

A New Alliance for Service-Learning and Community Engagement: Cultivating Citizens with an Ecocentric Vision of Justice

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Abstract

A core conviction that should inform service-learning and community engagement (SLCE) courses is that we cannot have thriving human communities, robust democratic citizenship, and authentic community/civic engagement when the ecological systems upon which all life depends, now and in the future, are ignored and ruined. When institutions of higher education use sustainability as an organizing tenet for SLCE, a new alliance can occur between SLCE and a sister discipline: sustainability in higher education (SHE). Harnessing the synergy from this collaboration can help students and faculty form the attitudes, goals, and learning outcomes sought by both disciplines in creative ways. When SLCE seriously attends to ecological sustainability, institutions of higher education can better contribute to the cultivation of place-engaged, ecologically literate, planetary citizens who value eco-social justice and generate new partnerships to achieve this goal.

Today, students are living in a complex world. They face issues of racism, sexism, poverty, addictions, inaccessibility to healthcare, patriarchy, and ableism—just to name a few. But they are also enmeshed in specific ecosystems and landscapes which are in crisis. Unprecedented atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide, acidification of oceans, diminished soil fertility, and pollution contribute to the disruption and destabilization of Earth's life systems (IPCC, 2013). The nature and magnitude of these ecosocial crises demand a polyvalent response that addresses more than technological fixes and singular linear actions. For example, merely divesting from Exxon, an extractor of fossil fuel, does not address the contributions to water pollution, food scarcity, or smog-filled skies made by the transportation, manufacturing, and sales sectors. Forming new academic alliances could create innovative programs, courses, and partnerships where the five core constituencies (students, community organizers, faculty, administrators and community residents) could co-generate creative solutions for transforming our communities and healing our natural world (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009, p. 5).

A primary cause of Earth's degradation is ecological illiteracy that includes both a precarious ignorance born of a pragmatic separation from nature and a willful "unlearning" of knowledge previously known in order to promote Enlightenment thinking and extractive agendas to fuel the industrial revolution (Tuana, 2006). We have forgotten how to appreciate our biological, social, cultural, and psychic enmeshment in and interdependency with the ecological communities where we dwell. At the physiological level, the iron carried by our hemoglobin, the water in our tears, and the calcium in our bones are the same elements that

moving in perpetual cycles between and among our bodies and the rest of the planet. We are entangled in an ancient continuum of matter and energy and are alive thanks to organic partnerships between iron and hemoglobin happening every day within and between our bodies. This story of interconnectivity and collaboration must inform who we are so that we may "reclaim knowledges that have been denied or repressed" (Tuana, 2006, p. 2) and construct new knowledge that will help us structure and maintain our economies, political life, and education systems. Whether referred to as "landscape" (the symbolic environment created when physical spaces are transformed by the conferral of human values and meaning onto them (Greider & Garkovich, 1994); or as "place" (a particular assemblage of humans and their multiple "others") (Duhn, 2012)—or with some other term—ecosystems deserve more respect as unique partners within service-learning and community engagement (SLCE). Ecosystems are not only where social change occurs, but these webs of life are also unique stakeholders contributing to social change. This article explores how strategic collaborations among SLCE practitioners and those working in the field of sustainability in higher education (SHE) could cultivate citizens who value ecosocial justice and develop innovative partnerships. The complementary nature of the foundation, knowledge, personal, and integrative assets that inform the attitudes, goals, and learning in both SLCE and SHE will be examined in detail. The final narratives describe SLCE-SHE aligned pilots and courses that offer a glimpse of the benefits of harnessing the synergy from an SLCE-SHE alliance to inspire new conversations in SLCE concerning future conceptualization work and studies in SLCE-SHE partnerships and practice.

