study Abroad, were described by some participants as "elitist" because of the associated costs (financial costs for Study Abroad/Domestic Study and time costs for service-learning and undergraduate research).

## Processes, Services, and Programs

Do the program and services contribute to clear systems and processes at the institutional level? Are the services offered meeting current best practice standards? Do the programs have adequate processes in place to continually assess its services and respond to assessment data? What changes and improvements should be made in the Engaged Learning program to improve services and programs and advance College goals?

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**Processes:** The process for designating courses as service-learning is clear but cumbersome. Once a course is designated as SL, there is no clear process in place for reviewing them and ensuring that they are continuing to be taught as SL. The approval process for designating SL classes is rigorous, and thus prohibitive for some faculty. The approval process uses a detailed rubric and a committee process. Though proposals for Study Abroad and Domestic Study must be submitted annually by faculty, none of the participants mentioned this process. Currently there does not appear to be a fully developed plan or clear processes in place for developing the Undergraduate Research program.

**Assessment:** Assessment is limited, primarily because the main form of assessment is through examination of products students post to their ePortfolio. Data for assessment are insufficient because there is currently no requirement for students to post deliverables for these programs to their ePortfolio.

**Programs:** The Engaged Learning Office currently oversees four programs, two that are fairly well developed (Service-Learning and Study Abroad), one that is new (Domestic Study), and Undergraduate

Research, which is tertiary. This portfolio appears to be too large for the ELO to successfully oversee, especially with the limited size of the staff and the lack of a Directorship, or other reclassification in accord with the growing portfolio and centrality of these High Impact Practices (HIPs) on campus. It was suggested that the quality of programs (specifically, Service-Learning) has suffered because of the number of programs that have been added to the office. These programs need to be available to all students to advance equity.

There were suggestions for creating a tiered SL designation with a “lighter” version of SL in addition to the full designation. For example, the Service-Learning Grant and Designation (SLG&D) Committee recommends a minimum of 15 hours of service to earn an SL designation while a “lighter” version could accept far fewer hours. This would enable faculty to try out SL before fully committing, thus improving issues surrounding inclusion of adjunct faculty.

The Undergraduate Research program needs to be developed and advertised as many were unaware the Engaged Learning Office was helping to support it. Processes addressing safety of students, research subjects, and the College, as well as processes for oversight of undergraduate research, are desperately needed for this program to go forward.

## Structure

How effectively is the unit/department structured and administered? Is the unit sufficiently resourced? What is the climate of the working environment?

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The ELO is effective and efficient in their work which was universally attributed to the energy, passion, and motivation of the current staff. The ELO is not sufficiently resourced regarding staff and physical space. With the size and scope of the programs, heading the ELO with a Coordinator 3 position instead of a Director position, or other elevated designation, is problematic. The ELO consists of two fulltime staff and one part-time intern which is inadequate for effectively overseeing four programs. Also, having the Program Specialist and Intern share an office creates problems around confidentiality and FERPA (and possibly HIPAA if ADA accommodations are discussed).

Several years ago, service-learning was moved from Student Affairs to Academic Affairs and into the now named Engaged Learning Office. Clearer distinction between the service-learning program of the ELO and the Thayne Center programs is needed. Also, with this move to Academic Affairs, the focus of the ELO should be on academic rigor and pedagogy rather on student services. Since this initial move, programs appear to have been added ad hoc; the connection between these programs is unclear giving the impression that the Office is the “junk drawer” of High Impact Practices. If these four programs are to stay together in the ELO, then their connection to each other should be explicitly communicated.

## Serving Clients

### Students

How effective and efficient is the Engaged Learning Office at serving students? What is working regarding student support systems and what is not? For example, navigating the Study Abroad (SA) application and paperwork process, applying for scholarships, or applying for the service-learning student project fund. How do we get more students involved in our programs? What are obstacles to getting involved?

