



# Frontliners



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT  
CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT  
AND COMMUNITY SERVICE



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Classroom in a Toolbox: ProFuturo, Bekaa, 2020



# Foreword

As global challenges are intensifying and getting more complex, progressive universities are developing their missions to better respond to immediate and long-term pressures endured by their students and their respective communities. The immediate being at **times of emergencies** where self-motivated faculty, staff and students frequently step-up to volunteer, offer help and support to affected communities. Although with the best intentions in mind, such altruistic efforts are often sporadic, short-lived, and overlap in initiatives, governance, and ownership. As for the **long-term pressures**, they are deeply rooted and intertwined, requiring longstanding commitment and a sophisticated approach to tackle.

Civic engagement provides a **clear framework** for the curricular, and extra-curricular programs to harness, support and sustain self-motivated initiatives, and to integrate outreach as a core institutional pillar in addition to research and learning. By doing so, the University will expand on its public purpose; acknowledge students' complex realities; pioneer in the production of local knowledge; and lead on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) off-campus.

**Rabih Shibli**

Director, Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS)

*Post War Reconstruction, South Lebanon, 2007*

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# The American University of Beirut Roots in Community Service

Commemorating the World War I centennial, an **exhibit** in 2014 of select documents from the archives of the American University of Beirut (AUB) University Libraries, retraced the University's fascinating trajectory during that era, bearing witness to the increasingly influential role that the then Syrian Protestant College (SPC) - established in 1866 - was destined to play in the region. The exhibit

spotlighted the practicality and flexibility of college administrators, the vision and steadfastness of the faculty and student body, and the grassroots engagement of SPC with the community during the years of the Great Famine (1914-1918). After the end of WWI, the administration had put forth to the Board of Trustees its proposal to change the name of the Syrian Protestant College to the American University of Beirut. The War

had given further in the direction of a secular liberal arts college, to emphasize the virtues of social and public commitment as essential elements of a liberal arts education, to expand its programs to a full-fledged University, and to **incorporate service to the community** along with strong academics and stellar professional schools in its plans and vision.



Courtesy of AUB Archives

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# Institutionalizing Civic Engagement

In the aftermath of the July 2006 War, a new milestone was added to AUB's mission for engagement in times of crisis. A remarkable momentum to volunteer-for-relief among students, faculty and staff founded a calling that led to a university wide Task Force for Reconstruction, and in 2008 after two years of sporadic efforts, the Center for Civic Engagement and Community

Service (CCECS) was **established**. CCECS's operations exponentially **evolved** when Lebanon was hit by the record-setting blizzard Alexa in 2013, a storm of unprecedented strength, where dozens of refugees froze to death in their tented settlements. Immediately after, AUB volunteers stepped forward and initiated a clothes donation drive which developed into a multiyear intervention

that integrates livelihoods, education, and psychosocial services to refugees undergoing protracted crises. Lastly, the Beirut Port blast on August 4, 2020, **consolidated** the Center's position as a Frontline Respondent to further enhance the University's impact, effectively promote civic engagement, and empower students as change makers.



*Ghata: Bringing Education to Informal Tented Settlements, Bekaa, 2018*

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# Vision and Mission

## Vision

Positioning AUB as a civic convener and frontline responder to societal conflicts and challenges while realizing the potential of university students as change makers in local and global contexts.

## Mission

Leveraging operational research, campus community, and socially responsive partnerships to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while equipping students with professional skills for ethical and effective crisis management.



