

# An Independent Audit of the Community Engaged Learning (CEL) Credit Hours System

## **Section 0: Abstract**

As a student at Hampshire College I found CEL-hours to be a well intentioned, but ultimately ineffective system. I sent out a survey to roughly 10% of the student body and evaluated CEL-hours on two scales: 1) the stated goals of CEL-hours found on the Hampshire website and 2) evaluation criteria based on my experience as a student at Hampshire.

I found that CEL-hours are broadly unpopular and unhelpful. With 77.01% of respondents saying they did not like CEL-hours. Furthermore, respondents said that CEL-hours made them feel stressed (74.4%) and anxious (64%), and only 29.89% of students said that CEL-hours achieved any of its stated goals. It is clear that CEL-hours harm campus culture and do not support students.

As a solution I propose that we remove CEL-hours and create a course called Community Leadership that is optional and provides structure for students who want it. [INSERT PROFESSORS] have already agreed to teach it.

## Section 1: Methods

As a student at Hampshire College I found CEL-hours to be a well intentioned, but ultimately ineffective system. The stated goals of CEL-hours are to help students:

1. Connect your learning in and out of classroom (integrative thinking)
2. Understand your surrounding community and your position relative to the community
3. Help build beneficial, long-lasting relationships between the College and community partners

In my experience as a student CEL-hours:

1. Make passions feel like work,
2. Add ambient stress to new students who're already struggling to understand Hampshire's divisional system, and
3. Are generally disliked by the student body.

In response to this I made a survey and sent it to every student's Hampshire email. This survey had three goals:

1. Draw a **distinction between CEL-hours** (the system of logging hours in order to pass DIV I and DIV II) **and CEL-activities** (the events students and faculty create that contribute to the campus culture).
2. Assess the **efficacy of CEL-hours and CEL-activities** using *both* my measures and the stated goals of the CEL-hours system.
3. Learn **what the student body thinks and feels** about CEL-hours.

The questions were as follows:

1. What DIV Are You?
2. Do you like the CEL Hours system?
3. If there were not CEL activities I would...
4. If there were no such thing as CEL HOURS I would...
5. Check all that apply, student facilitated events (whether eligible for CEL Credit or ineligible for CEL Credit) have helped me...
6. Check all that apply, FACULTY facilitated events (whether eligible for CEL Credit or ineligible for CEL Credit) have helped me...

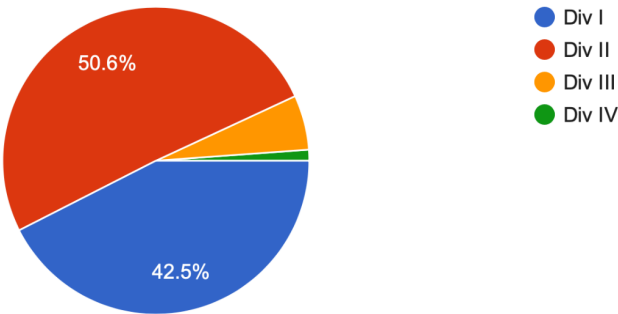
7. Check all that apply, JOINT STUDENT & FACULTY facilitated events (whether eligible for CEL Credit or uneligible for CEL Credit) have helped me...
8. Check all that apply, CEL Hours have helped me...(Remember I'm asking about the system of logging 40 hours of CEL, not the CEL events you attended)
9. How many of the most meaningful events in your Hampshire experience did you log as CEL?
10. Do CEL Hours make passions or student groups feel like work?
11. Have you ever attended an event because you needed it for CEL?
12. On a scale from 1-7 please rate the CEL Hours system
13. CEL Hours have made me feel... (select all that apply)
14. Is there anything you'd like to say about CEL Hours?

You can view the questions in more detail (including the responses I allowed for every question) at this link:  
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpOLSeBPNoMuGfpn9dvRePRWEcpHbfYmhObV2QjKmxX9B91Jnr8rA/viewform?usp=sharing>

Section 2: Results

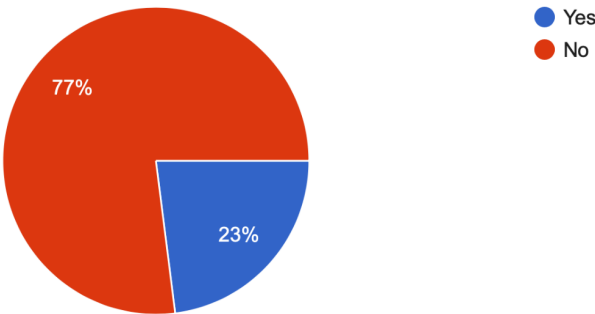
What DIV Are You?

