Developing Robust Undergraduate Research Opportunities in Communication Studies: A Community-Based Research Approach

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Incorporating undergraduate research in communication studies into a community-based research project offers students, faculty, and the community important ways to advance social change while also providing students a platform to practice democratic arts and gain experiences which prepare them for success beyond academia. We detail how 35 undergraduate students were involved in a multi-year research project about Participatory Budgeting and conclude that intentionality on the part of the faculty member, offering adequate support and guidance to students, and providing students with intellectual products contributed to the development of robust undergraduate partnerships.

Keywords: undergraduate research, community-based research, social change, democracy

The value of a college education has traditionally been recognized as an important contributor to a thriving democracy as students invest four years in learning to think critically, engage with new ideas and research, write extensively, and develop their capacities to speak in the public sphere. Yet, that presupposition was challenged, most notably by Arum and Roska, authors of the controversial 2010 book, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses,* whose research revealed that a large percentage of college students were not learning critical thinking, complex reasoning, or communication skills as hoped. Since then, higher education administrators, professional associations, and faculty have integrated considerably more assessment and accountability measures into their operations in an effort to prove the value and relevancy of higher education to legislators, parents, and others funding the rising cost of college.

In the field of communication, the National Communication Association (NCA) took the concern to task, bringing together faculty from around the country to answer the basic question, "What should a graduate with a communication degree know, understand, and be able to do?" (Kidd, 2015, p. 6). The result was a comprehensive list of nine learning outcomes that, in addition to proving the worth of the discipline to funders, provided a clear, concise roadmap for communication departments to use in preparing students to be productive members of civil society and ready to enter an evolving job market. Among the recommendations that NCA promotes is for students to "engage in communication inquiry" and further to "create messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context" as well as to "advocate a course of action to address local, national and/or global issues from a Communication perspective" (NCA, 2015, pp. 6-7). It is with those three specific goals in mind—engaging in research, generating context-specific messages, and advocating for positive changes in the community—that informed a robust undergraduate research experience we write about here. That endeavor involved 35 students over the course of 18 months who worked under the direction of a faculty-graduate student team on a citywide effort to increase democratic participation in local government.

We examine the research and evaluation project of the first Participatory Budgeting process in Greensboro, NC (see Jovanovic & Russell, 2016). Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a directly democratic process, which allows residents to decide how to spend a portion of their city's tax dollars. PB processes engage historically marginalized groups and have been found to reduce political and economic inequalities because they reallocate resources to low-income people, increase public oversight of government, and create stronger social networks (Leighninger & Rinehart, 2016). Given the inclusive and empowering nature of PB, we committed ourselves to making the research and evaluation of Greensboro's PB process as inclusive and transparent as possible by including various stakeholders such as community members, undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty.

We demonstrate lessons in how to weave together undergraduate research (UR) and community-based research (CBR) into a multi-year evaluation effort. UR has been determined to improve student classroom performance and increase post-graduation achievement (Hu, Scheuch, Schwartz, Gayles, & Li, 2008) while CBR validates multiple sources of knowledge with the goal of advancing social change for the purpose of social justice (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). By reflecting on our challenges and successes, we aim to offer practical lessons for others who wish to establish or strengthen undergraduate partnerships within their research agendas.

We conclude that 1) intentionality on the part of the faculty member to include undergraduate students; 2) offering adequate support and guidance to undergraduate students; and 3) providing students with an intellectual product they could take with them after course completion contributed to the development of robust undergraduate partnerships between faculty, graduate students, and community members.

Literature Review

Undergraduate Research

Over the past twenty years, higher education has placed a growing emphasis on the importance of undergraduate research. Hakim (2000) defines undergraduate research as "a student-faculty collaboration to examine, share, and create new knowledge or works in ways commensurate with practices in the discipline" (p. 1). The benefits of UR for students have been well documented, including improved retention, increased classroom performance, and greater post-graduation achievement (Hu, Scheuch, Schwartz, Gayles, & Li, 2008). Locally, the Carolinas Communication Association has awarded undergraduate research papers since 1995 ("Awards and Prizes", n.d.).

