Community Engagement Beyond the Buzzwords: Student Internalizations of the Land-Grant Mission

Megan Jeanette Myers
Iowa State University

Abstract
The mission statements of land-grant institutions consistently describe their students as "engaged." Beginning with a discussion of the importance of implicating students as partners in service-learning coursework and an analysis of the mission statements of Midwestern land-grant institutions, this study discusses the results of a pre- and post-test of a subculture of undergraduate students enrolled in a course with a required community-engagement component. The study assesses the dissonance or alignment of the ways mission statements describe students and the ways students describe themselves.
Keywords: *Mission statements, student engagement, land-grant, engaged citizen, Morrill Act*

Reimagining, Renewing, and Rewriting the Land-Grant University Mission in the 21st Century

Two decades ago, in 1999, the Kellogg Commission on the Future State of Land-Grant Colleges claimed that higher education institutions were "arrogant, out-of-touch, and unresponsive to the needs of society" (Kellogg Commission, 1999).[i] This call for reform echoed earlier critiques of Boyer in *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (1990) in which the author claimed that U.S. higher education institutions prioritized output as related to academic advancement as opposed to quality teaching and community integration. What followed such significant catalysts for action was an onslaught of similar attestations to the need for changes in the mission and values of land-grant institutions. Community-engaged scholars, administrators at land-grant universities, and community partners together called for a recommitment to the "societal contract" (Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2012, p. 223), a "re-imagining of the 21st Century Land-Grant University" (Fischer, 2009, p. A14), and a "renewing of the covenant" (Spanier, 2011) of civically engaged institutions.

These repeated demands for land-grant institutions to re-assess their missions included an emphasis on the quality of the student experience. Thus, when land-grant institutions began to actively re-engage with their mission statements and put forth a concentrated effort to more clearly align the student experience with their respective missions, an integral part of this process related to a clear establishment and definition of the key roles that students held within the civically engaged values of the university.

The goal of the present study is to gain a better understanding of how land-grant institutions—in large part as a response to the questioned values of land-grant colleges in the late Nineties—envision the ideal student experience, and how the undergraduate students themselves describe their experiences with community engaged coursework. If the mission statements of land-grant institutions clearly chart the role of students as integral to their broad goals of sharing knowledge with and positively impacting communities beyond campus borders, do students internalize these terms or "buzzwords" used to describe them? To illustrate the commonalities and divergences between the language used in the mission statements of land-grant institutions when referring to the student experience, this article begins with an analysis of the mission statements of 12 land-grant institutions in the Midwest in order to chart which terms are utilized most frequently in official university statements. As a complement to the rhetoric-based analysis of the mission statements, the present study also includes the results of a pre- and post-course survey of a diverse group of students at a large research-intensive Midwestern land-grant institution. The aim of the study is to better understand how students—enrolled in community engagement courses as undergraduates—internalize and advance land-grant ideals. Do they view themselves as "active" or "engaged" citizens? The two-part organization of this study provides an analysis of the aforementioned mission statements as well as a consideration of how undergraduate students at land-grant institutions define themselves and their connection(s) to the campus community and beyond. This dual approach allows for a reflection of the possible overlap or dissonance between the ways in which land-grant institutions describe their students and the ways in which students at land-grant institutions describe themselves.

Departing from an understanding of community engagement and a brief history of land-grant institutions, the findings from both the thematic mission statement analysis and the course surveys help

to further explore how students internalize the land-grant mission after actively participating in community engaged coursework. Sharing the results of a pre- and post-test given to students enrolled in community engaged coursework at a research-intensive Midwestern land-grant institution codifies students' understanding of land-grant ideals. By also including narrative responses from these students, I posit that when students take an active, hands-on role in high impact learning experiences they are not only able to more accurately and authentically relate to the land-grant ideals verbalized by their institution, but they also internalize the meaning and significance behind the sometimes loaded terminology that their university uses to describe them.

Historicizing the (Midwestern) Land-Grant Institutions and Defining Engagement

Prior to discussing and disentangling the different terms that Midwestern land-grant institutions use to describe their students, it is important to define engagement. If students are increasingly classified as engaged, how does the current literature imagine such "engagement" at the university level? What does it look like for students to take an active role in community engagement coursework? Moreover, this introductory section builds on understandings of engagement, offers a brief history of land-grant institutions, especially within the Midwest, and serves to detail the calls for action to re-evaluate the societal contract of the land-grant institution.

