Community-engaged And Transformational Scholarship Initiative

CATS is an initiative to facilitate large-scale meaningful and impactful partnerships between Montana State University and surrounding communities through course-based project collaborations.

The initiative delivers a simple model to:

- Match community identified needs and community driven projects to university capacity and expertise
- Magnify engagement of students and faculty across departments and disciplines
- Work within existing institutional structures using an “opt-in” framework for engagement
- Afford students with valuable opportunities to apply their skills in real contexts while making positive impacts in their communities
- Provide access to new ideas, energy, and university capacity to local partners to solve pressing community-based needs

Example Community Needs/Goals:

Identify effective public engagement tools
Assure water quality and conservation
Address climate change resiliency
Support community health and wellness
Develop safe routes to school
Manage congestion/promote alternative transportation modes
Create community through arts, culture, and placemaking
Assess and enhance accessibility
Promote local producers/ economic development
Ensure affordable housing stock

Timeline:

- Communities propose project list: Spring
- CATS works with community partner to match proposed projects to courses: Spring/Summer
- Kick-off event: Semester start
- Fall semester course work: Fall
- Spring semester coursework: Spring
- End of year event: presentation & delivery of final deliverables: End of Spring term

How it works:

A CATS coordinator works with interested cities, towns, counties, or other community entities and university faculty to match multidisciplinary project-based courses to a set of community-identified needs over an academic year. The partnerships require submission of proposed projects and commitments for coordination, project management assistance, and resources required to ensure successful project outcomes.

Contact:

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