

2014

Using Reflective Practice to Study the Impact of Community Engagement

Mary Slade
VCU ASPIRE

Erin Burke-Brown
Division of Community Engagement

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/community_resources



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Downloaded from

http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/community_resources/13

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Division of Community Engagement at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Division of Community Engagement Resources by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

Using Reflective Practice to Study the Impact of Community Engagement

Abstract

Research was conducted in order to determine the impact of the study of community engagement on students who participated in undergraduate community engagement coursework.

Keywords

community engagement, measurement, impact, reflective practice

Disciplines

Higher Education

VCU ASPIRE

Using Reflective Practice to Study the Impact of Community Engagement

Mary Slade, Ph.D., Executive Director, VCU ASPIRE

msslade@vcu.edu

Erin Burke-Brown, Assistant Director, Service-Learning

embrown@vcu.edu

VCU ASPIRE Living



VCU ASPIRE Learning



VCU ASPIRE
Community Engagement



ASPIRE.vcu.edu

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Make it real.

Mission Statement

The mission of VCU ASPiRE is to enrich and deepen students' understanding of their capacity to create positive change in communities and address critical societal needs through long-term sustainable partnerships.



Program Impact Areas

Specifically, VCU ASPIRE is dedicated to making community impact in the following areas:

- (1) pre-k-adult education;
- (2) accessible and affordable housing;
- (3) leadership development;
- (4) economic development;
- (5) youth mentoring;
- (6) healthy living;
- (7) environmental sustainability; and
- (8) urban revitalization.



Mission Statement

The mission of VCU ASPiRE is to enrich and deepen students' understanding of their capacity to create positive change in communities and address critical societal needs through long-term sustainable partnerships.



Community Engagement Curriculum

Curriculum (current 9 credit-hour certificate)

UNIV 200 Writing and Rhetoric (3 credits)

Special sections provided for VCU ASPIRE students. Taken Fall semester of the first year.

CMST 300 Foundations of Community Engagement (3 credits)

Course taught by VCU ASPIRE staff. Taken Fall semester of the first year.

CMST 301 Service Seminar (1 credit)

Taken Spring of first year.

CMST 400 Community Engagement Seminar (1 credit)

Taken Fall semester of the second year.

CMST 401 Community Engagement Capstone Seminar (1 credit)

Taken Spring semester of the second year. Students work in same location as the Fall placement.

Community Engagement Courses

CMST 300 Foundations of Community Engagement (3 credits) Contemporary communities are diverse and interconnected. To impact positive social changes, leaders in these communities must understand critical theories of community engagement. This course surveys critical theories and models of community engagement, including but not limited to theories of citizenship, social movements, civic leadership, social justice, civil discourse, and social capital. Students will use an interdisciplinary lens to analyze principles and practices of community and civic engagement. In order to fully comprehend the nature of community change students will analyze and initiate community change efforts within a Richmond neighborhood.

CMST 301 The Service Seminar- SRV LRN (1 credit) The purpose of this seminar is to provide an opportunity for a presence in the community as well as a chance to reflect on the experience. This project-focused learning experience promotes the thoughtful and critical reflective practice of community engagement. The community-based service encourages the application of community engagement knowledge and skills through the hands-on practice of community engagement. The seminar reflects service-learning pedagogy. The seminar will focus on one of the VCU ASPiRE's community impact areas.

Community Engagement Co-Curriculum

Co-Curriculum (100 hours over two years)



| ENGAGE (minimum of 50 hours) | LEARN (minimum of 10 hours) | LIVE (minimum of 10 hours) | LEAD (minimum of 10 hours) |
|--|--|--|--|
| This encompasses opportunities where students are able to ENGAGE with VCU ASPIRE's sustainable community partners or other partners to provide community outreach. | Learning opportunities include the exploration of knowledge, information, and resources. These opportunities can occur within the living-learning community, the campus community, or the local community. | LIVE events include opportunities that occur within the residence hall or on campus and enhance the community living experience. This can include RA programs, Hall Council events, and some social opportunities hosted by the program or hall staff. | LEAD hours encompass opportunities where the community, either residential or academic, are being supported through active participation on the part of the student that furthers the mission of VCU ASPIRE. |

VCU ASPiRE

VCU ASPiRE COMMUNITY-ENGAGED SERVICE

Community-engaged service consists of the application of one's professional expertise that addresses a community-identified need and supports the goals and mission of the university and the community. This may entail the delivery of expertise, resources, and services to the community. VCU ASPiRE is committed to community-engaged service through sustainable community partnerships and community outreach.