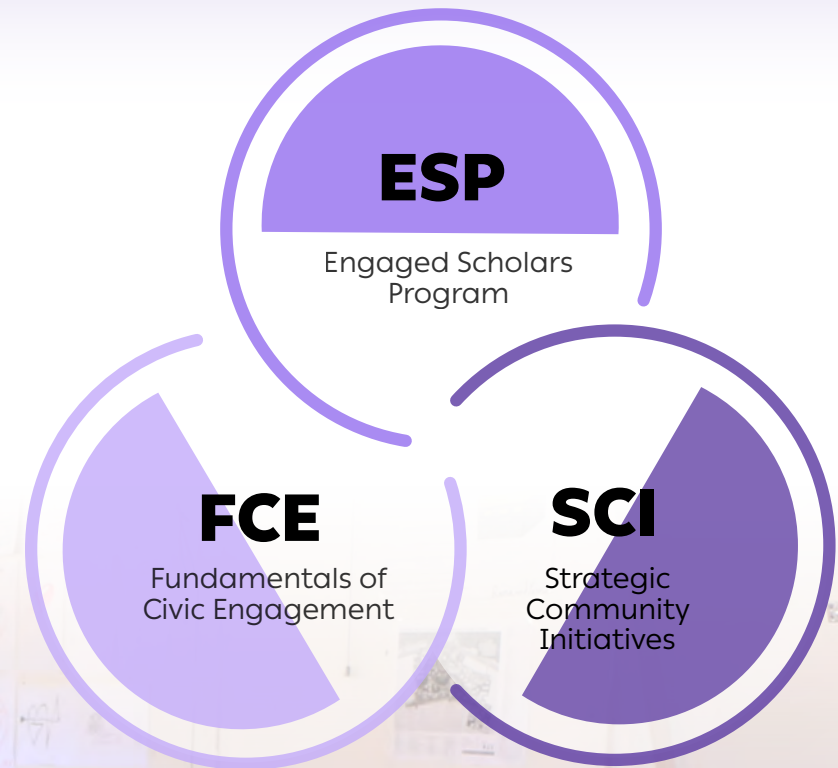
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# Foundational Pillars

The three pivotal phases that shaped CCECS's foundational pillars, namely, the July 2006 War, the Syrian Refugees Crisis, and the Beirut Port Blast, all started with mobilizing volunteering efforts for emergency response, that eventually evolved to a university-wide endorsement. This framework is represented through **three cross-cutting foundational pillars** for engaging scholars in leadership and skills development programs, piloting and demonstrating strategic community initiatives, and integrating civic engagement in general education.



*Strengthening Tertiary Educational Pipelines (STEP), Bekaa, 2023*

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# Foundational Pillars

## 1. Engaged Scholars Program (ESP)



Smart Farm, Godiolla Akimana, Community Support Project (CSP), Kirundo - Burundi

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# Foundational Pillars

## 1. Engaged Scholars Program (ESP)

Each year, CCECS guides more than 700 undergraduate and graduate scholarship recipients from Lebanon, the Middle East, Africa, and Afghanistan through a **four-track journey** beginning with workshops, volunteering rotations, extending to internships, and culminating in the development and implementation of Community Support Projects (CSPs). Community Engagement Skills Workshops are sequentially layered according to students' academic standing and in alignment with the ESP milestones. Volunteering rotations allow freshman and sophomore students access to community organizations and direct exposure to services offered to vulnerable communities.

Community-based internships provide junior and senior students with specialized opportunities to gain work-like experience over a minimum of four weeks. This preparatory experience culminates with a Community Support Project (CSP) that engages students in a participatory design process with local stakeholders to develop and pilot interventions that respond to pressing challenges facing vulnerable communities.





