

## 7. Recruiting Students on Campus as well as from Communities

Especially with a worsening economy, one major challenge in creating a Community Change Studies program is developing an effective plan for recruiting sufficient numbers of students to convince the college that the program should be launched and then continued over time. Can the program justify the college's investment in it? Will it attract enough students to generate sufficient income to cover its cost and be financially viable?

Enrollments at virtually every college are currently shrinking significantly, and this trend will intensify over the next decade. The competition for students therefore is getting tougher. As a result, most institutions keep reducing the number of courses and areas of concentration they offer.

This presents a particularly great challenge for Community Change Studies or any other nontraditional course of study which few colleges now offer, and with which few college administrators or traditional academics are familiar.

However, there are three strong arguments why a college should incorporate a Certificate or Degree program in Community Change Studies into its curriculum. First, there is a **rapidly growing job market** for graduates with the skills, knowledge, and values which CCS students acquire and, unfortunately, these needs will grow as poverty and inequity deepen. CCS graduates gain skills and knowledge which are central to a wide range of family-supporting careers in community-based organizations, other nonprofits, and community-facing positions with public agencies and business firms.

Second, in this era of extraordinary social concern and activism among students and community leaders, CCS' courses on organizing, participatory action research, and lessons from their region's political, economic, social, and reform history have the potential to become very popular. They **can attract large numbers of current students who want to develop the skills, knowledge and credentials to make a real difference on the issues they care about most**. This will require growing visibility and serious marketing, but the potential is real.

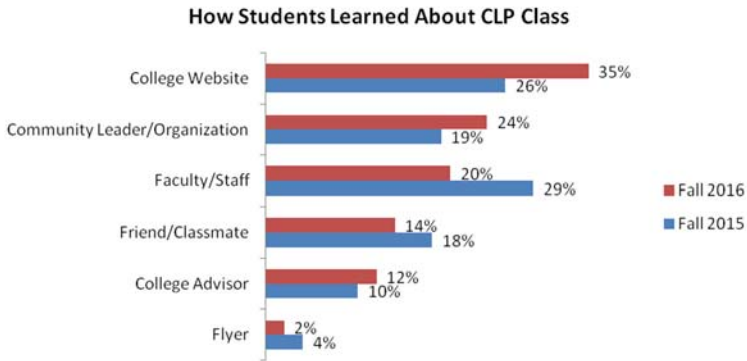
Third, CLP's sites are demonstrating that **a CCS program can attract new students to a college from nearby communities** by offering emerging leaders and others opportunities to prepare for careers and leadership roles tackling the critical community, political, and social issues they care about most.

Therefore, as a key part of their strategy, advocates for creating a CCS program should equip themselves with a student recruitment plan which is designed to attract –

- Both current college students and potential future students, especially emerging community and youth leaders and others interested in impacting community issues, public policies or institutional reforms; potential off-campus recruits include graduating members of the VISTA, Public Allies, Youthbuild, and other Americorps programs as well as staff from local community organizing, development, and service organizations, and public agencies,
- A sufficient number of students to ensure the program becomes financially sustainable and is continued over the long-run so disenfranchised communities will have access to a continuing stream of knowledgeable, skilled leaders, organizers and allies,
- Increasing numbers of students from communities of color and the low-income and working-class neighborhoods which need strengthened leadership, organizations, voice, participation, power and influence,
- Growing numbers of students who are interested in career or leadership roles in community organizing, planning and development and who therefore seem likely to enroll in the full pathway – a Certificate, Minor and/or Major -- not just the one course which attracts them initially,
- Sufficient numbers of students each year so they can form cohorts learning and working together, benefitting from peer learning and support, and building lasting relationships which will help them in the future, and
- Neighborhood, union and civic leaders, and emerging leaders reached through youth organizations and movements and local high schools.

Each CLP site has developed its own strategies for recruiting students, with some including much more intensive off-campus recruiting efforts than others. In the course of this experimentation they have learned many important lessons.

Let's review the main points they have learned over the years, starting with on-campus recruitment of current students.



