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College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University HLC Quality Initiative Summary Report

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HLC Quality Initiative Summary Report

Executive Summary

This Quality Initiative (QI) sought to identify more systematically how the College of Saint Benedict (CSB) and Saint John's University (SJU) structures, programming, curriculum, and environments promote or inhibit healthy gender development among CSB and SJU students. CSB, a Catholic Benedictine residential liberal arts college for women, and SJU, a Catholic Benedictine residential liberal arts college for men, share a common academic program, while maintaining separate residential life and student development offices. Gender is a central component of our missions. As single-sex institutions working in partnership with each other, we have a unique obligation and opportunity to focus on gender development. The project sought to

1. Examine the current status of gender development on campus;
2. Examine the impact of gender-related policies (or lack thereof) on gender development and gender inclusion on campus; and
3. Examine the gender development impact of several high impact academic programs.

The project involved hundreds of CSB and SJU faculty, staff, and students across multiple disciplines and institutional areas in designing and conducting six distinct projects to address the research goals. The Primary Investigators (PI) established connections among the various projects and shared findings with internal and external communities throughout the course of the QI project.

The QI provided valuable information to inform and guide our gender development practices. Research and insights from the projects have supported policy and programming recommendations and changes. They also have provided a baseline to plan and implement additional ongoing research. Accomplishments include

- A set of strategic actions to enhance gender development of CSB and SJU students;
- Adoption of a new admission policy for transgender and gender non-conforming students applying to CSB and SJU;
- Changes in our practice of sexual assault prevention;
- Changes in academic programs to enhance gender development of CSB and SJU students; and
- A focus on the holistic development of men and women within the framework of the current strategic plan, Strategic Directions 2020.

Six research projects considered a variety of facets of the student experience at CSB and SJU, which individually and collectively led to findings we will to use to improve gender development at CSB and SJU. The projects revealed some shortcomings in our current practices related to gender development, and provide us with an opportunity to make significant improvements in the coming years in support of our students and our missions.

Goals and Findings

The QI identified three broad goals. We constructed and completed six research projects that included student, faculty, and staff researchers, to address those goals. The results have informed campus conversations, strategies, and decisions regarding gender development.

Goal 1: Examine the current status of gender development on campus.

Two research projects explored current gendered behavior on campus. Aric Putnam, Associate Professor of Communication, worked with students to engage in rhetorical criticism of published texts produced by CSB and SJU to examine the strategies that underlie the institutions' self-presentation as it relates to gender. Karyl Daughters, Associate Professor of Communication, examined the relationships between CSB/SJU students' stated values associated with gender (e.g., gender identity, sex-role expectations) and actual observed behaviors that influence the social construction of gender among college students on the CSB and SJU campuses. Results from this part of the project recommended ways to address derogatory language through programming, to articulate clearly institutional understandings of sex and gender, and to capitalize on our unique structure to address gender issues. CSB/SJU has initiated communication campaigns to increase awareness and support development in gender differences. The "We don't say…" communication campaign initiated by students in fall 2016 provides an example of needed programming addressing the use of derogatory gendered language.

Goal 2: Examine the impact of gender-related policies on gender development and gender inclusion on campus

Two projects focused on gender-related campus policies. Mary Geller, CSB Vice President of Student Development, and Doug Mullin, SJU Vice President of Student Development worked with stakeholders on campus to create a transgender admission policy and practice for CSB and SJU. The policy prepared the institutions to educate and serve transgender and gender non-conforming students in ways consistent with both the Catholic and Benedictine character and the single-sex mission of each institution. This project resulted in a new policy clarifying admission practices for transgender students. Through a qualitative research study, Kathryn Enke, CSB Chief of Staff and Lead Title IX Coordinator for CSB, considered the discourses around Title IX and sexual misconduct on campus and how those discourses reflect a gendered campus environment. This project has led to improvements in our Title IX education program and sexual health education. For example, we have enhanced training and resources around Title IX and sexual misconduct for students, faculty and staff. We provide mandatory sexual misconduct training to all new students. As a result of the QI, we learned that in order to be maximally effective, training must counter widespread heteronormativity and uncertainty about sex, consent, and sexual misconduct, and we have developed programming accordingly.

