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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

Abstract

Poster from the annual meeting of the Council on Social Work Education in Tampa, Florida held in October 2014

Keywords

seed grant, community engagement, community, VCU, partnerships

Disciplines

Higher Education

Comments

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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:

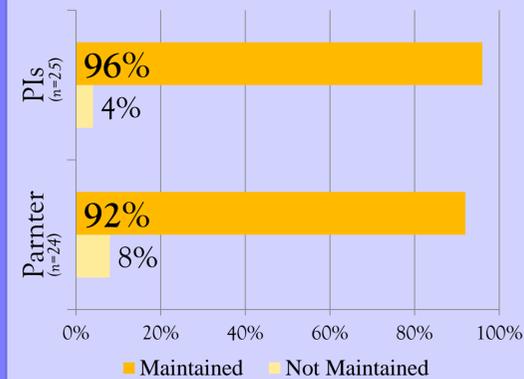
- Interdisciplinary (2+ academic units)
- Community-engaged (1+ partners)
- Integrated (teaching, research, and/or outreach)

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

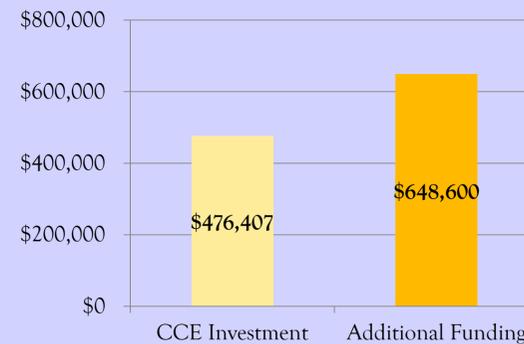
Relationship status after grant period (N=49)



Challenges

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

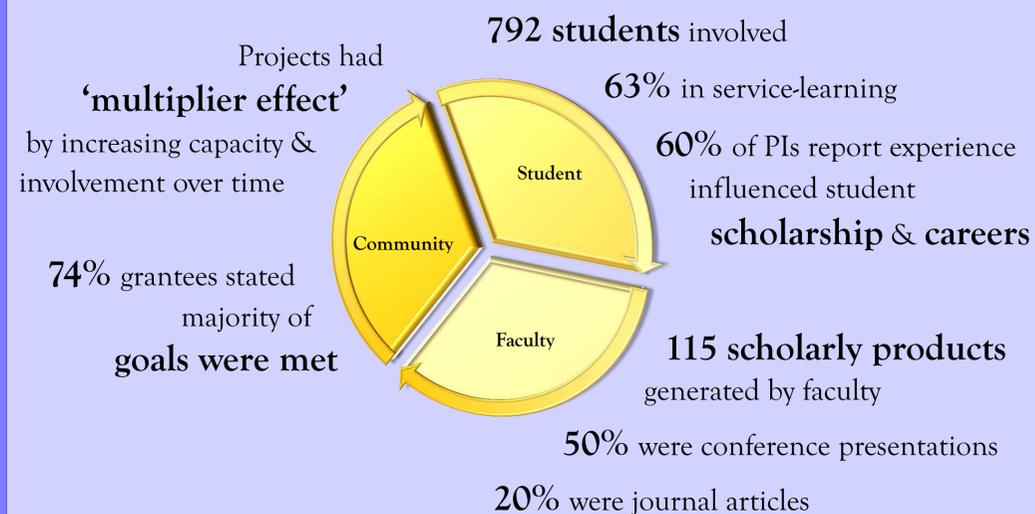
Sustainable Partnerships



- 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'