Beginning around the early 2000s, community engaged scholarship began to echo the new reality that higher education institutions valued and prioritized service-learning (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007; Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Kahne, Westheimer & Rogers, 2000; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). Further, recent research has charted the effects of service-learning coursework for students. One study (Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005) found that students who engaged in service-learning classes as undergraduates exhibited strong positive attitudes in response to their responsibility—on both a social and personal level—for others in need (p. 28). While a growing number of studies focus on the effects of service-learning initiatives on students and the consequences these types of courses have on their civic engagement beyond the formative undergraduate experience, there is a gap in regards to how students relate to and can formatively shape community engagement in higher education. As Fretz & Longo remarked (2010), "Even some of the finest monographs on the engaged university leave out students as actors and developers of community-based activities," thus confirming "the lack of scholarship about including student voice and experience in the engaged academy" (p. 317). Often, scholarship tends to focus on the roles of faculty and administration within the engaged academy, casting as an aside the pivotal role of students in imagining and claiming their own experience as related to community engaged initiatives. Longo & Meyer (2006) instead purport that today's college students can and should be partners in the engaged academy and numerous studies point to the fact that college students in the 21st century have ample opportunities to engage in community initiatives (Beere, Vortuba & Wells, 2011; Fretz & Longo, 2010; Kiesa et al., 2007). This idea of students as partners contributes to, but also offers a different approach to, more common discussions in community engaged scholarship about the partnerships between university and community. More recently, scholars have started to focus on the roles of students beyond a participatory level, centering their interest on the increasingly important role of students as "co-creators" (Jacoby, 2013). While some studies consider the impact of service-learning coursework on undergraduates—noting results that range from developing intercultural competence and civic-awareness (De Leon, 2014; Fitch, 2004; Welch & Billig, 2004) to raising grades in other courses and improving overall academic success (Brail, 2016; Kezar, 2002)—others focus on student peer leaders who facilitate and contribute at a leadership and administrative level to service-learning work at their institutions (Pritchard & Bowen, 2019; Shook & Keup, 2012). While a scholarly interest in the positioning of the student within a community-engagement continuum is on the rise, additional research is needed to examine if the level and depth of student partnerships with communities—as related to community engaged coursework—are dependent on the type of institution.

My interest herein reflects the importance of a connection between students—partners in developing, building, and facilitating a community engaged project—and service-learning programming within the context of land-grant institutions. Do undergraduates enrolled in land-grant institutions encounter increased opportunities for engagement as compared to non-land-grant institutions? If so, how does the rhetoric with respect to the student experience at land-grant institutions address the engagement of the student body? One study confirms that the imperative to "make engagement a more central feature of higher education is perhaps strongest for public and land-grant institutions" (Fitzgerald et al., 2012, p. 8).

The initial goals of the Morrill Act, which passed in 1862 and established the first land-grant universities by granting 30,000 acres of federally owned land to develop public institutions, centered on the idea that an educated public was the key to a democratic society (ACLU, 1994).[ii] The integral connection between land-grant institutions, sometimes referred to as "servant universities," and their surrounding communities constitutes the foundation for the importance of engagement for administration, faculty, and students alike. Land-grant institutions serve the greater public good to the extent that they have been labeled the social conscience of the U.S. education system (Gee, 2012, p. 51). The societal relevance of land-grant institutions and the demands in the late Nineties and early 2000s for them to become more engaged relates directly to the experience of undergraduates at such universities, but little research exists on the ways that they describe their students and how the students describe themselves. Are students, from their own perspective, "engaged" and linked to the civic mission of their institutions?

Any assessment of student engagement is preempted by the need to first address the meaning of engagement. In the wake of the 2001 Kellogg Commission Report, various organizations, foundations, institutions, and scholars attempted to (re-)define engagement. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, for example, confirmed that community engagement is the collaboration between the university and the (local and global) community that is "for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" (Driscoll, 2008, p. 39). According to Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco and Swanson (2012), in an effort to categorize different forms of engagement, there are four foundational characteristics of engagement that the myriad definitions of engagement tend to share: engagement is scholarly; must form part of the missions of teaching, research, and service; must be reciprocal and mutually beneficial; and must embrace the values of a civil democracy (p. 11). Given that various definitions and types of engagement exist—albeit with points in common—the ways that higher education institutions define students and the student experience multiply. What do higher education institutions mean when they classify their study body as "engaged," "global citizens," and "civically-minded"? The following sections, then, move from thinking about how existing literature addresses engagement at land-grant institutions to analyzing the ways that land-grant institutions actually define their students' relations to community engagement and how the students relate to such outwardly-imposed classifications.

University Definitions of Students as Related to the Land-Grant Mission: Imagining the Ideal Student Experience

The sheer popularity of mission statements within the realm of higher education proves difficult to deny. Beyond the all-encompassing mission statements that universities craft on a broad scale—often published from the Office of the President—university offices, colleges, departments, and other organized centers on campus often produce their own mission statements that speak more pointedly to their sense of identity and overall purpose.

The Nineties, the decade of the publication of the aforementioned Kellogg Commission on the Future State of Land-Grant Colleges in 1999, marked a national pattern of reviewing and restructuring university mission statements. The Association of American Colleges claimed that 80% of higher education institutions, in addition to making changes to curricula and institutional goals, also revised their mission statements during this time period (1994). Supporting the decision to edit university mission statements, research points to the multifold benefits of articulating a mission statement and considers the crafting of such a statement to be a crucial element of the strategic planning process of the respective institution (Drucker, 1973; Hartley, 2002; Morphew & Hartley, 2016). One of the most frequently reported benefits signals the advantages of agreeing on a shared purpose or motivation; one study positions the mission statement as "the necessary condition for many different individuals to pull together through a myriad of activities to achieve central shared purposes" (Gaff & Meacham, 2006, para. 5). There are other scholars, however, who "see the mission statement glass as half-empty. They view mission statements as a collection of stock phrases that are either excessively vague or unrealistically aspirational or both" (Morphew & Hartley, 2016, p. 457). While mission statements often endeavor to highlight what is unique about institutions, mission statements by nature are also general, all-purpose documents. Many higher education institutions view the mission statement first and foremost as an organizational document that can and should be accessible for all stakeholders. Those involved in the writing and editing process of such mission statements—oftentimes upper level administrators—also recognize that key to any successful mission statement is maintenance and continual updates (Delucchi,

1997). Hartley further confirmed critiques of mission statements by suggesting that "mission making is most often met with raised eyebrows" (2002, p. 8) and his study of 93 mission statements concluded that such normative articulations of the mission of institutions are consistently "amazingly vague, evasive, or rhetorical, lacking specificity of clear purposes" (1991, p. 29). Do the "vague and idiosyncratic" (Taylor & Morphew, 2010, p. 499) communication patterns of university mission statements, then, give way to "vague and idiosyncratic" definitions of students or the student experience?

