

BTtoP Scholarship of Reflection Project: Grant Analysis Report

Overview of Analysis

Between 2004-2012, a total of eighty-seven final program grant reports were to be submitted to Bringing Theory to Practice following funding: sixty-eight start-up, seventeen demonstration, and two intensive site. Of these eighty-seven reports, eighty were able to be coded for analysis (see Table 1). The coding of grant reports was used to analyze connections between a campus' proposed intervention and effects on students' engaged learning, civic engagement, and psychosocial well-being. Of the total reports coded, sixty-three were program start-up reports; sixteen were demonstration site reports; and one was an intensive site report. Program start-up reports that were not coded were either missing or problematic; in a few cases an interim report was submitted again as the final report or only financial information was submitted in lieu of a final report. Five program start-up reports were either missing or could not be coded due to missing information.

Table 1: Number of Submitted and Coded Grant Reports

Type of Grant	Total Number Submitted	Total Used for Analysis
Program Start-Up	68	63
Demonstration Site	17	16*
Intensive Site	2	1**

*St Lawrence merged their final 2004-2007 demonstration site report into their 2007-2010 intensive site report

** Georgetown did not submit an intensive site report for 2007-2010 and rolled findings into their demonstration site report 2010-2012

Levels of Student and Faculty Engagement in Funded Projects

The number of students and faculty¹ involved in funded projects was not uniformly reported in final grant reports. Reports were more likely to indicate numbers of students engaged in projects, rather than numbers of faculty or staff. Among the sixty-three program start-up reports coded, forty-two indicated the number of students involved in the intervention. From the numbers provided in these reports, we can estimate that between 2004-2012, approximately 10,139 students were involved in BTtoP-funded interventions. Of the sixty-three reports coded, only seventeen indicated the number of faculty engaged in interventions. From these reports, we can estimate that approximately 314 faculty were engaged in the interventions. Among the seventeen coded demonstration and intensive site reports, nearly all (16 of 17) reports estimated the number of students engaged in the grant project (approximately 18,561 between 2004-2012). Far fewer reports noted the number of faculty or staff engaged, however. From the five program start-up reports that indicated the number of faculty in funded projects, it is estimated that approximately 122 faculty were involved. Thus, across all grants

¹ Numbers of staff included were rarely indicated.

between 2004-2012, we can conservatively estimate that at least 28,700 students and 436 faculty were involved in BTtoP-funded projects. Projects that reported on the number of students engaged ranged from projects that included as few as six students to as many as 4,050 students. The range of levels of faculty inclusion in funded projects was similarly wide, with a low of two faculty involved to a high of ninety faculty.

Types of Interventions Funded

Since 2004, BTtoP has primarily funded projects related to service-learning or community-based learning. Out of eighty grant reports, 39 (49%) reference a primary focus on activities related to students’ civic engagement outside the classroom. Beyond civic-focused activities, the most frequently cited intervention in funded projects was development of student-centered learning communities (18%). Approximately 20% of funded projects included a primary or secondary focus on faculty development activities. A small percentage (9%) of funded projects referenced activities occurring in the co-curriculum as part of the overall intervention, such as a residential learning community, residence assistant training, and interventions in residence halls. Among the grant reports coded, funded projects tended to focus exclusively on first-year students (See Table 2).

Table 2: Breakdown of Funded Grant Projects by Population of Focus

Population of Focus	Program Start-Up	Demo/Intensive	Total*
First-Year	17	6	23
Sophomore	2	2	4
Senior	2	0	2
Combination of Years	3	9	11
Selected Population ²	8	0	7
Faculty	16	0	16
Unspecified	15	0	32
	Total = 63	Total = 17	Total = 80

*Total numbers do not represent mutually exclusive categories.

Most reports did not include information on the types of courses or disciplines that were involved in the intervention. Therefore, no meaningful analysis of trends in funded projects by disciplinary area or program could be completed.

Key Outcomes: Engaged Learning, Civic Development, and Psychosocial Well-Being

Funded projects relied on a range of assessment methods to provide evidence for outcomes. Across all outcomes, quantitative assessment tools were used most frequently (see Table 3). The specific types of assessment tools varied widely across funded projects. Nevertheless, surveys of all types – locally developed, national, standardized scales, and the BTtoP Toolkit Instrument – were the primary

² Examples of selected student populations included transfer students, alumni, students returning from study abroad, students on academic probation, low-income students, and work study students

sources of evidence for quantitative assessments. Among the qualitative assessments used, the primary sources of evidence were focus groups and the analysis of student work products such as written reflections and final papers.