Goal 3: Examine the gender development impact of several high impact academic programs.

Faculty examined the gender development impact of some of CSB/SJU's featured academic experiences, including the First Year Seminar (FYS), a course completed by all incoming students, and study abroad, an experience completed by approximately two-thirds of all CSB and SJU students. Patricia Bolanos-Fabres, Associate Professor of Hispanic Studies, and Sucharita Sinha Mukherjee, Associate Professor of Economics, conducted a comparative analysis of students learning outcomes in sex-segregated and co-educational FYS sections. Shane Miller, Associate Professor of Communication and Director of Gender

Studies, conducted focus groups to examine men's reasons for enrolling or not enrolling in study abroad experiences (male participation rates lag female participation rates). This is significant for CSB/SJU, because our students participate in study abroad programs at significantly higher rates than the national average and it is a signature program for the institutions. The study had two purposes: to determine the factors that contribute to SJU men enrolling in study abroad and to better understand factors that prevent SJU men from taking advantage of study abroad programs at the same rate as CSB women. This project assists us in making changes to encourage and enable more men to study abroad, such as differentiating, for men, the social advantages of study abroad versus staying on campus and developing gender focused short-term study abroad programs as an alternative to on-campus courses.

Impact

The projects helped us identify several key steps to enhance gender development of CSB and SJU students. While all of the projects assisted in identifying the current status of gender development on campus, they also yielded significant improvements in gender development practices and policies.

Gender development impact of high impact practices:

- *Study abroad:*
  - We have implemented curricular changes in some study abroad programs to encourage greater male participation. We ultimately seek to raise cohort study abroad participation rates at SJU from 45% to 55%.
  - The Center for Global Education is collaborating with athletic and coaching staff to identify ways to promote and encourage study abroad for SJU athletes.
  - Faculty and staff developed gender-focused short-term study abroad programs as an alternative pedagogical approach to studying gender.
  - The Center for Global Education continues to consider ways to:
    - Promote and incentivize the academic advantages of study abroad, particularly to men;
    - Differentiate, for men, the social advantages of study abroad versus staying on campus; and
    - Create more opportunities for cultural exchange and dialogue, as a potentially powerful way to increase male involvement in study abroad.
- *Single-sex first-year student courses:* Data from the QI supports the existing limited scholarship suggesting that single-sex educational environments may provide educational benefits and reduce gender stereotypes, particularly for women. We should consider increasing the number of single-sex FYS classes and make the option to take a sex-segregated FYS more visible on the student registration form. In fall 2017, we will offer one men-only and two women-only sections of FYS. In addition, we could consider expand single-sex educational opportunities for first-year students in coursework outside of FYS. Further, we will continue assessment of these courses to understand their benefits in gender development. We will explain the benefits of teaching single-sex FYS to faculty through faculty development workshops. FYS instructors of the single-sex sections are sharing their knowledge and experiences with the broader faculty.
- *Pedagogy changes:* In addition to the research projects included in the QI, faculty teaching FYS and in the Humanities were provided an opportunity to participate in a year-long workshop on

inclusion. These opportunities were provided by Mellon grants ($100,000 at each institution, for a total of $200,000). The workshop discussed strategies for creating an inclusive classroom, with "inclusion" defined broadly to include gender, sexual orientation and gender identity; race and ethnicity; socioeconomic diversity; geographic diversity; diversity of ability; and spiritual diversity and diversity of thought and perspective. Aided by the QI, this initiative resulted in numerous discussions on gender development and differences. Over 70 faculty participated in this workshop.

Development, articulation, and access of gender-related policies:

- The research from the QI resulted in the implementation of new admissions policies for transgender and gender non-conforming students.

- CSB/SJU have developed housing practices, bathroom facilities, and locker room facilities welcoming to gender non-conforming persons. On both campuses, all new construction and renovations in progress now will include single-user restrooms. This decision-making process included staff from across the institutions. By fall 2017, single-user restrooms will be available in key gathering spaces at CSB, and in the Learning Commons, Library and new athletic fields at SJU. In addition, facilities and physical plant departments on both campuses have worked with athletics and campus recreation staff to develop more welcoming locker room facilities for transgender individuals. Privacy dividers and single-user locker room facilities will be available on both campuses by the end of summer 2017.