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**Effectiveness:** The Engaged Learning Office is serving students well through their responsiveness to student inquiries, providing resources (especially on scholarships), and making the application process clear. Classroom presentations were seen to be helpful and informative. While students positively viewed the back-and-forth communication with the ELO, perhaps collating the frequently asked questions and their responses on the website, and then pointing students to the website, would be more efficient. The ELO are serving students less well in disseminating information about their programs to the larger SLCC student population. Some participants explained that by the time they heard of programs, it was too late in their college career to participate so getting the information out to incoming students is recommended. Not all students know what the “SL” notation in the catalog means and some accidentally end up in service-learning classes. Students are usually made aware of the Service-Learning Student Project fund through their professors, and not the ELO. Conversely, the ELO does an excellent job making students aware of funding opportunities and helping students apply for funding for Study Abroad.

**Barriers:** ELO programs may not be as inclusive as they could be. The cost of the Study Abroad programs was the most discussed barrier, though the time investment of the service-learning program may also exclude non-traditional and underrepresented students and/or students who have job or family commitments that make the suggested 15-hours of service commitment untenable. The development of the Domestic Study program will be important in reaching more students.

## Faculty

What is working regarding faculty development and faculty support systems and what is not? How efficient or effective is the Engaged Learning in providing services and programs to faculty? Are there potential faculty who are not being served who should/could be considered for future services (specifically for the service-learning program)?

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The process for applying for the service-learning designation is straightforward and the office is extremely helpful with mentoring faculty through the process. It appears that once classes are designated as service-learning, there is no consistent follow-up review to ensure that the courses, which may end up being taught by other instructors, are still meeting the stated objectives. Also, mentoring of faculty who “inherit” service-learning-designated courses is limited. The ELO maintains successful collaborations with community partners though there is room to increase the diversity of the community partners to more closely approximate the diversity of our student population (though the reviewers note that the community partnership program is managed by the Thayne Center and is, therefore, outside of the purview of the ELO). Adjunct faculty are not effectively served by the current process because of the extensive time investment service-learning and the application process entails. Providing a wider variety of service-learning examples may help reach faculty who have difficulty seeing how service-learning could work in their class. Also, parts of the SLG&D rubric focus on social issues and engagement with diverse peoples which would appear to leave out service to community partners that aren’t directly serving people (e.g. conservation/environmentally-oriented community partners), thus limiting SL options for faculty, students, and community partners. Additionally, not all faculty are aware of service learning which suggests that there is a need to disseminate information more widely.

The process for applying for Study Abroad/Domestic study is also fairly clear and the rubric can be followed, though there seems to be an emphasis on programs that involve a strong cultural learning component which might limit the faculty who apply because they can’t see their course fitting the rubric. At this time, the College might be at a point of saturation regarding the number of Study Abroad classes it can offer; partnering with local Universities could increase student opportunities for studying abroad without

significantly increasing the workload of the ELO. The Domestic Study program is not as visible so advertising might reach more faculty and students.

### Community Partners

What is working regarding departmental and community partner interactions and collaboration?

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The office effectively supports collaborations with community partners and works closely with the Thayne Center. The ELO also successfully works with the Professional Development Office in cross-advertising opportunities. There is room for co-creation of professional development courses as, currently, the ELO appears to develop its own professional development courses (e.g. Service-Learning).

# Recommendations

## General

- ✦ The Engaged Learning Office (ELO) needs additional staff and resources to effectively administer four programs, including one that is new (Domestic Study) and one that the ELO is supporting (Undergraduate Research) as both are growing. The role of the ELO in supporting the Undergraduate Research program needs clarification.
  - It is *abundantly* clear that all study participants agree that the current Program Coordinator 3 designation needs to be reevaluated. Indeed, there was near unanimity that the office and senior staff responsibilities are consistent with that of a Director. While none of the reviewers are expert in the HR system at SLCC, it is recommended that the Program Coordinator 3 position be reevaluated due to increased demands and responsibilities of administering four substantial programs.
  - Increase the number of full-time staff to at least three (3).
  - Increase the number of interns, and target internships toward specific skill areas (e.g. website design, marketing)
  - Expand the physical space to allow for privacy and confidentiality to avoid violating FERPA/HIPAA regulations
- ✦ Increase marketing and promotion of ELO programs
  - Expand social media presence
  - Present to incoming students
  - Increase focus to include adjunct and incoming faculty
- ✦ Update the ELO Website
  - Website language and photos should be reviewed by Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Coordinator
  - Website language, photos and usability should be reviewed for its accessibility to English Language Learners and People with Disabilities
  - Require students participating in ELO programs to post deliverables to their ePortfolio to improve the ELO's ability to assess the programs, or determine an alternative method to better obtain needed raw impact and assessment data
- ✦ Utilize the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification as an institutional roadmap for community engagement. The classification can leverage support for the ELO and its Community Engagement programs

