



At a Glance: Advocate for and contribute to solving problems affecting the local and wider/global community. Participate in community, neighborhood, and international activities.

Understanding Global & Local Engagement

An engagement is a committed and meaningful collaboration between individuals who share similar interests and aim to address issues affecting their local or global community.¹

Why does it matter?

Whether in your local community or at the global level, you have the chance to model the world you wish to, not live, but thrive in – a sustainable world that meets the expectations of future generations. In Higher Education, curricular programs shape students into skilled, employable individuals. However, extra-curricular activities are what provide students with the stage to apply the skills and knowledge they are learning in the classroom to real world issues.² Engaging in your community, beyond your studies or job, turns you into a well-rounded citizen, instead of just a qualified employee.

Participating in the quest for solutions to social, economic, or environmental issues facing you and your community broadens your horizons and allows you to explore your interests and values. Additionally, in their definition of mental health, the World Health Organization (WHO) states that your ability to contribute to your community is a measure of your wellbeing.³

Protesting inequity, serving the hungry at a soup kitchen, raising environmental awareness; no matter what your cause is, advocating for what is meaningful to you enhances your self-esteem and happiness.⁴ By taking part in building a stronger community, you are creating a better support system and a healthier medium for yourself and your fellow citizens to work, learn, and grow together – a feat that further strengthens local and global communities.

Cultivating Global & Local Engagement

Community engagement is a two-way street. Volunteering or advocating for a cause are examples of how students can serve their community, while learning and enriching their experiences.⁵

To become more engaged in the McGill community, join a group or club, volunteer in tutoring and mentorship programs, or participate in on-campus activities including social events, fundraising campaigns, sustainability projects, and many others (see Taking Action and Resources sections for examples). Student campus and local community engagement is valued and acknowledged by the Co-Curricular Record (CCR), an official McGill document which “recognizes a student’s involvement in learning opportunities outside the classroom.” The CCR can be a useful addition to your job application.⁶ Visit the [myInvolvement page](#) to learn about available opportunities.

The study of the historical relationship between a university body and its surrounding community sheds light on potential invisible barriers between students and their local community – as students don’t need to leave the campus where most of their needs are being met (e.g., food, healthcare, entertainment).⁷ While McGill offers student engagement opportunities, our campuses are only a small portion of a much larger community. Go beyond the gates and look for more opportunities in the diverse landscape that is Montreal, Quebec, Canada, and the world.⁸

Consider ways to be proactive in your local community: volunteer at local organizations, draft a petition to the government and secure signatories, write a letter to newspaper editors, attend town hall meetings in your area, respond to surveys, or report problems or threats to local authorities (e.g., safety issues, access to resources, environmental sustainability). Help accomplish the change that you envision, don’t be a bystander! Check-out the Quick Guide section for more suggestions.

At the global level, consider volunteering or doing an internship at a local or international organization whose mission speaks to your vision of global change. You could also volunteer abroad by participating in development projects in various areas such as education, health, or agriculture to help communities in developing countries and to experience, firsthand, your impact on people's lives. Consult [this list](#) for international volunteering opportunities.

When unsure where to start, learn about your rights as a citizen and as a human, and [explore your values, interests, and the skills](#) you wish to cultivate. These steps will help you discern the issues facing you and your community, and decide on where, when, and how to get involved.

Quick Guide to being a Conscientious Citizen

- Participate in student societies and vote in various student association elections
- Engage in dialogue with leaders at your organization regarding work or study conditions
- Get in touch with your beliefs (e.g., spiritual, social, political) and identify the causes that are important to you (e.g., literacy, gender equity)
- Learn about your civic, social, and economic rights and duties as a local and global citizen (e.g., [human rights](#))
- Challenge yourself and expand your worldview by learning more about and seeking out connections with groups beyond your areas of interest; learning often occurs outside of our comfort zone (e.g., attend an event about raising awareness of indigenous issues, even if this topic is not of high interest to you)
- Take initiative to create or participate in a group project and mobilize your group's skills to fill a need in your community (e.g., McGill [SEDE](#) projects: [Community Engagement Day](#), [Alternative Spring Break](#), [ExCELR](#))
- Get involved with local or international groups and organizations that are striving towards causes you care about
- Participate in the political life through voting and establishing a dialogue with policymakers at local, national, or international organizations

Taking Action

Professional Development & Training

- [McGill Community Learning Program](#): Courses designed for those who are intellectually curious, want to learn new skills, and enjoy social interaction.
- Check [myInvolvement](#) for upcoming workshops and programs by searching for events tagged with this category: Global & Local Engagement.

Gaining Experience

- [Engage McGill](#): engaged in University and student-led groups and events across campus.
- [SEDE Community Engagement and Volunteering opportunities](#) at McGill and beyond.
- [Montreal Events and Opportunities](#).
- [McGill CaPs Volunteer](#) page: a list of volunteering opportunities at McGill, and in local and international communities.

Resources

Websites

- [McGill Social Equity and Diversity Education Office - Community Engagement](#): SEDE provides a list of events, projects, workshops aimed at helping get students involved and addressing needs in the Montreal community.

Groups & Associations

- [McGill SEDE Resources](#): a list of McGill and local community groups and associations targeting various areas and populations.
- [Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning](#): CSL is a network of educators, students and community representatives dedicated to establishing community service-learning in Canada.
- [Inter-Council Network](#): A coalition for international cooperation, committed to global social justice and social change.

Books, Articles & Reports

- Alinsky, S. D. (2010). *Rules for radicals: A practical primer for realistic radicals*. New York: Vintage eBooks. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/680744744>
- Bornstein, D. (2007). *How to change the world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/141483455>
- Martin, C. E. (2010). *Do it anyway: The next generation of activists*. Boston, Mass: Beacon Press. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/491934231>
- Stoecker, R., Tryon, E. A., & Hilgendorf, A. (2009). *The unheard voices: Community organizations and service learning*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/430944592>

References

- ¹ [What is Global Engagement? On the Theme of CBIE's Annual Conference 2015](#). Embleton, S. (2015).
- ² [Student-community engagement and the development of graduate attributes](#). O'Connor, K.M. (2011).
- ³ [Promoting Mental Health](#). World Health Organization (2004).
- ⁴ [Practicing compassion increases happiness and self-esteem](#). Mongrain, M. (2011).
- ⁵ [Community Engagement for Student Learning in Geography](#). Bednarz, S.W. (2008).
- ⁶ [McGill Co-Curricular Record](#)
- ⁷ [Town-gown relationships: Exploring university-community engagement from the perspective of community members](#). Bruning, S.D. (2006).
- ⁸ [Community Engagement, Globalisation, and Restorative Action: Approaching Systems and Research in the Universities](#). Odora Hoppers, C.A. (2013).