# Foundational Pillars

## 2. Fundamentals of Civic Engagement (FCE)



Community Engagement Skills Workshop, AUB, 2023

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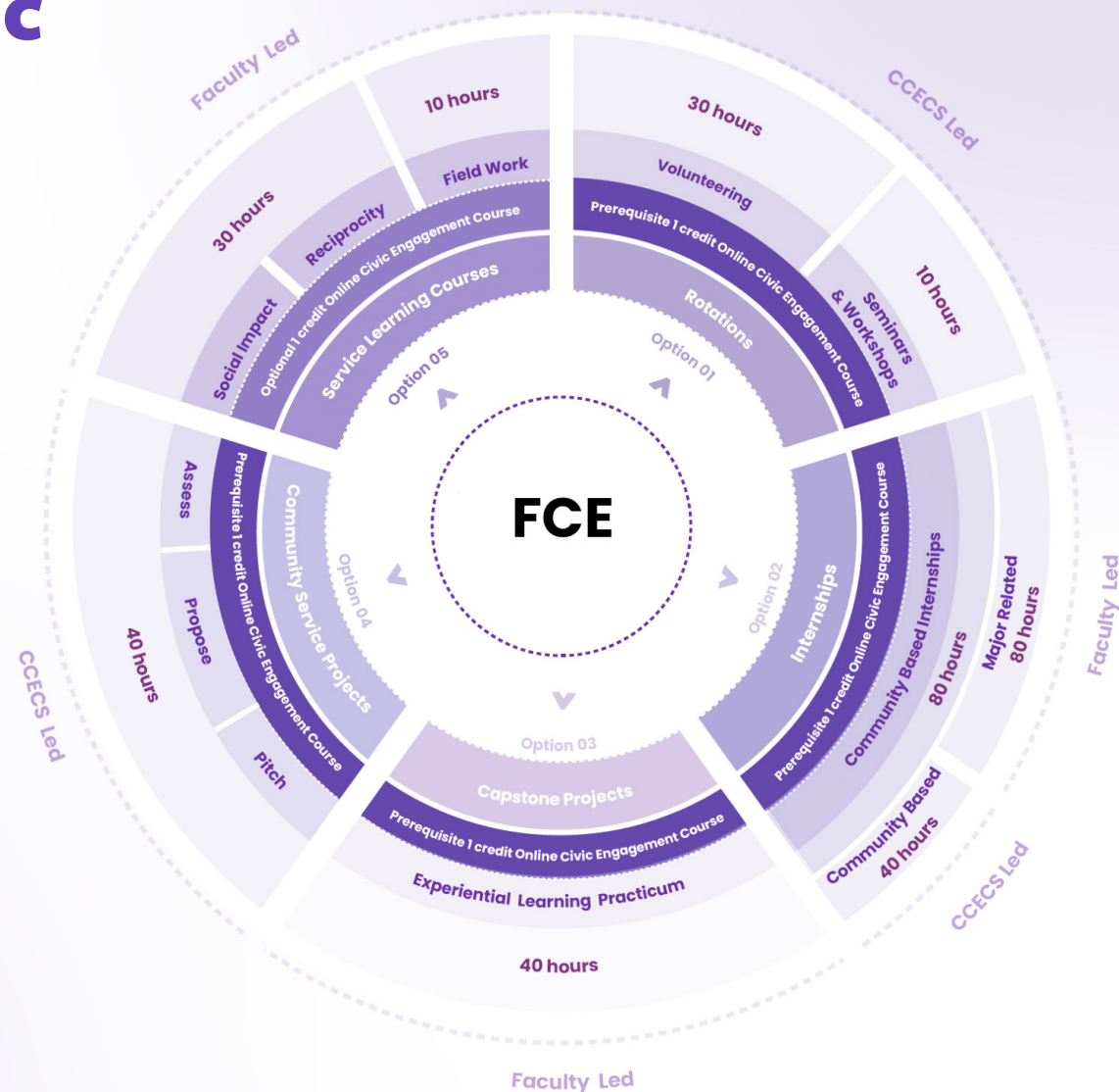


# Foundational Pillars

## 2. Fundamentals of Civic Engagement (FCE)

A three-credit general education course requirement bridging theory with practice, provides students with a **five-option pathway** to fulfill, namely through, Volunteering Rotations, Community-Based Internships, Capstone Projects, Community Support Projects (CSPs) and Service-Learning Courses. The common ground of these five options is a **one credit-online prerequisite module** that entails the fundamentals of civic engagement and field reports developed by students; an opportunity to recognize some of the prominent student-led initiatives, that can be used as references to further inspire their peers.

Each of these reports starts with a short documentary raising awareness and understanding on a specific societal challenge along with a case study illustrating the global relevance, the national manifestation of its policies and practices, and the local context where a specific site is identified for the pilot project implementation.