87 responses

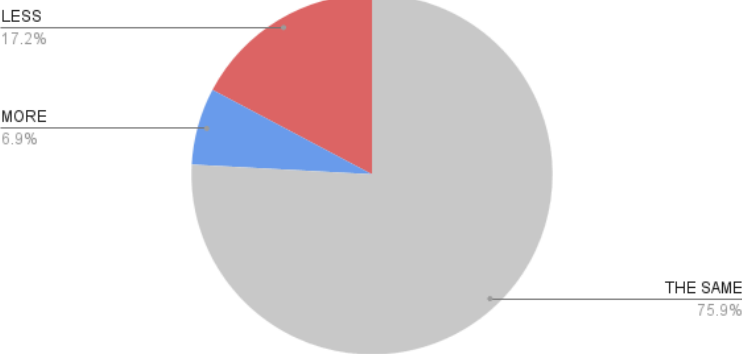


Do you like the CEL Hours system?

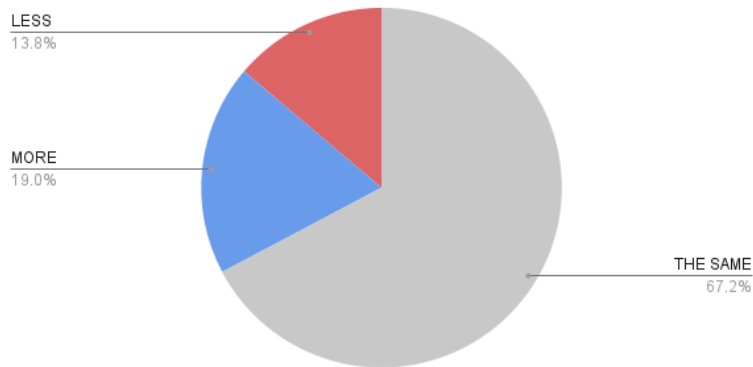
87 responses



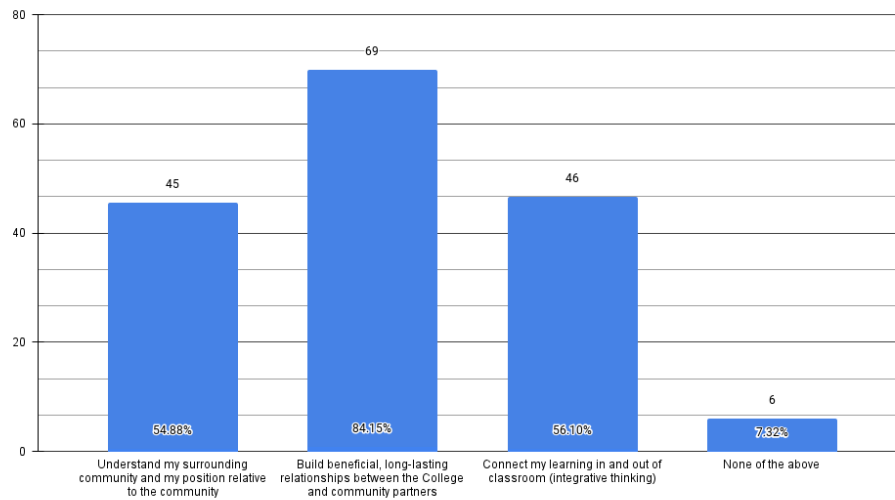
If there were not CEL activities I would participate in activities and student groups...



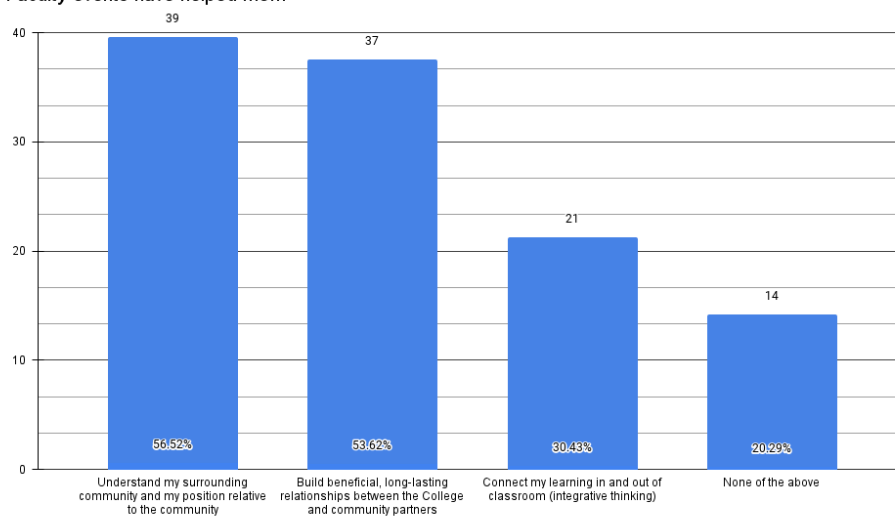
If there were not CEL hours I would participate in activities and student groups...



