

## CBL Impact Mini Essay - Grayden Gruchow

I've been fortunate enough to experience a few community-based learning (CBL) opportunities at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, and I can certainly say that CBL has led to some of the most high-impact experiences that I have had during my time in college.

During my freshman year Advanced Spanish language study course with Dr. Jodie Parys, we were given the chance to choose a community-based learning experience from a variety of firms that work in the community. I ended up doing two different opportunities, both working with Cristo La Roca Iglesia Metodista as a translator between the adults and kids when there was a language barrier, and working with the kids all collaborative through UW-Whitewater Enactus. These positive experiences led me to seek out more opportunities in the community, as I now teach English language learners from Latin America twice a week, an experience I would only have been prepared to take on if I had done community-based learning previously.

The experiences have given me a platform to develop my Spanish language listening and speaking ability that I would not otherwise get in the classroom. Engaging with the community in this intentional way also gives me a better sense of who is living in the area. There is a staggeringly large population of Spanish speakers in and around Walworth county, who only sometimes get the representation that they deserve. Awareness is the first step to change, and I'm very happy to be able to advocate for this population. By engaging with Enactus through CBL, I have found an organization that I connect with. Our Enactus chapter won the 2021 national title, and I currently serve as the president. This level of involvement was such a great organization would not have been possible, had I not taken the opportunity through CBL.

CBL has fundamentally defined my collegiate experience. Engaging in community-based learning has helped me realize that the UW Whitewater campus does not stop at the intersection of Prairie and Starin street. I've been able to engage with the community in ways that have fundamentally changed how I view community involvement and set a precedent for how I want to interact with communities in the future.