Research Foci

- Understanding the **nexus** of 3 critical concepts & their impact on college students:
  - Engaged Learning
  - Student Mental Health & Well-Being
  - Civic Engagement & Responsibility
- Understanding the dimensions of these concepts
- Understanding effective pedagogy for implementation
Research Foci & Evaluation Design

Guiding Principles:
- Multivariate (engaged learning, mental health, civic development = complex constructs)
- Longitudinal (2+ yrs)
- Quasi-experimental (comparison grps)
**Demonstration Project: Design Overview**

### Campus Level

- **Quantitative:**
  - Pre-test/Post-test (depression, alc., CSXQ)
  - Existing data sources (CIRP, CAS, CORE, ACHA-NCHA)
  - Comparison Groups

- **Qualitative:**
  - Clinical/In-depth interv.
  - Focus groups
  - Document analysis

### Cross-Site Level

- **Quantitative:**
  - College Student Exps Questionnaire (CSEQ)
  - Natl Survey of Stud. Engagement (NSSE)

- **Qualitative:**
  - Student Focus Grps
  - Cross- Constituency Focus Grps
  - Cross-Site Conferences
4 Major Thematic Findings

- **We Are Not Wasting Our Time**
  - Alcohol usage decreased
  - Programs are good for learning

- **Reality Check**
  - Students who participate in service or civic based learning understand this is complicated & on-going work.
  - Gain realistic perspective on what it means to be “civically engaged”

- **Questions = More Questions**
  - Complexity of variables
  - Complexity of Meas.
  - Complexity of Environments

- **Time is Key**
  - Untangling relationships
  - Stabilizing engagement programs
  - Increase participation across constituencies
  - Engagement involves and benefits everyone
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

- All 7 consortium schools along with 550 schools
- Random sample of first-year students and seniors
- Core Survey
  - Activities in & out of class, “meta” skills, relationships with faculty & students & administrators, time allocation, & demographic info.
  - Focus on 5 “Benchmarks”
    - Academic Challenge
    - Active and Collaborative Learning
    - Student/Faculty Interaction
    - Enriching Educational Experiences
    - Supportive Campus Environment
NSSE Consortium Questions (Just 7 Demonstration Sites):

- Civic engagement at campus, local, and national levels (civic knowledge, leadership, belief of ability to effect change, voting behavior)
  - Scales were constructed to represent degree of engagement at each level
- Frequency and number of drinks*
- Use of illegal substances, including prescription drugs for recreation
- Consequences of alcohol or drug use*
- Depression (felt hopeless, sad, etc)*
- Sources of stress

*Items from CORE/CAS surveys used with permission
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Sample of 2545 students

- First-year students = 61.4%, Seniors = 38.6%
- Women = 65.9%, Men = 34.1%
- White = 73.3%
- Asian = 7.6%
- "I do prefer not to respond" = 6.4%
- Black = 4%
- Hispanic/Latino = 4.4%
- Multiracial = 2.6%
What is the impact of engaged learning experiences and civic development on students’ well-being?
Findings: The High(& Low)Lights

- Across all levels of involvement (campus, community, national), students reported the lowest levels of community involvement.
- Men have higher correlations of involvement than women.
- Out of 2550 students, 5 checked that they NEVER use alcohol and drugs.
- Across all benchmarks, students reported the lowest levels of student/faculty interaction.
  - And the highest levels of Academic Challenge & Supp. Campus Env.
- The average drinks per sitting was 4.3
  - Most students do not use drugs
Correlation Results Between Measures of Engagement & Alcohol/Drug Use

- **HIGHER** levels of community involvement are sig. correlated with **FEWER** # of drinks per sitting & the decreased likelihood of binge drinking
  - As are **HIGHER** indications of Active & Collaborative Learning, Faculty/Student Interax, and Enriching Educ. Env.

- **HIGHER** levels of national & campus involvement are sig. correlated with drinking **MORE** days per week
  - As are **HIGHER** levels of Active & Collaborative Learning and Enriching Educ. Env.

- **Higher** degrees of involvement across all campus, community, and national levels are sig. correlated with **LOWER** marijuana usage
  - Decreased marijuana usage also correlated with ALL NSSE benchmarks
  - Students who reported having a Supportive Campus Env. also correlated with decrease use of illegal & prescription drugs
Correlation Results Between Measures of Engagement & Mental Health

- **HIGHER** levels of campus, community, and national involvement correlated with **LOWER** levels of depression
  - As are **HIGHER** levels of Active & Collaborative Learning, Faculty/Student Interax, & Enriching Educ. Env.

- However – **HIGHER** levels of all measures of engagement or involvement are associated with significantly **HIGHER** stress levels.
  - **HIGHER** levels of Supportive Campus Environment are associated with **LOWER** stress levels.
Research Limitations

1. **Self-selection bias**
   - Do students who are inclined to drink less and be more engaged select INTO programs?
   - Comparison groups still don’t necessarily reach students who are less inclined toward engagement or more prone to heavy drinking

2. **Sample size**
   - Engaged learning experiences are generally at periphery of the curriculum
   - On average, our demonstration sites reach 9% of target population

3. **Instrumentation**
   - Little consensus in the literature for defining & measuring engagement in learning, student mental health and wellbeing, and civic…
   - Because instruments generally measure one dimension of constructs is an “additive” approach valid, or do we need to develop new instrumentation?
Future Directions

1. Conclusion of second year of demonstration project and analysis of data
2. Further analysis of NSSE data
3. Overcoming research limitations – and build findings into new designs
4. “Field development” & Our Learning Curve