



Georgetown University

# The Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning



## Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning Partners

Center for New Designs in Learning & Scholarship (CNDLS)

Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching, and Service (CSJ)

Division of Student Affairs

University Health Professionals:

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

Health Education Services

Student Health

The initial phase of the Engelhard Project (2005-2011) has been partially funded by the Charles Engelhard Foundation of New York, through the national Bringing Theory to Practice Project in partnership with the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and the Engelhard Endowment for Engaged Learning.

For more information about the Engelhard Project, please see

[cndls.georgetown.edu/engelhard](http://cndls.georgetown.edu/engelhard)

For more information about the Engelhard Endowment for Engaged Learning, please see

[cndls.georgetown.edu/engagedlearning](http://cndls.georgetown.edu/engagedlearning)

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## The Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning: Innovating the College Experience

*“If only all courses could prove to be so relevant to my personal and educational growth.... This class is truly reflective of what all courses in college ought to be.”*

*–Engelhard Student*

The college experience poses significant and complex challenges to student well-being. Traditionally, these challenges have been addressed in residential halls, campus clinics, and counseling centers – everywhere but the classroom.

The national Bringing Theory to Practice Conference asked teams from a number of campuses to explore how “engaged forms of learning, requiring active student involvement and reflection, contribute to the resiliency and health of students, and their civic engagement.” In response, a diverse team of Georgetown faculty, administrators, and staff developed the Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning, an innovative experiment in integrating student wellness issues into academic contexts. Using a curriculum infusion approach, Engelhard faculty link academic course content with wellness topics through readings, discussions led by campus health professionals, and reflective writing assignments.

The reach of the project at Georgetown is significant: since its inception in 2005, over 4,200 students have been taught in over 140 courses by over 50 faculty from over 25 different departments. The project has proved enormously beneficial for students, faculty, and campus health professionals, shaping the Georgetown experience both inside and outside the classroom. As the Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning grows and changes, team members are evaluating its impact and looking ahead to the future of the project.

*“The Engelhard Project is a truly exciting initiative for Georgetown. By addressing student mental health and wellness through various forms of engaged learning, it does even more than enhance our ability to help our students with contemporary problems and issues. It connects students more closely with their professors and helps them understand that professors care about them as individuals—not just as students in their classes. It helps our students reach their fullest potential. And, as a Catholic and Jesuit University, it helps us fulfill our mission of “cura personalis,” or care of the whole person.”*

*–John J. DeGioia, President of Georgetown University*

## Project Background

Facilitated and supported by Georgetown's Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS), faculty from a variety of disciplines, university health professionals, Student Affairs, and the Center for Social Justice Teaching, Research, and Service (CSJ) forged a partnership to extend the reach of the university's existing safety net of campus resources to the classroom. The Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning began in earnest in the fall of 2005 with five pilot courses, and has grown dramatically since then; at present, often more than 20 Engelhard courses are taught each semester.

The principles of the Engelhard Project resonate with Georgetown's educational philosophy. Central to Georgetown's mission is its distinctive identity as a Catholic and Jesuit, student-centered research university. Stemming directly from the university's Jesuit roots, Georgetown's explicit focus on students pervades all aspects of student life and learning. Rather than compartmentalizing the diverse aspects of each individual, Georgetown encourages students as well as faculty to bring their whole selves into the classroom. This integrative educational philosophy of "educating the whole person" is part of what makes a Georgetown education unique, and the Engelhard Project is a signature aspect of this effort.

**The fundamental goals of the Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning** are to:

- engage students in personal reflection on health and wellness issues in ways that enhance and reinforce the intellectual content of the course;
- enable collaboration between faculty and university health professionals to link theoretical concepts to students' lives;
- expand the campus safety net by involving faculty and connecting students to resources.

## Project Design

Each Engelhard course incorporates a module on a health topic, chosen by the faculty member in consultation with the health professional and project team. Although the exact format of the module varies widely from course to course, each module at minimum includes these components:

- An assigned reading about a health-related topic, which connects in some way to the academic content of the course;
- A class discussion led by a campus health professional;
- A written assignment (required but not graded) which asks students to reflect on the health topic in light of the reading and class discussions.

The design of the Engelhard Project is based on the pedagogical framework of curriculum infusion.

### ***Curriculum Infusion***

The curriculum infusion approach involves finding opportunities within the regular academic content of a course where topics relating to a particular theme – in this case, health and wellness – can be highlighted and then considered from a personal perspective. When curriculum infusion is successful, students go beyond merely absorbing information; by integrating readings and class discussions with their own personal life experiences, they can explore in-depth how issues of health and wellness relate to their lives and those of their family and friends.