Awakening to Ecosocial Justice: A Brief Portrait of SHE

It is impossible to document here the whole history of when, why and how SHE emerged. For those who want a more detailed narration of the emergence of environmentalism, Merchant (1980) aptly gives a historical portrait of humanity's increasing ecological ignorance and illiteracy while Hawken (2007) documents the awakening of humanity's ecological consciousness. One noteworthy juncture in the development of SHE occurred when advocates for oppressed human groups connected ecosystemic degradation and social injustices, coining the term environmental racism (Commission for Racial Justice, 1987). Thus, new partnerships resulted when civil rights leaders joined forces with environmental advocates. Another important shift was the recognition at the international level of the futility of seeking solutions to environmental problems without simultaneously addressing the full range of social challenges facing human communities (WCED, 1987). At the cusp of the 1990s, the concept of sustainability surfaced more frequently in political and academic discourse as humanity was attempting to rectify an ignorance manifesting as eco-illiteracy brought on by industrialization and other factors. Thus, as the term sustainability was becoming more embedded in human mindscapes, it was becoming formally codified in international policies and practices (e.g., Earth Summit Climate Change Convention, 1992; United Nations Millennium Development Goals, 2000). Human communities were therefore beginning to re-learn how dependent our well-being was upon the ecosystems we inhabit, made increasingly vulnerable by human activities. By 2011, the U.S. National Research Council was tasked to incorporate sustainability more deliberately in the Environmental Protection Agency and used the following definition of sustainability to anchor their work: "to create and maintain conditions, under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations" (NRC, 2011, p. 12). Within the last decade, the concept of economic, social, and ecological sustainability has become a larger part of social, scientific, and political conversations, agreements, and partnerships (e.g., Paris Agreement, 2016).

Institutions of higher education have also played a critical part in the emergence of sustainability. The Talloires Declaration (1990) and the Copernicus Charter (1994) prompted the formation of several administrative groups globally (e.g., University Leaders for a Sustainable Future in 1995) and nationally (e.g., American College and University Presidents'

Climate Commitment in 2006) to formally incorporate sustainability and environmental literacy in college and university life. Sustainability pioneers in American education recognized that "ecology is unimportant for history, politics, economy, society" (Orr, 1992, pp. 85-86) and as a result, educational institutions were partially responsible for forming "ecological yahoos" who envision Earth not as a source of identity or well-being but as a commodity and personal possession (Orr, 1992, pp. 85-86). The discipline of SHE emerged at this time to help the rehabilitation of these ecological "yahoos."

SHE approaches "sustainability in an inclusive way, encompassing human and ecological health, social justice, secure livelihoods and a better world for all generations" (AASHE, 2015). This statement reflects three central tenets. The first tenet is the intentional coupling of social, economic, and ecological dimensions of life—what is referred to as the triple bottom line. Wade (2012) indicates that the three pillars of sustainable development are the environment, the economy, and society. Lageweg (2014) reiterates this in his vision of corporate social responsibility. A second organizing principle for SHE is the embracing of an intergenerational horizon of responsibility that prioritizes the present and future generations. This commitment highlights how "[h]umanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, para. 27). The final tenet of SHE is an avowal of a participatory approach due to the uncertainty and complexity inherent to the field of sustainability. When the goals of SHE include seeking the absence of large scale poverty; preventing environmental degradation; providing meaningful work and peaceful dwelling places; offering access to education and health care; and promoting intergenerational responsibility, many stakeholders need to form new partnerships to be able to accomplish these complex tasks (WCED, 1987).

This paper suggests that an SLCE and SHE collaboration could help cultivate engaged citizens capable of addressing problems facing human ecologies because the attitudes, outcomes, and goals in both disciplines are synergistic. The next section offers a brief historical portrait of SLCE to highlight possible synergy points with SHE. The final section offers observations from SLCE-SHE courses that point to the benefits of an SLCE-SHE alliance and new potential partnerships on and off campus that could contribute to ecosocial justice.

Awakening to Service-Learning and Community Engagement: A Brief Portrait of SLCE

As with sustainability, the development of service-learning and community/civic engagement has by no means followed a linear path. The unfolding history of this movement does not lend itself to a simple narration. However, summarizing some key periods within the emergence of community/civic engagement movement will help identify some attitudes, goals, and learning outcomes that are vital to SLCE and complementary to those of SHE.

There is a consensus that the foundation for SLCE movements manifested in the 1960s and 1970s when engaged scholars became more concerned with addressing social problems and worked in collaboration with civil rights movements to confront these (Bringle, Edwards, & Clayton, 2014; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2016). In his article "Service-Learning: Three Principles" (1979), SLCE pioneer Sigmon indicates that service-learning is "the integration of the accomplishment of a public task with conscious educational growth" (p. 9). Sigmon also proposes three tenets to service-learning: those being served control the service(s) provided; those being served become better able to serve and be served by their own actions; and those who serve also are learners and have significant control over what is expected to be learned (Sigmon, 1979, p. 10). These tenets helped to define service-learning priorities. Sigmon's (1979) vision of service-learning mapped the academic pursuit of creating student learning outcomes onto the context of what needed to be done to serve others. Thus, driven by the need for societal change and the civic rights turmoil at the time, service-learning scholars asked questions about the academy's relationship to the community and its role in social transformation. This was what Bringle, Edwards, and Clayton (2014) designate as the first phase of the service-learning/ community-civic engagement movement.