Multiple parties benefit from UR, including students, faculty, institutions, and the discipline. Undergraduate research can build a student's confidence and enthusiasm in their field of choice, while offering a rare glimpse into the rigors of graduate school. Indeed, research collaborations between faculty and students generate higher satisfaction in college for students and increase their desire to achieve and continue their education (Malachowski, 1999). Students who perform UR benefit from opportunities to present their work at academic conferences. Such experiences are simultaneously scholarly and professional and tend to possess monetary incentives and networking opportunities. Overall, undergraduate students can benefit from UR in five distinct areas: critical thinking skills, technical skills, problem identification, theory and research, and preparation for graduate school (Hartmann, 1990).

Faculty, too, benefit from incorporating undergraduate students into the research process, for it grants scholars the opportunity to mentor their strongest and most conscientious students. Out-of-class relationships that feature genuine encouragement for a student's success can create long-lasting bonds. Such experiences can result in transformational learning that profoundly impacts a faculty member's teaching strategies (Rodrick & Dickmeyer, 2002). UR is a learning experience for all involved, as faculty and students learn from and with each other.

UR also makes important contributions to the field of communication studies. "By challenging students to go above and beyond what has already been researched, we are encouraging them to leave an imprint on the field of communication" (Tyus, 2016, p. 13). Undergraduate students may offer fresh perspectives on issues and theories, and their work may be included in scholarly publications. By attending conferences or winning awards, undergraduate students bolster the reputation of their departments and institutions (Rodrick & Dickmeyer, 2002). Their successes, in turn, may generate increased excitement for communication studies among peers who see how the research makes classroom instruction practical and real.

Of course, the time commitments for both students and faculty are increasingly stretched thin, and UR may appear as a luxury which many cannot afford. To address this, faculty may introduce students to their research through the department's research methods class or senior capstone course. These classes build off one another to help students gain valuable research skills they can take later into the workforce or graduate school (Rodrick & Dickmeyer, 2002).

Whether incorporated into a curriculum or into a student's extracurricular experiences, undergraduate research stands to benefit students, faculty, and the field, as research, teaching, and mentoring fold into a holistic practice. When combined with community-based research, these benefits can be shared even more broadly.

Community-Based Research

Community-Based Research (CBR) is a process whereby community organizations partner with universities to carry out research that is beneficial to both in advancing disciplinary knowledge and addressing issues of community concern (Rosenberg, Karp, & Baldwin, 2016). The philosophical commitments of CBR include valuing multiple forms of knowledge and targeting social change efforts to advance social justice (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donahue, 2003). The collaboration among community partners and higher education stakeholders begins with establishing the research questions and continues throughout all phases of the research. What sets CBR apart from other forms of research is the central role of the community in the process and outcome. Importantly, the rigor and systematic inquiry indicative of all strong research practices undergirds CBR in bridging academic and community measures of success. The work often leads to the creation of public and discipline-specific products such as evaluation reports, grant proposals, journal articles, conference presentations, exhibits, and posters.

For its proponents, CBR is public work undertaken for public purposes, rooted in both intellectual pursuit and practical application. As such, it is vital to introduce student researchers to community work where they can learn to integrate research and community action into programs that target meaningful impact and community change (Stoecker, 2013). CBR thus not only helps students become aware of local issues but also connects students with community organizations working for social change. Bachen (1999) suggests that many students who participate in CBR form bonds with the community that last outside of the research process and timeline. Along the way, students develop interpersonal skills and engage in critical thinking on social justice issues (Lancaster, Hossfeld, O'Donnell, & Geen, 2011).

