

Strategic Leadership: Developing 21st Century Citizens Who Invest Their Time, Talent, and Treasure in the Service of Others

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BACKGROUND

The societal value of higher education and the impact that institutions are making on students is under immense examination, as it has never been in recent time. In addition, leaders of institutions of higher education are under mounting pressure to ensure graduates possess the knowledge, skills, and citizenry to excel in 21st Century. It can be argued that perhaps one reason for this increasing pressure is how the community, with its various constituencies, has become involved to a much greater extent. Community engagement has a long-standing history in higher education (Burkhardt & Pasque, 2005), and has been used to instruct, guide and foster students who authentically engage their community and engage in service-learning opportunities. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found that students who engage in service-learning while in college are more likely to be active in their communities and institutions as alumni. In 2005, The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, an elective classification system, began recognizing higher education institutions that use evidence-based documentation to demonstrate depth and breadth in engagement, as well as student learning, partnerships, and community involvement. Institutionalizing and tracking these evidence-based behaviors requires strategic leadership, vision, collaboration, partnership, and reciprocity (Carnegie Foundation, 2014).

In addition to enrolling in coursework, community engagement and involvement is the most important thing that a student can do while in college (Plante, Currie, & Olson, 2014). Astin (1999) asserts that involvement is an investment of one's energy and can yield positive student learning outcomes, and that gains in student development and learning are associated with student involvement and the efficiency of educational policy being reflected by the aptitude of a practice or policy that increases students' involvement. Authentic student involvement occurs along a continuum and is measured both quantitatively and qualitatively; it does not occur spontaneously, but instead through the careful and deliberate strategic planning of institutional leaders (Astin, 1999).

Leadership, management, and accountability are required to infuse the institutionalization of student involvement and engagement within a college campus, and simultaneous changes in leadership during

times of change can severely affect the change process (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). This chapter elucidates the results of a study of three Carnegie Community Engagement Classification designated institutions to understand the institutionalization of service-learning over time by examining the 2008 classifications and 2015 reclassifications across three distinct institution types – a Private Liberal Arts College, a Private Teaching University, and a Public Research University located within the same metropolitan area. Each institution experienced significant changes in leadership and organizational structure of the units responsible for the process. These changes and reorganizations will be explored in detail to demonstrate how institutional change occurs, and the effects of leadership changes during institutional change.

Change Theory, also referred to as institutional or organizational change theory, was used as the theoretical framework for this study. It is the framework that was used in the study because it the framework is often used to explain “change in institutional identity [that] occurs when shifts in the institution’s culture have developed to the point where it is both pervasive across the institution and deeply embedded in practices throughout the institution” (Saltmarsh et al., 2009a, p. 28). It can be further defined as patterns of decision-making by leaders in the academy that transcend particular issues or characteristics of a single institution or context (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). “Leadership performs indispensable roles at all levels. In its cumulative influence, leadership shapes institutional behavior and practices – what John Dewey called ‘habits of living’” (Sandmann & Plater, 2009, p. 23). Leaders who understand an institution’s environment, challenges, threats, and history are best equipped to petition and obtain buy-in from faculty, staff, and students and create change. “Change that comes from a group may elicit broader support because it takes place after wide-ranging participation by those affected” (Eckel, Hill, Green, & Mallon, 1999, p. 3). Service-learning that is woven into the fabric of institutional culture and course syllabi will integrate community engagement with purposeful opportunities for enhanced learning.

Community engagement can include advocacy, volunteerism, and service-learning, and has a longstanding history in American higher education (Burkhardt & Pasque, 2005). College campuses are regarded as catalysts for change in the community (“History of Service-Learning in Higher Education,” n.d.). Butin (2012) purports that the majority of faculty members affirm that working within the community is an important component of the educational experience for all undergraduates. The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities recommended that colleges and universities that aspire to “lasting learning that can be used to shape student’s lives and the world in order to improve student learning” focus on “teaching methods that involve students in active learning, such as undergraduate research, service-learning, and workplace internships should be viewed as among the most powerful of teaching procedures” (Kellogg Commission, 1999, p. 35). Active learning and involving students in the learning process has shown to positively affect students and reap remunerable benefits to the institution.

Preston (2014), using NSSE data 370 students in a large public institution who earned 30 credit hours, concluded that involved students outscored their uninvolved counterparts in several key areas: a sense of belonging (78%), supplemental instruction (68%), socialization on campus (80%), and career plans (70%). These areas are also reported as positively contributing to a student experience, and positively influencing alumni donor participation, and post-college community involvement (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Clotfelter (2003) found that the academic, on-campus involvement and interpersonal relationships, and the quality of interest a faculty or staff member demonstrated increased the likelihood of alumni giving by 40% and were significant at the .01 level. Furthermore, Clotfelter (2001) examined two distinct generations of alumni from 14 liberal arts colleges and found that participation in extracurricular activities, college campus leadership involvement, faculty/student contact and mentorship, and satisfaction with college experience were significant variables that predicted alumni donor participation.

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