Using Community-Based Participatory Research to Assess the Needs of HIV-Related Services for Infected Individuals in Rural Communities Page 10

Promoting Engaged Scholarship Among Undergraduate University Students Page 33

An Ecological Approach to Understanding Program Management Practices for Food Pantries in Rural Communities Page 68

FROM THE FIELD
Leading the Charge: Outcomes from a Student-Driven Engagement with a Veteran Community Page 78

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES
A More Humble Way to Change: Putting Constituents at the Center Page 91

STUDENT VOICES
Frustration, Excitement, Commitment: Preservice Teachers Reflect on their Fieldwork Experiences Page 95
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Contents

Message from the Editor
Marybeth Lima Page 5

Message from the Associate Editor
Andrew Pearl Page 7

Introduction to HBCU Special Issue
Kimberly L. King-Jupiter Page 8

Using Community-Based Participatory Research to Assess the Needs of HIV-Related Services for Infected Individuals in Rural Communities Page 10
Elizabeth Brown, Charles Brown, Owen Johnson, Wendelyn Inman, Revlon Briggs, Wanda Burrell, Rosemary Theriot, Elizabeth Williams, and Alexis Heaston

Partnering Academics and Community Engagement: A Quality Enhancement Plan for a Diverse and Non-Traditional University Page 17
Antoinette R. Miller, Keith E. Miller, Scott Bailey, Margaret Fletcher, Antoinette France-Harris, Sipai Klein, and Rosario P. Vickery

Promoting Engaged Scholarship Among Undergraduate University Students Page 33
Jenni Owen, Leslie M. Babinski, and David Rabiner

Catalyzing Change Through Engaged Department Cohorts: Overcoming the One-and-Done Model Page 41
Danielle Lake, Karyn E. Rabourn, and Gloria Mileva

Realmente Tenemos la Capacidad: Engaging Youth to Explore Health in the Dominican Republic Through Photovoice Page 54
Catalina Tang Yan, Arelis Moore de Peralta, Edmond P. Bowers, and Linda Sprague Martinez

An Ecological Approach to Understanding Program Management Practices for Food Pantries in Rural Communities Page 68
Kenya M. Cistrunk, Brittney Oliver, Laura Jean Kerr, Maria Trinh, Caroline Kobia, Leslie Hossfeld, Kecia R. Johnson, and Claudette Jones

FROM THE FIELD
Leading the Charge: Outcomes from a Student-Driven Engagement with a Veteran Community Page 78
Stephanie Sickler

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES
A More Humble Way to Change: Putting Constituents at the Center Page 91
Emely Anico, Sydney Menzin, and Scott Warren

STUDENT VOICES
Frustration, Excitement, Commitment: Preservice Teachers Reflect on their Fieldwork Experiences Page 95
Emily Arenz and Alexa Thornton

BOOK REVIEWS
Instructions to Book Reviewers Page 98

Land-grant Universities for the Future Page 99
Alexander H. Jones

2018 ENGAGEMENT SCHOLARSHIP CONSORTIUM CONFERENCE COVERAGE page 103

MISSION AND DESCRIPTION Page 113

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS Page 114

JCES MANUSCRIPT REVIEW PROCESS Page 115
I know that this column is for inclusion in the fall 2019 issue of JCES, and that you will be reading it in October. However, to publish this issue on time, my column is due smack dab in the middle of summer. I am writing on the couch, about five feet from the door, where it is sunny outside and the heat index is 101°F. I am on vacation, in fact I am on almost back-to-back vacations. Right now I am calm and relaxed—summer is always when I do my best thinking. I like to joke with my students that summer represents the three months of the year in which I can hear myself think.

My thoughts right now are with two recent trips I took; the first was to the American Society for Engineering Education conference. I attended many sessions and, as usual, was inspired by the great work of engineering educators who, like me, fight against engineering being a technocratic force with some largely unexamined biases. The most memorable talk I attended was a distinguished lecture by Alice Pawley. She posed a question that I am still thinking about, and it is this: “What, as an engineering educator, will you do to prepare your students to design in a world which will require 50% fewer carbon emissions in 11 years?”

Two days after this insightful question was posed, I decided to put it in the back of my mind as I traveled on a long overdue trip with my wife Lynn to Baja California Sur, Mexico—it was the first time we’ d taken a proper trip in eight years. We spent nine days in a place where desert meets ocean, and where we were essentially illiterate and dependent on others to be bilingual. In this place, we had wonderful adventures and interesting observations. We stayed in a small town called Los Barriles, where animals were clearly front and center in the community. Dogs and cows walked across the street and down the sidewalks and were treated with as much reverence as pedestrians—there were five or six animal hospitals in a community of 1,200 people. The other thing we noticed was that traffic signs were observed only casually.

About halfway through our trip, we did a day of guided birding with a company called Birding Los Cabos. I had never been to this region of the world and as a result, I was able to see a number of bird species I never had before, like Xantus’s hummingbird, ruddy ground-dove, and yellow-footed gull. Our guides were friendly and talkative and after a couple of hours, I asked them about my observation that while driving, people seemed to treat stop signs as a caution, rather than a command.

“Well of course,” said one of the guides. “Why on earth would you stop when no one else is there to stop for?”

She had a point. I continued to consider cultural practices, like the difference between negotiable and absolute. My thoughts on culture were further animated some two hours later, when, as we were leaving a salt flat on state-owned land, a police car charged up to us and T-boned quickly, blocking our exit and whipping up clouds of beige dust on the dirt road. Our two guides said matter-of-factly, “Oh, police,” as they each got out of the car and stood next to their front and passenger doors. Lynn and I cowered in the back seats—in America, you definitely do not exit the car when stopped by the police. One of the guides ducked her head in the car as three police officers brandishing machine guns approached and said, “Get out of the car!” We did so, with wide eyes.

Two of the officers began a conversation with the guides in Spanish, which I understood only a tiny fraction of; the third began speaking with Lynn in English. He wanted to know if we were okay. Yes, Lynn assured, we were having a wonderful day seeing birds around the area. He smiled broadly, and after brief conversations and waves goodbye, the officers retreated, we re-entered the car, and followed them out of the salt flat.

“Wow, in America, you never step out of the car if you are pulled over by the police, not unless they tell you to do so,” I said.

“Really?” one of the guides replied, “Here, that is what you are supposed to do. I didn’t know it wasn’t like that in America.”

“Those officers were friendly,” she continued. “Sometimes, we have to show our certified bird guide certificate and identification.”
Lynn and I have been pulled over by the police several times while birding in the United States, so that cultural phenomenon wasn’t different; once, we were even boxed in by three police cars, and the cops used a bullhorn to tell us to show our hands through the windows before they approached our truck to see what we were doing. The difference in expected behavior though, on whether to exit the vehicle when stopped by police—compounded with potential language issues—could quickly lead to a dangerous situation. This day reminded me, in small ways and in big ones, about how important it is to understand and honor cultural traditions and people to ensure safe, full lives. An article in this issue, “Realmente Tenemos la capacidad: Engaging Youth to Explore Health in the Dominican Republic through Photovoice,” details one way to accomplish these important goals.

Our fantastic trip to Mexico is now over, and as I finish out the July 4 weekend, I am again considering that somewhat terrifying question, about what I will do as an engineering educator to prepare my students to design in a world that will require 50% fewer carbon emissions in 11 years. I don’t have the answer to that question yet. I suspect that it’s going to take a lot of time, thought, research, and collaboration to try to do justice to that question. Still, I have ideas, signposts if you will, and many of them involve themes that are explored in this issue of JCES.

One of those signposts is ecology, and the importance of considering the well-being of living things in connection with the entire ecosystem. Humans are only one part of a vast ecosystem—if we treat those other beings with reverence, and with the ecosystem at the center of design, rather than people, we could begin to change the way that we engineer, in part by changing the way that we frame problems to help solve or changes to help facilitate. The article entitled “An Ecological Approach to Understanding Program Management Practices for Food Pantries in Rural Communities” sheds insight into how we can use principles of ecology in our engagement endeavors. Another article—“Catalyzing Change Through Engaged Department Cohorts: Overcoming the One-and-Done Model”—focuses on changing engagement from a course to department framework.

Another signpost is as follows: while framing problems and facilitating changes, we must engage meaningfully with our communities. JCES has a strong history of publishing articles in this genre, and two articles in this issue provide insights accordingly: “Leading the Charge: Outcomes from a Student-Driven Engagement with a Veteran Community” and “Using Community-Based Participatory Research to Assess the Needs of HIV-Related Services for Individuals Infected with HIV/AIDS in Rural Communities.”

A third signpost involves building capacity, which follows from using an ecosystems approach and engaging meaningfully with our communities. The articles entitled “Partnering Academics and Community Engagement: A Quality Enhancement Plan for a Diverse and Non-Traditional University” and “Promoting Engaged Scholarship among Undergraduate University Students” detail capacity-building efforts to build engagement within a university, and to enhance research-based solutions to community-identified needs respectively.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of JCES, including student and community voices and book reviews. Everything in this issue invites readers to think; it is my hope that each of you is able to enjoy this issue in a calm, relaxed, reflective space.
I recently had the pleasure of spending a week in Elon, NC to attend the second summer of the Research Seminar on Capstone Experiences, which is organized and facilitated by Elon University’s Center for Engaged Learning. The goal of the seminar is to facilitate “multi-institutional research on capstone experiences using a mixed-methods approach to conduct qualitative and quantitative research…to investigate capstone experiences as a high impact practice” (https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/cel-seminars/ce/). Capstones are project-based culminating experiences, often at the end of a degree program, that require students to synthesize, integrate, and apply what they have learned (Kuh, 2008).

This has been an incredibly valuable personal and professional experience for me. Through the Research Seminar, I am a part of a five-member multidisciplinary, multinational team with a broad goal of better understanding how diversity, equity, and inclusion intersect with capstone experiences in higher education, and how to use this information to better understand how to universally design capstone experiences to maximize learning for all students. My colleagues—from Deakin University (Australia), Portland State University (United States), the University of Calgary (Canada), and the University of Exeter (United Kingdom)—have helped to push me toward new theoretical, conceptual, and methodological ways of thinking, and, in the spirit of self-improvement and growth, I have been working on getting more comfortable with being uncomfortable.

In her entertaining and poignant TED Talk from 2017 entitled “Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable,” Luvvie Ajayi talks about the importance of avoiding the temptation to remain silent in the face of injustice and telling sometimes difficult truths in order to build bridges toward common ground. I believe this message is applicable to higher education. If we do not push ourselves out of our comfort zones, we do a disservice to our students, our communities, and our institutions. Taking the easy path will only reinforce the normalization of dominant social structures.

Our work on capstone experiences requires that we ask difficult questions, many of which are relevant to service-learning, another high-impact practice. As identified by Mitchell (2008) in her review of traditional vs. critical service-learning pedagogy, the inertia of the institutional and societal status quo can make it difficult for service-learning to fulfill its promise of ethical social change. It is only when scholars, practitioners, students, community members, and other stakeholders come together in authentic partnerships to “analyze the interplay of power, privilege, and oppression” (p. 62) that we begin to effect sustainable change. I think it is important for us all to reflect on and consider our roles and how we would like to situate our community engagement work.

For those of you who are interested in reading about some extreme examples of getting more comfortable with being uncomfortable, check out Can’t Hurt Me by David Goggins.

References


Historically black colleges and universities, or HBCUs, emerged in the United States to perpetuate an existing system of racial segregation. Under the guise of “separate but equal,” racially identifiable institutions were created to maintain segregation, thereby constraining individuals’ opportunities because of their group identity. Despite these beginnings, and amidst debates about the inferiority of black intelligence, HBCUs educated generations of African Americans who proceeded to deliver scientific innovations and educational excellence while seeking to transform the nation. The irony is that these institutions typically have the least resources allocated to them despite the fact that they typically serve those populations most economically challenged.

Johan Galtung (1990) broadly defines violence as a system of relationships designed to marginalize opportunities and diminish outcomes. These structures exist in a society that touts equality and self-reliance as the necessary ingredients for upward mobility. More insidious than the direct violence that occurs between two individuals, Galtung’s definition of violence allows us to reconceptualize slavery; the establishment of reservations; the system of share cropping; the existence of a minimum wage for labor that perpetuates poverty; segregated schools; inequitable funding in schooling post-desegregation; the school to prison pipeline (Redfield & Nance, 2016); the continued reliance on standardized tests deemed culturally biased yet not significantly correlated with college completion; racial and class inequities in the justice system; and police brutality as a system of relationships in a society that perpetrates violence disproportionately against African Americans and other diverse and economically marginalized populations. This framework of violence allows me, as a researcher, to adopt different questions to guide my research. After all, once you accept that society isn’t broken and inequities are produced and reproduced at a systemic level, then the solutions you can devise to redress these inequities are possible.

Community-engaged scholarship was an avenue for me, as an African American faculty member at a predominantly white institution, or PWI, to conduct the type of work that allowed me and faculty like me to make a difference in the lives of those students least served by our nation’s schools because of their class and skin color. Mind you, pursuing tenure at a research intensive university while conducting this type of research does present challenges. How does one maintain a trajectory toward tenure while designing and delivering programs, or developing solutions, that are meaningful for communities that our society cares little about?

Demonstrating the impact of enrichment programs like Project Nia and Kemet Academy on students from economically challenged communities took time. It took time to demonstrate that the students who participated in Kemet Academy were more likely to graduate from high school and matriculate in college than similar students from the same communities. And yet
the ability to pursue tenure at a research intensive institution requires that type of evaluation or critique of the work we do if we are to remain in the academy and prosper—i.e., achieve tenure and promotion.

Two examples of the kind of research that HBCU faculty are producing follow this essay. One presents an innovative approach to using community-based participatory research as a way to assess the needs of individuals from rural communities who are living with HIV/AIDS. This preview section concludes with a discussion of how an institution is prioritizing community engagement through its Quality Enhancement Plan.

The challenges of working in the communities that matter most to me while at a PWI have led me to a career at an HBCU. I have found greater latitude to develop programs and initiatives to transform the system of relationships that perpetuate violence. However, with this freedom comes constraints of resources caused by a public system of funding that subsidizes the education of the haves at a higher level than for the education of the have-nots. This reality requires the establishment of collaborations across types of institutions in order to redress the problems that community-engaged scholarship has the capacity to solve. Although the magnitude of problems facing poor and disenfranchised populations in the United States seems almost insurmountable, I would urge my colleagues at PWIs to establish collaborative partnerships as part of your unit’s standard operating procedures and remember to work with not for them. It has happened more than once that faculty from a PWI invite faculty from an HBCU or other MSI at the last minute. By the time the collaboration is initiated, the concept for the project had been developed, the resources allocated and we were asked for a letter of participation.

The existence of food deserts, health disparities, illiteracy, the school to prison pipeline are features of a violent society that disproportionately impact the poor and populations historically marginalized in our society and reduces their chances to live the American dream. And while the nature of the professoriate does not always lend itself to grappling with these social issues, the ability to demonstrate the immediate and long-term impact of community-engaged scholarship is essential and requires the existence of community-engaged researchers capable of engaging diverse, oftentimes marginalized populations.
Using Community-Based Participatory Research to Assess the Needs of HIV-Related Services for Infected Individuals in Rural Communities

Elizabeth Brown, Charles Brown, Owen Johnson, Wendelyn Inman, Revlon Briggs, Wanda Burrell, Rosemary Theriot, Elizabeth Williams, and Alexis Heaston

Abstract

HIV/AIDS remains a significant health concern in rural communities, which may also experience many disparate issues including reduced access to health services (Department of Health and Human Services, 2015). Community efforts should be increased to improve services to people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), especially in rural communities. In the state of Tennessee, using a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach, a needs assessment was conducted to identify gaps, barriers, and strategies for improving HIV-related comprehensive care services for people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in 26 rural counties. The paper describes the CBPR partnership and the needs assessment project that was conducted and how the results may support community leaders and health care providers in planning and allocating resources for non-medical services of PLWHA in rural communities, and thus maximizing both individual and community benefit.

Of the estimated 1.1 million Americans age 13 and older living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), approximately 50,000 were living in rural areas at the end of 2009 (Health Resources and Services Administration, n.d.-a). A study conducted by Cohn, Berk, Berry, Duan, Frankel, Klein, McKinney, Rastegar, Smith, Shapiro, and Bozette (2001) concluded that few adults with HIV in rural areas of the United States received HIV care. Rural residents with HIV have health care needs similar to those of their urban counterparts including general health care (Iyer, 2015). Access to quality health care for people living with HIV/AIDS in rural areas is harder to come by than one would think. Rural residents face the absence of qualified health care personnel (i.e., primary, dental, and mental health care providers) along with barriers to federal assistance for HIV care (Iyer, 2015). In rural America, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Federal Program is a critical source of support, helping PLWHA overcome barriers to care such as health insurance and financial resources (Health Resources and Services Administration, n.d.-b; Iyer, 2015). The highest uninsured rates in 2016 were among people who live in the South or West regions of the United States, and most of the people living in these two regions have been without insurance coverage for long periods of time (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2017). In Tennessee, the HIV/AIDS/STD Section of the Tennessee Department of Health (TDOH) received federal funds from the Ryan White HIV/AIDS (Part B) Federal Program to cover HIV non-medical services and cost-efficient systems for the delivery of services to individuals with HIV disease and their caregivers and families in 26 rural counties in Middle Tennessee. In 2015, the Community HIV/AIDS Partnership (CHAP) worked in conjunction with the United Way of Metropolitan Nashville (UWMN) and faculty researchers from Tennessee State University to assess the needs of HIV/AIDS prevention services and care in these counties to make recommendations to TDOH for allocation of Ryan White HIV/AIDS (Part B) funds based on prioritized needs. A summary description of organizations and HIV-related terms discussed in this article are shown in Table 1.

Purpose

This study has two purposes. First, it describes the collaboration of faculty researchers from Tennessee State University and community partners (CHAP members and UWMN staff) to conduct a needs assessment project regarding HIV-related services for PLWHA in the study area. A CBPR approach was used as a guide to conduct the needs assessment project among faculty researchers and community partners. As noted by Wallerstein and Duran (2006), CBPR is an alternative research paradigm that involves all partners in the research process and integrates
education and social action to improve health and reduce health disparities. For this reason, the CBPR approach was chosen to guide the needs assessment project. Second, this study presents the results obtained through the needs assessment project conducted by faculty researchers and community partners.

Methods
Design and Sample
Consistent with the CBPR approach, faculty researchers and graduate students from Tennessee State University worked collaboratively with community partners to design the needs assessment activities, develop the data collection instruments, and interpret the results of the study. The research study employed a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect data from the participants. The key activities of the needs assessment included conducting an epidemiological data assessment, completing revisions on a resource audit, administering two surveys, and facilitating three focus group sessions. The population from which the sample was drawn entailed service recipients (i.e., PLWHA), family members of PLWHA, and service providers within the 26 Middle Tennessee catchment area. The faculty researchers obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board at Tennessee State University to conduct the study.

Data Collection
The faculty researchers and community partners agreed to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct the needs assessment project. The first data collection activity entailed conducting an epidemiological assessment of PLWHA in the 26-county rural area to better understand specific populations as it relates to: 1) the most heavily burdened by the HIV epidemic, 2) experiences of infected individuals, 3) opinions related to the HIV care continuum from initial linkage, 4) subsequent retention in HIV care and services, and 5) long-term adherence to HIV treatment. Current gaps in services, consumer needs, and challenges that impact treatment attrition were also evaluated. Numerous state and local officials were contacted by faculty researchers and graduate students via telephone, email, and face-to-face communication to gather the epidemiological data. Additional data were compiled from the TDOH (i.e., HIV/AIDS/STD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community HIV/AIDS Partnership (CHAP)</td>
<td>The Community HIV/AIDS Partnership is a consortium of community leaders, community-based organizations, healthcare providers, local public health agencies, and individuals infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Department of Health (TDOD)</td>
<td>The Tennessee Department of Health is an agency of the Tennessee state government responsible for public health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way of Metropolitan Nashville (UWMN)</td>
<td>This community agency works to improve the lives of people in Nashville by focusing on health, education and financial stability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIV-Related Terms</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)</td>
<td>This term is used to describe the infections caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus that can lead to HIV/AIDS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immune Assistance Plan (IAP)</td>
<td>This program assists eligible HIV-positive individuals with health insurance premiums, co-pays, and deductibles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intravenous drug users (IDU)</td>
<td>This term refers to individuals who inject a substance into their veins using a syringe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men who have sex with men (MSM)</td>
<td>This term refers to male persons who engage in sexual intercourse with members of the same gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)</td>
<td>People living with HIV/AIDS have been diagnosed with the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Organizations and HIV-Related Terms

Second, a resource audit within the 26-county area was also conducted to assess the services currently available for PLWHA. The services commonly available to PLWHA were gathered through a comprehensive web search and information provided by PLWHA. The data were subsequently entered into an electronic database for assessment.

Third, two surveys (i.e., one for PLWHA and one for service providers) were developed and administered to PLWHA to evaluate their experiences regarding HIV non-medical services, challenges, and facilitators who impact their utilization of services, and their met and unmet service needs. CHAP members and the UWMN Community Impact Unit, under the consultation of the faculty researchers, compiled a 31-question quantitative survey and a 12-item qualitative survey (Brown, Johnson, Inman, Brown, Briggs, Burrell, Theriot, Williams, Buford, Burton, & Burton, 2015). PLWHA, who received services through the primary health care agencies in the 26-county area, were invited to complete the survey. If individuals were interested in completing the survey, the UWMN staff distributed the survey via mail. Individuals were informed via mail that the survey was voluntary and confidential. Survey respondents mailed back their completed surveys to UWMN staff. To prepare for data entry and analysis, the completed surveys were sent from UWMN to the faculty researchers. The second survey, the service provider survey, was generated to collect information about perceptions of service providers regarding the gaps in comprehensive care of individuals diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and their families. The questions for the service provider survey were developed based on findings presented in previous years’ needs assessment reports and comments shared during a planning meeting with faculty researchers and community partners. To increase completion rates, the length of the service provider survey was kept short (six questions) to reduce the time it takes the providers to complete the survey. The provider survey was loaded into Survey Monkey, and a survey link was created. The link to the survey was sent to the identified providers servicing the 26-county area. After collecting all of the data from the service provider survey, the results were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet by graduate students.

The fourth and final data collection activity involved conducting focus groups within the 26-county area. The purpose of the focus groups was to assess whether gaps existed in services and resources among PLWHA in the area. The faculty researchers, in collaboration with the community partners, prepared the focus group survey items, scheduled the focus group sessions, and provided the incentive gift cards for participants.

All volunteering participants received a gift card at the conclusion of the focus group session. The gift card incentive was provided to enhance the community engagement and provided an opportunity to promote access to health care. The gift card could be used for food, gas, or hygiene products.

The focus group sessions were conducted across three separate regions in the 26-county area over a three-day period in two-hour sessions each day. All focus group participants—PLWHA and their families/caregivers—were part of a convenience sample. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and full-disclosure statements were read to the participants. A 12-item focus group questionnaire was used to gather information and feedback. All data collected were anonymous and demographic quantitative data were collected before the focus group session began. Each focus group session followed the same format. The faculty researchers documented the responses from each focus group session through the use of note-taking and audio recordings. Two note takers and two audio recording devices were used to capture the qualitative data.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the quantitative survey data involved using SPSS Statistics 20.0. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to determine demographic characteristics of participants, criminal justice status, educational level, living conditions, and service utilization. The qualitative data collected from each of the focus group sessions were transcribed and analyzed using the qualitative software Atlas.ti7. During the qualitative data analysis process, common themes were identified that emerged from the participant discussions.

To improve the accuracy and credibility of the study findings, a member checking technique (Lee, Hoffman, & Harris, 2016) also known as “informant feedback” or “response validation” was employed by the faculty researchers to gather feedback from PLWHA about the preliminary findings of the needs assessment project. Also, consistent with the CBPR approach, the faculty researchers debriefed
the community partners about updates regarding the needs assessment project and preliminary findings on a regular basis. Lincoln and Guba’s study noted (as cited in Creswell & Miller, 2000) that peer reviews or debriefings provide support, play devil’s advocate, challenge the researchers’ assumptions, push the researchers to the next step methodologically, and ask hard questions about methods and interpretations. Over a two-month period, debriefings and member checking were carried out at several meetings held among faculty researchers, community partners, and PLWHA. A PowerPoint presentation and handouts, with content from the quantitative and qualitative results, were also shared during the meetings by faculty researchers to help the community partners and PLWHA understand the initial findings. Consequently, the faculty researchers sought to integrate the feedback from the community partners and PLWHA into the final results of the study findings.

Results
This section presents the results of the needs assessment project. The results are organized by the data collection methods, which include an epidemiological data assessment, resource audit, surveys, and focus groups.

Epidemiological Data Assessment
At the end of 2014, there were 997 PLWHA residing in the 26-county area and 4,975 PLWHA living in the metropolitan regions of Middle Tennessee. In this study, the term HIV prevalence is used to describe how many people are living with HIV disease at a given time, regardless of when HIV infection was diagnosed. Among the 26-county area, the prevalence of HIV disease has continued to rise over the past five years (i.e., 2010–2014), increasing from 829 to 997. HIV disease incidence refers to people who were newly diagnosed with HIV disease. From 2010 to 2014, the proportion of new HIV diagnoses in the 26-county area was approximately three times higher for men, comprising 72.7% of the total reported (i.e., 264 cases) and non-Hispanic whites (61.4%).

Resource Audit
The most commonly needed services identified by PLWHA in the 26-county area were basic dental providers, disability services, domestic violence interventions, expectant mother programs, health insurance providers, HIV/AIDS testing and screening sites, homeless shelters, medical care, local transportation, safer sex education, services for sexual assault, suicide prevention, transit to health care, tuberculosis screening sites, unemployment insurance, veterans assistance, childcare providers, and workers compensation assistance. Lack of transportation was cited as one of the barriers to accessing HIV services. Other noted challenges included respondents did not know where to go for services, cost or ineligibility, and waiting time to get an appointment to see a provider.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics and HIV Routes of PLWHA Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic white</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic black</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
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<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race/ethnicity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>99.9%&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
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<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>99.9%&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIV Transmission Route</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSM&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDU&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSM/IDU</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pediatric†</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other risk‡</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *Survey respondents were asked to self-report their race and, separate from race, their ethnicity. <sup>b</sup>Men having sex with men. <sup>c</sup>Intravenous drug use.

<sup>†</sup>Includes those under 15 years of age with a reported HIV transmission route of perinatal mother-to-child and those with no reported transmission route. <sup>‡</sup>Other risk includes occupational exposure, recipient of transfusion with blood products, and no risk reported. Respondents could report more than one transmission category.

PLWHA Survey
Eighty-nine (n=89) HIV positive participants voluntarily completed and returned the PLWHA Survey. The characteristics and HIV transmission route of the survey respondents are listed in Table 2. Respondents were predominantly male (n=64, 72.7%), English-speaking (96.6%) and born in the U.S. (94.4%). The ages of respondents ranged from 20 to 74 years, with a median age of 46. Whites
represented the majority of individuals completing the survey (n=50, 56.8%), followed by blacks (n=36, 40.9%), and Hispanics (1.1%). Of the 42 participants who responded to the question involving sexual orientation, 17 (42.5%) said they were heterosexual/straight, 2 (5.6%) said they were bisexual, and 1 claimed to be transgender. (From answers to other questions, we can assume that those not answering the sexual orientation question, 46 in all, or 51.7%, were likely homosexual or bisexual.) Asked how they thought they became infected, most (n=55, 61.8%) said men having sex with men (MSM), next was heterosexual contact (n=8, 9.0%), followed by intravenous drug use (n=7, 7.9%). Two (2.2%) said MSM or IDU (intravenous drug use). Over 10 percent (10.1%) reported “unknown” or “other” route. Among survey respondents, most (89.0%) were diagnosed with HIV disease for more than two years, and 39% reported they had been diagnosed with AIDS, which remained the same from the previous needs assessment findings.

Other findings, from the PLWHA survey, were that only 14 (15.7%) reported using illegal drugs in the past year; 13 (14.6%) reported as being homeless in the past year; nine percent (9.0%) reported as having been in jail or prison in the past year. While 82.1% of respondents completed vocational, some high school or at least some college education, 15.7% did not finish high school.

Some survey respondents (39.3%) reported first accessing HIV non-medical services within one month of initial HIV diagnosis, while 24.8% first accessed those services between three and 12 months after diagnosis, and 13.5% delayed more than one year to access non-medical services. Table 3 shows the numerical ranking and list of non-medical HIV services not currently offered through Ryan White Part B funding identified by the respondents. Non-medical case management (21%), transportation to care or service appointments (16%), and dental services such as check-ups, fillings, and extractions (16%) represent the top three non-medical services.

Table 4 illustrates the numerical ranking and list of services identified by the respondents as gaps in care and services that need to be addressed. Eye care (23%), rent assistance (22%), and utility assistance (22%) represent the top three gaps in care and services as identified by the respondents.

### Service Provider Survey
The provider survey was sent to more than 60 providers. Only nine providers participated in the survey, which is a very low response rate. Six respondents were administrators, and three respondents were case managers from various agencies within the 26-county area. While the response rate was small, there was relevant information discovered from the nine respondents. Proper training, booklets, and informational materials were requested by the survey respondents to improve the quality of services for PLWHA within the 26-county area.

### Focus Groups
A total of 54 people volunteered to participate in the focus group sessions. Forty males and 14 females participated in the focus groups. The average age of the participants was 50 years. The lowest age was 27 years, and the oldest person was 59 years. A total of 36 Caucasians/white not Hispanic, 16 African Americans/black, and two American

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Non-Medical HIV Services</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-medical case management</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Transportation to care or service appointments</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dental (checkups, fillings, extractions)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Translation services</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Food bank</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Psychosocial support</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Immune assistance plan</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3. Non-Medical HIV Services Not Currently Offered Through Ryan White Part B Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Eye care</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rent Assistance</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Utility Assistance</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Housing Assistance</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Support groups</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No responses</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4. Identified Gaps in Care and Services
Indians participated in the focus group sessions. Of the focus group participants, 32 (59%) self-identified as “homosexual” (i.e., MSM), 16 (30%) self-identified as “heterosexual” (i.e., straight), four (7%) self-identified as “bi-sexual,” and two (4%) self-identified as “other” (i.e., non-specified).

Common themes were found from the focus group data. The themes were service availability, utilization, access, satisfaction with services, quality and barriers to services, and unmet needs. The main items listed under the service availability theme were dental and medical services that are located in the metropolitan area in Middle Tennessee and local health departments. The feedback responses for the theme “utilization” included support groups, mental health services, dental services, and utilization of available transportation as the most critical HIV-related services that PLWHA are using now or have used in the last year. Under the access theme, respondents self-reported experiencing financial difficulties (e.g., no insurance, signing up for insurance/waiting period, no income, relocation costs, cost of living changes, and lack of local resources) as the reasons care was not accessed for 12 or more months. Most respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the pharmacies and various private primary care physicians within the local areas along with two agencies (Nashville Cares and the Vanderbilt Comprehensive Care Center) located in a metropolitan area within Middle Tennessee. Under the satisfaction with the quality of services theme, respondents identified transportation services, re-certification steps to obtain insurance, and access to primary care as the things that clients would like to see changed. Discriminatory practices and being discriminated against were listed as barriers to accessing services. The last identified theme was unmet needs. Participants listed the following: 1) lack of local access to primary care services, 2) lack of transportation, 3) nutritional needs not being met, 4) unsure of resources, 5) only having a nurse practitioner providing primary care services instead of a doctor, and 6) the long waiting time to see nurses and doctors.

Discussion

The CBPR approach was used to guide the process of conducting the needs assessment project among faculty researchers and community partners. As a result of this collaboration, an epidemiological data assessment, resource audit, surveys, and focus groups were conducted to complete the needs assessment project. The epidemiological assessment identified the population living with HIV in Tennessee (i.e., 26-county rural area). Although the total number of prevalent cases of HIV disease is small in the 26-county area, these cases were distributed over a large and diverse geographic area with generally fewer medical and support services available for HIV-infected persons, which poses an additional challenge for people living with HIV in the 26-county area. The resource audit revealed that PLWHA identified 18 non-medical support service needs within the geographic area. The surveys and focus groups also provided varying perspectives to existing gaps in care services.