Reciprocity is generally regarded as one of the most important features of CBR, despite being difficult to actualize and even harder to assess (Malm, Prete, Calamia, & Eberle 2012). To effectively carry out CBR, universities and communities alike must agree on what roles each will inhabit, the methods by which the research will be completed, and the goals of the research (Fontaine, 2006). According to Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2000), researchers ought to emphasize empowerment and look for ways to work *with* rather than *for* the community.

With these values and commitments in mind, we entered into a partnership with the City of Greensboro to research the city's first Participatory Budgeting process. To do so, we embraced the tenets of CBR as we incorporated undergraduate students into challenging, rewarding community-based research.

Pairing Undergraduates with Community Evaluation Efforts

The research team tasked with evaluating Greensboro PB began with only two people—a faculty member and graduate student—but consistent with CBR practices expanded to incorporate more talent, expertise, and assistance. For instance, a local research board was created, comprised of an interdisciplinary group of seven faculty researchers from five different colleges and universities in the state. In consultation with city officials, the team developed and refined survey questions and data collection protocols for the research project. The research utilized a mixed methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative data collection analysis in order to comprehensively assess the process.

Inviting undergraduate students into this community research project that garnered local and national visibility was made possible through advance planning for how the research tasks could be effectively distributed so that students could learn how to do tasks and also complete them within the timeframe of a semester. The faculty member (Jovanovic) and graduate student (Russell) co-authors of the final report were prepared for this challenge following several years of communication activism research focused on PB (Frey & Palmer, 2014) that included collecting field notes since 2011, preparing and analyzing community surveys, collaborating on field note protocols, and writing progress reports on Greensboro PB's advocacy efforts (Jovanovic & Russell, 2014).

In addition to the local research board and undergraduate researchers, the evaluation report co-authors solicited the advice from other PB researchers around the country. The team that evaluated Chicago's Participatory Budgeting process and the staff members at Public Agenda, a non-partisan organization contracted to collect and collate research data for all North American PB efforts, provided on-going assistance.

With the research players in place, Greensboro's PB process launched in August 2015 and concluded in April 2016. By the end of the eight-month process, approximately 2,000 people participated, either by proposing a project idea, developing a project proposal, voting and/or volunteering in another capacity (Jovanovic & Russell, 2016). These residents allocated $500,000 of the city's budget and approved projects such as bus benches, street improvements, shade covers at public pools, and murals.

The evaluation of Greensboro PB sought to provide answers to three research questions that probed for civic participation and community-government relations:

> **RQ1:** How does civic engagement change among different community segments—the general population, communities of color, and other groups who have not traditionally been engaged with city government—as compared to voting or other measures of participation?

> **RQ2:** How is PB inclusive, thereby generating increased participation from Greensboro's historically marginalized communities (Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, other) as well as the general population?

> **RQ3:** In what ways does PB affect community attitudes and trust/relationships between citizens and city government?

In addition to collecting quantifiable data, we sought to bring attention to the often taken for granted ways in which communication operates by highlighting interactions at community meetings to reveal values, power, intentions, strategies, ethics, and community building potential. Thus, our research examined the phenomenon of community engagement in local political processes by evaluating the ways people communicate and participate with the City of Greensboro's inaugural Participatory Budgeting process.

Democracy education, the touchstone for PB, involves advocating for people to be involved in decisions and self-governing practices. Educator Bill Ayers (2004) explains:

> A functioning, vital democracy requires, in the first place, participation, some tolerance and acceptance of difference, some independent thought, some spirit of mutuality…Democracy demands active, thinking human beings—we ordinary people, after all, are expected to make the big decision that affect our lives—and in a democracy education is designed to empower and to enable that goal. (pp. 9-10)

PB is thus considered a "citizenship school" (Wampler, 2000, p. 25) to build capacities for democratic participation with particular attention to expressions of multiple views, displays of tolerance and care, manifestations of creativity and the balancing of independence and mutuality as people discuss and deliberate on the decisions they make.