Hartley and Saltmarsh (2016) indicated that in the 1980s "the movement was defined largely as a 'community service movement'" (p. 35). This was because there was a more public recognition of service within academia (Liu, 1996). A good example of this institutionalization of service-learning in higher education was the formation of Campus Compact in 1985, a national organization of colleges and universities committed to building democracy through civic education and community development (Campus Compact, para 1).

The next significant period of change was 1990-1997. Hartley and Saltmarsh (2016) categorize this period as the rise of a service-learning (SL) movement—a much more intentional, coordinated approach to service-

learning (Zlotkowski, 1995; Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). Bringle, Edwards and Clayton (2014) recognized two different frameworks for SL developed during this period: "Discipline Specific Teaching and Learning Strategy" (instruction-centered learning) and SL as "Powerful Pedagogy for Student-Centered Learning" (SL informing course design and faculty development). SL therefore differed from volunteerism through a correlation of dedicated classroom time, academic research, and service projects rather than just offering opportunities to volunteer. Stanton and Erasmus (2013) also affirm this proliferation of SL programs but indicate that diversification occurred alongside an intensification of scholarship at this time. One result of this scholarship was the recognition that SL was not merely charitable voyeurism or abstract speculation; it demanded a deliberate inclusion of community partners and enduring university-community relationships. Major cognitive shifts included what SL pioneer Kendall (1990) articulates in Stanton and Erasmus (2013): "a good service learning program helps participants see their questions in the larger context of issues of social justice and social policy – rather than in the context of charity" (p. 64). Building on Sigmon's (1979) work, a key goal of the SL movement was to allow the needs of the community to determine the nature of the service provided, not merely the experts in the academy. Other characteristics of SL at this time were its focus on value-oriented character building and community development via reciprocal learning philosophies and pedagogies. Consequently, community partners helped to reform academic curriculum, and academic institutions became more active partners in social change. A desire to institutionalize this movement developed within all aspects of higher education in an effort "to infuse civic and community engagement values throughout institutions' practices—from the classroom to the procurement office" (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013, p. 70).

By the end of the 20th century, academics and organizations were calling for another cognitive and institutional shift: the further intensification of service-learning programs into holistic, integrated, and more effective campus-wide commitments to engaging with social issues in their communities to promote the public good. This intensification correlates with what Bringle, Edwards, and Clayton (2014) entitled the fourth phase of SL: SL as "democratic civic engagement." Hartley and Saltmarsh (2016) concur, indicating that the SL movement has evolved into a civic engagement movement that encompasses "community service and pedagogical practices as well as larger issues of organizational change that operationalize the qualities and values of engagement in relationships between higher

education and communities aimed at building a public culture of democracy” (p. 35).

In the new millennium, community/civic engagement programming has proliferated and diversified not merely because of academic curiosity. Major social crises such as 9/11, income inequality, climate change, and ecosystem destabilization have demanded much from American institutes of higher education (Hartley and Saltmarsh, 2016, p. 46). This resonates in "A Crucible Moment," a call to action crafted by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012):

A Crucible Moment likewise calls for transformations necessary for this generation. A daunting one is to eliminate persistent inequalities, especially those in the United States determined by income and race, in order to secure the country's economic and civic future. But the academy must also be a vehicle for tackling other pressing issues—growing global economic inequalities, climate change and environmental degradation, lack of access to quality health care, economic volatility, and more. To do that requires expanding students' capacities to be civic problem-solvers using all their powers of intellect and inventiveness. (p. 19)

Thus, important central principles and concepts in SLCE that inform attributes, goals, and outcomes include socio-cultural-economic equity, intergenerational ecological and social justice, self-determination, reciprocal learning, and a participatory approach to asset building, critical thinking, and problem solving (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2013 "Community Engagement Defined," Post, Ward, Longo, & Saltmarsh, 2016, pp. 15-60). These attributes, goals, and outcomes can be fostered when student and faculty/staff participate in initiatives that address societal needs and promote the common good. They are also achieved through the transformation of pedagogy, research, and teaching strategies through the use of critical thinking exercises, active research, and real-world applications. The development of strong, reciprocal, creative, long-term campus/community partnerships promote equity and justice, and demonstrate reciprocity, vital aspects of SLCE. In addition, action-oriented research can be tracked, assessed, and documented to show any significant impacts being made. In total, these attributes, goals, and outcomes serve a central purpose: to prepare students to be active, knowledgeable, caring, justice-seeking, global citizens.

