

SEM, Student Engagement and the Canadian Experience

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Topics

- **What is Student Engagement?**
- **Key Research Findings**
- **The Canadian Experience: Is it Different?**
- **SEM & Student Engagement**

Student Engagement

Institutional Reputation...

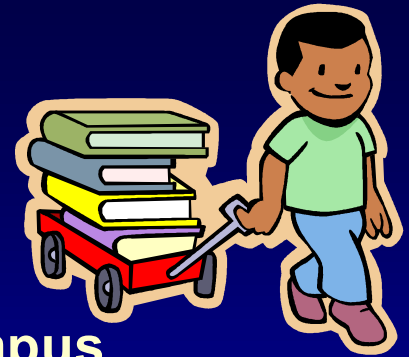
- **At first focused on inputs:**
 - *Student characteristics* (*prior academic performance mostly*); *the more selective, the better*
 - *Institutional resources* (*quality of faculty, campus infrastructure, books in the library, spending per student*)
- **This formed the basis for rankings (e.g., Maclean's, US News & World Report)**

But ...

The nature and quality of first year students' experiences in the classroom, with faculty, and with peers are **better predictors** of desired educational outcomes associated with college attendance than precollege characteristics.

-Gerken & Volkwien, 2000

...The Rest of the Story



- i.e., what happens during the student's campus experience is as, or **more**, critical than student inputs
- Institutions began to survey students on their satisfaction with programs & services (e.g., CUSC, Noel Levitz's SSI) & external bodies followed (provincial governments, Maclean's, Globe & Mail)

What is Student Engagement?

- Research of past 40 years has led to concept of student engagement (coined by Kuh) as a way of assessing educational outcomes & quality of teaching & learning
- Embraces 3 key student success processes
 - **Active involvement**: time & energy invested in learning experience inside and outside classroom (Astin, Tinto)
 - **Social integration**: interaction, collaboration & interpersonal relationships between students & peers, faculty, staff & administrators (Astin)
 - **Personal reflection**: think deeply on learning experiences

Key Research Findings

- How an institution **deploys its resources** and **organizes** the curriculum, other learning opportunities and support services leads to positive experiences and desired outcomes such as persistence, satisfaction, learning and graduation (Kuh, 2001; Pascarella/Terenzini, 2005)

Key Research Findings (Cont.)

- Student engagement **varies more within** any given school or institutional type than between schools or institutional types (Pascarella/Terenzini, 2005; 2008 NSSE Report)
 - *Though smaller schools generally engage students more effectively, colleges and universities **of similar size can vary widely** (NSSE, 2005)*
 - *Student engagement is **unrelated to selectivity** (Kuh/Pascarella, 2004; NSSE, 2003)*
 - *Some non-residential schools & community colleges have exemplary student engagement practices*

Key Research Findings (Cont.)

- Some students – such as first generation students, males, transfer students and those who live off-campus – are generally **less engaged** than others BUT benefit more from educationally purposeful activities than their peers
- Some **single mission schools** confer engagement advantages to their students (Kinzie et al, 2007)

And Key for Our Discussion ...

- The single best predictor of student satisfaction with college is the degree to which students **perceive the college environment to be supportive** of their academic and social needs (Astin, 1993; Pascarella/Terenzini, 2005)

Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

➤ NSSE benchmarks

- *Academic Challenge*
- *Active & Collaborative Learning*
- *Student-Faculty Interaction*
- *Supportive Campus Environment*
- *Enriching Educational Experiences*

➤ Similar “best practices” outlined by Gardiner et al., Astin, Chickering/Gamson, Tinto



Using NSSE (& Other) Data

- **Kuh notes that enough research has been done & data gathered**
 - *The problem is ensuring we use the data to change practices for the better*
- **Many campuses beginning to use NSSE, CUSC & other surveys to plan, improve & assess students' experiences**
 - *Use multiple sources for triangulation*
 - *Communicate results*
 - *Collaborate to enhance first-year experience*

SEM & Student Engagement Goals Inter-twine

Students who are:

- better connected
- increasingly involved on campus
- deeply invested in learning & growth

...are **more likely** to persist & graduate

**CANADIAN STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT**

Some Key Questions

1. Is the level of student engagement different in Canada vs. the U.S.?
2. Is there a different approach to enhancing student engagement in Canada?
3. Is the level of student engagement connected to the type of students we recruit ?
 - i.e., perhaps institutions with high, NSSE/CCSSE scores are recruiting & admitting more engaged applicants*

Differences in NSSE Results

- **FACT**: Canadian universities do not generally score as high on NSSE as their U.S. peers



So, let's try to see why this might be so...