As such, our research aimed at evaluating how communication creates the conditions for greater community engagement. That focus was designed to add to the literature on community-based research, democratic pedagogy, and social change processes to advance the public good. (Jovanovic, 2014).

Data sources eventually included: 44 interviews with various stakeholders, lasting 15 minutes to an hour and a half that were conducted face-to-face, by phone, and through email; 724 surveys from PB participants to ascertain demographic information, participant interests in community concerns, attitudes about city government, and prior civic engagement activity; 521 typed pages of field observations from 74 events; review of half a dozen extant city reports; and consideration of 60 news articles.

A project of this size relied on multiple funding sources to ensure students could participate fully. A summer university grant was secured to design and refine PB research training modules that would be later used with the undergraduate students in a research methods course. An additional grant from the Waterhouse Family Institute on the Study of Communication funded both undergraduate and graduate students for out-of-class work in data collection and report writing.

The evaluation effort provided a practical experience for 35 undergraduate students to engage in all phases of the research, though not a single undergraduate student was involved in all phases. Undergraduate students in a research methods class honed their skills in survey design and ethnographic methods specifically designed for the community-based effort (Wadsworth, 2011). The 23 students attended community meetings across the city over a period of eight weeks to first document communicative moments and collect field notes, and then to write vignettes highlighting the quality of interaction at those meetings. Later, eight undergraduate students in a service-learning

course entitled "Communication and Community" organized and supported outreach activities to promote PB and collect surveys. Another student completed an academic internship with PB, which included assisting with volunteer management. Finally, three undergraduate students who received university or external funding, contributed to the preparation of the evaluation report itself, first in the assembling of monthly progress reports throughout the initial phases, and then in the writing and design of the final 192-page report.

Importantly, the contract between the university and the city included explicit language calling for the coordinated effort planned by faculty with students to complete the work, to bring attention to the role of students in the research effort. The contract stated that students would receive instruction in survey design and survey implementation as well as training on observation protocols and preparation of field notes. In addition, the contract stipulated that all participating student research assistants would successfully complete a well-known national on-line research ethics module to reinforce the importance of professional standards in academic research.

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Analysis

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The undergraduate partnerships developed in this research project constituted two categories: 1) funded undergraduate research assistants and 2) course-based undergraduate student researchers. We make this distinction because the responsibilities and time commitments of the roles were significantly different. The two categories of undergraduate partnership also demonstrate how students were involved in the process in various ways across various times.

Funded Undergraduate Research Assistants

Undergraduate research assistants volunteered to contribute to the project outside of a course requirement and invested significant time conducting data collection, data analysis and report writing/design. They met regularly with the lead researchers, attended community events, and presented at academic conferences. They contributed to written research reports and were regularly encouraged to re-write material as both a learning exercise and to improve their work quality. The undergraduate research assistants received increased support and encouragement from the faculty member and graduate student. They also demonstrated self-direction as they took on tasks and completed them according to deadlines provided by the lead researchers.

The first undergraduate research assistant, Rodney, participated in the research project his senior year of college, from fall 2015 to spring 2016. He met almost weekly with the faculty member and graduate student for several hours at a time to discuss observation protocols, interview protocols, and survey design. He collected field notes at six different events and interviewed three participants. He conducted background research on the city and developed interactive maps which displayed location data about Greensboro PB events. Rodney also worked with the county board of elections and the city's information technology department to acquire voter demographic data and map it across precincts. He developed a website as well for the research and evaluation effort to

ensure transparency and expand the reach of our research to new audiences (see greensboroparticipatorybudgetingresearch.weebly.com).

Rodney's work spanned a full academic year during the data collection phase of the evaluation. Following his graduation, two additional funded undergraduate students joined the effort to work on the report-writing phase of the evaluation that continued during the following summer and fall semester.