Conclusions

The purposes of this study were to describe collaboration of faculty researchers from Tennessee State University and community partners, to conduct a needs assessment project of people living with HIV/AIDS related to their HIV-AIDS continuum of care and services in the 26-county rural area, and present the results of this project. The collaborative partnership approach helped to identify the non-medical service needs and interpret the results of the study. The results indicated that there were few HIV positive individuals linked to HIV non-medical services within one month of being diagnosed with the HIV disease. Additionally, numerous survey respondents noted that early intervention services, routine dental services, non-medical case management, eye care, psychosocial support, emergency food bank, rent assistance, utility
assistance, and adequate transportation to appointments are critical non-medical services for meeting the needs of PLWHA. This study identified the needs of PLWHA who participated in the project and were currently receiving services through community agencies in the 26-county rural area. This study may not represent the overall needs of PLWHA who are residing in the 26-county rural area and who are not currently receiving services. This needs assessment was the first step toward identifying the non-medical service needs of PLWHA in the 26-county rural area. The results of this study will be used by Community HIV/AIDS Partnership members as it relates to making recommendations to the Tennessee Department of Health for direct planning and resource allocation of Ryan White HIV/AIDS (Part B) funds. The findings and recommendations from this needs assessment study can also support community leaders and health care providers in planning and allocating resources for non-medical services of PLWHA in rural communities.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Tennessee Department of Health, Community HIV/AIDS Partnership and the United Way of Metropolitan Nashville for their support that contributed to this research. Also, appreciation is given to Chelsea Burton, Kelsey Burton, Delisha Crawford, Lauryn Buford, Clifford Joseph, and Joanna Harris for their assistance in data entry and collection.

References


Partnering Academics and Community Engagement: A Quality Enhancement Plan for a Diverse and Non-Traditional University

Antoinette R. Miller, Keith E. Miller, Scott Bailey, Margaret Fletcher, Antoinette France-Harris, Sipai Klein, and Rosario P. Vickery

Abstract
Research suggests that application of theoretical perspectives, specific program principles and components, and various institutional models of service learning, can positively affect persistence and completion for college students. Academic community engagement provides such an application, as well as a vehicle for professional interaction between community partners and faculty members, and is the theme for our university-wide quality enhancement plan (QEP). This paper describes our QEP roadmap from conception through the first four years of our five-year initiative, detailing the work done to align with the university's strategic goals; incorporate flexibility, coordination, and partnerships; ensure authentic projects that benefit community partners and students (traditional and non-traditional); and assess impacts on the institution, students, and community. We describe various types of community partnerships and provide specific examples of lower-level and upper-level undergraduate courses designed and delivered, in a variety of academic programs and disciplines, as well as lessons learned from our experiences.

Introduction
As a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accredited institution, we are required to develop and implement a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) every 10 years as part of our accreditation reaffirmation (SACSCOC, 2012). The QEP should focus on positively impacting students' learning, while integrating institutional assessment. A successful QEP initiative requires significant input from relevant campus constituencies, and should have an implementation plan, specific outcomes, and an assessment plan. Ideally, it should be an institutionalized part of the campus culture following an initial five-year implementation period. QEPs provide many institutions with opportunities to develop cultures of assessment (Loughman, Hickson, Sheeks, and Hortman, 2008; McConnell, Van Dyke, and Culver, 2011) and serve as catalysts for faculty and staff engagement (Fallucca, 2017). QEPs also provide structure and prioritize resources for focused activities that support student learning and the mission of the institution (SACSCOC, 2012).

In this paper, we describe the development and implementation of our QEP, focused on academic community engagement; provide vignettes from some of our classroom projects; and offer lessons learned for educators as a proposed model for other institutions with both a primarily diverse student population and a substantial, non-traditional, commuter student population.

About Our University
Clayton State University is a predominantly black institution located in the south Atlanta metro area. In fall 2017, our student body was more than 70% minority, over 60% female, and the average student's age was 26. We have a large first-generation college population, as indicated by student responses (approximately 60% of respondents on the 2017 administration) to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Over 40% of our students attend part time and nearly 30% of our students are non-traditional (Clayton State University Fact Book, 2017). We currently offer over 30 baccalaureate degrees and multiple master's degrees, focused on career-oriented education with a solid liberal arts foundation. Our student body directly represents our local communities; the overwhelming majority of students originate from the county in which we are located, and adjacent counties. The university mission and vision emphasize community engagement and experience-based learning.

Figure 1 presents a general organization and flow of our QEP since its inception. In spring 2012, our university began the process of identifying a QEP topic by examining existing institutional data and initiatives focused on student success.
Existing initiatives included Complete College America, the American Association of Colleges and Universities’ Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative, and our ongoing university strategic-plan-based initiatives. A campus-wide survey asked participants to rank several theme areas derived from the LEAP initiative’s High Impact Practices (HIPs). Service/Community-Based Learning yielded the highest ratings, whether it was focused on course-related service projects or courses tied to service organizations (intra-campus and between campus and community). Following this initial data-collection period, in fall 2012 a cross-campus steering committee consisting of faculty, staff, and student members was created and began the real work of narrowing the focus of the topic.

One of the first tasks of the committee was to verify the overall topic for the plan based on institutional data, the results from the previous survey, and input from committee members. Balancing our university resources with what would directly benefit our students, the committee agreed that our planning should focus on “low-hanging fruit,” using programs, activities, and initiatives the university had begun, but had not yet fully implemented. Because our university was already connected with the community in a number of ways, including through our faculty and staff activities, the idea of community engagement continued to be the most viable focus for our QEP.

After further detailed examination of institutional data including from the NSSE, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), and...
surveys of existing course offerings, the committee determined that while our value and commitment to service were evident in our current university mission and faculty responses, the majority of the university's listed courses did not incorporate community-based activities and less than half of our NSSE respondents had engaged in community work as of the 2011 NSSE.

The plan required broad institutional involvement; we developed and executed a stakeholder assessment plan, including students, faculty, and staff. Input from students attending steering committee meetings, broadly shared surveys of the student body, individual meetings with the committee chair, and student focus groups provided insight on student-specific concerns in the design and implementation of a community engagement course requirement. The primary issues centered on time management, work-life balance, and perceived increased requirements from community engagement projects. This feedback was expected given the particular challenges for non-traditional students to participate in course activities outside of regular class meetings (Kelly, 2013), differences in how non-traditional students perceive service learning (Rosenberg, Reed, Statham, & Rosing, 2012), whether documented benefits of such activities would differ for these students (Reed, Rosenberg, Statham, & Rosing, 2015), and challenges for students who commute (Jacoby & Garland, 2005).

The steering committee also collected information directly from the academic and non-academic departments regarding specific
engagements with community groups, not only to reinforce the appropriateness of this focus for the campus, but to gauge the existing community partnership connections in the area. The chair of the committee also visited with each academic department, convened multiple town hall-style meetings, and presented to the university’s faculty senate and the student government association to further spread awareness regarding this QEP focus, and to gather additional input from the affected campus constituencies.

In early 2013, our campus chose to focus on student engagement through community projects that enhance learning, while taking into consideration the concerns of non-traditional students. We defined academic community engagement as intentional efforts within courses to engage students in planned and purposeful learning related to service experiences within the community. We then further defined our goals, developed activities and assessments, and prepared for the accreditation visit in early 2014. We also convened subgroups focused on assessment and overall program design.

**Academic Community Engagement Definitions**

Academic community engagement intentionally marries community service activities with course-related concepts and outcomes to benefit both the community partner and the students. What distinguishes it from other more volunteer-based community service activities is the direct and deliberate link to academic goals. A service-learning (or any successful academic community engagement) experience incorporates a learning component, a service component, and a reflection component; combined, these entities link classroom material to service activities. Several variations on best practices have been offered (e.g., Howard, 2001; Neuwald, 2003) but common threads include specific service or civic learning goals and explicit links to the course material; reflection or other connection of the service experience to the learning; direct and ongoing communication among stakeholders and carefully selected service experiences; adequate preparation of students; preparation, training, and support for faculty; and integration of the community engagement project into the course plan/curriculum.

Felten and Clayton (2011) also note that one of the additional requirements for this pedagogy to be successful is that it be flexible to accommodate changing situations and be responsive to the needs for building capacity and learning for all involved; this component is particularly important given our student body. A sizable proportion of our student body is non-traditional; many students commute, rather than live on campus.

While not specifically focused on service learning, Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) identified various characteristics of non-traditional students that make them more vulnerable to leaving higher education, including the additional pressures of maintaining employment and not always seeing the value of connecting to the campus while on their individual journeys. Yob (2014) notes that many of the characteristics of successful student retention programs are also seen in academic service learning, and that these are important to non-traditional students as well as traditional students. These include academic and social integration, active participation, engagement in learning, direct interactions with faculty and fellow students, and application and relevancy of academic information. All of this speaks to the value of incorporating academic community engagement into our curricula, but also cautions us to consider balancing the benefits with the additional pressures on our students that the pedagogy might entail. A number of course-based strategies to address these needs are discussed in the section entitled “Course Vignettes.”

**Student Benefits of Academic Community Engagement**

The academic and other benefits of community-based learning to students have been documented in multiple venues. Service learning has been linked to higher GPAs, increased critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, and increased self-efficacy and tolerance for and appreciation of diversity. It also affords students the opportunity to apply course and curriculum content to practical and concrete contexts (e.g., Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Peters, McHugh, & Sendall, 2006). Additionally, increases have been reported in students’ academic engagement and intention to continue study (Gallini & Moely, 2003). Engaging in community-based learning is also linked to increases in civic engagement, sense of citizenship, and sense of social responsibility, as well as enhanced social development and leadership skills (e.g., Peters et al.; Joseph, Stone, Grantham, Harmançioğlu, & Ibrahim, 2007; Yoon, Martin & Murphy, 2011). Specifically relevant to our institution, service learning/community-based learning is a growing
area of research with documented benefits to both minority (Ellerton, Di Meo, Pantaleo, Kemmerer, Bandziukas, & Bradley, 2015; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000) and first-generation college students (Yeh, 2010; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000; Pelco, Ball, & Lockeman, 2014).

**Designing for Success**

Bringle and Hatcher (1996) identify planning, awareness, resource, expansion, recognition, monitoring, evaluation, research, and institutionalization activities—approached from the various standpoints of institution, faculty, student, and community partner—as important components in service learning. In our case, these include the previously described student surveys and focus groups, contacts and meetings with academic and non-academic departments regarding preexisting community contacts, and survey of preexisting courses with community engagement projects.

Following the acceptance of the QEP, a small group of faculty was recruited to design and deliver select pilot sections of our first-year experience seminar course that incorporated academic community engagement in fall 2013. To help prepare the pilot faculty, we worked with university resources to develop a four-session workshop series called the Community Engagement Academy for summer 2013. Sessions were conducted as a mixture of presentation and application where participating faculty completed the training with a specific course that is, for the most part, designed to be offered as one of our community-engaged courses in a subsequent semester. The first two sessions focused on pedagogy, specifically designing and assessing a course for community engagement. Attendees were provided with copies of the *Service-Learning Course Design Workbook* (Howard, 2001) in addition to materials developed by our own faculty and other service-learning resources. The third and fourth sessions focused on building community partnerships and preparing projects.

We conducted other awareness-raising activities, including branding exercises, during 2013 and early 2014. The campus selected Partnering Academics and Community Engagement (PACE) as the initiative’s name. Campus leadership also identified a director for the initiative reporting to the Academic Affairs Division. The director then recruited additional members from across campus to focus on implementation and assessment planning, and constructed an advisory board that included external community representation. Our initiative did not have a dedicated physical space on campus, but there were clearly identified points of contact (the director and other committee members) for on-campus and off-campus communications.

According to Bringle and Hatcher (1996), assessment is key to the monitoring and evaluation activities. For our QEP, we identified both program-level and student-learning outcomes and appropriate assessments. Some of the program-level assessments could be tracked by our institutional research infrastructure, such as student enrollment in community-engaged classes, student completion rates in those courses vs. other non-impacted sections of the same course, and numbers of courses offered under the initiative’s banner. Student-learning outcomes included course-level assessments, reflection assignments within community engagement courses, and scores on the Community Service Attitudes Scale (CSAS) constructed by Shiarella, McCarthy, and Tucker (2000), and administered at the beginning of the term (pre-test) and following project completion (post-test).

**Implementation and Sustaining the Momentum**

The Comprehensive Action Plan for Service Learning outlined by Bringle and Hatcher (1996) suggests several clearly identified actions that reinforce the need for careful planning, development of resources, attention to evaluation and assessment, and the involvement of all stakeholders, including faculty, students, and community partners. Here we describe key activities and actions taken by each stakeholder group to initiate, grow, and sustain PACE from years 1–4 (fall 2014–spring 2018).

**Our Faculty**

Through our Community Engagement Academy, faculty from disparate disciplines work together on the common goal of designing community-engaged courses; during the training sessions, attendee brainstorming regarding common faculty concerns often yielded creative or transferable solutions. An informal community of teachers and scholars has formed as a consequence of the Academy and the growth of the initiative. Bringle, Hatcher, and Games (1997) distinguish between faculty recruitment and faculty development in outlining things that should be...
kept in mind when developing service-learning initiatives. Faculty should be encouraged to participate by means of various incentives, and should be supported through training and other opportunities to develop, implement, and evaluate community engagement as a pedagogy. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) note that the collection of data to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the pedagogy on student and faculty outcomes can support the work, and that the institutionalization of the faculty’s commitment to service learning can be reinforced by the recognition and acknowledgment of service learning in activities such as promotion and tenure and annual reviews. Pribbenow (2005) identifies benefits to faculty, including more meaningful engagement, deeper connections to their students as learners and individuals, and greater involvement in a community of teachers and learners. Cushman (2002) also notes the importance of balancing and

**Table 1a. Projects by Service Type**

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<th>Service Type</th>
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<th>On Campus</th>
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**Table 1b. Projects by Project Activity**

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acknowledging the role of the professor as both teacher and researcher, and that faculty see the project as a place where their research, teaching, and service can contribute both to student learning and to community needs. Franz (2011) provides a number of suggestions on how to present engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure activities, as well as a number of resources for faculty who wish to do so.

As a Carnegie Community Engaged Campus, our institution incorporates academic community engagement-related activities into our tenure and promotion guidelines, as do many similar institutions (Driscoll, 2008). PACE’s director’s responsibilities include professional development, faculty training, and oversight of the community engagement activities, as well as a number of resources for faculty who wish to do so.

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Community Connections and Partnerships

Bringle and Hatcher (1996) state that while it’s a complex endeavor with many possible iterations, community representatives need to be involved in planning service-learning (and by extension other academic community engagement) programs. Many of our first course/community partnerships arose from previously existing connections, identified either through the initial QEP development information gathering or faculty’s own community service activities and interests.

In fall 2015, the university launched a networking event connecting representatives of community groups from surrounding counties and the metropolitan area. This now annual event combines community-partner networking, needs assessment, and information sharing, and forms the basis for many of the other opportunities to connect community partners and specific courses throughout the year. Many of our faculty and students from community engagement courses share their experiences. The event allows our stakeholder groups to celebrate the partnerships between our students and our communities. In recent years we have expanded our invitations to include additional university resources that can engage with community partners with needs that go beyond the scope of our classroom-based projects.

For each community engagement course, the faculty member is required to complete a memorandum of understanding in direct collaboration with their community partner(s).
The memorandum articulates not only the responsibilities of all parties (students, faculty, community representative, and PACE director) but also the specific learning outcomes for the students and the service outcomes for the community partner that will be addressed by the course project. This memorandum clarifies expectations, duties, and benefits to the stakeholders, provides PACE with important information to connect future courses with those partners, and helps provide relationship continuity across time as people may change, as suggested by Bringle and Hatcher, 1996.

**Institutional Impact**

During our first four full years of implementation (as of fall 2018), we trained over 60 full-time faculty and designed more than 60 courses to include community engagement projects. Over 2,000 students have taken at least one (many more than one) PACE community-engaged course. Course completion rates have increased in more than half of the PACE courses relative to historical (pre-fall 2014) baseline or comparable sections in the same semester. Additional measures including student retention, graduation, GPA, and performance on standardized measures of critical thinking and communication will be examined following the five-year QEP implementation.

Perhaps the most tangible impact on our institution has been the establishment of an infrastructure and culture to support academic community engagement that is specifically tailored to our student population. This includes emphasis on designing course engagements that are more project-based than direct service, projects that can accommodate student scheduling and transportation stressors, and increased development of online community-engaged courses. This infrastructure includes Academy training that emphasizes careful course project design and where faculty complete learner analyses that incorporate a wide range of student variables, including those specific to non-traditional students. The variables, therefore, consider and attempt to anticipate non-academic factors that can present challenges to students’ project completion, and closely align the in-class learning with the project activities.

**Community Impact**

Since our launch in fall 2014, PACE courses have completed over 170 projects, working with over 100 partners. Our courses have worked with local schools, nonprofits, governmental entities, and (in rare cases) small businesses or franchises. Project types include direct service such as clearing trails for a local nature preserve, tutoring, and volunteering at local senior centers. Other courses incorporate project-based service such as document drafting, basic research, design and execution of educational programs, and development of video and other promotional items. Given our substantial non-traditional and/or commuter student population, most of our community engagement projects have been project-based service, leveraging many of the usual activities in college classrooms (research, writing, creation of materials) to support the outcomes of our community partners, and mitigating many of the scheduling and other issues students may
encounter (Jacoby & Garland, 2005; Rosing, Reed, Ferrari, & Bothne, 2010).

Table 1 summarizes the types of service and projects completed by our students to date.

Community-partner feedback, collected by survey after each project, has been positive (Table 2). While challenges such as scheduling, student preparedness, and short project time were noted, benefits including new connections with other community groups, increases in the services they could offer, and improvements in their organization's communication or public relations were also cited. Collectively, each stakeholder was able to contribute to the implementation and sustainment of our QEP efforts.

**Student Impact**

In addition to increased course completion rates, positive gains have been documented on some of the subscales of the CSAS between pre-test and post-test results. Specifically, students show gains in their perception that there are actions that could relieve community need; recognition of one's own ability to do something to provide help; feeling a sense of responsibility to become involved based on a sense of connectedness with the community or the people in need; and reassessment of the seriousness of the need and the need to respond.

In the next section, we will detail some of the service-learning courses that were developed as part of the QEP. Instructor reflections offer insight into effective ways to ensure that non-traditional students are well-supported in these efforts.

**Course Vignettes**

Several of our co-authors have designed and delivered community engagement courses as part of PACE. Following are vignettes written by those instructors, describing their course partners, projects, and student benefits and instructional impacts. Students in these classes included high school students dual-enrolled in our classes (English Composition), traditional first-year students (English Composition and University Foundations), and a mixture of traditional and non-traditional students (Wills and Testaments, Writing for Nonprofits, Literatura Infantil). Table 3 summarizes each course's community partner and project activities.

**University Foundations, First-Year Experience:**

**LEGO robotics seminar (Scott Bailey).** The University Foundations course was designed to help new students make a successful transition to Clayton State University, while refining academic goals and preparing them to meet the challenges of higher-level learning and the demands of their chosen field by connecting them with faculty who share a common interest. This section of University Foundations consisted of students majoring in mathematics, computer science, and information technology, many of whom were first-generation students from nearby counties. For several years, Clayton State University has annually hosted a state super-regional competition for FIRST LEGO League (FLL), a national robotics program for children aged 9 to 14 years. Historically, there has been very little representation from the counties the university directly serves. Our course project focused on assisting the development of FLL teams in the local middle schools.

My students were affected by the experience. One student noted in his reflection that the middle school group he worked with continually struggled with the tasks given to them, and expressed frustration that the group did not ask questions that he could address. He started asking more questions in his own college algebra course (I was the instructor) and his grade steadily improved. Another student noted that "Hard work doesn't always yield immediate results," while another determined that the most important lesson learned is not every student wants to be in college and points out that learning is more about interest and passion. The importance of addressing personal issues, time management, personal responsibility, teamwork, and assisting peers in need were common observations from the more engaged students.

Before engaging in this project, although I was aware of the personal issues non-traditional students have and the roadblocks to success they present, I was largely unaware of the severity of the issues that K–12 students in the public school system, and thus our incoming students, possess. From my experience, and those of my students as viewed from their reflections, the most important roadblock to success is that ambition can easily be stolen by personal issues. It is important to note that inspiration, encouragement, and assistance that teachers can provide serve to alleviate emotional roadblocks to ambition and allow for a greater flow of information. However, passion can be transferred from teacher to student if there is a mutual trust and respect between the two. In this course, the more passionate and successful students who developed non-trivial connections with the
middle school students were those that graduated from similar public school systems and thus could immediately empathize and relate to their personal or emotional roadblocks.

English composition, first-year writing (Margaret Fletcher). Research suggests that college freshmen and dual enrollment students who encounter some success during their critical first year are more likely to stay in school. Encouraging first-year writers to make writing real and to educate others through their writing is a good place to start that journey toward graduation. My purpose for getting involved in the PACE program at Clayton State University was threefold. First, I wanted my students to learn more about volunteering in their community. Second, I wanted them to see that composition activities can be a part of volunteering, that writing serves an important purpose in the community. Finally, I wanted my first-year composition students to begin to feel that they can play an important role in an academic environment. Thus, with the guidance of the PACE director, I structured a program that was tied to the writing skills I teach in my classes.

I have a large number of dual-enrollment students as well as traditional and non-traditional students. Many of my students are first-generation college students; and some might be considered at-risk students. I wanted my students to use their beginning writing classes as a strong start toward continuing their education by becoming more involved in their campus community as well as in our classroom. I discovered that there are many campus activities that need volunteers and found some matches; thus, my students learned more about campus involvement by volunteering for on-campus PACE projects. Each project they worked on was linked to the larger community, but students had to be a part of the campus community. First-year writing classes are centered on peer review and group interaction; therefore, the activities the students completed in class fully aligned and even surpassed course objectives.

My students partnered with the university library for two consecutive semesters. Our first undertaking was a voting rights project just prior to the presidential election. Political science faculty and students helped my freshmen prepare booklets on voter registration, on candidates and their stances, and on guidance for further assistance in voting, such as locating the correct voting polls and taking appropriate identification to the polls.

Many students in our overall school population are first-time voters, so we developed the booklets to meet their needs and to encourage them to feel more comfortable with the voting process. Students distributed their voting guides to other students in a program held on campus. Thus, they got to know more upperclassmen, and meet new people. Many students told me they had fun. During the same semester, the university library was sponsoring an exhibit on civil rights, and we worked as volunteers for that program also. My classes prepared the program for a civil rights historical seminar, attended the meetings on a voluntary basis, and interviewed speakers. Students wrote essays on the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and their culminating activity was a bulletin board outlining the history and significance of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 intended to educate today’s young people.

The following semester, we worked with a traveling exhibit on Harry Potter books sponsored by the library. During both semesters, the library sponsored sessions with speakers, which my students assisted with and attended when possible. Students interviewed the speakers and produced a blog, which was included on the library’s official blog page. The most interesting part of the second semester was a section on developing Pathfinders, a type of research guide for younger students, working under the guidance of a university librarian. Thus the students themselves learned more about research as they prepared research guides for younger students.

When I began the course, I wasn’t sure how to handle the number of students involved, but by the time we finished, all four of my class sections of first-year writing were involved. Because students collaborated and worked together in groups on many aspects of the project, I think they learned from each other and the quality of the finished products was more than acceptable. When the Harry Potter exhibit was open to the public, the Pathfinders, complete with student names as authors, were available to community members who attended. My students were excited to see their “published” work disseminated to the local community. As college freshmen, they succeeded in presenting useful information to the student body and to community visitors. In other words they not only belonged to the academic community, they also became authors.

I would suggest that those considering this work find creative people on campus to work with,
make certain that the work is manageable, and link the project to the learning goals of the class. Also, don’t expect every student to be involved to the same degree, but do try to get all students working on some aspect of the project. Freshmen and dual-enrollment students who undertake projects are stepping outside their comfort zones, and in many ways, such as reading Harry Potter for the first time and learning about voting rights, as well as how to prepare a Pathfinder, I too stepped out of my comfort zone. Ultimately, my students and I felt good about our hard work.

Wills, mid-program legal studies course (Antoinette France-Harris). As Strait and Sauer (2004) note, increases in online course offerings have created a need to develop experiential learning opportunities such as service learning in an online course setting. Additionally, online courses have become increasingly popular with our non-traditional students, many of whom are juggling family and work obligations as they complete their education, so Clayton State University has offered a mid-program online legal studies community engagement course for five consecutive spring semesters. Offering this class online has allowed non-traditional students the flexibility that Felten and Clayton (2011) indicate is necessary for successful service-learning projects. Despite their busy schedules, my students have been able to partake in experiential learning and become involved in service to their community. This involvement is extremely important for my students, who are planning to become either attorneys or paralegals. Attorneys should aspire to offer at least 50 hours of pro bono services annually (American Bar Association, 2018). Paralegals should contribute 24 hours of pro bono services annually (National Federation of Paralegal Associations, 2006).

There are numerous pedagogical benefits to service learning for non-traditional students (Astin et al., 2000; Peters et al., 2006), and these benefits extend to the online classroom. According to Helms, Rutti, Hervani, LaBonte, and Sarkarat, (2015), “Technology facilitates information exchange and enables virtually any class to transition into online service-based learning.” In an online classroom, it is important to conduct activities that facilitate engagement. For this online legal studies course, the incorporation of service learning was designed to extend opportunities for increased student/faculty, student/student and student/content engagement.

For the online Wills, Trusts, and Probate Law course, I created a project to offer pro bono legal services to members of the local community. What makes the course unique is that in addition to the usual class activities, the students and I work in teams on a semester-long project that involves using the knowledge and skills they gain traditionally to assist real-life individuals. Through the community engagement experience, students learn about interviewing skills, ethical considerations, the basics of estate planning, and how to draft and execute estate planning documents properly. Typically, I include projects in each of my classes, so there was no extra work involved for the students as they participate in this project.

All parties that are involved reap benefits from the community engagement project. The community residents are thankful to receive pro bono legal help. Moreover, they enjoy interacting with and offering a learning opportunity to the students. In their evaluations of the class, students customarily cite the community engagement component as the course highlight. For many students, the service-learning project is the first time that they have used their specialized legal knowledge to assist actual individuals with real needs. The community residents teach the students the importance of effective and continuous communication, confidentiality, and sensitivity. As a result of the experience, some students decide to have difficult conversations with their own family members concerning estate planning upon the project’s completion. Still other students remark that the community engagement project makes the online class more engaging and they welcome the added classmate and instructor interactions.

The challenges related to this service-learning class are typical of other online courses and group projects. There may be students who are unwilling or slow to do their fair share, or who may have communication challenges. From the instructional perspective, it takes more effort to establish a partnership, to confirm that the project is running smoothly, to manage group dynamics, and to ensure that the client is satisfied. However, overall, the pros far outweigh the cons.

Writing for nonprofits, upper division English course (Sipai Klein). Writing for Nonprofits is a face-to-face, service-learning course that introduces undergraduate English majors to writing and communication activities that take place at nonprofit organizations. The course was offered during both spring 2014 and
fall 2015 and contextualized the writing needs of these organizations by collaborating with local partners to implement an eight-week long project. Students were given the opportunity to specialize in the type of communication that interests them by applying for one of four tracks within which they participated in the project: project manager, managing editor, graphic designer, or writer/researcher. These tracks mimic the positions found at a small nonprofit. Once students were “hired” for a track, they met with their community partner to discuss potential projects and subsequently submitted a project proposal to be approved by both the partner and instructor. While not all projects require fieldwork, students were expected to engage with the project as determined in the project proposal. Throughout the semester, students repeatedly met with the community partner and submitted update reports. The deliverables created for the projects had to be tested for usability on target audiences. The semester concluded with a presentation that was open to the public; additionally, each team submitted a portfolio that included a final recommendation report to the community partner.

An example of a successful project included a legislative luncheon that was designed, as students stated, “[to] raise awareness within the county community about the increasing number of teens age 16–19 not in school and not working.” This project supported a nonprofit with a mission to serve as a collaborative that connects resources from across the county. The student team identified published empirical research, analyzed data from the county, and interviewed community stakeholders related to high school dropout causes and prevention. They presented their findings at a luncheon that included multiple community activists and local political figures. The project was successful because students addressed a community partner’s specific needs, collaborated throughout the iterative research process, and, lastly, developed problem-solving communication skills within the context of a nonprofit organization.

An intriguing feature of teamwork in this course was the way a nonprofit’s mission encouraged non-traditional and traditional students to contribute and share. For example, when partnering with a nonprofit that worked with therapy animals, students from diverse generations vied for the project manager position—this included students who were separated in age by several decades. The team found ways for shared grounds and contributed their unique knowledge—the younger members created instructional material for using social media platforms and the more seasoned members prepared content. The intersection of skills and knowledge created a robust repository with which to serve the nonprofit’s communication needs and helped the team create a successful social media marketing campaign. This collaboration illustrates how traditional and non-traditional students can work together when they both value community engagement.

Writing for Nonprofits required a degree of flexibility and problem-solving that I did not encounter in my other courses. In their course reflections, students identified the following challenges: the additional time it took to travel to a community partner; the amount of labor required for the project; team-internal issues (e.g., communication, and the low-contributing team member); and community-partner communication (e.g., vision of the final deliverables). These challenges are natural consequences of collaborative learning that includes stakeholders outside of the classroom and make the course rewarding to students in the end. Still, the following suggestions did help address some of these challenges: 1) holding a kickoff meeting on campus with the community partner to clarify needs and expectation, 2) prototyping and receiving feedback from the target audience during the design phase (allowing students to experience the iterative process of negotiating deliverables with the community partner), and 3) investing in team-building activities to strengthen each team’s internal communication.

Litertura infantil, upper division Spanish language elective (Rosario Vickery). Litertura infantil, an upper division Spanish-language and culture course in children’s literature during fall 2016, connected students to the community in a dynamic relationship with our community partner, the county public library. Throughout the semester, students applied what they learned in class to a situation outside of the classroom with a librarian specializing in children’s literature serving as the students’ mentor. Although I had previously integrated service learning into many of my language and culture courses, I structured this course with community engagement as the driving pedagogy. The pedagogy worked as currency in learning the material for both non-traditional and traditional students since it offered a platform for
performance and immediate feedback from the community, a learning path especially appreciated when career goals are driving factors. The course objectives of engaging in critical thinking and continuing the development of advanced oral and written Spanish-language skills from topics in Spanish and Latin American culture in children’s books coincided with the library’s goal to significantly increase the number of bilingual story hours offered for the children and families in the community. I chose the community partner partly through the public library’s previous engagements with PACE and also because I had previously worked as a scholar for a national reading program for Latino children offered at that system.

In class, the students analyzed children’s literature through discussions and written assignments. They acquired new vocabulary, practiced reading aloud, and furthered oral proficiency skills by presenting a mock story hour to the class. As convenient to their schedules, students volunteered several hours at the public library. This approach enabled them to check out books to read and become acquainted with the library’s resources for children’s literature in Spanish. Students also worked side by side with their librarian mentor to prepare a story hour for the public library, the final project of the course. This story hour, conducted by each student for children at the public library, took place during the last month of the semester. Some students conducted a story hour with a student partner and others alongside the librarian. Every student was able to choose the activities for the story hour and the books to read to the children.

Some children who attended a story hour were fluent in Spanish while others had little or no previous exposure to Spanish language or the Latino culture. The college students knew to keep every child engaged, an important element that they addressed with youthful energy enjoyed by all. Each student was mentored by a children’s librarian who worked one on one with the student during the planning, preparation, and performance of the bilingual story time for the children. Parents who attended a story hour were from the community at large, a multicultural population including Latinos. All parents were excited about the exposure to Spanish and noted its importance for their children. The Latino parents particularly appreciated their children experiencing Spanish at a public space and noted the value of reinforcing the home language at the library.

Approximately 30% of the students in the class were heritage learners or immigrants whose first language is Spanish. The remainder were learning Spanish as a secondary language. Although there was a traditional mid-term exam, the course was primarily project-driven. This approach presented two challenges, which though resolved, are worth noting here. A logistical issue was that due to a disability, one student in the class needed help in arranging transportation to and from the library multiple times throughout the semester. This was especially challenging since library visits comprised 25% of the participation in the course. As the instructor for the course, I frequented the library regularly so the student who did not drive coordinated her visits with mine. A challenge related to communicating learning outcomes became evident from the first reflection on the service experience. I noted that a student who had emigrated as an adult was interpreting her role at the library solely from a collective perspective of social benefits to the community at large, and did not express any personal gain from the experience. In her final reflection, however, she noted that she had discovered new abilities within herself, like creativity, and that, “Cada etapa de este proyecto de clase fue una sorpresa para mí.” [Each stage of this class project was a surprise for me].

Lessons Learned and Suggestions for Practitioners

PACE experienced both successes and failures during its first four years. Reflection has been a driving force throughout the development and execution of the QEP, both at the stakeholder level and at the individual, course-based level. Based on ongoing reflection, we can summarize our lessons learned into four broad themes:

Communication with community partners is essential. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) emphasize the importance of the community partner’s involvement in the identification of service opportunities, both at a macro (program) and a micro (course) level. However, in our experience staff or leadership turnover at the community partner organization, or a misunderstanding regarding the expectations of all stakeholders (faculty, students, and community partner), can derail a project. Memoranda of understanding and regularly scheduled project updates help avoid these issues. Our most successful projects have been designed by faculty who: 1) directly communicate with the community partner in the needs assessment and project design,
and regularly throughout the project; and 2) proactively engage with the program director with project updates. These principles are emphasized throughout the faculty training, and reinforced by the program director during memoranda of understanding development and submission, periodic check-ins during the term of implementation, and end-of-term faculty reflections and community partner evaluations.

