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ACES: An Evaluation

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'ACES: An Evaluation'

May 2016

The American Cultures Student Prize

Awarded since 2008, the American Cultures Student Prize provides students with the opportunity to highlight work taken in an American Cultures course which promotes understanding of race, ethnicity, and culture. The prize also recognizes student's work as a standard of excellence in scholarship wrestling critically with the complexities of our diverse social conditions in illuminating ways.

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Team EmbrACES: ELI MORENO, KATHERINE LAZALDE, MARIE LIM, & SO YEON "SELENA" KIM, '*ACES: An Evaluation*,' Education 190AC, Instructor: Christyna Serrano

In Fall 2015, Team EmbrACES evaluated the American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES) program, a program in which students partner with community organizations to work on social justice issues within their AC course. The team carried out their evaluation by collecting, organizing and analyzing data from student survey responses for 5 consecutive semesters from a variety of disciplines and class sizes. The research provided both recommendations for the AC and ACES program, and concrete examples of how ACES benefits the development of students' critical thinking and commitment to civic engagement,whilst also providing hearty realism as to the possible extent of creating active and engaged citizenship in higher education curriculum.

Eli Moreno
Marie Lim
So Yeon (Selena) Kim
Katherine Lazalde

April 10, 2015

ACES: An Evaluation

Description

Our project provides a brief and general examination of the ACES department as a whole. We analyzed student survey responses to the post-course assessment from 2013-2015. Through the student responses, we attempted to determine whether ACES was successfully promoting a dialogue on issues of race and culture, teaching critically engaged scholarship, and encouraging students to actively address social inequalities. We chose to do an in-depth examination of eight AC courses that had a community engagement component and represented a diverse set of disciplines such as Asian American studies, engineering, environmental science, and even music. In addition to short answers, we examined student responses to long answer questions regarding their understanding of the achievement gap and civic engagement. Moreover, we tracked demographics among the respondents along the lines of race, income, etc. Through our methods, we were not only able to determine what type of students are enrolling in ACES courses, but the impact ACES was making on those students taking the courses.

Message

Our project provides feedback on how the ACES program is reaching its goal of building relationships between Bay Area communities and the Berkeley campus so that students may put theory into practice. This supports the goal of American Cultures because it goes beyond spurring conversation in the classroom and extends the dialogue about the topics of race, culture, and ethnicity by rooting those understandings within a particular community/social context through engaged scholarship. This also demonstrates how ACES encourages the students to treat their community sites as classrooms and the community organizers they work with as their teachers. In analyzing student feedback for ACES classes specifically, we are increasing capacity for the program, starting the process on how to improve it, and creating more room for it to reinforce the American Cultures goal to strengthen understanding of issues concerning inequality. ACES is critical in bridging classroom and community. This makes our project essential because it tries to enhance the program to better serve the American Cultures goal. We originally tried to solely focus on the reaction low-income and first generation students had to this curriculum, but due to limited resources, we couldn't. Nevertheless, we pushed this project to completion, because we found it worthwhile to provide insight on a student program as students ourselves based off of our peers' opinions. Ultimately, what motivated us is that we find it worthwhile for students to gain practical experience and learn about social issues in a higher education setting.

Critically Engaged Scholarship, Participatory Citizenship, and Cultural Responsiveness

Our team centered the project around ideas of critically engaged scholarship, participatory citizenship, and cultural responsiveness which are essential key characteristics defining ACES. Theories of race, culture, and ethnicity are central to the development of these ideas. Critically engaged scholarship is testing theories from the classroom. For example, in our ED 190 class, an ACES course that used Participatory Action Research as a pedagogical and methodological framework to engage in service-learning projects, we learned that researchers should be careful not to misinterpret cultural differences or make assumptions about the

priorities of a community. By promoting critically engaged scholarship, this program is advocating for students to embody participatory citizenship. In other words, participatory citizenship is being an active member in the community, not just a bystander. If the institution does not encourage these students to go out into the community, learning about what is wrong in society will not be enough to make these students anything more than bystanders. After all, education is supposed to promote the greater good of society. Also, our records show that many of the students taking ACES classes are minorities. We project these numbers to be likely higher, but are unable to confirm this due to low response rates. The community struggles discussed in academic readings are struggles that minority students see reflected in their own community. We believe this is the case as ACES courses try to practice culturally responsive teaching as they discuss many topics related to disadvantaged groups. Regarding cultural responsiveness, having a community engagement component is a strategy to empower these students to take action and tackle the problems that surround racial, ethnic, and cultural inequalities.

Conclusion

Our role is making the students' voices heard and helping program directors visualize the impact ACES is having on students and the community so that further program development initiatives can be taken. We believe that the space for collaborative learning and community involvement should continue to grow. Through ACES strategy of extending classroom knowledge into community organizations, the American Cultures goal to strengthen understanding race, culture, and ethnicity has a greater reach. Through our support of the program, we too are furthering this goal.

ACES: An Evaluation

Thank you to the ACES department for your help and support.

Eli Moreno

Marie Lim

So Yeon (Selena) Kim

Katherine Lazalde

December 12, 2015

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INTRODUCTION

Fall 2015, four student researchers participated in a community cooperative project as part of Education 190. A community cooperative project (CCP) "builds on a fundamental principle of critical pedagogy" (Serrano, 2015). CCPs try to work towards social change by linking knowledge with action through connecting the classroom and the community. For the assignment, Team EmbrACES decided to focus on the American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES) program, through which the university attempts to personalize academics with issues in the community. Ideally, this would lead to richer in-class conversations and help students acquire new skills. This project's purpose is to speculate on the value of AC and ACES courses by looking at student post-surveys responses for 5 consecutive semesters. We try to assess the impact the ACES courses have on the students and whether there are disparities between students who participated in community engagement and those who did not.

The AC requirement came about through student-driven action to bring knowledge on diverse cultures of the United States through comparative frameworks ("Introduction to the AC Requirement"). The AC requirement attempts to help students create non-traditional knowledge. ACES tries to create a space where students can become co-educators of knowledge through the implementation of community partnership opportunities. We thought this would be a fascinating semester-long project, because our own class is an ACES course, and we were interested in the structural execution of this kind of curriculum.

What we hope to accomplish through our project is to provide ACES staff with information on students' thoughts about their community engagement projects. Additionally, we are trying to support the program in a way that the institution does not. Furthermore, ACES aside, we want to highlight the value in creating these spaces for voices who would otherwise be

marginalized and introduce non-traditional curriculum. We want to see if these classes successfully make its students think critically about social issues.

It is crucial to note that our findings are based on surveys which are self-reported and have a low response rate which does not permit an accurate portrayal of the AC/ACES program. Our findings are based on the assumption that the survey responses are an accurate reflection of the overall student opinion. Speaking from personal experience, community engagement projects might not seem very effective due to lack of resources. When students are caught between other commitments (e.g. work) that demands their time and these projects don't feel like a priority, then this might point more to a structural problem in the school. Even though we wanted to be ambitious, the time limitations ACES program staff faced prevented us from doing as much for the program as we would have liked.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ACES roots itself in a history of intellectuals who have affirmed the importance of critical and community engaged pedagogy as a method to combat against institutional oppression ("Introduction to the AC Requirement"). Arguably, institutional oppression takes the form of capitalism that is founded in meritocracy. Marx defines superstructure as ideas, beliefs, and philosophies that ground a society. Particularly the educational system, he explains, sets up the foundation for the dominant class control, validating the capitalist system ("Marx and Marxism" 38). Specifically, the fact that we structure higher education so that the end goal is good grades perpetuates meritocracy (39). This goal is tied to the capitalistic ideology that views education as self-serving for the sake of private benefits like employment and consumption power (Giroux).

Consequently, in order for the system to function, some have to fail. Someone has to stay oppressed.

In a different lens, Freire offers the idea of using educational projects to help the oppressed reclaim ownership of the classroom, and by extension, their humanity (54). This is referred to as engaged scholarship, a collaboration between students as university researchers and community stakeholders to work towards addressing societal issues (Stanton 14). Such scholarship is utilized to help students develop critical democratic citizenship (Cruz 6). Through ACES, Berkeley has arguably adopted such a model. But the unhealthy financial state the program is in reflects the amount of obstacles there are to introducing alternate forms of education (Freire 68) in Marx's definition of a capitalist system.

There are many barriers to incentivize research universities like UC Berkeley to prioritize engagement scholarship (Stanton 14). Research universities tend to stray from doing anything overtly political (14). Additionally, universities in general are designed to focus on an individual discipline in a purely orthodox classroom setting (15). This connects back to how schools instill a meritocratic system pushing students to work for the grade, be competitive, and essentially be turned off to the idea of partnering up with others to achieve collective goals. These barriers demonstrate how education is used to reinforce an oppressive capitalist system. This suppresses student engagement and problem-posing education, which would encourage students to develop a critical consciousness (Freire 79).

Part of becoming conscious involves students and teachers jointly recreating knowledge (Freire 70). In the mainstream educational model, students are the recipients of knowledge. In this sense, oppressors continue to control thinking and action (Freire 77). In contrast, ACES aims to link educational curriculum to students' experiences (76). These experiences include both the

ones they gain from working in the community and ones that reflect their background. It tries to non-normalize Eurocentric knowledge and historical interpretations in order to fight oppression (70). It attempts to make Berkeley a space that houses resistance and social change, which threatens the dominant system (Giroux).