Study Methods and Rationale

This two-part section begins by outlining the study methods and rationale for my analysis of 12 Midwestern land-grant institution mission statements in regards to their descriptions of students and/or the student experience, and ends with a discussion of the study methods and rationale with regards to a pre- and post-course survey given to undergraduate students actively participating in community engaged coursework at a land-grant institution.

Given that the mission statement is an important organizational tool that forms the foundation for university objectives and strategies, taking a closer look at how land-grant institutions describe their students, before discerning how students describe themselves, proves insightful. Within the 12 Midwestern states as defined by the federal government, there are 13 designated land-grant institutions given that Missouri has two (Lincoln University and the University of Missouri).[iii] The sample of the study consisted of only 12 U.S. land-grant institutions located in the Midwest because one, Purdue University, does not have a general mission statement available online. Thus, a total of 12 public land-grant institutions, with accessible mission statements via official university webpages, are included in the analysis to follow. To explore and identify recurring categories in these 12 mission statements, semantic content analysis allowed for a creation of categories to identify main themes. I identified three primary themes that build on the role of land-grant institutions in the U.S. as identified and outlined by the aforementioned Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU). The three themes included references to students, references to communities beyond the campus, and references to extension and outreach. "Extension and outreach," a hallmark of land-grant institutions formalized in 1914 by the Smith-Lever Act, traditionally defines an "institutionalized form of public service" in which results of institutional research and instruction benefits the community (McDowell, 2001, p. 7). This category, however, is not to be conflated with engaged coursework or community outreach as related to the undergraduate or graduate curriculum.

Following the identification of three main themes, phrases and sentences in each mission statement relating to each designated theme were categorized. In order to gauge the frequency of each sub-theme, the number of sentences relating to each theme were counted. I discuss some of the relevant percentage values in the section to follow. To display the different words and terms used, as well as their frequency, I also include a cluster analysis visual in the form of a word cloud. This word cloud focuses on the first theme that highlights references to students.

Aligned with the previously noted vagueness of mission statements is the general variability of mission statements, in particular in regards to length, content, and format. David & David (2003) stated that a mission statement should not be too lengthy or too short, should not contain numbers or percentages, and should not contain goals or strategies as they will create distractions for the reader. Regardless of scholarly recommendations for successful and accessible mission statements, though, universities tend to interpret differently the distinctions between the mission statement and vision. While the mission statement traditionally outlines the objectives and goals of the institution, the vision often is geared toward the future and forward-looking goals. The two documents, however, are often conflated, which led to varying lengths of the mission statements coded herein.[iv] The mission statements analyzed, including documents only clearly categorized as "mission statements," ranged from two sentences to over two pages and, in regards to format, consisted of paragraphs, bullet points, and brief phrases; this range in length and variety of format and organization of the mission statements is noteworthy.

As the present study is two-part, as previously mentioned, the second data set allows for a response from students enrolled in community engaged coursework at a land-grant institution in the Midwest. Incorporating student voices into this study permits a mapping of the university description of students in the mission statements with students' descriptions of themselves. Are the two aligned? Where do they diverge? Do students describe themselves in the same ways that the university and administration do? Data collection for the Spring 2019 course consisted of one pre-course survey, which

was distributed in January 2019 at the start of the course, and a post-course survey, which was distributed in April 2019 at the end of the course. Fourteen students responded to either survey; 12 students responded to both surveys. Two students completed only the pre-survey, and two students completed only the post-survey. By the end of the course, students had completed an average of 2.9 years at their current institution and reported a variety of majors. No student confirmed prior participation in a community engagement course before the Spring 2019 semester.

The pre-course survey was administered using Qualtrics software and consisted of 11 items. Two open-ended items asked students about why they signed up for the class and what it means to be an "engaged citizen." A series of closed-ended items assessed students' familiarity with "engaged citizenry," the land-grant mission of their institution, and impacts and connections beyond campus borders. Questions also asked respondents whether they had been involved with a course that includes high-impact learning or service-learning previously. The post-survey was the same as the pre-survey with the exception of an open-ended question asking students about their biggest takeaway from the course. Open-ended questions were coded into thematic categories and summarized based on emergent patterns. Paired sample t-tests were utilized for the close-ended items to determine whether there were significant mean differences in students' pre- and post-survey responses.