Faculty preparation, support, and communication are critical. Providing a faculty-focused community engagement course is a preparation. Having a “Plan B” is part of preparation, too; in the event that an unresolvable issue comes up during a project, student learning, and where feasible fulfilling the spirit of the project, must take priority over an individual project deliverable. The course faculty member and program manager need to remain flexible and ready to adjust the course project for any number of reasons, including changes in community partner staffing or leadership. During the project/course development, faculty members and, where needed, the program director discuss the course, the community partner's needs and goals, and the student learning goals in detail and the agreement document is used to structure and clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of all parties. In the very rare instance where a PACE project was terminated early (usually because of changes in the community partner staffing or leadership), students’ efforts may be redirected to an alternative partner with similar needs, if available, or, if not, to an on-campus deliverable that supports the university mission. However, more typically adjustments can be made in the nature of the deliverable or the timing of the project completion, while still supporting both the student learning and the community partner goals.

Student preparation and engagement are essential. Students come to the course with different levels of academic preparation, community experience, and volunteerism. The instructor must provide students with adequate preparation in the skills or information needed for the project, a sufficient description of the project plan and deliverables, and a clear understanding of how the project ties to the community partner's needs. Communication with student teams should be frequent, and faculty should be prepared to serve as a project consultant as well as an instructor.

Leadership of the initiative matters. While every institution is different, campus culture and leadership investment can make or break an academic community engagement initiative. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) note that along with the initial self-assessment and strategic planning activities, a person should be identified to assume the leadership and administrative responsibility for the subsequent implementation and operation of the initiative. Given the curricular nature of our academic community engagement (embedded within courses), a senior faculty member was a natural fit; selecting someone who has already advanced through promotion and tenure, and therefore is more established in his or her career path, with a good grasp of the institutional culture, experience in working across campus and engaging with the university leadership on matters of policy and procedure has worked well.

**Future Directions**

We are in the last year of our initial five-year implementation, and have identified several actions to sustain our momentum. These actions include streamlining our data collection procedures, examining longitudinal effects, creating capstone or independent study community engagement courses, and constructing a dynamic community partner database. As PACE moves from QEP to permanent university program, additional success measures, including student retention and effects on graduation rates, can be examined. We also hope to transition our networking event to a more formalized conference and extend our reach to more partners such that our institution continues to grow its presence as a stakeholder to help address community interests and needs.

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Vol. 12, No. 1—JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOLARSHIP—Page 31


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Promoting Engaged Scholarship Among Undergraduate University Students

Jenni Owen, Leslie M. Babinski, and David Rabiner

Abstract

The School Research Partnership (SRP) is an engaged scholarship program that promotes collaboration among undergraduate students, community partners, and university advisors. In this case study, we describe the Research Consultation Project (RCP), an undergraduate student independent study project that uses a community-based research approach to connect students, faculty, and community partners to help address critical societal issues. In the RCP, undergraduate students function as research consultants for representatives of local school districts or leaders of other community agencies and organizations such as a county commissioner or a nonprofit focused on post-secondary education opportunities for youth. The students work under the supervision of an advisor to address questions posed by the policymaker or practitioner. RCP meets different but complementary needs of the students and partners in ways that bridge student academic and applied learning, research, policy, and practice.

Introduction

During the past 10 years, research universities have renewed their commitment to prioritizing community involvement in a number of significant ways (Stanton, 2008; Campus Compact, 2016). In an effort to develop productive connections with their publics, universities have developed new programs to help students develop civic skills and encourage faculty to pursue research that can address critical “social, economic, political, and environmental issues” (Bridger & Alter, 2006, p. 164). According to a report by Campus Compact, the four critical areas for engagement at research universities include engaged scholarship, scholarship on civic and community engagement, the education of students for civic and community engagement, and the institutionalization of civic engagement (Stanton, 2008). An increased emphasis on engaging in public scholarship to bridge the gap between scholarly research and practice (Bridger & Alter, 2006) is promoted as benefiting the community, and as such, the research question should be generated by community members to address an issue of significant importance in their work settings. The process focuses on the collaboration between the researchers and the practitioners and the product refers to the usefulness or practical importance of the outcomes.

Engaged Scholarship

The Campus Compact report on civic engagement and research universities (Stanton, 2008) highlights three dimensions of engaged research: purpose, process, and product. The purpose of the engagement is to benefit the community, and as such, the research question should be generated by community members to address an issue of significant importance in their work settings. The process focuses on the collaboration between the researchers and the practitioners and the product refers to the usefulness or practical importance of the outcomes.

The increased emphasis on the value of engaged scholarship is reflected in the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's classification for community engagement. One aspect of this is curricular engagement, which is defined as “teaching, learning, and scholarship [that] engage faculty, students, and the community in mutually beneficial and respectful collaboration” (Stanton, 2008, p. 21). In 1996, Boyer noted “universities are now suffering from a decline in public confidence (p. 11)” and encouraged the scholarship of engaging and connecting the work and resources of the university to “our most pressing social, civil, and ethical problems” (Boyer, 1996, p. 19). Addressing important societal issues is still relevant today in higher education, and in 2016, universities that are members of the Campus Compact renewed their commitment to “ensuring that our teaching, research, and institutional actions contribute to the public good” (Campus Compact, 2016).
In a recent review of engaged scholarship, Beaulieu, Breton, and Bousselle (2018) found two values that serve as the foundation for engagement: social justice and citizenship. In their review of 20 years of engaged scholarship, the scholars highlight the importance of working with community partners as active collaborators to ensure that research addresses a concern in the real world. This type of engaged scholarship, often called community-based research, is defined as “collaborative, change-oriented research that engages faculty members, students, and community members in projects that address a community-identified need” (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoeker, & Donohue, 2003, p. 5). Community-based research has been used to address societal issues representing a range of disciplinary perspectives from public health (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006) and physical therapy (Xia, Stone, Hoffman, & Klappa, 2016; George, Wood-Kanupka, & Oriel, 2017), to ecology (Waterson, Dunbar, Terlecki, Nielsen, Ratmansky, Persichetti, Travers, & Gill, 2011) and psychology (Collins, Clifasefi, Stanton, the LEAP Advisory Board, Straits, Gil-Kashiwabara, Straits, Espinosa, Nicasio, Andrasik, Hawes, Miller, Nelson, Orfaly, Duran, & Wallerstein, 2018), as well as general research methods (Arantes do Amaral & Lino dos Santo, 2018).

The School Research Partnership (SRP) is an example of engaged scholarship that promotes collaboration among university students, community partners, and faculty advisors to address societal issues related to children and families. The SRP is housed at the Center for Child and Family Policy in the Sanford School of Public Policy. Emphasizing bridges between basic research and policy as well as practice, the Center’s mission is to generate solutions to important problems affecting children and families.

This article highlights a core component of the School Research Partnership, the Research Consultation Project, in which undergraduate students partner with a community client and a university advisor to conduct an applied research project. In the RCP, school district leaders and nonprofit organization directors identify key issues that would benefit from timely, focused research to inform their decision-making. Undergraduates develop focused and responsive policy and practice research deliverables and present those to the policymakers and practitioners. This approach differs from other client-based research projects in that it is not integrated into a course, but rather coordinated as part of a group of independent study projects with common goals for addressing a need in the community. Students benefit from one-on-one mentoring from their advisor in addition to peer support during small group sessions on common issues. This effort, using a community-based research approach to promote engaged scholarship, is one example of several types of engaged scholarship at the university. The RCP is interdisciplinary and focuses on collaboration with a community client that serves children and families.

Background of the Research Consultation Project

The RCP grew out of two sets of needs: the needs expressed by school district leaders at the school board, central administration, and school levels and those expressed by undergraduate students. Policymakers and practitioners such as the RCP’s school system partners want and need access to research, yet typically receive it in forms that are not accessible or user-friendly from their perspective. Students are aware that much of the research they do is not applicable to the “real” worlds of policy and practice. The School Research Partnership has capitalized on the potential to develop a mutually beneficial match between school district representatives and students that addresses both sets of needs.

This match between community leader and student researcher also serves to address another problem: the widely acknowledged gap in engaged research (Stanton, 2008). RCP provides an avenue for bridging research with policy and practice by starting with the concerns and needs of policymakers and practitioners, and using student-generated, expert-advised research to inform those concerns.

Three local school districts along with about a dozen nonprofit education organizations have been community partners for RCPs. The districts are a mix of large and small districts, rural and urban, and with high- and low-resource students and schools. Combined, they provide a virtually endless source of real-world issues for their leaders to grapple with and for students to address. Moreover, they are accessible both geographically and with regard to organizational structure, making it possible to establish and maintain long-term working relationships with policy and practice partners in a range of institutions and roles.
Description of the Research Consultant Projects

As noted previously, the RCP addresses three systemic problems: 1) challenges that policymakers and practitioners face with acquiring research when they need it and in forms they can use; 2) challenges that students face in carrying out research that has real-world value; and 3) the gaps between research and policy/practice. While these are the overall systemic challenges that the RCP addresses, the individual student/community partner projects address a wide range of specific problems that the partners have identified as being of current concern. The projects, all research-based, range from topics such as best practices for exceptional children’s programs, to approaches to reduce high school dropout, to best practices for reducing truancy.

**Topic identification.** In advance of each semester, SRP directors solicit school districts’ and other partners’ requests for topics that the partners would like a student to examine. There are usually more topic requests than the SRP can accommodate in one semester, a testament to the value of the RCPs. SRP directors narrow the list of requests based on the feasibility of projects, the goal of maintaining a diverse group of partners, advisor expertise, and students’ areas of interest. Some partners participate nearly every semester, while others participate less often; thus with respect to the mix of partners, each semester has included those with knowledge of the RCPs as well as new partners. This combination has served to maintain continuity while at the same time expanding and diversifying the partner pool.

**Student recruitment.** Also prior to the beginning of each semester, the SRP co-directors publicize the RCP opportunity through faculty colleagues, prior RCP participants, and to all students in departments such as public policy and psychology. Students apply to the RCP via an online application form and provide a statement of interest, a résumé, and the name of a faculty member who will serve as a reference. Each of these items helps to assess whether a student’s stated interest and motivation fit with project expectations. The information students provide about their academic focus and their reasons for being interested in the RCP opportunity also provide important insight on how effectively the student is likely to communicate with external partners, which is a critical aspect of the project work.

**RCP advisors.** The third pre-semester component concerns advisors, which the SRP directors also confirm in advance of each semester. As with partners, the mix of advisors is often different from one semester to the next. Since the inception of the RCP, 16 different faculty/researcher advisors have guided students. The advisors’ areas of expertise include public policy, developmental psychology, public administration, education counseling, and sociology. All but one advisor has worked with multiple RCP students, bringing increased knowledge about the goals and process of the projects that benefits the students and partners alike.

To determine optimal partner/student matches, students and advisors rank their preferences from among the requested topics that the SRP directors have determined are feasible. The directors use this input to make the best possible matches.

In conjunction with announcing the matches, students, partners, and advisors receive a written description of the RCP and expectations for each member of the partner/student/advisor team. Partners, for example, are informed that their student may need assistance facilitating contact with individuals whom the partners recommend the students speak with to obtain valuable information about the partner’s topic area or to access data that would be helpful in completing their work.

**Finalizing consultation projects.** Following the confirmation of each student/partner/advisor team, each team meets in person or by phone as soon as possible. At this point, students typically have a brief description of the partner’s research request and what the partner hopes to learn from and do with the project deliverables. Thus, this initial three-way meeting serves to clarify the research topic and the related questions being posed, and to narrow the scope to ensure feasibility for a one-semester project. The first meeting also serves to establish an agreed-upon process for communication and interaction between the partner and student throughout the semester. Students are directed to inquire about their partner’s preferred method of communication (e.g., whether for phone, email, or in person) as well as how often they would like updates, whom to include on written communication, and other considerations that have implications for professional and productive interaction between the students and community partners. Students
provide their partner and advisor a detailed description of the proposed scope of work no later than two weeks after the initial student/partner/advisor meeting. At that point, partners either convey their approval of how the project has been defined or ask questions to help further refine the scope and plan. The goal is to develop a project that meets partners’ needs and that the student can reasonably complete within a one-semester timeframe. Projects may last for two semesters if that is best for the topic. A two-semester project might involve the same student throughout or two different students, one each semester.

Program expectations. With regard to student/advisor interaction, advisors and students must meet a minimum of once every two weeks, though they often meet weekly. The RCP respects advisors’ different styles and preferences for how best to advise the individual students and their projects. The promise of deliverables to third-party professionals, however, has led the RCP to standardize project expectations more than is typically the case for independent studies.

Throughout the semester, students provide updates to the partners based on the agreed-upon plan for each team. Some projects include components that require partner review and approval, e.g., surveys or interview questionnaires, while others require minimal ongoing input from the partner. Partners are informed that the student/partner interaction component of the RCP is critical not only to the quality of the final products but also for the students’ educational and professional development.

The SRP directors have served as RCP advisors and are available to provide guidance to any member of any team throughout the semester. Students and advisors consult the directors regularly, taking advantage of the directors’ institutional knowledge and their experience working with many different students, partners, and advisors.

Peer learning and feedback. Four group meetings complement the student/advisor meetings that occur throughout the semester. The group meetings occur approximately 2, 6, 10, and 12 weeks into the 14-week semester. All students must attend each of the four meetings and multiple advisors attend as well. At each meeting, students are invited to raise questions regarding project expectations and progress. Each meeting has a theme and covers specific content.

During the first group meeting, students present their topics and plans for accomplishing what the partner has requested. The students pose questions to their peers, their advisor, and other advisors about any early or foreseen challenges. During the second group meeting, students provide brief summaries of their progress to date and receive feedback from their peers, their advisor, and other advisors. Students receive instruction on writing a literature review, which is particularly valuable to the students, as many have had little or no prior experience with synthesizing research.

In the third group meeting, students receive training on writing for policy and practice audiences, often the first time that students have received specific guidance about how to write for a community partner. This is also the meeting at which students receive guidance about producing a conference-quality poster for the end-of-year presentations event. For the final group meeting, each student and advisor receives a set of draft student policy briefs to review and comment on. This session has proved invaluable as students receive peer and instructor feedback on their own policy brief while also benefiting from contributing to and hearing the feedback on their peers’ briefs. This is a meaningful session not only for the content shared but also for the way in which it exposes students to a strategy for giving and receiving constructive criticism in a thoughtful, productive way, an experience that is all too rare at their phase of educational and professional development.

Project deliverables. Students produce at least two and at times three distinct deliverables as part of the RCP. All students produce a substantial research paper (20–25 pages) on the partner’s requested topic, at minimum an in-depth review and synthesis of related literature reflecting the current state of knowledge in the field, and may include survey or interview data and analyses conducted by the student. Also, they write an action-oriented brief (5–7 pages) that summarizes the key issues for the partner in a succinct manner, along with recommendations, if appropriate. Some also produce a conference-quality poster that highlights research findings and recommendations. SRP hosts a poster session and dinner event at the end of the school year that is attended by community partners, students, advisors, university faculty, and other community members. This cross-sector convening is an important part of the
community building that supports the sustainability of the program. In the past two years, over 50 individuals representing schools, nonprofits, government, and community institutions have attended.

While completion of these products fulfills project requirements, many partners invite the student to present his or her findings to the partner’s organization. This opportunity increases the likelihood that the students’ work will be used and it is valuable to their academic and professional development. For example, students have presented their final products to school district leaders, nonprofit staff, and school board members. To summarize, these deliverables address the needs that the RCP seeks to meet and the gap that the projects help bridge: students conducting real world, applicable research; community partners receiving responses to their requests for research that is accessible and timely; a narrowing of the research-policy and research-practice gaps.

Examples of Student Research Consultation Projects

Since the inception of the RCP in fall 2009, 65 students have completed the RCP. The RCP has worked with over 17 different partners and covers a wide range of topics related to children and families. Recent projects include a focus on parent engagement in school, best practices for English Language Learners, an evaluation of a peer-tutoring program, educational issues for students with eating disorders, and strategies for closing the achievement gap.

Impact of the Research Consultation Project

Each semester we evaluate the project impact through feedback from students, advisors, and community partners. Students and advisors provide feedback anonymously through an online survey. The evaluation survey asks respondents to rank learning objectives of the RCP based on perceived importance to the project. The evaluations also request feedback on the four group meetings, which as described previously, include specific skills trainings and peer and advisor input on each project. These evaluations have been part of the course evaluation to inform continuous improvement. The authors obtained Institutional Review Board approval to compile and report these evaluations retrospectively.

Students rate the degree to which the RCP contributed to their progress on a number of learning objectives on a scale from “not at all” to “very highly.” The learning objectives that have been rated highly according to students from the past four semesters include: 1) learning to synthesize and integrate knowledge; 2) learning to apply knowledge, concepts, principles, or theories to a specific situation or problem; 3) learning to conduct inquiry through methods of the field; and 4) developing writing skills. For example, one student said, “This has been the perfect next-step in my academic and career path by combining my interests in policy and in education.” Other students, highlighting the opportunity to interact with community clients, said, “Meeting the client and using the client as a case study made the research much more meaningful” and “from this experience I learned a lot about thinking on my feet, and when to ask the right questions.” The importance of faculty support in navigating the research process was mentioned by a student who said, “I greatly appreciated the variety of feedback from the advisors. It was input that was always used and they frequently were aware of things that I was not, even after researching into my topic.”

Two-thirds of the school and community partners participated in the evaluation survey during the 2014–2015 school year. The most valuable activities cited by partners included finalizing the research question with the student and obtaining information from the student’s work during the final stages. Partners also indicated that the research paper and policy brief were highly valuable final products. One partner mentioned that gathering data from stakeholders was an important part of the process and said, “The methodology used by the student served our purpose very well. The focus group model provided valuable feedback for us with regard to the success of our long-range plan.” Another partner noted the personal qualities of the student and her initiative and said, “The most impressive and helpful benefit was her motivation and organization….” She used some grant funds to travel to additional facilities with similar programs to assist in her research, giving the project greater relevance.

Eight of the 10 most recent advisors provided feedback on the evaluation survey. Advisors rated the in-person meetings between the student, community partner, and advisor as the most important component for the success of the project. Learning objectives that were important to the advisors included: 1) learning to analyze ideas, arguments, and points of view, 2) learning to synthesize and integrate knowledge, and 3) gaining
experience working with a client. When asked for suggestions for improving SRP, advisors recommended more time on how to write the policy brief and literature review as well as additional time on developing a focus group or interview protocol. All SRP advisors indicated that they were likely to or possibly would continue to serve as an advisor.

**Engaged Scholarship: Purpose, Process, and Product**

The overall goal of the RCP is to use a community-based research approach to facilitate engaged scholarship. The three dimensions of engaged research—purpose, process, and product (Stanton, 2008)—are evident in the RCP. The RCPs provide community partners with research-based information that they do not have the capacity or time to obtain and provide students with experience researching issues of current concern to real-world policymakers and practitioners. Grounded in research, SRP takes the generation and application of knowledge beyond classrooms and data sets, thereby providing opportunities for the dissemination and use of research. To this end, a desired outcome of the RCP is to share reliable information and strategies to improve community-based decision-making and action.

The tangible products of this engaged scholarship include the useable deliverables that each student produces: a research paper, a memo or brief highlighting policy and/or practice recommendations, and a conference-quality poster reflecting a combination of the research findings and related recommendations. There are intangible products as well, including integrated knowledge development and professional development stemming from both casual and formal interaction between student and partner. The client-focused research and writing, oral presentation, and peer and professional feedback components of the RCP combine to create a unique but straightforward and replicable model for university/community engagement.

This process of responding to a community partner’s request for research is summed up by Watterson et al. (2011), who describe their community-based research as shifting “our pedagogies from what is done in (or for) the community to how learning is framed, implemented, and disseminated both with and alongside various community constituencies” (p. 8).

**Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

RCP presents a number of challenges, which we address each semester while also striving to put a lasting plan in place for addressing the challenges long-term. We briefly describe four challenges and our efforts to address them.

Partners’ choice of topics may not be of high interest to the project advisors or a strong fit with advisors’ research agendas. Thus far, we have recruited advisors in part by making the case that while the project topic may not be directly in their specific line of research, the benefit may be in the development of relationships that could lead to future opportunities. One solution would be to build on existing partnerships between faculty and community organizations.

For some advisors, however, the RCP provides an opportunity to make a new community connection. In some situations when the researchers do not have direct experience with the topic or community partner, they are able to support the students based on their expertise with students in defining a problem, conducting a literature review to answer research questions, and sharing their findings with a community client. More recent opportunities for engaged scholarship at the university include multi-year applied projects that include a long-term relationship with a community partner. This newer initiative, called Bass Connections, builds on faculty connections to engage students and community partners in ongoing research (see Brewster, Pisani, Ramseyer, & Wise, 2016, for an example).

Another challenge is the level of engagement of the community partner. We recommend that each student meet in person with her or his partner at least twice during the semester but that is not always feasible given partners’ schedules and their desired level of interaction. To compensate for the possibility of infrequent interaction, we ask advisors to strongly encourage or require their students to develop a clear timeline for their project that includes check-ins with partners. We do this recognizing that check-ins may include a combination of in-person, telephone, and email communication. It is important to strike the correct balance of including the community member as a true partner, and not have the students’ needs and short timeline become a burden. Finding ways to facilitate more frequent and meaningful interactions between students, advisors, and community partners would strengthen the experience.

Related to this second challenge, the most engaged partners have typically been those who
have selected their projects directly, rather than had the topic and student assigned to them by a supervisor. Over the 12 semesters of the RCP, the process for identifying projects has varied. Initially project topics within one school system came from individual district administrators. Those administrators requested the topics and served as the community contact for the student. That process shifted under one superintendent who preferred to generate the list of topics within the central office and then assign responsibility to central administration staff. A positive aspect of this process was that the superintendent approved topics that were priority areas for the school district. A challenge this presented, however, was that the staff member assigned to work with the student was not always personally invested in the topic. It appears that this may at times have had a somewhat negative impact on the partner’s engagement with the student and interest in the final product. Ideally, the community partner who works directly with the student would have a clear idea of how they will use the information provided by the student, and be invested in learning the answer to the research question. This investment would also increase the likelihood that the recommendations suggested by the student will be implemented. Since most of the projects are just one semester long, the student and faculty are often not aware of the degree of implementation of the recommendations. In most cases, ongoing collaboration with community partners is necessary to support implementation of recommendations.

The final challenge concerns how we select students to participate in RCP. We believe that most are genuinely interested in education and particularly motivated to carry out a project that has the potential for real-world impact. Others, however, may believe that an independent study requires less work than a standard course. When we sensed this, we began stating clearly and at the outset of the semester before students are required to commit, that the RCP is not by any means an “easy A” and that for most students it would in fact require the development and use of new skills such as communicating professionally with policymakers and practitioners, data collection, and a literature review.

Each of these challenges is important; none are insurmountable. RCP directors have found it to be critical to communicate the potential for these challenges and possible strategies for addressing them to all members of the RCP partnership—students, partners, and advisors. This clarity of communication and being careful not to minimize potential pitfalls continues to serve the RCP well.

Elements of the program we consider successful, and that we would recommend to others interested in starting a similar program, include the common sessions with all the students, the close contact with the faculty advisors, the emphasis on products that are useful to community partners, and the opportunity for the students to present their findings in a community forum.

Students and faculty seemed to appreciate the opportunity for group sessions to discuss areas of common interest, such as conducting literature reviews, writing policy briefs, and providing one another with peer feedback. Although each project had a different focus, the common elements and struggles were evident and provided a supportive environment for engaging in the community-based research project.

Our relationships with the faculty advisors were also valuable as we ran into roadblocks or challenges, either with the students or with the community partner. Challenges often included not having enough time to gather data from community stakeholders, or issues in gaining permission to access administrative data for analysis. Working closely with both advisors and community partners, we realized that setting the stage for a feasible project with a likelihood of being completed in one semester was an important step.

As part of the process, students produced a research paper and a policy or research brief as described previously. Writing for a variety of stakeholder audiences is challenging for the students but ensured that their products would contribute to the partners’ decision-making or thinking about their topic. Similarly, the opportunity to present their findings in a university/community event at the end of the semester provided a tangible goal for clearly communicating both the issue and their findings.

Conclusions and Future Directions

The RCP offers an opportunity to engage with policy and practice officials in ways that differ from other research opportunities available to students in that it is a coordinated independent study project with faculty and peer support. It requires students to develop and use research and critical thinking skills in the context of addressing issues of immediate relevance and importance to community leaders. The RCP provides undergraduate students and their university advisors opportunities to participate in engaged scholarship (Stanton, 2008) and to strengthen collaboration among the researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.
Research Consultation Projects are successfully meeting students’ and community partners’ complementary needs in ways that bridge student academic and applied learning, research, policy, and practice. The RCPs address the students’ need for academic work on real-world challenges and community partners’ need for research expertise to inform and improve their work. Given the community partners’ desire for these productive partnerships, the wealth of expertise at the university across several disciplines that are relevant to K–12 education, and Duke University’s commitment to “the translation of knowledge,” the RCP is an example of engaged scholarship for students, faculty, and community members. Compared with when we initiated the RCP, students now have many opportunities to engage in community-based research. One such initiative at this university is the Bass Connections program, which includes the goal of engaging with community partners using research to address societal issues. The education and human development theme in Bass Connections is particularly well suited to address interdisciplinary issues related to children and families (see https://bassconnections.duke.edu/about). Integrating independent study projects in ongoing university initiatives, such as Bass Connections, may provide the infrastructure necessary for the sustainability of community-based research with undergraduate students.

References


About the Authors

All of the authors are members of the Duke University faculty and/or staff. Jenni Owen is a senior lecturer in the Sanford School of Public Policy, on leave to the office of the North Carolina governor. Leslie M. Babinski is an associate research professor and director of the Center for Child and Family Policy. David Rabiner is a research professor and director of the Academic Advising Center.
Catalyzing Change Through Engaged Department Cohorts: Overcoming the One-and-Done Model

Danielle Lake, Karyn E. Rabourn and Gloria Mileva

Abstract

This article examines the merits and challenges of catalyzing institution-wide community engagement through onboarding successive engaged department cohorts. Building upon previous findings, it tests the hypothesis that deep and integrated community engagement within departments can be leveraged into pervasive engagement across an institution, exploring critical challenges to fostering collaborative, scaffolded, and sustained community engagement and offering recommendations. Such initiatives have been designed and piloted across the United States as a possible starting point for shifting often temporary, fragmented, and isolated community engagement efforts to collaborative and sustainable engagement opportunities that span programs of study. This cross-institutional and multi-departmental case study analyzes these claims, documenting the lessons learned from two successive initiatives encompassing 10 engaged departments across three institutions of higher education in the Midwest. Research harnesses traditional surveys, faculty, community, and leadership interviews, initiative reporting documents, as well as systemic action research practices. Through a cross-departmental and institutional comparison analysis, the researchers highlight the most challenging barriers and promising interventions to overcome the one-and-done model of previous engagement efforts.

Introduction

While one can demarcate a starting point for the current community engagement and service-learning initiatives within higher education at different historical and geographical moments in time, an important shift began in the 1980s. In comparison to the prior two decades, there was widespread concern that U.S. college students lacked connection to social issues, resulting in an initial push to involve students in public service through volunteerism. Over the decade, service activities were slowly linked to particular courses and, by the 1990s, a move toward civic, democratic engagement was apparent. The larger movement’s goal has been “to reclaim the core democratic purpose of higher education and to direct its core activities—teaching, learning, and knowledge generation—toward addressing the pressing issues that face society locally, nationally, and globally” (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2017, p. 112). Despite advances, long-standing concerns about the divide between the “ivory tower” and the community remain. Since the mid-1960s, an array of initiatives and several national organizations have sought to bridge this gap, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education’s classification for colleges and universities, Campus Compact, and the American Democracy Project. While these organizations have experienced success, they have also confronted consistent barriers. One particularly promising initiative is the emergence of engaged departments (Kecskes, 2004). Seen as a particularly valuable starting point for catalyzing change within individual departments, these initiatives attempt to foster a democratic ethos by incentivizing departmental engagement across programs of study (Battistoni, Gelmon, Saltmarsh, Wergin & Zlotkowski, 2003).

Review of previous research findings demonstrates that engaged departments, when combined with additional institutional support structures, can be effective catalysts for fostering more collaborative and integrated community engaged learning within a program of study or department (Lake, Mileva, Carpenter, Carr, Lancaster, & Yarborough, 2017; Driscoll, 2007; Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Zlotkowski & Saltmarsh, 2006). This article is inspired by these previous initiatives, the current effort in our own community, as well as the authors’ lived experience of community-engaged learning endeavors. The research team for this initiative is comprised of a civically engaged undergraduate student, an instructor facilitating community engagement projects, and a coordinator of an academic program that utilizes scaffolded community-based learning. As engaged practitioners utilizing participatory action practices in our study, we see this as a work of scholarship on, but also of engagement (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011).
The article seeks to extend previous findings by exploring how such initiatives can be leveraged to catalyze engagement across a college or university. This case study identifies both critical challenges encountered and effective interventions tested, highlighting how such initiatives can spark structural, procedural, and cultural changes that can be leveraged across the university. Analysis yields a series of recommendations for pursuing deep, pervasive, and integrated community engagement across the institution (as articulated by Saltmarsh, Janke, & Clayton, 2015).

Review of Relevant Literature
While the movement toward service learning and community engagement programs has grown (Matthews, Karls, Doberneck, & Springer, 2015; Norris-Tirrell, Lambert-Pennington, & Hyland, 2010), efforts to foster institution-wide commitments to community engagement have been stymied. Research thus far has shown that institution-wide commitment requires sustained institutional support, committed staff, and supportive policies (Crookes, Else, & Smith, 2015; Mugabi, 2015). Further, this commitment also requires a shift in the institutional culture or “the common set of beliefs and values that creates a shared interpretation and understanding of events and actions” (Eckel, Hill, & Green, 1998, p. 3). Engaged department initiatives (EDIs) emerged in the early 2000s (Kecskes, 2015) in response to sustained resistance toward cultural change at the campus level (Battistoni et al., 2003; Furco, Muller, & Ammon, 1998). Piloted across the United States, these initiatives seek to design and implement engaged curriculum that better supports students and community partners, generating deeper, longer-term engagement opportunities likely to yield mutually beneficial outcomes. In effect, they attempt to catalyze programmatic and cultural change at the academic unit or departmental level by requiring faculty collaboration in the design, implementation, and assessment of community engagement.

Kecskes’ (2015) evaluation of several EDIs across the United States recommends that such initiatives shepherd departments through five core stages, beginning with the generation of a collective understanding of who they are, clear articulation of what they have to offer, and the creation of a shared vision for collaborative, scaffolded, and engaged learning (stages 1–3). After elucidating this initial vision, the hard work of enacting, assessing, and revising this vision follows (stage 4). Finally, Kecskes (2015) recommends the celebration and dissemination of the department’s engagement practices (stage 5). Working through these processes does not just help to conceptualize engagement, it may also serve to build meaningful and purposeful relationships, shift culture, and enact change (Battistoni et al., 2003).

The focus on generating collaborative frameworks at the academic unit level is a direct response to failed efforts to generate such changes at the university and college level (Kecskes, 2006). EDIs are seen as a fruitful entry point because—as the organizational building block of higher education (Kecskes & Foster, 2013)—departments design and assess curriculum, allocate resources, shape tenure and promotion policies, and request faculty development to support community engagement across programs of study (Battistoni et al., 2003; Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Clayton, Bringle, & Hatcher, 2013; Driscoll, 2007; Kecskes, 2004). In addition, given that departments tend to be organized around common academic subject matter (Kecskes, 2008), efforts to foster and maintain a collaborative curriculum and culture are likely to present fewer challenges to generating deep, pervasive, and integrated (Saltmarsh et al., 2015) engagement than at other levels.

To the extent that such initiatives are an attempt to recognize and leverage the unique contexts of each academic unit, institution, and community, build relationships, incentivize flexible collaboration, and sustain partnerships, they appear to be a step in the right direction (Lake et al., 2017). EDIs have yielded clear gains. Previous initiatives have demonstrated that this strategy can strengthen student/community/faculty relationships (Cook, Scharrer, & Morgan, 2006), increase the quality of student work (Agre-Kippenhan & Charmian, 2006), and foster leadership (Silver, Poulin, & Wilhite, 2006). On the other hand, such initiatives have also been consistently stalled by departmental tensions and divides, unclear visioning (Kecskes, 2006), and unsupportive institutions (Saltmarsh & Gelmon, 2006).

