



2016

Community Partnership and Impacts

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This article was originally published at:

<https://journals.sfu.ca/iarslce/index.php/journal/article/view/255/160>

Recommended Citation

Bargerstock, B. A., & Alan Bloomgarden. (2016). Community partnership and impacts. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, 4(1), 99-100.

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Speaking at this year's annual IARSLCE gathering in New Orleans, the inspiring pioneer Nadinne Cruz announced momentarily that her next career move would be to divorce herself from higher education and redirect her energies and talents to family and community outside the constraints of the sector. While she shared a number of reasons underpinning her desires both to take this step and to make this announcement to a gathering of higher education faculty and staff, none was more unsettling than her critique of the capacity and commitment of higher education to achieve truly equitable and mutually beneficial community engagement. In a speech titled "Quilting the Fabric of Humanity," Nadinne's parting message was, in essence, this: You're too self-absorbed to match rhetoric to reality in community engagement.

The Community Partnerships and Impacts section of this journal is intended to be a place for researchers to break out of the insulated world that Nadinne and many others have described. The inward focus of higher education research is a consequence of a range of factors, from the sector's systemic prioritization of certain forms and locations of knowledge generation and production, to greater concern with impacts and outcomes for "insider" constituencies (e.g., students and faculty) than for external ones that are secondary or non-existent priorities, to persistent power and resource inequities between institutions and communities. The two pieces published in this section "nudge" those boundaries in different yet equally important ways.

In "Implementation of a School-Family-Community Partnership Model to Promote Latina Youth Development: Reflections on the Process and Lessons Learned," the authors (including a community partner) explore and assess the outcomes of community-engaged research with a school community aimed at addressing challenges that often lead to academic achievement gaps for Latina students. At the center of the piece is a rich description of an application of Bryan and Henry's (2012) partnership process model, which the authors employed to both organize a broad-based partnership with a school, families, and a community, and to make sense of the degree to which the innovation enacted an authentically democratic collaboration. Unlike other accounts, the attention to how the university partnered with the community does not overshadow the story of how the researchers and school personnel—together—co-created an evolving partnership that engaged the voices of families from a marginalized community.

In "A Student-Led Approach to eService-Learning: A Case Study on Service Project Effectiveness within a Fieldwork in Leadership Studies Course," the authors attempt to navigate the difficult borderland between speaking to the dominant and internal discourse about "what matters" in studying impacts (student learning!), and pushing toward analysis that identifies some especially interesting aspects of service-learning project work that is both (a) extensively student-driven (as opposed to faculty- or institutionally constructed), and (b) conducted via the new and emerging venue of "e-learning." It is these characteristics that led us as section editors to overcome initial concerns that this piece reproduced the inward focus we critiqued earlier and to see it as contributing new perspectives on where and how reciprocity emerges in this work.

Together, we wish to encourage our colleagues to continue to seek not only approaches to the study of this work that are more definitively informed by critical lenses on reciprocity, sustainability, and mutuality, but also opportunities to adopt practices and policies within our institutions that advance

commitments to these responsibilities. We are eager to see more submissions to the journal that reflect these concerns and the frameworks we articulate in the section description.

References

Bryan, J., & Henry, L. (2012). A model for building school-family-community partnerships: Principles and process. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 90, 408-420.