Frequently Asked Questions

ENGAGE helps open your classroom to the broader Bay Area community by cultivating partnerships with local organizations and supports pedagogical mentorship around project-based learning and community engagement.

WHAT IS PROJECT-BASED LEARNING?
Project-based learning is a teaching method that engages students in acquiring essential knowledge and skills enhancing skills through extensive inquiry into a real-world challenge. This pedagogy is a collaborative activity that takes place over a period of time and results in a product, presentation, performance, or other creation. Project-based learning is already integral to many departments at CCA, including Architecture, the design disciplines, and Community Arts.

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR MY COURSE TO BE CONSIDERED AN ENGAGE AT CCA COURSE?
- The community component must further the academic learning objectives of the course.
- The course must respond to a specific need defined by or developed collaboratively with the community partner.
- The community partner’s mission must be in line with the values of CCA.
- The course must have credit with the community partner built into the curriculum.
- The curriculum must be structured to allow students to reflect critically on community engagement and incorporate these experiences into their learning environment.
- Faculty must incorporate methods of assessment that allow students into their course structure in order to determine student participation and to create a knowledge base for the greater CCA teaching community.

WHY SHOULD I TEACH AN ENGAGE COURSE?
It’s in the DNA of the college. CCA’s mission is to prepare its students for lifelong creative work and service to their communities through a curriculum in art, architecture, design, and writing. ENGAGE provides a curricular way to accomplish this vital goal.

HOW WILL ENGAGE BENEFIT MY STUDENTS?
By facilitating project-based learning with a community partner, you not only provide students with tangible, real-world experiences invaluable to their future practice, but you do so with the support, expertise, and commitment of a partner organization that is personally invested in the project and its outcomes. For students, the ENGAGE pedagogical model is a way of thinking and making real-world meaning while still in school. For faculty, ENGAGE partnerships are a way of activating their own passion and practice within a course.

ARE STUDENTS IN AN ENGAGE COURSE REQUIRED TO SPEND A SPECIFIC AMOUNT OF TIME IN THE COMMUNITY?
The frequency of visits and shared activities within a specific ENGAGE course is determined by the capstone of the community partner and demands related to course-specific learning outcomes. Accommodating that projects always benefit from regular interaction among students, faculty, and members of the partner community. Faculty and community partners should consult the visit schedule during the pre-planning phase.

WHO SCHEDULES THE COURSE?
Although ENGAGE courses have a unique collaborative structure, the order of the individual program testing the course will schedule it, so that they would with any other courses in his or her program.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ENGAGE AND THE CENTER BEFORE AND DURING THE PROJECT?
The Center helps to facilitate the engagement of the center with the right faculty, facilitates project development, administers project agreements (MCAs), oversees course documentation, and provides ongoing academic and content support through the program manager and faculty mentors (there is one faculty mentor in each of the four academic divisions at CCA)

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ENGAGE AND THE CENTER AFTER A PROJECT IS COMPLETE?
ENGAGE gathers feedback from faculty and community partners, compiles documentation, hosts project presentations, provides resources and networking opportunities for future project execution, and helps to coordinate future projects with the Center’s roster of community partners.

“I have learned how design can be a positive, active force in the community.”
- José Fernandez, CCA Student

“Overall, ENGAGE classes have provided me with my richest, most valuable experiences at CCA.”
- Nicole Santucci, CCA Student

Share your ENGAGE idea with us
engage@cca.edu or cca.edu/engage
510.594.3768

ENGAGE at CCA
For the Faculty Partner

Textiles / Zero Kidney Project

“This model offers a great way to get students thinking about how to make art that matters in a much larger context.”
- Allison Smith
CCA Sculpture Faculty

Sculpture / Southern Dunes

“Engage classes have provided me with my richest, most valuable experiences at CCA.”
- Nicole Santucci, CCA Student

Furniture / Lighthouse Community Charter School

“Overall, ENGAGE classes have provided me with my richest, most valuable experiences at CCA.”
- Nicole Santucci, CCA Student

Crop Circles / Distance Wildlife Restoration

“Engage at CCA”
For the Faculty Partner

“Engage at CCA”
For the Faculty Partner
“The morale of the neighborhood rises when 35 kids, many at risk and just hanging out idle, are visibly happy and contributing to the community … I would be ecstatic to have this program again.”