## Service-Learning (SL)

- ✦ Consider changing the name "Service-Learning" to "Community-Engaged Learning." The term "Community-Engaged Learning" reflects partnership and reciprocity and is more widely used in the field.
- ✦ Make service-learning more universally available
  - Provide more ideas and examples of how service-learning can be incorporated into courses so faculty can envision how it might apply.
  - In an effort to make service-learning easier and less daunting for faculty, consider developing a tiered approach. For example, start with a service-learning option that requires fewer hours of service per student.



- Provide SL faculty with greater rewards (Promotion and Tenure) and compensation (course buy-outs or stipends) for the development and implementation of SL courses.
- Consider creating a simple online SL course designation form (e.g. ServiceNow forms) that can be completed by faculty in a modest amount of time and submitted to an approval workflow. Upon approval, SL staff can follow-up as needed to obtain additional information such as a final course syllabus.
- ✚ Develop regular review processes for existing SL courses.
- ✚ Provide professional development opportunities for faculty who “inherit” SL courses

### **Study Abroad/Domestic Study**

- ✚ Create more Domestic Study programs as affordable alternatives to Study Abroad – it’s a matter of equity
- ✚ Create partnerships with local universities to relieve burden on ELO and to expand student options
- ✚ Consider creating opportunities for students to engage with communities abroad virtually. For example, students could teach English or develop intercultural exchange activities.

### **Undergraduate Research (UR)**

- ✚ Develop processes and oversight for the Undergraduate Research Program
- ✚ Significantly augment the number of staff and leadership focus on UR, especially given the importance of this HIP in the view of the Provost
- ✚ If additional staff and title increase cannot be accommodated at this time, consider removing UR from the Engaged Learning Office entirely as it could be too large and complex for the ELO to manage at current staffing and leadership designation levels.

# Appendix A: Comment Summaries by Stakeholder

## Focus Group

### Student Focus Group

May 5, 2021, 4:00-5:00 PM

**Key Insight Desired:** How well are we serving students (e.g., how easy is it to learn about our programs and get involved)?

**Focus Group:** The first meeting was with six students who had participated (or hoped to participate) in Study Abroad and/or Service Learning and/or be civically engaged.

**Driving Questions:** We asked this group about the effectiveness of the office and of the processes for participating in its programs as well as what could be improved.

**General Responses:** There was unanimous consensus that the ELO staff are quite well respected and appreciated. Participants, especially with the Study Abroad Programs, specifically commented on their responsiveness to inquiries. Responses also were clear that the application forms and processes were easy to navigate and complete. Study Abroad students also found the presentations the ELO office made to their classes to be informative.

Regarding Service-Learning, students noted that the community partnerships were effectively facilitated and that the information on the Thayne Center website regarding the community partners was helpful. There appears to be the need for wider dissemination for the Service-Learning program as some students reported that they were not clear, when registering for classes, what the “SL” notation in the catalog meant. They explained that they knew of students who had unknowingly registered for Service-Learning courses (or, upon seeing the “SL” notation in the catalog, had to look up what that meant) which is problematic because of the increased workload usually associated with service-learning. Participants were quick to note that students who accidentally ended up in a service-learning course were happy they had participated by the end of the course.

It appeared that unless students were part of larger programs (e.g. Service-Learning Student Project Fund, SLiCE (Student Leaders in Civic Engagement), Engaged Learning Celebration, Civically Engaged Scholars programs, etc.), their interactions for service-learning at the course level were primarily with their professor and not with the Engaged Learning Office.