The ACES program effectively implements the above mentioned critical community engagement scholarship, as illustrated by Cruz's research. Her research demonstrates "[consistent] positive association between inequality content and learning outcomes for critical democratic citizenship," meaning that the students who were in courses with more content on inequality found themselves as being more participatory and justice-oriented citizens (34). Furthermore, her research found a positive association "between being part of the ACES program and structural thinking about racial inequality" (35).

METHODS

We selected eight AC/ ACES courses out of thirty-two courses offered at University of California, Berkeley from the Fall 2013 to Spring 2015. We selected courses from different disciplines. The course offered in the engineering department is the only AC course available in the STEM field. The selected courses are:

- Asian American Studies (ASAMST) 132AC ("Islamophobia and Constructing Otherness")
- Education (ED) 182AC ("Politics of Educational Inequality")
- Engineering (ENG) 157AC ("Engineering, the Environment, and Society")
- Environmental Science Policy and Management (ESPM) 163AC ("Environmental Justice: Race, Class, Equity, and the Environment")
- Ethnic Studies (ETH STD) 144AC ("Racism and U.S. Law")
- Music 26AC ("Music in American Cultures")
- Psychology 157AC ("Stigma and Prejudice")
- Public Health 150E ("Introduction to Community Health and Human Development")

We attempted to choose classes from a variety of disciplines and class sizes. Some courses were offered more frequently than others. With the exception of Music 26AC, we purposely chose upper division classes. While lower division classes tend to be more introductory, upper division classes are usually expected to delve deeper into subject matters. We kept Music 26AC in our selection, because it is more consistently offered and is one of the more widely picked courses to fulfill the American Cultures requirement, based on Berkeley Time, a student-run course catalog (2015).

We analyzed data from surveys collected by the ACES department post class completion by students. The survey consisted of twenty-six questions which attempts to evaluate demographics of the students enrolled, general understanding of social issues, and personal gains as a result of taking the course. The survey consisted of three types of questions: (1) choice-selection, (2) ranking level of agreement/disagreement with posed statements, (3) free text responses. For (2), the options span from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree" with five increments inside the spectrum.

In our analysis, we focused on question 9, 11, and from 21 to 26. Data from questions 9 and 11 gave us a sense of the distribution of the class along race and income level. We did not focus on any one group, nevertheless, because the response rate was already low and being even more selective would have given us less data to work with. We picked question 21 because we wanted to assess students' understanding of the relationship between academics and the community. We picked questions 22 to 26 because these questions directly asked for students' feedback about the American Culture (AC) program. The section was named "Your American Cultures Courses." We speculated the Survey Logic Question -- which we denoted as Question 25A -- to separate the students into two groups: those who did and did not participate in

community engagement service project or research. We also focused on question 15 and 17, which were free text responses.

FINDINGS

This section introduces our findings, beginning with general statistics on response rates and the demographics of the survey respondents. Following that, we will highlight the general trends for the survey questions. Then, we will identify similarities within the long text responses that addressed the achievement gap and active and engaged citizenship. Lastly, there will be a sub-section for each class that showcases the specific perspectives of the respondents for each class.

Table 1. Response Rates for Post-Surveys:

Courses	Semesters	Total Enrolled Students	Numbers of Responses	Percentages
ASAMST 132AC	Spring 2013	111	17	15%
	Fall 2013	122	21	17%
	Spring 2014	133	20	15%
ED 182AC	Spring 2013	145	20	13.8%
	Spring 2014	211	27	12.8%
ENG 157AC	Spring 2014	32	7	21.9%
	Spring 2015	50	20	40%
ESPM 163AC	Spring 2013	132	18	13.6%
	Spring 2014	132	17	12.9%
	Spring 2015	123	17	13.8%

ETD STD 144AC	**Spring 2013**	74	7	9.5%
	Spring 2014	39	3	7.7%
MUSIC 26AC	**Spring 2013**	372	62	16.67%
	Spring 2014	390	79	20.3%
	Spring 2015	391	82	21%
PSYCH 157AC	**Spring 2014**	291	37	13%
	Fall 2014	274	54	20%
PB HLTH 150E	**Spring 2013**	164	31	18.9%
	Spring 2014	172	29	16.9%
	Spring 2015	180	19	10.6%

Data sets for all classes have very low response rates, ranging from 7.7%-40%, as can be observed in Table 1. This could be attributed to several factors that will be expanded further in the limitations section. Demographics of the survey respondents varied by class and by semester,as demonstrated in Figure 1. However, we notice across all classes that Southeast Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Blacks were generally not represented. The most represented groups were Whites and Asian/ Asian Americans. The latter was the case in the majority of classes. Other times, Latinos/as, Chicanos/as, and Hispanics were next-most represented. In terms of income distribution (Figure 2), we observed that, with the exception of the education and ethnic studies classes, the majority of the respondents self-identified as from upper or middle class.
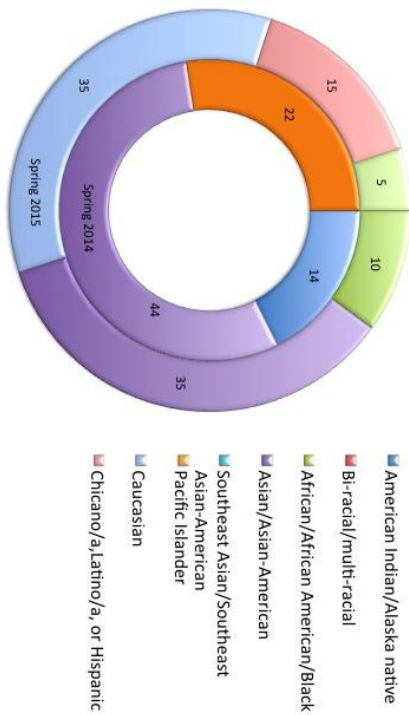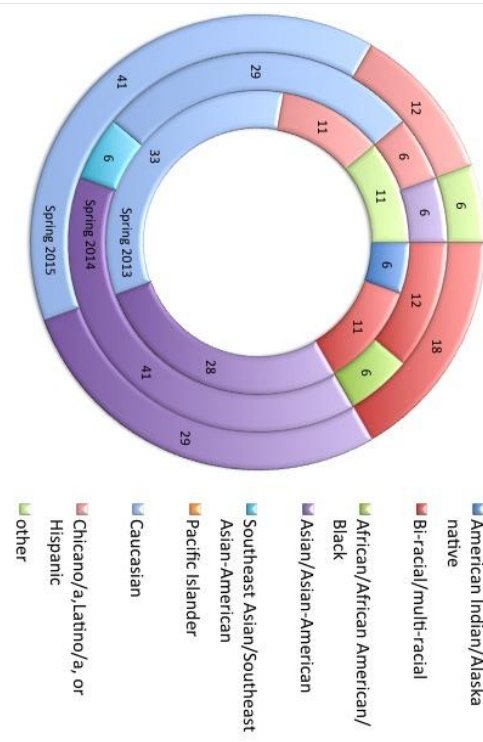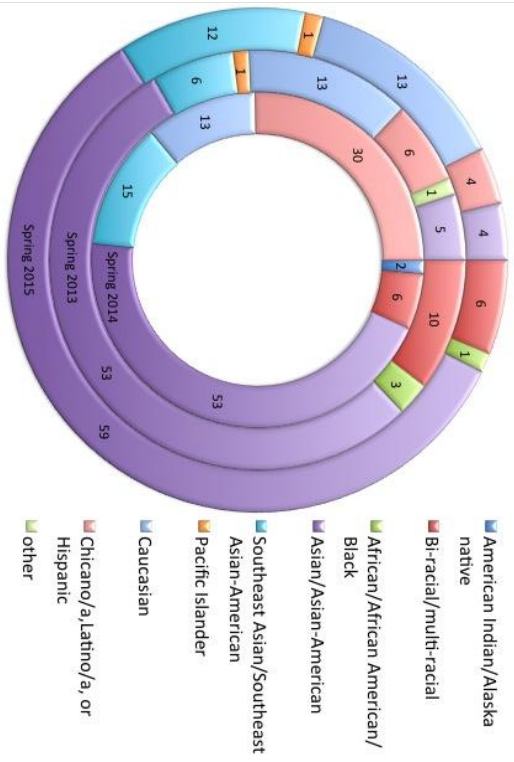
Figure 1. Race/ Ethnicity Demographics:
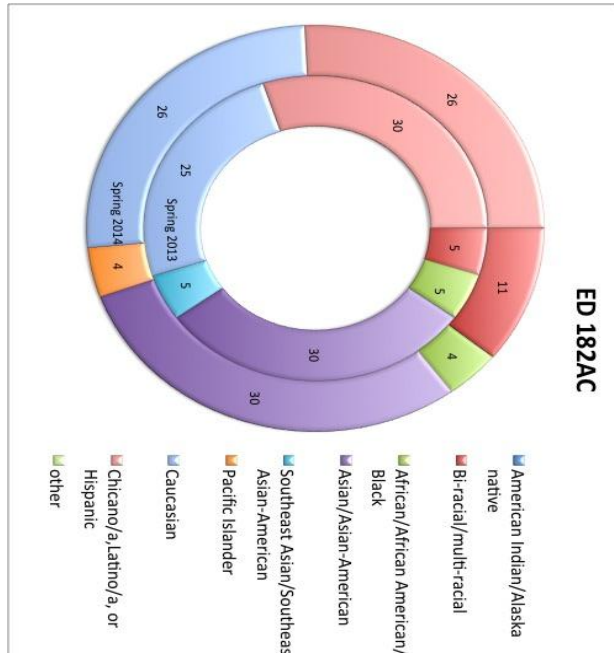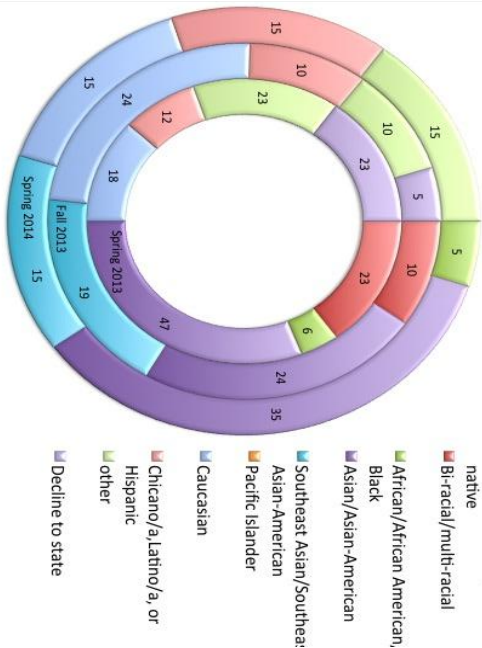
ETH STD 144AC