# Foundational Pillars

## 3. Strategic Community Initiatives (SCIs)



Ghata: Bringing Education to Informal Tented Settlements, Bekaa, 2018

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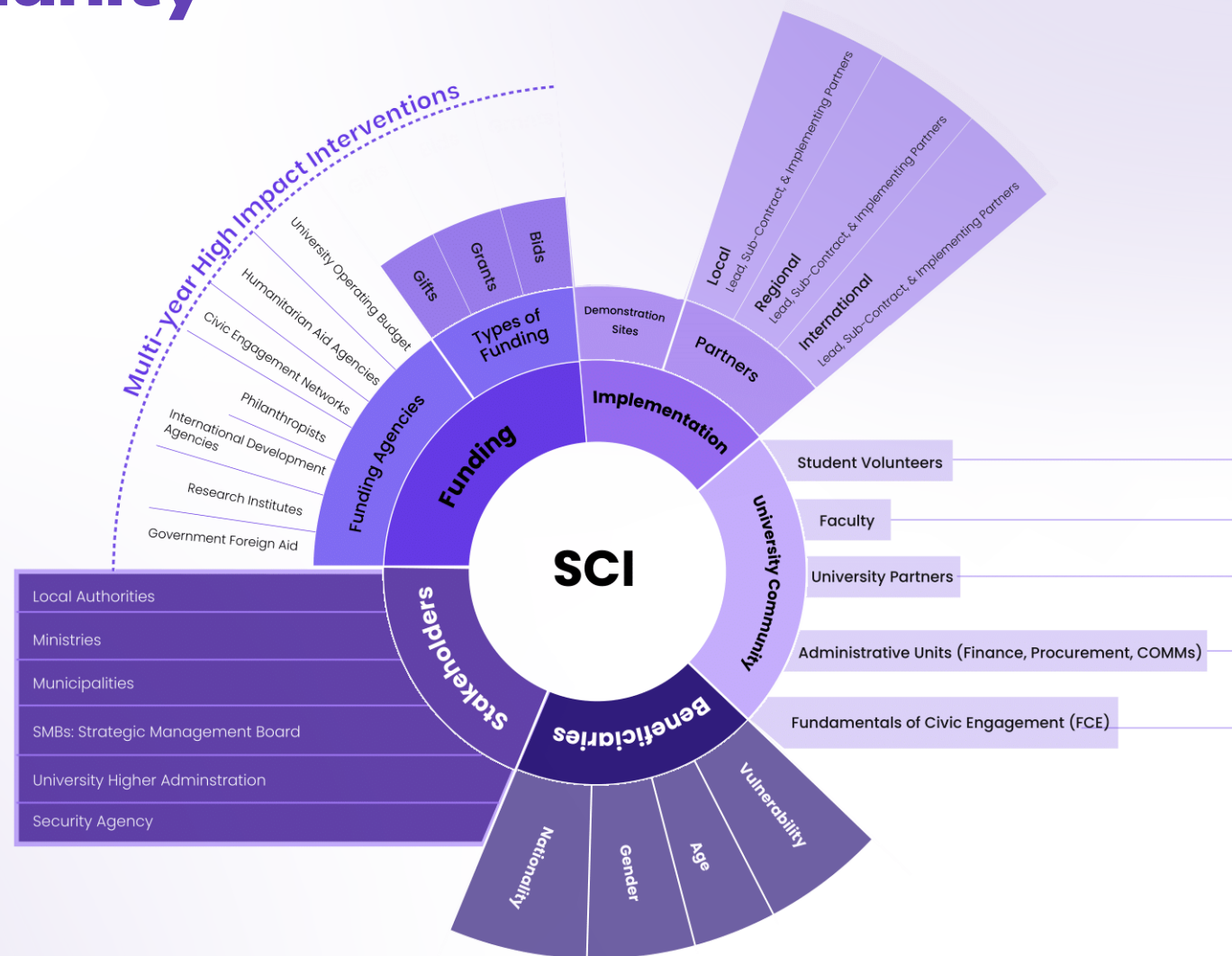


# Foundational Pillars

## 3. Strategic Community Initiatives (SCIs)

CCECS plays a leading role in empowering the most vulnerable populations through **multi-year high impact interventions**, by first identifying themes, setting the roadmap for project development, and establishing strategic partnerships with academia, stakeholders, and funding agencies. Each contextualized SCI is initially a prototype that is meticulously designed to tackle local complexities; it must be flexible, resilient, and positioned in the most appropriate setup for it to thrive.

Insights, common practices, and readily available resources within the targeted communities provide invaluable building blocks that increase local buy-in, ownership, and the sustainability of the prototype. Leveraging cutting-edge operational research, SCIs yield tangible solutions that are **expandable** to cover a wider scope of the same targeted community and are **transferable** to various locations enduring similar challenges.





# Socially Responsible Partners and Donors

Building strong partnerships is a prerequisite to the successful implementation of CCECS's foundational pillars. The simplest form is a **bilateral** agreement between CCECS and a community partner to host students during volunteering rotations and internships and develops to a **trilateral** agreement when a faculty member delivering a service-learning course is involved. Partnerships become **multilateral** especially when engaging in high impact multi-year interventions requiring close coordination with

local authorities and stakeholders, campus community, and external entities. Funding is also an essential factor whether in providing logistical support to students during volunteering and service learning, or to run institutional grants and implement strategic off-campus demonstration projects. CCECS abides by two **fundamental criteria** for establishing partnerships: 1) AUB **compliance** with all applicable laws of both the United States and Lebanon, and 2) the **international principles** of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.