### ***Community-Based Learning***

Closely related to the curriculum infusion method is the practice of integrating a Community-Based Learning (CBL) project into an academic course. Some Engelhard courses incorporate such a project, supported by Georgetown's Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching, and Service, into the course design. In these courses, students work in disadvantaged schools, homeless shelters, and other community organizations, which presents them with another perspective on issues of wellness. In turn, the other aspects of the Engelhard module enrich the experiences the students have in the community context.

### ***The Many Faces of Wellness***

In Engelhard courses, "wellness" is defined broadly. An Engelhard Faculty Fellow works with the Engelhard Project team to develop a course module that is most relevant to his or her class, with the goal of helping students become the healthiest and most well-balanced people they can be. This process often brings up a wide variety of issues relating to student life, from time management, to relationship violence, and many topics in between.

### ***Examples of Curriculum Infusion in Engelhard Courses***

Working with the Engelhard Project team, Faculty Fellows continue to develop creative ways to incorporate a variety of health topics into courses in an increasingly diverse set of disciplines. For example,

- Professor Jim Sandefur (Mathematics) uses data on how the body absorbs alcohol to teach math modeling.
- Professor Alisa Carse (Philosophy) relates issues such as stress and eating disorders to Aristotle's conception of "flourishing."
- Professor Sarah Stiles (Sociology) reinforces the concepts of social entrepreneurship and social change with class units on personal development, meditation, and exercise.
- Professor Maria Donoghue (Biology) connects the biology of depression and mood disorders to the students' experiences with these issues, either firsthand or through friends and peers.
- Professors Natsu Onoda Power (Performing Arts), Christine Schiwietz (Sociology), and Carol Day (Health Education Services) integrate themes that arise in their students' work running a theatre program in urban public schools into the classroom.
- Professor Julia Lamm (Theology) asks students to examine their own spiritual biographies as they study the spiritual lives of prominent religious figures.
- Professor Robert Friedland (Health Systems Administration) examines the economics of Georgetown University's own system of care for students affected by eating disorders.

*For a list of selected Engelhard course titles and departments, see Appendix A.*

## The Student Experience

Typically, in the first few weeks of an Engelhard course, students learn about the Engelhard Project, see readings or assignments on the syllabus that relate to their own health, and start to hear their professor asking for their thoughts on topics such as sexual health, depression, eating disorders, or relationship violence. In some Engelhard courses, in addition to the well-being topics infused in the course, students also take part in a CBL component, such as working with local high school students or partnering with local businesses. Students' work in their community projects often complements and further highlights the wellness topic within the course, while the wellness topic reciprocally supports the students' community engagement.

Before a health professional comes to speak in class, students are often asked what questions they have about the topic being studied. They might post their questions about depression or HIV on an anonymous discussion board for a biology class, or they might complete an online survey about their own health practices for an introductory seminar in Health Studies. The course professor and health professional look at these responses before class and tailor the presentation and discussion to address issues directly relevant to students. If the course includes CBL, the health professional and faculty member may design the curriculum infusion to support issues raised in the community work. At the same time, the professor and health professional practice the art of weaving the health material together with academic readings and theories in order to achieve course objectives.

After the visit by the health professional, each student is prompted to write a personal reflection on the wellness topic, describing how the class discussion affected his or her experience with the course and life as a Georgetown student, and responding to any emotions that the visit might have raised. These reflections provide students the opportunity to process the information, to apply what they have learned to their own lives, and to continue the wellness conversation with the health professional and their professor. After the wellness presentation, students often visit their Engelhard professor's office for both academic and personal reasons, and some students who are in need of university services contact the health professionals they met in class. Others respond in new ways to friends who struggle with personal issues by sharing information about campus health services or simply lending a more empathetic ear.

