

2020 Sessions for Interaction and Engagement Call

Title: Advancing Engaged Learning in iSchools through the Creative Problem Solving Process

Organizer(s):

Kelly Kowatch, Director - Engaged Learning Office, University of Michigan School of Information
Alissa Talley-Pixley, Assistant Director - Engaged Learning Office, University of Michigan School of Information

Scott TenBrink, Civic Engagement Program Manager - Engaged Learning Office, University of Michigan School of Information

Key Participants:

Kelly Kowatch, Director - Engaged Learning Office, University of Michigan School of Information
Alissa Talley-Pixley, Assistant Director - Engaged Learning Office, University of Michigan School of Information

Scott TenBrink, Civic Engagement Program Manager - Engaged Learning Office, University of Michigan School of Information

Abstract:

In 1996, the University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI) launch a curriculum grounded in experiential learning with required internships, service-learning, and client-based coursework. In 2017, the School moved this commitment to experiential learning further by launching an engaged learning office to coalesce numerous opportunities that had developed over the past twenty years with the goal of transformational student experiences across the curriculum, globally and locally.

The Engaged Learning Office manages community engagement, consulting, civic engagement, and global engagement programs and collaborates with faculty to holistically educate students and create mutually beneficial engagement opportunities with organizations from the public and private sectors. Students are taught the creative problem-solving process as a foundation to develop solutions to information problems brought to the School by partner organizations. The purpose of this session would be to expose participants to the creative problem-solving process while engaging in the question of how to create collaborative engaged learning opportunities across iSchools.

Description:

Purpose and Intended Audience:

The purpose of this session would be to expose participants to the creative problem solving process while engaging in the question of how to create collaborative engaged learning opportunities across iSchools. This session would be valuable to any conference attendee that is interested in learning more about engaged learning, including potential learning outcomes; program management, types, and methods for engagement; and to engage in discussion and

ideation about collaborations for engaged learning across iSchools. In addition to this, participants would be exposed to the creative problem solving process, a method employed to develop new ideas in groups for problem solving. It is our goal that participants will depart from this session with an understanding of the creative problem solving process, an understanding of engaged learning, a network of professionals who are interested in creating collaborative engaged learning opportunities for iSchool students, and initial plans for engaging in those collaborations.

Proposed activities including agenda, ramp-up (development), and follow-through:

The three organizers are trained in the Creative Problem Solving Process through the Creative Problem Solving Institute. They will deploy a three-hour design workshop that will expose participants to the four steps of the creative problem solving process, including clarifying, ideating, developing and implementing ideas. Participants, in diverse teams, will engage in the process of diverging and converging of ideas, while interacting with other conference attendees. Participants will learn how to develop problem statements appropriate for the creative problem solving process, interviewing and engaging with stakeholders, ideating and brainstorming ideas effectively, prototyping, presenting outcomes, and ultimately making a plan for engagement. As part of this workshop, participants will be exposed to the variety of engaged learning programs that are currently managed and taught by the Engaged Learning Office staff at the University of Michigan School of Information, with the prospect of invoking new ideas and domestic and global collaborations for all present. Prizes will be awarded to participants based on established parameters. Slides, design process outcomes (ideas and plans) will be shared, and participant information will be coalesced and developed into an iSchool engaged learning virtual network (for those interested).

Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field: Briefly state the focus of your proposal topic and note the importance, relevance, value, and/or interest to the broad iSchool community. Provide a brief explanation of how this event will appeal to the audience both with respect to content and format.

Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field: The University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI), created in 1996, was founded on what is now called an engaged learning curriculum. Foundationally a library school, the School's commitment to public access of information was transformed to include a technological perspective. Multiple courses included client/external engagement, which paired with a required internship, allowed for students to have the opportunity to graduate with a significant amount of relevant experience, often through engagement with an established community partner. A portion of the school's students was committed to public and community engagement inherently through career choice (as librarians); however, other students' more technically-oriented career choices engaged them in coursework and co-curricular activities that ultimately balanced the portfolio of industry engagement with that of public sector engagement.

In 2017, the School initiated an office to align resources, programs, and engagement, with the goal of facilitating transformational student experiences through engaged learning. Engaged learning,

as defined at the University of Michigan, includes student experiences that provoke deep learning in the areas of creativity; intercultural engagement; social/civic responsibility and ethical reasoning; collaboration, communication, and teamwork; and self-agency, and the ability to innovate and to understand and manage risks. These experiences are categorized into the following practices: discovery-based research experiences; global and international experiences; civic engagement; client-driven projects and internships; entrepreneurship; and creative work and performance.¹

The Engaged Learning Office (ELO) has six staff members and lecturers who manage and/or teach programs in global engagement (faculty-led project-based courses abroad and traditional study abroad); civic engagement courses and co-curricular programs with a focus on local governments; design consultancy programs that enhance the outcomes of student and burgeoning entrepreneurs; and service/volunteer programs for local and global non-profits. In addition to this, multiple staff work with a sizable fraction of the School's faculty to bring diverse clients into courses and to ensure that best practices for client engagement are deployed. With the launch of this office and coalescing of various programs and courses that had developed over the School's twenty-year history, the ELO assumed the relationship development and management of all partner/client-based relationship. Resulting from this amalgamation and standardization were shared learning outcomes and evaluation, a strategic outreach and engagement plan, a School-wide CRM to track and assess partner engagement, and engagement in creating and facilitating the necessary training to ensure positive and ethical student engagement in the community.

The ELO staff are been trained in the creative problem solving process and frequently apply and engage this method, in addition to the similar methods of design thinking and user-centered design, as a means to guide students through the information problems that commonly challenge all types of organizations. A three- to four- hour "design jam" is a common entry-point for engagement for external organizations to begin working with the U-M School of Information. These design jams allow for an organization to gain early exposure to the methods that are taught at UMSI and to simultaneously teach students how creative problem solving is a useful tool that can be applied to industry and social issues alike.

As the comprehensive portfolio of engagement opportunities managed by the ELO at UMSi is unique and demonstrative of a deep commitment to a specific type of learning, we are interested in broadly sharing our processes, methods, and learnings with our colleagues across the iSchool membership organizations. We anticipate that our interactive session will be of interest to those already engaged in engaged learning educational programs and also attract those who are not, with the goal of ideating upon new ways to engage our students in programs and potentially forge collaborative relationships.

¹ Goals and Practices, Engaged Michigan. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://engaged.umich.edu/engaged-learning/goals-practices/>

Duration: This session would require two 90-minute interactive sessions.

Additional reading:

Design Jam tackles water safety in the Great Lakes, Sunday, September 15, 2019 - 2:12pm

<https://www.michigandaily.com/section/academics/design-jam-tackles-water-safety-great-lakes-0>