

CONNECT!

Angelo State University

CONNECT! Campus and Community: *ASU's Plan to Enhance Learning through Community Engagement (CONNECT!)* reinforces the university's commitment to higher learning and community engagement by CONNECTING the students, faculty, and staff on our campus with local, regional, national, and global communities to enhance student learning and better serve those communities. The **CONNECT!** focus statement is: **CONNECTED students become socially responsible citizens!**

Research conducted for this initiative indicates that the student learning focus of **CONNECT!** should be *Social Responsibility*, which is also one of the Core Objectives of the new Texas Core Curriculum. *Social Responsibility* is "to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in the regional, national, and global communities." (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2012) **CONNECT!** proposes to address *Social Responsibility* through three high-impact pedagogical CONNECTIONS: a) service-learning, b) internships and other community-based practica, and c) community-based research. Additionally, academic and student affairs units reinforce this learning goal through related co-curricular community engagement activities. **CONNECT!** therefore aligns with ASU's Mission Statement, which says, "In a learning-centered environment distinguished by its integration of teaching, research, creative endeavor, service, and co-curricular experiences, ASU prepares students to be *responsible citizens* [emphasis added] and to have productive careers."

ASU (enrollment 6,888), a member of The Texas Tech University System, has a long and distinguished history of service to San Angelo, Texas (pop. 93,000), and the surrounding region. In recent years, ASU's student body has become more diverse. In 2009, ASU was designated a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Research indicates that community-engaged pedagogies and activities have a positive impact on all students and an even greater impact on Hispanic students. Through the years, reciprocal partnerships between ASU and the community have developed and prospered. Partnerships involving students were usually associated with particular programs of study and not widely accessible to the student population as a whole. By focusing community engagement resources on student learning, the enterprise most central to ASU's mission, these mutually beneficial partnerships can expand and better enable ASU to prepare students of all backgrounds and aspirations to be responsible citizens in San Angelo, the region, and beyond.

CONNECT! is administered in the newly established Center for Community Engagement. The Center assists faculty in developing courses that incorporate the curricular, pedagogical, and assessment strategies necessary for students to demonstrate their relative achievement of the stated learning goal. The Center also interacts with appropriate campus units and community partners to coordinate appropriate sites and activities as well as coordinate contracts, memoranda of understanding, etc. Additionally, the Center assists faculty in the production of community engagement scholarship for publication and/or presentation. The Center tracks and evaluates all of these activities, but the direct measurement of student learning is emphasized.

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