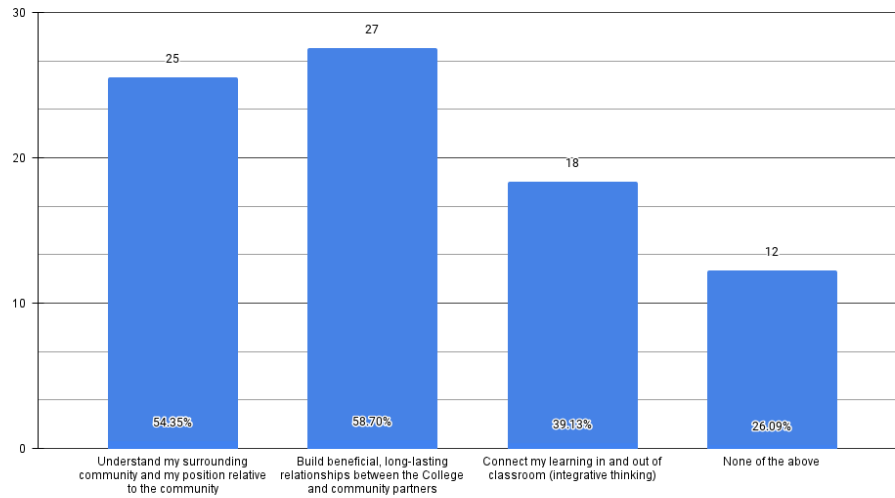
Student events have helped me...



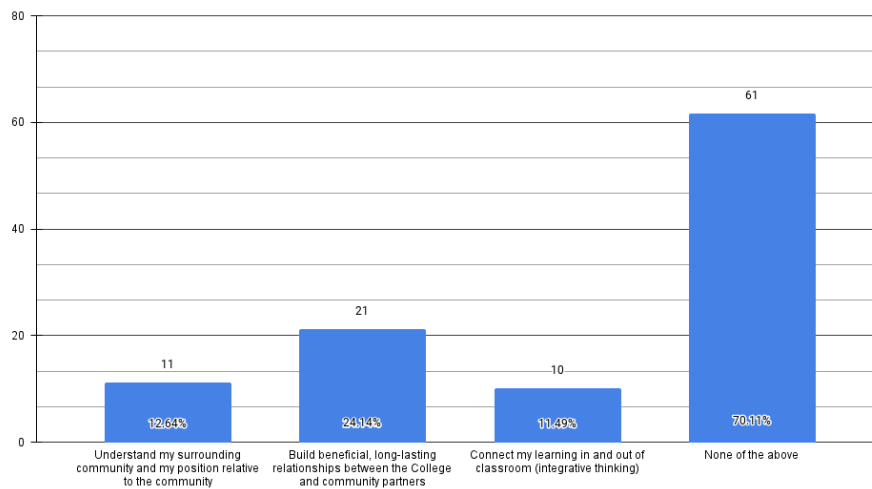
Faculty events have helped me...



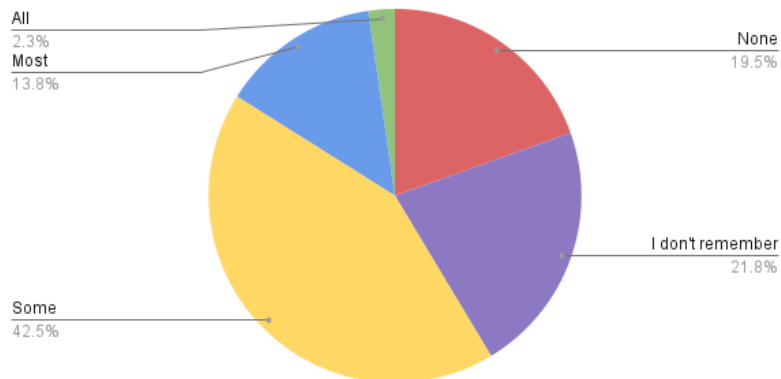
### Joint student and faculty events have helped me...



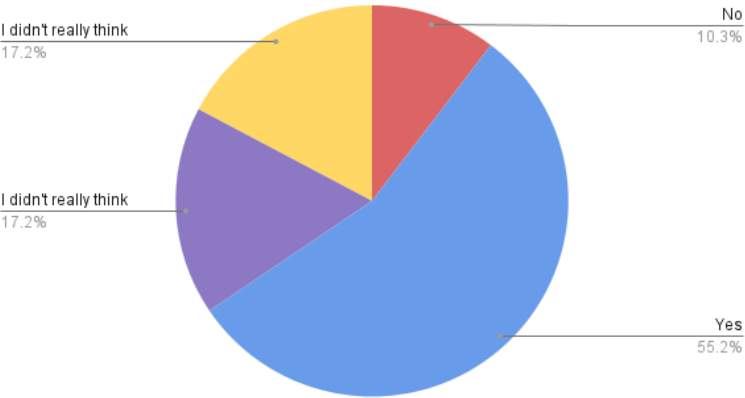
### CEL-hours have helped me...