Indeed, Zlotkowski and Saltmarsh (2006) concluded that “the future of service-learning will depend to a large extent on its ability to access and to win over” departments, characterizing them as “the power at the heart of contemporary education” (p. 278). Kecskes (2015) called this locus of change the ‘backbone’ for generating progress, noting that more progress on this front has been made in the
past “10 months than in the past 10 years” (p. 56). Additionally, Kecskes concluded that no amount of isolated faculty engagement work will amount to the collective work done within an engaged department. Community engagement that emerges from collective work includes a wider array of stakeholders and co-creates and enacts a shared vision designed to address a specific issue (Kania & Kramer, 2011). However, to the extent that such initiatives fail to shift departmental processes around engagement, align engagement with their mission, vision, and values, and integrate it into tenure and promotion guidelines (Clocksin & Greicar, 2017), they are likely to encounter setbacks.

EDI leaders suggest that the question is not whether intervening at this level is effective in the short-term and at the locus of application (the unit or departmental level), but rather if such initiatives can yield sustained curricular, community, and cultural change (Langseth, Plater, & Dillon, 2004). On this front, Kezar (2014) noted that failed college reform efforts often result from a lack of understanding about how change emerges (the process), a lack of awareness of institutional change research, copycat initiatives that fail to comprehend the nature of the situation, and the adoption of one strategy instead of multiple interventions.

Project Purpose, Description, and Methods of Study

The cross-institutional and multi-departmental case study (Yin, 2013) analyzed in these pages extends these previous research findings, examining how EDIs can be an effective response to change barriers and noting the conditions under which they operate as suitable starting points for catalyzing pervasive community engagement across college campuses. Given that the initiatives examined in this case study began in 2014, the long-term impact cannot yet be fully assessed. On the other hand, the cross-institutional and multi-departmental nature of the study has yielded findings valuable for exploring how varied conditions and approaches support initial success and sustained growth.

More specifically, the current case study explores how combining EDI cohorts might be effective for creating deep, pervasive, and integrative change by contributing to a shift in the structures, processes, and climate of the host university. Building on the work of Eckel et al. (1998), Saltmarsh et al. (2015) articulate that deep engagement yields changes in behavior and structures, pervasive engagement spans traditionally isolated and siloed work, and integrated engagement requires awareness of the larger whole, as well as a willingness to foster relationships, share resources, and collaborate on shared challenges. Given that EDIs require faculty collaboratively create a cohesive vision, generate mutually agreed-upon changes in curricular processes, and share ownership of projects, it is clear that they are intended to support deep, pervasive, and integrated engagement at the unit level. They are a clear attempt to shift siloed practices and encourage cultural change. Per Kezar’s (2014) findings on effective change strategies, they recognize that effective change must account for the unique context within which engagement is intended to emerge, flexibly altering curricular processes. We hypothesize that onboarding successive engagement through a combined cohort approach can open opportunities for faculty from across departments to collectively strategize around roadblocks and challenges, share innovative practices, and celebrate initiative outcomes, generating a community of reflective practice and a cadre of change agents.

Engaged Department Initiative 1.0: A Cross-Institutional Collaboration

The 2015 Grand Rapids Engaged Department Initiative was generated through a collaborative vision for place-based, cross-institutional engagement. This vision led the state’s campus compact: a large, public, liberal arts university of more than 25,000 students; a small, private, Catholic institution with about 2,000 students; and the first community college in the state with over 17,000 students to create across-institutional, place-based EDI. The original objectives were to increase faculty knowledge and skills in community-based teaching, expand students’ community-based learning opportunities, and enhance community partnerships at each of the institutions (Lake et al., 2017).

The first-round initiative included seven academic departments from across the institutions, a five-member multi-disciplinary research team, and a four-person cross-institutional leadership team comprised of campus engagement administrators (including the director of the Office for Community Engagement, the manager of the Academic Service Learning Center, and the dean of Curriculum). Given grant funding requirements and the research team’s disciplinary expertise, the original research plan focused on assessing: how the program
influenced student persistence rates and attitudes toward civic engagement, changes in curriculum and program learning outcomes, qualitative measurements of impact on community partners, and best practices for engaged department initiatives (Lake et al., 2017).

In order to advance previous findings on such initiatives and yield effective, real-time interventions for this initiative, the EDI 1.0 research team built upon research instruments for studying engaged department initiatives (e.g. Howe, DePasquale, Hamshaw, & Westdijk, 2010; Vogelgesang & Misa, 2002) and implemented systemic action research practices (e.g. Burns, 2014). Findings emerged from semi-structured ethnographic interviews designed to assess community partner, faculty, and leadership perspectives over the course of the 18-month initiative, student and faculty pre- and post-survey instruments, and analysis of initiative reporting documents. As findings were analyzed, report processes were put in place to encourage effective feedback loops and leverage lessons learned into a second-round EDI beginning in fall 2016. For further information on the research design and initial findings see Lake et al., 2017.

Engaged Department Initiative 2.0

Hoping to leverage the momentum behind this first-round initiative, the second round began the following academic year at only the large, public institution. Onboarding three new departments, this second-round initiative created a tiered model of engagement, leveraging EDI 1.0 faculty as mentors in a pipeline program for the second set of EDI faculty. It thus avoided the costs of external consultation and generated accountability mechanisms intended to keep EDI 1.0 faculty involved after the initial 18-month initiative was complete.

Using the momentum and initial findings from EDI 1.0, the research team hoped to identify barriers to and effective practices for shifting curriculum, departmental, and institutional processes. Researchers focused on tracking changes as they unfolded through semi-structured faculty, leadership, and community interviews. In addition, data was collected through the analysis of EDI reporting documents, including departmental semestery reports, meeting agendas, and minutes.

Semi-structured interviews with faculty, community partners, and administrative leaders continued at one-year intervals and were broadly designed to uncover perceptions of the process and its impact. Participants were asked approximately eight to ten questions designed through a review of similar instruments (e.g. Miron & Moely, 2006; Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006), lessons learned through the first-round initiative, and second-round goals. EDI 2.0 goals were to generate and sustain collaborative, community-based learning curriculum, foster departmental processes and climate supportive of engagement, and shift university policies and practices. Thus, questions covered topics focused on changing expectations, challenges, lessons learned, climate change, best practices, and collaborative engagement. In accordance with Berg and Lune's (2018) methodological suggestions, interviews were transcribed and triangulated with initiative reporting documents. In addition, reporting documents and interview transcriptions were analyzed independently using standard theming and content analyses (Neuendorf, 2016). Key points were first noted independently for relevant segments of text coded and grouped into themes. Discrepancies were then reconciled and insights triangulated through discussion. Aligning with Creswell's (2018) methods of increasing qualitative validity, researchers also invited EDI participants to review draft research reports and manuscripts for accuracy. Findings were compared between cohorts and to previous research describing the challenges of universities and community organizations working together.

In addition to three rounds of interviews, pre-initiative and mid-initiative check-ins with the leadership and assessment team were analyzed for key findings. Through independent analysis, open coding, and triangulation our team committed to identify systemic barriers and challenges, effective interventions and to document additional resources or process changes that may be needed.

Across all 10 departments and throughout both initiatives, researchers uncovered persistent and pervasive challenges as well as a number of potentially effective interventions. These insights have been articulated into recommendations highlighted in the following section. Findings provide additional evidence that engaged department initiatives—when structured to ensure long-term support, consistent and flexible oversight, and access to a range of resources—can be a particularly promising locus for catalyzing deep, pervasive, and integrated community-based learning.
Findings: Critical Challenges and Emergent Recommendations

Across the 10 participating departments, four consistent and critical challenges were noted in interviews, reporting documents, initiative meetings, and workshops. These included challenges surrounding the additional workload, departmental diversity, disconnects and discord, attrition and change, and inadequate infrastructural support. In general, these consistent challenges, documented below, are noted across the service-learning and community engagement literature (Butin, 2007; Grookes et al., 2015; Jay, 2010; Kecskes & Foster, 2013; O’Meara, Eatman, & Petersen, 2015; Stoecker, 2008). While the encounter with such challenges is nothing new, case study findings highlight effective response strategies. Recommendations not only emerge from feedback provided by EDI participants and a review of best practices within the literature, they have also been tested through interventions implemented between the first- and second-round initiatives and vetted by EDI participants across the initiative (including faculty, community partners, and the leadership team). As situation-sensitive and emergent responses to this case study, recommendations should not be overly generalized.

Critical Challenge One: EDIs as an Addition to, Not a Part of

Despite the legitimacy afforded through training and preparation, grant funding, resources and accountability, the EDI still often felt like an add-on to other faculty and staff workload requirements. One faculty member expressed her concern: “I am stretched so thin, to put more meetings into the schedule will cause an anxiety attack. How are we going to manage it all?” Funding and training do not in themselves create the time and space, nor the needed facilitative leadership for this work within already strenuous faculty workloads. For instance, scaffolding collaborative community engagement curricula throughout the major proved to be far more time consuming than most departments originally anticipated, a finding consistent with previous initiatives (Adamuti-Trache & Hyle, 2015). Leadership, faculty, and community partner interviews indicated that an initial lack of understanding about the full scope of program curriculum contributed to this issue.

In addition, a lack of consensus around community-based learning, an inability to merge current projects efficiently and the slow process of curriculum redesign and approval processes were identified as contributors to this additional workload. Given the consistency of this challenge across departments, we conclude along with Kecskes (2015) that EDIs implemented within institutional structures and cultures that do not provide the time and the facilitative leadership needed will continue to experience this barrier.

The first-round initiative did not require departments to engage with community partners through regular, recurring meetings and this lack of consistent interaction showed. As one EDI faculty member in our own case study noted, “In order to commit to this work, we needed to sit in a room together every other week for two hours in order to continue to move forward.” Researchers speculate this lack of consistent engagement was a major contributing factor to a lack of collaborative engagement within three departmental teams and two failed community partnerships. Reporting documents noted these partnerships ultimately ended prematurely due to lack of understanding and “fit”. The second-round initiative, however, required departments proactively and intentionally engage with potential community partners to more clearly define opportunities for mutually beneficial engagement prior to making a formal commitment. Sustaining dedicated meetings with community partners on a regular basis aligns with best practices in the service-learning and community engagement research (Kelly, 2005). Moreover, genuinely democratic engagement must be “inclusive, collaborative, and problem-oriented;” it requires “academics share knowledge generating tasks with the public and involve community partners as participants” (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009, p. 9).

Emerging opportunities to align, integrate, and leverage. Departments that made the most progress toward their initiative goals either leveraged external pressures to do so, aligned the initiative with other departmental tasks, or created ways to shift engagement practices from low-priority, additional workload obligations to essential tasks by incorporating them into their infrastructure. For example, departments facing external pressure to increase and incorporate engagement at the unit level in order to align with college or university level strategic plans or fulfill obligations associated with program accreditation,
experienced increased motivation to shift their curriculum and complete initiative tasks. Another department has built community-based learning into their articulated mission, vision, and values, while another ensured faculty were a part of the organization by serving on advisory boards to more fully understand the mission, vision, and values of the community partner. Other departments were able to incorporate this work into their departmental agenda, meeting bi-weekly to discuss their community engagement work. These strategies instantiate Keisa’s (2013) general recommendation that it is valuable to uncover ways to incorporate engagement into departmental or unit initiatives already underway.

Findings in the current case study also demonstrated that integrating students as part of the project team provided critical support, reducing the workload and increasing faculty accountability. Departments that involved students into planning aspects of the project progressed farther and fostered opportunities for student leadership. Students participated in project management, curricular revision, program reviews, literature reviews, and as community liaisons. Through these experiences, they were able to mentor peers and further engage in high-impact practices such as employment, internships, research opportunities, and conference presentations. Departments that collaborated with students were enthusiastic about the value they brought to the work, suggesting they provided a wealth of expertise and acted as catalysts for moving the work forward. EDI teams with student representation not only made more progress and fostered relationships between departments and the community, they also leveraged additional support and reduced the workload associated with developing and maintaining engagement initiatives.

Critical Challenge Two: Departmental Diversity, Disconnects, and Discord

The breadth of disciplinary diversity within a department as well as histories of discord appear to stymie initial collaborative engagement efforts. Smaller and more homogeneous departments in the current case study progressed more quickly with curricular revisions. More heterogeneous departments (i.e., those housing multiple theoretical and methodological frameworks) struggled to bridge the gap between their disparate subfields, identify common partners, and agree on curricular scaffolding plans. In fact, three participating departments have been unable to integrate community-based learning efforts between disparate subfields. For example, one team was unable to bridge the cultural, linguistic, archaeological, and biological subfields within its discipline and across its program. Separately, a large and long-standing department with a history of division and discord struggled to bridge conflicts in order to make progress on curricular revisions. In contrast, a new and burgeoning program with only a few faculty and external pressures engaged swiftly and achieved initiative goals. In general, the EDI fostered collaborative projects from more closely aligned subfields (cultural and linguistic studies). Several departments in this case study struggled to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships because of a failure to carefully consider how various partnerships might best support a wide range of programmatic learning objectives. In general, departments that progressed more slowly at the outset of these initiatives did not have a clear and shared understanding of the breadth and depth of their curriculum. As indicated in the previous section, thoughtfully and thoroughly engaging in this type of visioning and planning work—while essential—is often viewed as an arduous infringement upon faculty autonomy and expertise.

Emerging opportunities to understand ourselves before we engage. Despite this barrier, initial struggles and tensions often proved fruitful for creating the department-wide buy-in needed to shift engagement efforts from isolated silos to a shared initiative within the department, thus sparking immediate practical changes within the unit and the potential for long-term cultural shifts. In response to various examples of departmental discord in the first-round initiative, the assessment and leadership team required the second cohort to complete a curricular mapping process for their program, collaboratively brainstorm how curriculum could be transformed, and only then engage with potential community partners around mutually reciprocal relationships, following Kecskes’ (2015) recommendation to begin in the “taking stock” phase. All teams in the second cohort found it beneficial to gather baseline data on current engagement efforts, accounting for their impact and generating a joint mission that better prepared them to seek out a community partner that would best fit their needs.
In addition to conversing about the objectives and projects within the unit (a look inward at departmental assets and objectives), additional metrics designed to press outward may be helpful for expanding potentially narrow disciplinary frameworks and assumptions. For some departments, a literature review of engagement within their disciplinary fields can be used to shape discussion around the challenges and merits of various approaches to community engagement. This process helped a number of teams develop a shared understanding of community engagement in the context of their department and disciplines, generating a shared vision for how they want to progress. In the current case study, this process also resulted in the production of internal reporting documents that served as a catalyst for department-wide buy-in. In general, such a process can reframe essential dialogues around best practices, challenges, and strategies for moving forward (Kecskes, 2015). We echo Kecskes’ (2004) recommendations and further specify that EDIs begin by requiring departments initially engage in dialogue on program mission, vision, and values, complete a literature review of engagement within their own discipline and subfields, conduct curricular mapping, and review place-based engagement opportunities.

Critical Challenge Three: Attrition and Change

While the transitory nature of personnel within the nonprofit and higher education systems is, in fact, one of the reasons to pursue EDIs, it has also been a consistent challenge. Even though EDIs’ aim to sustain deep, pervasive, and integrated engagement practices by requiring collaborative ownership of the partnership (Kecskes, 2015), personnel attrition still halts progress and causes tensions. Adamuti-Trache and Hyle (2015) argued that long-term partnerships between faculty and community require “adequate communication, a culture of sharing and recognition of partners’ strengths” (p. 75), but even such practices cannot entirely redress the challenges of attrition and rapidly changing needs. The impact of personnel losses in the current case study ranged from minor and temporary roadblocks to the complete reimagining of the engaged projects. In general, participating EDI teams that were unable to identify community partners with strong organizational leaders made less progress enacting their project plans. While identifying committed organizational leaders is essential for long-term, reciprocal partnerships (Adamuti-Trache & Hyle, 2015), it can take quite a bit of time to find and support committed organizational change agents. Indeed, some community organizations may have no committed change agents. In one EDI partnership, each member of the community agency left the organization before the first year of the partnership was complete. Noting this challenge, Clocksin and Greicar (2017) concluded that community partnerships are ephemeral in nature, “as key stakeholders leave, so too does the partnership” (p. 366).

In addition to the loss of personnel, evolving organizational desires and changing community conditions also challenged efforts to sustain and launch projects and maintain momentum toward relational, high-quality engagement across participating EDI teams in the current case study. Faculty found the combination of these conditions to be a major concern. One interviewee noted that these issues resulted in the need for a “continuous infusion of energy” that was not acknowledged by the short-term initiative or the institution in any substantial way. For example, while this partnership produced clearly valuable products to the partner agency (a refugee resettlement organization) in its first year—including program assessment reports, translation services, and the creation of training videos for the agency’s clients as well as guest lectures and student internships—changes in the political, legal, and economic landscape meant that vastly different work was needed in the second year of the partnership. In particular, efforts to assess the needs of a different population of clients and to understand the long-term needs of refugees was requested. Despite shifting needs, additional support for reassessing and recalibrating the partnership was not available. For instance, there was no funding, course release time, assigned faculty, student assistance, or administrative support.

Emerging opportunities for adaptability and flexibility. Collaborative, community-based initiatives require flexibility in order to foster reciprocity under changing conditions over the long term. Engaged department initiatives must support the messy and emergent evolution of such work, opening opportunities and offering incentives for departments to adapt plans in order to best meet the needs of their students and community members (Kecskes, 2015). Hoffman (2015) referred to the need for flexibility by describing collaborative engagement, at its best, as an organic and generative process that requires
The two departments with the most significant, thriving partnerships have done just this: continued to evolve in their approach by reimagining course projects with community partner needs in mind, pursuing new grant opportunities, conducting additional research, advocating for changes on campus, and recruiting new students to the project. Internally, departments can better adapt to unexpected changes resulting from loss of key personnel, changing community conditions, or altered partner needs when they prioritize and legitimize the ongoing work required to sustain partnerships through formally legitimizing the partner’s involvement (i.e., the provisions of a stipend, memorandum of understanding, a contract letter, etc.). By inviting partners into the curricular visioning process, new course plans can be vetted with the partner in mind and feedback can be elicited prior to sending revisions through the curriculum system. Additional logistical support—whether funding or personnel—can help dampen the barriers and obstacles of this work.

In addition to assigning liaisons to this work, they can also ensure such changes are filtered across the program through multiple touch points (departmental meetings, student presentations, monthly partner updates, semesterly reporting documents, etc.). For instance, one department’s outreach to a host of potential partner organizations yielded little interest in (or preparation for) long-term student engagement opportunities. Encountering this challenge, they adjusted their approach and by the end of the 18-month initiative, concluded that their program and students could be effectively supported by an association of partnerships, not one.

Externally, administrators of EDIs can further support the need for adaptive and flexible engagement by ensuring the initiative provides peer-to-peer support and requires consistent assessment feedback loops (Rabourn, Lake, Mileva, & Scobey, 2018). For instance, the requirement that departments engage in semestery assessment in the second-round initiative encouraged faculty to stay more in tune with the collaboration as it unfolded, encouraging effective and timely adjustments. Findings also verified the value of cross-departmental peer-to-peer support. This strategy allowed for real-time cross-team brainstorming on challenges as they emerged.

Critical Challenge Four: Lack of Infrastructural Support

While this EDI acted as a catalyst for outreach efforts, it did not acknowledge the need for adaptive flexibility over the long term by offering resources to support the ongoing work needed. A lack of university infrastructural support was noted across most participating teams, and was especially true for the two four-year institutions involved. Indeed, the participating departments located at the college offering the least amount of infrastructural support and administrative backing encountered more roadblocks and made the least progress. And despite a burgeoning network and procedures for supporting this work at the large public university, the actual work involved caused participating faculty to consistently ask for additional resources and time.

For example, as faculty began to implement engagement in their courses they voiced consistent concerns about a lack of training for students and a desire for more professional development opportunities for faculty. In particular, faculty in this case study expressed a desire for support in preparing students on three fronts: cultural sensitivity, awareness of organizational culture, and professionalism. In truth, the need to prepare faculty and students for engaged learning has long been acknowledged (Brukardt, Holland, Percy, & Zimpher, 2004; Kecskes, 2006, 2008, 2015). Kecskes (2015) has also made the need for sustained and adaptive engagement clear, sharing that such initiatives require “time, patience, generosity, and inclination toward reflective practice and creativity, ideally guided by a facilitative leader” (p. 62).

Emerging opportunities for creating support through boundary-spanning advocacy.

At one of the three institutions with greater commitment to intentional administrative support, these challenges were ameliorated through boundary-spanning advocacy that led to the design and implementation of interactive training modules, optional in-class workshops, an additional community engagement colloquia series, and a second round of EDIs. These opportunities deepened faculty and student readiness for engagement through a focus on cultural sensitivity, organizational culture, and professionalism. They were intended to not only increase student and faculty readiness for the experience, but also to reduce the stress they often experience, and increase the likelihood of generating mutually beneficial outcomes for all participants.
In general, these findings further support the conclusion that such initiatives must be surrounded by additional infrastructural support. Indeed, we have argued that layers of support across the university are needed in order to sustain long-term and mutually beneficial partnerships with the community. In addition to the two critical layers of support mentioned previously (peer-to-peer support and assessment feedback loops), we have previously identified the value of leveraging on-campus expertise generated through such initiatives and advocating for the creation of support structures that legitimize and incentivize this work (Rabourn et al., 2018). Such an approach is especially valuable when EDIs are implemented by mid-level engagement administrators operating outside of faculty governance and lacking the power or resources to ensure long-term and infrastructural support. Previous research has shown that the integration of engaged curriculum is still largely undervalued across most institutions of higher education (Saltmarsh & Gelman, 2006). It is rarely accounted for within standard tenure and promotion processes (Crookes et al., 2015; O’Meara et al., 2015). In the current case study, we found that recognizing faculty member dedication to community-based learning within tenure and promotion processes, for example, were more likely to feel that this time-intensive work was valued by the institution.

With commitment from unit, college, and university leadership, we recommend that transacademic managers be assigned to leverage initiative findings into the creation of infrastructural support at the university. A transacademic manager can serve as a boundary spanner, navigating between worlds in order to build and sustain relationships and networks. They seek to work outside of hierarchies and foster democratic decision-making and interdependency on complex local problems (Williams, 2002). When possible, opening opportunities for such a role to participating faculty and staff as an essential part of their workload is also likely to yield deep, pervasive, and integrated engagement since it would assign time to fostering relationships, redesigning curriculum, and assessing projects. Truly collaborative plans and genuine alignment between the department and community partner require relational, organic, generative work (Hoffman, 2015).

Implications and Discussion

Context and Approach

Our cross-institutional research findings further confirm that the critical challenges experienced by faculty across three institutions and 10 participating departments are exacerbated or ameliorated by the institutional context surrounding the work, a fact scholars have long known (Kezar, 2014; Sturm, 2006, 2010; Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh, & Bush, 2011). For instance, upon encountering lackluster administrative support, heavy turnover, and a lack of sustained funding, departments at the small, private institution completed the basic requirements for the first-round 18-month initiative and never expanded from there. Without institutional support or backing for intensive curricular redesign, departments at the local community college used the initiative to simply enhance days of service projects already underway, failing to consider opportunities for long-term curricular reform. In contrast, with a strong commitment from the university president, the signing of a civic action plan, the designation of community-based learning courses, and the implementation of distinguished community-engagement awards, the EDI teams at the large, public institution have all persevered past the initiative’s official end date. To the extent that such initiatives are siloed and isolated additions to unsupportive university-wide structures, they are not likely to yield sustained change.

On the other hand, findings also indicate that effective intervention is dependent upon the initiative’s approach to engagement. When such initiatives are not progressively built over a longer period of time, resourced only for the initial groundwork, and disconnected from other strategic, infrastructural, and procedural work, they are not likely to generate pervasive and sustained change. Indeed, short-term engaged department initiatives can perpetuate, instead of alleviate, the challenges associated with community engagement. We conclude that one-and-done or one-off approaches are not just ineffective, but also unjust: while they may quickly generate quantifiable, short-term gains for the institution, they also generate unrealistic expectations and unsustainable workload commitments for faculty, increase the chances of short-term, surface-level engagement for students and disjointed, ineffective
community partnerships. When 1) the infrastructure and culture of the institution are not conducive to such work, and 2) the initiative is structured as a short-term, fast-paced, one-off attempt to foster change, it is unlikely to yield sustained impact (even if or when it yields short-term, quantifiable gains).

**Recommendation: Tier Engaged Department Cohorts**

We suggest future initiatives require longer-term, tiered investment from participating departments, merged funding over time, and provide recommendations on a range of effective ways to spend funds. In addition, we suggest initiatives are implemented in multiple cohorts. A tiered cohort approach not only fosters longer-term commitment and accountability for participating departments, it also allows new teams to learn from the challenges experienced by earlier engaged departments, creating layers of support, fostering cross-departmental collaboration, and generating networks for cross-institutional advocacy. Aligned with previous research findings, this model acknowledges that sustained change requires a long-term, flexible, context-sensitive approach, the fostering of relationships across networks, and multiple intervention strategies (Kezar, 2014). Such an approach also enacts Sturm et al.'s (2011) recommendations that sustained institutional change requires that we consider both “the institutional conditions that enable people in different roles to flourish, and how we can catalyze change through a range of initiatives and at multiple entry points” (p. 3). Juxtaposing the progress experienced at the large, public university with the other two participating institutions illustrates the value of the tiered cohort model. For example, after the start of the first-round EDI, evidence of a shifting departmental climate is clear: two participating departments are pursuing ways to partner with other departments, one department has asked to use their grant funds to provide a financial donation to their community partner, and an additional department has decided to reserve funds moving forward to support a graduate assistant position entirely devoted to engagement efforts. These outcomes indicate a significant climate change within participating departments, highlighting diverse ways that the EDI has created deeper and more integrated and pervasive engagement practices. With community engagement infused into the mission, vision, and value of each department, the momentum to push forward can further catalyze institutional change. While EDIs can be seen as an effective strategy for looking inward and fostering unit level change, tiering engaged department cohorts can be seen as a way to leverage those internal changes outward.

**Conclusion**

Our analysis leads us to reaffirm the merit of EDIs as one potentially effective entry point when they are supported by both the steps outlined by previous researchers of engaged departments, the enhanced recommendations noted within this article, and additional, long-term support structures. Interviews demonstrated the particular value of deepening faculty awareness of the breadth and depth of their program, investing in student involvement and leadership, as well as boundary-spanning oversight (like that of a transacademic manager) designed to yield flexible, responsive, real-time intervention strategies that leverage shifts toward processes, structures, and cultures of engagement across the university.

For these reasons, we recommend both the intentional creation and implementation of long-term and flexible structures and processes designed to support engaged work and a boundary-spanning administrative position. We also recommend future efforts commit to an engaged department cohort model. The support and accountability fostered by the cohort model tended to yield more progress toward generating deep, pervasive, and integrated engagement than did the one-off initiatives. It also opened opportunities to move beyond identifying challenges involved in such initiatives, providing time, space, and resources to leverage lessons learned into successive initiatives. In effect, the cohort model generates what Kaplan (2015) has labeled “in-reach,” making it a powerful opportunity for gathering “useful intelligence” likely to “facilitate partnerships” (p. 219). It also mobilizes interconnections, contributing to a shift in what Sturm et al. (2011) deem the university’s architecture. Such an approach “invites consideration of these initiatives in relation to the systems within which they operate, the structures that shape their actions, the design that creates the structures, and the spaces within which they work” (p. 5). Thus, we conclude that fostering deep, pervasive, and integrated engagement opportunities at the individual department/unit level can be an effective strategy when such an approach is designed in and through collaboration across the university and for the long haul.
References


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Abstract

Youth are often at risk for physical and psychosocial illnesses, and yet their input is rarely included in health assessments and interventions. Two U.S.-based universities partnered with community stakeholders and youth in Las Malvinas II, Dominican Republic to explore factors that promote and/or hinder the health of youth in Las Malvinas II. Youth (n=8) conducted a photovoice, and identified six key health priorities: (1) good nutrition, (2) depression and poverty, (3) violence, (4) sports and neighborhood association, (5) education, and (6) sanitation and community infrastructure. Findings revealed youth's exploration of complex multi-level determinants of health. This study suggests youth have nuanced understanding in regards to health. This paper presents the findings of the photovoice led by the youth as an illustrative case study of using CBPR-based methodologies to engage youth in local community health improvement efforts in Las Malvinas II, Dominican Republic.

Community health assessment (CHA) is a process designed to determine population health priorities as well as to identify health promoting community assets and risk factors. CHA seeks to obtain and interpret data for the purpose of designing and implementing interventions to improve health (Cibula, Novick, Morrow, & Sutphen, 2003). Research indicates CHA and community health improvement plans in local health agencies have led to improved public health decision-making (Rabarison, Timsina, & Mays, 2015). Moreover, multi-agency partnerships and participatory approaches to CHA foster collaboration while also contributing more relevant local action plans, which have the power to influence local policy (Chudgar et al., 2014; Zahner, Kaiser, & Kapelke-Dale, 2005). Through inclusive participatory processes, community members can take an active role in CHAs. This also addresses power imbalances as health professionals and community residents co-design protocols, collect and analyze data, and disseminate assessment findings. Such strategies lead to recommendations and interventions that are mutually beneficial to community members and academic partners (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010).

Participatory approaches to research present opportunities to increase youth sociopolitical and leadership skills while contributing to their communities (Ozer & Douglas, 2013). CHA also provides opportunities for data collection and knowledge-building regarding youths' nuanced perspectives on community health needs and assets that are often overlooked but can inform action initiatives to improve the health of communities (Brazg, Bekemeier, Spigner, & Huebner, 2011; Hebert-Beirne, Hernandez, Felner, Schwiesow, Mayer, Rak, Chavez, Castaneda, & Kennelly, 2018). In 2016, faculty and students at Clemson University partnered with community stakeholders in the Dominican Republic to implement a CHA as part of the Building Healthier Communities (BHC) initiative, an ongoing collaborative effort between the Dominican Republic's private and public organizations and local and U.S.-based higher education institutions. Drawing from the CDC CHANGE Framework (Desai & Edwards, 2010), focus groups, interviews, and household surveys with community residents contributed to the identification of health priorities regarding the health of youth and families. While key stakeholders from multiple sectors including health care, education, and community-based organizations played a major role throughout the process, youth voices were not included. However, the health and well-being of youth emerged as an important community priority among adults. As such, researchers at Clemson University set out to explore a strategy to engage youth in the community CHA process.

This paper describes an expansion of Clemson University's CHA work in the Dominican Republic through a partnership with Boston University's School of Social Work in an effort to engage youth
in the CHA. More specifically, this paper describes a photovoice training protocol that was designed to engage youth in Las Malvinas II, Dominican Republic in an exploration of community health priorities. Steeped in critical pedagogy, this photovoice protocol curriculum draws from Freire's (1970) pedagogy that shifts the power dynamics between teacher and student, transforming both as co-creators of knowledge rooted in individuals' lived experiences. This paper adds to the literature by illustrating effective strategies for engaging community stakeholders and youth at local and international levels in collaborative health and development efforts through a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach. Moreover, this paper details photovoice as a model to explore the complexities and perceptions of health-promoting risk factors from the lens of youth that could inform local and public policy efforts.

Background
Las Malvinas II is a vibrant community located in Santo Domingo that continues to experience multiple socioeconomic and environmental challenges. Over 1,500 residents live in substandard housing within 0.1 square kilometers, with mostly unpaved roads and underdeveloped infrastructure, where basic needs such as water and sewage are not met (López, 2009). In addition, the community is severely polluted by industrial waste and impacted by the lack of sanitation, health care, and other vital systems. Seventy percent of residents report being unemployed and nearly a third are illiterate (Universidad Iberoamericana [UNIBE], 2012). In an effort to improve local health and well-being, community leaders from the local neighborhood association in Las Malvinas II partnered with organizations from the public and private sector as well as local and U.S.-based higher education institutions. The aim of the partnership was to spearhead the BHC Initiative.

Building Healthier Communities Initiative
The BHC process began in Las Malvinas II in 2015 to foster multilevel partnerships and leverage community strengths to assess and improve the health outcomes of community residents. In order to institute healthier communities, university students and faculty partnered with UNIBE and the Las Malvinas II community leadership to culturally and linguistically adapt the missing into the CHA (Desai & Edwards, 2010). The BHC team conducted a mixed-method CBPR to identify community priorities and assets through interviews, focus groups, and household surveys. Research questions explore multilevel factors from the socioecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) across the community at large, school, health care, community organizations/institutions, and work sectors. Drawing from evidence-based practices such as the CDC's CHANGE tool in other cultural contexts, this initial study sought to explore the following research question: What are the social determinants of health related to five health priorities previously identified by local adult residents in Las Malvinas II? Key public health priorities identified by local residents and stakeholders included: 1) education, 2) unwanted pregnancy, 3) sanitation, 4) vaccine-preventable diseases, and 5) chronic disease management (Scockling, Brown, Fuentes, & Moore de Peralta, 2018). Although these results were valuable, and used to inform development of a collaborative community health improvement plan, the input from youth in Las Malvinas II was not included, even though the priorities were also relevant to young people, and they make up a significant portion of the population in the community. Therefore, in the present study, Clemson University and Boston University's School of Social Work collaborated with the local neighborhood association, La Junta de Vecinos, and Universidad Iberoamericana (UNIBE) to recruit, train, and engage youth in CBPR strategies such as photovoice to explore social determinants of health and health assets in their community.