Music 26AC
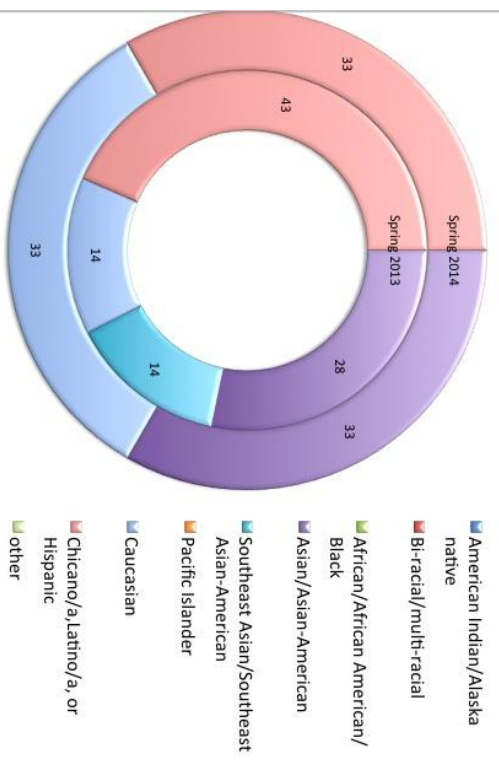
Psych 167AC

PB HLTH 150E
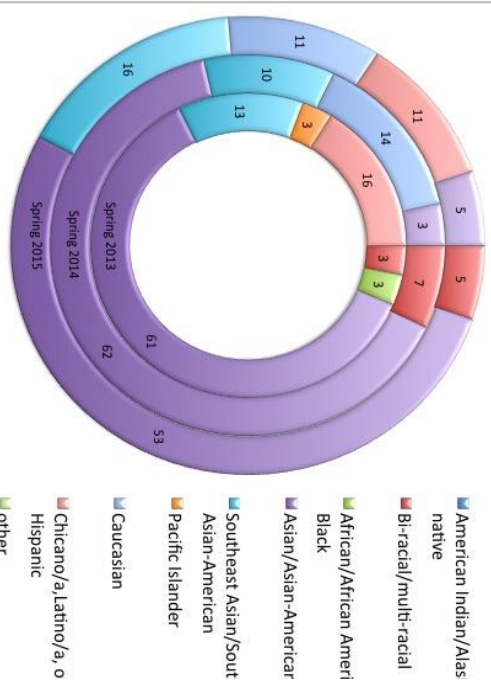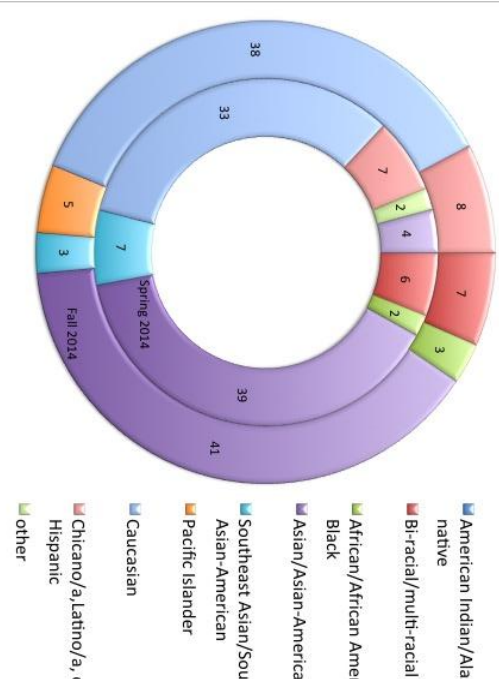
Figure 2. Income Distribution Demographics:

PB HLTH 150E

Legend:
- Low-income or poor
- Working-class
- Middle-class
- Upper middle or porfessional class
- Wealthy

Psych 167AC

Legend:
- Low-income or poor
- Working-class
- Middle-class
- Upper middle or porfessional class
- Wealthy

ASAMST 132AC

Legend:
- Low-income or poor
- Working-class
- Middle-class
- Upper middle or porfessional class
- Wealthy

ED 182AC

Legend:
- Low-income or poor
- Working-class
- Middle-class
- Upper middle or porfessional class
- Wealthy

When asked about topics related to the relationship between academic theory, the community, and course material addressed in questions #21-25, students for all classes responded in general agreement.[1] Notably, we saw the most ambivalence for Music 26AC. While respondents still mostly agreed, we saw a greater portion of individuals who disagreed or had no opinion. When separating the responses for folks who did and did not participate in the community engagement component, we noticed very little difference in the survey outcomes. This could be attributed to various reasons like course structure, instructor irregularity, etc. When asked to reflect on the effectiveness of the community engagement components students had mixed feelings. But, for the most part students found the community engagement component

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[1] See Appendix B for detailed distribution of responses to Questions #21-24, 25B, excluding 23

was effective in bridging the community and university. For all questions, there were

respondents who said they did not know how to respond. Moreover, responses demonstrated that

students gain or hone certain skill sets from taking the listed courses.[2] Students generally believe

that they were able to enhance their critical thinking, time management, and teamwork skills.

There were several Yes/No questions, specifically, #23, #25a, and #25c, responses noted

in Figure 3. #25a was used to differentiate who did and did not participate in community

engagement. #23 and #25c were used to get a sense of whether students are taking other classes

that talk about inequality or offer community engagement. These questions may influence how

knowledgeable students come across as in their long text responses.

Figure 3. Yes/No Questions:
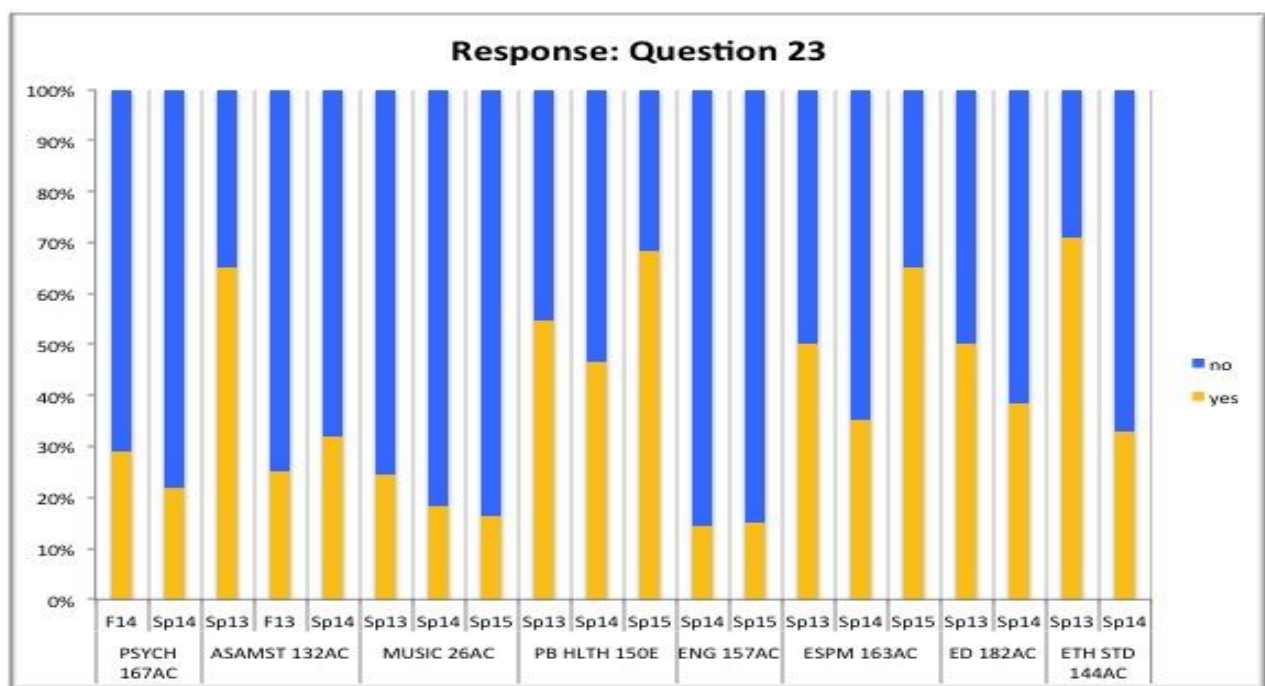
Response: Question 25a