Maggie and Jessica, like Rodney, had demonstrated in other undergraduate course work their abilities and desire to collaborate on the research, and thus they were invited to join the team. Jessica agreed to write sections of the report while Maggie took lead responsibility for managing the visual rhetoric and design of the evaluation report.

Jessica viewed her time invested in academic writing as a communicative act that offers opportunities to critically reflect on experiences and make sense of disparate pieces of information. Taking inspiration from Bakhtin's (1981) dialogical realm framework, Motlhaka and Makalela (2016) argue that academic writing is "a dynamic, functional, intersubjective process of reciprocal negotiation among writers and readers, in which discourse mediates interactions among conversants" (p. 252). Jessica reported that writing for the research and evaluation project aided her in better understanding the scope of Participatory Budgeting and the varied roles of community members in supporting a local initiative.

Intensive feedback on Jessica's writing led to multiple revisions. She indicated that this process helped her hone her craft and sharpen her critical thinking skills. As we all wrote to develop different sections of the evaluation report, writing became a shared and collaborative act of inquiry. It was "a complex, mediated, distributed, and dialogic process of discovery and invention where collaboration, feedback, and indeed co-authorship" supported Jessica's learning (Motlhaka & Makalela, 2016, p. 253). For Jessica, the project was challenging, rewarding, and useful to her career ambitions in journalism.

Maggie came into the project with some prior graphic design experience and expressed a desire to put those skills to work for the evaluation report. The importance of graphic design comes from a recognition that the evaluation report constituted a rhetorical artifact and that both content *and* form would shape the perception of readers (Morey, 2014). Recognizing that representation matters (hooks, 1997), throughout the process, Maggie struggled with questions such as for whom were we designing the report, and whose stories would be graphically highlighted? Maggie reported learning about the importance of accessible design – that is, formatting the report so that it was appealing to community members, not just academics and government bureaucrats. Maggie aimed for the report's visual elements to reflect the diversity of participants, especially when selecting which photographs to include.

However, we underestimated the complexity of graphic design for our evaluation report. As the deadline for publication approached, it became clear that Maggie alone would not be able to complete the task. The amount of time and technical skill necessary for formatting the 189-page report required the services of a professional graphic designer who incorporated many of Maggie's design cues into the final product. Like Jessica, Maggie found the project rewarding. Although unable to execute every element of the report's design and formatting, she took pride in the development of several

graphic representations of the community process that are in the report and call attention to the community's participation in PB.

The funded undergraduate assistants invested considerable time in the research, and often under tight deadlines for specific products. To recognize that commitment with financial remuneration, we sought out as many campus-based and external funding opportunities as possible.[1] Funding the work of our three undergraduate research assistants was a significant factor in retaining them throughout the project, and reflected our social justice orientation to adequately compensate these research team members.

Despite the many important contributions and successful outcomes that ensued with the funded undergraduate research assistants, the process was at times fraught. The students' performances were sometimes inconsistent. In response, the faculty member and graduate student lead researchers struggled in considering how best to address the challenges: How much responsibility could we place on the shoulders of students? How much support and guidance should we offer? If we needed to decrease the undergraduates' workload, how could we do so without seemingly excluding them from the project? As might be expected, our undergraduate students occasionally found themselves stretched between commitments to schoolwork, family obligations, other employment, and our research project. We strove to navigate these tensions with patience, empathy, and honesty. Ultimately, all the undergraduate research assistants made valuable contributions to the evaluation of Greensboro PB during the busiest times of the research project.

