The Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility at Swarthmore College makes available Curriculum Development Grants that provide funds up to $5,000 for expenses related to the development or revision of courses that incorporate community-based learning pedagogies.

Community-based learning (CBL) refers to methods by which students work and engage with external communities for academic credit. CBL courses engage students in active, collaborative, and inquiry-based learning experiences that meet identified community needs. It is a method in which the knowledge and skills gained through experience are treated as equal to those derived from readings and lectures.

CBL brings together students, faculty, and community partners to collaborate on learning and on projects that provide intellectually-rich experiences for students and tangible benefits to the greater community. Students acquire, develop, and employ analytic tools and skills with support and time to reflect on the work as they gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the academic discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic and social responsibility.

Lang Center staff members are available to help with the development of courses and proposals, as well as with community placements, transportation, orientation, reflection, and skill building. For both new or enhanced courses, funds may be used to support costs related to course development or offering the course, e.g. books, software, travel, guest artists, materials.

Proposals, which can be brief, should include: goals for the new or revised course; activities to be undertaken during the project period and how these will contribute to development or enhancement of the course; description of ways the course activities with external communities will relate to students’ academic work; a budget; your commitment to teach the class for at least one semester; and a letter of support from your department or program chair which includes a commitment to offer the new or enhanced course in the schedule of courses. Preference will be given to courses that will be offered on an on-going basis.

Selection will be made by faculty members of the Lang Center Advisory Committee, and will then be recommended to the Provost. Criteria for selection will include: intellectual quality of the connection between course content and community-based learning activities; potential of externally-oriented components of the course to contributevaluably to the education of students and to the communities within which it will be embedded; feasibility of the proposed activities and course development; and desirability of offering opportunities for community-based learning across departments and divisions.