



**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<sup>+</sup>CE courses.

## **Student Motivation**

- A. Become an 'Engaged Scholar' by taking four A<sup>+</sup>CE courses in the first two years, maintaining an overall GPA of 2.5 with a maximum of one 'C' in the A<sup>+</sup>CE courses.
- B. Get A<sup>+</sup>CE course designations on transcript.
- C. Develop 21<sup>st</sup> 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<sup>+</sup>CE designation- upload A<sup>+</sup>CE syllabus and A<sup>+</sup>CE Signature assignment
  - Get course and assignment approved by A<sup>+</sup>CE Advisory Sub-Committee.
  - Upload student artifacts via Blackboard.
  - Artifacts collected at the end of every semester.
- B. Sign up to be A<sup>+</sup>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.