- Gender development has been a focal point of a new First Year Experience set for implementation in fall 2017.

- We have made a number of changes related to sexual misconduct as a result of the QI research:
  - We have enhanced training and resources around Title IX and sexual misconduct for students, faculty and staff. We now provide mandatory sexual misconduct training to all new students. We learned that in order to be maximally effective, training must counter widespread heteronormativity and uncertainty about sex, consent, and sexual misconduct, and we have developed programming accordingly.
  - In spring 2017, CSB piloted a program in sophomore residence areas focused explicitly on women's sexual health.
  - CSB/SJU communicates openly about the prevalence of sexual misconduct at CSB and SJU, and provide systems of support for reporters of sexual misconduct that ensure confidentiality.
  - CSB/SJU now provides resources to faculty and staff through periodic trainings, informational posters in every classroom, and online at https://www.csbsju.edu/joint-student-development/title-ix/faculty/staff-resources.

- *Student development programs:*
  - At CSB, we highlight our focus on women's leadership development, women's agency and empowerment, and women's sexual health education, as expected contributors to 1) the development of women's confidence, 2) a potential reduction in the incidence of sexual

misconduct at CSB and SJU, and 3) the observed reduction in heteronormative beliefs across the CSB experience. This programming happens through multiple venues, including the Institute for Women's Leadership, the Hynes Scholars leadership cohort for sophomores, the Advocates for Inclusive Mentoring program for underrepresented students, and involvement with the American Association of University Women.
    - We will continue to examine the connections between CSB and SJU culture and gender attitudes. For example, future research on campus could look at the dynamics created in single-sex residential environments and the implications for gender construction and development.

Key recommendations to support gender development:

- Reinvigorate the institutions' use of gender development language to make it more meaningful to students, faculty and staff. This includes talking about gender in unusual ways or unfamiliar venues. For example, CSB/SJU initiated communication campaigns to increase awareness and support understanding of gendered language, such as the "We don't say…" communication campaign initiated by students, which provides programming addressing the use of derogatory gendered language. Additional programs from multiple constituencies and diverse forms of messaging are being developed to address specific issues identified on campus as a result of the QI and other gender initiatives.

- Focus attention on making our community more inclusive on a number of different dimensions: gender, sexual orientation and gender identity; race and ethnicity; socioeconomic diversity; geographic diversity; diversity of ability; spiritual diversity; and diversity of thought and perspective. Through ongoing campus conversations, we are working to define and build an "Inclusion Ecosystem" to encourage, support and build inclusion at CSB and SJU. Students, faculty, staff, administrators and regional community partners were invited to gather for two all-campus dialogues in December 2016 and May 2017. Over 75 people participated in the first day-long conversation focused on CSB/SJU's Inclusion Vision. More than 100 participants gathered for the follow-up half-day conversation focused on redrafting CSB/SJU's Diversity Statement. We are planning similar ongoing dialogues for the coming academic year and seeking grant funds to support our continued work.

- Work to counter heteronormativity, ethnocentrism, and traditional gender roles, particularly among SJU men, to improve the educational experiences of our students, change community norms about sexual misconduct, and expand understanding of acceptable roles for men and women. The QI included the following recommendations related to gender development:
    - Students need to make stronger connections between their gender education (whether through the gender studies department, common curriculum requirement, or institutional programming) and attitudes about gender, to their own behaviors.
    - The Men's Development Institute at SJU and other student development offices (athletics, recreation, and residential life) should offer appropriate developmental programming about masculinity on both the CSB and SJU campuses. We must also explore incentives for men to participate in their programs designed to help them understand their gender identities and dismantle their own privilege.

- CSB/SJU should continue to feature gender studies as a meaningful part of any common curriculum in order to improve the educational experiences of both women and men, change community norms about sexual misconduct, and expand understandings of acceptable roles for men and women.

