

Karen Barron: 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 and 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 the series. Today, our featured guest is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English, Dennis Etzel. Welcome Dennis.

Dennis Etzel, Jr. (he/him): Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Karen Barron: Oh, it's great to have you. You have a history of incorporating Community Engaged Learning into your classes. My first question is, why do you do it, what do you see as the value of CEL to our students and the greater community.

Dennis Etzel, Jr. (he/him): Oh, it brings me just a sense of really helping students and encouraging them to go further than the classroom. You know many of the things that we do, we prepare students in the classroom and that even when I was a student, there weren't as many opportunities and thinking of outside of the campus or outside, you know when we think of Washburn, I think of Topeka too. Even that growing up, the thought of community didn't enter a conversation I thought of it as like just the neighborhood, right? That I didn't think that I could even be involved with something outside of the neighborhood and outside, even in community building, so I'm glad that CTEL created this kind of initiative for Community Engaged Learning, and I know that from the papers that my students when they reflect on their own experiences that they were always glad and happy to have had that experience. And that they also hope to wish to continue engaging either in volunteerism or other community practices, so I feel like, in other words, that they change the perceptions and biases that, you know, their own perceptions and biases that they held, and it's changed out of that experience.

Karen Barron: Yes, yes, I agree with that. That's been my experience with student feedback as well and I think, too, I could relate with you talking about you know when I was growing up as well. Your community might be your family, your neighborhood and now we're much more global than that, you know, and that's a good thing reaching out to, you know, beyond our campus community to the communities beyond. Thank you. So, Dennis, I know you've been involved in several different projects and I'm wondering if you would mind just briefly describing some examples of CEL from your courses either past or present or future.

Dennis Etzel, Jr. (Sure yeah so I'm worked my first year writing students, I had some time ago, and then I'm going I'm about to do again soon with food insecurity, that they went to Harvesters and learned about the needs in the Topeka community and in general in the area that Harvester serves and as part of Feeding America and they actually did also put together these snack packs that are given to students at the public schools. And that they learned that those snack packs sometimes might be the only food the student has that weekend. So that that's really an important thing, and that how even Harvesters works when you see some of those slogans like, oh, you know \$1 can provide eight meals, or you know something like that, and that they get an understanding that a Harvesters has the opportunity to buy. food at a discount when other corporations or companies have a surplus or that they just messed up and so as students, the students really learn and many also are coming out of those experiences too, that of the food insecurity in that learning that they aren't alone in that that they're just so many that are affected by that.

That also I in my mythologies and literature class that when students learn about the hero's journey it's something that Joseph Campbell created that: mythologies have these hero's journey that a hero has to leave home and has an adventure and something happens to change that hero, I had students first conduct their own interviews with each other about their own heroes' journeys and then they went out with the help of Arts Connect. That arts connect found different people in the community who are creating art and from several diverse situations and that the students interviewed one of those art heroes. So, for instance Dina Bennett who had worked at you will be in art Center or resume I'm sorry the molding art museum and looked at social justice through our she was interviewed. And John Sebelius who runs a PTSD treatment program at the VA and focuses on the visual arts, the YWCA that the domestic violence, shelter, using art to help victims, so that the students have normally interview skills, but actually learned about these heroes and what they were doing for the Topeka community and the connection between the arts in social change. And then finally I've been working with students in my Advanced College Writing class, students who are nurses and it's now set up again, that will be going to Midland Hospice and students who might be getting the information from all of their classes about nursing and studying hard about you know all of the different things that are involved in nursing, but may not see writing as a way for nurses to connect with patients or how patients are served or people who are in hospice were served. The writing that we learn about legacy stories, and there's actually they call it legacy therapy or reminiscence therapy, that after someone is interviewed for their legacy story, that you know it could be, especially in the hospice situation where things are there at the you know, maybe the end of their life and that things are very painful, but to be able to reminisce about their lives in about all of the good things in it and to give advice. It helps the patient, it helps the person being served, and that also then it helps the family too; it helps serve their families, to be able to have such a story or document in that things that they may not have known about that person, so that when it comes to health care that legacy stories are very effective. They're also another form of healthcare and that students then get that insight and that they many write about how they wish to continue with that and or that some who are already serving in the hospital say yeah you know this kind of made me try to think and understand my patients on another level, the one that they're not used to when they go in and kind of go through their routines so. Those are the I really I love that being able to do this, that in the classroom to give this kind of other opportunity to go outside of the classroom right? Prepare with a certain theme, or certain idea, and then to find a way to challenge biases. And challenge perceptions, [coughs] Excuse me.

Karen Barron: Yes, and I love, how you are so creative in reaching out to you know many different sectors of the community, and I just think it sounds so positive, and I can just imagine that your students enjoy you know interacting this way, rather than, you know, just writing something for their instructor, for example. So that's fantastic and it just reminded me when you were talking about the snack packs. It reminds me to carry around some snack packs in my car, so that when you know you see someone on the street that's homeless, you have something that you can give to them, so, so thank you for that reminder. Dennis, thank you so much for sharing your experiences with CEL. You are an inspiration and it's been a real pleasure talking with you.

For more information on how you can get involved with Community Engaged Learning at Washburn or apply to be a CEL Scholar, Karen Barron: Please see the CEO 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