The principal challenges to recruiting currently enrolled students to CLP programs are –

- Competition with already widely recognized fields of study and career pathways.
- Helping students understand how this educational pathway can lead to good family-supporting careers and what those potential careers are.
- Clarifying what “Community Change Studies” is and why students should enroll in it.
- Gaining sufficient visibility and prominence for the program that students and others in the community know about the program and seriously consider enrolling in it.

### **Important elements in strategy for recruiting current college students to CCS**

1. Offering CCS as a Minor, Major or Certificate program.
2. Maximizing support for the program within the college, ideally including top academic leaders, faculty from several departments, service learning and civic engagement programs within the college, academic counselors, and student organizations and clubs.
3. Strong positioning within the college, locating the program within the Department which, because of its goals, current courses, and leadership is most likely to actively support the CCS program, offer CCS courses as

electives counting toward completion of the Major, and steer students towards enrolling in the CCS program.

4. Building collaborative relationships with other Departments to help attract their students to taking CCS courses, if possible co-listing CCS with Departments focusing on such related fields as nonprofit management, social work, environmental studies, criminal justice and community health.
5. Seeking approval of one or more CCS courses as meeting a Gen Ed requirement to attract more students.
6. Linking CCS to Service Learning and community engagement programs and seeking priority for its students for jobs through the Community Work component of the Federal Work Study program.

### **Key selling points for students --**

- Community Change education can lead to long-term professional careers with good pay and benefits, upward mobility, and job opportunities with many types of employers – CBOs, other nonprofits, churches, labor, political organizations, government, etc.
- Community Change work provides you with a chance to “give back” to communities like their own, to meet great needs, and to be paid for it.
- CCS enables you to develop cross-sector skills and knowledge which you can use to create change on whatever issue you care about most – climate change, creating green jobs, criminal justice reform, community health, gentrification, etc.
- CCS programs offer practical experience working on important issues through internships and other on-site learning; When feasible, offering paid internships, through Community Work Study or other funding.

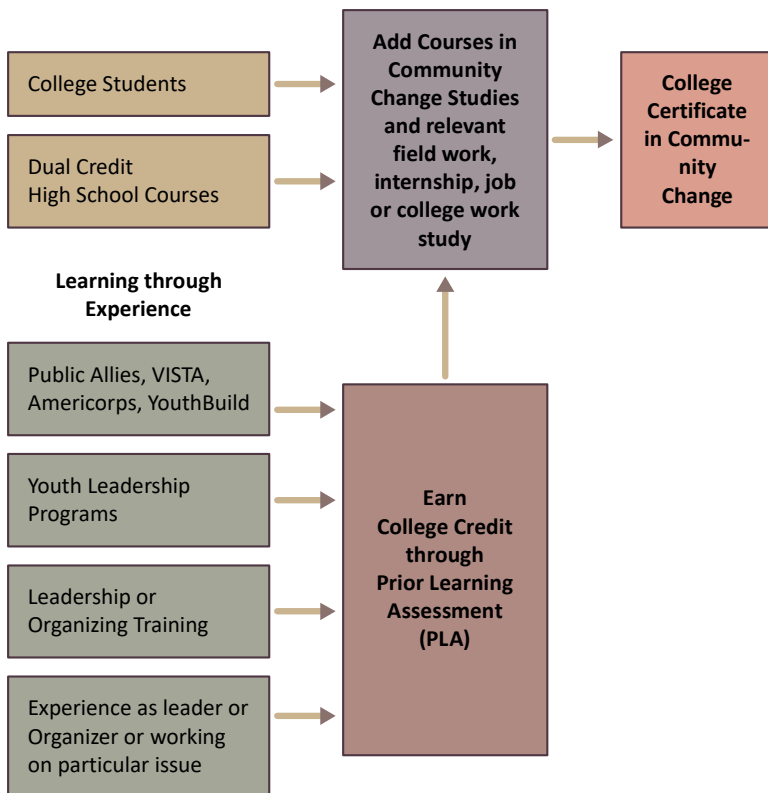
### **Recruiting students from nearby communities:**

Chapters 5 and 6 describe how Prior Learning Assessment and high school dual enrollment or early college programs can create entry points onto the CCS pathway. They also discuss the possibility of earning college credit for service in Public Allies, VISTA, YouthBuild’s leadership development program, and similar programs.