*"My whole life I've wanted to be the kind of person anyone can lean on, and the more I look into each of the issues raised by the Engelhard Project, the more I am able to be that person."*

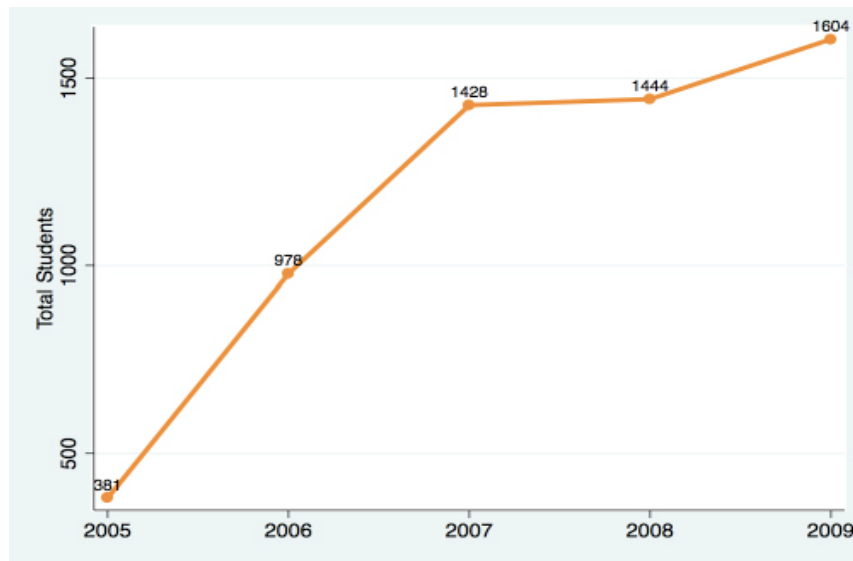
*-Engelhard Student*

*"I often left class invigorated and would go home to do more research on the matters we had focused on that day, and, subsequently, I'd often share what I learned with both friends and family."*

*-Engelhard Student*

## Student Enrollment in Engelhard Courses

Student enrollment in Engelhard courses has continued to rise over the first five years of the program. The graph below shows the increase in enrollment numbers by academic year.



## The Faculty Experience

Engelhard Faculty Fellows experience the Engelhard Project as a faculty development program that allows them to engage students personally as well as intellectually. Some Faculty Fellows develop an interest in the Engelhard Project through interactions with colleagues who are already participating; others enter the project following conversations with members of the project team or involvement in a faculty workshop. Faculty already teaching CBL courses may seek out the Engelhard Project as an effective way to implement classroom resources that support their students' experiences of wellness issues in community projects.

During the first semester of a Faculty Fellow's participation, the Fellow attends a Safety Net Training to

- meet campus health professionals from various areas of expertise who support student health and wellness;
- hear about Georgetown's existing safety net and process for supporting student wellness;
- and learn how faculty can help students reach campus health resources when needed.

Experienced Engelhard Faculty Fellows often serve as resources or mentors for new Fellows. Faculty Fellows have found this opportunity for connecting across disciplines and building a sense of community among diverse faculty to be a personally and professionally rewarding aspect of the project.

Faculty Fellows work with the Engelhard Project team to develop the curriculum infusion aspects of their Engelhard courses. After identifying a wellness or health topic that connects with both the course content and with Georgetown's students, each Fellow partners with a campus health professional to develop a curriculum infusion module for the course. The Fellow and health professional may meet several times to discuss how to engage the students on the topic both intellectually and personally. They work together to choose course readings and frame discussions which set the stage for the health professional's presentation. The team also strategizes about how to follow the visit, for example, through continued class discussion on the topic, or a with

a subsequent class conversation with the health professional.

*“This class has been more than just a curriculum and writing papers; it’s been about creating a lifestyle.”*

*–Professor Sarah Stiles, Sociology*

*“Personally, once Engelhard modules were put in place in this course, I couldn’t imagine doing without them. These topics have forged a bond between my students and me that is substantial; we have engaged deeply around issues that I care about and in so doing have created a community of shared experience and perspective that is strong. I trust that through these nonthreatening experiences, students leave my class more well prepared to address life’s challenges and more willing and capable of understanding the challenges that others face. The Engelhard program is innovative and thoughtful; no college class should be without some infusion.”*

*–Professor Maria Donoghue, Biology*

## The Health Professional Experience

Crucial to the success of the Engelhard Project is the participation of a diverse group of Georgetown health professionals, representing Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS), Health Education Services, and Student Health, with expertise in a variety of topics. They teach class sessions and lead discussions on different health topics, including nutrition, eating disorders, substance abuse, sexual harassment, depression, mood regulation, grief, and stress management, among others.

The collaboration between health professionals and faculty begins when health professionals lead a Safety Net Training for Faculty Fellows, familiarizing them with campus resources and procedures. The health professionals then work with faculty to develop Engelhard modules for each course, contributing expertise on the health topic while considering how best to engage students. As a growing number of students become aware of campus resources through this project, the health professionals support those who reach out to them following the course visit. Health professionals welcome the opportunity to work with faculty colleagues and to add to the academic side of the student experience.

