3.E - Core Component 3.E

The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution’s mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students’ educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

Argument

CWRU provides a rich learning environment for students at all levels.

1. The university recognizes that the co-curricular experiences of students are an important component of the students' overall learning experience.

To support the acclimation of first-year students to college life, CWRU has recently established a formal office for First-Year Experience and Family Programs. The purpose of this office is to strengthen the link between the academic programs and student life for CWRU's first-year students. This is accomplished through programming in residence halls and other co-curricular activities.

The Division of Student Affairs, which serves students at all degree levels, is a major resource for, and a provider of, co-curricular experiences at CWRU. The Division's mission statement “To seek out and actively engage and serve students with quality developmental, intentional and comprehensive experiential learning opportunities in a diverse, inclusive and vibrant university community” is rooted to the understanding that co-curricular programs are important to the overall student experience. The Division’s mission mirrors and aligns with CWRU's overall mission to provide educational programs that actively engage students. Student Affairs fulfills its mission by providing services and programs that enrich the student’s academic experience. Co-curricular programs are offered throughout all centers and offices within the Division of Student Affairs. Presented here are a few examples selected from the Career Center, the Center for Civic Engagement and Learning, Educational Services for Students, Greek Life, and the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

The Office of Student Activities and Leadership’s website describes the Case Leadership Journey, a four-phase leadership development model (exploratory, engaged, focused and transitional leadership) that students can follow and customize in order to develop their leadership skills.

The Center for Civic Engagement and Learning offers a number of co-curricular programs, including those focused leadership (see the third column of the chart). For example, the Civic Engagement Scholars program is an experiential learning program that promotes student involvement in the Cleveland community. Students commit to 50 hours of community service throughout the academic year while also attending trainings and educational programs about community and social issues.

The Division of Student Affairs and the College of Arts and Sciences sponsor the Free Access program which provides no-charge entry for CWRU students into museums in the University Circle area (such as the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Botanical Gardens, and the Western Reserve Historical Society) as well as throughout greater Cleveland (the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame,
and the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage). The proximity of the University Circle museums to the CWRU campus allows for these resources to be used in conjunction with some of CWRU’s academic programs, such as for providing "fourth-hour" events within the SAGES First Seminars. Exposure of students to these extraordinary cultural venues introduces a rich experiential component to these courses.

In addition to providing the coaching and training for CWRU’s seventeen Division III varsity sports teams, the Department of Physical Education and Athletics also provides multiple opportunities for students to participate in club sports and intramural activities.

The SOURCE (Support of Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavors) office provides undergraduate students with the resources that enable them to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in research, which aligns with the active and creative learning and inquiry goals stated in the university’s mission statement.

Students who wish to pursue Cooperative Education experiences in industry are aided through programming provided by the Case School of Engineering's Division of Engineering Leadership and Professional Practice.

The Study Abroad program at CWRU aligns with the university’s goal of creating global citizens. The university offers a broad range of programs which include short-term study abroad, student exchange programs, and direct-enrollment in semester- or year-long study-abroad programs through over 75 partner institutions. Study abroad programs are available to undergraduate students in all majors. Students who participate in study-abroad receive transfer credits in accordance with university policy.

The university offers opportunities for students to participate in programming that reinforces CWRU’s core values of inclusion and internationalism through the Office of Multicultural Affairs, and the Sustained Dialogue program and diversity training sessions (on diversity awareness and best practices for faculty search committees) available through the Office of Inclusion, Diversity and Equal Opportunity (OIDEO). The OIDEO also recently launched the Diversity 360 initiative, which is intended to provide co-curricular training leading to enhanced cross-cultural competency for students, as well as respect and appreciation for the breadth of human diversity. Educational sessions on diversity are also part of new student orientation at CWRU.

Graduate students benefit from a variety of co-curricular programming. The School of Graduate Studies provides professional development opportunities, career search resources, and gives graduate students the opportunity to take no-cost courses outside of their degree program (fellowship courses) for personal enjoyment or to satisfy their interests. The Graduate Student Senate provides co-curricular programming through its Activities, Professional Development, Mentoring, and Allocations committees. Communication about these programs is provided to graduate students through an (approximately weekly) newsletter the "GSS Review." (See sample newsletter.)

In a similar fashion, students in CWRU’s professional degree programs are served by the Graduate Professional Council (GPC). The GPC offers a number of co-curricular events focused around professional development, as well as a number of social events, which often occur in coordination with the Graduate Student Senate.

2. Demonstration of the contribution of co-curricular programming and overall campus environment to the students' educational experience comes both from statistics on the numbers of undergraduate students participating in these activities (as extracted from the 2012 National Survey on Student Engagement) as well as the students' self-reports about the efficacy of these programs in various
student surveys. The most-recent undergraduate student activity report shows the level of student participation in many extracurricular and co-curricular activities. In addition, the First Destination Survey reports for 2013 and 2014 show that virtually all of CWRU's undergraduates who completed the survey have participated in some form of experiential learning activity outside of their degree program, and have recognized the skills derived from those activities.