Response: Question 25C
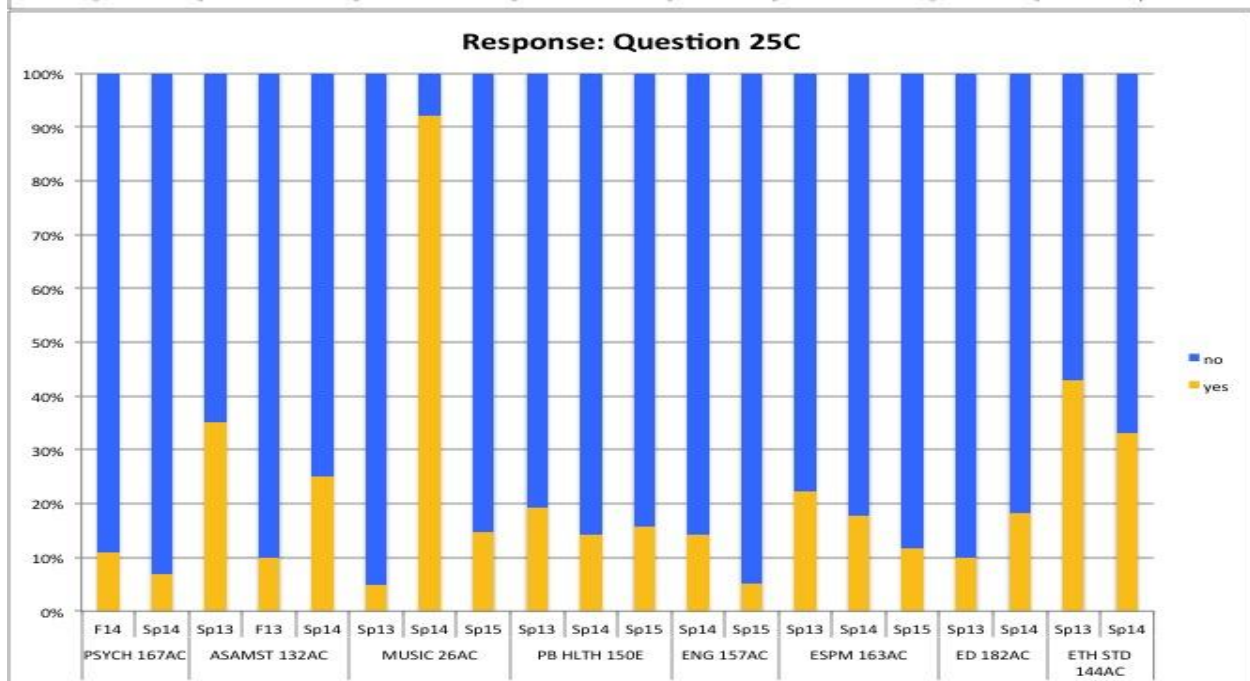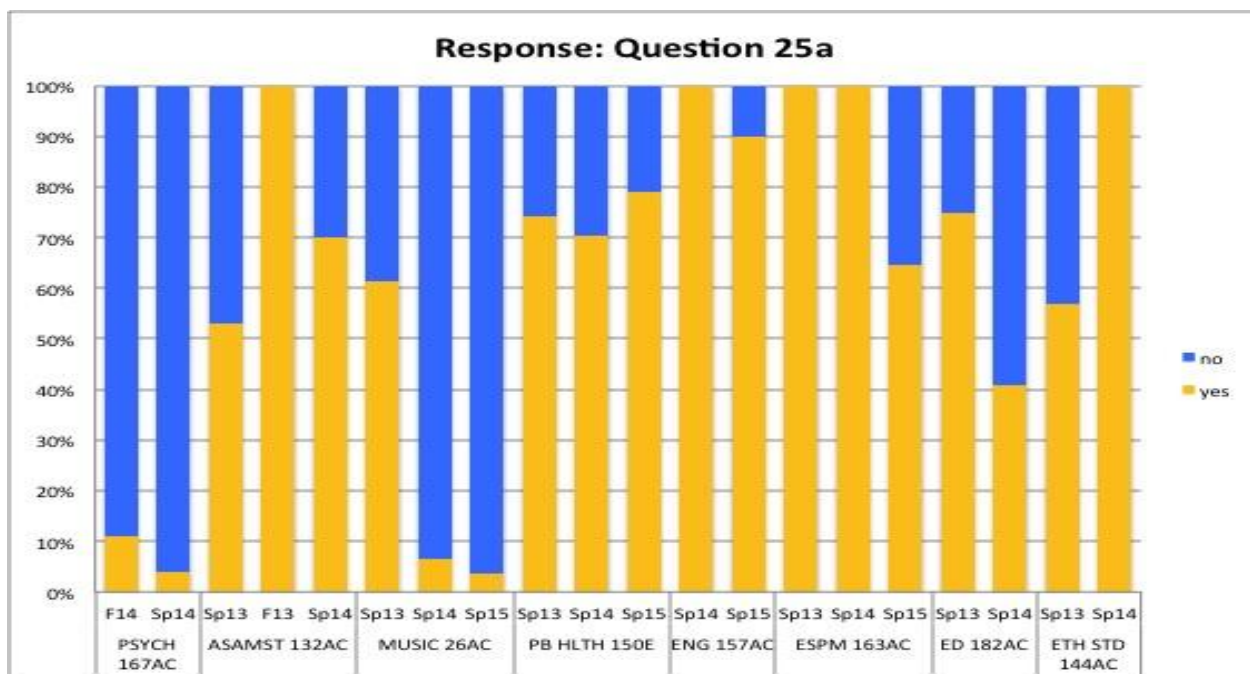
When looking at the long text responses we found that, although students might be aware of educational disparities and what it means to be critically engaged citizens, responses still demonstrated common misconception and assumptions. For example, for question number 15 which asks about educational disparities, the most frequent responses attributed disparities to the

Asian model minority myth and cultural deficiencies. Other concepts commonly referenced

included race and class. Class was used as a means to bring in segregation within neighborhoods

that connected to opportunity gaps mostly in terms of educational resources. Similarly, for

question 17 which asks about what it means to be an actively engaged citizen, the most frequent

responses were voting and being informed about local or national politics. Other responses

showed feelings of obligation and responsibility to take action in respondents' own hands to

bring change. Some respondents acknowledged that charity work was insufficient to address the

larger structural issues. However, we observed long responses that demonstrate an effective and

positive understanding of educational disparities and what it means to be a critically engage

citizens.

Engineering 157AC*:*

The following response demonstrates an adequate understanding of educational disparities:

> "due to systems of oppression that span generations, minority students are typically
>
> located in low-income neighborhoods ... [where] graduating high school is typically not
>
> on your list of priorities. ... Also, the culture that spawns from these neighborhoods
>
> (speaking specifically about Native land and poor, rural communities since those are the
>
> only ones I have experienced) does not always necessarily hold education to such a high
>
> degree as a lot of other areas do."

This response shows a historical understanding of the root causes of oppression and how theses

serve to generate educational disparities. However, we are unfamiliar with the course content

and it is likely this student's response was a result of previous coursework they have undertaken.

Based on the rest of the responses the latter seems to be the case since most responses do not demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the root causes of educational disparities.

The following response models a student's understanding of what it means to be a critically engage citizen:

> "being informed about political issues of our time, but also of historical political issues; taking action in political events such as elections, polls, and bills; forming an opinion about social issues we face daily; and being aware of how other people are affected by our societal values and systems."

The response demonstrates a well rounded understanding of a critically engaged citizen as someone who is not only politically active but understanding of how others are affected by societal actions. We observed that most responses followed this general trend and showed a partial understanding. We realize this is an opinionated question but it still relies heavily on students understanding of course content and their participation in community engaged based projects.

ESPM 163AC:

> The following response illustrate an appropriate understanding of educational disparities:

> "due to a complex set of structural inequalities rooted in racism is the cause of the disparity in graduation rates. There are problems in schools themselves as well as outside schools. These graduation rates are also connected to inequalities in income, in health care, in taxes, in communities, and more."

This response shows a comprehensive understanding of educational disparities as rooted in structural inequalities resulting from racism. Additionally they have a clear understanding that other social factors such as health play a role in generating these disparities. The response sharply contrast from the engineering course as students demonstrate a more comprehensive understanding of disparities. This could be due because ESPM course tend to include thematic content on public health and social issues.

The following response demonstrates a concrete understanding of what it means to be a critically engage citizen:

"understanding issues that plague people of the community, whether it be your people or other people that are facing discrimination, and actively participating in government and social movements in order to spread awareness and instigate change."

This response highlights a critically engaged citizen as someone that is both aware and takes action to promote social change. It is interesting to note the difference in responses from Engineering with ESPM. Students in ESPM tended to demonstrate a more concrete understanding of critically engage citizens and defined it as someone who takes action and initiate change through social movements rather than simply civic participation.

MUSIC 26AC:

The combination of the following two comments summarized respondents' interpretations of racial/ ethnic educational achievement gap, demonstrated in Question 15. One respondent stated:

There's a social/economical aspect and a cultural aspect behind these "data". Some groups are usually on the lower ends of the economical status and are

unable to support their children's education. [...] This ties into the cultural aspect,

where some cultures focus more on the work aspect rather than the educational

system. There may also be personal aspects as well, though those are difficult to

discuss as they vary from person to person.

Another comment expanded further one how such cultural values were formed:

I believe [it is] due to the type of culture that specific race/ethnicities were raised

in. Furthermore, there are quite a combination of historical complexities such as

slavery, segregation, oppression, and modern day institutional racism that prevent

students from achieving certain goals. [...]