The QI originally proposed that we had an opportunity to serve as a "gender lab," a place that intentionally and systematically examines gender development among college students and develops best practices in this area. While we still view that as an opportunity, our project research revealed a number of challenges we must address. We will need to increase enthusiasm among faculty and staff to participate in gender research; existing gender research remains largely within independent research agendas. We have a responsibility to deliver the gender development outcomes we promise students when they enroll at CSB and SJU, which include programs to meet the needs and aspirations of young women, emphasizing women's leadership and a personal development profile that includes intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical development (for CSB), and programs to meet the needs and aspirations of young men, emphasizing leadership and a personal development profile that includes intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical development (for SJU). We see these institutional commitments as a catalyst for continuing improvement.

The projects provided us a tremendous opportunity to learn more about student understanding of gender. They collectively created a baseline from which we can continue to assess gender development and how well initiatives are working to increase gender awareness. For example, Daughters' project found that women enrolling at CSB seemingly subscribe less to heteronormativity, a gender binary, or traditional sex roles than men do. Women also show a significant decrease in heteronormative beliefs over their time at CSB. There was a significant main effect for year of school in all of the subsets used in this study. Men are more invested in heteronormative beliefs, particularly the gender binary, than women are, and that level of investment remains relatively stable throughout college. In addition, Enke's project found that those same heteronormative beliefs impact the ways that students understand and talk about sexual misconduct. Countering those beliefs through mandatory and ongoing education marks an important step toward preventing sexual misconduct. The information and the tools used to conduct the study are useful and will help us move forward to test initiatives and their impact on gender development.

Challenges and Opportunities

The QI project findings provided us an opportunity to be open about the ways the two college's structures, programming, curriculum, and environments promote (or do not promote) healthy gender development for CSB and SJU students. Most of the projects reported tremendous opportunities implementing the QI. Students, faculty, and staff fully engaged as both researchers and participants. The work of the QI was featured more prominently than prior gender research at CSB and SJU. Importantly, it prompted members of our campus community to stretch their imaginations and broaden their critical thinking, while becoming more deeply rooted in the values that make us who we are and who we aspire to become.

While all of the projects explored various avenues of our central research question, many paths remain to be explored to comprehensively address our research question. The QI helped support a plan for

enhancing gender development in our students, but also raised many questions that will require additional time and energy. This may be a challenge moving forward.

Individual projects reported some unique challenges: a lack of assessment data, the unwillingness of students to participate voluntarily in the research projects, and the complexities inherent in discussing, understanding, and engaging gender fluidity and non-traditional gender identities in a Catholic environment.

Involvement

The QI was led by co-PIs Dr. Kathryn Enke and Dr. Shane Miller. The project allowed us to capitalize on the expertise of our community members as we designed, collected, and analyzed data. The largest investment was from the individuals who completed each of the QI's six projects.

Individual projects involved both faculty and staff from a variety of departments and disciplines. We engaged students as participants and research collaborators. For Miller's project, the Center for Global Education helped advertise particular focus groups and provided funds to purchase pizza and beverages for focus group participants. The Gender Studies program provided funds for bookstore gift-cards offered as incentives. For Enke's project, the Office of Health Promotion supplied the names of potential participants. FYS instructors and students, as well as administrative staff for the Common Curriculum and the Registrar's Office contributed to Bolanos-Fabres and Mukherjee's project.

The CSB and SJU Presidents and their cabinets endorsed the project and are addressing gender development in our Quality Initiative and our strategic plan, *Strategic Directions 2020*. We shared details of the project throughout with the two Boards of Trustees, with the Joint Faculty Senate, and with the two Student Senates.

The institutions demonstrated broad commitment to the project through the assignment of qualified PIs and the allocation of financial resources to support the work of the initiative. Faculty and staff completing research projects as a part of the initiative received stipends. In addition, student focus groups incurred costs to support attendance. Additional funds have been collected and budgeted for development in this area over the years of the projects, including funding for projects related to *Strategic Directions 2020*, which has specific goals related to the holistic and transformational development of women and men.

