

**GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS AS COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING CLASS:
CHALLENGES AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

**PhD. Emad Dawwas,
An-Najah National University (NNU),
P.O. Box: 7, Nablus, Palestine,
dawwas@najah.edu**

Abstract

Community based learning (CBL) is a pedagogical approach in which students serve their community while fulfilling their academic requirements. This approach was adopted in a Geographic Information Systems class that was redesigned and taught as a CBL class in the collaboration with three local community partners: the Municipality and the Fire Department of Nablus City, and the Urban Planning and Disaster Risk Reduction Center at An-Najah National University. In this class, 35 students employed the skills and the knowledge they gained in:(a) collecting data about buildings earthquake vulnerability in Nablus city; (b) establishing and managing Geodatabases using the collected data; and (c) developing and testing several earthquake scenarios. These outputs were introduced to the community partners at the end of the class.

This paper discusses the learning opportunities, the role of each stakeholder, and it addresses the challenges that were encountered during the planning and the implementation of the class.

Key Words: Community based learning (CBL), teaching GIS, community service