These two comments illustrate how many respondents attributed the achievement gap to

interplay between cultural differences as well as socio-economic background. Cultural

differences consisted of familial standards, familiar expectations, and their community's culture.

Socio-economic background indicated income level and socio-economic status of the family, and

geographic location of the neighborhood and/or school. Students highlighted how these factors

lead to limited access to support, resources, and opportunities. Many respondents alluded to

social structures, institutionalized racism, discrimination, segregation and history as the source of

such racial and ethnic differences. Some also stated how such racial/ ethnic achievement gap

furthers racial/ ethnic stereotypes. One student responded to question 17 as the following:

Active citizenship is awareness about the society you live in. It is

statistical knowledge about the environment you live in. It is critical

thinking about the information you are given. It is inter-personal

engagement with many different people in order to understand the many

point of views and challenge your prejudices. It is getting out of one's

subjectivity and caring about others. It is also taking strong stands and

participating in the public debate to see ideas transformed into actions

This comment demonstrated that active and engaged scholarship include being conscious and

aware of their local and national surroundings, issues, etc and also being actively and proactively

taking actions. To expand further on taking actions, other responses included exercising civic

duties such as jury duties and voting, community-engaged volunteering, reading news,

participating in campaigns, doing public speech, and discussing with their peers, families, and

community.

Public Health 150E*:*

Respondents for Public Health 150 answered that various factors contribute to explain

the racial/ ethnic achievement gap shown in question 15. One respondent answered:

Our education system better serves certain races than others. For example,

because of segregation and a history of institutionalized racism, African-

American/black students are still not fully integrated into schools. Also

our set up of tracking, standardized testing, and curriculum that favors rote

memorization favors certain students over others. There are issues with

culture clash, stereotype threat, student's backgrounds, funding etc.

As shown by this comment, factors included cultural differences, socio-economic differences,

and context that they live in. Students suggested health conditions, neighborhoods, food and

physical safety, household stability, and access to "good" education institutions as the contexts

they live in. They also implied how these factors contribute to limited access to resources,

opportunities, support, and motivation, differentially among different racial/ ethnic groups. Lastly, many discussed how these all resulted from institutionalized racism and geographic segregation.

Another respondent commented:

> [...] [D]oes this chart account for Native-American students who graduate from tribal schools? And the 80% of Asian Americans does not account for the many ethnic groups if CA. Especially for CA I need to see the disaggregated data for Asian Americans.

The response acknowledged certain racial/ ethnic group(s) and alternative education mechanism that the survey fails to look at.

For Question 17, many respondents answered that active and engaged citizenship comprises of being aware and conscious of the societal circumstances as well as taking action. Many attributed learning about societal issues and having open mind to be able to perceive different views and opinions about those issues as being aware and conscious. They also ascribed applying what they learned in class, exercising/ utilizing rights and civic duties – such as voting, being involved with elections, and doing jury duties –, and being involved with community-engaged volunteering and services.

What was notable in responses particularly for Spring 2013 was that some respondents actually mentioned their ACES experience as a way of being an active and engaged citizen, and were able to provide richer picture of what active and engaged citizenship looks like in practice. The ACES was an optional component of the course. One respondent wrote:

I participated in the ACES program and while I thought it was a good

start to active and engaged citizenship, I personally think that I can do

more. I volunteer with the Suitcase Clinic and through conversations with

homeless and low income people of Berkeley, I strive to empower them

with knowledge of resources so they can feel more confident about their

livelihoods. My interactions with them have really opened my eyes on

how the best way to help someone is not simply just to help them, but to

work together with them to achieve a common goal.

Community-engaged service or research projects helped students to initiate their own active and

engaged citizenship, by working closely with the community.

ED 182AC:

This class emphasizes the historical context behind educational inequality and ties it back

to the present. The course content is reflected in the following quote about the achievement gap:

The educational outcomes of different ethno-racial groups are impacted by

the social institutions that favor those with more cultural capital and

privilege. People of color have historically struggled to receive an equitable

education compared to their white counterparts.

The respondent acknowledges the continued existence of educational inequality that contributes

to disparities in outcomes, which demonstrates awareness of structural issues. The social

institutions this respondent mentions is confirmation of that. Knowing that there are historical

roots counteracts the argument that blames the individual instead of the institution. The fact that

terms like cultural capital and privilege are discussed is indicative of a critical understanding

behind educational inequality. This is because knowing what cultural capital means in conjunction with privilege is knowing part of oppression is the cultural bias.

The class's community-based projects are meant to immerse students in the community so they may gain knowledge about how to make a social impact. In this participant's response, the promise behind connecting academics and social issues is evident:

> An example of active and engaged citizenship would be my fieldwork through ACES. I contributed my time, resources, and skills to a racial justice organization. Being a UC Berkeley student, I was able to access resources that definitely added to the project. In turn, this project helped equip a broader audience with information to get involved in the national conversation concerning equity in higher education.

The main takeaway from this respondent's thoughts is the value in having a positive community engagement project experience. This respondent is able to articulate the significance of her position in higher education as beneficial to the community. Not only does she have more skills to bring to the table from being an undergraduate, but the community is able to have access to university resources through her. Additionally, participating in this helped her learn through experience the definition of active and engaged citizenship. Lastly, she was able to feel like the work she did had a national impact on an issue that ties directly to the class.

ASAMST 132AC & PSYCH 157AC:

These four comments display the respondent delving into critical thinking. These two comments came from ASAMST:

(Q15): I think there are a wide range of reasons, and probably some which need research to uncover them. I could certainly gain better insight into the reason by taking another American Cultural requirement course. I understand that the experience of being stripped of one's identity, such as happened during the middle passage voyage into slavery, had a multi-generational effect on African Americans, which could be one factor. In addition, some Native American tribal traditions are averse to showing up a peer with lesser abilities, since they are non-competitive, and U.S. schools reward competition. The unequal distribution of wealth not only between school districts, but in homes, could definitely play a role…

(Q17): I understand active and engaged citizenship to consist of informing oneself of social issues, especially one's that we heretofore have only been vaguely familiar with; sharing one's knowledge with others wherever and whenever appropriate or necessary; and keeping oneself up-to-date with current conflicts and issues

These two comments went beyond the normal explanation that most respondents had written. The answer for question fifteen seems like the person put thought into the explanation of a historical oppression that had lasting effects. For question seventeen, this was one of the few answers that did not have to do with voting so it stood out to me. Especially, when the student brought in "sharing one's knowledge with others wherever and whenever appropriate or necessary" because an important part of being engagement is dialogue.

These next two comments came from the psychology course responses:

(Q15): There are major disparities in the quality of the schools based on neighborhoods… Parents and caregivers for students of color are often under a great deal of stress and unable to provide adequate support for the students and there are no neighborhood resources to bridge the gaps. Students of color have difficulty navigating the institutional structures and are easy targets for suspension and expulsion when problems or conflicts arise. These students may also not see enough evidence that there will be an advantage for them in facing the challenges of acquiring an education. They may not see the possibility of a bright future or participation in the "American Dream" as a result of their hard work

(Q17): A person must be fully aware of the community, including the people, their social standings, beliefs, and roles in society. Then, to fulfill the active component, the person must act upon the awareness of problems within the community. A person could vote for an increase in school funding so that the students could get a better education. Now you may respond by asking where the money's coming from? A possible solution could be that the engaged citizens could donate money directly, if they value education.

The first comment touched upon both structural and individual issues while bringing up the "American Dream" that many groups believe is achievable if they work hard. For the second

comment, I felt that the responder touched upon the idea of being "active" in being an engaged

citizen. The example however was problematic when saying "A possible solution could be that

the engaged citizens could donate money directly, if they value education" because it seems to

imply that those who value education will donate money. This respondent seemed to understand

active and engaged citizenship, but her thoughts seemed muddled with the traditional notion on

giving back to the community.

ETH STD 144AC:

This class talks about racism in relation to law in the United States. The first comment

talks about the history of residential segregation. The second comment talks about the history of

citizenship. Both address the ongoing effects of intersecting areas of oppression that need to be

part of the conversation to address inequalities today. Interestingly, law is not directly referenced

in the comments, but both residential segregation and citizenship have been heavily influenced

by law. The first comment is as follows:

> Unfortunately, these are still disparities due to America's history of residential
>
> segregation that exist in neighborhoods of color. These communities have high
>
> dropout rates resulting from lack of resources and the low amount of opportunities
>
> available to these students. Ultimately, this cycle continues to reinforce ideas of
>
> white culture being dominant and being equated to opportunities, while minority
>
> neighborhoods equate to unemployment.

This shows that there is awareness of how residential segregation influences the access to

opportunities and resources for different neighborhoods, and how this influences the

opportunities the students that come from these places have. In this class, historical context is

also cited as a reason for disparities. More importantly, the distinction drawn between white and

minority and the implications of that shows how this learning environment is critical to bringing

these issues to the forefront. These are concepts critical to understanding educational issues.

The second comment problematizes citizenship:

> Active and engaged citizenship is when not only are you considered a citizen of a
>
> particular country but are able to freely live out your pursuit of happiness. In this
>
> country, people of color continue to be discriminated against and characterized as
>
> un-Americans. This renders them as outside the category of being a true citizen of
>
> this country.

Although this quote doesn't explicitly connect active and engaged citizenship to community

issues, it is insightful that she complicates what it means to be a citizen in general. It speaks to

the power dynamics behind who gets to participate in making decisions. This was the only

comment of the long responses that speaks to the nuances of the definition of citizenship. That is

important, because if we are talking about trying to bring the oppressed into solving social

issues, then we should be talking about the lack of institutional power the oppressed have in the

first place.