Results
Students as Defined by Land-Grant Institution Mission Statements

This section first presents the findings of mission statements from the 12 land-grant Midwestern institutions analyzed for the purposes of this study: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ohio State University, Lincoln University, University of Missouri, Michigan State University, University of Minnesota, Kansas State University, University of Nebraska, Iowa State University, University of Illinois, South Dakota State University, and North Dakota State University. Each mission statement was examined on the basis of the three aforementioned sub-themes: references to students, references to communities beyond the campus, and references to extension and outreach. The sub-theme categorized as communities beyond the campus consists of references to students, faculty, and other university constituents engaging with partners and organizations outside campus borders; oftentimes mission statement phrases classified as part of this category directly reference the phrase "off campus." The University of Wisconsin statement, for example, mentions "research and service *off campus* and abroad" ("Mission," 2020, my emphasis). Other mission statements cite an application of knowledge that extends to various levels, noting an institutional reach that includes both a local and global public or that proposes multi-tiered impact in the state, nation, and world, for example. The references to extension and outreach in the analyzed mission statements often contain direct links to the land-grant status of the various institutions and many outline a clear dedication to public service. In some cases, such as in Kansas State University's Mission, the ideals of land-grant institutions appear reiterated: "through outreach and engagement initiatives, partnerships are established with various stakeholders to translate knowledge and basic research into applications that address public needs" ("Kansas State University Mission," 2020). The sub-theme detailing references to students is further explored in the following paragraphs given that it relates closely to the focus of this study.

A total of 36 different messages related to the aforementioned themes were identified in the mission statements of the 12 institutions. Among the sub-themes, the most frequently occurring theme related to the students, with a 39% share (f=14). The least frequently used sub-theme in the mission statements of the land-grant institutions related to overt references to communities beyond the campus, with a 25% share (f=9). Notably, an analysis of the distribution of the sub-themes in the mission statements appeared generally well-balanced and the frequencies in use of each sub-theme only varied by 14%.

Of primary interest to the present study is the category related to the various and sometimes complicated and convoluted ways that students are depicted in mission statements. Or, given how the University of Nebraska titled their organizational document—"The Missions of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln"—how do seemingly disparate "missions" (plural) from different corners of the institution frame the student experience as related to the overarching ideals of the institution? I categorized this sub-theme as any wording in the mission statement that makes clear reference to students at the undergraduate or graduate level; such references include adjectives or labels aimed at describing students or the student experience—such as "engaged student citizens" or "globally engaged citizen leaders"—and also include

any references to actions involving the student body in regards to what they will do, learn, and/or participate in during their college careers and beyond. This sub-theme had the most diverse set of references in the mission statements given the myriad articulations of the student experience. Some institutions, like Lincoln University, simply comment on a "student-centered environment" ("Mission Statement," 2020) while others detail the student experience and utilize various adjectives to describe and characterize students. Identified references often include institutionally-derived goals for student engagement and student learning or development to the likes of "students can develop aesthetic values and human relationships including tolerance and differing viewpoints" ("The Missions," 2020). The fact that references to students outnumber the other two identified categories in my content analysis of mission statements confirms that students are indeed central to the mission statements of land-grant institutions. Are these categorizations, however, accurate? Do students see themselves as "engaged student citizens" and "globally engaged citizen leaders?"

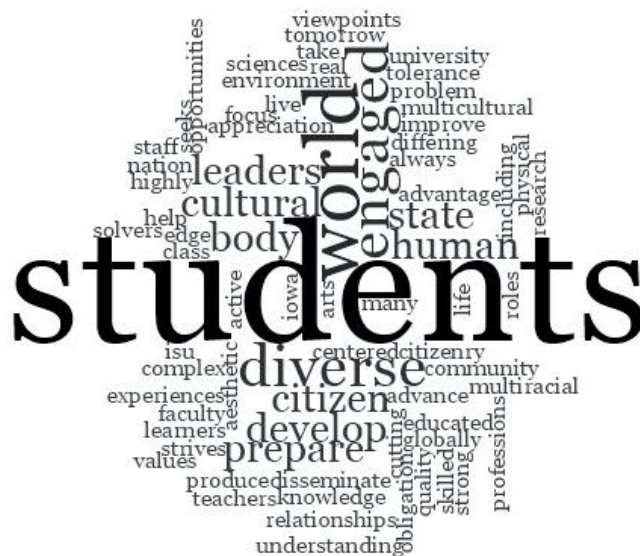**Student References in Mission Statements**

Figure 1

Figure 1 offers a word cloud of words and phrases in the 12 previously identified mission statements that were identified as referring explicitly to students and the student experience. Aside from the word "student(s)" that flagged the phrase or sentence as a match with the student sub-theme, the words "world(ly)," "engaged," "diverse," "leaders" and "citizen" are among those most emphasized. Stemmans Paterson refers to "the citizen-student" (2016) in a study focused on the long term impact of volunteerism and service-learning on students. This term illuminates the overall well-being of students engaged in service-learning in college, assessing impact beyond college years. Citizen-students, then, eventually become "citizen-graduates" dedicated to fostering change in their communities through public work. Highlighting that the development of students at a land-grant institution—geared toward building "world citizens," "engaged leaders," and any number of combinations of descriptors included in Figure 1— benefits communities beyond the campus (and beyond each student's academic career) is key to foregrounding the broad impact of community-based pedagogies.

Another pattern that emerged in relation to the ways that students appeared referenced in the mission statements included various statements that sought to attract a diverse group of students -- with clear references to socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, and international students – but such inclusions did not attempt to define the students or the student experience with regards to community engagement and instead served primarily to label various student groups as a means of inclusivity.