Community Outreach (episodic)

Community outreach is the application and provision of institutional resources, knowledge or services that directly benefits the community.

Examples: events, volunteering

Sustainable Community Partnerships

Sustainable community partnerships consist of prolonged collaboration between VCU ASPiRE and communities for the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, information, and resources.

Examples: building capacity, leadership development, economic development, educational improvement

The Study



ASPiRE Live, Learn, Engage

Research Purpose

This research was conducted in order to determine the impact of the study of community engagement on students who participated in undergraduate community engagement coursework.



Study Methodology

1. ASPIRE students complete a foundational course on community engagement as part of the community engagement certificate program during their first semester. During their second semester in the program, students select a community engagement seminar.
2. Upon completing each course, 124 students reflected on the experience. They were asked **What? So What? and Now What?** in terms of what they learned about community engagement. This was a course requirement.
3. Students submitted a written reflection online.
4. Blind copies of the reflections were analyzed and emergent themes were calculated.
5. Inter-rater reliability (Kappa Coefficient) of themes was calculated across the course faculty (86%, 92% respectively).
6. The themes and subsequent discussion are presented here.

Reflection Process

- **What?** (summary of activity)
- **So What?** (significance of experience)
- **Now What?** (future impact)

| Civic Learning | | | | Cognitive Development | Intercultural Competence | Personal Development |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| Civic Knowledge | Civic Skills (Tools) | Civic Dispositions | Civic Behavioral Intentions | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Engagement Defined • Volunteering • Service • Social Capital • Sustainable Versus Episodic Service • Civic Action • Civic Responsibility • Associations • Civil Discourse • Advocacy • Civic Leadership • Needs-Based Community Engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to create change • How to network with others • Civic action planning • Integrating community engagement into discipline specific issues • Finding your voice • Speaking on behalf of those who cannot speak • Volunteer approaches • Needs assessment strategies • Team-building skills • Building sustainable relationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We instill hope in others through our civic actions. • Service must address community-based needs. • Sustainable partnerships are important for creating change. • Trust must be established between volunteers and the community. • Some types of action may not be in the best interest of the community. • Respect for all who need assistance is paramount. • Engagement requires commitment and devotion. • Community engagement results in the empowerment of others. • Civic action brings people together. • One must exercise integrity when serving others. • One person can make change happen. • Civic engagement must be thoughtful and deliberate. • Volunteering is powerful. • Service is important. • Community engagement is mutually beneficial. • Community engagement requires good intentions and purpose. • All communities can benefit from engagement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intent to continue to serve. • Increased interest in serving. • I am inspired to serve. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem-solving skills • Creative thinking skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of seeing various perspectives in the change process • Increased interest in diversity • Awareness of importance of perspective of those who are different • More open-minded • Increased awareness of inequities • Will apply to my future life as a global citizen • Changes point of view | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An investment in the future • Challenges me • Increased my interest in service-learning • Builds confidence • Decreases egocentricity • I feel like I make a difference • I grew as a person • I learned a lot about myself • Will apply to my career • I honed existing volunteer skills. • I am more compassionate. • I am more empathetic. • I can better deal with adversity. • I feel I can persevere. • I have learned personal commitment. • My career choice is affirmed, altered, or decided. |

*Bringle and Steinberg, 2010

The Impact of the Study of Community Engagement on Undergraduate Students

| TYPE OF IMPACT | PERCENT OF TOTAL | TOTAL N=137 |
|---|------------------|-------------|
| CIVIC LEARNING | | |
| Civic Knowledge | 88% | 121 |
| Civic Engagement | 100% | 121 |
| Civic Skills (Tools) | 99% | 136 |
| Civic Action Planning | 27% | 37 |
| Team-Building | 22% | 30 |
| Building Sustainable Community Partnerships | 21% | 28 |
| Building Social Capital | 13% | 18 |
| Developing A Voice | 12% | 16 |
| Creating Change | 5% | 7 |
| Civic Dispositions | 67% | 94 |
| Importance | 45% | 42 |
| Benefits | 33% | 31 |
| Integrity | 22% | 21 |
| Civic Behavioral Intentions | 31% | 43 |
| Enhanced Desire to Serve | 100% | 43 |
| COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT | | |
| Critical Thinking | 100% | 32 |
| INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE | | |
| Expansion of Perspective | 60% | 21 |
| Increased World View | 40% | 14 |
| PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT | | |
| Learned About Myself | 49% | 60 |
| Building Confidence | 21% | 26 |
| Increased Emotional Connection to Others | 12% | 14 |
| Career Defining | 11% | 11 |
| Overcoming Challenges | 11% | 11 |

*Kappa Coefficient = 88%

“This community engagement class has taught me what I can do. I felt empowered by the class; that I can help. What I do can make a difference. Not only can I do the impossible but I now have the skills and tools to do so.”