LIMITATIONS

We encountered many issues both in the data-gathering process as well as the analysis.

Initially, we had ambitious plans for our ACES project. However, there were time and resource

limitations including scheduling conflicts. The ACES team is relatively small, comprised of three

faculty. It was difficult for them to support us on a consistent basis. The data was unprocessed

and we had to take several steps to a) assess which data we needed b) organize the data and c) follow up with ACES staff to fill in the gaps. There were points where the data had errors, making our findings inaccurate. Therefore, we had to go back to fix the data and start over.

In terms of the program, many classes were being offered irregularly, based on who is teaching. This made it difficult for us to control for factors like teaching style, cultural sensitivity of the instructor, and course content. Moreover, response rate was very low, ranging from 9%-20%, with the exception of one semester of one class that had a 40% response rate. The response bias skews the data. Also, we only have one class in the STEM field to examine whereas the rest of the classes were in the social sciences. It's hard to compare and contrast the two areas when one is overrepresented in the data. Lastly, everything collected from the surveys is self-reported, which is problematic because there's no control for the students' own biases. For example, income level is not specified, in which case respondents have to use their own judgment to gauge their socioeconomic status.

DISCUSSION

Despite abovementioned limitations and challenges, the data from post-surveys still demonstrate the impact of the AC/ACES Courses to the educational experiences of students. For example, students responded that they were able to enhance various skills through their AC/ ACES courses.[3] Students were also able to develop critical consciousness, about how and why social inequality exists, as exhibited in their text responses and answers to questions from 21 to 25.[4]

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[3] See Appendix C for detailed distribution of responses to Question 26.
[4] See Appendix B for detailed distribution of responses to Questions #21-24, 25B, excluding 23

However, it is also true that the survey data do not differ much between those who said yes to whether there was community-engaged service or research project component to their AC Courses and those who said no. More research needs to be designed to address why this is the case. We hypothesize in this policy brief that limitations we mentioned above, specifically lack of institutional support and resources attributes to such a phenomenon. To further complicate things, long text responses may be an inadequate representation of knowledge. For example, the depth of knowledge an engineering student may have about social issues may differ from that of an ethnic studies student. Also, it is critical to note that we did not analyze the Pre-Survey data, meaning we cannot precisely gauge overall semesterly impact of the AC/ACES Courses.

As such, we would like to provide some recommendations and guides for future AC/ACES research ideas.

1. We recognized that course consistency is very dependent on whether the instructor is willing and/or capable of teaching AC/ACES courses. Consequently, we suggest that one of the future research projects focus on how to enhance sustained professor/ lecturer/ educator retention for AC/ACES program and on how to readily and effectively provide AC/ACES Course Curriculum Development training sessions.

2. As we navigated through the AC/ ACES websites for our research, we encountered difficulties with lack of information and consistency. Therefore, we strongly believe that updating the websites would greatly help not only the AC/ACES program itself but also the students who would be looking through the website to find more information. We specifically advise that the future research projects update AC/ACES course descriptions, with much detailed background information and telling course descriptions. Information to be included can consist of, but not limited to, which courses are more readily offered,

whether the courses include (both optional and required) community-engaged service or research project.

3. We strongly recommend that future research projects thoroughly examine how to improve response rate for the surveys. More responses are needed to not only better assess how students' experiences are with AC/ACES courses but also build further on the research by focusing on specific focus groups.

4. We noticed lack of resources provided for ACES courses. We believe it would be beneficial if AC/ACES program creates a list of already-established community partners and projects, so that future research projects can either continue or expand further from this. This would greatly help the students get involved with and engage the community more into their researches.

CONCLUSION

Our research revealed that community-engaged service or research projects actually did not impact the students as much as we expected. We also recognized that AC/ACES program has various structural problems that contributed to this result. However, our research simultaneously demonstrated that AC/ACES still proves to be beneficial for students' development of critical social thinking and teamwork, and apprehension of what active and engaged citizenship look like. Connecting back to scholars' work on community engaged scholarship, this alternative form of learning is valuable. UC Berkeley, like other research institutions, would be wise to support programs such as ACES. Overall, reflecting upon Limitations and Discussions presented on this policy brief, we strongly recommend that AC/ACES seriously consider our recommendations to enhance the program and students' experience with AC/ACES courses.

Appendix A: ACES/AC Post-Survey Documents (Modified for this Policy Brief)

9. Select the category which best describes your race or ethnicity.
   - American Indian/Alaska native (1)
   - Bi-racial/multi-racial (2)
   - African/African-American/Black (3)
   - Asian/Asian-American (except Southeast Asian/Southeast Asian-American or Pacific Islander) (4)
   - Southeast Asian/Southeast Asian-American (5)
   - Pacific Islander (6)
   - Caucasian/White (7)
   - Chicano/a, Latino/a, or Hispanic (8)
   - Other (9)
   - Decline to state (10)

11. Which of the following best describes your social class growing up?
   - Low-income or poor (1)
   - Working-class (2)
   - Middle-class (3)
   - Upper middle or professional class (4)
   - Wealthy (5)

Each year, more than 1 million students fail to graduate from high school in the US and there are significant graduation gaps among student subgroups. For example, in California, approximately 68% of all students graduate from high school with a regular diploma in four years; however, this rate varies by student subgroup.

California High School Graduation Rates

Student Subgroups	Four Year Graduation Rate
All students	68
Asian-American	80
European-American/white	77
Hispanic/Latino	57
African-American/black	55
Native-American	50
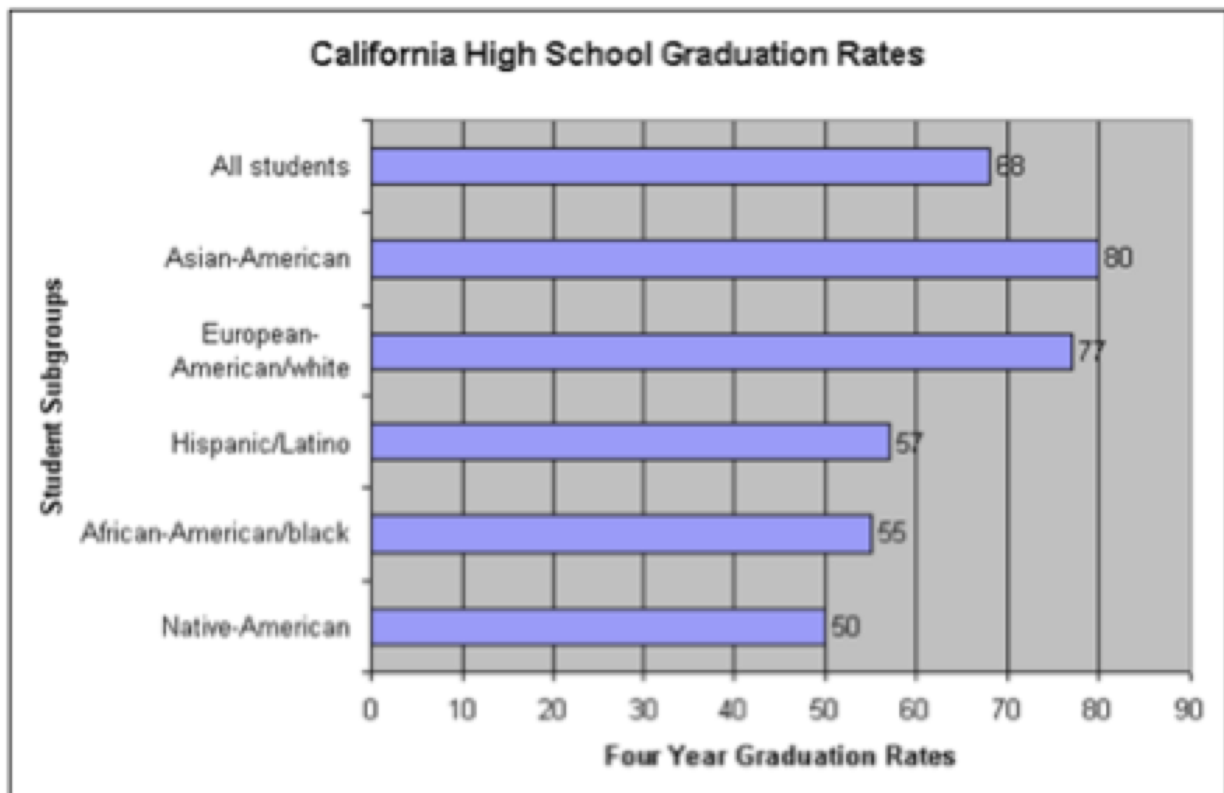
15. In four years, 80% of Asian-American, 77% of European-American/white students, 57% of Hispanic/Latino, 55% of African-American/black students, and 50% of Native-American students graduate with a regular high school diploma. Why do you think this is the case? (Open-answer question)

17. What is your understanding of "active and engaged citizenship?" Please explain and give examples.

21. How much do you agree with the following statements?

(circle one for each item).									
	Agree strongly								
	Agree somewhat								
	Agree slightly								
	Neither disagree nor agree								
	Disagree slightly								
	Disagree somewhat								
	Disagree strongly								
a. I know how to apply academic theory to real-life community issues.		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. I see connections between what I learn in university classrooms and issues which impact the community.		1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Your American Cultures Course

22. The following statements describe course content and learning activities on the socio-historical causes of inequality that may have been present in your American Cultures course:_____ (FILL IN WITH THEIR RESPONSE FROM QUESTION 1 OR 4). How much do you agree with these statements?