SLCE attitudes, goals, and outcomes can work in harmony with SHE's, as will be shown in the next section. However, it is important to note the foundation for this alliance some SLCE practitioners have already laid; Sigmon (1979) had an ecocentric vision of community engagement: "Service-learning...is rooted in the belief that all persons are of unique worth, that all persons have gifts for sharing with others, that persons have the right to understand and act on their own situations, and that our mutual survival on the planet Earth depends on the more able and the less able serving one another" (p. 11). Others, like Siemers, Harrison, Clayton, & Stanley (2015), propose "integrating ecological perspectives and values" as one foundational principle of authentically "place-engaged" SLCE. Their claim is that place is not neutral; each place with and within which SLCE occurs has a "particular local voice, history, culture, politics, and ecology" (p. 101). Others have developed singular SLCE courses that embrace ecological perspectives as part of efforts to transform human communities (e.g., Lawrence's "Creek and Community"). In addition, other larger institutes like Portland State University have been able to "strategically link the university's commitment to sustainability with experience in SLCE in order to accelerate positive community change" (Kecskes, Joyalle, Elliott, & Sherman, 2017, p. 162). These examples indicate that SLCE-SHE alliances are germinating in higher education, but are not the norm. The following sections will outline points of convergence and synergy between SLCE and SHE as well as narratives of SLCE-SHE alliances which include artifacts collected from students that demonstrate potential benefits.

Academic Foundations of an SLCE-SHE Alliance

SLCE and SHE have been unobtrusive neighbors on most campuses, yet an intentional partnership could bring to fruition interdisciplinary, ecocentric community engagement programs that could foster ecological literacy and form engaged citizens eager for ecosocial change. This new alliance can also inspire scholar practitioners and community members to seek each other out, promoting a more nuanced knowledge democracy in society. In addition, it has been shown that new intracollegiate alliances can reap benefits at curricular, professional, and personal levels (Baer, 2002). Since there are many areas of potential benefit, an examination of the academic foundations of a SLCE-SHE alliance is needed. The following table aligns some of the vital attributes, goals, and learning outcomes that characterize each discipline, as shown in the historical outlines above. (Table 1). To organize this framework, the categories employed by Viegas, Vaz, Borchardt, Pereira,

Selig, & Varvakis (2016) are used and adapted to visualize the complementary natures of SLCE and SHE. Viegas et al. (2016) offer a comprehensive literature appraisal of SHE that spans more than 15 years and 259 studies.

Table 1

Comparison of Foundational Assets within the Attributes, Goals, and Learning Outcomes of SHE and SLCE

Sustainability in Higher Education (SHE)	Community Engagement Programming (SLCE)
Emphasizing the trifold interconnectivity between economies, ecologies, and societies; seeing how attention to the triple bottom line evokes new patterns of thinking.	Cultivating robust, reciprocal, creative community partnerships to address the complexity of issues facing society today.
Dynamic, learning-oriented philosophy of action.	The community's constantly developing needs determines the nature of the service provided.
Collaborative, collective, constructivist, experiential social knowledge co-production.	Knowledge reciprocity between academy and community partners.

Synthesis

This first category, Foundational Assets, refers to the philosophies and ways of studying and creating knowledge (epistemology, interdisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity). Since SLCE invites the cultivation of robust community partnerships to effectively meet the needs in society today, embracing the ecological lens of SHE can augment SLCE's understanding of what community entails and the web-like interdependencies within planetary communities. SHE encourages thinking patterns that imagine human societies living in harmony with nature (Foster, 2001) while challenging economic, mechanical, and disconnected

worldviews that only envision the environment as a neutral source of material substances to exploit. There are multiple epistemologies involved within sustainability studies at the interface of natural and human sciences and the humanities (Rasmussen & Arler, 2010), but overall, SHE promotes transformational patterns of thinking and a philosophy of action that is developmental rather than static. SHE's web-like, ecological perspective emphasizes uncertainties management and collaborative, collective, and constructivist experimental knowledge production. These foundational assets invite robust community partnerships that include inarticulate landscapes, non-human creatures, and interconnected "discourse communities" (Conville & Kinnell, 2012, p. 27) to address the challenges that face contemporary society. Likewise, SLCE challenges the separation of academic disciplines and promotes intellectual reciprocity between the five constituencies outlined by Bringle et al. (2009). This new alliance could promote more web-like thinking, cross disciplinary approaches, and collaboration across a research continuum, creating novel avenues for social and ecological transformation (Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh, & Bush, 2011). Therefore, the two fields' ways of discovering knowledge complement each other, building a strong foundation for an SLCE-SHE alliance.

