COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

An Introduction for Faculty

Presented by (first) (last),
(position), (institution)

for

(audience)
(Month) (Day), (Year)

General Welcome, Introductions. Who is here and why?

CBR: AN OVERVIEW

- ◘ What is CBR?
- ◘ Why do CBR?
- ◘ Principles of Practice
- ◘ Pedagogical Methods
- ◘ Benefits & Challenges
- ◘ What It Takes
- ◘ A Success Story
- ◘ Resources

Quick overview of items the presentation will cover.

CBR: WHAT IS IT?

- ◘ **A collaborative, participatory research process that embraces:**
    - ▪ Research
        - • Community has information needs
        - • Campus partners have research tools and resources
    - ▪ Education
        - • Community has valuable local knowledge & experience
        - • Campus partners have theoretical and large scale perspectives
    - ▪ Action
        - • Build organizational and community capacity
        - • Effect policy change

A good grasp of the definition of CBR is crucial. This isn't research about the community, this is research with the community. This isn't research that stays in the academy, but that's turned into concrete action.

RESEARCH: Communities need knowledge and **information** and have access to invaluable data, but rarely have the time, resources, and expertise to gather and analyze it. Faculty and students, meanwhile, have the research tools and resources to perform data connection and analysis—but might not have access to the cultural and localized knowledge that nonprofits possess.

EDUCATION: The campus and the community have much to learn and share with one another. The community can inform campus partners about local community issues, their clients, etc., while campus partners can provide national and theoretical perspectives.

ACTION: It is crucial that the research have an impact, and that research methods be designed as such. Research can create, improve, and evaluate programs; improve infrastructure; effect policy change.

CBR: WHY DO IT?

- ◘ **Complex social problems ill-suited to "outside expert" research alone**

- ◘ **Impact community capacity**

- ◘ **Build long-term relationship with community partners**

- ◘ **Effective method of teaching and learning for all participants**

There are a number of reasons to do community-based research:

Collaboration is essential to solving these problems—both parties have information too valuable not to share. Academic research requires practical insight and application to have an impact. The community needs the research expertise and experience that academics can offer.

Research can not only satisfy faculty member's interest, but also have an impact on community

Community-based research projects build substantial, long-term relationships between the community and campus—values and respects all parties; many research projects lead to other research projects; research may reveal other opportunities for campus to get involved (other service learning courses, volunteer activities, etc.)

Structured so that everyone has something to learn and everyone has something to teach. Faculty learn what they couldn't without community partnerships; community organizations gain access to new research; students gain field experience and understand practical application of knowledge.

CBR: PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

- ◘ Research need(s) defined by community

- ◘ Research is action-oriented

- ◘ All stages of process involve all partners (faculty, students, and community) equitably

- ◘ Strengths and knowledge of all partners appreciated and utilized

- ◘ Findings disseminated in accessible way

You'll return to the principles of CBR practice over and over again, as they define every step of the research process. They are as follows:

Community partner must define research needs! Researchers should not impose their interests on the partner, but engage in real conversation about organizational needs.

All research methods should be designed such that the final analysis will yield some sort of pre-defined action (improve programming, inform legislators, etc.)

All parties informed and offer input throughout the process.

Mutual respect—everyone has much to offer and much to learn from one another.

Public communication/knowledge exchange—how will information be best presented? Might not be an academic paper, but a public forum, brochure, etc.

CBR:	PEDAGOGICAL METHODS

◘ **Course-based options model**

◘ **CBR-based semester courses**

◘ **Long-term, course-based projects**

◘ **Interdisciplinary, multi-course collaborative projects**

CBR can be incorporated into courses in a variety of ways depending on resources available, faculty time, and community needs. (*Offer explanation, followed by example*)

Options model: Traditional course where CBR isn't incorporated into the syllabus or curriculum, but students have the option to do CBR projects related to the course, rather than traditional final papers and projects.

Semester courses: Entire course is designed around community-based research. Students work in teams to address research questions relevant to curriculum.

Long-term projects: Each course builds upon the last. Might happen with the same cohort of students (i.e. EPICS), or with subsequent courses (i.e. Appalachian State long-term project with Blue Ridge Parkway). Makes a lot of sense because few community needs can be addressed in the course of a semester, and projects oftentimes reveal new research needs.

Interdisciplinary, multi-course: Faculty from different departments work together to build comprehensive project—makes a lot of sense because social problems are often multi-pronged.