(circle one for each item).								
	Agree strongly							
	Agree somewhat							
	Agree slightly							
	Neither disagree nor agree							
	Disagree slightly							
	Disagree somewhat							
	Disagree strongly							

		Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Agree slightly	Neither disagree nor agree	Disagree slightly	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly
a.	The perspectives of historically marginalized groups were included in my AC course lectures and/or readings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b.	This AC course included content (e.g. readings, lectures, or discussions) on how and why inequality exists.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c.	In this AC course, we analyzed how laws, policies, the economy, and/or social practices can reproduce inequality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d.	This AC course encouraged me to consider how I am personally connected to broader systems of inequality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e.	In this AC course, we analyzed how historical events may influence present-day inequalities.							

23. Outside of my AC course, I am enrolled in a different course this semester that includes content/readings/assignments on the socio-historical causes of inequality (as described in questions above).

24. The following statements describe course content and learning activities that may have been present in your American Cultures course:_____ (FILL IN WITH THEIR RESPONSE FROM QUESTION 1 OR 4). How much do you agree with these statements?

(circle one for each item).							
	Agree strongly						
	Agree somewhat						
	Agree slightly						
	Neither disagree nor agree						
	Disagree slightly						
	Disagree somewhat						
	Disagree strongly						
a. This AC course included applying academic knowledge (such as research or theory) to searching for	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	solutions to real-life social, civic, economic, or moral problems.							
b.	In this AC course, university resources (e.g. library access, research money, materials, technology, etc…) were utilized to address or solve challenges facing communities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

25A). **Survey Logic Question:** A *community-based service or research project* is a project with faculty and students together with members of the community. Did your AC/ACES course include a community-based service or research project?

- o Yes
- o No

25B) (If they answer yes, then they are directed to the rest of the questions. If they answer no, then they should be directed only to question 25 and then to the last page of the survey.)

For the first two questions below the option of "don't know" should be included; I wasn't sure how to get another row into the likert scale…)

(circle one for each item).							
	Agree strongly						
	Agree somewhat						
	Agree slightly						
	Neither disagree nor agree						
	Disagree slightly						
	Disagree somewhat						
	Disagree strongly						
1. The community-based project in this AC course was jointly designed by community members together with the professor, GSIs, or course participants. (should also include I don't know as a response)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. The community members we worked with were asked about the impact or success of our community-based project.		1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(should also include I don't know as a response)								
3. The community-based project supported the learning objectives of this AC course.								
4. The community members I worked with through this AC course contributed to my knowledge on how to solve problems that impact the public good.								

25C. Outside of my AC course, I am enrolled in a different course this semester that includes a community-based service or research project. **(everyone answers)**
   o Yes
   o No

26. The community-based component of this course enhanced my skills in: (check all that apply)
   o Time management
   o Working in teams
   o Public speaking
   o Writing
   o Academic research
   o Leadership
   o Critical thinking
   o Working with others from different backgrounds
   o None of the above

Appendix B: Responses to survey questions 21-24, 25B, excluding question 23

Course	Sem.	Resp.	Q21:A	Q21B	Q22A	Q22B	Q22C	Q22D	Q22E	Q24A	Q24B	Q25B1	Q25B2	Q25B3	Q25B4
ASAM ST 132AC	Sp13	Agree	65%	82%	94%	82%	83%	83%	77%	77%	66%	99%	77%	88%	77%
		Disagree	18%	6%	6%	18%	12%	6%	6%	12%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%
		Other	18%	12%	12%	0%	6%	12%	18%	12%	18%	0%	22%	11%	22%
	F 13	Agree	76%	80%	96%	101%	96%	91%	91%	92%	72%	61%	53%	91%	85%
		Disagree	15%	5%	5%	0%	5%	5%	5%	10%	19%	20%	15%	5%	5%
		Other	10%	14%	0%	0%	0%	5%	5%	0%	10%	20%	33%	5%	10%
	Sp14	Agree	85%	80%	80%	75%	80%	65%	85%	60%	65%	54%	71%	71%	50%
		Disagree	5%	0%	5%	5%	5%	10%	5%	10%	25%	0%	0%	0%	50%
		Other	10%	20%	15%	20%	15%	25%	11%	30%	10%	43%	28%	29%	0%
PB HLTH 150E	Sp13	Agree	90%	97%	87%	97%	97%	97%	90%	100%	77%	84%	68%	89%	89%
		Disagree	10%	3%	6%	3%	3%	3%	3%	0%	6%	37%	5%	32%	32%
		Other	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	16%	0%	47%	0%	0%
	Sp14	Agree	86%	86%	86%	90%	86%	86%	72%	86%	69%	63%	37%	79%	68%
		Disagree	14%	14%	3%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	10%	5%	5%	5%	5%
		Other	0%	0%	10%	10%	14%	14%	24%	14%	21%	32%	58%	16%	17%
	Sp15	Agree	74%	95%	95%	95%	84%	95%	84%	79%	53%	47%	27%	60%	60%
		Disagree	11%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	5%	5%	11%	0%	0%	7%	7%
		Other	16%	5%	5%	5%	11%	5%	11%	16%	37%	53%	73%	33%	33%
Course	Sem.	Resp.	Q21:A	Q21B	Q22A	Q22B	Q22C	Q22D	Q22E	Q24A	Q24B	Q25B1	Q25B2	Q25B3	Q25B4
ENGIN 157AC	Sp14	Agree	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	86%	100%	100%	100%	86%	100%	100%
		Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	14%	0%	0%	0%	14%	0%	0%
		Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Sp15	Agree	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%	85%	100%	95%	95%	85%
		Disagree	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
		Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	15%	0%	5%	5%	15%
PSYCH 167AC	F 14	Agree	83%	85%	94%	96%	83%	89%	91%	81%	61%	100%	75%	75%	75%
		Disagree	11%	9%	0%	3%	16%	6%	6%	8%	17%	0%	25%	0%	25%
		Other	3%	6%	6%	0%	0%	6%	0%	8%	22%	0%	0%	25%	0%
	Sp14	Agree	70%	87%	88%	89%	72%	88%	75%	83%	58%	50%	50%	0%	50%
		Disagree	11%	4%	4%	6%	15%	6%	17%	10%	17%	0%	50%	50%	50%
		Other	17%	7%	7%	6%	13%	7%	9%	7%	26%	50%	0%	50%	0%
ED 182AC	Sp13	Agree	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%	100%	80%	93%	60%	93%	80%
		Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	7%	0%	0%
		Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	7%	33%	7%	20%
	Sp14	Agree	81%	93%	93%	93%	93%	85%	89%	93%	59%	55%	55%	91%	73%
		Disagree	7%	4%	4%	4%	4%	7%	4%	4%	33%	18%	9%	9%	9%
		Other	11%	4%	4%	4%	4%	7%	7%	4%	7%	27%	18%	0%	18%
ETH STD 144AC	Sp13	Agree	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	29%	50%	75%	100%	75%
		Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	29%	50%	0%	0%	0%
		Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	43%	0%	25%	0%	25%
	Sp14	Agree	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	67%	67%	67%	67%	100%
		Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%
		Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	33%	33%	0%

| Course	Sem.	Resp.	Q21: A	Q21B	Q22A	Q22B	Q22C	Q22D	Q22E	Q24A	Q24B	Q25B 1	Q25B 2	Q25B 3	Q25B 4
MUSIC 26AC	Sp13	Agree	60%	66%	77%	79%	69%	69%	82%	60%	50%	55%	26%	58%	32%
		Disagree	15%	18%	3%	8%	13%	8%	3%	19%	27%	0%	5%	5%	5%
		Other	21%	15%	15%	11%	16%	18%	10%	19%	21%	42%	66%	34%	61%
	Sp14	Agree	65%	73%	84%	82%	80%	78%	89%	57%	49%	80%	60%	40%	40%
		Disagree	13%	13%	3%	3%	6%	9%	3%	20%	24%	0%	20%	20%	20%
		Other	22%	14%	14%	13%	14%	13%	9%	23%	27%	20%	20%	40%	40%
	Sp15	Agree	61%	71%	88%	84%	76%	76%	78%	54%	45%	33%	67%	33%	33%
		Disagree	11%	9%	1%	4%	7%	12%	7%	13%	26%	67%	33%	67%	67%
		Other	26%	21%	11%	12%	17%	12%	15%	21%	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%
ESPM 163AC	Sp13	Agree	94%	100%	83%	100%	100%	89%	94%	94%	83%	67%	72%	83%	67%
		Disagree	6%	0%	6%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	17%	11%	17%	28%
		Other	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%	6%	6%	6%	17%	17%	22%	0%	6%
	Sp14	Agree	71%	82%	94%	82%	94%	88%	82%	88%	65%	82%	82%	88%	71%
		Disagree	12%	12%	0%	0%	0%	6%	12%	0%	12%	65%	59%	0%	24%
		Other	18%	6%	6%	18%	6%	6%	6%	12%	24%	24%	24%	12%	6%
	Sp15	Agree	82%	100%	100%	100%	94%	100%	88%	94%	76%	47%	29%	53%	41%
		Disagree	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	0%	6%
		Other	12%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	6%	0%	18%	12%	29%	12%	76%