*Through Our Lens, Community Support Project (CSP), Bekaa, 2022.*

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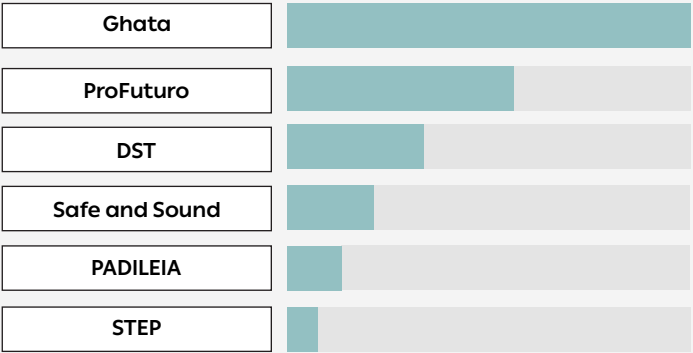
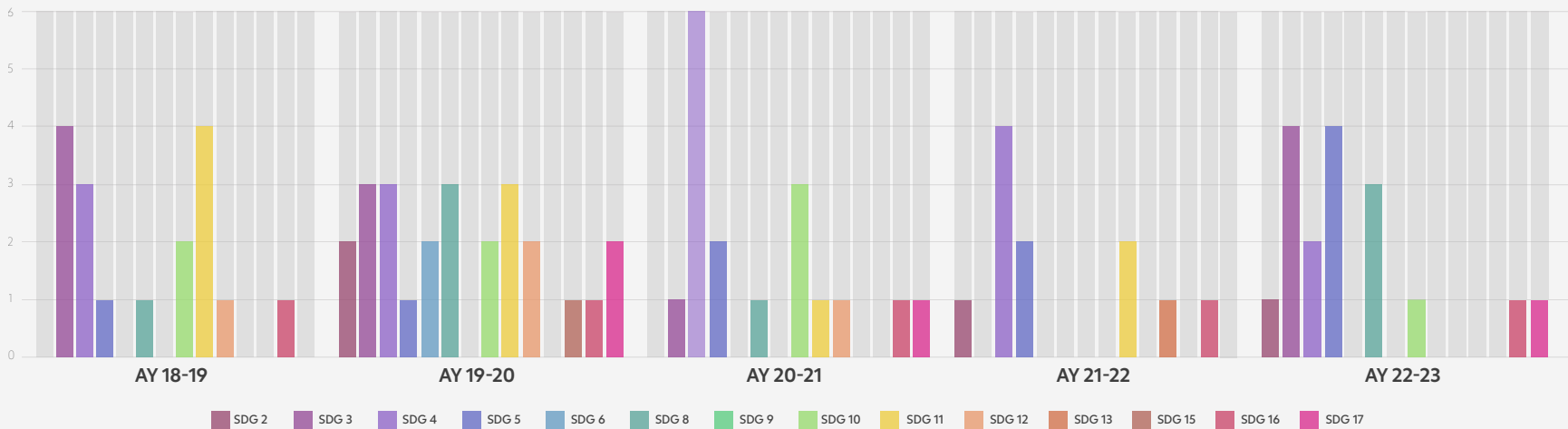




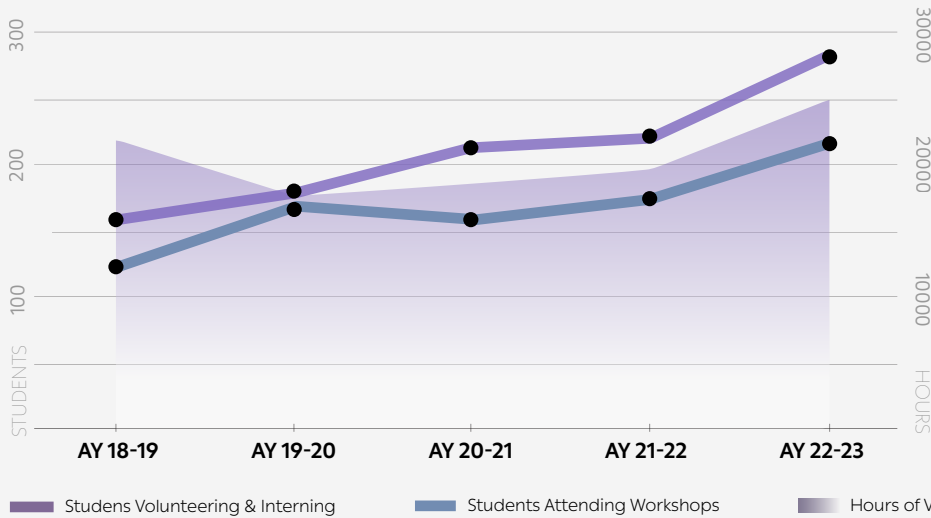
# Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

