

**Community Engagement Scholars Program (CESP)  
at the University of Minnesota**

At the University of Minnesota, the Community Engagement Scholars Program (CESP) encourages students to become actively involved in community services, through off-campus volunteering and site-based educational opportunities, and to be recognized for integrating community work into their educational experience. These experiences complement classroom learning, foster personal, professional and civic development, and allow students to work with others to enhance the well-being of their communities.

This program entails 400 hours of direct community service (with 120 hours directly tied to academic learning), 1 integrative community engagement capstone project that addresses a crucial community need, and 6 on-going reflection activities (ranging from topics of diversity to privilege to community building and collaboration). Reflection activities are designed to help students see how their academic experiences and community-based work are transforming their attitudes, assumptions, and perspectives, as well as how their service positively impacts their community. At the end of the program, students are asked to look back on their reflections in order to identify patterns and create meaning out of their diverse experiences and, ultimately, to gain a better understanding of what “service” means. All undergraduate degree-seeking students at the University of Minnesota are welcome to enroll in this program after attending an information session.

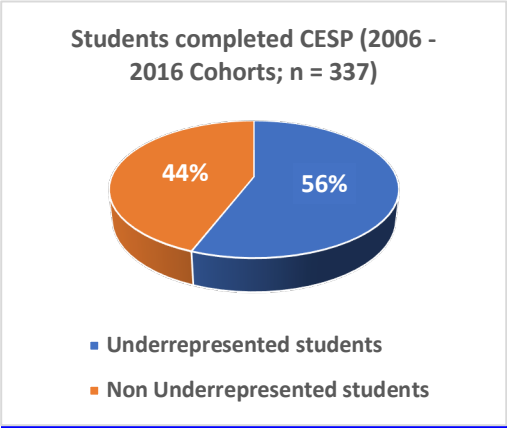
**This study** was conducted to assess the association of CESP completion (2006 - 2016 cohorts) with academic outcomes by comparing the following variables:

- Final term GPA
- 4-year graduation

between

- the treatment group (students of 2006 – 2016 cohorts completed CESP) and
- the comparison group (matched students in 2006 – 2016 cohorts who neither enrolled in in CESP nor took SL courses)

\*PSM is used to create equivalent treatment and comparison groups.



	CESP (n = 284)	Non CESP nor SL (n = 284)	Chi-square
4-year graduation	232 (81%)	164 (57%)	37.43 ***

Final term GPA	M	SD	M	SD	t-test
	3.54	.32	3.16	.70	- 8.28 ***

Note: \*\*\* p < .001.

**In summary**, students who completed CESP tend to have a significantly higher graduation rate at year 4 as well as significantly higher final term GPA than students who neither participated in CESP nor took SL courses. We will investigate more into the association between CESP participation and academic outcomes for underrepresented students. CESP, as well as other community engagement programs, seem to be worthy of continued support, investigation/data collection, given the associated positive academic benefits to its student participants.

**Acknowledgements**

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