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Evaluating and Refining a University's Seed Grant Program for Community Engagement

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Evaluating and Refining a University's Seed Grant Program for Community Engagement

Keywords

community-engaged research, Council for Community Engagement, community engagement, partnership, seed grant, grant

Disciplines

Higher Education



Evaluating and refining a university's seed grant program for community engagement

Jennifer F. Jettner & Valerie L. Holton

Background

At VCU, **community engagement** is a **key strategic focus area** that is integrated across teaching, research & outreach. The **goal** is to develop collaborative **partnerships** that are **mutually beneficial**.

Since 2007, the Council for Community Engagement (CCE) has provided 1 year seed grants (\$20,000) for projects in which partnerships were:

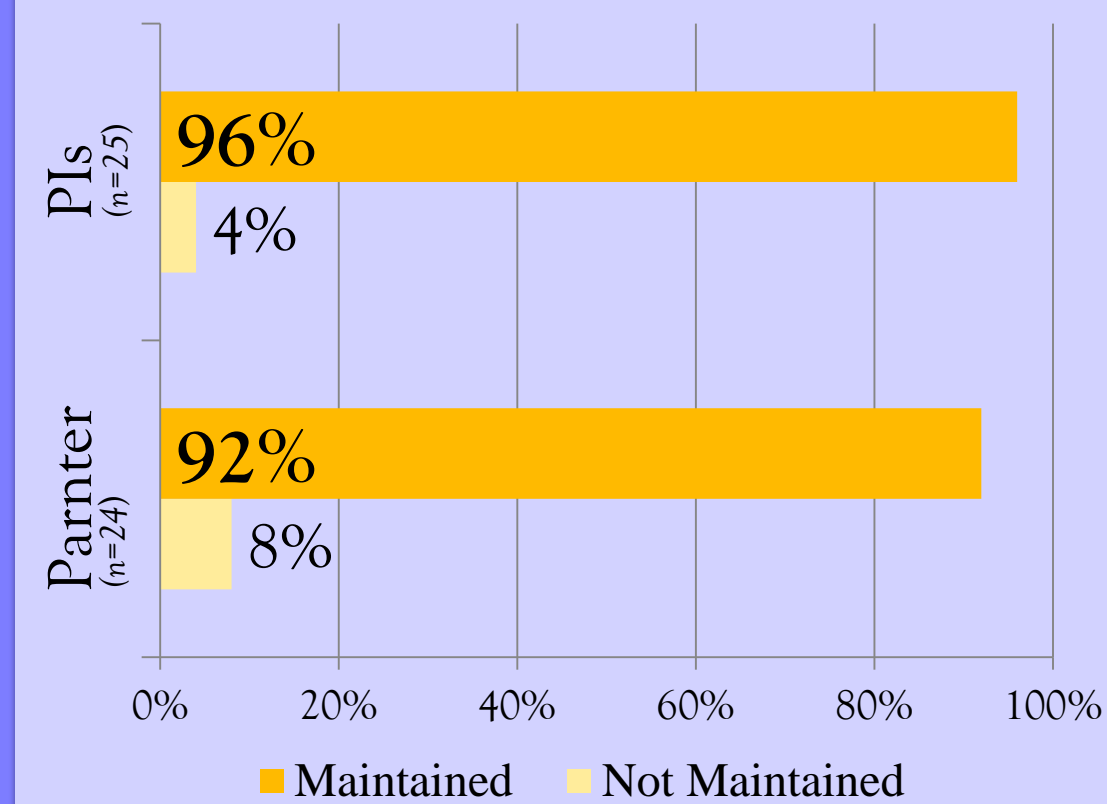
- Interdisciplinary (2+ academic units)
- Community-engaged (1+ partners)
- Integrated (teaching, research, and/or outreach)

Methodology

Impact Domains	Data Collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project History ▪ Partnership ▪ Funding ▪ Scholarship ▪ Ongoing Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CCE grants over 5 years (2007-2012) ▪ Faculty survey ▪ Partner survey ▪ Surveys sent Fall 13
Sample Size	Response Rate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 30 PIs ▪ 24 Partners ▪ 34 CCE grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 86% PIs ▪ 75% Partners ▪ 89% CCE grants

