

We began by considering factors in our identities that shape our approaches to community engagement. Here is a summary of the factors that were shared:

- I’m drawn to thinking about large-scale systems, and it’s hard to balance that with need for grassroots activism.
- I feel out of place in academia, and enjoy the relief from its presumptions and tensions when working in the community.
- Because I love talking with people, I assume that people want to talk with me.
- I’m an advocate of non-violent communication, and want to be very aware of how ideas and feelings are flowing between me and the people with whom I teach and engage.
- I’ve been pushed by minority activists to focus on the limitations of the dominant culture and economic system, rather than thinking I have special gifts to offer marginalized populations because I’m part of the dominant system.
- Instead of trying to change systems, I subvert and/or go around them.
- I’ve seen communities mobilize to protect themselves, and want ours to be similarly able.
- I’ve always been the “other.”
- I saw my neighborhood deteriorate after a change in government, and realize it was because of how people were taught to think about their civic responsibilities.
- I’ve always been seen as a “trouble-maker” because I have a strong sense of justice.
- I’ve always been independent and driven, and don’t have much experience working in communities and teams.
- I’ve always moved around to new places, and now am ready to put down roots and build the kind of community relationships that I had growing up.
- I’m conflict-avoidant, and am always looking for how to help groups find the common good.
- I have a lot of practice being in the role of the teacher, so sometimes I take on that role whether I’m asked to or not.
- My success in my field distanced me from the people in my small home town, and so I’m eager to rebuild a sense of belonging and community.
- I grew up outside the U.S., and so want to develop a sense of belonging here.
- I like to see the tangible outcomes of my work—to be able to see it and quantify it.
- I like thinking about the big picture, but know that I’m privileged to do that because I don’t have to struggle for attention and resources.
- I’m a non-native person, but am committed to supporting the sovereignty and empowerment of native peoples.
- My high school teacher enabled me to pursue my passion, and I want to give other people a chance who might otherwise fall through the cracks.
- I have a strong family background in volunteerism and mission work—this inspires me to action but also can make me too eager to try to help in inappropriate ways.

- I'm from a family of teachers.
- I want to show how a woman can excel in my field, because women are so marginalized.
- My family engages in deep philosophical discussions, and I want my students to see the value of asking big questions and trying to live out the answers.
- I was the first to attend college in my family, and have always felt like an outsider in academia.
- I want my students to admire me.
- I grew up in a university town and that academic culture feels normal to me.
- I feel a sense of self-worth when I feel I can offer something valuable to those who need it.
- I want people to know that my profession can do good in the world.
- I grew up as a white person in disenfranchised minority communities. I was privileged but also discriminated against.
- Graduate school gave me a tendency to distance myself from painful realities of the world by theorizing about or categorizing the situation.
- I grew up in an organized, wealthy neighborhood, and people with quite different socio-economic backgrounds may have trouble relating with me.
- I grew up in two different home cultures, and so am drawn to seeing how the same facts can be viewed and interpreted differently.
- I'm a parent of young children, and feel the tension between my family and professional identities.
- My parents were dedicated to service because of their religious convictions.
- My parents weren't able to be very involved in my schooling because of language barriers, and I want to help others avoid this problem.
- I plan to run for elected office someday, and I think about how the relationships I'm forming will affect that effort for better or worse.
- I'm an able-bodied white male, and am often perceived by marginalized people as powerful and well-connected, but also untrustworthy.
- I have a tendency to always think that bigger is better, like many Americans.
- I'm a new parent, and feel anxious to create a world that is healthy for my child.
- I'm concerned that I'm leaving my children with a less free country than the one I grew up in.
- I had teachers who looked out for me, and think every kid deserves a chance.
- I've always lived my life on an academic calendar, and can forget that others do not.
- I was part of a desegregated elementary school, and it showed me the power of a diverse community.
- My life experience has shown me how valuable and useful my discipline is, and this inspires my work. I need to recognize that its importance may not be as evident to my students.
- My hometown was not diverse or stimulating, and I rebelled and discovered the larger world. I want to help students push beyond the boundaries of our limited campus culture.
- I like to be praised, and avoid criticism.