2018-2023

**87** Student-led  
Community Support  
Projects (CSPs)  
implemented by  
**322** students  
across Lebanon targeting  
**14** Sustainable  
Development Goals (SDGs)



**58601**  
Direct Beneficiaries of Strategic  
Community Initiatives (SCIs)



**6684** students  
engaged in  
volunteering rotations  
and community-based  
internships completing  
**106155** hours

**2168** students  
participating in  
community  
engagement skills  
workshops



# Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Through CCECS's foundational pillars, KPIs are set to capture the impact of the work done to measure mutuality i.e. the **learning-outcomes for students and the tangible-outcomes for community partners**:

## Engaged Scholars Program (ESP)

the number of volunteering hours, internships, workshops attended, and the field work conducted while developing and implementing Community Support Projects (CSPs) is documented using tracking sheets. Students are also asked to write reflection papers drawing on their experiences and lessons learned for the first three milestones. As for the CSPs, a short video, PowerPoint presentation, full-fledge proposal and an exit report represents the impact of every intervention on the direct and indirect beneficiaries.

## Fundamentals of Civic Engagement (FCE)

the one credit-online course is measured by the percentage of completion rates. Four pathways namely, Volunteering Rotations, Community-Based Internships, Capstone Projects, and CSPs, follow the same reporting mechanisms as the ESP. Regarding the Service-Learning pathway, course learning outcomes are set by each faculty member evaluating social impact, academically relevant field work, and reciprocity.

## Strategic Community Initiatives (SCIs)

every project has a distinct monitoring and evaluation system to measure achievements, assess challenges, and evaluate lessons learned. To capture the work done off-campus in complex settings, designing the metrics for every project's KPI entails accounting for the bureaucratic parameters of reporting to the university support units and the funding agencies, while also accommodating to the unforeseen occurrences related to community partners and the targeted beneficiaries.



AUB Engage Forum, AUB, 2023



Little Recyclers, Community Support Project (CSP), South Lebanon, 2018



Feccan Carpets, Community Support Project (CSP), Bekaa, 2018

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# Awards and Recognitions



Most Civically Engaged University Campus  
in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA)  
by Ma'an Alliance for Arab  
Universities - 2015



MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship  
by the Talloires Network - 2016



Innovate for Refugees Award  
by MIT Enterprise Forum - 2017



Learn by Design Honorary Award  
by South-by-SouthWest (SXSW) - 2018



WISE Awards finalist for high impact  
projects providing solutions to 21<sup>st</sup>  
century education challenges - 2018



Harvard Program in  
Refugee Trauma

*world peace.... global health and  
mental health.... science and culture*

Fritz Redlich Human Rights Award  
by Harvard Program in Refugee  
Trauma (HPRT) - 2018



Fritz Redlich Human Rights Award by Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma (HPRT), Orvieto - Italy, 2018

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# Moving Forward

Civic Engagement has a myriad of definitions, and large discrepancies exist between different universities regarding its application. Based on a long-standing experience, CCECS is directing its vision, mission, and objectives to reinforce AUB's position as a **Frontline** respondent in contexts of uncertainties. This principle sets the road map to CCECS's engagement in times of

emergencies, and to continuously align and guide the development of its curricular and extra-curricular programs accordingly. To emphasize this stance, CCECS is developing a two-fold strategy for the next five years **building alliances and partnerships** within global civic engagement networks and **linking outreach-KPIs** to the university's overall accreditation and ranking systems.



Digital Skills Training (DST) graduation ceremony, AUB, 2019

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