

Karen Barron (she/her): Welcome to this 10 minute episode of the NFOA Bridge mini Bodcast. NFOA is the acronym for Not For Ourselves Alone, Washburn's motto. And the virtual bridge is located right here on Teaching Tuesdays connecting Washburn with the Topeka community and beyond through Community Engaged Learning, also known as CEL.

I'm Karen Barron, community engaged learning coordinator for the Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning and host of this series. Today, our featured guest is Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Dr. Jason Miller. Welcome Jason.

Jason Miller (he/him): Thanks, very much for having me.

Karen Barron: Yes, we're glad you're here. Jason, you've been here at Washburn for four years, I believe, and have incorporated CEL into your classes, ever since, and you had a history of CEL that you brought with you, so my first question is, why do you incorporate CEL into your curriculum?

Jason Miller (he/him): That's a great question. I think that there are a couple reasons why Community Engaged Learning is so valuable and important to my own pedagogy. One, it really does a great job of connecting what's happening inside my classroom with these larger social issues and the community around us, and so students not only gain experience through hands-on stuff working in the community but they're also connected to the issues that are impacting our community as well, and then hopefully they gain some skills to respond, so I see CEL as sort of a bridge between our classroom and the community. CEL also, I think, has the capacity to help reduce stereotypes and to help facilitate intercultural understanding, which was something as an anthropologist I'm always really interested in, particularly in some of the courses that I teach like Immigration, which I'll talk about more probably in a minute, and then, finally, I think it can be really mutually beneficial. When you go into the experiences, the faculty person with reciprocity is the goal, so not only do my students get this really rich educational experience, but the community partners get something tangible that can help them in their work as well.

Karen Barron: Yes, Okay, thank you, thank you, Jason. Would you mind sharing and describing some examples of CEL and your courses here at Washburn?

Jason Miller (he/him): Sure, so at Washburn there are two courses that I teach that have large community engaged learning components, the first is AN314, which is the Immigrant Experience in America. And in that course, as the title makes clear is about immigration and the United States and, and you know really helping students to understand what are these global forces that are encouraging people to move or pushing or pulling on folks and what happens here locally in Kansas? What's the sort of implication of that movement on the ground, so in that course I always partner with local immigrant and refugee serving nonprofits and community based organizations, the last time I taught the class we partnered with ESLO courses here in the community where students became conversation partners. With folks who are learning English and then we also partnered with an organization called Communities In Schools, and for that organization, we worked in State Street Elementary School and the students in my class helped create, gosh, I guess you call it like a parent program or a parent support group almost for immigrant parents at the school. To create an opportunity for parents who were immigrants themselves to sort of interact with school folks and with teachers and help build bridges between those two communities. The other course that I teach that involves a large CEL component is AN335, which is Applied Anthropology and in that course, which is one of my favorite courses to teach, students basically undertake a research project for a community partner from beginning all the way to the end, so in

advance of the semester or meet with a community partner and we'll come up with a particular research project that the community partner identifies and things can be really beneficial to whatever work that they're doing. And then, when the semester starts and I meet with my students, I have the community partner there and the community partner sort of pitches the project and talks about you know, this is the kind of research that would be useful for them and kind of you know what are the end products that they want at the end of the semester and then, boy, the students just run with it. Over the course of the semester, the students do everything: they design a research project, they send that project through IRB, they go out and collect data. Whatever the data for the research question requires and they analyze the data and then at the end of the semester, they produce a technical report for the community partner with all of those data and analyses that they've conducted embedded in it, and then a presentation for them at their community site as well. That course, in particular, I think, does a really great job of helping students see how can I apply what I've learned in my anthropology degree and in my anthropology classes to real world settings and so. You know, again, going back to this notion of being mutually beneficial and reciprocity, on one hand, my students get this really incredible educational experience, where not only are they, you know, putting together this real research project, but they get tangible deliverables like they get to say on their resume or CV that they've written a technical report and they've created a project for a community partner that's actually going to be used. On the flip side, the community partner. gets an entire research project with analyses and policy implications and suggested next steps and then help with how do you articulate what the data is saying with whatever that particular partner needs. So, you know, what are the things that you can take from what the data are telling you and then implement them to improve your organization or to help you advocate for a policy position that best serves your clients, or whatever it is, so it's a lot of fun to see students go through that entire process over the course of just 16 weeks.

Karen Barron: Yes, that sounds so exciting and, as you say, you know, so valuable for the students and for the community partners, which is is the goal of Community Engaged Learning, I wondered a little bit if you could talk a little bit more about the State Street where you were working with immigrants. How did you come up with that program? Where How did you decide how to orchestrate that? Does that make sense?

Jason Miller (he/him): Yeah yeah, so and I will say it's been a couple years since that project first started so I'm a little I'll have to think back in the pre-COVID times to remember how that project first got off the ground, but when I first came to Washburn about four years ago now, I met with Chris and Rick, and you Karen, and the other folks in Community Engaged Learning here on campus and sort of, said, you know, Hey I'm new. I'm the new kid on the block. What sort of organizations should I be connected with and who's doing work with immigration locally? And so, one of the organizations that at this point I don't remember who connected me with them, I think it might have been Kris Hart, but connected me with Becca from Communities In Schools and Becca is actually no longer at Communities In Schools, she's moved on to, I think she's at the YWCA now. But it was just like hey, I think you'd really like Becca. She works with schools, which is something I also have a little bit of a background in, and parent involvement and, you know, I just want to create opportunity for the two of you to get together and so basically, that's what we did. We just got together and said, hey, this is what I do, this is what I do and looked for areas of overlap, and it just so happened that one of the schools that they were working with at the time that could really benefit from some help was at State Street Elementary where they were trying to get this parent group up off the ground, so I think that's another great example of the importance of sort of openness and reciprocity that I didn't go to the community and say this is what I want to do, do it with me, but rather approaching it sort of open and saying, you know, hey, these are

the skills and resources, I have, how could they fit with what you need and what you want? And then over those conversations we find a way to then work together and it's really cool project for out of it.

Karen Barron: Thank you Jason. You explained that really well and I appreciate it, and thanks for sharing all your experiences with Community Engaged Learning. You're an inspiration and it's been a pleasure talking with you.

For more information on how you can get involved with Community Engaged Learning at Washburn, please see the CEL pillar on the Center for Teaching Excellence web page and contact me, Karen Baron coordinator of CEL for CTCL.

A special thanks to Tom Morgan for composing our bumper music and the Washburn jazz band for recording it, featuring Craig Treinen on sax.

See you next week on the NFOA bridge!

Bumper music fade out