*“It’s really bringing people together for the first time around a holistic education of the student. Faculty and health professional staff are interacting in new and different ways, and, I think, faculty are being perceived by the students as being more interested and involved in their lives personally.”*

*–Carol Day, Director, Health Education Services*

## The Impact of Engelhard

Responses collected through focus groups, end-of-semester surveys, and written reflections provide compelling evidence that the Engelhard Project is having a direct impact on students' academic and personal lives. For instance, students report that in comparison with other courses at Georgetown, they experience more engagement with the learning process and the academic material in Engelhard courses, and that their Engelhard faculty demonstrate care for their students as whole persons more so than faculty in their non-Engelhard classes.

When the health topics in a course resonate with their own life experience, students say that the course had more personal impact on them. Students also report higher levels of personal impact when the health information is well-integrated into the course content, that is, when the course includes ongoing discussion throughout the semester as opposed to one or two isolated visits from a campus health professional.

On the end-of-course surveys, students indicate that they feel comfortable contacting or referring friends to the health professionals they met through class. (See Appendix B for the average responses to all items on the end-of-course survey.) This is corroborated by the health professionals themselves who say that many students contact them individually after they visit a class. The revelations and insights revealed in student reflection papers, a required piece in all Engelhard courses, demonstrate that students are truly thinking about how course information relates to their personal lives, and that they are able to use the health and wellness information they have learned in situations with friends and family.

Echoing the student findings, Faculty Fellows often report that curriculum infusion topics introduced early in the semester open up deeper exploration of the course material throughout the semester, and that their students produce better work because of this level of engagement. Faculty also feel more prepared to approach students who are experiencing difficulty. With the support of the visiting health professionals, faculty are more comfortable raising topics which might be troubling to students. Class becomes a safe place for discussing current issues that arise at Georgetown or elsewhere.

*"I was extremely inspired by the discussion we had...Hearing other peoples' personal stories was really touching. We don't really get the chance to have these kinds of discussions, so I appreciated that the Engelhard aspect of this course allowed us to apply what we are learning to our own personal challenges."*

*–Engelhard student*

*"At least a dozen students each year stayed after the lecture to engage the speaker. Many sent me an email thanking me for caring enough for them that I provided this opportunity to learn about depression. Several directly sought counseling or visited my office to discuss their personal circumstances and seek my advice. It was, in one word, transforming."*

*- Professor Joseph Neale, Biology*

Some Fellows have been surprised by how their own teaching has changed as their relationship with students has been transformed. This idea of teaching as a whole person is fundamental to Georgetown's mission of teaching *to* the whole person. When faculty bring more than just the academic aspect of themselves into the classroom, students are encouraged to do the same in a way that deepens the learning experience for all.

In addition, the Engelhard Project is beginning to have an impact at the institutional level. One of the strengths of the project and a significant reason for its continuing success has been its deeply collaborative nature from the beginning. Both students and faculty have benefited from increased awareness of University health and wellness resources, and University health professionals have been welcomed into the classroom as partners in the academic enterprise. This innovative cooperative effort continues to strengthen connections among all participants as the project has expanded and evolved. By building upon existing efforts across campus to address issues of student well-being, and by connecting groups across campus with one another, the project has developed into a unified initiative which transcends institutional boundaries.

*"We have a great program. It's clearly having a positive impact on the lives of many, many students. It's also clearly having a positive impact on the faculty who are involved, and it's been a great program for those of us in Student Affairs who have been working with the faculty, but I think if we expand Engelhard it will really have a positive impact on the culture of Georgetown."*

*—Jim Welsh, Assistant Vice President for Student Health*

## Looking Forward: The Engelhard Endowment for Engaged Learning

The Engelhard Endowment for Engaged Learning, made possible by a generous gift from the Charles Engelhard Foundation, represents a significant opportunity to broaden and deepen inquiry into transformative educational practices at Georgetown University.

The Endowment will:

**Provide funds to sustain and institutionalize the Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning at Georgetown**

The Endowment will fund new paths for inquiry and innovation in the area of engaged learning practices inside and outside the classroom. It offers an exciting opportunity to transform the Georgetown undergraduate curriculum by building upon and expanding the creative teaching and learning experiences that currently take place all around the university. Current research demonstrates that students recognize the value of a course more readily and learn the theoretical material more effectively when they can see concrete examples of how it connects to their personal lives.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough overview of literature on this topic, see: Swaner, Lynn. "Linking Engaged Learning, Student Mental Health and Well-being, and Civic Development: A Review of the Literature." April 2005. Available at <http://www.bringingtheorytopractice.org/pdfs/BTtP%202005%20Literature%20Review.pdf>.