Harnessing the Power of Youth and Communities
The BHC initiative employed a CBPR approach. CBPR presents key opportunities to engage local community residents and youth in decision-making to examine health inequities from their perspective and influence change in their communities (Sprague Martinez, Richards-Schuster, Teixeira, & Augsberger, 2018; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). CBPR is a transformative research paradigm that conceptualizes community members as assets and agents of change (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011). Instead of prioritizing the expertise of research institutions and power in decision-making, CBPR fosters partnerships with local communities that actively involve mutual collaboration and power sharing in decision-making throughout all stages of the research process (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998).
While CBPR approaches to research have also expanded to international communities, limited scholarship has engaged youth to examine social determinants of health. In a systematic review that examined 399 articles relevant to CBPR between 1985 and 2012, only 15% of the articles included CBPR projects in which youth were included as community partners, and from those who engaged youth, only 18% involved youth in all phases of the research process (Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner, 2013). Employing participatory approaches to research where youth are not only assets but also change agents presents a multitude of positive outcomes for youth including increased awareness and critical consciousness on social issues (Foster-Fishman, Law, Lichty, & Aoun, 2010) and increased youth skill development (Zeal & Terry, 2013). It can also balance power dynamics between youth and adults through redistribution and power sharing (Cahill, 2007).

Leveraging Photovoice as a Strategy to Engage Youth

Photovoice presents a promising participatory methodology to empower youth to examine and enact change in their communities. Developed by Wang and her colleagues in the 1990s through their work with women in Yunnan province, China (Wang, 1999), photovoice has continued to be used extensively to explore social issues from the perspectives of marginalized youth and adults across multiple disciplines including education (De Los Ríos, 2017; Smith, Bratini, & Appio, 2012), public health (Wang & Burriss, 1997; Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchison, Bell, & Pestronek, 2004; Wang & Pies, 2004), and social work education (Bromfield & Capous-Desyllas, 2017). Serving as a form of participatory visual ethnographic inquiry, photovoice allows participants to explore a social phenomenon from their own perspectives by capturing images of their daily activities and environments (Streng, Rhodes, Ayala, Eng, Arceo, & Phipps, 2004; Wang, 2006). This particular method has been shown to be effective when engaging populations in the margins such as indigenous, homeless, and youth of color (Castleden, Garvin, & First Nation, 2008; Streng et al., 2004) in addressing topics that are stigmatized, such as immigration, mental health, and sexually transmitted diseases (Davtyan, Farmer, Brown, Sami, & Frederick, 2016; Fleming, Mahoney, Carlson, & Engebretson, 2009; Mizock, Russinova, & Shani, 2014; Streng et al., 2004). Furthermore, the photovoice process has contributed to youth leadership and civic engagement in effecting change (Wilson, Dasho, Martin, Wallerstein, Wang, & Minkler, 2007).

There is a growing body of literature on local and international community health research and practice that employs photovoice as a strategy to engage individuals and communities in the margins in health development initiatives addressing community health priorities. Health priorities explored internationally through photovoice by youth have included: physical social determinants of health such as sanitation in Uganda (Esau, Ho, Blair, Duffy, O’Hara, Kapoor, & Ajiko, 2017); identity and resilience in Kenya (Dakin, Parker, Amell, & Rogers, 2015); HIV prevention in the United States and South Africa (Davtyan et al., 2016; Mitchell, DeLange, Moletsane, Stuart, & Buthelezi, 2005; Moletsane, Delange, Mitchell, Stuart, Buthelezi & Taylor, 2007); forced migration in Uganda (Green & Kloos, 2009); and maternal health in Uganda and in the U.S. (Musoke, Ndejjo, Ekirapa-Kiracho, & George, 2016; Wang & Pies, 2004). However, there is limited international literature that incorporates youth perspectives on health holistically, particularly in the Dominican Republic. In 2014, researchers trained street drug users in the photovoice methodology to explore factors that stigmatized the drug addiction epidemic in Santo Domingo (Padilla, Matiz-Reyes, Colón-Burgos, Varas-Díaz, & Vertovec, 2018). While this research used participatory approaches such as photovoice, it focused primarily on drug addiction and consumption. To the best of the researchers’ knowledge, in addition to the photovoice research project that engaged street drug users in the Dominican Republic, this study is one of few that have engaged youth in the Dominican Republic in health development efforts using photovoice.

The main objective of this paper is to illustrate effective strategies to engage community stakeholders and youth to explore assets and social determinants to young people’s health and well-being. More specifically, this paper discusses in detail photovoice as a model that engages community stakeholders and integrates youth voice in setting local and international level priorities relevant to health and community development. We describe the photovoice methods as well as findings presented by the youth at the community forum.
Methods
Institutional Review Boards (IRB) at Clemson University, UNIBE, and Boston University reviewed and approved the assessment protocol, with the primary IRB being Clemson University. In order to determine health priorities, youth implemented a weeklong photovoice project in Las Malvinas II, Dominican Republic.

Sample
Eight youth participated in a weeklong photovoice study. Youth ranged in age from 18 to 24 years old (M=20.25, SD=2.05). Five of eight participants self-identified as male (62.5%) and three of eight participants identified as female (37.5%). All youth participants were born and raised in the Dominican Republic and Spanish was identified as their first language. Three were high school graduates (37.5%), two were high school seniors (25%), and three were freshman, sophomore, and junior in high school, respectively.

Procedures
This study incorporated a two-phase non-random sampling strategy (Devers & Frankel, 2000) to identify photovoice participants (n=8). First, purposeful sampling strategies were used by the local partner university representative and the neighborhood association president to identify key adult and youth leaders from the local neighborhood association in Las Malvinas II. Next, using snowball sampling (Noy, 2008), key adult and youth leaders were asked to identify youth members of their networks to participate. Once participants were identified, they were invited to attend the photovoice sessions.

Drawing from Nuestro Futuro Saludable’s critical service learning, health equity, and action curriculum (Martinez, Ndulue, & Peréab, 2011), adult researchers facilitated training to youth participants. A critical pedagogy framework was incorporated into the training where youth identified and examined prioritized health assets and threats in the context of their lived experiences in their communities. Critical pedagogy positions youth as experts of their own lives that actively co-construct an understanding of key issues to transform their realities (Bellino & Adams, 2017; Price & Mencke, 2013). Research activities were designed specifically with the understanding that youth are equipped with a wealth of knowledge and skills; thus sessions were tailored to be dynamic providing ownership to the youth over the course of the project. Youth participated in three full-day photovoice sessions (see Table 1).

Session 1
Youth participated in team-building activities to develop positive relationships and get to know each other. In addition, youth also brainstormed on group agreements to create brave and positive learning spaces. Then, youth defined health in their own words and identified facts that promoted or hindered health through a collective brainstorm. Adult facilitators led a series of visual and storytelling narrative exercises where youth reflected on examples of health assets and threats at the individual, interpersonal, and community level. Adult facilitators took notes of youth responses and emerging themes on large flipchart paper throughout the group brainstorm and discussion.

With the intention to equip youth with a critical understanding of their lived experiences and the various factors that influence youth health, adult facilitators introduced social determinants of health and the socioecological model.
(Bronfenbrenner, 1994) using visuals and applying them to examples of personal anecdotes told by the youth. Followed by the introduction of key concepts, youth selected key health priorities through a democratic voting process. Next, youth were trained in photovoice methodology. This training included basic photography, camera usage, and ethics.

**Session 2**

During the second day of the photovoice session, youth focused on data collection and analysis. Youth were divided into small groups of two and three, and each group received a digital camera, which they used to take photos around their community relevant to the health priorities identified in the first photovoice session. Youth spent the second half of the session presenting the images captured and analyzing the photos collectively using the SHOWeD process drawing from Wang’s (1999) research that will be further described. As a result of the analysis and discussion of the images, youth created photo essays and captions that explored more in-depth the health priorities identified by the youth. Final images based on clarity and relevance to the health priority were selected and edited by the youth.

**Session 3**

In the final photovoice session, youth planned and implemented strategies to disseminate their findings with the community. Youth planned and presented at a community forum in Las Malvinas II. Adult facilitators provided logistical support, which included printing photovoice images and captions and communicating with the local neighborhood association to support with recruitment and outreach of key community stakeholders to attend the forum.

**Analysis**

Youth collected 130 photos and through a democratic voting process, they evaluated the quality and concept of each image and chose 17 that best represented the health priorities identified. After the images were selected, youth were asked to title and write a short essay caption for each image. Using the SHOWeD mnemonic framework (Wang, 1999), researchers facilitated the writing process by moderating discussions with youth on: 1) What do you See?, 2) What is really Happening?, 3) How does it relate to Our lives?, 4) Why does this problem, concern, or strength exist?, and 5) What can we Do about it? With the support of undergraduate Clemson University students as well as Clemson University service-learning students, youth participants, in small groups, analyzed and discussed emerging themes found in the images, while college service-learning students provided support by writing verbatim youth reflections to accommodate their multiple literacy levels. Each group of youth presented their images and write-ups to their peers in the larger group and incorporated additional suggestions from their peers. Images and in-depth discussions were analyzed carefully using the SHOWeD guide and collective write-ups of each image were drafted.

Once images were selected and written and descriptions of each image completed, youth presented their findings to community residents and stakeholders including members from the local neighborhood association and municipal government. By fostering dialogue between youth and adults, participatory photovoice efforts can contribute to creating a youth/adult partnership model in the planning of the health interventions and community initiatives with municipal institutions as well as the neighborhood association.

**Results**

Youth participants identified health priorities and assets that were different from those identified during the adult CHA. These themes, identified in Table 1, included: depression, poverty, violence, sports and neighborhood association, education, sanitation and community infrastructure, and social media. This paper presents the photovoice images presented by youth at a local community forum. Community health assets such as the local neighborhood association, access to good nutrition, sports, and green space are discussed, as well as community threats such as violence, depression, lack of sanitation, and underdeveloped community infrastructure. Youth created recommendations particularly with the intention to remediate and prevent negative health outcomes. In the sections that follow, images are discussed along with the captions youth developed based on the SHOWeD framework. Photo essays and write-ups were written by youth in Spanish and the research team translated them to English. Although youth agreed with the five health priorities identified by adults initially in 2015 as part of the BHC process, youth also explored additional health priorities that reflect more nuanced perspectives regarding the root causes and upstream factors in the social environment that impact the health and well-being of youth in Las Malvinas II (see Table 1).
Good Nutrition

Youth identified good nutrition as a factor that promoted youth health and well-being. A youth took a photo that depicts produce and snacks at a “colmado” (corner store, also usually a social gathering place) store in their neighborhood. Contextual factors that influenced access to healthy food were not discussed. A youth stated:

(Spanish) La buena alimentación es muy bueno porque podemos comer saludable, y además podemos estar en buena forma…. Los alimentos deberían de estar organizados, y limpios, en buenas condiciones.

(English) A good nutrition is very good because we can eat healthy and also be in good shape…. The food should be organized, clean, and in good condition.

Depression and Poverty

In addition to physical health, youth also identified mental health and depression as a key health priority to their overall well-being, which was not included in the adult-led assessment. In Image 1, a woman is shown covering her face with her hands. A youth described the situation like this:

(Spanish) Es cuando una persona tiene demasiados pensamientos, y tiene actitud depresiva, molesta, agresiva.

(English) It’s like when a person has a lot of thoughts and has a depressive, annoyed, and aggressive attitude.

Moreover, youth associated depression with other health threats and described potential causes as well as solutions:

(Spanish) Surge por la salud que los afecta, enfermedades como: el VIH, sida o cáncer. Pueden ser ayudados por el familiar. Como solución proponemos ir al psicólogo buscar tratamientos, interactuar con los demás, tener confianza, fe y por más problemas que tengamos podemos solucionarlos.

(English) It originates from the health that affects them, diseases such as HIV or cancer. They can be helped by a family member. As a solution, we suggest to go to the psychologist to look for treatment, interact with others, have trust, faith, and no matter how many problems we have, we can solve them.

In addition to chronic health diseases as potential causes of depression, youth also described associations with broader economic conditions such as poverty and misery as major factors that lead to depression. Regarding Image 2, a youth said:

(Spanish) El problema es la miseria, lo cual puede llevar a la depresión. En esta casa duerme una persona a pesar de las condiciones en que está. Surge por problemas económicos y por la falta de empleo.

(English) The problem is misery, which can lead to depression. In this house, a person sleeps despite the condition it’s in. It’s caused by economic problems and unemployment.

Violence/Lack of Safety

Youth across photovoice sessions also spoke about repeated experiences and continuous exposure to violence in their communities. Among events described by the youth that impacted their lives, their families as well as their communities, a youth wrote in one of the narrative exercises: “Un hombre que mató a su mujer” (“a man that killed his wife”). Furthermore, even when youth identified factors that promoted their health in their built-in environment such as green space, lack of safety was identified as a continuous health threat that limited access to community assets. In a segment entitled “Área verde insegura” (Unsafe Green Space), a youth described a photo of an open green space like this:

(Spanish) No todo se ve tan mal en nuestra comunidad, Las Malvinas, porque mira lo lindo que se ven en esa foto ahí… El área verde puede ser una zona turística y de recreación.
Not everything looks that bad in our community, Las Malvinas, because look how pretty it looks in that photo… the green space can be a tourist and recreation zone.

Youth recognize green spaces as a key asset to the well-being of the community. However, youth also identified feeling unsafe as a factor that limited the frequency of accessing this space. While the green space had potential to be a recreational space for families, youth did not use the space frequently due to fear of being harmed. They further explained:

Because we’re afraid that something will happen to us, of being robbed or abused by delinquency.

In order to address this matter, youth recommended implementing systems to increase safety and surveillance by:

Taking the appropriate measures with a security plan to provide safety and peace to the people in our community.

Sports and the Neighborhood Association

Among community assets the youth identified, in addition to access to green spaces, were the positive impact of sports and the community neighborhood association. Youth captured various signs in the community. As a response to the public community sign, “Dile si al deporte, no a las drogas” (“Say yes to sports and no to drugs”), youth highlighted the role of sports and community-led groups in promoting youth health and well-being in the face of adversities:

This classroom is not in adequate condition to educate students because it’s a garage and we think that it’s not appropriate for education.

Moreover, youth also spoke about the role of the grassroots local neighborhood association in advocating for the development of sport facilities that promote youth health and well-being:

We can count on the support of the Neighborhood Association. They help us resolve our problems in the community regarding trash, sports. Because of them, we have the basketball and volleyball court.

Education

Similarly to adults, youth also identified education as a health priority associated with the well-being of youth in Las Malvinas II. While adults’ emphasis was heavily on increasing education outcomes, photovoice revealed multiple barriers youth experience when accessing a high-quality education. Youth unanimously identified school’s infrastructure and resources as a major concern: “Me Asfixio en esa Aula” ("I’m suffocating in that classroom"). Youth captured photos of spaces where students have class and play during recess (Image 3). Youth say:

This classroom is not in adequate condition to educate students because it’s a garage and we think that it’s not appropriate for education.

Moreover, youth presented various recommendations including:

Build a new school and take care of it.
Open a new school because a lot of times we don't have resources to go to another school. We don't have money to go somewhere else.

Improve so students have a healthy environment because they can't breathe due to the dust.

There are kids who don't want to go to school because that's a house, a classroom where class is held... and at the “garage.” Recess is at a gallery, they don't have space to have fun during recess.

Sanitation and Community Infrastructure

In addition to education, adults as well as youth identified sanitation as a key health priority. Youth captured photos depicting large bodies of still, contaminated water generated by the factories as potential threats exposing youth to develop multiple diseases. In Image 4, the youth explained:

“El agua aposada por mucho tiempo causa gripe, mal olor, y entre muchas enfermedades” (“The still water sitting for a long time causes bad smells and colds, among other diseases”). Despite these challenges, youth demonstrated a strong sense of collective responsibility and action by sharing recommendations to improve the sewage and draining system:

We should collaborate among all of us and avoid this from happening, because with a friendly hand, everything is possible. A submersible hole sewer should be created so it prevents it from accumulating. Because whether it rains or not, that water remains there accumulated.

Furthermore, inconsistent curbside trash collection for residents was found to be associated with negative health outcomes for the community. In Image 5, “Esta es la solución a la basura” (“This is the solution to trash”), youth captured a group of residents throwing trash bags on the garbage truck. A participant stated:

To send it (garbage truck) more frequently, because right now, a month...
goes by for the truck to come and lots of trash accumulates causing pollution and impacting our health.

Youth further explained institutional power from the factories was a key determinant to this health threat:

(Spanish) Porque a veces viene y se queda recogiendo la basura de las fábricas por su dinero y la de la comunidad, no las recoge porque el camión se llena con la basura de la fábrica.
(English) Because sometimes it (garbage truck) comes, and it just picks up the trash from the factories because of their money, and the trash from the community doesn't get collected because the truck is full with the factory's waste.

Moreover, youth also added the role of money and buying power associated with waste collection:

(Spanish) Ponemos la basura en la esquina y el camión no se la lleva. Y cuando tú vas a botar la basura y no estás ahí para tirarla, ellos te la dejan. Si tú le pagas, ellos la pueden echar al camión, si no le pagas, ellos la dejan ahí.
(English) We place the trash in the corner, and the truck does not take it. And when you go to throw the trash away and you're now there to throw it to the truck, they leave it there. If you pay them, they will put it in the truck, but if you don't, they will leave it there.

In addition to waste collection and sanitation, street pavement and maintenance was also identified as a key health threat to the well-being of youth in the community. Youth felt local political candidates and elected officials were not accountable to meeting the youth and the community's needs, particularly the condition of the street pavement. “Prometen y nunca cumplen” (“They make promises but never keeping them,” a youth said (Image 6).

(Spanish) Estamos todavía en espera de que arreglen las calles, porque para tiempo de campaña, el síndico de Santo Domingo Norte siempre promete y nunca cumple con tal de que le den los votos. Y así nosotros somos engañados por los candidatos políticos. Porque cuando llueve todo se llena de lodo, un “bache.” No podemos salir. Tiraron los contener y pusieron la tubería por debajo de la calle para poder tirar las calles y todavía nada, estamos en espera.
(English) We're still waiting for the streets to be fixed, because during campaign time, the governor of Santo Domingo Norte always makes promises that he never keeps unless he gets votes. And so, we're deceived by the political candidates. Because when it rains, it's all filled up with mud. We cannot leave. They put some containers and pipes under the street so they could pave the streets but nothing still, we're still waiting.

Discussion

We conducted a CBPR photovoice with eight youth from a low-resourced community in the Dominican Republic to identify health priorities from a youth perspective. Photovoice findings revealed youths’ nuanced experiences in regard to health and well-being. Youth grappled with multilevel social determinants of health in the context of the socioecological model at the individual, interpersonal, and community level. Youth drew complex relationships of health threats at the institutional broader level such as lack of economic opportunities and how it can be potentially associated with individual health outcomes such as depression. Although youth agreed with the initial health priorities identified by adults, youth explored the complex relationships between these and the potential impact on individuals’ health and behaviors when analyzing these priorities (Table 1). For example, when looking at education, while youth agreed with adults’ initial prioritization to expand and enhance the infrastructure of the only school in the community in 2015, youth also examined limited
financial resources and poor infrastructure as social determinants that impact students’ motivation to stay in school or further continue their high school education. In the photovoice sessions, youth also talked about the role of multiple barriers that could complicate youth access to education such as financial constraints, teen pregnancy, and violence. Young women’s health outcomes were at the crossroads of supporting financially their families and returning to school while also facing intimate partner violence. Youth described women in their communities being murdered by their husbands in the photovoice storytelling exercises. Moreover, a mother of one of the youth participants informed her daughter about a man that murdered his wife and was on the way to make a phone call to the wife’s family. Although research suggests photovoice as an appropriate tool to learn about the experiences of youth with topics that may carry a level of stigma such as violence (Chonody, Ferman, Amitrani-Welsh, & Martin, 2013), further research should explore approaches to consider incorporating additional socio-emotional support to youth participants to cope with the traumatic impact of violence.

Youth identified the local neighborhood association, sports, and green spaces as potential community health assets that were dynamic and constantly interacting with health threats such as lack of safety, poverty, and lack of community stakeholders’ accountability. For example, in Área Verde Insegura (Unsafe Green Space), youth examined environmental factors that can be an asset and a threat simultaneously. While green space represents opportunities for enrichment and community building, lack of safety transforms this health asset into a threat to community safety. Prior examinations of contextual assets and institutional resources present in the environment (Theokas & Lerner, 2006) have not discussed in depth the factors that may impact individuals’ access to these assets, especially from the perspective of youth. This duality speaks to the complexity of youth experiences and perspectives that differ significantly from adults and affirms that these perspectives are important to capture and recognize when designing community health assessments and intervention plans. Congruent with the literature, photovoice findings speak for the nuanced perspectives on health assets and threats that youth experience in their communities (Brazg et al., 2011; Sprague Martinez, Gute, Ndulue, Seller, Brugge, & Peréa, 2012; Hebert-Beirne et al., 2018). While some of the health priorities identified by adults aligned with some of the priorities youth identified (see Table 1), such as education and sanitation, additional health priorities such as violence and community health assets such as sports and the local neighborhood association capture youth nuanced experiences and perspectives often overlooked by adults.

The photovoice process also allowed youth to build and use important life skills. For example, youth exhibited critical consciousness (Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016) and the capacity to analyze, navigate, and challenge structural and social inequities in examining the role of power in the provision of sanitation resources and street maintenance. In studies of youth, critical consciousness mitigates the impact of inequities and predicts better health, academic, career, and civic outcomes in marginalized youth (Diemer et al., 2016). Therefore, through CBPR activities such as photovoice, youth are likely to develop the abilities that will help them to develop the agency and competence to challenge oppressive structures and inequities to set their own paths (Diemer et al., 2016). In accordance to the CBPR approach (Sprague Martinez et al., 2018; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010), multilevel partnerships and participatory approaches to exploring health and well-being of youth in the community yielded not only rich qualitative data, but also contributed to further active engagement of youth as experts in the Building Healthier Communities initiative, fostering dialogue between youth and adults to effect change (Wilson et al., 2007).

After youth presented their findings at the community forum, residents and key community stakeholders, neighborhood association members and representatives from various governmental and non-governmental organizations in attendance recognize the knowledge and contributions of

Image 6. Street pavements are promised but never kept, a youth said.
youth and expressed interest in partnering with youth to support municipal efforts in the planning and implementation of educational strategies with the community. This multilevel community/academic partnership presents opportunities for the community as well as interdisciplinary educational institutional efforts, including social work practitioners to collaborate and contribute to local health and development abroad and in the United States.

Limitations
Analyses presented here were developed in the span of a weeklong series of photovoice sessions by a group of eight youth who were referred by the local neighborhood association. Future studies engaging a larger group of youth from multiple ages between 12 to 17 years old would uncover additional themes particular to their experiences. Additional future research may also replicate this model across different groups of youth to determine similarities and differences based on comparing different demographic characteristics. Youth were divided into small groups and were given one camera to capture images. While this fostered teamwork and collaboration, images may have been influenced by youth holding the camera. Future photovoice sessions should provide individual cameras to all youth and allocate further time for discussion of their lived experiences in the context of a deeper application of the socioecological model in their community. Due to limited time of the sessions, while key themes emerged throughout the discussions among youth, not all of these themes were captured through images during the photovoice sessions. Allocating increased time can yield further nuanced perspectives on the health and well-being of youth integrating the complex intersectional identities of youth across class, gender, ability status, race, religion, etc.

Conclusion
Youth reflections as well as adults’ experiences have demonstrated that this community-based participatory research photovoice approach presents multiple benefits to the community and collaborating institutions. Not only did it provide opportunities to engage youth meaningfully within their social environment by capturing images, participating in critical analysis, but it also involved youth in the planning and implementation of health initiatives in partnership with adults and multilevel community stakeholders in Las Malvinas II, Dominican Republic. These benefits were affirmed by the words of Danilo, who wrapped up the week by stating:

(Spanish) Bueno, qué puedo decir?... Me he quedado sin palabras de verdad que sí... gracias por llegar acá a las Malvinas y realmente por el apoyo por ayudarnos a saber que realmente tenemos potencial y salir adelante. Realmente nosotros tenemos la capacidad... o sea... nunca dudar del potencial que nosotros tenemos. Porque realmente, nosotros los jóvenes tenemos una capacidad. Podemos vencer cada obstáculo. Y si nosotros podemos vencer cada obstáculo, hay que seguir... con la frente en alto.

(English) Well, what can I say?... I’m left without words honestly. It’s been amazing.... Thank you for coming here to Las Malvinas and also for your support in helping us know that we really have the potential to move forward. We’re really capable, I mean never doubt the potential that we have. Because really, we, the youth, have capacity...we can overcome every obstacle. And if we can overcome every obstacle, we have to move forward with our heads up.

While literature suggests CHAs have the potential to generate a deeper understanding of the health of a population through research, CBPR photovoice approaches can complement CHA by including voices left out in the CHA process. Fostering collaboration and creative approaches to community-driven research, CBPR photovoice empowers youth by supporting the development of critical analyses of their lived experiences and social determinants of health. Incorporating these findings and approaches to enhancing the health of communities can yield to key contributions in policy.

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An Ecological Approach to Understanding Program Management Practices for Food Pantries in Rural Communities

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Abstract

This qualitative study was conducted in Mississippi, a state comprised of 82 counties, many of which are rural and highly impoverished. To gain a greater understanding of the food needs of residents from across the state, a representative sample of food pantries from each region of the state was identified. For this project, researchers with the Mississippi Food Insecurity Project formed a partnership with the Mississippi Food Network to interview partner pantries across the state. Interviews were conducted with food pantry managers and volunteers to examine various issues, challenges, and successes related to their operations. All interviews were transcribed and coded using a systematic analysis of codes to generate major themes related to pantry management protocols. Using an ecological framework, our study yielded five major areas of consideration for optimal pantry management: volunteer recruitment, operating and control systems, patron needs, collaboration, and advocacy.

Introduction

In 2018, 11.8 million U.S. households reported being food insecure, defined as being unable, at some point during the year, to provide enough food for each member of the household due to a lack of resources (United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, n.d). Furthermore, 4.5% of these households reported very low food security, indicating challenges in providing enough food for each member of the household, along with a reduction in food and disrupted eating patterns. Low and very low food security have been especially prevalent in nonmetropolitan (rural) areas, among ethnic/racial minorities, and within households with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty line (Coleman-Jensen, Rabbit, Gregory, & Singh, 2016). Moreover, in 2015, 12.7% of Americans were food insecure, and rural households suffered higher levels of food insecurity than other households (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2016). In 2019, with a population of just under 3 million people, Mississippi is hampered by both the highest rate of poverty at 19.8% (United States Census Bureau, QuickFacts Mississippi, n.d.) and food insecurity at 18.7% (Health of Women and Children, n.d.) Prevalence of food insecurity has prompted public and private agencies and organizations to continue the implementation of strategies to alleviate this need and its associated health and social issues (Daponte & Bade, 2006).

Data from three federal programs—Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the National School Lunch Program, and Women, Infants, and Children—provide evidence of this pervasive need. Some 59% of food insecure households used at least one of these three federal programs in 2015. Historically, charitable groups have also provided food to those most in need, through the establishment of emergency kitchens, food banks, and food pantries (Greenberg, Greenberg, & Mazza, 2010).

Despite these conditions, scant literature exists regarding food pantry operations and best practices for managing food pantries in rural communities. Furthermore, advancements in community engagement among higher education institutions present a growing challenge to understand the contextual factors for serving diverse populations, particularly in rural communities. In relation to food security, this role is vital in addressing social disparities plaguing at-risk groups and communities.

Collaborators in the Mississippi Food Insecurity Project noted this gap in the literature and the potential function of organizational factors in pantry utilization patterns (Paynter, Berner, & Anderson, 2011). In this article, researchers share findings from a food insecurity study that sought to add to the literature in this area. Specifically, this research highlights perspectives regarding pantry providers’ delivery of services within an
ecological framework, and in so doing, offers key considerations in the management of rural, faith-based, and non-faith-based food pantries.

Literature Review

The collaborative nature of community/university efforts to eradicate food insecurity rests on the premise that community members and university researchers combine expert knowledge in pursuit of research-based solutions. The subjective nature of this work centers on the specific needs of the community and identifying challenges and solutions germane to their needs. This approach juxtaposes traditional research paradigms that embrace objectivity and challenges the notion of how knowledge is created to address critical issues in the community (Dodd & Nelson, 2018). These partnerships provide an avenue for access to a range of opportunities for enhancing the community’s capacity for development. Cooper, Kotval-K, Kotval, and Mullin (2014) claim that the breadth of community/university partnerships underscores a cultural shift in society’s recognition of the invaluable contributions that communities and universities can make when they work together. Research regarding a range of social services (Brown & McKeown, 1997; Degeneffe, 2003; Ebaugh, Pipes, Chafetz, & Daniels, 2003) has focused on short-term outcomes. Yet, collaborative efforts between university and community partners provide an avenue to promote sustainable development for a community’s social, educational, and economic well-being.

Priority areas of interest for faith-based organizations and non-faith-related groups have included services to the homeless, incarcerated, orphaned, and hungry (Boddie, 2002; Scales & Kelly, 2016). Efforts to address the needs of such groups have led to the development and implementation of housing, educational, and employment services and food assistance programs. Moreover, Poppendieck (1999) suggested that a significant number of congregations offer food assistance programs, in response to the pervasive reports of food insecurity within local communities.

Theoretical Perspective

Food pantries’ delivery of services to vulnerable populations may be viewed as a behavior within an ecological context. Ecological frameworks have been posited to explain human development and behavior for more than half a century (Brofenbrenner, 1977, 1979; McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988). Within such frameworks, an individual is affected by external factors and, by the same token, that individual has the capacity to affect the environment. Externals factors may be categorized as interpersonal (e.g., relationships, social networks, and supports), organizational (e.g., social institutions), community (e.g., relationships between institutions), or societal (e.g., public and social policies at local, state, and national levels) (McLeroy et al., 1988). While each of these factors may influence the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the individual, the person may in turn contribute to changes within social networks, organizations, communities, and society through her/his behaviors. Understanding this reciprocal relationship between the individual and her/his environment aids in explaining and changing attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and practices. Reciprocity refers to the continuous exchanges that occur between people and their environment (Payne, 2014); thus, the effort to support the needs of under-resourced individuals and families through collaborative efforts improves the overall quality of life for the community as a whole.

Limited research on food pantry management and its role in addressing food insecurity exists (Remley, Kaiser, & Osso, 2013). The research in this paper is intended to expand our understanding of food pantries by examining organizational management efforts in a rural setting using an ecological framework to understand the interconnected nature of all components of emergency food programs. Viewing food pantries within the context of an ecological framework may aid such organizations in assessing factors impacting their operations.

Collaboration With the Food Bank

In August 2015, the Mississippi Food Insecurity Project started as a collaborative university research initiative at Mississippi State University among faculty in the disciplines of sociology, social work, political science, nutrition and health promotion, and food science, with the purpose of identifying, examining, and documenting issues related to food insecurity in Mississippi. In fall 2015, members of the Mississippi Food Insecurity Project met with the Mississippi Food Network (MFN) administrators to discuss their individual and shared goals and endeavors. From this meeting, several MFN priorities were identified, including a need to gain insights into pantry managers’ experiences within their pantries.
and their successes, challenges, and issues within the pantries. Both entities were seeking a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of food insecurity across the state.

With consideration to their shared interest in understanding food insecurity and efforts to alleviate it, university researchers initiated an exploratory study largely focused on emergency food programs, otherwise referred to as food pantries, throughout Mississippi. Local church congregations, who sought ways to address food insecurity in their communities, ran more than half of the food pantry programs in this study. The remaining organizations were secular providers offering identical services in their communities. All participating organizations are members of the MFN, which exclusively serves as a food bank for almost 70% of the counties across the state (Mississippi Food Network, 2017).

There are approximately 430 member agencies throughout the state that partner with the MFN and distribute food in their communities. The MFN receives food from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other sources and distributes to the partner agencies based on their requests, demand, and availability. Offering low-cost food items on a monthly inventory list, the MFN invites partner pantries to purchase these items at a reduced cost. In addition to the MFN’s resources, most individual partner pantries also receive donations from businesses such as Walmart, Kroger, and other private donors. Items received from these sources must be inventoried and shelved separately from food items received from the USDA, per federal requirements and auditing purposes. While the MFN is an extremely valuable resource for hundreds of partner food pantries, the organization has rigorous administrative reporting requirements that pantries must adhere to in order to comply with the nonprofit’s organizational procedures.