### How many of the most meaningful events in your Hampshire experience did you log as CEL?

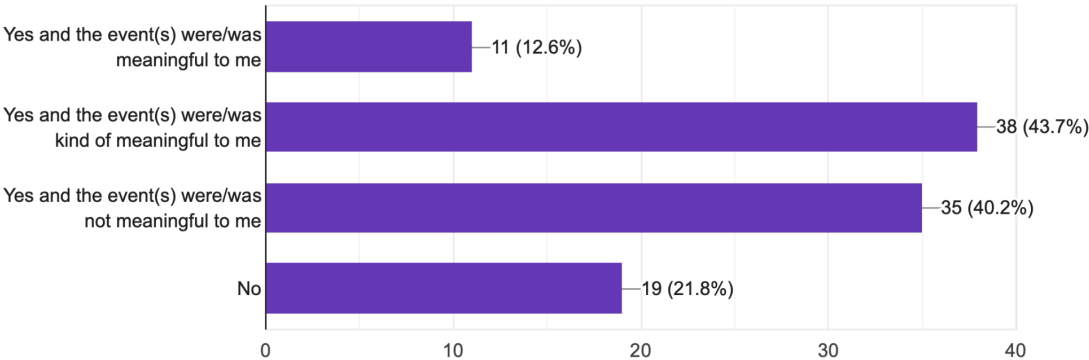


Do CEL Hours make passions feel like work?

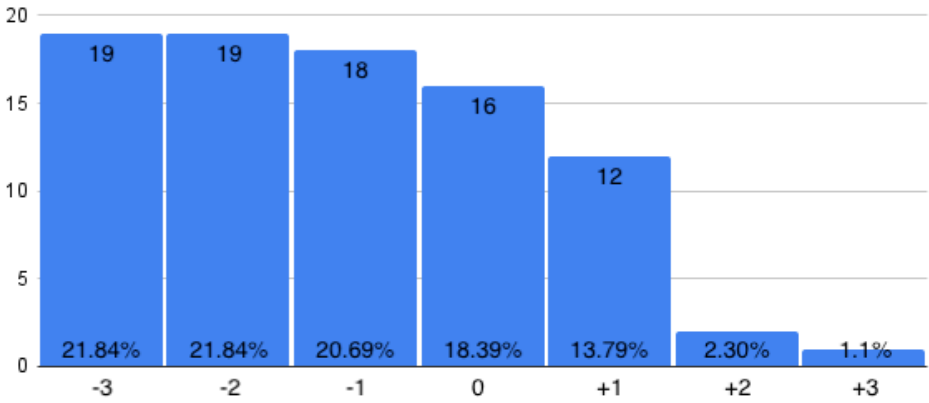


Have you ever attended an event because you needed it for CEL?

87 responses

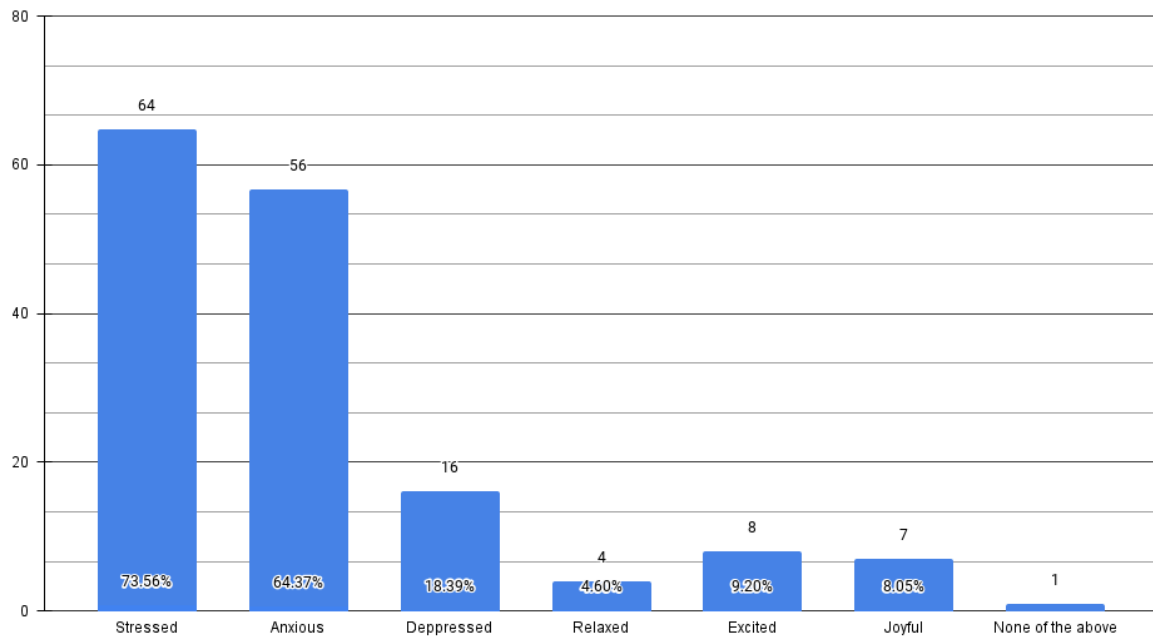


Histogram of On a scale from bad (-3) to good (+3) please rate the CEL Hours system



On a scale from bad (-3) to good (+3) please rate the CEL Hours system

### CEL Hours made me feel...



*Note: Some questions were added after the survey was sent out so they have less responses.*

Appendix A. Contains all the responses to the question *Is there anything you'd like to say about CEL-hours?*

Appendix B. Contains all the individual responses to questions that allowed respondents to add their own answers in an 'other' section.