Table 2

Comparison of Knowledge Assets within the Attributes, Goals, and Learning Outcomes of SHE and SLCE

Sustainability in Higher Education (SHE)	Community Engagement Programming (SLCE)
Develop pedagogies that move students from theory to praxis; augment ecological literacy; craft transformative learning experiences that inspire emotional and intellectual growth; foster new behaviors.	Develop pedagogies emphasizing value-oriented character development. Employ long-term, collaborative, inquiry based, experimental exercises, and active research.

Incorporation of transdisciplinary exercises, narrative and metaphor building opportunities, and action research (Shephard, 2008; Hutchinson & Herborn, 2012).	Incorporate teaching strategies based on real-world experiences.
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Synthesis

Investigating the educational pedagogies at the heart of Viegas et al.'s (2016) second category, Knowledge Assets, illustrate how the teaching practices employed by practitioners of SLCE and SHE complement each other. The goals aimed for by SHE pedagogies range from skills acquisition (Blanchet-Cohen & Reilly, 2013), to environmental awareness (Blum, 2008), to literacy—the “ability to actively engage with social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainable development” (Murray & Murray, 2007, p. 285). Since a primary goal of SLCE pedagogy is addressing that which thwarts human flourishing by cultivating “lifelong, interdependent and independent learning” (Bringle et al., 2014, p. 19), then a pedagogical point of intersection for both SLCE and SHE is the involvement of lifelong exploration of personal and cultural identity within specific ecological landscapes and production of new behaviors (Foster, 2001; Winter & Cotton, 2012). The formation of an environmentally literate citizenry (NEEF, 2015) required by SHE includes human flourishing, which is also a vital goal of SLCE’s pedagogies. Human and ecosystemic flourishing must be seen in tandem, and this requires a knowledge base that promotes the formation of citizens and communities who understand cultural and ecological dimensions of personal identity and global citizenship. Building an alliance with SHE can prompt SLCE practitioners to understand and engage with ecological landscapes as co-creative life-systems and stakeholders that inform and fashion those who work to promote justice.

Table 3

Comparison of Personal Assets within the Attributes, Goals, and Learning Outcomes of SHE and SLCE

Sustainability in Higher Education (SHE)	Community Engagement Programming (SLCE)
Values: reflective, individual, inner attributes such as compassion, equity, justice, peace, cultural sensitivity and care for the future generations. Dynamic, transformable, and culturally or contextually situated values (Thomas, 2009). Recognition that programs must connect values, beliefs, and attitudes with the concrete acts of constructing sustainable societies.	Values: active, knowledgeable, caring global citizens capable of cultivating inclusive dialogues with key stakeholders to cultivate assets and address community needs. Recognition of the specificity of needs and issues as well as the variety of resolutions required. Understanding that values, beliefs, and attitudes of global citizens should be reflected in concrete social transformations.

Synthesis

SLCE desires to prepare educated and engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility (Hartley & Saltmarsh, 2016); and promote “social change and/or social justice” through academic pursuits within and outside the academy (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013, p. 63). The personal values and empowered citizenship cultivated by SHE (Juárez-Nájera, Rivera-Martínez, & Hafkamp, 2010) could offer a broadened, planetary horizon of meaning for the concepts of partnerships, citizenship, democracy, empowerment, justice, and

governing strategies (Jucker, 2002). It could also guide how individuals could act based on these values. For example, research from Le Hebel, Montpied, and Fontanieu (2014), Zelenski, Dopko, and Capaldi (2015), and others suggest that activities that reduce a student’s perceived separation between self and nature can lead to an increase in that student’s environmental empathy for what or who is designated “other.” Both SHE and SLCE also recognize the contextually situated nature of the values and needs, as well as the difficulty of turning empathy into behavioral change. Nevertheless, the universal need of a habitable Earth connects us all. Thus, integrating value formation strategies from SLCE and SHE could equip students to work in effective partnerships for ecosocial justice within particular cultural and ecological settings, producing more democratic citizens and community transformation.

Table 4

Comparison of Integrative Assets within the Attributes, Goals, and Learning Outcomes of SHE and SLCE

Sustainability in Higher Education (SHE)	Community Engagement Programming (SLCE)
Attend to the common good by addressing social and ecological problems in holistic and systematic ways.	Coherently and comprehensively address societal issues to contribute to the public good.
Ecosystemic, web-like thinking patterns; resistance to narrow, fragmented, reductionistic approaches to learning and social transformation.	Resistance to narrow, fragmented, linear approaches to learning and social transformation.
The complexity of the challenges facing the planet today requires	Real-world experiences and the complexity of social crises demonstrate webs of interdependency characterizing human societies.

an appreciation of the many webs of interdependency characterizing Earth’s many ecosystems.	Cultivation of cooperation and knowledge democracy among stakeholders.
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Synthesis

