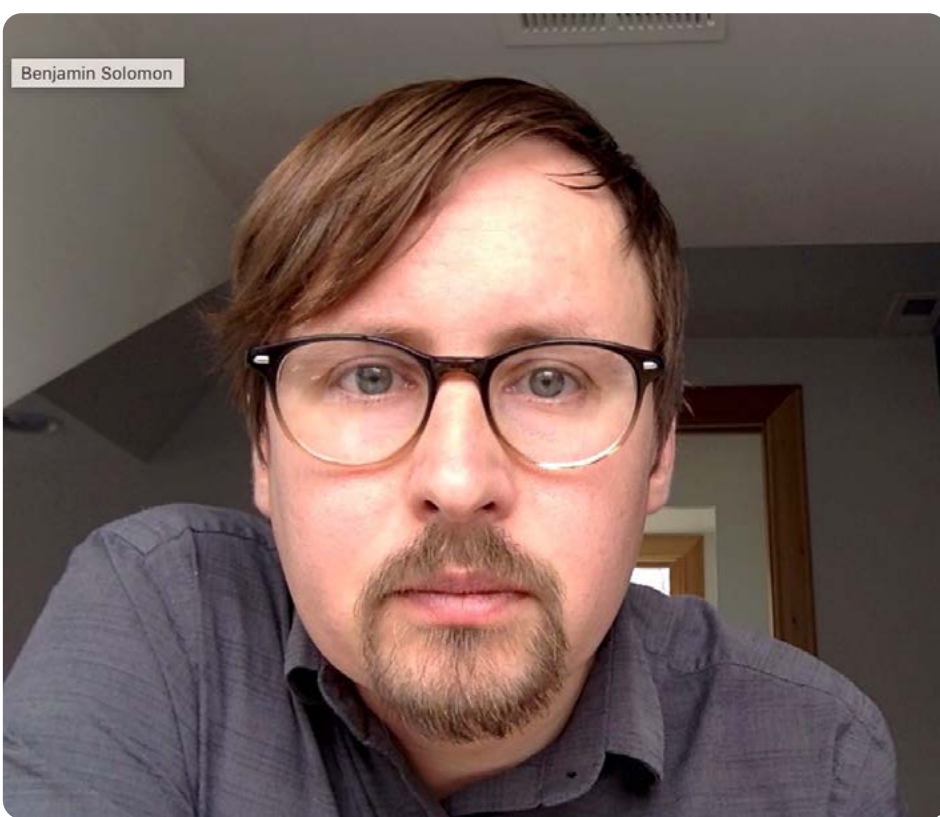


Reflections

Spring Semester 2022

Interview with Community-Engaged Department Innovator Benjamin Solomon



Benjamin Solomon, Associate Professor in the English, Linguistics, & Writing Studies

How long have you been teaching with service-learning (community-engaged learning)? I've been teaching with community-engaged learning in one form or another for about 8 years. My approach has changed and shifted over time, but community engagement remains a core component of my pedagogy.

How did you get started in this high-impact practice? Through the Thayne Center and the English Community Engagement Committee. There has been strong departmental and institutional support for community engagement since I joined SLCC in 2012 as an adjunct faculty member.

What challenges have you faced over the years? I find that service-learning as a form of community engagement can be problematic if not thoughtfully integrated into the course and the curriculum. I've taught service-learning classes that I felt didn't quite help students make strong connections between their writing and their communities. This has encouraged me to consider community engagement in ways not limited to service-learning.

What has been the most rewarding about it? When I see students finding their own pathways through their communities (and others'), into the curriculum of my classes and back again, I feel very fortunate to be a part of that process.

Please tell us about the process of guiding ELWS to become an Engaged Department. Our department worked for several years to become an engaged department. We used a nationally recognized set of criteria to evaluate our department's levels of community engagement, and we worked intentionally over the years to improve in key areas

like student outreach and strengthening connections with community partners. Lucy Smith and the folks in Engaged Learning and the Thayne Center helped guide us through the proposal process and, with their help and recommendations, we achieved Engaged Department status in 2019.

Please remind us of any awards you have won with community engaged learning. In 2018 I received the Utah Campus Compact Engaged Scholar Award. Here's the English Dept's blog post on it:



What advice/resources do you have for others who are considering becoming service-learning (community-engaged learning) practitioners? Community engagement comes in many forms. When I first started using community engaged teaching, I was strict with my students in how they completed that portion of the class. Later, I grew more flexible and considerate of how my students might participate in their communities in a variety of ways, and I think my students have benefitted from this.