Appendix C. Contains links to a copy of the survey as well as a results spreadsheet.



### Section 3: Discussion:

In total there were 87 responses to this survey. That means that 12.45% (about 1 in 8) current Hampshire students are counted as respondents. Of those respondents, 67 of them (77.01%) said they do not like the CEL-hours system. That means 9.59% of Hampshire students don't like CEL-hours. Even if these results aren't proportional to the general student body (which, given the sample size I believe they are), 1 in 10 students disliking CEL-hours is enough to justify rethinking if we should even have them.

It gets worse. The average rating of CEL-hours from -3 (bad) to +3 (good) was -1.07. Only 1 respondent said that CEL-hours were (3) good, and only 2 respondents said that CEL-hours were (2) pretty good. 5 respondents who said that they liked CEL-hours rated the system as a 0 (neutral). There is significant student dislike of CEL-hours and a minority of students who shrug their shoulders and say "it's fine."

CEL-hours have 3 stated goals on the website. 12.64% of respondents said that CEL-hours helped them achieve the first goal: *Connect your learning in and out of classroom (integrative thinking)*. 24.14% of respondents said that CEL-hours helped them achieve the second goal: *Understand your surrounding community and your position relative to the community*. 11.49% of respondents said that CEL-hours helped them achieve the third goal: *Help build beneficial, long-lasting relationships between the College and community partners*. Only 29.89% of respondents said that CEL-hours did any one of these three things. **For 70.11% of students, CEL-hours are not working.**

The good news is that it seems like students are already doing what CEL-hours are intended to do without any need for administrative support! **92.68% of respondents said that student supported events helped them meet one of the three stated objectives of CEL-hours.** These events would continue without CEL, therefore there is little to no danger

associated with getting rid of CEL-hours. So, what happens if we get rid of CEL-hours?

To answer this I asked a few questions that were based on my experience as a student (wholly expecting to only receive one or two responses that had the same opinions as me). The questions of note here are as follows:

1. Do CEL make passions feel like work?
2. How do CEL-hours make you feel?
3. Would you participate in more, less, or the same amount of community activities or student groups if CEL-hours were removed?

To my absolute shock it turns out that **a majority of respondents (55.2%) thought that CEL-hours made passions feel like work** without me prompting them. This is INSANE! I thought this was just me overthinking everything!!! One person even said "[CEL-hours] make it feel like it's work" before they even got to my question that asked about that! This is wonderful! And terrible when you consider the effect that CEL-hours have on students. I LOVE PEOPLE!!!

I also asked "How do CEL-hours make you feel?" and **everybody (hyperbole) said it made them feel stressed (74.4%) and anxious (64%)**. That's so much unnecessary suffering! I know dukkha arises but we surely don't need to entice it so much.

Furthermore, when I asked if people would participate in more, less, or the same amount of community activities or student groups if there weren't CEL-hours **19.0%** said they would participate in **more** and only **13.8%** said they would participate in **less** with the remaining **67.2%** saying they would participate in about **the same** amount of CEL-hours.

Here are a few students who choose to share their thoughts on the CEL-hours system:

*As mentioned before; [CEL-hours] don't do any of [their stated goals]. Also, as a working student, I don't have time to attend many of these events.*

*Especially the ones on the weekends that they try to create so more people can come. I work on the weekends and then I have HW to do. CEL is just an added stress to the college experience.*

*[CEL-hours helped me] find out which activities qualified [for CEL].*

*[CEL-hours help me] WITH NOTHING I DO A LOT AND NEVER THINK OF CEL UNTIL I MEET WITH MY ADVISOR, AFTER WHICH I PROMPTLY FORGET ABOUT IT. I DO THE THINGS I DO BECAUSE I WANT TO AND CARE ABOUT THOSE THINGS. that's why i came to hampshire.*

## Section 4: Conclusion

It's clear that CEL-hours must be eliminated or seriously reworked considering their negative impacts on the student body. I would advocate for removing them altogether considering that they universally stress students out and that 19% of students say they would participate in more community activities and student groups if CEL-hours are removed, but there's still an unaccounted for minority. The 13.8% of students who said that they would participate in less community activities and student groups without CEL-Credits.

These students were prone to saying things like "[CEL-hours] make sure I log what I do [and] keep track of what I think benefits me..." or "[CEL-hours provide] Accountability to myself and learning documentation." These students would undoubtedly benefit from CEL-hours continuing in an optional form, but how could we implement this?

## Section 5: Next Steps

Hampshire College is built around self-directed learning. This means that we trust students to choose what works for them. CEL-hours can easily become a part of that. How? Community Leadership offered as a course!