Based on information from this preliminary meeting, we sought to develop an exploratory, descriptive research project that: 1) described the experiences of food pantry providers in the state, 2) documented the barriers food pantry providers face, and 3) examined assets and resources utilized by pantry managers and volunteers.

**Methods**

**Participants**

The MFN leaders supported the research project and provided a list of 283 partner food pantry member agencies. To garner interest among the agencies, the MFN introduced the research project during an annual conference for food pantry managers and volunteers. Participants were recruited through two strategies: recruitment at the annual conference and telephone contacts. Using convenience sampling, we telephoned several agency affiliates, inviting them to participate in the study. Similarly, we extended an invitation to participate in the study to food pantry managers who contacted us and expressed interest in participating in this Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved study.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

From September to December 2015, several research team members interviewed 25 food pantry providers/volunteers at 14 food pantries located in nine counties in Mississippi, representing four geographic regions of the state (North Central, Central, Delta (East), and Southwest). For this qualitative research project, faculty researchers developed a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide. Interviews were scheduled and conducted on-site at the individual participating food pantries. Participants signed informed consent forms and were assured confidentiality. Interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to two hours and were audio recorded and transcribed. Questions included the following:

- What factors contribute to food insecurity in your county?
- What can you tell us about the clients you serve?
- What can you tell us about your service delivery process?
- How many volunteers serve in your organization?

Once interviews were complete, the seven-member research team collectively identified relevant codes that captured the aim of the study. In this process, the discussion yielded multiple codes that were defined and operationalized by the group. Codes were entered in MAXQDA (qualitative analysis software), yielding themes that helped the researchers gain a better understanding of food insecurity and food pantry management.
Results

Of the 14 food pantries where we conducted interviews, nine self-identified as faith-based organizations. The remaining five were run by nonprofit community organizations, with a parallel focus on alleviating hunger for local citizens. The pantries ranged considerably in level of complexity and capacity, from physically small operations with one or two service providers to complex, administratively robust operations with a director, support staff, volunteers, complex administrative intake systems, and large physical space. All pantries expressed the sustained (and at times increased) demand by their constituents for more food and more days of operation. An ecological framework proved useful in understanding the dynamics of food pantry program management. Findings related to five domains within the ecological framework: individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and society.

Individual

At the individual level, volunteers are the heart of food pantry operations. Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, and Washburn (2009) assert the desperate need for skilled individuals who aid in the provision of technology services, program development, staff training, and strategic planning; however, volunteers are often thought to be underused and undervalued resources for tackling tough challenges within the organization. The food pantry managers in this study were candidly honest about the administrative demands and operational oversight needed for the food pantry. These include but are not limited to: pick-up and unpacking food, tracking donations and maintaining inventory, submitting monthly reports to the food bank, tracking patron allotments, and in some cases delivering food to homebound clients. Participants in this study talked at length about the varying responsibilities associated with operations; they highlighted the importance of having a strong, dedicated core group of volunteers with diverse talents and skills. From an ecological perspective lens, individual volunteers have a unique vantage point to affect the organization's environment. Of volunteer recruitment, one faith-based pantry manager said:

You’ve got to have somebody in that church, if not the pastor, somebody that’s interested in the food pantry or whatever project that you need volunteers to really promote it. You’ve got to have somebody in the church; you can’t just put in the bulletin or announce it. You’ve got to have somebody that promotes it.

Similarly, another pantry manager said:

We are very fortunate in volunteers that we have…. We get them from campus, and we get people in town. We got two or three that don’t go to this church, and they are some of the strongest volunteers I have. They show up every time, and they do whatever you ask them to do…. These are people with professional degrees. And they’re here packing groceries for someone else, and that’s a beautiful thing to see.

Due to a myriad of responsibilities associated with food pantry management, the scope of services often exceeds the physical abilities of a few individuals. Pantry managers stressed the importance of intentionality regarding volunteer recruitment and ensuring that collectively, individuals possess a range of transferable skills that can be utilized within the food pantry operations system. Reliance on community volunteers from a range of agencies and organizations sets the stage for successful services targeting a broad range of community members.

Interpersonal

The importance of interpersonal relationships undergirds the work on emergency food programs. Relationships or networks within the ecological social environment can be classified as symbiotic or reciprocal (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2006). Reciprocity means balance, mutuality, working together to meet real needs; everyone teaches, everyone learns, everyone serves, everyone is served (Davis, Kliewer, & Nicolaides, 2017). Through partnerships, institutions are able to engage with each other through mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships. In this instance, academic institutions that are intimately established within their local communities have the propensity to make a sustainable impact on society; likewise local communities can have a seamless network with academic institutions in order to maintain an equal and positive partnership (Jacoby, Sutin, Weidman, & Yeager, 2015). One manager reported that, “In October, November, December we have a network with [a local grocer]
for [a supply of] boxes. You have got to have numerous boxes because you can't have people bring their boxes back.” While another said, “Walmart gives us a lot of bakery items. They give a lot of meat that we can give to [patrons].”

In a similar fashion, a participant shared,

We have a [partnership] and we get food from them. We're partners with [another organization] and they write a check for us to get food. We're partners with a local bank and they write a check to help us with food. We get a chance to put nutritional food in their [bags].

Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq and Morrison (2010) challenge the notion that relationships spring up from nothing by highlighting the importance of context and interactions between entities. When examining the interpersonal nature of the connections between food pantries and the organizations that support them, a common thread is their commitment to the patrons and the community at large. This commitment is uniquely characterized as a transformational relationship. Clayton et al. (2010) state that in transformational relationships people "come together in more open-ended processes of indefinite and longer-term duration…to develop systems they work within” (p. 8). Community/university partnerships highlight the important attributes that interpersonal relationships have within communities, particularly rural communities. Combined efforts to address food insecurity from a macro perspective within a rural setting challenges all stakeholders to embrace symbiotic strategies to foster transformation for individuals and the community as a whole.

Organizational

The complexity of organizational structure and the level of bureaucracy related to service provisions are characteristics that define the organization and its ability to carry out the mission and achieve goals (Katz & Gartner, 1988). These characteristics are most evident in organizations with an increased level of intentionality, or purposefulness in their work. Additionally, these organizations possess resources, such as physical and financial capital that advances the work they do. Many of the food pantries in this study started from humble beginnings with a goal of addressing a pressing need in their rural community; they have developed systems and processes to guide the expansion of services. For example, a manager for a community-supported pantry recounted the historical evolution and growth of the current food pantry, explaining how the organization moved from a small operation out of a broom closet to occupying a renovated gymnasium. Pressing social issues of poverty and unemployment that plagued their community fueled the structural changes and expansion of services within this organization.

Bureaucratic processes provide structure in almost all the food pantries in the study. Not only do these processes help define the boundaries of operations, they help solidify a framework for service. One manager of a church-operated pantry explained their process for operations, stating:

We have a group that does the interviewing, files the records, and we have a group that bags and distributes. Somebody manages the volunteers, and they'll send out calls for volunteers. We've got some other people that function as staff. We have a group of people we call in-takers who interview the patrons. They come in and they verify that all the documents that are needed in order to be eligible to participate in the program. We have a group that pulls the records. Some of them are the same people that do different things at different times. But that's basically the various functions.

Community

The emphasis on the needs of community members and advocacy efforts for change at the macro level is highlighted in the work done by these pantries. Inherent in the efforts for change is the need for community building to promote sustainability. Hardina (2013) espoused the importance of including residents in the development and decision-making processes to promote citizen participation. The food pantries in this study came to fruition because of the stated needs of food insecure community members. In working collaboratively with other community stakeholders, food pantry managers and volunteers can effectively meet the needs of community members. Of interest in collaborative partnerships is the desire to work with a range of other service providers to help citizens. One pantry manager said:

On a normal day we may have a health provider call in [and say] I'm at this
person's house and they don't have any food, can you give me some food [for them]? We ask if there are any dietary stipulations... If they say they're on liquid diet then what normally we'll do is we'll have to go out and buy some Ensure or something that can hold them until we can get a prescription from their doctor.

Similarly, a pantry manager from a larger urban area highlighted the importance of community collaborations to offer optimal services to food pantry patrons. The dimension of community in systems theory highlights the importance of influencing existing social institutions for the benefit of people who are excluded from power structures in society (Payne, 2014). Furthermore, Clayton et al. (2010) explain the importance of mutual transformation whereby power is more evenly shared and there is an exchange of resources. Thus, the work of food pantries in rural communities brings to light a clear effort to ensure that dietary challenges of marginalized and/or disenfranchised citizens are addressed through partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

Society

When examining the macro implications of emergency food service programs, it is important to remember that these services are controlled by federal guidelines. Food pantries in this study are members of a network of food pantries that receive assistance from the state food bank, which administers The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), a program under the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (n.d.). Public and private organizations that participate in TEFAP are distributors of food specifically for home use, either through distribution or prepared meals for low-income citizens.

Participant eligibility is determined at the state level, where each state can adjust income requirements to assure the food assistance is provided to those households most in need. While TEFAP is administered at the federal level, the program is carried out at the state level where administrative funds are distributed. Also, TEFAP creates and updates administrative guidelines, such as record keeping, food storage, and reporting requirements. Additionally, federal guidelines create parameters for the types of foods available through TEFAP, with the intended goal of ensuring that recipients are offered a variety of quality foods to meet their dietary needs. Within the context of rural communities struggling with poverty, federal emergency food assistance programs are a primary source for food provisions, particularly for older adults.

Discussion and Recommendations

Community/university partnerships centered around emergency food programs are poised to help address critical social issues related to the overall well-being of community members. However, to the authors' knowledge, there is a dearth of such partnerships in the literature, thus, increasing the significance of the current study. Based on the findings from this study, careful consideration must be practiced when examining factors related to effective and efficient operations. These include: 1) volunteer recruitment, 2) operating and control systems, 3) patron needs, 4) collaboration, and 5) advocacy. These findings highlight the interconnectedness of domains within the perspective of ecosystems, with specific emphasis on how pantry managers navigate the environment to accomplish the work of their organization. These recommendations highlight the central role of volunteers to help ensure that all functions of the organization are operating as designed. Addressing the range of needs of pantry patrons highlights the importance of interpersonal relationships with other community entities and organizations. The role of advocacy in creating opportunities for service hinges on establishing and maintaining relationships that help promote organizational growth.

Volunteer Recruitment

Food pantry managers identify a core group of volunteers with diverse skill sets who work regularly with the food pantry. The managers in this study were candidly honest about the administrative demands and operational oversight needed for the food pantry. These include pick-up and unpacking food, tracking donations and maintaining inventory, submitting monthly reports to the food bank, tracking patron allotments, and in some cases delivering food to homebound clients. With a myriad of responsibilities associated with food pantry management, the scope and services exceed the physical abilities of a few individuals. Participants in this study talked at length about the varying
responsibilities associated with the operations; they highlighted the importance of having a strong, dedicated core group of volunteers. For this reason, recruitment of a diverse group of volunteers is highly suggested. Eisner et al. (2009) state the desperate need for skilled volunteers who can help provide technology services, program development, staff training, and strategic planning, as volunteers can be underused and undervalued resources for tackling tough challenges within the organization. Pantry managers note the importance of being intentional in volunteer recruitment and ensuring that volunteers possess a range of transferable skills that can be utilized within the food pantry operations. However, each community possesses unique characteristics, and food pantry managers must carefully assess the varying needs of the patrons they serve. In analyzing the results of their assessment, it is incumbent upon the leaders of the organization to consider the number of volunteers needed to help meet these needs.

Operating and Control Systems

Operations are the procedures put in place to run the pantries and control is characterized as the process through which results are compared with the goals and objectives (Florin & Carmen, 2013). Operation and control systems regulate the day-to-day functions of the pantry. From the findings, the operational plans for many of the organizations were developed around needs such as completing administrative paperwork, verifying client information to see if they qualify for services, managing inspections, and staff meetings and trainings.

Pantry managers should be encouraged to develop an operational and control plan to ensure program maintenance and continuity. During holidays, vacations, or at other times when volunteers are unable to fulfill their obligations, operations and control systems will ensure that the pantries continue to operate with minimal interruptions. While the literature does not present guidelines on the development of policies and procedures for food pantry operations, our findings suggest that pantry managers can and have constructed manuals explaining the process for managing clients’ information, completing inventories, reporting to donors and food hubs, etc. Such manuals can then be used to train staff and volunteers.

Patron Needs

Recognizing that the needs of patrons may exceed the services offered by the food pantry, pantry managers spoke of networks and partnerships with other service providers. Given the realities and presence of poverty for many of the patrons served by these food pantries, programs to assist with employment and living expenses were noted. In addition to not having adequate, healthy sources of food, many citizens struggle with the challenge of meeting other basic daily needs, such as clothing and shelter. In January 2016, over 82,000 Mississippians deemed as able-bodied adults without dependents became subject to a three-month time limit for receiving SNAP benefits (Mississippi Center for Justice, n.d.). Food pantry providers made mention of an ever-increasing number of patrons being served prior to these policy changes, and thus got a head start on addressing patron needs.

Collaboration

Nolen and Krey (2015) highlight the valuable resources and assets provided by religious congregations working to end child hunger in Texas. They specifically noted the importance of partnerships outside the congregations, coupled with support from congregants, as key components in successfully implementing targeted programs for a geographical area (Nolen & Krey, 2015). As these needs are made known, pantry managers continually find themselves creating alternative solutions to address various problems that did not fall within the scope of their services.

For example, in rural communities, the lack of public or reliable personal transportation may create a barrier for some patrons. Covney and O’Dwyer (2009) note that the lack of viable transportation in rural communities exacerbates a range of issues, such as finances and health. This challenge must be taken into consideration when planning food distribution. Alternative plans for food distribution help shore up the overall efforts to meet the needs of patrons. In some cases, volunteers may choose to offer delivery services, and in other cases, a proxy may be used for pickup. Additionally, a recognition of the interdependency of churches with other community and public organizations, as well as the cultural component that informs services, is necessary. According to Boddie (2002), rural congregation networks encompass private and public institutions within the community, creating
patterns of service and interaction that facilitate formal and informal exchanges that serve to support and maintain local social service programs.

Additionally, understanding the nuances that exist between various entities helps build strong community/university partnerships. Dorado and Giles (2004) identify three behaviors that characterize relationships: learning, aligning, and nurturing. Learning behaviors lay the foundation whereby partners become familiar with each other; aligning behaviors include those actions that are designed to improve the working relationship among partners; nurturing behaviors are identified as actions and interactions that support, develop, defend, and expand partnerships (Dorado & Giles, 2004). Community/university partnerships in varying phases still offer a heightened level of commitment to addressing social injustices. More pointedly, students involved in these collaborative structures gain exposure to intimately witness and learn from these relationships.

**Advocacy**

Though less salient in the responses of our participants, advocacy may play a pivotal role in the success of food pantry providers' efforts. Several researchers investigating food security within rural regions note the influence policy has on the allocation of resources, which broadly affects the lives of food insecure residents, services of food pantry providers, and communities (McArthur, Ball, Danek, & Holbert, 2018; Calancie, Stritzinger, Konick, Horton, Ng, & Ammerman, 2017).

Through the establishment of food policy councils, food pantry providers and other community members may more accurately determine the extent of food insecurity within their area, and identify the collective impact of their services. With this information, food policy councils can devise strategies that leverage the resources from diverse council members. Additionally, findings should be reported to local and state leaders and elected officials to garner support for policies that address food insecurity and allow for the provision of necessary resources to address this health disparity (Calancie et al., 2017). Community initiatives may increase accessibility of nutritious food items through discounts and coupons at local grocery stores and farmers’ markets (McArthur et al., 2018). State-level authorities may also establish policies that create or enhance employment opportunities that in turn reduce barriers facing residents attempting to meet their daily needs.

**Conclusion**

The pervasive nature of food insecurity requires steady and decisive action to curtail the permeation of this societal challenge. Across the country, significant rates of poverty impact a number of individuals and families. This exploratory study establishes a preliminary foundation for understanding the varying needs of food pantry managers in Mississippi. Results should be interpreted with care because only 14 of 283 food pantries participated. Major findings involved historical significance of faith-based organizations in meeting the needs of marginalized and oppressed citizens and demonstrate the power of community engagement to address various social issues. Emergency food programs serve a role that is vital in meeting the needs of citizens who are food insecure and who may not see an end to being in this predicament. Careful attention must be given to planning and implementing these services, with special focus on recruiting diverse volunteers, identifying collaboration and partnership opportunities, examining the critical needs of the patrons in relation to the services offered by the pantry, and maintaining manageable operations and control systems that support the capacity of the organization.

This study illuminates the possibilities for collaboration between local universities and the communities surrounding them. The community/university partnerships offer a viable means to address some of the needs of food pantry managers in terms of human and technical resources. For instance, land-grant universities and Cooperative Extension services have an inherent focus on outreach and community engagement. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education are initiatives that aim to improve the nutrition knowledge and dietary behaviors of families through university and Cooperative Extension resources (Mississippi State University Extension Service, 2019a; Mississippi State University Extension Service, 2019b). Faculty members, especially those teaching community-engaged or service-learning courses, may develop opportunities that enable students to learn about social, agricultural, and economic factors that contribute to food insecurity. Such an opportunity may be similarly beneficial for food pantry providers if students and faculty are tasked with proposing possible solutions to enhance recruitment of volunteers or community support to improve organizational operations.
Future research is needed to further explore the needs of patrons and how collaborative partnerships can inform policy and advocate for measures to address a range of challenges presented by the patrons. Addressing these issues is vital for helping underserved citizens in communities across the country. Tackling food insecurity through a multi-pronged approach allows stakeholders from all arenas to contribute to enhancing the quality of life for all. Promoting social welfare policies provides an appropriate and measured response to food insecurity. Yet, the proliferation of poverty necessitates a more direct approach to alleviating food insecurity, especially in rural communities. Community engagement efforts from higher education institutions should span the gamut from empirical research to hands-on learning and practice opportunities. Ultimately, these efforts offer a viable means for addressing the root cause of food insecurity.

References


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Leading the Charge: Outcomes from a Student-Driven Engagement with a Veteran Community

Stephanie Sickler

Abstract
This project merged experiential learning, a service project, and one discipline's accreditation requirement for a human-centered design curriculum to engage students in designing for different user groups. The project followed a semester where students were required to engage with the community they were designing for. Ten service hours were required as a part of the course to familiarize the students with the venue and its residents of their local Veterans Affairs hospital. Upon the start of the subsequent semester, students requested further interaction with the veteran population they had come to know. As a means of exploring programming, a studio project was modified to fulfill their request, allowing them to further engage with the veteran population they had served through exhibit design. Though the studio course did not have an official service-learning course designation, by the end of the semester and, at the students' direction, their project transcended the traditional mold of service learning by evolving organically based on experiential outcomes. By its end, the course's objectives were met through the production of a full-scale, professionally designed museum exhibit honoring the veterans the students had come to love during their service experience. The exhibit was displayed numerous times before it found its final resting point in the VA hospital lobby. This engagement experience demonstrated that perhaps a more student-driven approach to engaged scholarship opportunities in the design disciplines could have transformative value for both learners and community members.

Introduction
The effectiveness of service learning as a pedagogical strategy has been explored extensively (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Conway, Amel, & Gerwien, 2009; Jacoby & Associates, 1996; Reeb, 2006; Reeb, Katsuyama, Sammon, & Yoder, 1998; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Zollinger, Guerin, Hadjiyanni, & Martin, 2009). Bringle and Hatcher (1996) defined service learning in its infancy as, a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (p. 222).

Though the nuances of service learning have evolved over time, true service-learning experiences remain difficult to achieve in some disciplines as there are many constituent groups to assemble and align, and pedagogical requirements to fulfill that do not fit easily into this mold. Engaged scholarship is an easier target for some disciplines such as interior design because much like the practice of interior design, engaged scholarship utilizes a variety of stakeholder perspectives to solve or understand a complex social problem (Van de Ven, 2007). Outside the parameters of a true service-learning course designation, students can engage with community partners through participatory course work utilizing a variety of methods of engaged scholarship. Much like service learning, these partnerships have been shown to produce insightful outcomes with enriched learning opportunities (Van de Ven, 2007). Experiential learning theory
(Kolb, 1984) is also an appropriate lens for examining participatory community activities for design students. Demirbas and Demirkan (2016) suggest that design students should utilize experiential learning theory to produce design solutions by experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and doing, a process that aligns closely with established design pedagogy.

Community engagement and service experiences are of particular importance in a design curriculum because through service students can understand the importance of empathy, or the designer's sensitivity toward the end user, in design practice. This project offers a relevant and key piece of insight into the discussion of service experiences in the design discipline as it suggests a new model for teaching human-centered design through community engagement. As Gomez-Lanier suggests, research in project-based service learning in the interior design discipline is underdeveloped (2016). This project seeks to fill a gap in scholarly literature by examining the transformative potential of student-driven service experiences within an interior design curriculum.

Service and the Design Curriculum

The interior design curriculum is unique compared to many disciplines. Assignments are more often hands-on, with project-based deliverables. Studio courses—the courses in a design curriculum that bring linear knowledge together to reach common outcomes—require students to follow a particular design process to solve complex problems, then depict design solutions through a variety of tangible design drawings, models, and renderings. Over the course of the design process, students must transform their first ideations into fully fledged executable designs through iterative study (Demirbus & Demirkan, 2016). The Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA), requires that student work “apply knowledge of human experience and behavior to designing the built environment” (CIDA, 2018, p. II–20). This standard is applied early in the design process during the programmatic phase of design, or the evaluation period where user needs and project challenges are identified and strategies are developed for addressing each throughout the design process. The goal in requiring this knowledge is to prepare students for professional practice wherein designers must account for user needs and the human experience on a daily basis through the practice of human-centered design.

Human-centered design is not a design style, but is a process for designing and developing buildings, products, and communities that is grounded in information about the people who will be using them—utilizing research findings and data on cognitive abilities, physical abilities and limitations, social needs, and task requirements in order to provide living-environment solutions that enable all users to function at their highest capacity—regardless of age or ability. (Greenhouse, 2012).

Identifying client and user needs during programming and then producing thoughtful and functional design solutions indicate students have developed empathy through the design process, an important goal of interior design education. However, when faced with user populations vastly different from themselves, young designers can find programming quite challenging, especially if they have not yet developed a sensitivity toward their client or end user. Often in design education, instructors will try to engage students with their end user group to help combat potential pitfalls in designing for special populations. Research suggests that service experiences, punctuated with reflection exercises, can facilitate cultural awareness and sensitivity toward the end user, a major goal in programming for human-centered design (Bowie & Cassim, 2016; Conway et. al., 2009; Simons & Cleary, 2006). Zollinger et al.'s (2009) framework for service learning in interior design education identified four criteria for service learning wherein projects must: 1) relate to course objectives, 2) apply course knowledge, 3) connect to the community, and 4) reflect on learning. Particularly in design education, a strong connection with the end user has the potential to illicit more empathetic design solutions from students (Hess & Fila, 2015). Empathy for the end user is particularly important in design practice because a designer's client is not necessarily the end user of the space being designed. Nonetheless, the end user's needs must be met by the design. For example, a hospital executive may be the paying client in health care design, but designers must address his/her primary goals and concerns as well as the needs of the staff and patients in the design solution. In this scenario the hospital executive is the client and the staff and patients are the end
users, each with vastly different requirements for their human experience in the hospital. It follows that community engagement is a natural fit for design students as a vehicle for encouraging human-centered design solutions, which more closely align with the needs of end users, because community engagement and service experiences provide students with firsthand knowledge of these user groups they must design for. This outcome is especially relevant when students are tasked with designing for populations unfamiliar to them.

In recent years accreditation standards for undergraduate and graduate interior design programs have demonstrated an increased focus on students' sensitivity toward, and empathy for, the end user (CIDA, 2018). Student exposure and experience with such a broad constituent group is a powerful catalyst for developing a more holistic understanding of the practice of interior design. Additionally, other scholars are taking notice of the impact of empathetic design (Hess & Fila, 2015). CIDA's professional standards for interior design programs offer guidance for programs as they seek to achieve the goals for accreditation. Guidance for Standard 7, which addresses human-centered design, suggests examples for methods of gathering human-centered evidence (CIDA, 2018). These examples identify precedent studies, case studies, surveys, observations, peer-reviewed literature, and focus groups specifically, but engaging students with actual human subjects is not mentioned (CIDA, 2018). Therefore, an important goal of this project was to encourage and facilitate engagement opportunities in an interior design curriculum that foster a lifelong desire for outreach, produce rich design solutions, and promote a cultural sensitivity toward all client types. Outcomes from this experience can assist design educators in planning curriculum, which can achieve the important goal of facilitating the understanding of user needs among students in design studios. Community partnerships with the veteran population achieve the important goal of both outreach and engagement, as well as facilitate an understanding of the needs of a much less familiar user group.

Procedure
In the semester prior to this engagement experience, and as a part of the programming phase of the design for an assisted living facility, 32 third-year interior design students in a studio course on designing for special populations were required to complete 10 hours of community service at the Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital in Tallahassee. Research suggests that although design does not specifically alleviate medical symptoms, the facility itself, if well-designed, can positively impact and diminish the intensity of some symptoms, thereby contributing to overall wellness (Olinger, 2012). The community service requirement not only familiarized students with the cutting-edge facility at the VA but also began to engage them with the VA's residents. Prior to the service period, and after receiving Institutional Review Board approval from the university, students and faculty underwent extensive governmental background checks and received tuberculosis vaccines as part of the VA volunteer protocol. Service activities included volunteering at mealtime with the residents, attending a veterans' dance, decorating for the holidays, and other limited interactions with the residents. While a few students struggled to fulfill their 10-hour requirement, others served well beyond the hours required.

Based on their generational characteristics, it was expected that students in this course would demonstrate a positive response to the opportunity to interact with local veterans. Research suggests that this learner group as a generation is civic-minded and more patriotic than previous generations, due in large part to the acts of terror they have witnessed both domestically and abroad (Raines, 2002). Sensitivity among students toward servicemen and servicewomen, therefore, seemed relevant to contemporary generational theories. To assess student perceptions of this first engagement experience with the veteran population, the Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale (CSSES) (Reeb, et. al., 1998) was administered to each student before and after their service period at the VA.

Table 1 describes the characteristics of the student cohort based on questions from the CSSES. All students in the cohort were females, which is not uncommon in an interior design program. Data presented in Table 1 indicates that many participants in the student cohort were familiar with the military as well as assisted-living facilities. This information led faculty to the assumption that students’ response to the CSSES would be favorable, as they were at least somewhat experienced with the population they were serving. Table 2 depicts student responses to questions in the CSSES in pre- and post-tests. Overall, students reported being efficient in their community service.
activities and confident of the impact potential. It is notable that results in Table 2 indicate there was no significant difference between pre- and post-test results. This could suggest that the cursory experience was not significantly impactful to the students.

Faculty were somewhat surprised to discover such favorable responses to the CSSES in the post-service iteration because, although the time commitment was low, the service hours were all conducted outside of class time and in addition to regular class assignments. Faculty were concerned that the burden outside of class time would negatively influence the students’ favorability of the experience. Though no statistical change was perceived from pre- and post-tests, high scores indicated that students were comfortable with and willing to participate in service experiences.

Students Take Charge

Perhaps even more surprised were faculty when, upon the start of the following semester, students in one section of the studio requested further interactions with the veterans. At the request of students, one section of the subsequent studio course containing only 16 students from the original 32-student cohort was revised a few weeks after it began to include more in-depth interactions with the residents at the VA to accommodate students’ specific request of being able to “give back” to the veterans they had encountered briefly the previous semester. Although this presented a few challenges to the instructor, it was agreed upon that a new scenario would be developed that would accommodate the students’ request for further engagement. The remaining 16 students from the original cohort of 32 continued in their studio section as it had been planned and did not participate in the follow-up service engagement. The two sections were led by different faculty members.

Redefinition of the Course

While the first studio course that involved students with the VA included learning objectives focusing on design for special populations, the second studio course included learning objectives focusing on design for hospitality interiors. Special populations refers to unique user groups such as children, the elderly, health care or rehabilitation

### Table 1. Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age*</td>
<td>20.81</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military service experience</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>96.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family military service experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>84.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience with a VA hospital</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>93.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family ever used assisted-living facility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>53.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates associated values are mean and standard deviation, respectively.

### Table 2. Pre-Post Comparisons of Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale and Service Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre M (SD)</th>
<th>Post M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I choose to participate in community service in the future, I will be able to make a meaningful contribution.</td>
<td>8.94 (1.78)</td>
<td>8.68 (1.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the future, I will be able to find community service opportunities that are relevant to my interests and abilities.</td>
<td>8.90 (1.42)</td>
<td>8.91 (1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that, through community service, I can help in promoting social justice.</td>
<td>8.07 (1.76)</td>
<td>8.14 (1.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that, through community service, I can make a difference in my community.</td>
<td>9.03 (1.66)</td>
<td>9.18 (1.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that I can help individuals in need by participating in community service activities.</td>
<td>9.41 (1.56)</td>
<td>9.14 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that, in future community service activities, I will be able to interact with relevant professionals in ways that are meaningful and effective.</td>
<td>8.84 (1.83)</td>
<td>9.14 (1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that, through community service, I can help in promoting equal opportunity for citizens.</td>
<td>8.19 (1.97)</td>
<td>8.32 (1.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through community service, I can apply my knowledge in ways that solve “real-life” problems.</td>
<td>8.81 (1.89)</td>
<td>8.82 (1.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By participating in community service, I can help people to help themselves.</td>
<td>8.78 (1.98)</td>
<td>8.95 (1.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that I will participate in community service activities in the future.</td>
<td>9.16 (1.92)</td>
<td>9.23 (1.60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
facilities, and others. Hospitality design typically includes the design of restaurants, hotels, spas, and other public areas meant to serve patrons in a variety of experiences. In order to fulfill the students’ request of further engagement with the veterans while continuing to meet the course’s learning objectives, it was determined that the area of exhibit design was the best vehicle for accomplishing these goals. The exhibit design spinoff provided the instructor with course goals aligned within the constructs of hospitality design wherein students would learn to research, program for, and execute a design for an exhibit space. In addition to meeting course goals, the exhibit also allowed for participation with veterans as the students had further requested that the veterans be the subject of the exhibit. Studies have shown an increase in learning and appreciation of the impact of service when students are allowed choices and control within their assignments (Jenkins & Sheehey, 2011; Werner & McVaugh 2000). The design studio was therefore adjusted such that it would marry exhibit design and service with the goal of producing a full-scale exhibit honoring the veterans living in the dementia unit as well as the new Community Living Center (CLC) of the local VA hospital. Students further requested permission to collaborate on the exhibit as an entire class, rather than working on facets of the exhibit independently.

Recreation Therapy was identified by the VA administrators as a likely partner for the exhibit project, as they could assist the students with the hands-on activities they were searching for. The recreation therapy activities presented a hands-on experience for the students that was a low risk/high reward intervention into the residents’ daily lives. A secondary goal was collecting sufficient information on and from the residents in order to create an exhibit with them as the subject, making recreation therapy a perfect fit for the project’s design.

Recreation Therapy Training and Implementation

The previous semester’s background checks and screenings permitted students to volunteer on the VA campus, but training was needed to ensure student competencies in the identified recreation therapy areas. Students self-divided into five teams and, aided by the director of recreation therapy at the VA, selected the different interaction types they wanted to engage in. Training was conducted by the rec therapy team and other VA administrators in each of the five areas of participation: art therapy, nutritional encouragement, games, oral history, and photography. By the time the face-to-face interactions with residents had begun, students were competent enough to understand the impact of their interactions. Together with the recreation therapy team, student groups planned activities and identified residents who would be likely to participate. Nonverbal or non-communicative residents were excluded as likely participants, as well as residents with severely diminished capacities or severe social disorders.

Interactions were planned with the residents in lieu of class time, to capture time with the residents at their optimal time of day. Each of the five student teams joined the residents in their respective buildings and were consistent with their interactions to help the residents become comfortable with their presence. No interaction was mandatory for the residents, but the activities were made available regardless of participation rates. For example, the nutritional encouragement team would commence cupcake decorating at their specified therapy time and location whether residents were present for the activity or not. Often, as the activity continued, residents would join the students one by one when they were ready. Table 3 gives an account of the activities students hosted by each student team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Team</th>
<th>Activities with Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art therapy</td>
<td>Tie dye, noodle necklace making, birdseed pine cones, painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritional encouragement</td>
<td>Cooking, cupcake decorating, menu planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral history</td>
<td>Storytelling and photo album review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>Photo album review, photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>Basketball, trivia, card games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outcomes

Observations During the Service Period

Interactions with the residents of the VA were student led. This left the faculty member available to conduct observations of both participant groups. Over the course of the service period, faculty observations of the resident and student
encounters as well as students’ written reflections to the interactions were encouraging. In the residents, faculty observed that interactions with the students garnered more resident participants than the VA staff had predicted. Further, a significant verbal response was noted from many residents known for their quiet, reclusive demeanor. Staff in the units where these interactions were taking place also noted the residents’ anticipation of each day the students would visit. Observations of the students revealed that after the initial ice was broken, they had no trouble leading the sessions on their own. This supports research that suggests students should be engaging in service activities that maintain a balance of autonomy and supervision as a means to promote community engagement (Simons & Cleary, 2006).