Appendix C: Skill-Building Impact from Community Engagement Participation
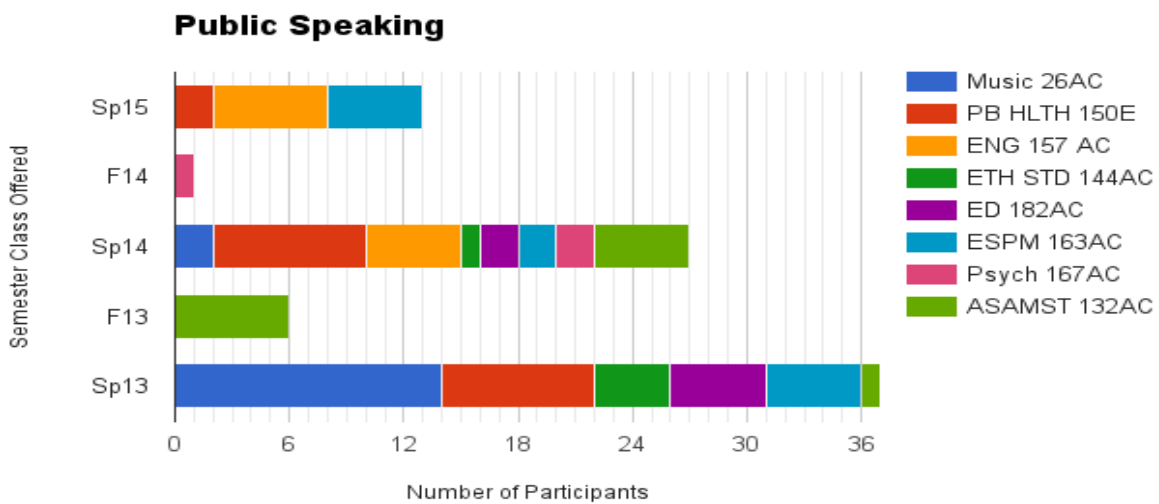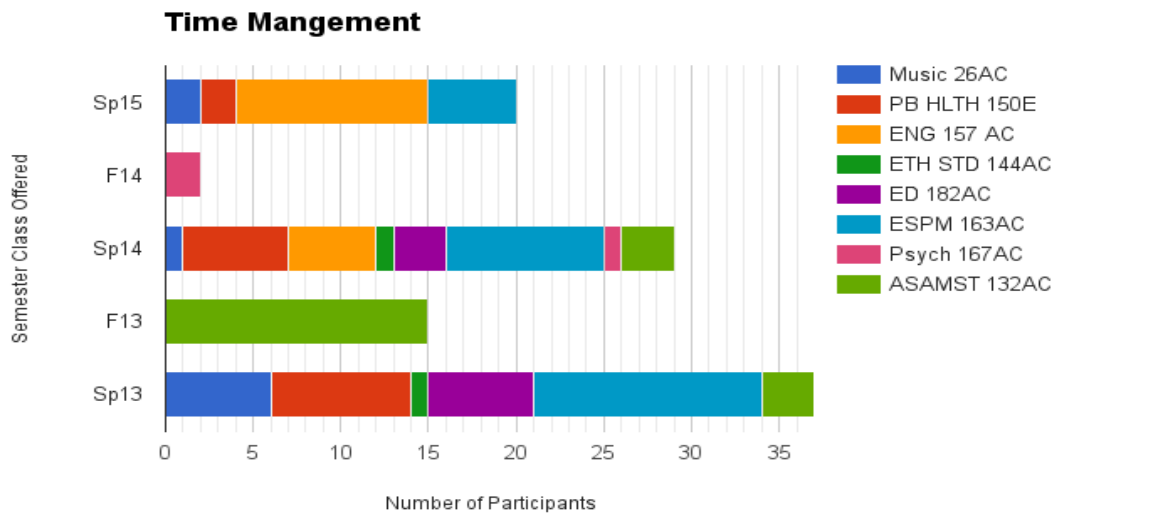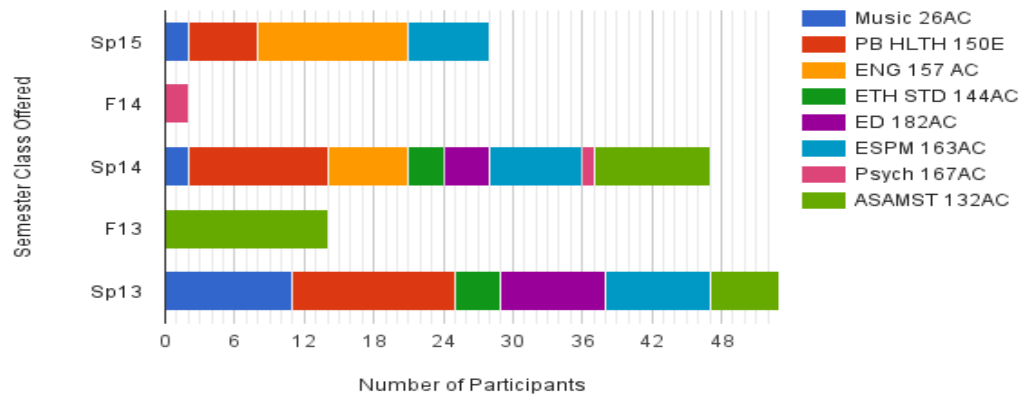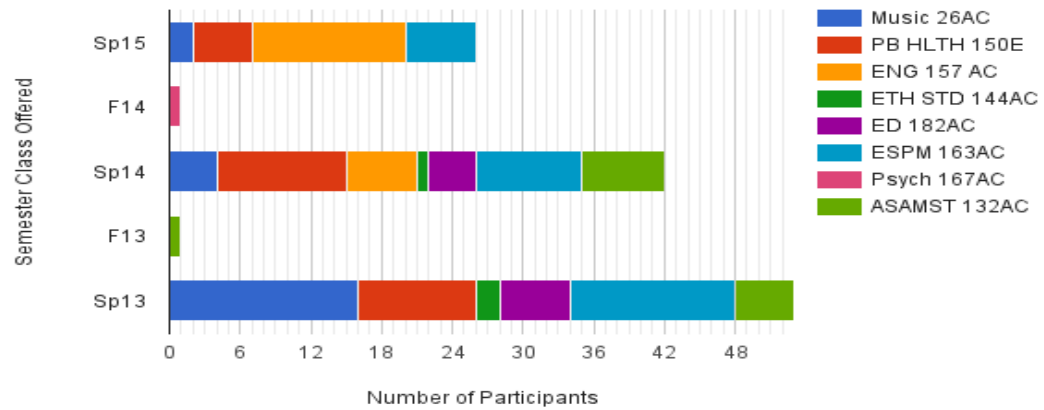
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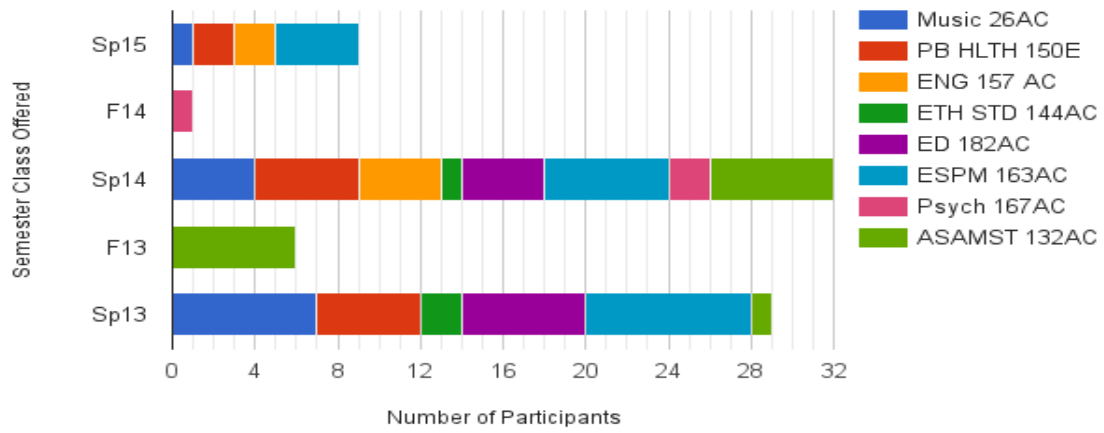
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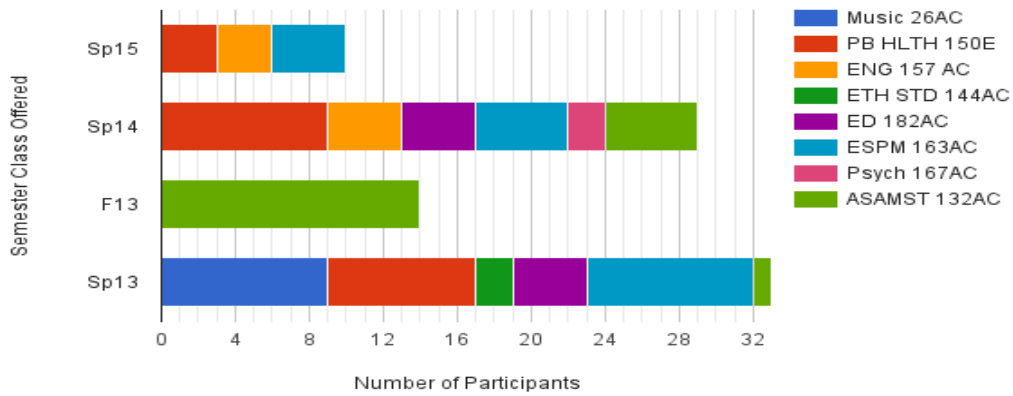
Critical Thinking

Working with Others

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