There seemed to be a general unfamiliarity about the Civically Engaged Scholars Program (which are administered by the Thayne Center and not by the Engaged Learning Office) and about scholarships, including the Service Learning Student Project Program Fund and High Impact Practices (HIPs) scholarships, at least among those who had not received them. Students also expressed that by the time they discovered the programs, it was too late for them to participate. Little mention was made of the Domestic Study program and the Undergraduate Research Program.

**Recommendations:** The primary recommendation of this focus group is to more widely advertise the programs and services of the Engaged Learning Office. Specific suggestions included having a greater social media presence (e.g., Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook, etc.), hosting events on campus, hanging posters (the cafeteria was specifically mentioned), and talking to school tour groups for incoming students. Peer-to-Peer

mentoring, possibly workshops or panels, facilitated by students was also recommended. While the office was highly responsive to student inquiries, collating all of the frequently asked questions (questions about the passport office, insurance, vaccination requirements, packing list, cancellations (note this was very specific to the pandemic), etc.) into a FAQ page or somehow providing this information on the website could reduce the back-and-forth interactions with the office (thus reducing the burden on both the students and on the staff). The reviewers note here that the ELO maintains a robust Study Abroad webpage complete with a FAQ section so it is unclear why multiple participants appeared to be unaware of this resource. While no specific critiques were provided, there was also the suggestion of reviewing the application process to ensure it's accessible to English Language Learners.

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## Strategic Alignment Focus Group

May 6, 2021, 1:30-3:00 PM

**Key Insights Desired:** How well are we aligned with college strategic goals? Are we adequately supporting college goals?

**Focus Group:** The second meeting included six faculty, staff, and administrators with whom the Engaged Learning Office regularly collaborates (e.g., Deans, community partners, those involved in service-learning, community engagement, etc.).

**Driving Questions:** We asked this group how well the Engaged Learning Office is meeting its stated purpose in regard to SLCC's Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Goals, about collaborations with departments and community partners, and whether the programs contribute to systems and processes at the institutional level.

**General Responses:** The clear consensus is that the Engaged Learning office is successful and that what makes the Office and its programs successful is its staff. Specifically, participants mentioned the prolific communication from the office, their desire to learn more to better facilitate their programs, and their collaboration with other College departments as well as the community. The Office provides tremendous support for service-learning (e.g., defining what it is, checking in and mentoring faculty, helping students apply for the Service-Learning Student Project Fund, etc.) and mentoring community-engaged departments. Their relationship with community partners is sound and based on mutual respect; the office gets good feedback from community partners.

Several participants commented on how much the office does and that more staff are needed to support the newer programs at the same level as the Service-Learning program and to grow (scale up) all four programs. Though the Undergraduate Research program is new (within the last year), the Office has already created a college-wide definition and created a website.

**Areas for Improvement:** It was noted that students who decide to take service-learning designated classes are not typical SLCC students and having students engaging in the ELO programs more closely mirror the larger student population would put the ELO in closer alignment with SLCC Vision, Mission, Values, and Strategic Goals. However, the reviewers note that according to a 2019-2020 impact survey, the demographics of students participating in service-learning closely approximates the SLCC student population at large. It was noted that students aren't just at the College to get a degree, but also to develop

skills and to contribute to their community and the Office helps develop these lifelong skills and prosocial proclivities.

A concern was raised about how service-learning courses are managed after their initial approval by the Service-Learning Grant and Designation Committee. Specifically, it was mentioned that some faculty inherit courses previously designated as SL, but don't have the proper training to successfully teach using service-learning.

Regarding Study Abroad specifically (though these comments could more generally apply), there was specific discussion on the need to make SA available to every student, with it being described currently as an "elitist" program by one participant.

Undergraduate Research received specific mention for the need for funding for students to get involved in research, the need for more mentors, more library resources, and more professional development for Undergraduate Research faculty.