[Insert Professors] have agreed to teach *Community Leadership* as a course for the spring and fall semesters. This course would always be the same: To enroll you email the professor teaching it a brief (1 paragraph-1 page) statement about your goals for the semester. Then, you track what activities you participate in or lead using the form linked in Appendix D. Finally, you submit your 20+ hours and a 1-3 page reflection to the professor near the end of the semester.

This should be enough for professors to write an evaluation for students while also allowing students enough freedom to focus on community leadership, rather than documentation of community leadership. Replacing CEL-hours with a Community Leadership course will greatly improve campus life while keeping the beneficial parts of CEL accessible to all students who want to use it.

## Appendices:

### **Appendix A.**

I understand why they exist but I feel like the system of logging them isn't great especially because in my experience the part of thehub where you submit hours is always broken and weird

the problem more than anything is the difficulty logging them, as well as the need to do them, even if you have plenty of hours if you are someone who works ahead I really don't like it but I do think its good to get students out of their rooms. However, it is stressful for students and I feel like it makes them attend events just to get the hours and they don't get anything out of it, which is the opposite of the goal. On the other hand, students are bad at showing up to events so its a good way to get people to come, but I feel like there should be a better way to do this but IDK what

The system for logging hours is really unclear and it seems like I could just make stuff up anyways? It just all feels a bit unnecessary and more performative.

Some of the events are fun, but I do them mostly out of obligation rather than pure interest

It was incredibly frustrating at the end of the year during Div I to have to manage not just 4 different classes and their finals, but also make time for events that I didn't have any interest in.

May be better than alternative options because you can enter almost anything as CEL

Div 1 CEL hours can make getting off campus to do cool stuff more difficult because you feel you have to focus on campus things, even if they are less interesting

I think the idea is meaningful, but the execution is poor.

The CEL system didn't change what I was doing a lot, I went to a couple clubs that I likely would've ended up at anyway and then I found enough events to say I attended.

The way of doing CEL-1 hours in Div I isn't great, but I liked having more opportunities to choose my activities during CEL-2. My activity for CEL-2 during Div II was really nice and fun and helped me understand more about what I want to pursue academically, but the school should provide more support in helping students find activities that work for them.

I WISH THE HUB WASNT BROKEN AND IT WAS MORE EASY TO SUBMIT HOURS AND THE ESSAY- also, the general CEL 1 was nice and easy, although a little annoying to keep track of, but the race and power bit was more stressful. I didn't much out of it and it just felt like work. i dont think i learned much new, but I also wasn't very emotionally invested in learning. But yeah, that made me not enjoy the race and power bit because it was quantified. And then also I think that there are more ways to engage with community beyond clubs and events, like parties or just hangin out, and that's not accounted for in CEL, but I guess clubs are important to participate in too. It's good that Hamp found a way to make kids engage with their community, because that is really hard to do in my experience. My experience is a little different, though, because I dont have trouble engaging in my community. I think my biggest take away I want you to know is about how it's different w the race and power bit.

Generally I think it makes community engagement feel like a checklist as opposed to feeling meaningful. It's also like super unclear what actually we should be counting as CEL, generally I would just say it feels really baseless and meaningless. I tried to talk to javiera about this and was shut down majorly.

Since I'm a commuter, I cannot stay on campus. So I cannot attend groups and other events.

nah, I'm you! I'm you Violet!!!

If they have to exist then can they please make more sense. Can they please be standardized SOMEHOW. I feel like the system has changed every single semester I've been at this school (I'm class of F21). Like can somebody just explain it to me in a clear way. Every professor and advisor I've asked has told me something different. Listen, I hate logging hours and I hate having to keep track of how many hours I spend doing something I would have done anyway, but it would be easier to do if I understood it even a little bit. I think that they serve a valuable purpose honestly, like I appreciate that they exist, but I really wish they existed in some alternate form. I don't want them gone entirely, because I think community engagement is really important, and students should be required to get out of their rooms for reasons other than just going to class. Look, I don't know, man. I believe in them in theory and believe they exist for a good reason, but that doesn't change the fact that they stress me out. I'd rather just be required to write reflections on my community engagement for my div portfolios, and to like...go on the honor system there. That would be much more positive for me, like I feel like I'd be more able to live in the moment with each activity if I was planning on just writing the narrative reflection rather than logging hours. Like, if I wasn't worried about logging the hours or whether or not it would "count" or if a supervisor would confirm my presence or whatever else we have to do. That stuff just freaks me out.

(Continued from Question 2) I might even participate in more community events overall; Without the pressure of taking notes and writing a reflection, or the struggle of meeting required hours. However! I like the topics and discussions at student facilitated (and some faculty) CEL Events, and I think the community benefits from talking about such critical things. If CEL Activities and Events were smaller, more casual public meetings/activities, I



would absolutely attend and participate more. Having to find enough time in my day to CEL Events for a few hours is really stressful and makes me want to go to them less.