Reflection on Civic-Engagement and Social Justice Research

by Sarah Mathis

This semester I had a hard time choosing just one organization to align myself with.

Every project I worked on called into a different aspect of climate change. My report led towards air and the quality of life around us, which I aligned with Utah's very own Clean Air Partnership. My Profile with Mr. Slemko led me to align with his work through Salt Lake Cities Community College Recycling Club. The final piece, my commentary, was a pool of multiple organizations promoted by a social media page I put together. My point is, that by researching and learning from multiple organizations I was able to expand my ideas further than just aligning with one.

Climate Change is a vast topic and does not have one clear solution. I am glad I was able to research many different organizations because I ended up learning more than I thought I would have.

My experience in this class as well as researching my topic has not changed much of my attitude, values, or biases; but I do believe it has allowed me to further my community engagement and learn more about the environment. My perspective has not changed, although I do believe it has been broadened to a wider view. Writing about this topic has shown me that a solution can look like many different answers.

Learning in this course has shifted my understanding of

community by showing me there are multiple ways to solve one problem. As stated earlier, each organization brought something new to the table and introduced a unique perspective. Whether it was pollution-free air, clean water, less plastic, or a little bit of everything, I was able to see multiple perspectives and opinions fighting for the same goal—slowing down climate change. I believe it has influenced my writing in the sense that it has inspired me to look at every angle of the problem and into each part of the story by investigating why it's important.

Meet Our New Staff in the Thayne Center for Student Life, Leadership, and Community Engagement



Timothy Davis, Director of the Thayne Center

Interview with Timothy Davis

How long have you been with the Thayne Center? Since August 2021

What is your background as it relates to community service?

Like many of our students, my experience in service started in college at the University of Minnesota during Service-Learning Courses.

Anything you want to say about what you do with Thayne Center? As the director, I oversee the strategic direction of our office. Given the array of programs and services for students, it's a combination of helping keep the lights on, making sure we have mission clarity, and setting priorities.

What is rewarding about service? Exciting moments with students like offering student jobs, seeing them learn about a resource that would really help out, working with students on major initiatives.

Any advice for students who are interested in service? Reflect upon and learn to speak to the importance of identity and community. These foundational principles underwrite nearly all of the systemic inequities that we must attend to through service.

Interview with Lola Moli

How long have you been with the Thayne Center? 3 months but I was an interim Assistant Director for Student Life and Leadership for about 3 months in 2020.

What is your background as it relates to community service? I started as a student leader in Junior High and since then, I've served in different student leadership positions in high school and during my undergrad at Weber State University. During my time as a student leader, I have come to learn that leadership is service to other students and to the communities that we exist in. Some of my favorite experiences serving in the community include a non-profit organization in Ogden that served inner-city youth by offering tutoring, activities, and skill development in an after school program. I volunteered there throughout my undergrad. I also went to several alternative spring break trips with



Lola Moli, Assistant Director for Student Leadership

Weber State and served in the New Orleans and Las Vegas communities where I learned about food insecurity and homelessness and identified ways to bring those experiences home to make a difference in my local community. I love to continue to connect students to opportunities to continue serving and believe it to be an important component of student leadership development.

Anything you want to say about what you do with Thayne Center? The Thayne Center recently merged with Student Life and Leadership, and we are finding new ways to create a deeper impact on the SLCC community by developing a foundation of community engagement and leadership. We are working on being more intentional in our programming and outreach so that we are more inclusive in the services that we offer which include student leadership development, connection to resources, connection with other students, and service opportunities.

What is rewarding about service? It is difficult to turn outwards and focus on others, especially as a student who is focused on their own academics and social lives. Service helps me to turn outwards and recognize that my decisions have an impact on others and I get to choose whether that impact improves my community or only improves myself. Serving others allows for me to see how I can contribute to society in positive ways, and I have had the opportunity to find new pathways to help others.

Any advice for students who are interested in service? The Thayne Center offers several opportunities to serve! Jose will probably touch on more of these opportunities but I will cover those that fall under my title.

CES

The Civically Engaged Scholars program is an opportunity for students to graduate with special cords and be the first to walk at graduation by completing hours of service during their undergrad and taking a community-engaged learning courses at SLCC to deepen their understanding of community engagement.

Alternative Breaks

During the fall and spring breaks, we offer several opportunities to serve locally or nationally during student breaks. Students will have the opportunity to travel to different places and focus on themes like mental health, homelessness, food insecurity, sustainability, etc. and serve in the community while learning how to create a positive impact in their own communities.