CD Tech and others offer courses to the community, sometimes teaching in the community rather than on campus. Some stress systematic outreach and recruitment to --

- Community-based organizations of all types, including organizing groups, community development corporations and community-based services programs.
- Neighborhood leadership groups.
- Churches, mosques, temples and faith-based organizations.
- Unions and neighborhood businesses.

## Recruiting from Colleges and the Community



## **Recruiting from Youth and Community Organizations**

Many youth-led and youth-serving organizations have leadership development programs or other initiatives which may surface promising candidates for recruitment into CCS courses or more extensive pathways. Among the organizations which may have local chapters with this emphasis are the following

- Churches.
- Opportunity Youth United.
- Student Action’s members.
- Black Lives Matter.
- Youth organizing groups, etc.
- Organizations working on DACA issues/Dreamers.
- Magnet schools featuring leadership studies.
- Job Corps.
- YouthBuild, VISTA, Public Allies, Americorps, CityYear.
- Boys and Girls Clubs.
- YM and YWCAs.
- Other youth centers.
- Mentoring programs.
- Church youth groups in low-income neighborhoods.
- Organizations working on reentry issues, in-prison education programs and ministries.
- High school student governments.
- Reentry organizations.
- Youth rights organizations.
- Coalitions.
- LGBTQ organizations.

## **Examples of Strong Recruitment Efforts --DeAnza College**

The CCS program at DeAnza College’s Certificate in Leadership and Social Change is housed in an on-campus center called the Vasconcellos Institute for Democracy in Action (VIDA), which is directed by a faculty member who teaches several core classes in the program and is a progressive leader within the College. Much of the program outreach is done through VIDA, the social justice activist community on campus and a few community partners.

“Setting out clear weekly goals and milestones for both recruitment and enrollment has energized both efforts. Recognize that recruitment is an entire job in itself. If you don’t have dedicated staff for recruitment, please consider hiring a couple of folks, or at the very least leveraging any internship/student worker resources you have to help get the word out.”

DeAnza also informs prospective students about the program through two high school outreach efforts:

- **Youth Voices United for Change Conference:** An annual conference that brings high school students to De Anza from under-resourced and underserved areas.
- **Mentors for Youth Empowerment:** This program exposes high school students to De Anza student mentors as they prepare for graduation and college.

VIDA is also getting current CCS students and alums still on campus more involved in promoting the program on campus by wearing CCS tee shirts and going to talk to students in classes and clubs. A CCS program graduate now serves as Coordinator for Student Outreach and Support, and is an enormous help in building the program, and who also serves as Treasurer of CLP’s National Board.

There’s also great potential in having CCS students identify already existing student groups and reaching out to inform their members about how CCS relates to their concerns and how they can gain from enrolling in a CCS course and, hopefully, the entire Certificate or Degree program.

Other examples of outreach and recruitment efforts include the following:

- **CD Tech** staff have developed a Student Ambassador Program to enlist students in being “hands on about spreading the word” about the program through tabling and flyering.
- For their first cohort of students, the program in **Phoenix** focused on recruiting students through community partners which also provided modest contributions to help students pay tuition. Their strategies included reaching out to specific departments and classes – such as liberal arts, political science, social work, and nursing – and connecting to the student life director to reach student organizations that had community minded students.

- The CLP program at **Minneapolis College** has primarily used internal recruitment strategies, including informing college advisors about the program, using an on-campus Community Development Club, and making sure faculty who teach the core CLP classes tell students in their class about the multi-course Certificate program.

Recruitment for NYC's **Center for Community Leadership is built into its structure**. CNL was created by a citywide coalition of over 120 housing and tenant groups, and they help recruit people in their communities and then help train, mentor, and place the students.

*See the following interview with CLP Co-Chair Shelia Balque for a description of the creative recruitment efforts in Los Angeles.*