There should be more smaller options for the Race and Power hours outside of the Community Days of Learning

It feels like high school community hours, Hampshire is not a normal school, why do we have this system

Just confused about the separate 10 hours of race and power and that it seems like it can only be filled by 4 events?

thanks for doing this survey, friend!!

YES. Okay I think the idea of CEL is incredibly helpful especially for first years because it forces people to engage with the community or join clubs when they might not have without it. I know there are lots of problems with the club systems and the amount of support we receive but Hampshire has a very unique amount of student involvement in clubs and community and it would be wrong to completely deny that CEL doesn't play a part in this. Personally I've never had to actually log my hours since my advisors just believe me and know I've completed well over the required 40 hours. The system of actually logging things is from my understanding very complex, i sort of wish there was something similar to the idea of a DIV II project but for CEL, where instead of simply meeting an hour count you have to participate in some sort of community event or club. So if you're active in a club instead of getting a certain amount of hours you have someone vouch that you're an active member Or show something as proof that you're involved. But that would probably allow people to lie about involvement more easily idk. But i do feel really strongly that having community engagement being a requirement is really important

for the question "do you like the CEL hours system" I don't like or dislike it, I just feel neutral about it. In my first year here I struggled more to get enough CEL hours,

but getting involved in theater this year just because I enjoy it has resulted in me getting way more CEL hours than I need. I think it can be beneficial to keep track of the activities we do but I don't think it's helpful to make a certain number of hours required.

It doesn't do what the school thinks it does. It hasn't helped me create relationships. And It doesn't help me with my major. It simply stresses me out.

Based on the questions asked I feel like I'm the only one who found getting 40 hours very easy.

They suck lol, everyone I know treats them like a box to check off, and most people bullshit it

I hate them and they confuse me.

The number seems arbitrary

i like the mandatory race and power ones, i just feel its to easy to lie about going/not have people fully engage. Plus they tend to be held at really bad times.

I don't know how but I'd like the system to be logged differently. I want to be doing more activities and group things but I am stressed with other aspects of school and having CEL as another requirement is stressful as a first year.

"I both like and dislike CEL. I understand why it's necessary, but it also isn't terribly well designed. Oftentimes times I have felt alienated in group discussions because so many people said they were just there for the CEL credit. it's not exactly encouraging me to be emotionally open with others when so many people aren't invested. CEL prevents the people who actually care from having meaningful discussions and I honestly wonder if people who are doing it for the hours actually become invested at any point thanks to the requirement.

I've genuinely felt more connected with people that I ride on the bus with to and from UMASS club meetings, which is an activity I could probably never log for CEL credit. the activities I feel I've learned/gotten the most from are all ones I had to go to other schools to participate in and could never log for CEL credit.

Sometimes I am surprised by how uninformative activities are. for instance, the working with indigo workshop mostly consisted of the activity and didn't talk extensively about history or the science of it, which I was surprised by.

Oftentimes, I have left events feeling just as socially starved as when I started. I haven't really connected with anyone at these events. I think some people prefer more 1 on 1 community building/knowledge sharing and CEL activities don't really cater to/neglect that audience.

hope this response was helpful :)"

I get the idea of them trying to connect to the campus and community but it feels very forced and turns it into a chore rather than something I'm excited and interested to do.

I genuinely can't imagine not doing CEL activities but the CEL logging system is so broken

I think they're obnoxious, inherently hierarchical, and purely to the benefit of virtue signaling. Bad for people who struggle with demand avoidance as well.

Not a bad idea on paper but in execution I cant really see them being anymore beneficial to student life than if they were just available events to attend. They make passions seem like work

theyre a waste of my time and are always at inopportune hours, when i am unable to attend or the activities are not properly advertised and i end up missing them anyways

I think there needs to be a way to encourage participating in events on campus, and that the system has good intentions, but the physical process of how those hours are submitted on the hub and verified makes it feel simultaneously overwhelming but also meaningless, like it depends on your advisor and not what the college's values are. Regardless, the actual interface used to log the hours is terrible and makes it feel stressful and institutional in a bad way

pretty much anything should be aloud to be logged as cel hours, even parties because thats when some of the most meaningful connections are made.

I feel like there needs to be a better incentive to go to the CEL activities. I enjoyed that Jennifer Bajorek allowed us to make up absences by attending these events.

The task of listing and defending my CEL hours strikes fear into my heart, it makes me feel bad!

fuck cel all my homies hate cel

Maybe if there was a more formal check-in and/or reward system, like CASA throws some kind of event for people that have at least x amount of hours logged in or an event for people that haven't logged any/enough and they can do it all together with CASA staff support. Those regularly sent emails just make me push CEL further back into my mind out of annoyance. It makes it sound like I haven't done anything, but I've done a lot because I happen to care about things and don't need this sort of system to keep me caring. The system just sucks and doesn't help me in any way. The official way to "log" them just feels kind of... I don't know. It feels dumb and fake. I don't feel that I am accomplishing anything. I was already gonna do those things, so it's the same as asking me to go out of my way to a website from 1927 to log each what I eat not for any medical or intrinsically beneficial reason - just because it's a rule somewhere that I gotta do this or else some people in an office will make a decision I won't like. Not

to mention I have to log them in individually and fill out all the fields every time. It's painstaking and there's no real payoff. Just that the box someone made up gets checked.