A list of innovative pedagogical CBR models can be found at: http://www.cbrnet.org/Archives/2007/March/11CBRProjectsReceiveInno.html. A listing of other types of CBR courses is maintained in the CBR course database at http://www.bonner.org/campus/cbr/profiles.taf

CBR:	BENEFITS

◘ **Community**
- Access to faculty expertise
- Organizational capacity building
- Policy change

◘ **Students**
- Develop new skills
- Improve existing skills
- Connect classroom learning with real-world application

◘ **Faculty**
- Enhanced teaching credentials
- New venues for publishing and resenting
- Positively impact students and community

Community:

Learn from faculty what they might not have access to on own

Improve programs, develop/improve infrastructure, better understand community needs and clients

Provide information that can impact policy

Students

New skills: public communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving

Improve skills: communication, critical thinking, writing

Connect classroom learning with real-world learning—become more invested in coursework

Faculty

Develop teaching skills

Wide variety of conference and publications seek publications for this type of work, in addition to their own academic fields

Research makes a difference

Currently, the National CBR Networking Initiative is developing impact evaluations to provide evidence to support these claims, rather than just anecdotes

CBR: CHALLENGES

◘ **Unpredictability**

◘ **Calendar conflicts**

◘ **Role confusion**

◘ **Participant compensation/ recognition**

There are challenges in doing CBR. They are by no means insurmountable, but they are important to anticipate and be prepared to address.

Unpredictability:

•You can't always find the information you're looking for.

•People aren't always reliable.

•Research needs might be redefined mid-way through the project.

•Community is an "imperfect" research environment.

(But note that all of these "problems" provide opportunities for student learning experiences).

Calendar Conflicts:

•Academic calendar might prevent students from devoting the type of time the partner needs.

•Students not available in the summertime.

•Semester schedule not conducive to long-term projects

(But note that many of the pedagogical methods we discussed earlier, as well as summer fellowship programs, creatively address these problems)

Role Confusion: There might be some discomfort with not knowing information/being an expert on the issue or community.

Compensation/Recognition: CBR requires a lot of time and resources, and there's not a lot of compensation for parties involved. We're finding that people are coming up with creative ways to compensate community partners, developing awards programs and other opportunities for students. There's been some growth in faculty recognition—needs to be incorporated into tenure review process. Number of journals, conferences, recognizing this kind of work is growing.

CBR: WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

◘ **Time**

◘ **Long-term vision**

◘ **Communication**

◘ **Flexibility**

◘ **Willingness to develop research process with community input**

A successful CBR project requires the following:

Time: Know upfront that this will take more time than a standard course or research—but it will be worth it.

Vision: Because CBR is action-oriented, it's important to consider the long term implications and impact of research. It's also important to plan ahead to make sure things get done—i.e. the time that it takes to go through the IRB process, gather focus groups, etc.

Communication: All parties need to communicate regularly, openly, and honestly, not only because everyone has invested so much, but also because everyone has valuable knowledge that could inform other parties in the process of addressing challenges.

Flexibility: Things will come up! Need to be patient and flexible with both partners and students.

Willingness to develop research with community input: Number one priority is that this be a community-driven process. Listen to the community partner.

CBR: A SUCCESS STORY

WWS/SOC469
Health, Housing, and Employment:
What Works for the Poor in Small Cities

◘ Isles, Inc. & Katherine Newman (Woodrow Wilson School of Public Affairs)

- Syllabus developed collaboratively
- Lectures: national scope + community experts
- Student teams paired with Isles staff
- Concluding presentation

Talk about one example of a success story. For Princeton, WWS 469. Lots of time and resources, but really paid off.

Syllabus development: Katherine and Elisha worked carefully with Isles for many months to develop a syllabus and refine research questions

Lectures: In the classroom, Katherine gave students national and theoretical foundation to deal with local issues. Then invited public health, housing, and other experts in to talk as well.

Students teams: Divided into teams, students had the opportunity to work carefully and closely with staff and clients.

Concluding presentation: Combined local research with other knowledge to develop recommendations; presented research to staff in accessible way, as well as recommendations for moving forward

CBR:	RESOURCES

◘ **National Community-Based Research Networking Initiative**
   www.cbrnet.org

◘ **CBR Course and Project Database**
   www.bonner.org/campus/cbr/profiles.taf

◘ **Campus-Community Partnerships for Health**
   www.ccph.info

◘ *Community-Based Research & Higher Education: Principles & Practices*   *Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, et. al.*

There are lots of great resources out there. Some of the most comprehensive and relevant are:

Overview of Networking Initiative. Website provides links to a host of other resources.

Explanation of database—great way to access hundreds of prior classes and projects in an astounding array of disciplines

CCPH—health-oriented, but provides a lot of great resources.

CBR & Higher Education—great introduction to CBR