Students According to Students: Will the Real "Engaged" Students Please Stand Up?

This section details the responses of undergraduate students enrolled in community engaged courses at a Midwestern land-grant institution and shares the results of a mixed-methods study that

includes narrative responses to open-ended questions in addition to quantitative data from Likert-scale questions. By shining a light on the student perception of the land-grant mission, this section also serves to frame the concept of institutional alignment and campus culture from a student perspective.

Through sharing the results of a pre and post-test given to students enrolled in community engaged coursework with the intent of gauging students' understanding of land-grant ideals, I posit that when students take an active, hands-on role in high impact learning experiences they are not only able to more accurately and authentically relate to the land-grant ideals verbalized by their institution, but they also internalize the meaning and significance behind the sometimes loaded terminology that their university uses to describe them. In other words, allotting students the opportunity to become involved in community engaged coursework helps to bridge the disconnect between the way the land-grant institution might describe its students and the way the students describe themselves.

To assess results, the open-ended questions were coded into thematic categories and summarized based on emergent patterns. Results from the pre- and post-surveys are presented below in two sections; the first focuses on students' understanding of "engaged citizenry" and the second on impacts and connections beyond campus borders. The sections are composed of responses to similar survey questions and intended to organize student responses to aid in the understanding of students' experiences and provide a basis for comparing pre-and post-course survey results. Both the pre- and post-surveys asked students about their perceptions of what it means to be an "engaged citizen," as well as whether the term describes them. My insistence on this label in particular stems from the constant use—and sometimes misuse—of the term. Shulman (2011) points to the ambivalent nature of the term, derived "from a long tradition that treats the special character of universities as a function of their *dis*engagement" (p. ix). Given that engagement can be interpreted as an action—to be engaged with community—and also, as evidenced in Figure 1, can be employed as an adjective to describe individuals or, in this case, students, I felt that "engaged citizen" was a buzzword that more students connected to or had encountered previously (as compared to other terms appearing on Mission Statements such as "global citizen" or "active citizen," among others).

For the most part, students' descriptions of what it means to be an "engaged citizen" did not differ substantially across the two surveys. Students most commonly discussed that being an "engaged citizen" entails actively working within and giving back to communities through volunteering and outreach efforts. Several students also reported that being an engaged citizen means being aware of current issues and challenges within the community. Other responses included that "engaged citizenry" constitutes serving as role models, promoting community safety, voicing opinions and thoughts, and working within the political system through voting and petitions. Among students who responded to the aspect of the question in the pre-survey that asked whether the term "engaged citizen" described them, most did not believe that the term "engaged citizen" described them or they were unfamiliar with the term. One student admitted, "I am unfamiliar with the term and do not know the definition," while other students pointed to their lack of understanding of or familiarity with their surrounding community: "I'm not sure if I am a total engaged citizen because I feel young and I don't really know what community I am even a part of" and "I would not say I am an engaged citizen as I don't know much about my community." Another student mentioned that the most they had done in this respect was signing petitions and voting. On the post-survey, students were more likely to report that they believed the term "engaged citizen" applied to them, with a few students attributing this to their enrollment in the course. Numerous students offered definitions of the term, for example: "Being an engaged citizen means actively seeking out information about current cultural and political topics that are affecting one's community and the world at large, and then working with other community members to create a better environment for all of the community's members." Another student concluded in regards to the term, "I think it describes me better now than it did before the semester" and yet another shared that professors instilled in her "the importance of not only looking within myself but to be engaged with community matters."

Across both the pre- and post-test, students were also asked to rate on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) their agreement with two statements related to "engaged citizenry." The first item asked students to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "I am familiar with the term 'engaged citizen.'" The second asked students to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "I am comfortable describing myself as an 'engaged citizen' to peers, instructors, or in a job interview." As shown in Figure 2, below, students' mean level of agreement to both statements was higher on the post-survey relative to the pre-survey. In both cases, these differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

These results suggest that at the end of the course, students were more familiar with the term "engaged citizenry," as well as more comfortable describing themselves as an "engaged citizen."
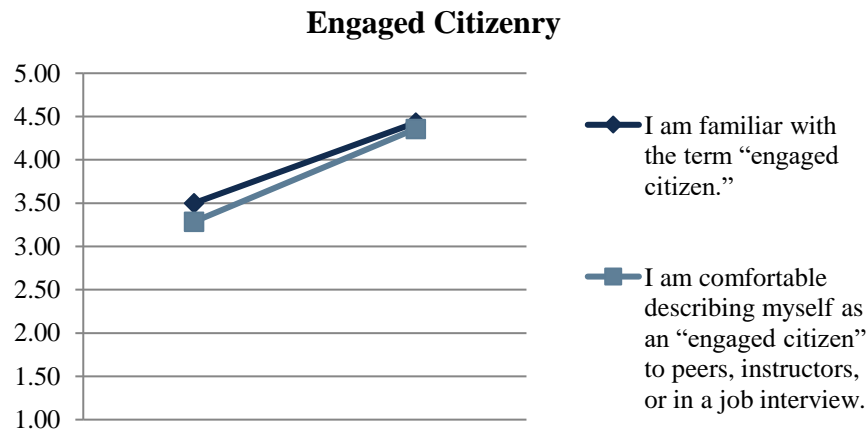
Engaged Citizenry

Figure 2. Significant changes in students' agreement with statements related to "engaged citizenry." The Y-axis quantifies mean responses to the statements listed in this question from pre- and post-survey on a scale from "strongly disagree" (1.00) to "strongly agree" (5.00).