Table 3: Types of Assessment Tools Used in Funded Projects

	Type of Assessment	Program Start-Up Grants	Demonstration/Intensive Site
Engaged Learning	Quantitative	14	7
	Qualitative	3	1
	Mixed*	6	3
	Unspecified**	0	0
		Total = 23	Total = 11
Civic Engagement	Quantitative	21	6
	Qualitative	5	0
	Mixed*	7	3
	Unspecified**	3	1
		Total = 36	Total
Psychosocial Well-being	Quantitative	29	9
	Qualitative	3	1
	Mixed*	6	4
	Unspecified**	0	2
		Total = 38	Total = 16

*Quantitative and Qualitative Methods Used

** The source of evidence for reported outcomes was either not provided or was unclear

Each of the eighty grant reports was coded for indication of outcomes related to engaged learning, civic development and psychosocial well-being. The majority of reports provided findings on outcomes related to one or two of these focus areas, as opposed to providing findings on all three outcome areas. Approximately 25% of program start-up grants reported on all three outcomes (16 of 63). The majority of demonstration/intensive reports, however, reported on all three outcome areas (10 of 17). Thirteen of the eighty coded reports (all program start-ups) did not provide findings on *any* of the three outcome areas.³ Among the grant reports that provided results on outcomes, psychosocial well-being (or non-cognitive) outcomes were the most frequently reported, followed by civic engagement and engaged learning outcomes, respectively. Coded grant reports were assessed for the degree to which they provided findings that were entirely positive, entirely negative, or provided mixed results with regard to particular outcome areas (see Figure 1).

³ Though some of these were faculty development grants that did not involve assessment, the majority of reports that provided no information on outcomes were simply poorly assessed or poorly written.

Engaged Learning Outcomes

Of the eighty reports coded, thirty-four (42.5%) evaluated outcomes related to changes in students' engaged learning as a result of their participation in the funded intervention. Twenty-three of the sixty-three coded program start-up grants assessed changes in students' engaged learning, and eleven of the seventeen demonstration/intensive site reports assessed for these outcomes.

Although less than half of all coded reports assessed for changes in students' engaged learning, when outcomes were assessed the results were largely positive. Nearly 75% (25 of 34) of all project reports indicated only positive outcomes related to changes in learning outcomes, such as increased class participation, increased ability to analyze ideas and synthesize information, increased sense of academic motivation, and greater valuing among students of opportunities to process information and reflect. Five reports indicated a mixture of positive and negative (or no change) in engaged learning outcomes and four reports found only negative or no change in outcomes following the intervention.

Civic Development Outcomes

Of the eighty reports coded, forty-six (57.5%) evaluated outcomes related to changes in students' civic development as a result of their engagement in the funded intervention. Thirty-six of the sixty-three coded program start-up grants assessed changes in students' psychosocial well-being, and the majority (10 of 17) of the demonstration and intensive site reports assessed for these outcomes.

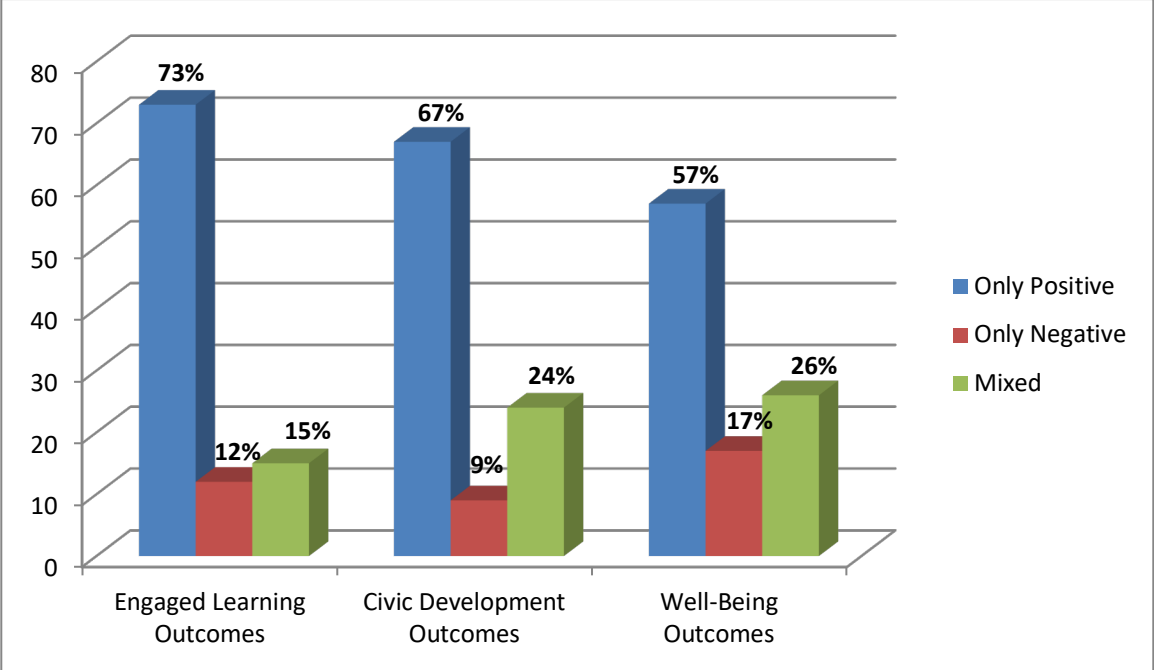
Across the information provided on outcomes related to students' civic development, approximately 67% (31 of 46) of project reports indicated only positive outcomes related to students' civic development as a result of their participation in the intervention. Positive outcomes included indicators such as increased knowledge of one's community and community needs, increased interest in civic issues, increased sense of civic duty, leadership skills, and a desire to advocate for someone other than oneself. Eleven reports indicated a mixture of positive and negative (or no change) in outcomes and only four reports found only negative or no change in civic outcomes for participating students following the intervention.

