

Digital Community Engagement Pathway Proposal

Program Description

DCEP is a general education pathway for underserved students in all fields and majors. The pathway uses community engagement, small research teams, and an interdisciplinary approach to core curricula so that students can address the world's most pressing problems in applied settings as they fulfill their general education requirements.

The Pathway's goal is two-fold: to recruit more underrepresented students to SIUE and to increase opportunities for these same underserved students who, because of ACT scores and economic factors, do not have access to what the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) calls [High Impact Practices](#) (HIPs). In HIPs, students work with faculty on signature work "related to a question or problem that is important to the student and important to society" ("[Why Students Need Capstones and Signature Work](#)"). HIPs improve personal and social development and increase deep learning, practical competence, and speaking and writing ability by more than 50% (AAC&U). Our site provides [contextual demographics](#) of underserved students at SIUE, and the rate at which they participate in High Impact Practices including Honors and Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities to explain how DCEP might provide more equity in the availability of High Impact Practices on Campus.

Students will take a set of core courses together emphasizing interdisciplinary research and problem-solving methods. They will meet each semester in research-team courses facilitated by their mentoring professor and a community organization to address major social problems in our region such as food insecurity or immigrant alienation. Students will take their education beyond the walls of the classroom and into the St. Louis region. The teams will use interdisciplinary methods to analyze, visualize, and share their work with the public using data mining, mapping, storytelling, networking, and cultural analytics. In this way, the program gives students firsthand experience applying twenty-first century career skills including collaboration, systems thinking, and innovative approaches to digital communication. In this innovative, community-based program, students will learn the important skill of negotiating the civic responsibilities they bear toward others in both physical and digital spaces.

Student Objectives

- Use effective high impact practices, including intensive undergraduate research, project-based learning, and service learning, to increase student retention and success among underserved student groups.
- Demonstrate the practical career applications of students' degrees through a community-based pedagogy while learning twenty-first century skills, including collaboration, systems thinking, and innovative approaches to digital communication.
- Use the program's nexus of community engagement and digital pedagogy to help students negotiate the civic responsibilities they bear toward others in both physical and digital spaces.
- Engage students in interdisciplinary problem solving at the earliest stages of their college career.
- Demonstrate the role that the humanities and social sciences play in understanding and addressing global problems such as poverty, discrimination, and climate change.

Proposed General Education Requirements for Pathway Students

DCEP students are required to complete a general education program that combines the requirements outlined in University policy 1D1 – University-wide Criteria for the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Science (B.S.), and Professional Baccalaureate Degrees – with the following 28 credit-hour curriculum. SIUE's Digital Community Engagement Pathway requires 28 credit-hours of general education coursework. These requirements fall into two categories: the DCEP Research Teams and the DCEP Core.

Year	Summer	Fall	Spring	Outcome
Year 1	Two-Day Orientation	DCEP120: Research Team (3 hours) DCEP 121: Communicating Globally and Locally (3 hours)	DCEP120: Research Team (3 hours) DCEP 123: Research and Systems Thinking (3 hours)	Materials to help community organization elucidate and communicate the problem.
Year 2	One-week research seminar	DCEP 220: Research Team (3 hours) DCEP221 and 221L: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Scientific Method (4 hours with supporting lab credit)	DCEP 220: Research Team (3 hours)	Students finish the year with a large-scale problem map and plan
Year 3	2-week research seminar	DCEP320: Research Team (3 hours)	DCEP 320: Research Team (3 hours)	Culminating digital collaborative project
Year 4	2-week research seminar	DCEP 420: Research Pro-seminar (1 hour)	DCEP 420: Research Pro-seminar (1 hour)	Individual capstone projects

DCEP Research Teams (18 hours)

In each semester of the first three years, students will meet in intensive research teams comprised of five students, a faculty mentor, and a community partner. These teams will focus on a “wicked” or seemingly unsolvable problem such as nutrition and food access, the challenges of intergenerational communication, and poverty’s manifestations across rural and urban environments. The level of difficulty the research teams undertake will grow with students, and the curriculum will be intentionally organic, transforming each year based on student and faculty interest and community need. Students and faculty will work together to structure a series of readings from diverse fields such as history, literature, anthropology, and sociology that supports their work, and they will meet twice weekly to study their problem using critical thinking, writing, and qualitative research methods. In products at the end of each year, research teams will apply a variety of digital methods, including data mining, mapping, storytelling, networking, and cultural analytics.

