

January 2022

## Community Based Learning Mini-Grants Ease Educational Expenses

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### Recommended Citation

Berge, Shannon (2022) "Community Based Learning Mini-Grants Ease Educational Expenses," *Redwood Roots Digital Magazine*: Vol. 3, Article 13.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/rr/vol3/iss2/13>

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# COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING MINI-GRANTS EASE EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES

By Shannon Berge

In the spring of 2019, a series of equity-based, world café style open-forums were held with the goal of improving the community-based learning experience for students at Cal Poly Humboldt. It became evident that extra costs to participate in these experiences (gas, testing fees, background checks) were causing financial hardship for many students, and for some, fees became a barrier to participation altogether. In response, the Center for Community Based Learning (CCBL) developed a program to offer mini-grants to help students complete community-based learning experiences.

In the summer of 2019, CCBL was awarded a Loyalty grant of \$10,000 to help students with community-based learning costs for the 2019/2020 academic year. Due to the success of the Loyalty Grant program, the mini-grant program was expanded in 2020 by tapping into available GI2025 funding. As of February, 2022, 346 additional students have benefited from the award. “Thank you so much for your help with my school expenses,” responded one student to the news of their \$250 award.

The GI2025-funded Community Based Learning (CBL) Mini-Grant program provides assistance to all students participating in community-based learning, including teaching and clinical experiences, who experience financial hardship due to their off-campus placements. Awards of up to \$250 are provided to eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis each semester to provide support with onboarding and completion expenses related to field placement.

This program reduces financial barriers and increases equitable access to these high impact practices for students at Cal Poly Humboldt. According to the 2021/2022 data, 12% of students would find participation “more difficult” without the award, and 9% of students report that they would simply not be able to participate without the additional financial support.

To date, the response from students has been overwhelmingly positive. “Thank you so much for the generous grant. It means a lot to me and will help me reach my goal of becoming an elementary school teacher this time next year!” reported a CBL Mini-Grant student recipient.