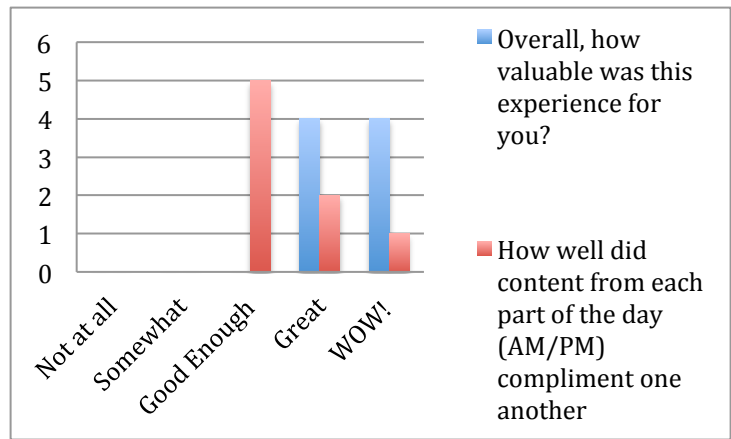


UWEC Immersion Workshop Evaluation

Overall Experience:

Two instructors and eight undergraduate students from UWEC participated in the immersion workshop. Participants spent approximately four hours per day over five days in a seminar setting learning processes and skills. In addition to interactive activities and discussion, four guest speakers came to share their experiences, primarily focused on the “Gateway Green” project. In the afternoons, the group visited various sites around Portland including the Gateway Green site, the Gateway neighborhood, etc. Beyond the planned instruction time students had a cultural immersion of Portland as a city.

They volunteered at “potluck in the park” serving food to the homeless community, used public transportation, ate at food carts, and learned to navigate the city. Overall feedback from the workshop was incredibly positive (in blue). 100% of the participants ranked their overall experience as a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale (1 being low). The rankings for the connection between the morning content and the afternoon site visits was less strong but still positive overall (in red).



Most valuable learning and insights:

Participants cited a wide variety of components as most valuable. For the majority, the application of the collaborative process (creating a recommendation for how to grade students participating in similar courses in the future) was the most useful and interesting. Several students felt like they really benefitted from all the tools they had been taught to address conflict and build consensus. Tools that participants specifically noted included active listening (5), exploring the phases and roles in the process (1), and skills to identify and explore interests (2). One participant noted that having a transparent explanation of the facilitation process (Laurel stepping back and explicitly forcing the group to identify the techniques she was using and why) was particularly helpful. Participants also noted that understanding the spectrum of decision-making processes and the awareness that not all contributions (to a group) need to be equal as useful knowledge.

In addition to these practical skills, participants appreciated other big-picture benefits from this course. Several noted that now have a fuller understanding of just how complex this work can be but also how powerful. They noted the amount of planning, time, effort and patience collaborative governance takes. Several students noted feeling inspired (meeting with Ted), and felt better equipped to “play the game,” including changing career paths (from Jim). They appreciated the need for government officials have to stay connected with their communities but also noted the limitations that many forms of our governance systems have to resolve challenges. Finally, based on their broad experience in Portland, participants reported a greater understanding of urban growth boundaries and that all places have their issues including homelessness. Further, they noted the real potential that public transportation has to alleviate the need for personal cars, and the supremely vital role that travel and real life experience play in promoting deep learning. Finally, Laurel’s “way of being” with participants and both Carrie and Laurel’s unwavering enthusiasm were appreciated.

UWEC Immersion Workshop Evaluation

Least Valuable/Opportunities for Change

Students offered multiple suggestions for how to improve on the content and process for this workshop in the future. One participant said that the overview of Oregon Solutions, Oregon Consensus, and the general organization of the various players in this work were not relevant. One participant felt like too much time was spent on active listening, another thought the component of neutrality and bias was least useful, and one thought the feeling exercise (part of the active listening work) was not as impactful as others. One felt like he still didn't have a clear understanding of crowdfunding (although this person really enjoyed the speaker).

In terms of the learning process, participants suggested several options to improve. First, one participant requested more food while another requested fewer carbs in the morning. This person suggested that by starting at nine AM participants could get their own food before coming. Several suggested that they spent too much time sitting and suggested more activities that included actually practicing the skills, standing or walking. One participant suggested having an activity to help them understand how badly collaboration can go when a group is missing critical pieces of the process. To better understand collaborative governance, several students requested opportunities to observe collaboration in action (either as observers in a live meeting or watching videos of this type of work). To this end, several participants suggested focusing more closely on a case study to illustrate the different components of the process and to follow the case study from start to finish. Although Gateway Green was used as a case study of sorts, the connections between the ideas we discussed in the morning and the Gateway Green project could have been more explicit. This would have met one participant's request for "more synergy" between the morning and afternoon learning. Finally, one participant noted the need to carefully manage conversations to keep them focused on the topics at hand and not "hijacked" in different directions.

Participants Ideas Looking Ahead

Perhaps the most impactful portion of this workshop will be in the work that participants do upon returning to their own communities. Thinking of this, participants shared that they hope to do the following things in the future.

1. Use the power of collaboration for change.
2. Use active listening in all kind of current and future relationships.
3. Take the time to see all parts of a city to really understand it.
4. Give students opportunities for experiences like this in the future and integrate theory and projects into courses.
5. Learn more about and implement collaborative problem solving skills into personal and professional lives (2)
6. Take lessons from Portland (and difference from Eau Claire) and the Gateway Green process to spark new thinking and future efforts.

Practical recommendations for next time:

1. Frame the topics as building towards an end practice (framework, skills, actual practice, wrap-up experience)
2. Start later in the day (9-10). Maybe have instructors come early but cut other content for 3 hours each.
3. Focus on a case study all the way through (consider using Malher, Skype with parties).

UWEC Immersion Workshop Evaluation

Quotes of Note that Capture Participants' Experiences

- "Truly, [there are] too many changes to list. Every thought I will have from now on will have Portland/this program's influence in the back of my head."
- "It has given me an appreciation of the role government can and cannot play in solving problems and encouraged me to think about democracy as a phenomenon with a variety of processes, some hierarchical and some collaborative."
- This experience, "has left me with a plethora of new experiences for comparison and for adoption into my life. Even more, understanding the ways I can begin to work with people through collaborative governance makes me feel more connected with people and with the desire to deepen those connections through community action"
- "I had assumptions that there were better ways to resolve conflicts. There are more effective means in which our government can function."
- "I'm realizing very useful info in emerge when I shut up and let people think."
- "I must implement collaboration into business and sustainability."
- "I am an agent of change that has not yet gained momentum."