**Student Exhibit**

Students spent six weeks interacting with the veterans and within the first three weeks of participation had determined the scale and parameters of their exhibit based on the success of their sessions with the residents. Upon completion of their visits, students designed, built, and installed a full-scale exhibit highlighting their time with the residents. Each of the 24 display boards it took to communicate their exhibit were 4- by 8-feet tall and were self-supporting. The boards towered above guests, both seated and standing, and the exhibit occupied the entire breadth of the newly opened community center, adjacent to the CLC and dementia unit on the VA campus. The exhibit, open to the public, also included two display boards dedicated to student reflections. Therapeutic outcomes specific to the resident participants were verified by the recreation therapy staff and listed on each display board as requested by the director of the VA to bring to the visitors’ attention the notable value of the interaction. Students also produced a full color, four-page exhibit flyer to educate visitors on the project, which also explained and called attention to the icons for therapeutic outcomes included on each display board. (See Images 1 and 2.)

Opening day of the exhibit brimmed with excitement as family, friends, caregivers and VA residents themselves poured through the exhibit space. The community center was packed and tears of joy and appreciation flowed from family members who attended. Smiles adorned the faces of the residents as they saw themselves portrayed in the massive display boards. There was barely room to move about from the residents who could not be peeled away from their pictures in the exhibit. Pride beamed from the students as what they had accomplished began to sink in. (See Images 3 and 4.)

**Therapeutic Outcomes for Veterans**

The recreation therapy team, VA administrators, and nursing staff all expressed their perceived impacts and patient outcomes for the veterans who participated in the interactions with students. At the VA administrators’ request, and validated by the director of recreation therapy, students compiled a comprehensive list of therapeutic outcomes for resident participants. Table 4 details these findings, which highlight demonstrable outcomes and were included in the physical student exhibit. The benefits to VA residents within their functional domains, as included in Table 4, directly reflect the standard therapeutic goals for residents in this unit of care. In many instances, staff remarked that the student engagement evoked more pronounced positive responses from residents than typical therapy sessions conducted by staff during regularly scheduled therapy programs.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

While working on the design and production of the exhibit’s display boards, students continued their traditional studio practice of following the design process to solve a complex design problem.
They used case studies and other exploratory measures to understand exhibit design, and participated as a class in exercises to determine the color scheme, font styles, and production themes of their exhibit. By all accounts they were meeting their course objectives in addition to the service work being done with the VA residents. This scenario coincides with findings from Gomez-Lanier (2016) of increased design thinking skills, and improved technical drawing and communicative skills among interior design students engaged in service-learning activities. The resulting design product, the full-scale professional exhibit, was a tremendous display of creativity, graphic communication, and critical thinking—all of which were specified as student learning outcomes for this course. Suh and Cho (2018) suggest that instructors guide students toward a more structured learning scenario to encourage comfort with the creative process; however, contrary to their findings, students in this instance flourished with less direction from the instructor. They formed their own community of peer critics and made design decisions as a team, then

Table 4. Therapeutic Outcomes for VA Residents by Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>BENEFITS WITHIN FUNCTIONAL DOMAINS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visits from Interior Design students and collaborative efforts for exhibit</td>
<td>Provided intergenerational interactions and individually meaningful activities; encouraged use of communication and social skills; promoted sense of community within city resident resides; encouraged sense of purpose and usefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminiscence — Storytelling</td>
<td>Prompted sharing/memory recall about past life experiences; encouraged the use of language and communication skills; provided opportunity to share emotional life events in a safe setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports — March Madness Shootout</td>
<td>Prompted use of fine/gross motor skills, hand-eye coordination; allowed for increased mobility, flexibility, range of motion and body awareness; prompted use of interpersonal and social skills while promoting sportsmanship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games — Cards, Bingo, Black Jack, and Trivia</td>
<td>Provided reality orientation, encouraged alertness, active listening and maintaining of attention span; prompted use of motor, verbal, cognitive and decision-making skills; encouraged problem solving and memory recall of basic math, spelling, English and history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Crafts — Tie Dye, Necklaces, Birdseed Pine cone, etc.</td>
<td>Prompted use of fine/gross motor skills and hand-eye coordination; encouraged concentration and pattern recognition; encouraged trust, sense of belonging and cooperation; encouraged individual creativity and self-expression; increased feelings of self-worth and personal satisfaction through task completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapted/Modified Cooking Experiences — Cupcake Decorating, Snack and Food Preparation, Menu Planning</td>
<td>Prompted use of fine/gross motor skills, creativity, and verbalization of personal preferences; encouraged socialization; provided alternative food choices; encouraged food and fluid intake; promoted sense of usefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Birthday Celebrations</td>
<td>Promoted sense of fellowship and communion with residents, family and staff in honor of resident’s birthday based on individual and/or family preferences (i.e. cake, music selections, prayers, readings, speeches, shared talents)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
presented their decisions to the instructor. Their final work product demonstrated a full and deep understanding of the design problem at hand and demonstrated a higher quality than if students had produced each piece independently. This supports the recommendations by Kaye and Berger (2004) for demonstration, display, and exhibition of student products from service learning as a means of validation for the learning and accomplishment through the partnership.

In addition to the successful production of the full-scale exhibit, intangibles were also perceived during the interactions that must be accounted for and attributed to the service partnership. On the last day’s visit, residents and students celebrated one participant’s birthday in song. One veteran, previously identified by the VA staff as non-verbal and non-participatory, led the party with singing while another played the piano and another joined in on the harmonica. The nursing staff remarked that neither gentleman had played or sang in months until that time. Not a dry eye was to be found among the students who experienced firsthand in that moment the power of their time and concern for this group. In student reflections, themes emerged that quantified impacts from the service. These themes, as described in Table 5, tell the story of learning through this project and illuminate the true impact of this experience on student learning: Students can see how their interactions impact themselves, others and how it applies to their learning as well as the profession of interior design. Perhaps the most encouraging theme that emerged from student reflections was their awareness of how the experience cultivated in them empathy for the residents, an important goal of interior design education. This outcome supports literature that suggests service experiences are meaningful for deeper learning and as a means of gaining an expanded cultural awareness (Bowie & Cassim, 2016; Conway, et. al., 2009; Simons & Cleary, 2006).

### Discussion

Jenkins and Sheehey (2011) suggest a 10-step checklist for planning, implementing, and evaluating service learning. This comprehensive framework is meant to guide faculty through a calculated experience with service learning as an instructional strategy. While the merit of their process is acknowledged, in this instance the unexpected engagement opportunity only allowed the instructor to pick up the project at Stage 5 in the checklist, the step that suggests providing support and feedback to students regularly during the course of the project. Rather than strictly adhering to a multi-step, well-planned process such as proposed by Jenkins and Sheehey (2011), this project was allowed to evolve organically in response to the student and community member experiences and needs. This is perhaps one of the most remarkable and unique aspects of the project. As Bowie and Cassim (2016) point out, the rigid structure of traditional service learning is often difficult to reconcile with the fluidity of most design curricula due to its experimental nature.

In breaking with the traditional service-learning framework wherein faculty are at the helm of any service-driven activities, faculty purposefully empowered the students to direct their own learning and work product over the duration of the service engagement with the veterans. The experience grew organically in this way as students were the leaders in this unique setting rather than the natural followers of faculty expectations and directives. As new information and challenges arose over the course of this experience, students were allowed to collectively solve each issue with little intervention from their instructor. Their learning mirrored much more of a constructivist learning theory wherein the students were forming new knowledge based on their experiences during the engagement (Jonassen, 2009). In this case, and as Jonassen suggested, students were “owning” the goals and outcomes of the problem at hand (2009). In this project, through metacognition, or awareness of one’s own thinking process, students used an active learning experience to build a rich web of knowledge, which ultimately led them to produce a well-designed professional exhibit. Research has shown that by engaging students in their own learning, they will form strong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Emergent Themes of Student Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMERGENT THEMES FROM STUDENT REFLECTIONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun/enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from/admiration for the veterans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutually beneficial experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design experience cultivating empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans’ pride/enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
bonds with the concepts and knowledge at hand (McKeachie, 2002; McGlynn, 2005). Further, their thinking patterns can even be changed by their experiences (Prensky, 2001). As research suggests, students were offered selective choices during the experience (Jenkins & Sheehy, 2011; Werner & McVaugh, 2000), both in terms of how they interacted with the veterans as well as in how they designed the exhibit. Those choices ultimately guided the experience as well as the student learning outcomes, resulting in a transformative learning experience. All 16 of the students in this class came together to create a team project like no other. They were given more than enough freedom to fail but instead, as suggested by Simons and Cleary (2006), this collaborative experience empowered the students, not only in service of the veterans but also in the way they honored them through exhibit design. These results suggest that students were eager to impact the community they served through meaningful exchange rather than simple passive service. More investigation should be conducted regarding flexibility and student leadership in service-learning experiences. Student-driven projects may be a vehicle for deeper learning as a result of the personal empowerment, leadership opportunities, and knowledge building components they bring to service-learning courses.

As this project was service-based and unexpectedly put together at the behest of students, empirical data was not collected to assess the specific rate or level of therapeutic impact for the residents. There was simply no time to set up such protocols and remain within the semester’s timeline for completion. Observation and discussion with staff were the only means of data collection, which occurred organically throughout the experience. However, this does not diminish the value of the service. When, at the surprise of all parties, veterans who were “excluded” from participation by the VA staff began to demonstrate never before seen responses to the students’ presence, it became clear that a strict research protocol would not have been ideal for this community group after all. Prior to the start of the students’ service period for this project, consent for participation had to be gained for residents predetermined by the VA recreation therapy staff to be “a good fit” for this engagement. The experience would have taken an entirely different turn if those residents had remained excluded from participation. As it happened, each week of the engagement, VA staff presented us with another round of consent documentation for residents who had recently joined in the activities by choice. By the end of the experience, the number of resident participants had nearly doubled. Allowing the veterans to self-select into the study was not only an important recruitment tool for participants, but was also key in expanding the students’ personal and emotional growth, as evidenced in their reflection papers. All veteran participants were residents in either the hospital’s locked dementia ward or their new community cottages for dementia care. Many patients in the locked ward transformed from nonverbal or non-communicative patients to active participants by the end of the six-week experience, completely by choice. During this transformation students experienced firsthand how their service helped give a voice to residents that had been written off by staff. This organic growth needs a mechanism for study and would be an interesting topic to explore further within the veteran population as well as other memory care patient groups.

Another key observation was the potential effect of gender on the experience. All veteran residents except for one were male, yet the student group was entirely female. The single female of the resident group had been a military nurse as a young woman with a litany of service accomplishments but seemed insecure and shy at the beginning of the service period. She was surrounded by all male residents as her peers and the students were determined to bring her out of the shadows. She had a birthday during the service experience and the students decided to throw her a birthday party complete with balloons, cake, and a birthday pin they had made for her to wear. That day was a turning point for her in the service experience. It cannot be said for certain that the relatability of the female students was what brought her out of her shell, but the impact of gender on participants’ individual outcomes would be a valuable study to pursue in an effort to predict the most favorable scenarios for successful community engagement experiences. In addition to the effect the group of young women may have had on the single female participant, it must also be noted the potential impact of an influx of young women on a ward of senior male residents. The joy and interest on their faces was evident during every visit. Many of the residents were widowers and enjoyed talking with the students about their love conquests as young men. Both examples demonstrate that further study is needed to explore the impact of gender in service-learning experiences.
It is also prudent to identify lessons learned from this experience through the lens of the faculty sponsor. The students in this course requested the opportunity to engage further with the veterans in their community, and although this course had to be modified to accommodate their desires, it was done so with the hope that the experience would help them develop a deeper understanding of human-centered design, a key component in design education. CSSES scores from the previous semester’s activity indicated that although students’ confidence in their ability to “help individuals in need by participating in community service activities” were above average, the post-test data revealed no significant change after the volunteer work had been completed. This supports service-learning literature that suggests that without a true service-learning framework, community service engages have little lasting educational or social/emotional value to students (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Conway, et al., 2009; Simons & Cleary, 2006). Additionally, these results could indicate that the community service experience illuminated the need within the veteran community to such a degree that the students stagnated in their confidence rather than experiencing growth and reinforcement of their self-efficacy for community service as suggested by Reeb (2006). Nevertheless, it is notable that while this project began with a simple community service requirement, it evolved into something much larger and much more involved at the students’ request. This may suggest that students are not only capable of but are also interested in making deep connections with others as part of their knowledge-seeking process. Perhaps their ability to learn outside of traditional classroom activities is more advanced than we know, and that they crave opportunities to impact the world around them, especially in marginalized communities. Further exploration is needed to identify the level of engagement in service activities with the most potential for positive impact on student growth and efficacy in community service.

The impromptu design of this engagement prohibited it from including a final round of the CSSES administration, but in the absence of quantitative data to support student growth in this area, student reflections suggest that every student in the exhibit design cohort was positively impacted by this experience. As depicted in Table 5, “design experience cultivating empathy” and “helping others” were equally notable among student reflections, occurring in over 62% of reflection papers. This suggests that in addition to the visual evidence perceivable in the physical exhibit, student reflections also indicate growth in the understanding of human-centered design as a result of this service experience. The relevance in particular to interior design education is that nowhere in the list of suggested activities for the instruction of human-centered design as written in CIDA accreditation standards is the suggestion of service learning. This omission is critical in that it overlooks the potential for firsthand knowledge obtained through a service experience as well as other advantages of non-traditional learning opportunities (Bowie & Cassim, 2016). Furthermore, it overlooks the potential of projects allowed to progress in an organic fashion. The transformative nature of service allowed students in this instance to control their path of learning and growth, and it is expected that their advances in this knowledge domain were greater than what is easily achieved through other recommended instructional techniques as written in the CIDA guidelines. This supports the work of Bowie and Cassim (2016), which advocates the deliberate pairing of service learning and human-centered design due to their natural overlap in theory and practice. Further, the implications of this experience can be applied beyond interior design education to the variety of disciplines that seek to improve the experience of users through human-centered design.

Limitations

Stakeholder partnerships were strong for this project. One key component to the success of this endeavor was the buy-in offered by the VA hospital, its administration, its staff, and residents. An equal force in this collaboration was the support of the administration the students represented. From the faculty and department level all the way to the College’s Advisory Board—the group that funded the fabrication of the exhibit—students were supported one hundred percent in their efforts. These strong partnerships instilled confidence in the students and fostered an appreciation for the opportunity they were given. However, top level administration for the VA experienced several changes over the course of this project and beyond. The turnover rate failed to protect the interest of the partnership between the interior design department and the veteran population, limiting the continuum of service learning going forward.
Service learning in its traditional form requires an ongoing benefit to the community partner, which cannot be guaranteed when leadership is not consistent. The tangible outcome of this collaboration was a full-scale, professional quality exhibit produced by the 16 students enrolled in this class. The display was so impressive that it not only remained on exhibit at the VA for several weeks after its opening, but it was subsequently a requested component of a Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit, and was also put on display in the Alabama Museum of Natural History. It was displayed again upon request of the planning committee at the Service Member to Civilian National Summit in 2014. At present, plans are in place for a permanent installation of the exhibit in the VA where the project took place. In the absence of continued collaboration with the recreation therapy team and residents of the VA, the professional display that honors this collaboration and the veterans who participated will serve as a reminder of the impact of this experience to all who enter the VA medical center. The new installation space is planned for the main lobby of the medical center on the VA campus.

**Conclusion**

Despite the challenges of working with a community partner with ever-changing leadership and having to design a service-based course at the last minute, the value of this experience to both students and veterans cannot be overlooked. More study into the potential for impacts to similar communities, such as with persons in memory care units or other veteran community groups, would be beneficial as others seek to understand best practices for engagement with underserved community groups. It is notable that, for a variety of reasons, students were impacted socially and emotionally by this collaboration with the veterans. This suggests that careful consideration should be afforded to service-learning projects to ensure that the student group is gaining as much from the community as the community is from the student engagement.

Furthermore, this project has illuminated the potential impacts when students are empowered to take control of their own learning experiences. What began as a simple community service project evolved into a yearlong, highly involved relationship with a community partner at the students’ request. While this is not an appropriate model for every service opportunity, further investigation is needed into the traditional understanding of the faculty/student relationship in community-based partnerships. The flexibility of this engagement (and faculty leader) was critical in the effectiveness of the experience. There was no faculty ego to overcome or agenda to complete, illuminating the potential for emerging student leaders when individuals are empowered to direct their own learning. The untapped potential of student-driven engagements could be a key component to understanding best practices for service learning and human-centered design.

Finally, in a societal age focused on the user experience, from software development to product design to classroom instruction, the success of this project in its ability to connect students to a user group through a careful examination of human-centered design depicts the relatability of design education to other disciplines. Human-centered design is at the heart of design practice and education, and is a model that could be employed by any discipline as a means to connect to user groups. Service learning is a logical vehicle to establish this connection between students and users, especially when users are realized as consumers of knowledge, goods, and/or services. Therefore, meaningful partnerships between students and community stakeholders should always include the voice of not only the client (in this case, the VA administration and staff), but also the end user (in this case, the VA residents) to enable students to fully understand their target audience/user/consumer. To that end, all service-learning opportunities should include student opportunities that empower them with agency within their own field of study.

**References**


About the Author
Stephanie M. Sickler is an assistant professor and foundations coordinator in the Department of Interior Architecture and Design at Florida State University.
Learning to Listen: The Lesson of Engagement

The following Student Voices contribution hits home for me. Emily Arenz and Alexa Thornton describe what I have come to know from my own work in multicultural teacher education: If we let them, young people will tell us what they need. It’s not only that the students Arenz and Thornton observe in their classroom-based field experience say or show themselves to be bored and unengaged, it’s that they communicate how things could be otherwise. Arenz hears from the student she observes that the source of inattention is the boring lesson; Thornton, from her student, understands lack of peer and teacher interaction to cause his demotivation. Taken together, their collective act of listening tells us that young people want to experience intellectual stimulation through meaningful activity with others. Arenz and Thornton are now poised to take this lesson with them as they assume leadership over classrooms of their own.

This Student Voices contribution affirms for me the importance of the listening framework proposed by Kathy Schultz (2003). Elegant in its simplicity, Shultz’s framework directs us to listen to students’ lives, to the lives of their classrooms and communities, and, importantly, to where and how those lives have been silenced in schools. Through their field experience, Arenz and Thornton learned to listen to the life of the classroom and, through that, understand how much more there is to learn about students, community, and schooling in society. Further, they learned to listen to the voices of themselves as future teachers, talking their way into the kind of teachers their students have taught them to be.

Reference


Dr. Katherine Richardson Bruna
Associate Editor, Student and Community Engagement
We are the best. The biggest. The most effective. The only. We are saving lives. We are transforming systems. We are the solution.

Check out any nonprofit’s mission and vision statements: The superlatives abound. Find your way to the impact part of the website, and the trend continues. Organizations purport life-altering changes that they’ve produced among the individuals they serve through a dizzying display of percentage increases, interspersed with inspirational dramatic stories of individual transformation. After examining a nonprofit’s promotional materials and impact reports, attending galas, and hearing pitches, it is hard to believe that we still face any social or economic challenges. We have so many organizations solving all of our many problems.

The reality, obviously, is more complex. But as a sector purporting to solve community issues, it sometimes seems that we are unable to have real, nuanced conversations about the long, hard, real, unglamorous grind of social change work. Some of this simplistic grandeur is perpetuated by social change organizations themselves. Some of this is caused by funders who demand immediate results, and seemingly hold onto the belief that their resources can change the world within a finite amount of time.

None of these solution and savior narratives, however, are propagated by the very people we are attempting to serve, who understand, all too well, the complexities that accompany any specific social change intervention. The critical question becomes how to motivate and sustain a culture of making a difference through social change work while maintaining a sense of humility about the limitations of individual organizations and people to effect change.

Any undoubtedly multifaceted answer must involve ensuring that constituents are always at the forefront, not seen solely as beneficiaries of the work of nonprofits, but rather, fundamental decision-makers in the very process of determining how the work actually occurs. Rather than a paternalistic, savior-oriented mindset, a constituent-first approach must be foundational to the work of any social change organization.

Two of us are former democracy coaches at Generation Citizen (GC), and one of us is the current CEO. At GC, young people learn politics through taking action on local issues they care about. To this end, the entire premise behind GC is based on a constituent-first mentality. We implement a program predicated on the fact that young people have specific contextual and critical knowledge on local challenges in their community, and that they themselves can make meaningful change. Young people in New York City have a better understanding of the challenges of police-community relations than many governmental officials working on the problem from their offices. Students in Lowell, Massachusetts have a unique lens into the problems, and potential solutions, of the opioid epidemic because of their personal experience with the crisis.

Correspondingly, GC students use this local knowledge and their personal experiences to inform their proposed solutions. For example, students, reflecting on their experiences with police officers, have advocated reforms to the quota systems and for comprehensive police reform. Other students, affected by the deportation of family members, have pushed for local immigration protections.

Despite the fact that GC’s philosophy puts the constituent front and center, we too inevitably fall victim to some of the traditional pitfalls of social change work. We predominantly work with low-income schools, and many of our employees grew up in much different socioeconomic backgrounds from the communities we serve. This divergent reality has inevitably informed how we have built our curriculum and training programs.
Additionally, when raising money, we have sometimes elevated the stories of individuals and overplayed our impact, in an effort to prove that we are engaging in truly transformational work. At times, we have failed to put constituents front and center in every aspect of our work and understand empathetically the complexity of their lives.

So how can we, and all nonprofits, ensure that putting constituents front and center is not a slogan and tagline, but an actual reality? We must put concrete structures into place to ensure that constituents inform our work products.

First, a constituent-centered approach requires ensuring that social change work itself becomes more democratic. The efforts of organizations, and the money directed toward programmatic activities, should be informed by those being served, rather than solely promoting technocratic solutions perpetuated by those already in power.

There are concrete ways to democratize social change entities and shift entrenched power dynamics. One necessary reform, which we have begun in earnest at Generation Citizen, is to prioritize the exploration of diversity, equity, and inclusion work internally. This challenging but critical examination requires ensuring that more of our organizational leadership represents the same demographics of the students we serve. It also requires that we critically assess power dynamics internally—examining who gets to make decisions and how, and ensuring that a robust democratic form of decision-making is formalized and processed.

Additionally, a constituent-oriented approach involves prioritizing constituent voice and input in program development. Rather than assuming that practitioners know what works best, informed by statistically sound best practices, the people we are trying to serve should be part of any efforts to form, or reform, impact strategies. They cannot solely be seen as beneficiaries, or as people we are trying to help.

In Generation Citizen, we have formed a Student Leadership Board, comprised of young people from all across the country who have gone through our program. These students are beginning to advise GC on curricular and training approaches, and weighing in on organizational strategy. To date, students have provided feedback on how our curriculum can sometimes come across as paternalistic, that the conferences they attend as spokespeople for us are too old and too white, and that our volunteers are not always culturally competent in the classroom.

It is challenging to ensure that these students are not tokenized, but rather, viewed with authentic and real expertise. As part of this quest to prioritize constituents, we will be bringing youth voice to our national board of directors, ensuring that the young people we serve have a seat at the decision-making table. We have also just started a Teacher Leadership Board to advise us in similar ways, focusing on pedagogical and curricular priorities.

It is not just organizations that need to elevate constituents. Philanthropy must consider its practices as well. There are obvious sociological and psychological challenges behind the act of giving. It is assumed that donors, since they earned the money, should unilaterally control how their money is spent. But to what extent should populations on the receiving end of social innovations have a say in how money is spent on them? In determining philanthropic priorities, foundations and individuals should do more than consult experts and practitioners. They should actually listen to the people on the ground they are intending to help. This should involve focus groups, and frequent site visits, not just to see the best and glossy parts of an organization, but to understand the trickier and challenging components as well.

At GC, we have ensured that all of our board meetings and staff retreats are place-based, situated within the communities we work. Our stakeholders meet with constituents, ask questions, and reflect upon our work, not to prove that we are engaging in transformational work, but rather, to truly understand our strengths and challenges in the distinct communities where we work.

A repercussion of the importance of a constituent-first approach is a recognition that real and lasting change takes time. There is sometimes, implicitly or explicitly, an expectation, from organizations or funders, that one organization can transform an entire system. The aforementioned savior rhetoric perpetuates this narrative. Organizations propose missions that aim to close entire educational gaps, or ensure that every young person in this country will be able to attend college. Even GC’s mission states that, one day, every young person in this country will receive an effective action civics education.

Ambition can be good. But these visions can also breed unrealistic expectations. This mentality is worsened by the fact that limited resources are available to the sector, breeding competition. As a
result, they often must present themselves as the best and most effective recipients of the donations, producing the most “change” per dollar spent in order to get more funding. Rather than worrying about solving the problem, organizations focus on proving that they are the best.

A potential solution to this cycle lies in a broader social and cultural shift toward more honest conversations between donors and organizations, and most importantly, with the target populations, about realistic changes each group can expect to see. Most often, the flashy and quick solutions are not the ones that will lead to long-term sustainable change in the field.

GC is ultimately trying to improve our democracy by engaging young people in the political process. The change will not occur overnight. Reforming our democracy through empowering young people is difficult to measure on surveys or test scores. We are not attempting to make excuses, and know that there are indicators along the way that can help to demonstrate forward progress. But, at the same time, it is challenging to have an honest conversation about the real limitations of our work (we cannot solve the problems with our democracy on our own), elevate constituents to the forefront, and still effectively bring in dollars.

In current times of unprecedented economic and political inequality, there may be no more important work than attempting to solve societal woes. And there are so many examples of organizations that are truly making a difference, in issues ranging from education to poverty to climate change to criminal justice. But no organization, on its own, is solving our intractable problems.

And that realization, that no organization can solve all of the inequity that has pervaded society, calls for a deep dose of humility. Paramount in a constituent-first philosophy is a recognition that we all must be more humble. We must be humble about our ability to effect change. We must be humble about the time frame in which change can happen. We must be humble about the extent to which we can bring about change on our own. Regardless of how we effect change, putting constituents first must be part of any solution.

**About the Authors**

Emely Anico is a program officer at The Climate Group in New York City. Sydney Menzin is a business analyst at the Public Consulting Group in Boston. Scott Warren is co-founder and CEO of Generation Citizen, whose mission is to empower young people to become engaged and effective citizens.
Stephanie Schneider recently joined the staff of JCES as the student associate editor. A graduate student at Iowa State University, Schneider is pursuing a master of science degree in education with an emphasis in social and cultural studies. While working toward her undergraduate degree—a BS in elementary education with endorsements in science, reading, and English language arts—she worked with students from six months to college age. Through the Urban Ecosystem Project, an NIH-SEPA-funded (National Institutes of Health-Science Education Partnership Award) program dedicated to encouraging historically excluded youth to see themselves as scientists, she began to learn about educational disparities. This sparked an interest in learning more about the education system and the role it plays in institutional racism. She continues to participate in the Urban Ecosystem Project, which has provided her with opportunities ranging from working at informal summer science camps to co-facilitating a college course for pre-service teachers, from implementing an after-school program to leading a year-long professional learning community group with 17 teachers in two urban schools in Des Moines, Iowa. Schneider’s current research focus is the effect of a culturally responsive science teaching framework in elementary classrooms, specifically on educators’ science teaching beliefs, identities, and practices. She believes her master’s degree experiences will add to her knowledge of social justice issues in and related to the education system, thereby supporting her goal of being part of the effort to eradicate systemic injustices.
Frustration, Excitement, Commitment: Preservice Teachers Reflect on their Fieldwork Experiences

The Purpose of Education: Engaging Active Minds

By Emily Arenz

My fieldwork experience broadened my views regarding the complexity of the current education system and helped me develop my own ideas about the purpose of education. In the school I observed, administrators and teachers genuinely promoted the importance of meeting statewide testing requirements. The content students were learning usually connected back to the standardized test questions they were going to answer on their future tests.

Overall, these efforts did help students reach higher test scores. However, this strong focus also led the school to adopt a fixed curriculum to better prepare students to meet testing expectations. This meant teachers often followed a script when speaking to their students and had very little room for creativity toward their lessons.

I noticed quickly that students seemed to struggle to stay engaged in these scripted lessons. While my cooperating teacher was able to have caring conversations with his students before and after class, he immediately switched personas when he had to teach from the conventional lesson. Although the students genuinely enjoyed their teacher, they had a hard time paying attention to these lessons and I was left questioning how much of the content they were learning. As an observer, I was able to see and hear what students truly thought about the content and this kind of instruction. In one instance, some students were talking in the back of the classroom and when I suggested that they pay attention they replied, “But it’s boring and we can’t focus.” I realized they were right. The lesson was boring and it did not offer any opportunity for students to actively participate or engage with ideas. I was surprised that I was left feeling frustrated and even angry.

The purpose of education, in my opinion, is for students to flourish and learn to engage in a democratic society. Students can learn this if they are taught a broad understanding of the world around them and how to develop their own thinking on what that world means. Teaching this to students helps them become aware of current issues and recognize how their voices can have an influence in a democratic society. Although the scripted content taught in this classroom might be considered important for one kind of student growth, it is not enough for students to reach these broader goals. Instead of listening to a teacher routinely teach, students need to work together, engage in class discussion, and get involved with their curriculum as a whole.

As a future English teacher, I want to show students literature written by people of diverse backgrounds and help students form their own voices in their writing, as well as society. In my classroom, I want students to be able to freely express their ideas. Democracy is about being able to have individual ideas and respectfully voicing these ideas to possibly make a change in the world. I was frustrated that the school I observed seemed to be teaching students to achieve higher test scores instead of how to develop and communicate ideas that could lead to success for themselves or society. Teachers are there to guide and inspire, and to help students create their own ideas. Having a classroom environment that establishes the importance of developing informed opinions will help students flourish in a democratic society because it prepares students for a life of involvement with ideas. Instead of just listening to the teacher lecture, students should be able to talk among their classmates and learn from each other. On the few
occasions when the students were given the opportunity to work in groups, I saw how this type of interaction could motivate and energize them. They were extremely excited to discuss the topic they were learning. They were able to bounce ideas off each other and gain new insight. They were engaged in a way they were not during most of the lessons I observed. When I saw students working together, I realized this type of teamwork helps students grow through their peers.

My fieldwork experience helped me discover there is still work to be done in education. I believe there needs to be a better way to get students involved in their own learning. While I recognize there is a specific curriculum teachers may need to follow, it is important that teachers are able to use creativity to make lessons that align with their beliefs about the purpose and goals of education. Although I was often frustrated, I also gained a new understanding of education that I had not recognized before. Teachers have the power to get students to find their own voices in society, and it is important that teachers use this to benefit their students. Ultimately, this experience makes me excited to pursue these goals and to continue to develop my skills in order to realize the positive impact I can have in the education system.

When one thinks about the role of the teacher, it’s easy to think that the role is simply to teach content, to set up lessons for students to engage in that lead to the successful development of knowledge and skills. As an aspiring teacher, this is what I thought my passion was: to learn and to teach what I had learned. After my fieldwork experience, I realized that having a passion to teach content was not enough to be a successful teacher. What is also necessary is to have the ability to prepare and support students so they are able to learn. For this to happen, teachers must know who their students are as people. Successful teachers analyze their students and explore their challenges and strengths. To make an impact, educators connect with their students in order to motivate them and engage them in learning. I learned from my involvement in the community that a successful education takes more than having an intelligent teacher. It also requires a teacher who can foster relationships in order to engage and inspire students.

I learned this lesson through my experience with a particular student. Jordan was kindhearted and witty, but he did not engage in class and I and my cooperating teacher had trouble motivating him. I tried a lot of one-on-one attention, but, while we had some good interactions, he would not apply himself to assignments and spent a lot of class time engaging in disruptive and distracting behaviors. When I first started to observe in the classroom, I was expecting students to automatically listen, communicate, and ask questions. I found Jordan's actions and lack of focus, as well as my inability to change these behaviors, frustrating. I wanted to demonstrate my passion for teaching, but my ideas about what teaching means were consistently challenged by Jordan and students like him. My cooperating teacher also struggled with these students. He sometimes told Jordan to pay attention or to do his work, but otherwise he focused on other students. Looking back, it seems to me that Jordan did not have the benefit of a meaningful relationship with his teacher, the kind that can promote motivation and inspire learning. I believe these kinds of relationships between students and teachers are crucial in the success of a student and that what Jordan lacked was not intelligence, but connection.
I wish my experience was a success story. I wish that I could say I found a way to engage Jordan and that my passion for teaching was ignited, but I did not and it was not. As a student who had very little teaching experience, I did not have the tools, skills, or confidence to turn this into a success story. The reason I share this, however, is because I learned a very valuable lesson about the role of a teacher. I learned that rarely, if ever, do students come to school immediately ready to begin a day of strictly knowledge and skill acquirement. I realized that the academic learning aspect of school is only one part of students’ lives. Everyone has different identities and experiences and teachers can use these details to connect with their students. Motivation comes from understanding. If a student can feel as if his teacher understands and respects him, a connection is bridged, and that connection is the beginning of meaningful learning. As a teacher, this fact is perhaps the most important thing to acknowledge in order to be the best educator for all students. By supporting, confirming, and accepting students, the wall between my passion and theirs can be brought down.