Another valuable resource is the following book by James Zull, which draws on insights from biology and learning theory (eg. Piaget, Vygotsky, and Kolb), and demonstrates the importance of linking student learning to concrete experience and positive emotions: Zull, James E. (2002). *The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning*. Sterling, Va.: Stylus Publishing

### Enable ongoing curricular experimentation and innovation

Designing curricular experiences for engaged learning means foregrounding learning that is active, authentic, collaborative, and reflective. The Engelhard Endowment for Engaged Learning will enable us to invest attention and resources in a wide range of integrative and engaged learning approaches.

### Establish an annual Institute for the Study of Engaged Learning.

The Engelhard Endowment will also fund an annual Institute for the Study of Engaged Learning. The Institute, which will convene a diverse group representing universities, colleges, and educational organizations across the country, will explore how engaged learning is reflected in student work and what kinds of evidence can be collected to demonstrate how students are learning. Participants will include faculty, student affairs leaders, academic staff members, alumni, and others. By enabling discussion and debate among these groups, the Institute will foster a distinctively collaborative approach to this inquiry.

*"The foundation's increased generosity allows us to more deeply connect our commitments to intellectual learning and care for the whole person, in keeping with our Jesuit tradition. We are extremely grateful to the Engelhard Foundation for their support of our innovative methods to do this important work."*

*-John J. DeGioia, President, Georgetown University*

The Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning has grown dramatically since Fall 2005, when 283 students were enrolled in Engelhard courses; in Spring 2010, 1,183 students took Engelhard courses. Drawing on Georgetown's rich educational legacy, and driven by recent research on engaged learning, the Engelhard Project for Connecting Life and Learning is a signature example of Georgetown's commitment to defining what "educating the whole person" means in the twenty-first century. As the project continues to evolve and expand, more members of the learning community will experience the transformative effect of the Engelhard Project and of Georgetown's deepened and renewed dedication to educating the whole person.

*"The Engelhard Project is one of our most authentic and productive programs. The generosity of the Engelhard Foundation means that engaged learning will be part of a Georgetown University education for many years to come."*

*—Todd Olsen, Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students*

## Appendix A: Selected List of Engelhard Courses

\* indicates a course with a community-based learning component

Anthropology:	On the Move: Transnational Migration*
Biology:	Forest Ecology An Issues Approach to Biology Biological Chemistry
English:	Humanities & Writing Contexts for the Study of Sexuality Narratives of Violence
Mathematics:	Math Modeling
Philosophy:	Introduction to Ethics Philosophy of Education* Navigating Moral Choice Responsibility, Resilience, and Self-Respect*
Psychology:	Abnormal Psychology Research Methods and Statistics Introduction to Community Psychology*
Spanish:	Advanced Spanish Frida Kahlo: Rebel & Artist Early Modern Spanish Theater Spanish Mystics
Theater:	Acting I Theater as Social Change*
Theology:	The Problem of God
McDonough School Of Business:	Management & Organizational Behavior* Managerial Communications
School of Foreign Service:	Geopolitics of Population Issues in the EU Immigrant Ethnography*
School of Nursing & Health Studies:	Community & Health Leadership Crisis Management in College Health Health Promotion / Disease Prevention Healthcare Systems Economics

## Appendix B: End-of-Course Survey

An end-of-course student survey has been administered after each Engelhard course for the last five years. Represented in the following table are averages (mean) of 2020 student responses over five semesters. The questions used a response scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Survey Statement	Mean Response
“I have thought about how the information I learned in this course relates to my personal life.”	4.04
“Spending class time on this topic was worthwhile.”	3.90
“I learned new information about the [health] topic from this course.”	3.87
“I would feel comfortable contacting one of the health professionals I met or heard about through this class.”	3.77
“In this class, my professor demonstrated care for the whole person more so than faculty in my non-Engelhard classes.”	3.77
“I would feel comfortable recommending to a friend one of the health professionals I met or heard about through this class.”	3.74
“This course made me think in a new way about the health topic.”	3.58
“It is likely that what I learned in this course about mental health and wellness will influence my future behavior.”	3.48
“The health and wellness information presented in this course has influenced my attitude toward peers.”	3.32

*For five years in a row, the Engelhard Project has appeared on a student-published Thanksgiving list of "100 Things At Georgetown To Be Thankful For."*