Course-Based Undergraduate Student Researchers

A growing trend in high education institutions is to get involved in the surrounding communities to address long-standing social, economic, and political concerns (Battistoni, 2006). Thus, an undergraduate communication research methods course was designed specifically to teach the skills, theories, and practices of community-based research surrounding the evaluation of Greensboro Participatory Budgeting. Students, faculty, and community members collaboratively designed and implemented research that validated multiple sources of knowledge, promoted the use of multiple methods of discovery, and supported wide and varied distribution of the knowledge produced. The goal with community-based learning and research is to extend the capacity of nonprofit community partners to potentially bring about positive social change in the areas that they operate (Rosenberg, Karp & Baldwin, 2016). For this particular project, students relied on Yolanda Wadsworth's (2011) text, *Do It Yourself Social Research* that recognizes community-based research is accomplished by "systematically and rigorously amassing observations and imaginatively generating more compelling explanations" (p. 9). Throughout the course, students immersed themselves in the PB process, guided by the central question, how can the community benefit from this research? The students kept detailed records of their involvement, by time and activity type, and completed a

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[1] Internal funders included the University of North Carolina, Greensboro's Office of the Provost; Office of Leadership and Service-Learning; and the Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Office. External funders included Villanova University's Waterhouse Family Institute for the Study of Communication and Society.

series of assignments that mirror the tasks involved in many communication research methods classes, but with a specific link to PB.[2]

The community study required that students learn not only research methods, but also that they understand the context in which the research was taking place, including: the history of the city and current controversies; the geographic divisions within the city as they pertain to race and class segregation; the needs of residents as actually expressed by the residents and not elected or appointed representatives; patterns and processes of communication among residents and with city officials; and how local government operates in making budget and other decisions. Guest speakers from municipal government, nonprofit agencies, and the PB organizing team attended class sessions to provide this context and background information. Students also read *27 Views of Greensboro*, an engaging book detailing the complexities of the city through the perspectives of 27 different authors to "expose its fissures, of race and history, of politics, of culture" (Woodman, 2015, p. 15).

With readings and training in rhetorical analysis, ethnographic research methods, survey design, and interviewing, students were dispatched into the community and assigned work with four goals in mind. These goals reflect a view of civic engagement that scholar Randy Stoecker (2016) considers vital for "liberating" service-learning and community engagement from its tradition of prioritizing student learning instead of the more meaningful work of real social change. In sync with that view, the students' work was designed to: 1) Enhance capacity for change by providing knowledge to the community; 2) Enhance leadership of the community volunteers; 3) Organize constituent community groups; and, 4) Help build organizational capacity (Stoecker, 2016).

The first goal, providing knowledge to the community that can enhance the capacity for change, was accomplished in part with student-designed information graphics that summarized the research collected in various phases of the PB process (see "Research and Documents" at greensboroparticipatorybudgetingresearch.weebly.com). These designs were made into posters and circulated throughout the community to draw attention to how residents were participating in PB.

Second, to enhance the leadership of community volunteers, monthly research reports were prepared and distributed. These reports became "talking points" for PB volunteers in talking to the media.

Some students advanced the third goal, organizing constituent community groups, by educating international community members at events to promote PB. Of note is that approximately 11.7% or 33,059 Greensboro residents are foreign born, speaking 37 different languages (Planning Department, 2016). Participation from Greensboro's international community was admittedly low in the first phase of PB but surged later with increased outreach efforts. One student translated ballots and surveys into Spanish so that the growing Latino/a community members could be fully included in the final PB phase. Other students assisted in hosting an International Expo designed specifically to introduce and promote PB participation among community members whose first language was Spanish, Korean, French, Arabic, Vietnamese, Rhade, and Hindi.

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[2] Assignments included an annotated bibliography of outside research related to PB and community engagement, ethnography/field notes, rhetorical analysis, community interview, survey development, reflective journaling, and visual rhetoric.

The final goal, helping to build organizational capacity, was perhaps the most important function fulfilled by the students. Greensboro PB's staff time was limited, with the need for data collection and outreach outstripping the capacity. The students were recognized as critical team members to extend the reach of the staff members by providing event planning assistance, posting social media information, collecting data, canvassing neighborhoods, and developing graphic materials, in addition to contributing to the overall evaluation effort. The budget director for the city summed up the impact of students this way:

> I was surprised at the consistency of the effort from the students, and I was gratified with how they stuck with the process. I kept seeing students at every event…It was nice to have energy in the room from some of those younger folks.

