

Community Engagement Fellows Project Report

The CE fellowship has been a great experience, particularly for networking and realizing that so many wonderful people are doing community engaged work. It's easy to feel isolated in our efforts, and through the CE Fellows Program I've made more great connections than I've made in the past several years combined. I'm particularly grateful that I can stay involved through the Salish Sea Welcoming Committee for years to come (meaning I'll meet even more great people). So often fellowships are one-off events so the buzz wears off when it's over. It's ingenious that continuity is built into this network, and I'm grateful for it.

My goals evolved throughout the year. I had originally planned to restructure my Global Health course by the end of Spring quarter. Perhaps because I won't be teaching it until Spring 2017, I found myself engaging in more immediate things. So while I still intend to restructure Global Health, informed by what I learned through my CE colleagues, my work turned towards a different project, namely the [Western Regional International Health Conference](#) (WRIHC).

WRIHC is a regional student-led conference that was initiated 9 years ago through the University of Washington Global Health Department. The conference location rotates on a two-year cycle, with a year in Seattle followed by an "away" year at a partner institution, such as Oregon State University, Arizona State University, Simon Fraser University. WWU has never played a key role in the conference, despite the fact that there are plenty of students and faculty interested in global health. I've participated several times through my connections with the UW Global Health Department (I'm an affiliate faculty member) and I've always wanted to do a better job building this partnership. By force of circumstance (I'm ashamed to admit), I finally learned that I shouldn't be doing this on my own. Because I was gone for part of winter quarter, I recruited an awesome TA and another faculty member to help out, and we (I should say they) recruited over 20 participants from WWU to attend the conference in Seattle, raised enough money from multiple departments and programs across campus to be named as a major conference sponsor, and solicited departmental funding for all student attendees. Our participation was significant enough that the conference organizers at UW invited WWU to host the conference in 2017. While we don't feel prepared to host as soon as next year, we are interested in doing it in the future, maybe even in 2018.

My CE Fellowship project morphed into working on developing a vibrant community of Whatcom County residents (beginning with WWU students and faculty, but extending to partner institutions and community members) who are interested in engaging in global health issues*, including annual participation in the WRIHC. We've decided to start this process by forming an Associated Student global health club. One of the main goals of the club will be to work on the WRIHC on recruiting participants, organizing poster presentations, creating a network of students interested in global health issues,

attending the conference together, and engaging in post-conference continuing conversations to discuss how to apply the amazing learning that occurs at the venue.

This year's conference was incredibly inspiring for students, and they came back ready to take action. We want to use the conference as a catalyst for engagement in global health. There are so many benefits to WWU becoming a regular host of the WRIHC. We can forge relationships with students, faculty and community members throughout the region who are engaged in ethical global health work; our students can network with graduate programs in global health; students learn about regional global health NGOs; we can fuel our internationalization efforts at WWU, and more!

So far we've been meeting to discuss next steps. We're planning to start the club at the beginning of next year, and we'll see where it goes from there. Please let me know if you'd like to be involved in global health organizing in our community!

* Note that global health is a broad term that encompasses both the global and the local. For example, this year's conference theme was *Glocalization*, and we spent as much time discussing racism in the US, migrant rights, and other local issues as discussing topics in international development. Local activism is a key goal of the conference.