

Chapter 8

Integrating Case Study Methodology to Analyze Intra- and Inter-Institutional Comparisons of Service- Learning Within the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification Framework

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ABSTRACT

Service-learning has a venerable history in higher education and includes three pillars: community service, academic learning, and civic knowledge. An elective classification system by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching called the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (CCEC) created a framework for higher education institutions for fidelity and accountability of community engagement. This chapter examines data from three different colleges and universities to understand the institutionalization of service-learning—a private teaching university, a private liberal arts college, and a public research university situated in the same metropolitan locale—offering varying approaches to completing the CCEC applications from the three vantage points. Using case study methodology, this chapter highlights intra- and inter-institutional comparisons of three institutions of higher learning to inform higher education institution administrators seeking to enhance service-learning experiences that benefit students, higher education practitioners, scholars in the higher education and service-learning fields, as well as community leaders.

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INTRODUCTION

Service-learning has a venerable history in higher education (Burkhardt & Pasque, 2005) and includes three pillars – community service, academic learning, and civic knowledge (McGoldrick & Ziegert, 2002). College campuses have been regarded as catalysts for community change with its educated college students the crucial contributors of community engagement for their campuses (“History of Service-Learning in Higher Education,” n.d.). In addition to enrolling for courses, becoming involved is the most important act one can do as a student (Plante, Currie, & Olson, 2014). Astin (1999) claims that involvement includes energy yielding positive student-learning outcomes and occurs along a continuum that can be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. Gains from student learning and development are associated with the quality and quantity student involvement yielding effectiveness of educational policy reflected by the practice that increases student involvement (Astin, 1999).

In a quantitative study, Preston (2014) concluded that *involved* students outscored uninvolved student counterparts in several areas including career plans (70%), supplemental instruction (68%), socializing on campus (80%), and a sense of belonging (78%). Results indicated that utilizing service-learning provides an educational experience as well that supports academic scholarship (Preston, 2014).

Active participation in service-learning as one form of involvement has shown positive results in higher educational priorities such as retention rates (Hara, 2010b), “real world” experiences (Nicoterea et al., 2011), and engage with diverse groups of people (Cox, Murray, & Plante, 2014). These directed and purposeful effort must be pursued by the students, community, and institution to achieve the desired educational experience. In some cases, SL opportunities may change students’ worldviews (Murray, Plante, & Cox, 2015) and, according to studies, can increase donor participation (Truitt, Plante, Cox, & Robinson, 2017).

The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (CCEC) is an elective classification in which higher education institutions participate voluntarily in a self-assessment process whereby colleges and universities are appraised based on data and documentation on an institutions’ identity, commitments, and mission. Taking place on a five-year cycle, the CCEC is described as a collaboration between local, national, and global communities and higher education institutions for favorable exchange of knowledge and resources to advance scholarship, enhance curriculum, promote creative activity, and engage citizens and strengthen civic responsibility – all in a milieu of reciprocal partnerships. The application framework for CCEC was designed to esteem college and universities’ diverse approaches to community engagement and to employ institutions in the practice of self-assessment, query and reflection, and celebrate achievements while promoting progress of their processes and programs (Burack, Furco, Melchior, & Saltmarsh, 2012).

The first CCEC classification cycle was in 2006 with more institutions applying for the first time in 2008. Campuses who received the CCEC designation in either of the two years (2006 or 2008) were eligible for CCEC’s first reclassification opportunity for 2015, which was a reflection of the 2012-2013 academic year. The reclassification cycle demonstrated changes that took place from the institutions’ initial application to enhance community engagement. There were 296 schools that classified in both in 2008 and 2015 (Carnegie Foundation, 2014) including the three higher education institutions that will be included in this case study: a Private Liberal Arts College, a Private Teaching University, and a Public Research University – all located in the same metropolitan region in the southeastern United States.

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