Partnership Development

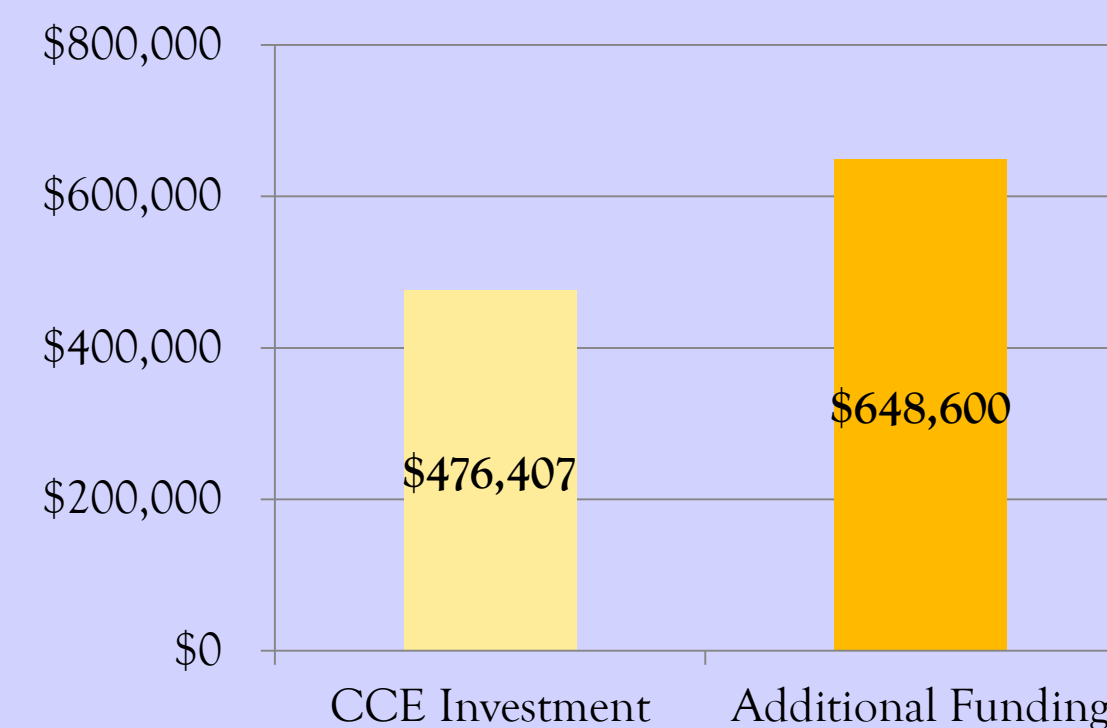
Relationship status after grant period (N=49)



Challenges

- Lack of **Time**
- Difficulties in **Coordinating** across multiple agencies
- Communication** & unclear expectations
- Building **Trust** with target population
- Consistent & Long-term **Funding**