**Challenges:** There are challenges in measuring the impact the programs have on supporting the College's Values and Strategic Goals. Questions were raised about direct connections between the programs and completion and retention with the note that these can be difficult to measure. Relatedly, it was explained that there is a good collaboration with the ePortfolio program and that the Office encourages SL and SA students to post to their ePortfolios, but because students aren't required to do so, data on the success of the programs in meeting the College Goals can be difficult to access.

Other challenges include differentiating between the Thayne Center and the Engaged Learning Office because of overlap with service-learning. There can be difficulty drawing lines between what each Office does. Also, the Office provides clear support for faculty-driven service-learning, but it can be more difficult for students to navigate/contact community partners on their own.

Challenges on a smaller scale included the cumbersome nature of administering the High Impact Practice funds and that the money hasn't been resourced in such a way to make it accessible to all.

**Recommendations:** Recommendations include to increase the staff and their space and to have the Office overseen by a Director. What the office is expected to do is too much for two people. Participants would like to see the social justice and inclusivity aspects augmented, including making the connections between the programs and inclusivity explicit and updating non-inclusive language on the website, as well as mirroring the student population in the community partners available. Numerous other recommendations were offered, including: some addressed faculty development, such as including creating more resources for faculty (it was specifically mentioned that providing more examples on how to incorporate service-learning might help to attract more service-learning faculty); more broadly disseminating information about the ELO process and its applicability to diverse and disparate fields; and, developing various Faculty Fellows programs. Others addressed funding for those participating in the programs, such as opening up the Service-Learning Student Project Fund (which is currently limited by state-wide purchasing guidelines), overhauling how students and departments access HIPs funds, offering stipends for community partners to work in co-educating students, and providing recognition/compensation/space for faculty to implement the ELO programs since these programs require considerable time and energy. A comparison to the Writing Intensive designation, which comes with faculty teaching release time, was drawn.

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## Administrative Support Structures Focus Group

May 6, 2021, 3:30-5:00 PM

**Key Insights Desired:** How can we become more effective and efficient in our work and how effect are the assessment processes.

**Focus Group:** The second meeting included seven faculty, staff, and administrators from related divisions across the college.

**Driving Questions:** We asked this group questions about the structure, administration, and resourcing of the office, whether the office is able to adequately assess its programs, and about the equitability and inclusivity of its programs and services.

**General Responses:** Not all participants were familiar with all four programs or what the responsibilities and resources of the ELO are. Participants were surprised that Undergraduate Research had been added to the ELO's portfolio. Echoing other focus groups, there were numerous comments that the ELO should convert the Coordinator position to a Director position, especially given the number of programs the current Coordinator oversees. There was also a general consensus that the office is under-resourced, but participants were impressed with the amount of work they were able to do with what they have. Several participants noted that, while the service-learning program is running fine, it is given less attention now that there are so many other programs overseen by the ELO. There also seems to be a lack of cohesiveness of programs. The department was referred to as "the island of misfit toys" and the programs, other than Study Abroad and Domestic Study, aren't clearly related. While they are all High Impact Practices, other HIPs are housed elsewhere making it unclear why these four programs are placed together in the ELO portfolio.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** were much-discussed topics. Specific issues mentioned included:

1. The language used on the ELO website can create distance between the office and students;
2. There are too many barriers (e.g. financial costs, time commitment costs, etc.) for transformative HIPs;
3. Study Abroad needs to be better funded to be accessible to all students
  - a. The Study Abroad Program to India was specifically mentioned as supporting/reflecting colonialism and oppression;
4. Domestic Study should be increased to address inclusivity issues for students who, for financial, legal, or personal reasons can't participate in Study Abroad (which is currently better developed than Domestic Study);
5. The process to get designation for service-learning and Study Abroad are geared towards faculty with specific writing skills;
6. These programs are difficult for adjunct faculty to access because of the time investment needed in both the development and teaching of these types of classes
  - a. This point is especially important since the majority of classes are taught by adjuncts (and adjuncts are more likely to teach courses at campuses serving more diverse student populations and at times favoring the non-traditional students (e.g. evening classes)– which goes back to equity);

Conversely, it was noted that the development of Domestic Study was an equitable practice and that student resources through the High Impact Practice funding is specifically directed at promoting diversity and inclusion. It was also noted that a focus on diversity was a focus in the internship program and that they successfully employ student workers providing important learning opportunities in the process.