The students were further applauded for displaying thoughtful and professional demeanors at the many public meetings.

Learning and Feedback

When students serve as research associates, faculty need to provide intense training and feedback to ensure the research skills not only contribute to the students' knowledge, but even more importantly, contribute to the community's goals. To cultivate a collaborative spirit in data collection, to ensure detailed observations from varied perspectives, and to have a means by which mediocre work could be mitigated (Mould, 2014), students were assigned to attend meetings in pairs or trios after receiving in-class training and practice to record the details of how people spoke about PB, community building, and citizen-government relations. One female student wrote a narrative from her field notes that connected detailed observations with matters of representation and storytelling:

> There was tension between Red Hair and the other volunteers. As fast as someone would suggest an idea, Red Hair would shoot it down…. Her excitement for the process was overshadowed by her inability to actively listen to others…This was my second experience taking field notes. After feedback from Spoma as well as information from our text, I was able to see the importance of noting the details.

This student's field notes and narrative were very good, yet as always, there was room for improvement as suggested by the instructor:

> Your ethnography is very good in its reach to explore how this method can be a positive research source for examining interaction. You provide a good example with Red Hair, and could possibly say more…For instance, how did she express concern for the community? You say she shot down ideas of others. How so? What did she say or do? Could you bring in more from your field notes (those are excellent, by the way) to help and detail?

This example shows how the iterative feedback and on-going process of data collection, writing, and review was important to the learning experience for undergraduate researchers.

Other students offered excellent observations and interpretations as well. For instance, another female student wrote about being a participant-observer. She had written earlier in her paper about a man in attendance that was skeptical of ideas being presented for consideration. The student noted that this man was visibly upset and so, as the meeting wrapped up, she took the initiative to talk to him:

> As others are filling out surveys and beginning to leave, I walk up to the man, still sitting in his chair. I say I liked the sidewalk idea. Then we talk for what seemed like 15-20 minutes…about couch potatoes, about sidewalks, about public art and statues. He had been grouchy, and he had spoken against beautification projects but in the end I learned he appreciated all that, he just wanted sidewalks first.

This student noted the value of dialogue in community meetings, and for reaching across difference as a fundamental democratic art needed to inspire trust and cooperative action. The faculty feedback affirmed and challenged the student:

> This is an important part of your paper that gets to the heart of PB *and* communication. That is, sometimes we say things that are aggressive, because we've been wounded or silenced for so long. This idea could benefit from references to justice, inclusion and care that we read about in structuring research and in implementing PB. You also point to dimensions of front-stage and back-stage talk, good communication features to weave into future writings.

The student's observation would eventually inform parts of the final evaluation report that pointed to the value of bringing people together to discuss specific, concrete needs in their community.

The above writing samples and faculty feedback encouraged a kind of learning that creates a partnership between the faculty member and students in doing research, becoming important resources, together, for the community. This is not a new finding for community-engaged scholars, but a message that requires repeating: "If colleges and universities look to their faculty and student bodies as resources in that campus-community partnership and regard community members and leaders as sources of knowledge and expertise, teaching and learning can be transformed" (Hagenhofer, 2014, p. 187).

Indeed, the learning in undergraduate research extends beyond the course concepts. As one male student wrote, his involvement led to an unexpected acknowledgment of his creative ideas:

> Even though my task is to observe, I cannot help myself. I raise my hand to suggest a project. The young lady scribe writes my idea on the board. An indescribable feeling swells inside me. I participated! People are listening to each other. I am in awe.