It unnecessarily gamifies extracurricular life on campus. CEL hours are unfair for the Hampshire students who just don't have the priveledge to use their time in that way. It would be beneficial for someone who for example works on top of school and needs to work as much as possible to afford school and therefore misses all CEL events. Why should they be punished for this.

I wish there were more options for CEL activities, a lot of events I've attended don't qualify

i think it's a good way to force students to attend events the college puts on, but i do think there needs to be a different approach to how CEL is pushed onto students. "Would rather do CEL hours than another class. CEL2 is kinda non existent but no one seems to care."

They are just difficult to attend to since they are scheduled so sporadic. if there were two options once a week at a constant time or on a consistent day, I would integrate that into my schedule but it's hard to stay aware of those events going on while balancing a certain routine. Should be easier to log

There should be more activities for cel hours and not just cel one.

## **Appendix B.**

*Other Responses to "Check all that apply, student facilitated events (whether eligible for CEL Credit or ineligible for CEL Credit) have helped me..."*

WE NEED MORE STUDENT RUN EVENTS. THE EVENT REGISTRATION PROCESS HAS EFFECTIVELY PREVENTED THE

MAJORITY OF STUDENTS FROM INDEPENDENTLY HOSTING EVENTS  
AND HAS CREATED A LACK OF COMMUNITY AT LEAST WITHIN  
THE DIV 1 CLASS

They don't really do any of these things; any and  
every relationship I have created was on my own and  
outside of a CEL activity

make me aware of things and groups happening around  
campus

did not help

barely have attended tho

have fun and get out of my room

Other Responses to Check all that apply, FACULTY  
facilitated events (whether eligible for CEL Credit or  
ineligible for CEL Credit) have helped me...

get CEL hours

Eat. Like, faculty facilitated events usually have  
food, which is really nice.

They make it feel like it's work

I haven't attended many but basically they are  
educational but not that necessary

honestly... eat good food

did not help

barely have attended tho

have fun and get out of my room

Other Responses to Check all that apply, JOINT STUDENT & FACULTY facilitated events (whether eligible for CEL Credit or ineligible for CEL Credit) have helped me...

None of the above

Fully dont remember anything but i definitely went to one

did not help

barely have attended tho

have fun and get out of my room

Other Responses to Check all that apply, CEL Hours have helped me... (Remember I'm asking about the system of logging 40 hours of CEL, not the CEL events you attended)

Build some community relationships but mostly done out of obligation to get the hours needed

pass Div I

Accountability to myself and learning documentation.

Find out which activities qualified

The system of logging them was really bad during my Div 1 (F20-S21) and added a lot of extra stress

They literally just make me stressed out and the justification I have heard for them just doesn't make sense

Feel bad :(

Did not help, added stress

Dunno, haven't logged them in the system yet

As mentioned before; they don't do any of these things. Also, as a working student, I don't have time to attend many of these events. Especially the ones on the weekends that they try to create so more people can come. I work on the weekends and then I have HW to do. CEL is just an added stress to the college experience.

n/a

Worthless

Meh

logging them doesnt do much for me

Not helpful with anything at all. Coercive system that kills sincere curiosity, makes event attendance a chore because it's mandated. Feels like a checklist.

They have not its just another assignment

did not help

Make sure I log what I do, keep track of what I think benefits me and learn how to properly stretch the truth

no

WITH NOTHING. I DO A LOT AND NEVER THINK OF CEL UNTIL I MEET WITH MY ADVISOR, AFTER WHICH I PROMPTLY FORGET ABOUT IT. I DO THE THINGS I DO BECAUSE I WANT TO AND CARE ABOUT THOSE THINGS. that's why i came to hampshire.

barely have attended tho

remember what I did over the year

do nothing, they were just annoying



Other Responses to CEL Hours have made me feel... (select all that apply)

Confused

irritated

An inconvenience because I have to figure out what things I do can classify as CEL

I mostly didn't care that much but was a bit stressed since I didn't know if I had enough.

CONFUSED. Deeply and thoroughly confused. I cannot even express to you how confused they make me.

A bit worried, but not super anxious

Inconvenienced.

Micromanaged

>:( ANNOYED. RESENTFUL. THE FEELING OF "what the heck, man :( why did you give me this requirement"

## **Appendix C.**

Questions:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeBPNoMuGfpn9dvRePRWEcpHbfYmhObV2OjKmxX9B91Jnr8rA/viewform?usp=sharing>

Spreadsheet:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12On7R4RuEqdXh4MJ2ZNKDeyplecykiSu8NI1Fbwjts0/edit?usp=sharing>

## **Appendix D:**

The first draft of the Community Leadership Hours Form is on the following page.

**Community Leadership Hours:**

[illegible]

### Example Form

[illegible]