The only way to really understand students and relate to them is to be an active member in our diverse society. I do not yet know how to relate to every student, but I do know that to be a successful teacher I must push myself to understand the students I work with. I must do so much more than teach content. After my fieldwork experience, I feel ready to dedicate myself to all the challenges that are included in being an educator. I wish I had longer with Jordan, and I think about him often. I know he was capable of success and achievement. Working in the community has taught me that I do have a passion to teach, but even more so, the passion to be a teacher. That realization is the most valuable asset to me and to my future students.

About the Authors
Emily Arenz is studying for a bachelor’s degree in Secondary English Education at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater with plans to teach high school English after graduation.
Alexa Thornton is a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater with a Secondary Education degree in mathematics. She is currently teaching in the Sheboygan Area School District.

They wish to thank their advisor at UW-Whitewater, Dr. Kathleen Elliott, assistant professor of Educational Foundations, for her counsel and guidance in preparing this manuscript and for her encouragement and helpful advice throughout their time at UW-Whitewater.
Instructions to Book Reviewers

Book reviews published in JCES are intended to speak to a wide range of issues relevant to the scholarship of engagement. Reviews of books within the social sciences, natural sciences and math, medicine and health, the environment, law, business, philosophy, religion, and the arts and humanities are encouraged. All book reviews submitted to JCES should provide readers with a broad overview of the book, but should go beyond description to discuss central issues raised, strengths and limitations of the text, and current issues of theory and practice raised by the book that are germane to the subject matter and engaged scholarship. Book reviews should introduce readers to literature that advances knowledge, provides practical advice, disseminates best practices, and encourages conversation and dialogue. Faculty members, administrators, staff members, students, and community partners are invited to offer their interpretations of the literature. If you are interested in writing a book review for JCES, please contact Katherine Rose Adams (katherine.adams@ung.edu) for a current list of books available to review. Reviewers are also welcome to suggest titles.

Dr. Katherine Rose Adams
University of North Georgia Book Review Editor
What does the land-grant university have to offer for the mosaic of higher education in the United States today and in the future? Gavazzi and Gee seek to answer this question in a thorough review of the mission and purpose of land-grant institutions as told by 27 acting presidents and chancellors from the original 1862 land-grant colleges and universities. In 2016 and 2017, Gavazzi and Gee interviewed these individuals to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) facing land-grant universities.

As lifelong champions of land-grant institutions, Gavazzi and Gee are well positioned for the authoring of this book and conducting the interviews. Gavazzi has spent his entire adult life at land-grant universities, either as a student at Pennsylvania State University and the University of Connecticut, or as a professor at The Ohio State University. As a scholar of families and children, Gavazzi has worked with one of Ohio State's regional campuses in community engagement efforts. Gee, who grew up in rural America, has served as president of several large universities, including The Ohio State University, Brown University, and Vanderbilt University. He currently serves as president of West Virginia University, his second stint in that position.

As the Introduction (pages 8–11) outlines, Chapter 1 of the text introduces the SWOT analysis and situates the study in the larger political context of the Trump presidency, as Trump's election and inauguration occurred amid the interviews. The authors highlight the election results near land-grant university campuses to point to the conflicting relationship between universities and communities, especially in regard to politics. Gavazzi and Gee champion the diversity in American institutions and argue that a marital covenant model of service best captures the potential of university/community engagement.

The second chapter examines the origins of the land-grant university, referencing the Morrill Acts. The authors again emphasize the covenant relationship that higher education ought to have vis-à-vis the public or the local community. Gavazzi and Gee criticize the privatization of higher education, and thus champion the land-grant university as the quintessential people's university because it, from its onset, has institutionalized community engagement. The authors highlight The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, The Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement, and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities' Innovation and Economic Prosperity Universities Designation as excellent examples of codifying university relationships with their local communities.

The authors’ qualitative findings begin in Chapter 3 with interviews of 27 acting presidents and chancellors of the 1862 land-grant universities. Gavazzi and Gee identified seven emerging thematic paradoxes according to the SWOT analysis. This chapter, which synthesizes significant quotes from interviewees, is unique to the field; it covers a vast set of topics, including financial, mission, epistemological, access, geographic, global, and value pressures. For interested readers, Chapter 3 would be the recommended chapter to read to understand the overarching themes of the book. In Chapter 4, Gavazzi and Gee continue answering their driving question by focusing on several of the emergent themes from the interviews. In particular, the authors examine the financial, mission drift, and geographical pressures. The authors found that governing boards, elected officials, and accrediting agencies have immense power in shaping the land-grant university experience, pressuring presidents and chancellors to be more efficient with financial resources, to produce more knowledge through research (as opposed to an emphasis on teaching
and service), and to tailor education to rural communities instead of urban communities. Gavazzi and Gee suggest that these constituencies can inhibit or enhance the potential of land-grant universities to engage local communities.

Chapters 5 and 6 similarly accentuate the impact a constituency can have for better or worse on the traditional mission of land-grants. In Chapter 5, the authors reference the constituency of faculty. They trace interviewee responses to document the critical role that faculty have in appropriately positioning land-grant universities alongside communities. Faculty after all are a primary stakeholder in engaging the community through teaching, research, and service. The authors argue that despite limitations in promotion and tenure processes, faculty governance systems can advance the mission-critical notion of university/community engagement. Students are also central to the production of university/community engagement as Gavazzi and Gee’s Chapter 6 suggests. According to the authors, presidents and chancellors emphasized the salient role of students in developing robust relationships with communities, whether through service learning, extracurricular engagement, activism, or even as alumni who return to work in the local community.

Chapter 7, the final chapter, issues a clarion call for developing a servant university marked by a healthy marriage between university and community. The authors, harkening back to their earlier reference to the Trump campaign, cast a vision for Making America Great Again through a moderate, bridge-building agenda centered on the capacities of land-grant universities.

This text is a fine attempt at bridging the gap between the traditions of higher education in the nation and the impending doom facing postsecondary education. As many scholars note, the demise of faculty governance, questions about access and affordability, issues of grade inflation and learning, the corporatization of higher education, technology, and inequities in student success continue to affect the public’s perception of higher education. Despite the giddy nostalgia of the 1860s, the authors do make a solid argument that land-grant universities have historically developed and contemporarily enact a model of university/community engagement that responds to these major questions in the field regarding access, affordability, and the tripartite mission of teaching, service, and research. Nevertheless, the authors leave two major omissions that taint their positive perspective on the land-grant institution: The plight of indigenous peoples and the destruction of natural resources.

First, regarding indigenous Americans, the Morrill Act that granted 30,000 acres of land per senator to every state in the Union in 1862 was part and parcel of the ongoing Manifest Destiny project of westward expansion (Pfaff, 2010). A month prior to President Lincoln signing the Morrill Act of 1862, the president signed another act that granted copious amounts of land in the west, the Homestead Act of 1862. Further, only a day before Lincoln signed the Morrill Act, he signed the Pacific Railway Act, which donated land and resources from the federal government to build the first transcontinental railroad. All three acts were federal directives that utilized stolen land for the purpose of American potentionation. To be sure, the federal “granting” of 30,000 acres must be interpreted not as positive university/community engagement, but as part of the imagination that produced the genocide of indigenous peoples. The gruesome irony in Gavazzi and Gee’s text is not an exaggeration: To champion the historicity of land-grant university/community engagement is to also champion the proliferation of the university at the expense of others, particularly indigenous peoples. The Morrill Act, and thus the very essence of the land-grant university, is not innocuous, and certainly ought not to be celebrated. The violence of the 1800s on indigenous peoples must be reckoned with and repaired by these very land-grant universities if they are to truly exemplify mutuality in their efforts to engage the local community. When nostalgia supplants reality, something has gone terribly awry.

Second, regarding natural resources, the land-grant university, as Gavazzi and Gee note, was originally founded to train agriculturalists, engineers, and military cadets. The esteemed authors fail to acknowledge the ecological mayhem in the present age that has been produced, in part, by the education and ideologies received at land-grant universities. Land-grant universities embodied the federal impulse of capitalist production at the expense of the earth; they are the higher education normalization of ecological devastation and resistance to inclusive epistemologies (Collins & Kalehua Mueller, 2016). If university/community engagement practices
of the land-grants is the quintessential model of marriage between university and community, then the relationship is going to be one characterized by extractive violence.

In sum, Gavazzi and Gee champion the servant mentality of land-grant universities in the face of the political and cultural *zeitgeist*. But, the authors fail to ask the appropriate question. Rather than inquiring, “What does the land-grant university have to offer for the mosaic of higher education in the U.S. today and in the future?” it would be more appropriate to ask, “To whom and for what does the land-grant university have to offer for the mosaic of higher education in the U.S. today and in the future?” Their answer to the latter question is not one of service, but one that is an erasure of indigenous identity and a stopgap to ecological flourishing.

References


About the Reviewer

Alexander H. Jones is assistant director of the Human Needs and Global Resources program at Wheaton College.
The University of Minnesota, in partnership with the North Central ESC Region, welcomed more than 600 conference attendees to Minneapolis Oct. 2–3, 2018, for the annual meeting of the Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC). The conference, which featured more than 250 concurrent sessions, marked the launch of ESC 20/20 Vision. Focus. Impact., a strategic action plan adopted in 2016 to serve as a guide for the non-profit educational organization’s future endeavors and growth.

The conference theme, Transforming Higher Education Through Engaged Scholarship, spoke directly to the efforts undertaken by many universities over nearly two decades to transform them from being universities with community engagement programs to being engaged universities—a subtle shift in language with a powerful shift in practice.

“This conference takes place during a critical time in our nation’s history,” said Dr. Andrew Furco, associate vice president for public engagement at the University of Minnesota, in his welcome to conference attendees. “[It’s a time] in which higher education’s ability to address society’s most challenging issues is being questioned by legislators, business leaders, community residents and even our students and faculty.

“The discussions and debates that will take place during this conference will surely bring to the fore some of the key issues that higher education will need to consider in the coming years, and the important role that engaged scholarship, in particular, will play in advancing higher education’s academic and public agendas,” said Furco.

R.T. Rybak, former mayor of Minneapolis and president and CEO of The Minneapolis Foundation, one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the nation, was the keynote speaker for the Oct. 2 opening plenary.

The launch of ESC 20/20 at this conference brought with it the additions of the presentation of the first Engagement Scholarship Consortium Excellence Awards and related panel discussion, as well as the first ESC Faculty Scholars Panel. Awards program information follows. Coverage of the ESC Faculty Scholars Panel begins on page 106.

The ESC Excellence Awards Program recognizes activities that improve the quality of life for individuals, families and communities while building capacity through community-engaged scholarship. The program also provides important recognition opportunities for students, faculty, community partners and higher education institutions and increases opportunities for enhanced peer learning.
Nominations were received from two- and four-year public and private higher education institutions from across the nation and were evaluated by a panel of scholars that included David Proctor, director of the Center for Engagement and Community Development at Kansas State University; Deborah Smith-Howell, associate vice chancellor for Academic Affairs and dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Nebraska Omaha; Birgit Green, director of the Office of Academic Engagement at Texas Tech University; Laurie Van Egeren, assistant provost for University Community Partnerships, Office of University Outreach and Engagement, Michigan State University; Scott Reed, vice provost, Division of Outreach and Engagement, Oregon State University; Paul Brooks, associate vice president for Public Service and Outreach, University of Georgia; Lynnette Young Overby, deputy director, Community Engagement Initiative, University of Delaware; and Sharon Paynter, assistant vice chancellor for Public Service and Community Relations, East Carolina University.

Presentation of the ESC Excellence Awards took place Oct. 2. Western Carolina University received the Excellence in Student Community Engagement Award for its Student Democracy Coalition Project. Two Excellence in Community Partner Engagement Awards were presented—one to Colorado State University's Campus Connections Youth Mentoring Program and one to The Ohio State University's Generation Rx Program. Ball State University received the Excellence in Faculty Community Engagement Award for its Schools Within the Context of Community Program. (Editor's note: Ball State's program also received the 2018 W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Engagement Scholarship Award and, ultimately, the 2018 C. Peter Magrath Community Engagement Scholarship Award.)

Finally, the University of Wisconsin-Extension was named recipient of the Ryan, Moser, Reilly Excellence in Community Engagement Institutional Leadership Award. The award is named in recognition of leaders from Pennsylvania State University, The Ohio State University and the University of Wisconsin-Extension for their significant contributions to the inaugural meeting of the National Outreach Scholarship Conference (known today as the Engagement Scholarship Consortium).

ESC Board President Samory T. Pruitt, vice president for Community Affairs at The University of Alabama, underscored the importance of the highly competitive new program. “These institutions exemplify the best engagement scholarship has to offer,” Pruitt said, “and demonstrate innovative and practical solutions to some of the most critical challenges facing our nation and world today.”

Editor's note: The Engagement Scholarship Consortium, a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization, is comprised of a mix of state-public and private institutions of higher education. The ESC goal is to build strong university/community partnerships anchored in the rigors of scholarship.
The Kellogg Foundation recipients/regional finalists for the 2018 C. Peter Magrath Community Engagement Award were the University of Florida, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Texas Tech University, and Ball State University.

Following are the Kellogg recipients by region, with a brief description of their winning projects:

South Region, the University of Florida: Healthy Gulf, Healthy Communities (HGHC)
HGHC addressed human health effects of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in Gulf Coast communities throughout Alabama and Florida. Active from 2010–2017, the project combined community-based research, laboratory research and community outreach efforts. The project helped ameliorate the psychosocial impacts of the oil spill, build community resiliency and address contamination of local seafood. The oil spill threatened to wreak havoc on affected communities that rely heavily on tourism and fishing and were among the region's poorest prior to the spill. Partnering with community stakeholders, the university determined unmet community needs and developed research initiatives that led to useful programs for residents. Researchers also followed 260 residents for five years, tracking the psychosocial effects of the oil spill and publishing recommendations for future relief efforts that focused on financial literacy and the strengthening of community-based programs to address substance abuse. Another set of researchers examined the role of social networks in disaster recovery with the aim of improving post-disaster recovery programs.

Northeast Region, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University: The Virginia Tech Water Study Research Team: Flint, Michigan Water Crisis
For almost a decade, Virginia Tech faculty, students and community partners worked together to analyze drinking water to ensure it meets safety standards. The Virginia Tech Water Study Research Team discovered and disclosed harmful levels of lead in drinking water in several communities across the country—including Durham and Greenville, North Carolina; Flint, Michigan; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Washington, D.C. Following the identification of regions with contaminated drinking water, the 45-member team collaborated with community stakeholders to solve problems that led to the contamination. In 2015, Flint faced an increased incidence of childhood poisoning and one of the worst outbreaks of Legionnaire's disease in U.S. history. In addition to helping oversee a citizen-science effort that tested 800 water samples at 277 homes across the city, Virginia Tech researchers also sampled water in hospitals and businesses for heavy metals and dangerous chemicals and pathogens and published their findings. The work of the coalition of Flint organizations and Virginia Tech researchers ultimately led to the exposure of lead contamination and misconduct by the State of Michigan and the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Building on these efforts, the research team coordinated extensive outreach—including phone calls, letters and press conferences—to educate the population about the imminent health threat posed by Flint drinking water. The revelation of contaminated drinking water led to corrective action by the State of Michigan, as well as hundreds of millions of dollars in emergency federal support.

West Region, Texas Tech University: The East Lubbock Promise Neighborhood (ELPN): From Cradle to Career
Working under a U.S. Department of Education grant with more than 75 regional partners, Texas Tech's ELPN project has revitalized one of the poorest and most underserved areas in the state and region. Using a community-action research model, Texas Tech formulated evidence-based solutions that empower the community to increase long-
term health safety and economic well-being. East Lubbock faces a variety of challenges, including endemic poverty, high rates of child abuse and child delinquency and a low rate of college attendance. To increase educational attainment, the project’s early learning initiative provided 62,000 children and families with after-school enrichment programs in music, art, nutrition and cooking in 2017 alone. High school graduation rates in the area have increased dramatically—from 67 percent in 2013 to 93 percent in 2017. The program also provides free support for adults aiming to obtain their GED, enroll in vocational training or take continuing education classes. Documenting and analyzing the variety of the program’s components, the Promise Neighborhood project has resulted in more than 11 peer-reviewed publications, two dissertations and important changes to curriculum for teacher preparation programs.

North Central Region, Ball State University: Schools Within the Context of Community (SCC)

Ball State’s SCC program takes a unique approach to teacher education to help prepare culturally responsive and community-engaged teachers. Launched in 2009 as a partnership between Ball State and the Whitley neighborhood of Muncie, Ind., SCC immerses education students in low-income, predominantly African-American communities where they’re matched with community mentors who educate student-teachers on the community’s values and strengths. As part of the initiative, Ball State faculty designed a research agenda examining the impact of community-engaged teacher preparation on aspiring teachers, children and the wider community. Researchers working on the project had, by fall 2018, produced 12 peer-reviewed research papers, a co-authored book and a wide array of national presentations—all while leveraging more than $3 million in funding support programming for children in the community. Working with community partners, the program has helped prepare nearly 200 culturally responsive, equity-focused future teachers.

2018 Exemplary Project Recognition Honors

Cornell University, for the Rust to Green Community/University Partnership; Kansas State University, for The Rural Grocery Initiative; The Pennsylvania State University, for The Penn State Berks Center for Service Learning and Community-Based Research; and The University of North Carolina Wilmington, for UNCW-ACCESS of Wilmington Collaborative Community Scholarship.

Magrath Award Selection Committee

Chair: Burns Hargis, president, Oklahoma State University. Representative Members: Burton Bargerstock, president, Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship; Susan Ann Gust, activist and community development consultant; Catherine Howard, chair, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Council on Engagement and Outreach; Samory T. Pruitt, president, Engagement Scholarship Consortium.

2018 W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Engagement Scholarship Awards Selection Committee

Steve Abel, Purdue University; Amy Hutson Badham, University of Alabama at Birmingham; Leslie Boney, North Carolina State University; Katy Campbell, University of Alberta; Royrickers Cook, Auburn University; Denae Dorris, Tarleton State University; Tracy D. Eells, University of Louisville; Margee Ensign, Dickinson College; Birgit L. Green, Texas Tech University; Lisa Guion Jones, University of Central Florida; Dave Lassen, Oklahoma State University; Melissa M. Lubin, James Madison University; Kim Obbink, Montana State University; David E. Procter, Kansas State University; Scott Reed, Oregon State University; Susan Renee, University of Missouri-Columbia; Javiette Samuel, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, Susan E. Short, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Richard E. Smith, The Pennsylvania State University; Louis Swanson, Colorado State University; Laurie Van Egeren, Michigan State University.
The 2018 Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC) conference, held Oct. 2–3 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, included a featured scholars panel convened specifically to explore engaged scholarship and its role in obtaining promotion and tenure (P&T).

“It was important to our committee that panelists could demonstrate how they applied disciplinary knowledge in social and community contexts while moving through the promotion and tenure process,” said Lynnette Youn Overby, ESC Scholarship Committee chair and deputy director of Community Engagement Initiative, University of Delaware. “In this way, we could provide traditional scholars, junior faculty and graduate students who are interested in community engagement with models and best practices.”

During this Oct. 2 session, titled Gaining Tenure While Enhancing Teaching, Research and Service Through Engaged Scholarship, panelists were asked to describe their academic and personal journey in obtaining P&T as disciplinary scholars with a community engagement focus, and to provide examples of the support necessary to be successful, thereby encouraging more faculty to pursue research and creative activities with that focus.

Faculty members from five institutions and a variety of disciplines sat on the panel. They were Tracy Eells, University of Louisville, Andrew Furco, University of Minnesota, Pauline Johnson, The University of Alabama, Maria Mayan, University of Alberta and Lynnette Young Overby, University of Delaware. The panel was part of the implementation of the ESC 20/20 Vision. Focus. Impact. Strategic Action Plan, which seeks in part to promote excellence in the study, research and practice of engaged scholarship both locally and globally.

Each panelist faced specific challenges along the P&T road, with common themes being time constraints, the need for financial support, the infancy of the field of engaged scholarship at that time—as well as the perception of it being a “soft science”—and varying levels of support at their respective institutions.

UA’s Johnson, professor of Civil, Construction and Environmental Engineering, said that her involvement in what was then deemed service learning was cited as a reason not to grant tenure. That changed, however, just four years later. She acknowledged that initially, she didn’t consider the impact of her work on promotion and tenure. She began with painting, tornado relief, creation of school gardens and the construction of vegetable washing stations. Over time, her work transformed into research-based projects within the Black Belt region of Alabama—from infrastructure improvements including wastewater and drinking water projects for improved health, to working with community partners to bring back a dying Main Street in Greensboro, Alabama.

“Some of the highlights of my academic career are the projects that we did in partnership with those communities,” said Johnson.

Her sentiment was echoed by others on the panel, who spoke of the high level of satisfaction and personal development gained from doing community-engaged scholarship work. They noted, however, that much more is required to attain P&T.

“I don’t think I would be a full professor today if all of my work had been done as an engaged scholar,” said Furco, a professor in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development and associate vice president for Public Engagement in the Office for Public Engagement at the University of Minnesota.

Furco said that part of the expectations (for P&T) are that there are certain levels of inquiry and bodies of knowledge that have to be produced. He discussed the importance of how engaged scholarship work is presented in the quest for P&T, noting the need for faculty to emphasize the scholarship in their reporting about their community engagement activities, and to connect their efforts to a larger body of work. He also said that it is essential to extract the significance
of the work—its impact and its relevance to the discipline—teasing out the language in an institution's P&T guidelines and talking about the work in those terms, as well as to share the impact of the work on students and the community.

Sharing advice specifically for junior scholars, Furco said, “We have to play the game, to some extent. … Wherever we are situated, we have norms and standards and expectations, and we have to, to some extent, play the game. To the extent that we can take our engaged work and have it be part of this larger set of expectations, that's where we can become successful.”

Furco also said that faculty have to have a spine about them for what they believe, and that if they are not at the right institution, they need to be willing to step away and go to an institution that embraces the type of work they are doing. Others agreed that a culture of engagement is essential.

Maria Mayan, assistant director of Women and Children's Health and associate professor, Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta, shared that her experiences led her to ask questions of herself about her role as an engaged scholar. Those questions included: What would my role as an academic at my university be? What is my responsibility? What is the role of civic engagement? What story needs to be told? What am I willing to do, say, and risk? And if I don't speak up, as a public intellectual who has the job to take risks, who will?

“So with those kinds of questions as an engaged scholar, you put yourself in a particular space, and this is what all of us in this room can do,” said Mayan. “We reveal politics, ideology, and values behind decisions, and we encourage opposing viewpoints. We gain real-life experiences and stories, and we share them with faculty and students and our partners. We create meaningful connections and research relationships. We ask unique questions that elicit comments such as, 'I've never thought of it that way.' We respect the complexity of problems and uphold human dignity. We share and we model how to share power, and we use language that acknowledges the differences in privilege, sexuality, ethnicity, education, geography, class, etc. … As engaged scholars we have a very unique skill set.”

On her path to P&T, Mayan, as well as other panelists, shared the importance of working across campus and sitting on committees—often outside your area of scholarship—in addition to being active in your own college. Lynette Young Overby, faculty director of Undergraduate Research and Experiential Learning and professor of Theatre and Dance at the University of Delaware, echoed these sentiments, noting that it is important for young faculty members to utilize the campus learning opportunities available to them.

The group stressed the importance of sustainability, as well as that of building a culture of engagement and seeking out like-minded scholars on your campus—from colleagues to department chairs to deans. The necessity of finding ways to gain support on issues of time and bureaucratic stumbling blocks was also addressed, as was the need for funding support.

Johnson addressed the importance of thinking past seed funds to where the large dollars will come from, reminding of the necessity for funding and publication on the P&T journey. She also cited the importance of a campus database that allows faculty researchers to connect across disciplines, as well as the need to get new faculty off campus and into the community early on in their academic careers. “It's really important to get together with an organization that is trusted in the community, because that opens all kinds of doors for you,” she said.

Tracy Eells, vice provost for Faculty Affairs at the University of Louisville, said that universities can move toward P&T models that circumvent stumbling blocks, can increase funding, and can give recognition, as well as flexibility, for this type of research, noting that many have established offices that focus on community-engaged scholarship. He went on to say that he believes a lot of faculty are doing engaged scholarship but are not calling it that, highlighting the importance of faculty speaking about their work in terms of how their students and community partners have benefited from the integration of teaching, research, and service.

“Being a respected individual within your academy is critically important,” said Mayan, who also shared the gravity of articulating the value and impact of engaged scholarship. Faculty need to be able to express what their scholarship changed in the community, she emphasized—not just through classes or publications, but through working with community members. And they need to utilize the media to help tell their stories.

All agreed that communication about the rigor of a scholar’s community-engaged work within their discipline is essential, not only to educate, but also to dispel the pervasive perception in many fields.
that this work is less rigorous than that of others. The group also acknowledged that the manner in which faculty members talk about this work varies from discipline to discipline, and so it is important that they use language within their own disciplines and tie it to engaged scholarship without being co-opted into using common language that doesn't fit their field. Scholars also need to be able to talk about their engagement work from the perspective of how it enhances the quality of their research.

One of the challenges Johnson faced on her P&T path was that, as she said, “As engineers, we don’t know assessment.” She and her husband, who was also on the engineering faculty at UA, developed an approach that focused on planning around their expertise and then filling in the knowledge gaps with other people on the team—from fellow faculty members to students to community partners.

This approach is indicative of what others on the panel shared as being critical to their success in earning P&T. There was a common belief in the importance of relationship-building, networking, letting people know what you’re doing, and connecting and developing relationships with colleagues who respect the work you are doing.

The Johnsons’ work, a study in resilience, grew from service learning to engaged scholarship, and it led them to start UA’s Engineers Without Borders (now Student Engineers in Action, or SEA), which continues to offer engineering students opportunities to put their learning into action in partnership with communities both at home and overseas. It was one of many examples of engaged scholarship success stories shared by panel members.

All of the panelists acknowledged progress, as well as the responsibility to support young faculty in ways that encourage them to pursue engaged scholarship within their disciplines; of sitting down with junior faculty members and guiding them on their P&T path, utilizing personal experiences gained on your own.

Mayan shared the importance of contributing to your university, students and society through your engaged scholarship efforts, summarizing, “Tenure is about academic freedom and the ability to serve students and society.”

The general observation was that campus culture changes slowly, but progress in support of community-engaged scholarship can be seen in such things as funding for projects and graduate students, learning opportunities for students, and even something so seemingly small as service learning now being included as a box to be checked on end-of-year faculty reports at some institutions. Each points to the essential nature of faculty who are pursuing this type of research being valued. That perception of value, along with individuals in high-visibility positions engaging in this type of work, continues to provide incentive to draw faculty toward community-engaged scholarship.

“As administrators, we need to highlight and build a spotlight around it,” said Furco. “We can’t change the system, we have to nudge the system. Over time, it’s going to have an impact.”

Overby reminded those present that remembering the big picture of why this work is important, is important.

Johnson summarized with: “If I could wave a magic wand, I would say that when U.S. News & World Report decides to evaluate universities by engagement scholarship as well as by [more traditional] PhD-produced [work], then we will start to see real institutional change. We’ve come a long way, and we’re still in transition.”
Mission and Description

The mission of JCES is to provide a mechanism through which faculty, staff, and students of academic institutions and their community partners may disseminate scholarly works from all academic disciplines. JCES accepts all forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies. JCES is a peer reviewed journal open to all disciplines. Its purpose is to integrate teaching, research, and community engagement in ways that address critical societal problems through a community-participatory process.
Types of Manuscripts

The editorial board of the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship (JCES) invites the submission of manuscripts that relate to its mission: To provide a mechanism through which faculty, staff, and students of academic institutions and their community partners may disseminate scholarly works from all academic disciplines. A goal of the publication is to integrate teaching, research, and community engagement. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for the journal.

Traditional submissions are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods empirical studies. We also welcome submissions that utilize new and emerging methodological techniques. Regular Manuscript submissions should be based on a solid theoretical or conceptual framework and the discussion of the research findings should include practical, theoretical, and/or policy implications. These submissions should demonstrate central involvement of students and/or community partners and advance the field of community engagement scholarship, and should not exceed 8,000 words.

From the Field articles have a practice or case study orientation and share best practices, practical wisdom, and applied knowledge. Context is an essential part of community engagement work; therefore, it is critical to situate Research from the Field submissions philosophically, historically, and theoretically in order to systematically extend our knowledge and understanding. Innovative partnerships that demonstrate central involvement of students and/or community partners have the potential to make highly interesting pieces for this section. Research from the Field submissions should go beyond a simple project description to include innovative lessons learned or best practice principles with strong application and practice implications. Research from the Field manuscripts should not exceed 6,000 words.

Community members working with academic partners from all disciplines are invited to submit original work to the Community Perspectives section. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for this section. Specific types of submissions appropriate for Community Perspectives include commentaries, critical reflections, and opinion pieces related to community engagement and/or engaged scholarship. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field, scholarly contributions of many kinds related to the field of engagement scholarship are encouraged and will be considered for publication in JCES. Community Perspective manuscripts should be between 750–2,000 words in length. Examples may be found on the JCES website.

Students from all disciplines are invited to submit original work to the Student Voices section. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for this section. Specific types of submissions appropriate for the Student Voices section include commentaries, critical reflections, and opinion pieces related to community engagement and/or engaged scholarship. Given that engagement scholarship is such an interdisciplinary field in which there are many appropriate ways to best “tell the story,” scholarly contributions of many kinds related to the field of engagement scholarship are welcome and will be considered for publication. Student Voice manuscripts should be between 750–2,000 words. You can also see examples of published submissions on our website.

Book Reviews submitted to JCES should give the reader a well-developed sense/description of the book, but should also go beyond description to discuss central issues raised by the text. Reviewers are encouraged to address how the reviewed book addresses theory, current scholarship, and/or current issues germane to the subject of the book and engagement scholarship. Reviewers may reference other material that has bearing on the book being reviewed, particularly when these sources have the ability to position the book within larger discourses regarding the topic. Ideally, Book Reviews should not exceed 1,500 words.
**JCES Review Process***

**Manuscript Receipt**
- Editor scans for style and documentation standards, requests revisions if necessary
- Editorial staff assigns manuscript number, sends acknowledgment email to corresponding author (usually, but not always, the first author)
- Editor selects appropriate reviewers

**First Review**
- Editorial staff sends manuscript to reviewers, with review form and return due date
- Editor reassigns manuscript if reviewer unable to complete review
- Editorial staff sends reminder email one week in advance of due date
- Editorial staff sends reminder email one week after due date if review not yet received
- Editor receives reviewers’ evaluation and rating forms

**Editor Options**
- Editor accepts manuscript (proceed to **Edit for Publication**)
- Editor sends corresponding author the recommended revisions and requests resubmission
- Editor rejects manuscript (end of process)

**Revise and Resubmit Instructions**
- Editorial staff notifies author of publication decision
- Editorial staff sends to corresponding author a letter regarding the decision, reviewer comments, and manuscript with edits and tracked changes
- Editorial staff requests resubmission within four weeks

**Resubmitted Manuscript and Second Review**
- Editor scans for compliance with reviewer evaluation; if necessary, author is sent request for further revisions
- Editorial staff sends to the original reviewers the revised manuscript, a copy of the original manuscript with editor’s and reviewers comments and tracked changes, the review form, and a copy of the letter to the corresponding author
- Editorial staff requests return of second review within two weeks

**Editor Options Following Second Review**
- Editor accepts manuscripts (proceed to **Edit for Publication**)
- Editor accepts manuscript with minor revisions (proceed to **Edit for Publication**)

**Accept with Minor Revisions**
- Editor sends corresponding author notification of decision to accept with minor revisions and requests a final revision within two weeks
- Editor ensures minor revisions have been made (proceed to **Edit for Publication**)

**Edit for Publication**
- Final editing and proof reading by editor and editorial staff
- Editorial staff sends proof to corresponding author
- Editorial staff negotiates editorial changes with corresponding author
- Editorial staff sends official copyright forms for corresponding author’s signature

**Publication**

*Authors’ names on all documents viewed by reviewers, including manuscripts, letters, emails, and other identifying information, are masked throughout the process.*

Visit jces.ua.edu to submit an article.
The Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship is published at The University of Alabama by the Division of Community Affairs for the advancement of engaged scholarship worldwide.