SLCCSA

If students are interested in serving in different leadership positions on campus, we house the student government in the Thayne Center and have several teams that students can choose to participate in such as Clubs & Orgs, Equity & Diversity, Senate or programming. All student leaders help to serve as student voices on campus committees, advocate for students on campus, create programming to elevate student experiences, and serve as liaisons between students and the SLCC faculty and administration.



Christina Souknarong, Student Civic Engagement Coordinator

Interview with Christina Souknarong

How long have you been with the Thayne Center? I started working at the college May 1, 2021.

Anything you want to say about what you do with Thayne Center? I oversee the Civically Engaged Scholars Program and advise Equity and Diversity Vice President for SLCCSA.

What is rewarding about service? Being able to connect to people.

Any advice for students who are interested in service? When I was student, community service used to mean just going out to volunteer with folks to make yourself feel good. But as I got involved with different student organizations, I learned that community service was engaging with the community and learning from them. It wasn't just about giving back to them and making myself feel good, but creating a space to learn amongst one another. Service to our community is having to really think critically about the ways in which the systems we live in play a role in how community members and those around us interact with space and places that have not set them up for success.

Interview with Jose Rodriguez Hernandez



Jose Rodriguez Hernandez,
Assistant Director for Community
Engagement

How long have you been with the Thayne Center? Since October 2021.

What is your background as it relates to community service? I have worked in community engagement at varying capacities from volunteer to working at NeighborWorks SL, a nonprofit that helps with community development through helping first time homebuyers and other projects.

Anything you want to say about what you do with Thayne Center? I oversee the relationships between our students and community partners.

What is rewarding about service? What is most rewarding about engaging with service outside of the classroom is that you get to see the lessons that are taught in action. Which is to say, you get to put a lot of theory into practice and witness how its working (or not working) out in the real world. You also get to meet lots of incredible folks who might even help you find a job or get connected to other opportunities down the line.

Any advice for students who are interested in service? It helps to see service through the lens of learning instead of "doing good." Sure you might be helping individuals or a community out, but I think service is a very reflective and internal process that helps you take stock of issues, causes, or communities you care about. Go in with an open mind and a willingness to engage beyond your current understanding.

ELWS is a Community-Engaged Department

In April of 2019 the Department of English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies was recognized as an "Engaged Department" by the Community-Engagement Grant and Designation Committee (which is made of representatives from the Thayne Center, Office of Engaged Learning, local community organizations and community-engaged faculty withing SLCC). Benjamin Solomon was the driving force behind this recognition. At the time of the recognition only one other department at SLCC held this recognition (Dental Hygiene).

Being an engaged department means that a significant number of our faculty practice collaborative, community-centered approaches to teaching and learning. These include engaged pedagogies like service-learning, a civic orientation across the curriculum, and a department-wide focus on writing as a form of action and an agent of social change.

Working with community partner organizations, local organizers, activists and public servants, the engaged faculty of the English Department invite students to see and experience how reading and writing intertwine with

community issues, local conditions, and civic action, and how writing outside the boundaries of the college classroom can have a profound effect on learning and growth.

"A department is considered an Engaged Department when they have philosophically and structurally integrated civic and community engagement throughout the culture, leadership, and curriculum of the department. Strategic, department-wide community partnerships based on reciprocity are created and sustained, and student involvement in civic engagement is pervasive" (ELWS MOU, 2019).

"Community-engaged learning enhances course learning outcomes and student engagement while also addressing community-identified needs. Community-engaged learning incorporates critical reflective thinking and civic engagement into academic coursework by means of integrating service opportunities with nonprofits, governmental, and/or educational community partners. Community-engaged learning involves students in activities that attend to local needs while developing their academic skills, increasing their subject matter knowledge, and commitment to their communities." (<http://www.slcc.edu/service-learning/index.aspx>)

Learn About Our ELWS Faculty Community Engagement Committee

The Community Engagement Committee meets several times a semester to plan, discuss, and implement goals relating to community-engaged learning (CEL) for the ELWS Department. Some of the responsibilities of the committee include:

- ☼ promote community engagement with in the ELWS department
- ☼ identify and work with community partners—nonprofit agencies in the community—to promote student learning and service
- ☼ mentor ELWS Civically Engaged Scholars (CES)
- ☼ work closely with the Engaged Learning Office and Thayne Center
- ☼ assist faculty in finding opportunities for community engagement
- ☼ assist faculty in designating courses as community-engaged learning courses
- ☼ plan the annual faculty retreat
- ☼ assist faculty with professional development in civic literacy and community engagement
- ☼ ensure courses with formal community-engaged learning (CEL) designation follow best practices of community-engaged learning pedagogy
- ☼ support faculty in documenting community engagement in the professional ePortfolio

To learn more about or to join the ELWS Community Engagement Faculty Committee, please contact Lisa Packer (lisa.packer@slcc.edu).