DCEP Core (10 credit-hours)

DCEP students are required to take DCEP 120: Communicating Globally and Locally and DCEP 123: Research and Systems Thinking during their first year at the University. These courses are designed to help student research, map, and conceptualize global problem and their impact on our region. In these courses students will also learn how to write and speak using interdisciplinary, multi-modal forms of communication. In their second year of instruction, students will take DCEP 220: Interdisciplinary Problem Solving and the Scientific Method and its accompanying lab, in which students will learn how scientific modes of inquiry can apply to the problem they are investigating in their research teams.

Students must also satisfy the following requirements through their major, minor, or additional coursework:

- a course in the physical or life sciences

- a mathematics, statistics, or quantitative reasoning course
- a theater and fine arts breadth requirement

Additional Requirements

DCEP Summer Seminars

Students will participate in a one-week research seminar in the summer preceding each year of the program where they will choose community partners, learn from peer mentoring, and share their research outcomes.

Fourth Year Pro-Seminars (2 credit hours total)

During a DCEP student’s final year of course work, they will enroll in two one-hour seminars to work on their capstone project and consider future career goals with their DCEP mentoring faculty

Course Articulation

The Pathway curriculum is designed to be holistic, with students meeting the overarching goals of the University’s general education program throughout the four years of their participation. However, if a student chooses to leave the program early for any reason, the articulation plan below demonstrates how courses in the Pathway will count toward general education completion.

Year	Fall	Gen Ed Articulation	Spring	Gen Ed Articulation
Year 1	DCEP120: Research Team (3 hours) DCEP 121: Communicating Globally and Locally (3 hours)	ENG 101 ACS101 humanities breadth First year transition	DCEP120: Research Team (3 hours) DCEP 123: Research and Systems Thinking (3 hours)	ENG102 Social science breadth Info and communication in society breadth US cultures Experience
Year 2	DCEP 220: Research Team (3 hours) DCEP221 and 221L: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Scientific Method (4 hours with lab credit)	Life or physical sciences breadth Lab experience	DCEP 220-Research Team (3 hours)	Global cultures breadth RA101
Year 3	DCEP320: Research Team (3 hours)	Interdisciplinary studies	DCEP 320: 3hours (research team, repeatable)	
Year 4	DCEP 420: Research Pro-seminar (1 hour)		DCEP 420: Research Pro-seminar (1 hour)	

Application Procedures

The Digital Community Engagement Pathway is designed to support underserved students by providing them with access to the High Impact Practices typical of an honors program. Therefore, rather than

requiring a specific ACT score or GPA, we have designed a set of admissions standards that will allow us to evaluate a student’s commitment to the community and level of motivation in arenas of their life within and beyond the classroom. In addition, because underserved students often apply later in the season, admissions to the program will continue through July, and the pilot Summer Bridge Program may be one place where we seek new students.

The application for admission to the Digital Community Engagement Pathway will be a supplement students can complete and submit in tandem with their general application for admission to SIUE. In this supplemental section, prospective students will be asked to: 1) respond to a short prompt describing why engaging with the community is a goal for their time in college; 2) choose something to share that represents their best work or what motivates them, including an assignment they are out proud of, a song/poem they wrote, a video or podcast they’ve created, or a reflective essay; and 3) choose something to share that indicates prior engagement with their community (such as a newspaper clipping, program, or certificate of participation). A faculty committee will be in charge of selecting students for admission to the program.

Application Procedure			
1) Completed Application Form	2) Answer prompt describing why engaging with the community is a goal for time in college	3) Signature work example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assignment • creative work • video or podcast, or • reflective essay 	4) Community involvement example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • newspaper clipping • participation certificate, or • letter of reference