CWRU regularly administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as one way of obtaining data on the efficacy of CWRU's curricular and co-curricular programs. A comparison of NSSE results obtained over a five-year span show that a relatively consistent percentage of CWRU undergraduates participate in co- and extracurricular activities. (See the NSSE report on co-curricular participation for the period from 2005-2012.) The five NSSE benchmarks of effective educational practice (Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Enriching Educational Experiences, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Supportive Campus Environment) reflect important aspects of the student experience inside and outside of the classroom.

CWRU's mission statement provides that the university improves and enriches people's lives through research that capitalizes on the power of collaboration, and education that dramatically engages our students. The idea of collaborative research permeates CWRU's strategic plan as well. Students benefit from the fact that CWRU is a multidisciplinary research-intensive university through the opportunities that are afforded them as a result. The listing of research projects presented at the Fall 2014 undergraduate research symposium (one of three annual undergraduate symposia) illustrates the range and depth of undergraduate research at CWRU. Similarly, the listing of research posters presented by graduate students and postdoctoral scholars at CWRU's annual Research ShowCASE (see the example for 2014) illustrates the breadth and vigor of research activity at the university.

Data from the 2014 First Destination Survey illustrates, by major, how many undergraduate students have conducted research on and off campus, either with faculty members or independently. A large majority (82%) of students who responded to the 2013 CWRU Senior Survey indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunity to participate in research with CWRU faculty members, and 90% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the SOURCE office.

With respect to “education that dramatically engages students,” data from a survey on student engagement (NSSE 2012) administered by the Office of Institutional Research shows that a large majority of first-year students and seniors believe that their education at CWRU contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development. Included in this data were student responses to questions relating to solving real-world problems, developing a personal code of conduct, contributing to the welfare of the community, thinking critically and analytically, and speaking and writing clearly and effectively, among others. This same survey shows that the students perceive the emphasis of their coursework is on intellectual exercise. First-year students as well as seniors responded that their coursework focused on analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience or theory the most (first-year students - 87%, seniors - 90%), and seniors responded that their courses least emphasized memorizing facts, ideas or methods (55%). Student engagement can also be gauged through statistics on attendance at events promoting community service activities as well as actual participation in co-curricular community-service activities.

First-year CWRU students and seniors were also asked about active and collaborative learning in the 2012 NSSE survey. A majority of students in both categories said that they had asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions, discussed ideas from their readings/classes with others outside of class, and worked with classmates outside of class to prepare assignments.

A majority of CWRU students said that the university puts quite a bit or very much emphasis on
encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial/ethnic backgrounds (54% according to the 2012 NSSE Survey). Among first-year students, 91% said they had serious conversations with students of a different race/ethnicity than their own, and 90% had conversations with students who were very different than them in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values. More than half of CWRU students said that the university had contributed quite a bit or very much to their understanding of people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

These survey results support the argument that CWRU is providing an engaging educational experience for its students.

Sources

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- CWRU Senior Survey Academic Experience report (2013)
- CWRU undergraduate leadership programs - overview from website
- Department listing, Division of Student Affairs
- Description of committees of the Graduate Student Senate
- Educational Services for Students - programming listing from website
- First Destination Survey report (2013)
- First Destination Survey report (2013) (page number 6)
- First Destination Survey report (2013) (page number 7)
- First Destination Survey report (2014)
- First Destination Survey report (2014) (page number 10)
- First Destination Survey, extract on research experiences (2014)
- Greek Life - programming description from website
- Intersections (undergraduate research symposium) - overview and Abstract Book for December 2014
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- List of programming offered by the School of Graduate Studies
- Mission and Vision statements - Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity
- Mission, Vision, and Core Values statements - from 2013 Strategic Plan
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Active and Collaborative Learning report (2012)
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Co-curricular Experiences report (2005-12)
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) College Outcomes report (2012)
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Student-Faculty Interaction report (2012)
- Newsletter, Center for Civic Engagement and Learning (end of year 2014)
- Office of Multicultural Affairs - programming list from website
● Overview of diversity training programs - from website
● Overview of First Year Experience and Family Programs - from website
● Overview of new student orientation - from website
● Overview of SOURCE (Support of Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavors) office - from website
● Overview of student surveys - from Institutional Research website
● Overview of the Center for Civic Engagement programs and Learning with program diagram
● Overview of the Center for Civic Engagement programs and Learning with program diagram (page number 2)
● Overview of the Center for Civic Engagement programs and Learning with program diagram (page number 3)
● Overview of the Free-Access program for CWRU students - from website
● Overview of the Graduate Professional Council (GPC) and listing of activities - from website
● Overview of the Sustained Dialogue program - from website
● Policies on transfer credit - from Undergraduate Studies website
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● Program booklet, Research ShowCASE (2014)
● SAGES program overview - from website
● Sample newsletter and archives, Graduate Student Senate
● Schedule of student surveys conducted by Institutional Research
● Sport club and intramurals - description from website
● Study Abroad programs - main website
● Undergraduate Student Activity Report (2012-13)
● University Strategic Plan for 2013-2018
● University Strategic Plan for 2013-2018 (page number 6)
● Vision, Mission and Priorities statement - Division of Student Affairs