To gauge general familiarity with the land-grant mission—not related to a specific term like "engaged" or "engaged citizen"—students were also asked to rate on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) their agreement with three statements related to impacts and connections beyond campus borders. The first item asked students to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "I have been involved with course work at my institution in the past that has either local, national, or international impact." The second asked students to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "As a university student, I have had the opportunity to share knowledge beyond campus borders." The third item asked students to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "I feel connected to the community beyond the campus borders." As shown in Figure 3, students' mean level of agreement to all three statements was higher on the post-survey relative to the pre-survey. In all three cases, these differences were statistically significant (p<0.05). These results indicate that at the end of the course, students were more likely to believe that they have had the opportunity to impact, share knowledge with, and feel connected to communities beyond campus borders.
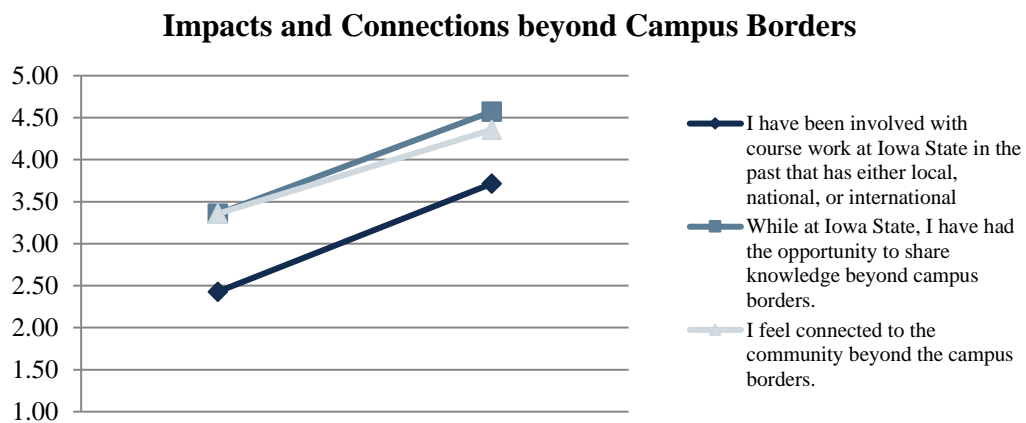
Impacts and Connections beyond Campus Borders

Figure 3. Significant changes in students' agreement with statements related to impact and connections beyond campus borders. The Y-axis quantifies mean responses to the statements listed in this question from pre- and post-survey on a scale from "strongly disagree" (1.00) to "strongly agree" (5.00).

A comparison of the pre- and post-surveys of the community-engaged course suggest that the students felt more "engaged" after the coursework and readily began to associate themselves with some of the same terms that land-grant institutions utilize to describe their students. This finding—that students were more familiar with terms like "engaged citizenry" and more apt to describe themselves in this way after taking part in community engaged coursework —illuminates the crucial reflection phase of experiential learning. This mirroring moment, when the student is able to say "that's me!" and reflect on their experiences, is a pillar of community engaged pedagogies. Reflection allows for a structured consideration of experiences with regards to course learning objectives; it is both intentional (going beyond a mere narration of experiences) and continuous in that it should happen throughout the semester. While the results of the post-test show that community engaged coursework allows for students to feel increasingly connected to communities beyond campus borders—thus aligning students' experience with the desires of many mission statements that reiterate the importance of university and community connection—it is important to note that course offerings serve as the bridge. If public engagement is to be expanded at the student level, faculty need to value community based learning and design courses that respond to this need. Student collaboration is dependent on the practice of faculty and, moreover, the development of faculty and staff to support civic engagement (Bringle & Hatcher, 2010). Additionally, the role of community leaders and organizations must not be overlooked. As Beere, Vortuba, and Wells (2011) note, "community leaders and community organizations that have positive experiences with their local colleges and universities encourage more of this work. Community needs are vast, and when colleges and universities help address those needs, communities will push more linkages" (p. 26).

Taking a critical and collaborative approach to such "linkages" between university and community proves key to achieving successful campus-community partnerships and recent research calls for a reassessment of the ways that the community can inform university decisions, thus more clearly having a stake in the development of university-community projects and long-term partnerships. A "democratic approach" to service-learning pedagogy, for example, factors in the essential leadership roles of community members and organizations, confirming that community members "are the experts in community history, structure, resources, and needs" (Hicks, Seymour & Puppo, 2015, p. 107). Thus, in addition to considering how students respond to university mission statements of land-grant institutions, how might the communities often implicated in these official, all-encompassing university documents also respond? More importantly, how might community members and organizations contribute to and have a role in the development of such mission statements?

Discussions about how community leaders and organizations can shape the ways in which universities define collaborative and/or community based coursework are indeed necessary. While the present study centers on how students react to and align with the student-related descriptors in mission statements, researchers should ask the same about how communities align with the myriad ways they appear referenced in such university documents; the implications of "town and gown" relationships should be reciprocal not only in writing, but also in practice. Some scholars have alluded to the importance of defining university-community partnerships and deciding on a set of shared principles and practices (Fitzgerald, Allen & Roberts, 2010; Strand et. al., 2003). Fitzgerald, Allen, and Roberts discuss members of a university-community partnership co-drafting a mission statement, (albeit it on a smaller scale), to define partnership activities and iterate plans of implementation and sustainability for university-community collaborations (p. 15), but the development of university mission statements often happens behind closed-doors.

