UHD’s QEP Topic: Academic Achievement through Community Engagement (A+CE)

Thesis: Prepare students to think critically about community issues.

Criteria: Curricular, first two years for FTIC (first time in college) students

Definitions:

A. **Critical Thinking** (one of the learning outcomes of Texas Common Core)

   The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) defines critical thinking as creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.

B. **Community Engagement**

   The Carnegie Foundation defines community engagement as “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.” Within the scope of this QEP, community engagement will also encompass both the identification and analysis of community issues.

Requirements for a Course in the QEP

A. Incorporate one of the Student Learning Outcomes in your syllabus:

   **A+CE Student Learning Outcome (SLO) 1**: Students will be able to analyze community issues with respect to different perspectives, theories, or solutions.

   **A+CE SLO 2**: Students will be able to identify or design creative strategies to address an aspect of a community issue.

   (If the A+CE designated course is also a core course, then please align one of the A+CE student learning outcomes to one of the core outcomes).

B. Design and administer an A+CE Signature assignment associated with SLO.

Optional: Design and administer a Critical Reflection Assignment.

   Critical reflection assignment would be a post-assignment to help students reflect on what they learned from the A+CE Signature assignment and how they will apply this learning to future assignments.

   Critical Reflection is often grounded in a meaningful experience, critical reflection is a reasoning process through which students can articulate questions, confront bias, examine causality, contrast theory with practice, or point to systemic issues.
**Implementation in Classroom**

Critical analysis of community issues in classes will be conducted in one of three modes listed below.

- **Awareness**-introduction to concept of the intersections between the classroom and community;
  - Examples: book discussion, case study, research project on hunger, immigration, scarcity of clean water, etc.
- **Integration**-Study of community issues through coursework enhanced with speakers, panels, public deliberation events, etc.
  - Examples: on-site presentation (hunger issue may be at Target Hunger)
- **Involvement**- Direct engagement in an activity with the community partner.
  - Examples: maintaining public garden, interviewing leadership of Target Hunger, etc.

All courses using one of these modes will be designated as A+CE courses.

**Student Motivation**

A. Become an ‘Engaged Scholar’ by taking four A+CE courses in the first two years, maintaining an overall GPA of 2.5 with a maximum of one ‘C’ in the A+CE courses.
B. Get A+CE course designations on transcript.
C. Develop 21st century skills in critical thinking while engaging in community issues.

**Faculty Participation**

A. Get course designated:
   - Fill out application for blanket or individual section A+CE designation- upload A+CE syllabus and A+CE Signature assignment
   - Get course and assignment approved by A+CE Advisory Sub-Committee.
   - Upload student artifacts via Blackboard.
   - Artifacts collected at the end of every semester.

B. Sign up to be A+CE Signature Assignment reviewer using AA&U Critical Thinking rubrics.

C. Get involved in Faculty Development Opportunities such as workshops, conferences, webinars, internal consulting, Faculty Big Read, and teaching circles.