Psychosocial Well-Being Outcomes

Of the eighty reports coded, fifty-four (67.5%) evaluated outcomes related to changes in students' psychosocial well-being as a result of their engagement in the funded intervention. Thirty-eight of the sixty-three coded program start-up grants assessed changes in students' psychosocial well-being, while nearly all (16 of 17) demonstration and intensive site reports assessed for these outcomes.

Across the information provided on outcomes related to psychosocial well-being, approximately 57% (31 of 54) reported only positive outcomes related to well-being, such as an increase in students' trust in themselves, their self-efficacy, sense of flourishing in their lives, and an increased sense of having a purpose in life and self-acceptance. Fourteen reports indicated a mixture of positive and negative (or no change in outcomes) and nine reports reported only negative or no change in outcomes associated with students' well-being following the intervention.

Figure 1: Percent of Projects Reporting Positive, Negative, or Mixed Findings by Outcome Area



Discussion and Reflection on Findings

The utility of undertaking an assessment such as this is at least three-fold. First, there is utility in better understanding the scope of the efforts that BTtoP is helping to foster and engage on campuses, how project resources are actually being directed at the campus-level, and what we can discern from campus-level findings. The second is to challenge assumptions about what we think we are doing and know with regard to each of these things. And third, the analysis is useful in pointing out areas for improvement of our own practice, levels of intentionality, and measures of accountability.

First, we now know something about the types of projects being funded and how many students and faculty are being engaged through BTtoP-sponsored efforts. The numbers provided in this part of the analysis are highly conservative, so we can safely assume the scope of engagement of BTtoP-funded projects well exceeds 28,000 students and some 400 faculty. Note that these numbers do not incorporate information from grant reports that did not include this information, estimates from mini grants or estimates from the civic seminars. More work can be done to augment these numbers, but we now have a baseline from which we can safely project upwards. We also know something about the types of evidence campuses are using to assess funded projects. The reliance primarily on quantitative assessments says something about the easy access to surveys on campuses and perhaps about the use of existing assessment resources as well. It also suggests possibilities for more targeted and structured forms of reporting by campuses. For example, we might consider modifying our grant reporting templates in a way that encourages better synthesis of quantitative data. Finally, from this analysis we can gain a better sense of the types of interventions used and their degree of efficacy in affecting outcome areas (i.e. engaged learning, civic development, and psychosocial well-being). The types of

funded interventions employed by campuses, which are mostly civic and entirely experiential, have a better than 60% success rate of positively affecting target outcomes across any one of three outcome areas. One could argue those are pretty good odds when thinking about program implementation.

From a personal perspective, this analysis has challenged some of my own assumptions about the types of projects funded by BTtoP and the characteristics of reporting provided by campuses. For example, I suspected (and this analysis supports) that many BTtoP-funded projects have tended to focus on first-year students. However, I did not realize the relatively frequent degree to which funded projects have included or exclusively supported faculty development endeavors. Thus we might consider being more explicit about this type of support in the future and how we can better encourage assessment of faculty development activities, if we believe they are worthy of funding. Additionally, I have assumed that the conceptualization and assessment of outcomes associated with students' psychosocial well-being is a challenge for campuses. Yet, findings related to well-being outcomes were the *most frequently* included. This suggests to me that we should not be underestimating the ability of project leaders to grasp, implement, and assess for outcomes related to students' well-being. Relatedly, I was struck by the relative lack of assessment of outcomes related to student learning. It is possible that project leaders assume better learning is inherent in the engaged learning pedagogies employed as the funded intervention, but it may be worth encouraging more explicit assessment in this area.

Finally, grant reports represent the primary and most significant data source for BTtoP, a fact made even clearer to me through gathering and synthesizing the wealth of data they generated. This analysis also highlights the importance of accountability, both of grantees to the project and of the project staff to our goals. Report templates are provided to all grantees, but there are clear gaps in the enforcement of grantees adhering to it. This analysis would have been made stronger by the inclusion of complete, well-written reports. If future analyses are to be helpful, we will want to be thoughtful about our own project reporting guidelines and the implementation of protocols for reviewing submitted grant reports to assure that those guidelines are being met.