Faculty, staff, and student participation was vital and represented that larger "cost" of the QI. In addition to the stipends, the many hours of faculty, staff, and student time also represented real and significant institutional investment. A substantial number of faculty, staff, and students were directly involved in the research. We had significant points of contact with faculty and staff. Almost 1,200 CSB and SJU students participated in the six projects of the QI. Many of the six projects involved additional staff, faculty and students in important supporting roles. For example, the study of men's participation in study abroad required collaboration with the Center for Global Education (seven staff members). That project also included student focus groups, in which 32 students participated. In another example, those projects embedded in courses are typically including 20-30 students each. The creation of the new transgender admission policy required conversations with numerous offices that involved many staff.

Conclusions

As two single-sex institutions engaged in a unique educational partnership, CSB and SJU have an opportunity to become national leaders in the conversation about gender development and function as a gender research lab. While we believe that goal is within reach, we need to enhance gender development on campus. The research findings provide a baseline for implementing change and moving forward.

We have begun to identify strategies in our policies, policy implementation, academics, and student development. The individual projects identified the following issues to address in the future: our students' current constructions of gender continue to confuse the difference between sex and gender; students report using and hearing the use of sexually derogatory language with surprising frequency; and there remain consistent sex differences on many measures, such as adherence to traditional gender roles. In addition:

- The QI led to strategies for fostering healthier understandings of gender identity. Single-sex FYS class sections, taught by committed and experienced faculty, provide extremely valuable settings in which students find safe spaces to critically reflect on gender identity.
- Students stressed that differing sexual misconduct prevention interventions are required for male and female students, each targeted to their level of understanding and preconceptions. Effective intervention with male students must anticipate and address male defensiveness and fragility regarding their fears of being perceived as sexual predators. Effective intervention with female students must anticipate and address stereotypes about female victimhood. The QI resulted in changes in Title IX training and resources.
- The QI made possible our transgender policies and the QI results are leading to implementation of additional practices supporting gender non-conforming persons in a specific gendered context. This is part of ongoing work focusing on inclusion on our campuses.
- The QI projects have produced better understandings of gender issues within our high-impact educational practices such as study abroad and First Year Seminar.

Future Directions

Next steps resulting from the QI are having an even wider impact. For example, ongoing work on inclusion involves hundreds of staff and faculty on campus (with dual grants funded by the Mellon Foundation alone involving over 70 faculty). While approximately 15 faculty were involved in development of gender learning outcomes as part of a new general education program, the role of gender and discussion of these goals has included the greater faculty and staff through numerous open forums and faculty assembly meetings. Additionally, changes in facilities to welcome gender non-conforming students has involved facilities and physical plant staff in ways that the initial policy discussions did not.

The research PIs have disseminated the project findings broadly at campus events. At the initiation of the QI, we held forums for both faculty and staff to discuss the plans and projects moving forward. The

August 2017 All Campus Forum include a conversation about the QI outcomes and plans to initiate a series of discussions on gender development moving forward.

The follow-up activities associated with the QI are in addition to the approximately $3,000,000 currently dedicated to women's programming in CSB Student Development, and $3,000,000 allocated to men's programming in SJU Student Development. Ongoing programs like the Institute for Women's Leadership, Men's Development Institute, Hynes Scholars (a women's leadership cohort for sophomore students), and Advocates for Inclusive Mentoring (a mentorship program for underrepresented women) will continue, along with single-sex residential life and athletics/club sports programming for women and men. In addition, fellowship and scholarship opportunities support women and men pursuing academic and experiential opportunities that defy gender stereotypes, such as women in STEM fields and men in internships and academic fellowships.

Because the project was integrated into the colleges' strategic plan*, Strategic Directions 2020*, and links directly to our missions and visions for CSB and SJU, we remain committed to continuing this work beyond the timeline of the QI. The research findings of this QI will form the basis for gender development conversation in support of the next strategic plan, *Strategic Directions 2025*.

Additionally, each of the projects identified next steps, including:

- Implementation of a new admission policies for transgender and gender non-conforming students.

- We are seeking significant additional grant funding in support of inclusivity, which will help us to continue to create and sustain an inclusive environment.