Discussion and Implications for the Future

A consideration of whether students internalize some of the terms or "buzzwords" that land-grant institutions employ to describe them scratches the surface of exploring the student benefits—as opposed to the community or faculty benefits that are often the focus of research—of community engagement, thus foregrounding the importance of the student experience within our perceptions of campus or institutional culture. The small sample size of students surveyed in the community-engaged course allows for an initial window through which to view and problematize whether the land-grant university experience from a student perspective matches the institutions' goals for the student experience. Qualitative and quantitative results from student pre- and post-tests confirmed that following active involvement in community-engaged coursework, students felt a stronger connection to their community

and could better grasp what it meant to be an "engaged citizen." Not only did the quantitative results show significant changes in students' agreements with statements related to the impact(s) of high-impact coursework and the perceived connections beyond campus borders, but narrative responses of students confirmed the same. Experiential learning experiences—like community-engaged or service-learning coursework—give students the opportunity to engage with their community in an academic context that emphasizes reciprocal and thoughtful collaboration, and this hands-on approach allows them to better grasp and understand what it means to be engaged students and citizens. This research can help scholars and perhaps administrators to assess if students can readily see themselves as "partners" with and believers in the goals and ideals that the university details in terms of community engagement and students' global citizenry and engagement. It would be worthwhile to build on this initial research by further unpacking implications of the study for faculty designing and teaching community engagement courses and for administrators responsible for envisioning the role(s) of students within the mission of land-grant institutions. Likewise, while the interest of the present article focuses primarily on the student experience, it would also be interesting to outline the differences between extension and outreach (within the context of the land-grant institution) and community engagement coursework, deciphering how students may be involved in one or both of these avenues for public engagement at land-grant universities.

Additionally, there is the possibility of a regional pattern in terms of student engagement or alignment with the land-grant mission. Are students enrolled at land-grant institutions in the Midwest, for example, more civically engaged and/or more aware of their status of being or becoming "engaged citizens?" Is the experience of the Midwest, the "heartland" of the history of land-grant institutions—with Iowa as the first state to formally accept the provisions of the Morrill Act and Michigan as the location of the nation's first agricultural college—unique? Similarly, how does foregrounding the student experience within our perceptions of campus or institutional culture at public or private institutions not designated as land-grant compare with the findings at only institutions designated as land-grant? Keeping the potential for further comparisons and research in mind, this study serves as a starting point to exploring how the demands for land-grant institutions to re-assess their missions included an emphasis on the quality of the student experience and, further, how an alignment of the student experience with land-grant missions is possible when students have the opportunity to enroll in courses with required community engagement components.

References

American Association of Colleges. (1994). *Strong Foundations: Twelve Principles for Effective General Education Programs.* Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges.

Beere, C.A., Vortuba, J.B. & Wells, G.W. (2011). *Becoming an Engaged Campus.* San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Boyer, E.L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered. Priorities of the professoriate.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brail, S. (2016). Quantifying the Value of Service-Learning: A Comparison of Grade Achievement Between Service-Learning and Non-Service-Learning Students. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 28(2), 148-157.

Bringle, R.G., & Hatcher, J.A. Student Engagement Trends over Time. (2010). In H.E Fitzgerald, C. Burack, & S. Seifer (Eds.), *Handbook of engaged scholarship: Contemporary Landscapes, future directions: Vol. 2 Institutional Change* (pp. 411-430). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.

Colby, A., Beaumont, E., Ehrlich, T., & Corngold, J. (2007). *Educating for Democracy: Preparing undergraduates for responsible political engagement.* Stanford, CA: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

David, F.R., & David, F.R. (2003). It's time to redraft your mission statement. *The Journal of Business Strategy*, 24(1), 11-14.

Delucchi, M. (1997). "Liberal arts" colleges and the myth of uniqueness. *Journal of Higher Education,* 68(4), 414-426.

De Leon, N. (2014). Developing intercultural competence by participating in intensive intercultural service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 21(1), 17-30.

Driscoll, A. (2008). Carnegie's community-engagement classification: Intentions and insights. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 40(1), 38–41.

Drucker, P. (1973). *Management: Tasks, responsibilities, practices.* New York: Harper & Row.

Fenzel, L.M., & Peyrot, M. (2005). Comparing College Community Participation and Future Service Behaviors and Attitudes. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning,* 12(1), 23-31.

Fretz, E.J. & Longo, N.V. (2010). Students Co-creating an Engaged Academy. In H.E Fitzgerald, C. Burack, & S. Seifer (Eds.), *Handbook of engaged scholarship: Contemporary Landscapes, future directions: Vol. 1 Institutional Change* (pp. 313-329). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.

Fischer, K. (2009). "Reimagining the 21st-Century Land-Grant University." *Chronicle of Higher Education,* 55(42), A14-A15.