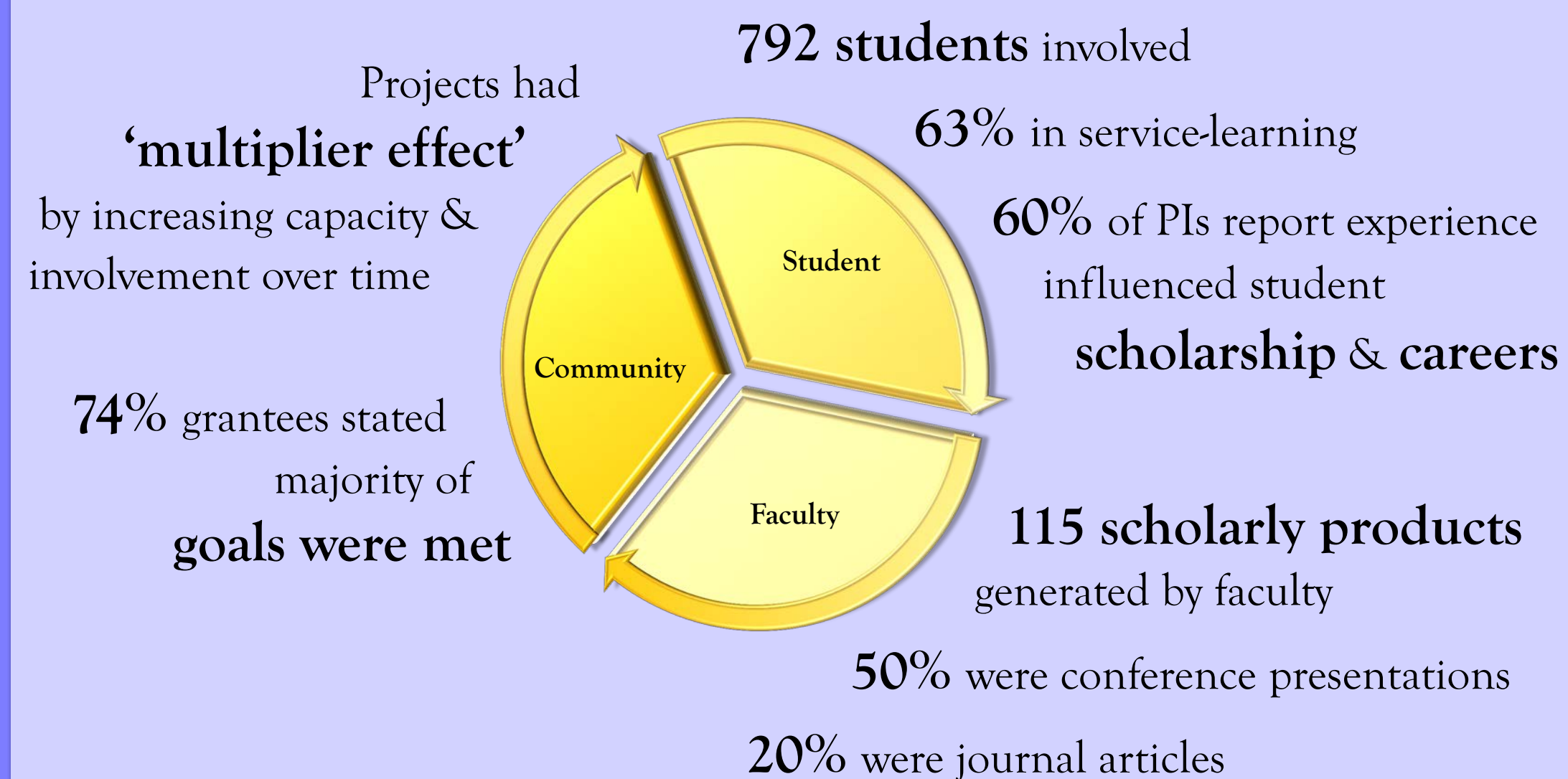
Sustainable Partnerships



- 47% of projects continued past funding period
- For every \$1.00 invested, grantees leveraged \$1.36
- 76% of additional funds were from external sources

Successful Partnerships

Multiple Benefits



Study Aims

Few studies have assessed the **effectiveness** of **seed grants** as a strategy to support the development of **high quality, high impact** university-community partnerships.

Thus, we asked...

1. Do the CCE seed grants facilitate successful university-community partnerships?
2. Can CCE seed grant money be a catalyst for sustainable partnerships?

Lessons Learned

Evaluation Adjustments

- 2-year PI follow-up surveys
- Annual Partner surveys

CCE Seed Grant Adjustments

- Partnership development workshops
- Sustainability planning workshops (i.e., external funding & service-learning)
- Exploring ways to increase focus of seed-grants (i.e., issue themes)
- Exploring ways to increase quality of relationship (i.e., partnership-building grants)

While promising, findings indicate need for wrap-around system to further support growth of 'seeds'