Both SHE and SLCE require critical, “big picture” or systemic thinking that facilitates creativity, collaboration, and co-construction of knowledge and values across disciplines, partners, and communities. Emotional maturity, critical thinking skills, and creativity must be fostered alongside technical competency to appreciate and apply integrative goals and outcomes in SHE and SLCE. SHE is constructive; embraces long- and short-term systemic thinking; and emphasizes collaboration (Foster, 2001) in order to successfully engage difficult social, cultural, and political contexts (Fisk & Ahearn, 2006). Hence, SHE’s integrative approach appreciates the complexity of life as Earth’s citizens, and offers the perspectives, tools, and space to develop technical competencies; emotional maturity and risk-taking; creativity; and co-construction of knowledge and values on and off campuses. (Breunig, Murtell, Russell, & Howard, 2014; Eilam & Trop, 2010). SHE practitioners are clear that “... a sustainable world cannot be created without the full and democratic involvement of all members of society; a sustainable world without participation and democracy is unthinkable” (Wals & Jickling, 2002, p. 225). This orientation complements the critical, systemic thinking, and diversified approach to knowledge creation that SLCE encourages, as is affirmed by the Carnegie Foundation: “The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum/teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good” (Carnegie Foundation, 2013, para. 2). Together, both SLCE and SHE invite reflection on an individual’s encounter with the physical world and the intricate, complex relationships between individuals in communities and society as a whole.

Narratives of SLCE-SHE Alliances

At Wingate University, a small, rural, comprehensive, independent university in North Carolina, conversations about both SLCE and SHE emerged at about the same time. Our germination of SLCE programs stemmed from our most recent quality enhancement plan (QEP) called W'Engage. This SLCE program was designed to help sophomores engage with current issues affecting their local and national communities; work with community partners to co-create knowledge and practices; and help create civic mindedness and care for the common good on and off campus (QEP Committee, 2016). However, when Wingate's president stated in his inaugural address (April 7, 2016) his desire for a sustainable campus that upholds our motto of Faith, Knowledge, and Service, pioneering SLCE scholar-practitioners on our campus intentionally aligned SLCE and SHE in their QEP pilot seminars and courses.

There were two pilot seminars that contributed to the official SLCE-SHE aligned W'Engage course. The following narratives will offer experiences made by one constituency, students, to give a glimpse of the potential of an SLCE-SHE alliance. A future research direction for SLCE and SHE practitioners would be deeper, more qualitative assessments of the benefits of an SLCE-SHE alliance for all five constituencies.

Honor Seminar Pilots and EcoJustice W'Engage Course

Since our QEP made SLCE a new adventure, two honors seminars (EcoJustice, Fall 2015, and EcoLiteracy, Spring 2016) became the incubators to help craft W'Engage courses. The honors seminar was a good model since it involved in-class learning, reflection activities, leadership opportunities, and immersion trips to the Outer Banks and Asheville, N.C. This deep engagement with the place that inspired Rachel Carson brought the EcoJustice course text, *Lost Woods* (Lear, 1998), to life. It also deepened student understanding of the second assigned text, Stephen Scharper's *For Earth's Sake* (2013). Alongside this intellectual and affective experience, participants were also offered opportunities to work with and learn from community partners (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) researchers; park rangers; Trinity Retreat Center "Sound to Sea" education program practitioners; volunteer turtle nest protectors; North Carolina Aquarium and Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center employees; and community activists) living Carson's vision of justice in the marine ecosystems she loved so much. A reflection from a student's video journal illustrates broadened cognitive foundations, thanks to this immersion experience:

Something that was impactful about this experience was that it wasn't necessarily that you were learning about ecology or ethics: it was the camaraderie that you were able to build between your fellow students in discussing different problems that we were introduced to see here as human beings and how as human beings we affect the planet (but not just us to the planet but the planet to us and) how it's all just one big—one word we used over this session was—web or fabric. (Student 30, Video Journal, May, 2016)

Learning was co-generated as students and faculty built relationships with community members. Days were devoted to reading, reflecting, discussing, and exploring ideas and community projects. At nighttime campfires, students from many diverse backgrounds and academic programs gathered to converse about what they were experiencing, what they cared about, and their hopes and aspirations for more resilient communities where they could one day live with their families. There were benefits from an immersion in the places where community partnerships worked and lived, and this echoed in an artifact from the EcoLiteracy seminar:

The best part of my day was when we got to work with GreenWorks in the French Broad River [Asheville, N.C.]. . We picked up trash from the waters and banks and dug up tires from the dirt under the water. This was an amazing feeling as all of the research and discussions came together when we got to work. (Student 15, Trip Journal, May 2016)