Further Information about community engagement in ELWS see the following articles:

- ☼ "Introduction to Community Engagement"
- ☼ "Community Engagement in ELWS Composition Courses"



Post Pandemic Reflection Retreat

by Lucy Smith

The 2022 UCCEN Engaged Faculty Retreat took place in a hybrid format February 10-12, 2022, at the beautiful Red Cliffs Lodge in Moab. Engaged scholars and civically engaged staff from higher education institutions from across the state along with the Utah Campus Community Engagement Network (UCCEN) planned the event. Previously, Utah Campus



UCCEN Engaged Faculty Retreat 2022, "Connect, Reflect, and Move Forward" held in Moab, Utah

from left to right: Lisa Packer, Jessica Berryman, Lucy Smith, Brittney Loose

Compact (UCC) hosted the event and when UCC dissolved, UCCEN formed to fill the gap. The theme of the conference was "Connecting, Reflecting, and Looking Forward." There were seven people from SLCC that attended, including two faculty members from the English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies department.

Staff from the Engaged Learning Office collaborated with SLCC faculty to host a panel presentation titled, "What Just Happened? Lesson Learned from the Pandemic." This panel focused on lessons learned and adaptations that occurred during the global pandemic. We discussed remote teaching and methods for offering high-quality community-engaged learning opportunities to our students. We highlighted the unique challenges that have occurred over the past two years, but also focused on how this created new opportunities and innovation. Discussions also centered on social justice and equity efforts.

The weather was delightful, the food was excellent, and the river was a gorgeous sparkling green. It was a special treat to gather in person after a long period of virtual meetings and isolation.

About Reflections

Reflections is a newsletter for and about community-engaged learning published twice a year by the SLCC ELWS Department. We welcome submissions on student experiences, faculty perspectives, pedagogical insights, community partner engagement, civic involvement, staff profiles, and upcoming events.

Send photos, events, posters, or articles to:
elisa.stone@slcc.edu

Faculty Editors: Elisa Stone and Daniel Baird
Student Editor: Miriam Nicholson

Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) Announcements

- There are two new scholarship opportunities for students enrolled in designated community-engaged learning (CEL) courses. The application will be open through financial aid from August 1-September 1. Applicants are eligible for a whole year tuition waiver! The guidelines will be similar to our existing CEL tuition waiver, but students will need to have taken two CEL courses. Scholarship information can be found online, and the new info will be up soon. Please tell your students about this opportunity.
- The Engaged Learning Office offers funding to students in designated CEL courses through the CEL student fund. We still have funding left for this academic year and want to distribute it! If you are teaching this summer, encourage your students to apply! The info is on the Engaged Learning Office student web page (<http://www.slcc.edu/service-learning/student/index.aspx>).
- The Service-Learning Professional Development faculty course is offered this summer. This course walks faculty through the process of designating a CEL course. Please encourage your colleagues to join or participate if you want to revamp your course.
- The Engaged Learning Office is looking for one new assessor to help with civic literacy student learning outcome assessment. Please let Lucy Smith know if you are interested. Contact info is found below.
- Finally, please join us in saying farewell to Cassi Hoffmeister, the specialist in the Engaged Learning Office. Cassi recently had a baby and will be staying home with him. She will be with us through May, possibly through the beginning of June.

For more information or questions, please contact
Lucy Smith, Director, Engaged Learning Office
lucy.smith@slcc.edu

A flyer for a "DAY RETREAT" event. The background is light blue with stylized yellow and orange flowers. The text is centered and reads: "Please join us at a DAY RETREAT to learn more about Community-Engaged Learning in the ELWS department*". Below this, it says "FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2022" and "The Clubhouse (The historic site of the Ladies Literary Club) 850 E. South Temple 9am - 3pm (in person only)". At the bottom, it says "To register: Go to MySLCC / Employee / Register for Training / Office of Learning Advancement". A note at the bottom right says "*Faculty will be paid if they are not currently on contract or if they are adjunct faculty." and "Lunch and snacks served." The number "4" is in the bottom left corner.