-VCU ASPIRE '14 Student

ASPIRE Live, Learn, Engage

“It [community engagement] means wanting to be there, wanting to help, and wanting to make a difference.”

-ASPiRE '14 Student



ASPiRE Live, Learn, Engage

“I think it is important to have a strong foundation before starting anything. In the case of VCU ASPIRE, knowledge about community engagement is our foundation. We are now better informed and can move forward.”

-VCU ASPIRE Student, '14



ASPIRE Live, Learn, Engage

| The Impact of Service-Learning Community Engagement Coursework | | |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Type of Student Impact | Percent of Total | Total (N=116) |
| Civic Learning | | |
| Civic Knowledge | 42% | 49 |
| Civic Skills (Tools) | 64% | 74 |
| Civic Dispositions | 57% | 66 |
| Civic Behaviors | 50% | 68 |
| Academic Knowledge | 46% | 53 |
| Cognitive Development | 39% | 45 |
| Intercultural Competence | 57% | 66 |
| Personal Development | 70% | 81 |

“I am now ready and motivated to get out in the field and teach students about making healthier choices in life”

-VCU ASPIRE Student, '14



ASPIRE Live, Learn, Engage

“ I understand the scope of what [this seminar] is trying to accomplish and how that fits the needs of the community.”

-ASPiRE Student, '14



Foundations of CE Course

Service-Learning Seminars

| The Impact of the Study of Community Engagement on Undergraduate Students | | |
|---|------------------|-------------|
| TYPE OF IMPACT | PERCENT OF TOTAL | TOTAL N=137 |
| CIVIC LEARNING | | |
| Civic Knowledge | 88% | 121 |
| Civic Engagement | 100% | 121 |
| Civic Skills (Tools) | 99% | 136 |
| Civic Action Planning | 27% | 37 |
| Team-Building | 22% | 30 |
| Building Sustainable Community Partnerships | 21% | 28 |
| Building Social Capital | 13% | 18 |
| Developing A Voice | 12% | 16 |
| Creating Change | 5% | 7 |
| Civic Dispositions | 67% | 94 |
| Importance | 45% | 42 |
| Benefits | 33% | 31 |
| Integrity | 22% | 21 |
| Civic Behavioral Intentions | 31% | 43 |
| Enhanced Desire to Serve | 100% | 43 |
| COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT | | |
| Critical Thinking | 100% | 32 |
| INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE | | |
| Expansion of Perspective | 60% | 21 |
| Increased World View | 40% | 14 |
| PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT | | |
| Learned About Myself | 49% | 60 |
| Building Confidence | 21% | 26 |
| Increased Emotional Connection to Others | 12% | 14 |
| Career Defining | 11% | 11 |
| Overcoming Challenges | 11% | 11 |

*Kappa Coefficient = 88%

| The Impact of Service-Learning Community Engagement Coursework | | |
|--|------------------|---------------|
| Type of Student Impact | Percent of Total | Total (N=116) |
| Civic Learning | | |
| Civic Knowledge | 42% | 49 |
| Civic Skills (Tools) | 64% | 74 |
| Civic Dispositions | 57% | 66 |
| Civic Behaviors | 50% | 68 |
| Academic Knowledge | 46% | 53 |
| Cognitive Development | 39% | 45 |
| Intercultural Competence | 57% | 66 |
| Personal Development | 70% | 81 |

Discussion

1. The study of community engagement impacts students' civic learning most.
2. The study of community engagement impacts most students' dispositions for the discipline.
3. Service-learning community engagement coursework alone impacts students' academic learning.
4. Service-learning community engagement coursework impacts students' personal development and inter-cultural competence most.
5. Students' personal development is impacted greatest by the service-learning experience. In particular, students comment on the impact of the course on their career choice.
6. Both coursework in community engagement as well as accompanying coursework using the service-learning pedagogy have the greatest impact on students' learning and development.
7. Students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills are impacted by both community engagement and service-learning coursework, however, the service-learning experience impacts more students.