- Holly Alonso
Friends of Peralta Hacienda

"We love working with these projects. We receive tangible goods and learning experiences … This was an awesome experience for our Clients."

- Caleb Zigas
La Cocina

ENGAGE at CCA
For the Community Partner

Frequently Asked Questions

CCA can contribute to the health of your organization and your community by channeling the creativity, skills, and passion of students in fine arts, architecture, design and writing.

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL ENGAGE PARTNERSHIP?

Successful partnerships are relationship-based, stemming from shared interests and face-to-face conversations. We work together with community partners and potential faculty members to develop a project whose scope, timeline, and explicit, tangible outcomes meet everyone’s needs.

WHAT TYPES OF CREATIVE DISCIPLINES DOES ENGAGE REPRESENT?

ENGAGE is a CCA-wide initiative, encompassing all 27 programs of study in the realms of art, architecture, design and writing. For the full roster of CCA programs, visit cca.edu/studies.

HOW EXPERIENCED ARE THE STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE ENGAGE COURSES?

90% of ENGAGE courses run at the 300 level or above, meaning that participating students have developed significant technical skills in their chosen discipline. We work closely with the community partner throughout the collaboration, brainstorming process, to ensure that each course identifies the right faculty partner for that particular project.

WHAT IS ENGAGE AT CCA?

Coordinated by the Center for Art and Public Life at California College of the Arts, ENGAGE at CCA is an innovative curricular initiative that connects interested faculty and students with community partners and relevant outside experts through semester-long projects. Faculty and students in an ENGAGE course work with their community partner to respond to a specific need defined by or developed collaboratively with the partner. Deliverables range from feasibility studies and mentorship to grassroots and exhibitions. By combining project-based learning with community engagement, ENGAGE courses offer significant creative resources to community partners and real-world learning opportunities for students.

WHAT TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS DOES ENGAGE PARTNER WITH?

We partner with organizations that share the Center’s mission to address pressing social and environmental issues. Community partners need not have 501(c)(3) status, but they should be prepared to engage with faculty and students at least three or four times during the semester, and they should be open to discussing a variety of project deliverables and their interpretations.

WHAT DOES ENGAGE EXPECT OF THE COMMUNITY PARTNER?

In addition to project-specific participation, there are three principal ways we ask the community partner to contribute. We request (1) that you maintain an open line of communication with the faculty member and the Center, connecting on a regular basis throughout the semester, (2) that you ensure key staff and community members are available for project evaluations, reviews, and critiques, and (3) that you complete an online survey at the end of the semester so that we can learn from your experiences.

CAN WE CONTACT FACULTY REGARDING QUESTIONS ON A POTENTIAL PROJECT?

Yes. We also recommend that any organization interested in an ENGAGE partnership should contact the Center for an initial brainstorming session. By sharing your needs and allowing us to ask questions, we will be better equipped to propose a range of discipline and faculty with whom you could productively partner.

HOW LONG DO PROJECTS TAKE?

Though bounded by the semester schedule (13 weeks), we often see relationships developed with community partners on the basis of shared interest. A key objective within the collaborative pre-planning process is therefore to determine the practical scope of a project. Are you working with a specific deadline? Is it possible to iterate a smaller project within your larger project goals? Rather than focusing on a finished product, many (ENGAGE) courses develop design and prototypes that can be fully realized at a future date. For example, students in the Local Filter Incubator course developed textile prototypes in order to demonstrate the potential of sustainable fibers to farmers and manufacturers.