**Assessment:** One challenge the ELO faces is the difficulty in assessing the success of their programs because, as noted by other groups, student participants are not required to post their experiences with the ELO programs to their ePortfolio, which seems to be the primary way programs are assessed. Assessments of component of the ELO's programs (specifically service-learning) is biased toward the Civically Engaged Scholars program because an ePortfolio is required. It does not appear that other programs, such as Study Abroad are assessed while Domestic Study and Undergraduate Research are too new and underdeveloped to need assessment. In addition to the limited assessment of the student experience, there is little assessment of the community partner or faculty experiences (the reviewers note that assessment of the community partners does take place and the assessments are completed by the Thayne Center).

Assessment of the creation/administration of the programs is more formal with committees to evaluate faculty proposals for service-learning designation, Study Abroad (noting each study abroad faculty must submit a new proposal for committee review each year), and Domestic Study. This process increases the credibility and rigor of the courses through the use of a robust rubric.

**Recommendations:**

- The ELO should be headed by a Director; this would clearly communicate the College's support for the ELO programs, and for HIPs more generally. Equity and diversity in the office needs to be increased as do resources for the ELO. To this end, the ELO should engage in conversations with the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Coordinator.
- There needs to be college-wide communication about the Engaged Learning Office, their programs, responsibilities, and resources. Clarify the distinction between the Engaged Learning Office and the Thayne Center.
- Adjunct faculty should be supported in engaging with ELO programs.
- There should be more transparency in the administration and awarding of HIPs funds because of concerns of a possible conflict of interest.

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## Engaged Learning Office Staff

May 7, 2021, 9:00-10:00 AM

**Key Insights Desired:** How are we doing as a team? How does the working environment feel?

**Focus Group:** The second meeting included staff of the Engaged Learning Office and of the Office of Learning Enhancement.

**Driving Questions:** We asked this group how effectively the office is structured, administered, and resourced and what improvements could be made to improve services and programs.

**General Responses:** Participants expressed enthusiasm for their work and for their work environment. They feel satisfaction with their work and they believe that their work is important. The programs are growing as students become more aware, and new programs are being added to the ELO portfolio, which is

great, but that puts a strain on their already heavy workload. The High Impact Practice funding has allowed the ELO to offer scholarships, especially to students interested in the Study Abroad Programs. As these programs grow, the need for funding will grow. The Campus Internship Program, funded through the Career Services budget, is especially effective with the interns improving their skills. The Service-Learning program is the largest serving thousands of students. Study abroad is much smaller with 30-40 students per year and Domestic Study, which is much newer, involves closer to 10 students. Because the Undergraduate Research program is so new, it appears that the office has, thus far, not served any students.

**Challenges:** Participants noted that there is a lot of work to be done and that they lack the needed resources (staff, time, and space). As programs continue to grow, so will the need for resources.

Logistically, the shared office space is problematic, especially when a staff member needs to meet with students about confidential issues or with multiple students at once. Right now, two staff share a single office (which is also the reception area and the kitchen) so there is no privacy. This makes it difficult to effectively serve the programs and to adhere to FERPA and HIPAA regulations.

**Recommendations:** There needs to be more staff and interns, including those with specific skills (e.g., website designer, marketing, etc.). There needs to be additional office space. The Coordinator 3 position should be converted to a Director position. This has been explored in the past, but the decision appears to have been made to not take this step. Upgrading the title and visibility of ELO is better aligned with the responsibilities and number of programs the Coordinator manages, as well as demonstrating SLCC's values to utilize these HIPs to deepen and accelerate student learning.

Partnerships with local universities, especially for Study Abroad, should be leveraged as a way to efficiently expand the program without significantly increasing the load on the Engaged Learning Office staff.

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## Provost Meeting

May 7, 2021, 12:30-1:30 PM

**Key Insights Desired:** How well are we helping the College meet strategic goals? What are we doing well and what can we do better?

