

# Student Experiences with Campus-Community Engagement: Impacts and Challenges

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# Outline

## Roadmap of Presentation:

- Philosophy and theory of education
- Experiences with community-based education
- Suggestions and Recommendations

## Guiding Questions:

- Can universities do more to facilitate a richer student learning experience?
- Can students do more to make the most of existing opportunities?



# Part I: Philosophy

What is the purpose of the university?

- In 12th century universities, scholars taught information to anyone curious to know
- Formal education can benefit the community (Ernest Boyer)
- Field education became part of McGill's Social Work program in 1962



# Theory of Education

How do universities prepare students?

- Students approach university expecting they need it to succeed
- Transitions into and out of university do not coincide well with expectations
- There are few jobs available after graduation
- Little practical learning occurs within university



# Neoliberalization of the University

- A main goal of the present day Canadian university is to make money through enrollment
  - Recruiters focus on what draws students in
    - Faculty, teaching assistants and other intermediaries become recruiters and marketers
- Unaffordability of education and lack of employment means students graduate in a debt hole
- Since universities are for-profit businesses, the student experience is generally secondary to capital



## Questions to Consider

- Can universities as businesses facilitate a student-centred experience?
- Can community-based learning be an integral part of university curriculum?



## Part II: Experiences with community-based education: Placements

- Placements are good learning experiences but are work-intensive
- Many programs do not have many placement opportunities
- Most information needed for my placement I learned on my own
  - If students learn what they need in placements, why are they taking classes?
- Placements facilitate networking, but that is done outside the university and is largely up to the student



# Curriculum

## Coursework Examples:

- Community Organizing
- West Coast Lit
- Most instructors are not based in the community
- None of these courses had an action component to community-based learning





# Curriculum Continued

- Field Assessments
- Quantitative and Qualitative Data Gathering
- Longevity?
- Community First?



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# Alternative Spring Break

- Immersive service-learning program between PSI & Partner Organization
- Typically one week
  - Months of Preparation
- Adopted by several universities in different forms



# Alternative Spring Break

- Local
- Justice Oriented
- Long Lasting Impact
- Opportunities to revisit

Sustainable development: Towards a zero-waste campus

volunteering, learning, and interacting with the local, Montreal community. Students will get to immerse themselves in social justice topics by working with local groups and organizations.

Engaging High School Students through Experiential Learning



# Alternative Spring Break

- Abroad
- Charity-based
- Impact?



How **social justice** could ruin your next international mission trip

“You go into this experience looking to serve or to help people in need. The truth is: you’re really the one in need.”

“ASB gave me **more self-awareness, confidence, and helped me to expand my comfort zone** more than any other experience I’ve ever had. Going into ASB, I knew that the time I spent would have an impact on someone’s life—I just didn’t expect that person to be me.”

Said one student, “This sort of work makes me think, ‘gosh, would these people get help if I weren’t here?’” (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998)



# Pre-Departure

- Mandatory Intercultural Competency Training
- Days of Service

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## 6-Day Visit To Rural African Village Completely Changes Woman's Facebook Profile Picture

NEWS IN BRIEF

January 28, 2014

VOL 50 ISSUE 04

World · Travel · Internet · Our  
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## Pre-Departure

- Fundraising - \$1,800
- Sustainability in community
  - “The project will enhance the school facilities while maintaining the values of sustainability”







# Reflections

- Western savior industrial complex?
  - Neo-colonialism
- Impact on community
- Language Barrier
- Student work < Hosting & Hospitality efforts
  - Water source 20km + \$





# More Questions Than Answers

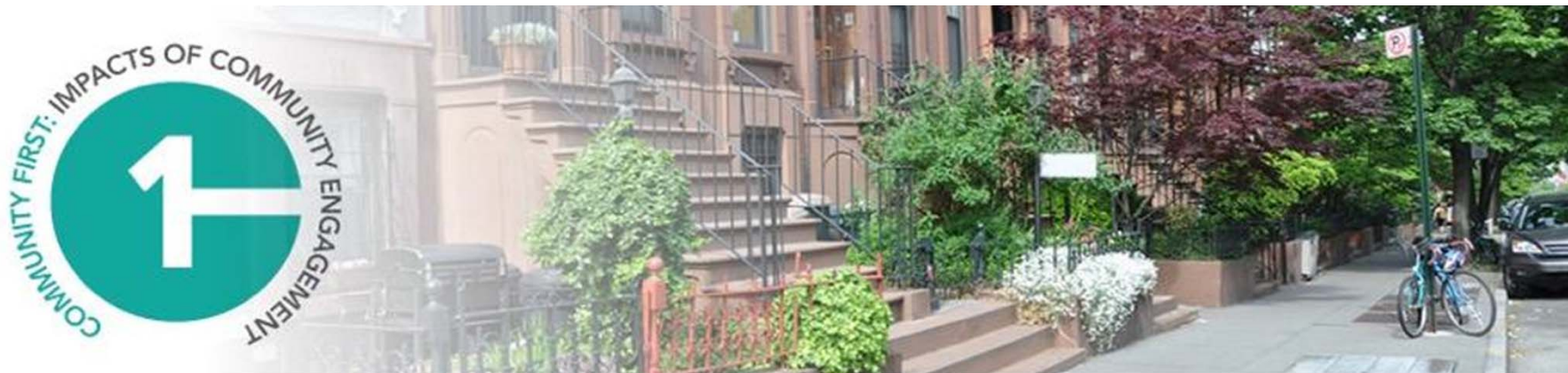
1. Where is community? Is international learning CSL?
2. How can students, with limited resources, have a positive impact on community?
3. Settle for small short term impact or must be sustainable?
4. Should we resort to financial contributions to community for infrastructure and / or projects?