A Comparative Look

- **Students in Canada participate less in three of the best practices in undergraduate education: active learning, peer collaboration, and student-faculty interaction. Three possible explanations:**
 1. *As faculty spend more time doing **research**, there is less time available for students*
 2. *Full-time non-tenure and part-time faculty are often **overloaded with classes** and unable to devote time and effort towards fully engaging students*
 3. ***Increasing student-faculty ratios** leave fewer faculty assigned to larger cohorts of students.*

(Kandiko, 2009)

A Comparative Look (Cont.)

- **Student engagement in Canada and the U.S. differs by academic major**
 - *Students in **professional fields**, such as finance, management and pre-law had similar responses in both countries. The narrowest gaps occurred in the business and professional fields.*
 - *In contrast, there was a marked difference between Canadian and U.S. students in **arts and humanities, life sciences and social sciences**. Canadian students in those majors reported considerably less engagement overall compared to their U.S. peers.*

(Kandiko, 2009)

The Changing Student Demographic

- **Commuters**
- **Working off campus**
- **“Swirling”**
- **e- learning**
- **Evening & weekend classes**

Today's students have less time committed to on-campus learning

Are Canadian Institutions Different?

- **Institutional character (size, location, student-faculty ratios, research focus)**
- **Academic practices (e.g., TA's, admission policies/practices)**
- **Student attitudinal, behavioural & academic characteristics**
- **Organization of campus activities & organizations**

And the College Sector May Be Different...

- **In 2009 Humber College finished 1st among 58 extra large North American colleges participating in CCSSE**
 - *Only Ontario college to participate*
 - *Ranked highest in 4 out of 5 benchmark categories (active & collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge & student-faculty interaction)*

Some Engagement Strategies...

- **Aboriginal student access/retention**
- **Academic civility**
- **Academic programs/courses – specialized**
- **Academic support – writing**
- **Access – special populations**
- **Bridging programs**
- **Building connections between curricular and extracurricular experiences**

Some Engagement Strategies...

- **Career development**
- **Coaching (case managed access to student services, coaching first-year students on probation)**
- **Co-curricular record**
- **Community outreach**
- **Cross-departmental collaboration**
- **Cultural sensitivity**

Some Engagement Strategies...

- **Emotional Intelligence interventions**
- **Faculty development**
- **Financial aid**
- **Graduate student teaching development workshops**
- **Integration of enrolment management & student services**
- **Learning & information commons**
- **Peer mentor programs**
- **Planning (staff/faculty retreats and symposia)**

Some Engagement Strategies...

- **Recognition for staff & faculty**
- **Residence (academic, bridging and transition programs)**
- **Service learning**
- **Supplemental instruction**
- **Teaching (clickers, critical thinking, early feedback, hybrid courses, idea incubator, technology in large classes)**

What Services/Programs Work?

- **CSSE: Academic advising & financial aid advising**
- **Hossler's review of retention literature:**
 - *Intentionally & well-implemented orientation programs, academic advising, supplemental instruction*
- **Tinto & Kuh: educational innovations that shape classroom practice (service learning, learning communities, undergraduate research, internships, study abroad)**

One Conclusion...

- **Student engagement/involvement matters**
 - *And it matters most during the critical first year*
- **What is less clear is how to make it happen in different settings & for differing students**

Connecting Back to SEM

- *Purpose of SEM – Student Success*
- *The SEM Components:*
 - *Data mining & analysis*
 - *Student Retention*
- *Need to Plan Holistically*
- *Importance of collaboration between academic and student affairs*

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Canadian SEM Website: www.uwindsor.ca/sem

- Student Engagement Bibliography
- Student Engagement Programs in Canada

**Discussion,
Comments & Questions**