As the seminars progressed, all students in the class became better able to articulate what they learned to the rest of the campus and even generated new paths to internships and graduate programs previously unknown to them. Another offshoot of the EcoJustice pilot was the germination of a registered student organization called BIGG (Bulldogs into Going Green), to investigate water use, waste production, and energy consumption on and off campus; and to promote more resilient communities. BIGG has become a home and launching pad for subsequent SLCE-SHE W'Engage participants who want to live a planetary version of Wingate's principle of caring, called "one dog." Participants in the second pilot also recognized the importance of creative, democratic partnerships across campus boundaries to holistically address issues facing our world, such as water scarcity:

At Michigan State University professors and other University officials have addressed the Flint water crisis. They are being active in their local community. Now, I know Wingate University is no Flint but I genuinely believe we should do our part as global citizens and help a community in need. . . . We need students who get fired up and want to effect change when someone in another community can't get clean access to water—access to clean water should be a shared value. (Student 27, Research Paper, May 2016)

The pedagogy, syllabus, course texts, and immersion experience for the EcoJustice W'Engage (Fall 2016) was modeled after the honors seminars and partnerships cultivated a year earlier. As reflected in the pilots, a high level of self-awareness was demonstrated in fireside chats, communal meals, reflection activities, and video/photo and written journals (see samples offered below). Where W'Engage differed was that this course was purposefully team taught (Religion and Biology Departments) and involved mentors from the 2015 seminar. The mentorship component enabled stronger peer collaboration and friendships during and after the course; augmented course principles (e.g., co-generation of knowledge); and ensured partners enjoyed working with these students again. Also, students, faculty, and community partners designed local service-learning and community engagement opportunities that included working with park rangers on trails, community garden initiatives, and education and advocacy projects. For instance, the class worked with the Habitat and Wildlife Keepers' (HAWK) Kids in Nature Day at Squirrel Park in Matthews, N.C. Based on their talents, academic learning and passions, some students worked with community organizers and residents to offer nature walks; others ran the station where kids could create a fairy house with natural materials; some students worked with a non-profit to help build birdhouses; and others helped teach kids how to fish.

The EcoJustice W'Engage attended to SLCE-SHE foundational assets by helping students visualize the interconnectivity between economies, ecologies, and societies: students became familiar with both the place and subjects which captivated Rachel Carson and how local partners strive for ecojustice. Through projects, events, readings, and reflections, students recognized the dynamic reciprocity among many stakeholders that is needed to create resilient ecosystems and communities. A student's reflection submitted after a service-

learning opportunity (Kids in Nature Day) with HAWK volunteers, demonstrates this:

Children have a way of embracing the world around them, which is something I took away from seeing [kids' and their families'] participation. . . . What I learned about ecojustice is that it consists of a cascade of events. An event such as this one, inspires others from the community to bring their kids to the park more often. It encourages families to preserve healthy snakes by educating them on the difference between copperheads and [non-venomous] snakes. Observing the kids interact with nature reminded me of Scharper's "EcoFeminism" piece under 'Role of Nature' [sic]. This sub-heading details Scharper's point that nature is a reflection of the past, present, and future. It carries traces of our negligence through pollution and our [hu]man made features. (Student 18, Ecojustice W'Engage course)

Both pilots and this W'Engage also attempted to give students the knowledge assets to begin the lifelong process of gaining the intellectual capital, practical skills, and emotional fortitude to tackle today's environmental, cultural, and economic issues. Students experienced how human and ecosystemic flourishing must occur in tandem, and enabling this knowledge acquisition influenced course pedagogy; the choice of community partners; and attention given to skills acquisition, environmental awareness, and appreciation of sustainable development. The benefits of cultivating SLCE-SHE knowledge assets are seen in a student reflection made after working alongside Carolina Thread Trail members:

One of the most notable things concerning the leaders we met was the dramatic differences in their backgrounds. Mayor Rick Becker has been a politician for many years and was previously a math teacher; Chip Sell was a banker and a businessman before he retired; and Lisa Tompkins has been working as a landscape designer. Despite their differences in background, these people come together with a shared love for ecology and sustainability. It is worth noting also that they would likely have a much more difficult time accomplishing the great work that they do if it were not for these differences and specialties, which makes them an excellent example to apply here

on campus. (Student 7, from Carolina Thread Trail Excursion, October, 2016)
The contexts for generating students' personal assets also offered the content concerning what planetary citizenship entails, and these contexts varied: conversations and reflection took place within classrooms, local community meetings, mentor talks, and service-learning opportunities and projects. The universal need of a habitable Earth directed student reflections concerning their own values, assumptions, and identities and the formation of viable democratic societies:

