

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Community Engaged Learning Council and Center for Community Engagement (and Steering Committee)  
FROM: Committee on Academic Programs  
RE: Final Recommendation on proposal to modify the Community Engaged Learning program  
DATE: May 13, 2021

**Background:** At the end of January, 2020, members of the Community Engaged Learning Council (CELC) sent to CAP, Steering, CSPP, and Faculty Senate a series of recommended changes to the structure, goals, and activities related to community engagement at TCNJ.

**Charge:** Steering asks the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP) to review CELC's recommendations. CAP should carefully consider the impact of these changes on other programs and units on campus and should consult with these units as it sees fit. CAP should seek testimony from Faculty and Staff Senates, Student Government, Academic Leaders, the Council of Deans, the CELC, and the Center for Community Engaged Learning and Research. CAP need not review suggested changes to the structure of CEL, as it does not fall under governance. CAP should deliver a final recommendation that indicates concurrence or non-concurrence with each of CELC's proposals, along with a detailed rationale.

**Procedure:** The Community Engaged Learning Council (CELC) and the Center for Community Engagement (CCE) prepared a report that outlines the need for change and the recommended changes for community engaged learning for all TCNJ students. In addition, in this document the CELC and CCE provide evidence of the success of the pilot program completed in the 2019-2020 academic year.

The link to the CELC/CCE report can be found here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T3BpLA4GJXSX\\_3Yg79E6pDgDa0KB4i70/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T3BpLA4GJXSX_3Yg79E6pDgDa0KB4i70/view?usp=sharing)

On January 26th, 2021 CAP sent out surveys to students, faculty/staff and academic leaders to solicit feedback on the proposed changes to CEL in order to develop a preliminary recommendation. In April 2021, CAP sent out another survey and hosted several open fora on 4/7/21 to ask for feedback on the preliminary recommendation. CAP used this feedback to develop the final recommendation on the proposal to modify the CEL program. We comment on each specific proposal element below.

### **CAP Final Recommendations and Rationale:**

1. **Proposal Item #1- FYCEL.** The initial feedback on the changes to the First Year CEL (FYCEL) was very positive and therefore CAP concurs with this portion of the proposal and recommends that the changes to the FYCEL be fully implemented as proposed. CAP asked respondents to indicate whether the new model (A) met the Learning Outcomes, (B) provided a more uniform experience to students, and "(C)" allowed for CEL to be integrated into other curriculum/courses across campus (i.e., with regard to Continuing the Conversation). The initial testimony from

important stakeholders (a limited number of faculty, students and academic leaders responded to a survey) was positive on all aspects of the proposal related to FYCEL.

2. **Proposal Item #2 CEL designation.** The addition of the Introductory level CEL designation makes sense, assuming that the course approval process is followed with the amendments noted in #4 and that guidelines, expectations and outcomes are made clear for the introductory CEL courses. Testimony indicated that there may be a need to further incentivize student participation.
3. **Proposal Item #3 ACEL-by-contract.** CAP has more substantive recommendations for proposal item #3. There are some concerns in regards to the Advanced CEL- by-contract (ACEL-by-contract) proposal. CAP agrees with the testimony and recommends that CELC and CCE work to clarify and further develop this aspect of the proposal before this piece is approved for use on campus.
  - a. Student and faculty feedback highlighted that there is a lack of understanding about the nature of the ACEL-by contract courses. Both faculty and students asked that more details be provided on the ACEL-by-contract courses. Given this, they reported limited enthusiasm for participating in ACEL-by contract courses, with faculty and students indicating that they are less informed of the benefits of and nature of ACEL-by-contract and the nature of the ACEL courses. In the survey, CAP also asked what would motivate students and faculty to participate in ACEL. More details of the benefits to students and faculty engagement in ACEL needs to be highlighted in the proposal.
    - i. Student respondents said they would be interested because of the positive impact on the community; however it was noted that they do not fully understand the nature of ACEL-by-contract courses and would like more information about the courses. Students also noted that there would be more interest in participating in ACEL courses if the course fulfilled requirements and/or was more closely tied with a major or minor.
    - ii. Faculty expressed interest in participating given the positive impact on the community, the opportunity to partner with community organizations, and the opportunity to work with students outside of the classroom but noted barriers such as time and department commitments. Others indicated that they were not sure whether their discipline was appropriate for ACEL-by-contract and/or they were hesitant because they were not CEL or social justice experts. In addition, faculty wondered how they could assess students effectively without a grading rubric since they are not experts in the field.
  - b. Concern was raised by both faculty and students about the approval process and oversight of ACEL-by-contract courses. For example, what mechanisms will be in place to ensure students enrolled in different ACEL-by-contract courses have similar experiences? How will students be supervised? How will continuity with the community partners be maintained? In addition, concern was raised about how to evaluate student work that involved an additional ACEL piece incorporated into a regular course. Learning objectives should be made clear by CCE and CELC, as well as guidelines for assessment of ACEL-by-contract.

Given the lack of clarity on ACEL-by-contract proposal, as well as the reservations about the consistency of ACEL-by-contract experiences, CAP recommends that CELC and CCE work to develop a set of guidelines, expectations and outcomes for ACEL-by-contract to ensure oversight of and consistency in the experience. In addition, guidelines for assessment of ACEL-by-contract (e.g. evaluation rubric templates) should also be developed. These materials should address the concerns of faculty and students and will yield a positive experience for all parties involved in the ACEL-by-contract agreement.

4. **Additional Recommendation:** CAP recommends that CELC work to develop a CEL course approval process that adheres to the [TCNJ Course Approval Policy](#) that states that faculty be involved in the approval of courses. Currently CCE staff approve the courses (and it was proposed that they will do so in the future), which is not aligned with the course approval policy. CELC should identify the appropriate body that will approve Introductory CEL, ACEL courses (and ACEL-by-contract if/when implemented) and to review changes to FYCEL, as well as IDS103. According to the policy, “the process must utilize a committee or council defined under the approved shared Governance Structure. If an alternative body is needed, it must consist of at least three institutional members, be comprised of 50% or greater full-time faculty, and be approved by the Committee on Academic Programs”. CAP suggests that the CELC serve as the appropriate body or that the CELC and CCE create an alternate body with faculty and staff well versed in CEL.