## Course-based Examples

- Only two instances of experiential education in undergraduate degree at the University of Windsor
  - Ways of Knowing
  - Methods of Behavioural Change
- Graduate degree experience at Wayne State University
  - I chose placement site – Pathway to Potential – CFICE project





### Part III: Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement CFICE



# Poverty Reduction Hub

- This hub emphasizes equalizing power between universities, the community and students
- Universities have a civic duty to give back to community, so we make sure the community drives the process
- Partnerships can hopefully be sustained once funding ends



# Poverty Hub Projects - Living Wage

Facilitation, but also research:

- Completed a case study on the Living Wage initiative in Hamilton, Ontario
- In the process of co-authoring a book chapter about the Collective Impact of Living Wage



# CFICE Poverty Reduction Hub Example

- Windsor, Ontario
- Pathway to Potential
- Using Campus-Community Engagement to Build Capacity for Poverty Reduction



# Phase I

- Focus Groups
  - Students, faculty, and community members
- Charity is Good, Justice is Better: Mobilizing Campus and Community Against Poverty



# Charity is Good, Justice is Better con't

- Panel Themes
  - Culture of Campus-Community Engagement
  - Student Experiences of CCE
  - Role of CCE model in Effecting Systemic Change on Poverty
  - What Role Should University of Windsor Play in CCE?
- Breakout Sessions
- Roundtable Discussion





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10. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2000, 283: 2689-2696.



## Part IV: Recommendations



- Embody “Justice is Better”
- Stay tuned for results from implementation of the Social Action and Innovation Lab and Social Justice Leadership Program



# Recommendations - Curriculum

- Students might have placements but they aren't integrated into the curriculum
- Classrooms are not always the best places to experience skills-based learning
- Instructors should be community-based for more practical courses
- Theory can be taught by academics, but for praxis, current practitioners are helpful to integrate students into the community
- Instead of writing papers, assignments can have an action component to do something concrete in the community
- Instructors may be hesitant to evaluate community projects because of risk management culture
- Universities need to empower instructors to offer alternative means of evaluation



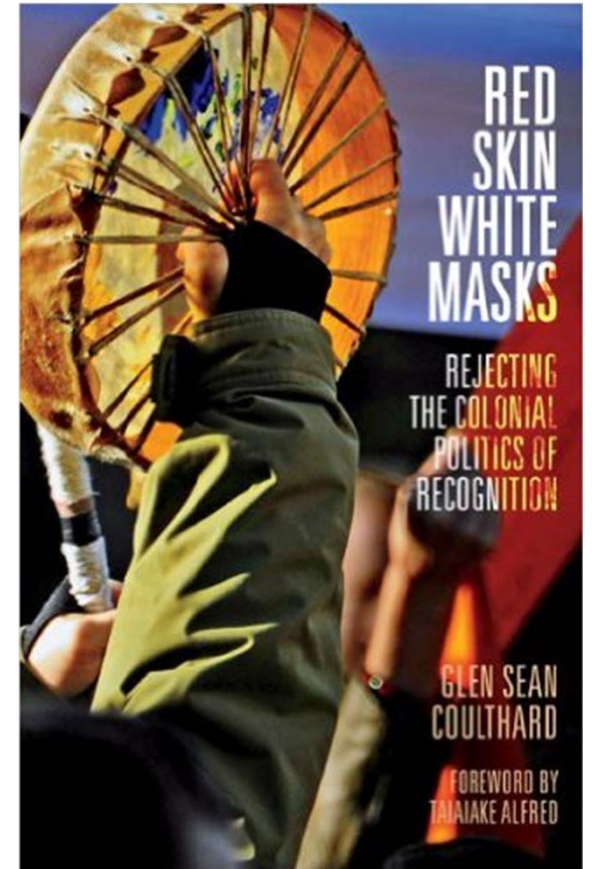
# Recommendations - Students

- **Research Research Research!**
  - Where is your money going?
  - What is the long term impact of your project?
  - Is your presence a burden?
- **Post-project work**
  - Fundraising for community (?)
  - Fight structural barriers to change
    - Justice for migrant workers.



## Recommendations - Decolonization

- Universities have “historically participated in the displacement of Indigenous peoples” (Kuokkanen, 2007, p. 14)
- Five Theses of Decolonization (Coulthard, 2014):
  1. Direct Action
  2. Dismantle Capitalism
  3. Indigenizing the city (Urban Resurgence)
  4. Gender Justice
  5. Moving Beyond Nation State and Politics of recognition



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