In our class, I have learned that gaining an understanding about ecojustice issues and sustainability is simply not enough. We have to take what we learn and engage ourselves in the world. . . . One of my favorite ways we contributed to the common good on the trip was when we met with the activist for turtle rehabilitation and reproduction to understand the life of a sea turtle. We began to see the importance of why we should keep our beaches clean and how everything we do affects someone or something, somewhere. . . we all committed to some form of trash/plastic reduction after discussing with the activist how destructive it is for all marine life. Personally, I stopped using straws, reduced my plastic bag use by switching to reusable bags, and started recycling all of the plastic forms that I have yet to stop using. (Student 15, Trip Journal, May 2017)

Artifacts from the video and written journals as well as some of the future activities undertaken by some of these students (e.g., summer research on aquatic invertebrates; wildlife club presidency; community garden coordination) demonstrate that adequate space was made for acquiring SLCE-SHE personal, reflective values, and this, at least in a small way, translated into more educated and engaged students who took on campus and civic responsibilities and sought to strengthen campus and community partnerships. Changing personal values and cultivating value-oriented, engaged citizens are not easy tasks, but the sustainability focus of these SLCE courses can help outline what engaged, responsible planetary citizenship could entail.

When looking at the overall understanding of interrelationships (integrative assets) W'Engage artifacts often revealed a shift to critical, "big picture" or systemic thinking in participants. This new worldview helped them recognize present and future stakeholders with which to share and co-create knowledge and values. Thanks largely to the immersion experiences

and community service-learning partnerships and projects, emotional maturity, critical thinking skills, and creativity were fostered, alongside more technical competency. A sample from a student's final synthesis paper supports this assertion:

One thing that I was not nearly so aware of [prior to this course], however, was the overwhelming amount of networking and conjoined effort necessary to accomplish the goals we strive for out of this newfound love for the ecological world. Scientifically speaking, research must be done to understand exactly what the problem is ecologically, and what change must be made to mend it. In order to gain enough support for change, efforts must be made to affect the social atmosphere; the culture itself must make a shift. Then, for this shift to amount to anything productive, political policies must be made enforcing them and outlining precisely what is to be done. In order for the political efforts to be realized in practice, there must be economic resources to fund the necessary responses, or at the very least provide incentive to follow the prescribed procedures. This intricate web, similarly to the web-like nature of nutrients passing through an ecosystem being fully reliant on all of its members playing a role, is not nearly so effective if one of the three elements (ecological, sociopolitical, or economic) is faulty or missing. (Student 7, Final Synthesis Paper, May 2016)

In the pilots and W'Engage courses, a love of places, peoples, and economic prosperity was translated into many actions, activities and commitments as participants strove to transform their landscapes, their worldviews, and the resilience of their communities.

Conclusion

These SLCE-SHE aligned pilots and W'Engage courses showcase the promise of purposefully aligning sustainability with service-learning and civic engagement. Future directions for SLCE scholarship could include more longitudinal studies that measure the aforementioned benefits of this alliance for all constituencies. Artifacts and faculty observations seem to demonstrate that in these SLCE-SHE aligned pilots and courses, students

acquired broadened cognitive foundations to develop more web-like thinking and learning. Both students and faculty also seemed more comfortable with cross disciplinary approaches and collaboration with academic stakeholders and community partners. This familiarity broadened and deepened how the first two QEP outcomes (Learn-Reflect) were approached and helped meaningfully achieve the third outcome (Act) by imagining and fostering new partnerships and novel avenues for social and ecological transformation. Fruitful dialogues about partnerships have also ensued at Wingate University, especially concerning how new (and old) partnerships are entered into, cultivated, and sustained as part of SLCE. These SLCE-SHE courses, as Palmer (2015) suggests, have allowed students to understand and experience how the things that are physically, socially, and economically necessary for healthy, sustainable, and flourishing human communities are possible (p. 12). When sustainability was used as the organizing principle for the pilots and W'Engage courses, ecological landscapes, alongside people and social systems, became co-generators of knowledge and valuable contributors to ecosocial justice within human communities. The urgency of our ecological crisis demands nothing less. This article's theoretical frameworks and course narratives demonstrate that if serious attention is given to harnessing the synergistic effect of SHE-SLCE collaboration, strong partnerships can be formed on and off campus to better serve a common goal: building just, resilient, healthy communities. An SLCE-SHE alliance is a viable path to cultivate citizens with the ecocentric vision of justice that our world sorely needs.

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