- The faculty continue to work on revising the general education requirements:
  - Strengthening the gender learning outcomes and scaffolding them at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, with all students required to complete the intermediate level.

- We will continue to offer some sections of single-sex FYS courses.
  - We will continue assessment of these courses to understand their benefits in gender development.
  - We will explain the benefits of teaching single-sex FYS to faculty through faculty development workshops and FYS instructors of the single-sex sections are sharing their knowledge and experiences with the broader faculty.

- Faculty development for pedagogical changes aimed at creating inclusive classrooms are being expanded beyond the FYS and humanities cohort of the current Mellon Foundation grants.
  - Faculty participants in the current Mellon Foundation grants are sharing their insights and best practices with faculty in other fields across the institutions in workshops (the first of these occurred in May 2017).

- Gender development will be a focal point for the new First Year Experience (FYX), some aspects are being piloted in fall 2017. We have included gender-development programming based on

the findings of the QI in the new FYX, including the research on language use, sexual health, and sexual misconduct.

- We are implementing changes related to sexual misconduct as a result of the QI research:
  - We have enhanced training and resources around Title IX and sexual misconduct.
  - CSB is piloting a program in sophomore residence areas focused explicitly on women's sexual health.
  - CSB/SJU will continue to communicate openly about the prevalence of sexual misconduct at CSB and SJU, and provide systems of support for reporters of sexual misconduct that ensure confidentiality.

- We continue to enhance our outreach to men to participate in study abroad opportunities.
  - We will continue to implemented curricular changes in some study abroad programs to encourage greater male participation.
  - The Center for Global Education will continue to collaborate with athletic and coaching staff to identify ways to promote and encourage study abroad for SJU athletes.
  - Faculty and staff continue to develop gender-focused short-term study abroad programs as an alternative pedagogical approach to studying gender.
  - We will continue to promote and incentivize the academic advantages of study abroad, particularly to men and to differentiate, for men, the social advantages of study abroad versus staying on campus.

- CSB/SJU have developed housing practices, bathroom facilities, and locker room facilities welcoming to gender non-conforming persons.
  - All new construction and renovations in progress now will include single user restrooms. This decision-making process included staff from across the institutions.
  - By fall 2017, single-user restrooms will be available in key gathering spaces at CSB, and in the Learning Commons, Library and new athletic fields at SJU.
  - Facilities and physical plant departments on both campuses are working with athletics and campus recreation staff to develop more welcoming locker room facilities for transgender individuals.
  - Privacy dividers and single-user locker room facilities will be available on both campuses by the end of summer 2017.

- CSB/SJU initiated communication campaigns to increase awareness and support understanding of gendered language, such as the “We don’t say…” communication campaign initiated by students, which provides programming addressing the use of derogatory gendered language.

- Many of the individual projects have plans for ongoing research and sharing of research findings inside and outside of our campus community. Examples include:
  - Ice, R. (2016, April). Intensive Series on the Quality Initiative in the Open Pathway, Part 2: Quality Initiative Examples and Resources for Institutions (participants represented institutions with Quality Initiatives that were particularly well received by Quality Initiative

Proposal reviewers), presented at the Higher Learning Commission (A Commission of North Central Association) Annual Conference.

- Enke, K.A.E. (2017, April). *Sexual misconduct discourses within a gendered campus environment.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, San Antonio, Texas.
- Miller, S. (2017, March). *Exploring men's motivations for not studying abroad.* Paper presented at the American Men's Studies Association Conference, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- Mullin, D. & Geller, G. (2017, July). *Navigating the journey to welcome transgender students*. Presentation at the annual meeting of the Association for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities, Aston, Pennsylvania.
- Enke, K.A.E. (2017, under review). Sexual misconduct discourses in a gendered college environment, *Journal of College Student Development.*
- Several completed and planned presentations at the CSB/SJU Thursday Forum, an opportunity to reach broad groups of students, faculty and staff at CSB/SJU, a weekly local open forum for faculty, staff, and students to present, share, and discuss research, initiatives, and pedagogical practices.