

Transcript for NFOA Bridge Fac/Staff Tracy Routsong

Bumper Music fade in

KB: Welcome to this 10-minute episode of the NFOA Bridge mini bodcast. NFOA. N-F-O-A 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 Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and Professor of Communication Studies, Dr. Tracy Routsong. Welcome, Tracy.

TR: Thank you for inviting me.

KB: You are most welcome; we're glad you're here. Tracy, 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 our greater community?

TR: For me, CEL is the bridge between what can feel like the academic bubble and the community at large, so not only do students receive the opportunity to apply what they are learning, they do so in a way that partners them with a variety of individuals, oftentimes requiring unique problem-solving opportunities and attempting to stretch skillsets. So then, at the same time, they are working in partnership to fulfill community needs – working on what some might call 'soft skills' such as critical listening and thinking, interpersonal networking, and often working in small groups. Part of community engaged learning is stepping away from assumptions and preconceived notions, and instead working with members of the community to determine positive paths forward, instead of not just working for a community, but working with a community. Reflection is another key aspect of CEL where students process the experience, so reflection should happen throughout the engagement to help students connect their experiences between the community and the classroom.

KB: Thank you. I really like your definition there and your emphasis on not working just for the community but working with the community. Could you please briefly describe some examples of CEL from your courses, past, present, or future?

TR: Sure, so one of my favorite CEL projects involved my Research Methods course in Communication Studies, so we worked with a community group that was planning an event to honor a local teacher who had been working for 25 years, and my students worked with the planning committee to build, well they were building a research foundation but the community didn't really know that part, but they developed interview protocols, they learned to submit IRB applications, and then they conducted, transcribed, and analyzed interviews with past students and parents. From there, students conducted a thematic analysis, again that's the academic portion, and then they chose one theme to highlight in a video compilation, so they showed their

research instead of writing say a research paper, they demonstrated with this video, so it might have been a theme of family or a theme of caring. So then the community members watched the videos and provided feedback and finally they chose one to show at the event itself. So the students were able to practice these key research skills, and a lot of them then also took another step and learned editing skills so they could complete their videos in a more powerful presentation. And then they learned how to present research to various types of audiences, so students frequently reflected about their excitement to have their research used and they said to “build something real” and they stated that they took it more seriously than they might have if it had been gathering data just for a regular class project. And so some of the students and myself actually got to attend the event of seeing that real-time reaction to their finished product, and it was a learning experience, I just wouldn’t be able to generate in a traditional classroom.

KB: Oh, that sounds really interesting. I would love to see that. I mean is that anywhere that we could see the finished product, or is that not a public thing?

TR: That is a very good question. We gave a copy of all the videos the students made to the teacher, and I believe though with IRB, I don’t know that I could submit it other than that.

KB: Right. Right. Well, it sounds like a really good project and I’m sure extremely meaningful for the teacher herself or himself.

Thanks so much, Tracy for highlighting one of your experiences with CEL. It’s been a 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, please see the CEL Pillar on the Center for Teaching Excellence webpage, and contact me, Karen Barron, 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.

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