Similarly, an international student in the country for only that academic year, worried that she would not be able to record observations, or write to the standard expected of community-based research. However, her worries were unfounded. The faculty member wrote:

> You feared you might not understand everything, but you did—you noted the issue of being "alone, together" which is an important communicative notion and you pointed out issues of power and equity through examination of the talk. Terrific! Your writing is beautiful—this is a wonderful paper and a reminder why getting out in the community is the highest form of research and service that I can think of—the spirit of that is in your words.

Undergraduate research activity with training, support, and both public in-class and private direct feedback provides the opportunity for students to learn new skills and contribute in meaningful ways to their community.

Conclusion

The increasing interest in cultivating undergraduate student researchers, we found, has many benefits. Like Paul Harvey, the noted broadcaster for 75 years who made famous the phrase, "The Rest of the Story…" to call attention to news story postscripts, we too think it relevant to include how students applied their undergraduate research experiences upon completion of their work with Participatory Budgeting.

Our funded undergraduate students contributed a tremendous amount of time and skill to data collection and report writing that in turn provided them the opportunity to attend and present at a total of five local and regional academic conferences. These sometimes competitively selected and other times invited events represented important opportunities to demonstrate polished public speaking skills and to communicate research findings with other scholars and students.

The students further used their research experiences to bolster future work they would undertake. Rodney secured meaningful full-time employment in higher education, Maggie was accepted into the graduate program of her choice, and Jessica continued her undergraduate studies in an elite disciplinary honors program.

Rodney was hired at a community college as program coordinator for their Minority Male Success Initiative, a program rooted in social justice that fosters and encourages academic success for first-year minority male college students. He reported:

> The work I did as an undergraduate student has helped me to not only navigate and adapt to the culture that is student development, but also helped me to understand how to organize events and develop the tenacity and determination needed to thrive in this line of work. I draw upon every experience I had as an undergraduate research assistant every day at work.

Rodney's experiences with undergraduate research provided him with the confidence and knowledge to be a valuable team member in promoting social justice through scholarly means.

Maggie was accepted into her first-choice of graduate schools, where she researches media education through a social justice lens. Maggie's graphic design contributions to the report significantly shaped the final product, and an infographic she created has been adopted by the City of Greensboro as one of its preferred promotional materials documenting the impact of PB. She indicated that graduate school was nowhere on her horizon before she started this research project, but researching the power of direct democracy ignited a passion in her to pursue more of this work through advanced education.

Jessica, employing a leadership from the rear style, prodded our research team to meet self-imposed deadlines. We also counted on Jessica to do the background research necessary to write compelling narratives in the final report. Since then, she became one of only a handful of students in communication studies to pursue a yearlong project to earn disciplinary honors upon graduation. Her effort with PB propelled her further into social justice efforts with a project designed to provide digital networking resources for local grassroots organizations.

A number of students in the research methods course also used their community-based research experiences in productive ways. One found employment with a local nonprofit agency mitigating the impacts of human trafficking. Another student secured a paid internship with the Participatory Budgeting Project. One went on to complete a yearlong internship with the YWCA, advancing social justice through art in its Latino Family Center. Other students highlighted their research skills in applying to, and being accepted into graduate school.

The experience of incorporating undergraduate students into a community-based research project was both challenging and rewarding for all parties involved. Many students gained unprecedented civic engagement and research experience. An important factor for supporting student success was to provide them with a product they could showcase after their class ended. All students were able to demonstrate their research proficiencies with one or more of the following: academic posters, conference presentations, websites, and professional writing products. To ensure this, a significant time commitment was required to offer students adequate training, feedback, and support. Finally, intentionality on the part of the faculty member was an important factor in this experience that included securing funding for undergraduate students in grant proposals and building a research methods course around the evaluation of Greensboro PB.

Incorporating undergraduate students into community-based research stands out as a way to tie together multiple missions of higher education and the National Communication Association's goals for communication graduates. That is, undergraduate research which supports community initiatives for social justice both fosters the democratic arts and promotes critical thinking through communication practices while preparing students for entry into the workforce or other educational pursuits.

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