Fitch, P. (2004). Effects of intercultural service-learning experiences on intellectual development and intercultural sensitivity. In M. Welch & S. H. Billig (Eds.), New perspectives in service-learning: Research to advance the field (pp. 107–126). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Fitzgerald, H.H., Allen, A, & Roberts, B. (2010). Campus-Community Partnerships: Perspectives on Engaged Research. In H.E Fitzgerald, C. Burack, & S. Seifer (Eds.), *Handbook of engaged scholarship: Contemporary Landscapes, future directions: Vol. 1 Institutional Change* (pp. 5-28). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.

Fitzgerald, H.E., Bruns, K, Sonka, S.T., Furco, A., & Swanson, L. (2012). The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement,* 3(7), 2-27.

Gaff, J., & Meacham, J. (2006). Learning Goals in Mission Statements: Implications for Educational Leadership. *Liberal Education,* 92(2).

Gee, E.G. (2012). The Modern Public University: Its Land-Grant Heritage, Its Land-Grant Horizon. D.M. Fogel & E. Malson-Huddle in *Precipice or Crossroads: Where America's Great Public Universities Stand and Where They Are Going Midway through Their Second Century.* Albany: Suny Press, 51-62.

Hartley, M. (2002). *A call to purpose: Mission-centered change at three liberal arts colleges.* New York: Routledge Falmer.

Jacoby, B. (2013) Student partnerships in service learning. In Clayton, P., Bringle, R., & Hatcher, J. (2013). Research on service learning. Volume 2A, Students and faculty: Conceptual frameworks and assessment. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus. (pp. 599-618).

Kahne, J., Westheimer, J., & Rogers, B. (2000). Service Learning and Citizenship in Higher Education. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning,* (Fall), 42–51.

"Kansas State University Mission." (n.d.). Retrieved March 9, 2020 from https://www.kstate.edu/about/mission/.

Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Land-Grant Universities. (1999). *Returning to our Roots: The Engaged Institution/Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land- Grant Universities.* Washington, D.C.: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, Office of Public Affairs.

Kezar, A. (2002). Assessing community service learning: Are we identifying the right outcomes? *About Campus,* 7(2), 14-20.

Kiesa, A., Orlowski, A.P., Levine, P., Both, D., Kirby, E.H., Lopez, M.H., & Marcelo, K.B. (2007). *Millenials talk politics.* College Park, MD: CIRCLE.

Land-Grant University FAQ. (n.d.). Retrieved May 3, 20109 from https://www.aplu.org/about-us/history-of- aplu/what-is-a-land-grant-university/.

Longo, N., & Meyer, R. (2006). College Students and Politics: A literature review. College Park, MD: CIRCLE.

McDowell, G.R. (2001). *Land-Grant Universities and Extension into the 21st Century: Renegotiating or Abandoning a Social Contract.* Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.

"Mission." (n.d.). Retrieved March 9, 2020 from https://www.wisc.edu/about/mission/.

"Mission Statement." (n.d.). Retrieved March 9, 2020 from https://www.lincolnu.edu/web/about-lincoln/mission-statement1.

Morphew, C.C. & Hartley, M. (2006). Mission Statements: A Thematic Analysis of Rhetoric Across Institutional Type. *The Journal of Higher Education,* 77(3), 456-471.

Pritchard, K. & Bowen, B.A. (2019). Student Partnerships in Service-Learning: Assessing the Impact. *Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning & Civic Engagement*, 10(2), 191-207.

"Role, Mission, and Values." (n.d.). Retrieved May 5, 2019 from https://www.unl.edu/about/role-mission/.

Shook, J. L., & Keup, J. R. (2012). The benefits of peer leader programs: An overview from the literature. New Directions for Higher Education, 2012(157), 5-16.

Shulman, L.S. (2011). Foreword. In Beere, C.A., Vortuba, J.B. & Wells, G.W. (Eds.), *Becoming an Engaged Campus* (ix-xiv). San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Spanier, G.B. (2011). "Renewing the Covenant: Ten Years After the Kellogg Commission." *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement,* 15(9), 9-13.

Stemmans Paterson, C. (2016). Volunteerism and the Citizen-Student: Long Term Impact on Well-Being and Health. *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education* 8(2), 1-2.

Strand, K., Marullo, S., Cutforth, N.J., Stoecker, R., Donohue, P. (2003). *Community-Based Research and Higher Education: Principles and Practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

---. (2003). Principles of best practice for community-based research. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 9, 5-15.

Taylor, B. J., & Morphew, C. C. (2010). An analysis of baccalaureate college mission statements. *Research in Higher Education*, 51(5), 483-503.

Welch, M., & Billig, S. H. (2004). New perspectives in service-learning: Research to advance the field. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

[i] This research meets the ethical guidelines of the Institutional Review Board at Iowa State University and qualifies as exempt (Study 18-452-00).

[ii] Recent comprehensive studies that outline the history and mission, as well as speak to the future, of land-grant institutions include *Land-Grant Institutions for the Future, The Modern Land-Grant University* (Sternberg, ed., 2014), *Precipice or Crossroads?* (Fogel & Malson-Huddle, eds., 2012), and *Land-Grant Universities and Extension* (McDowell, 2001).

[iii] The 12 states in the Midwestern region of the United States include the following: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

[iv] To increase the reliability of the study, during the data analysis process I was assisted by Brandi Geisinger, a staff member at Iowa State University's Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE). In addition, this research was in-part supported by a Miller Faculty Fellowship at Iowa State University.