- My father was a political activist—showed me how to stand up for my principles no matter the cost.
- My family immigrated and had to work hard to develop a supportive community in our new home place.
- My life’s work has been breaking down institutional barriers that prevent people from supporting each other and recognizing humanity of others.
- I worked in the business world and encountered too many people who didn’t know how to think.
- I come from a culture that values service to society above the needs of the individual.
- I’m a member of a religious minority that was excluded from education in my home country.
- I always played outside as a child, and think we all are better the more we’re engaged in the real world.
- I see education as the only way of building world peace.
- I sense that the system is hostile and destructive because so many voices are left out.
- I learned early on that some people are truly disadvantaged.
- I want to learn to balance my western education with my indigenous values and background.
- As a high schooler I found my own path to get me out of a traumatic family situation.
- I’m the youngest in a big family, and always like to work in the background making good things happen.
- I’ve never been motivated by leaders or coaches who yell; I prefer gentle prodding and encouragement.
- I’m trying to dis-identify with my identity, because I worry that identity politics lead us to demonize others.

We then discussed what advice we’d share, and give ourselves, about how to become better prepared to do effective, ethical community-engaged work.

Here is a summary of those tidbits of wisdom:

- See students as an asset for effectively engaging the community.
- Separate “engagement” from “service.”
- Start small. Start successful.
- Ask for help. Admit what you don’t know.
- Trust others to care as much as you, and have as much to offer.
- Pay attention to power relationships.
- Value the margins, and the marginalized.
- People are your teachers, not your subjects.
- Start by looking in the mirror.
- Keep reminding yourself of the big questions.
- Observe deeply. Do nothing right away (instead listen, reflect, and learn).

- Listen openly. Listen first. Listen more than you talk.
- Understand that you have real impacts, even on day one.
- Don't take yourself too seriously.
- Reveal your complex self, and see the complexities in others.
- Be available, but have boundaries.
- Expect difficulties, and for things to be "messy." Give yourself a chance to do better.
- Practice self-care (this includes getting enough sleep). "An empty well cannot give."
- Question respectfully.
- Acknowledge your expectations, and those of your students and community partners.
- Check in often.
- Be humble, reverent, and patient.
- Be collegial; talk with the people down the hall.
- "Every idea is utopian until we turn it into social practice."— Remember to begin.
- Be open to new ideas and methods.
- Avoid the cult of the iconic hero.
- Link engagement work with other teaching and research obligations.
- Be realistic about how much time you have. Make a timetable, and then multiply by 3.
- Lean into existing connections—recognize you're already part of "we."
- Step up, and step back.
- Learn the history, but don't be beholden to it.
- Learn the names of the people you work with.
- Bring food to share.
- Invite your community partners to your house for dinner.
- Make the process of relationship-building fun.
- Find wise guides and mentors—especially elders.
- Be honest about your intentions and capacities.
- Write down what others talk about and care about.

We concluded by sharing specific actions we plan to take to prepare ourselves to propose a project by the beginning of winter quarter. These actions included:

- Learning the culture and operating procedures of my institution better.
- Talking with staff of a local office of a federal agency.
- Spending more time in downtown Bellingham.
- Following up on an invitation from colleagues at another institution.
- Going to a city council meeting.
- Talking with a colleague I met at a conference.
- Talking with a colleague on campus that teaches the same course.
- Talking with local business leader.
- Taking a Geographic Information Systems course.
- Digging into the resources in the Washington State Archives on campus.

- Identifying community members with a particular condition.
- Connecting with a national organization about starting a local chapter.
- Deciding which of my many ideas I'm going to pursue.
- Following up with the Center for Service-Learning about partners.
- Reflecting on the outcomes and structure of an event I'm hosting.
- Reading a particular book.
- Restoring connections with a First Nations group.
- Re-thinking an assignment in my spring course.
- Learning how to make a Facebook page.
- Talking with a local business network.
- Learning about online teaching.