**Focus Group:** This meeting was with the Provost.

**Driving Questions:** We asked the provost questions about how the ELO is meeting its stated purpose in the context of SLCC's Mission, Vision, Values, and strategic goals and what improvements could be made to improve their services and programs and to advance College goals.

**General Responses:** The Provost had only positive comments regarding the work that the Engaged Learning Office, and Lucy Smith specifically, does. He specifically mentioned Lucy's success in collaborating with other departments, her success in building the programs, and with her leadership, energy, passion, and enthusiasm. He noted that College funds are limited so all departments and offices need to use their resources effectively and when requesting additional funds, it needs to be explicitly clear how the funds will improve teaching and how the benefits will be spread throughout the curriculum.

He discussed the newest program, Undergraduate Research, at length and is an exceptionally strong supporter believing that undergraduate research has a place at community colleges and that it is key in

moving students, specially underrepresented students, into STEM fields. He believes that the formalization of undergraduate research gives it credibility and that now is the time to shape the identity and direction of undergraduate research at the College. The reviewers note that shortly after our meeting with the Provost, he communicated a series of tasks for the ELO including creating a repository of information for faculty and students around Undergraduate Research.

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## Faculty Focus Group

May 7, 2021, 2:00-3:30 PM

**Key Insights Desired:** How well are we serving faculty? How easy is it to learn about our programs and get involved? What can be done better?

**Focus Group:** The second meeting included eight faculty and administrators.

**Driving Questions:** We asked this group questions about the effectiveness of the services and programs, including whether they are meeting current best practices, what is and isn't working, and about potential faculty who are not being served.

**General Responses:** This group had favorable comments on the office describing them as responsive and helpful and attributed the success of the office and its programs to its staff. The ELO was congratulated on their adaptability during the pandemic, especially in keeping the service-learning program running. They specifically mentioned support for faculty interested in designating their courses as service learning. There were suggestions for making SL more approachable with comments focusing on the amount of time it takes to designate and teach an SL course. Having an "approaching SL" designation might interest more faculty, especially adjunct faculty, which would, in turn, benefit students. A concern regarding a lack of review of courses once they have been designated as SL was raised. It appears that there are processes in place to review engaged departments (including their courses), but that there are no processes for reviewing individual courses. Also, it's not clear that there is training for faculty who "inherit" courses previously designated.

Regarding Undergraduate Research, several participants were surprised that this had been added to the programs overseen by the Engaged Learning Office. Those who knew of this addition commented that the definition on the website is appropriately broad to cover research that takes place in disparate departments. However, there were strong feelings about the lack of institutional oversight, vetting of research, IRB support, and funding. Currently there are no processes in place to assess risks to the students, risks to research subjects, or risks to the College. It was also noted that professional development for faculty in overseeing undergraduate research, especially in considering/mitigating the potential risks of undergraduate research, is imperative. It was noted that Undergraduate Research at other institutions is overseen by entire departments with the suggestion that a similar structure may be needed to provide the necessary oversight and support.

Regarding Study Abroad, the participants were shocked at how much the office does. Their support (e.g. handling student payments) and long-term relationships with host institutions have been instrumental in the success of the program. While Domestic Study is newer and not as well-developed, the group commented on the ELO's drive to develop the program and to provide support for interested faculty.



**Recommendations:**

- The staff of the ELO needs to be increased, specifically with full-time positions.
- Collaboration between the ELO and Professional Development are good, and the two offices cross-advertise professional development opportunities, but collaborations could be strengthened, possibly through co-creating professional development opportunities
- Program market could be augmented.
- Create a 'service-learning lite' program for faculty interested in service-learning, but don't have the time to develop an SL designated course.
- Develop a review process for courses previously designated as service-learning.
- Provide more support for creating engaged departments.

Develop processes and oversight for Undergraduate Research, though there were also recommendations to remove UR from the Engaged Learning Office and create a new department. With the way the definition is written, 80% of the faculty could consider their work UR so the program is expected to grow.