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This chapter reviews the history and various definitions of student engagement and proposes a multidimensional model from which one can develop a variety of engagement opportunities that lead to a rich and challenging higher education experience.

What Is Student Engagement?

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The term student engagement has been increasingly prominent in U.S. higher education as an indicator of student and institutional success and quality. In fact, Shulman (2005, 38) stated that "learning begins with student engagement." However, the concept of engagement has been in the literature for more than seventy years with the meaning of the construct evolving over time (Kuh 2009).

History of Student Engagement

The American psychologist Ralph Tyler was one of the first to focus on engagement with his pioneering work in the 1930s showing the positive effects of time on task on learning (Merwin 1969 as cited in Kuh 2009), which later became one of Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson's (1987) seven principles of good practice in undergraduate teaching. Additionally, in *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949, 63), Tyler described learning as taking place through the actions of the student saying that "It is what he does that he learns, not what the teacher does." The College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) developed in the 1970s by C. Robert Pace focused on what he termed "quality of effort." Using the CSEQ, Pace posited that students gained more from their college experience when they invested more time and energy in educationally purposeful tasks: studying, interacting with their peers and teachers about substantive matters, applying what they are learning to concrete situations and tasks, and so forth (Kuh 2009; Pace 1984, 1990). Alexander Astin (1984) expanded upon Tyler and Pace's work with his theory of involvement and in the same year, the *Involvement in Learning* report (National Institute of Education 1984) highlighted the influence of involvement on student achievement. Since then, scholars have associated student effort and time on task to various desired outcomes of college (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Pike 2006; Tinto 1987, 1993).

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Student engagement has become a focal point in efforts to enhance teaching and learning. According to Trowler (2010, 2), "It is not difficult to understand why: a sound body of literature has established robust correlations between student involvement in a subset of 'educationally purposive activities', and positive outcomes of student success and development, including satisfaction, persistence, academic achievement and social engagement." Trowler's statement reflects the combined work of Astin (1984, 1993), Berger and Milem (1999), Chickering and Gamson (1987), Goodsell, Maher, and Tinto (1992), Kuh (1995), and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005). The third edition of *How College Affects Students*: *21st Century Evidence that Higher Education Works* (Mayhew et al. 2016) provided further support for Trowler's position.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (Kuh 2002, original emphasis) highlighted the importance of student engagement by stating that "what students ***do*** during college counts more in terms of desired outcomes than who they are or even where they go to college." The Education Commission of the States (1995) and The Study Group (1984) stated that the colleges that add most value to the student experience—the most educationally effective institutions—are those that are most able to channel students' attention and energies toward appropriate activities that engage them at high levels in those activities. Kuh (2003) went on to state that the vast amount of research on college student development shows that student engagement is the single best predictor of learning and personal development.

Definitions of Student Engagement

Kuh (2009, 683) defined student engagement as "the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college *and* what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities." Coates (2007, 122) defined engagement as a "broad construct intended to encompass salient academic as well as certain non-academic aspects of the student experience" including "active learning, participation in challenging academic activities, formative communication with academic staff, involvement in enriching educational experiences, and feeling legitimated and supported by university learning communities."

Axelson and Flick (2010, 38) defined student engagement as "how *involved* or *interested* students appear to be in their learning and how *connected* they are to their classes, their institutions, and each other." Fletcher (2015, n. p.) defined student engagement as "any sustained connection a learner has towards any aspect of learning, schools or education." Student engagement is increasingly viewed as an indicator of successful classroom instruction (Fletcher 2015) and an indicator of institutional excellence (Axelson and Flick 2010).

Some authors, such as Skinner and Belmont (1993, 572), have associated student engagement with motivation saying that students who are

engaged "show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone." These students tend to select challenging tasks, show initiative in learning, demonstrate intense effort and concentration, and express positive emotions including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest during learning.

According to the Glossary of Education Reform (2016, n. p.), a comprehensive online resource that describes school-improvement terms, concepts, and educational strategies, student engagement "refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education."

Barkley (2010) used the words "passion" and "excitement" to describe student engagement and developed a classroom-based model to understand student engagement. She (Barkley 2010, 8) defined student engagement as a "process and a product that is experienced on a continuum and results from the synergistic interaction between motivation and active learning." This definition, while useful for improving student learning provides a one-dimensional perspective of student engagement.

As the definitions above attest, student engagement takes many forms. In his effort to define student engagement and whether it is likely to help improve learning, Graham Gibbs (2014) provocatively labeled student engagement as the latest higher education buzzword. According to Gibbs, student engagement is used to refer to so many different things that it is difficult to know what people actually mean by the term. Although indicating that this ambiguity makes implementation of educational policy to support student engagement difficult, Gibbs nevertheless provided ample support for its impact on student learning and institutional effectiveness.

A Multidimensional Perspective of Student Engagement

It is exactly the diversity of meaning of student engagement questioned by Gibbs that I believe is its strength and maximizes the potential of student engagement for positively impacting the quality of higher education and learning. While most of the definitions of student engagement described above focus on integration in learning activities, the model of student engagement first proposed by Groccia (Burns et al. 2004) and later expanded by Groccia and Hunter (2012) is multidimensional and extends the concept of student engagement beyond learning behaviors to a broad range of campus activities within and beyond the classroom. Learning requires "educational practices that engage students across disciplinary boundaries in learning experiences that tackle real problems, allow for application of course content to those problems, and lead to sustained intellectual growth and a heightened sense of personal responsibility" (Groccia and Hunter 2012, 3). To achieve these outcomes, a student must engage with the learning process on behavioral, affective, and cognitive levels. To engage at a behavioral level, the learner

must have some degree of participation or effort, and be persistent in the learning process. At the affective level of engagement, the learner must have a level of interest in the experience that results in improved motivation and enjoyment, thus establishing a level of commitment. Lastly, the learner must engage on a cognitive level displaying a degree of mental activity, processing thought about the experience that should result in the ability to cognitively process the experience and establish linkages to previous experiences.

Adding to the complexity of student engagement is the fact that it is possible to engage positively along one or more of these three dimensions while also engaging negatively along others. Reflecting this complexity, Trowler (2010) provided an example of a feminist student who attends all classes and completes all assignments but engages negatively on affective and cognitive levels to the chauvinistic, antifeminist statements of the teacher.

Phillip Schlechty in *Shaking up the Schoolhouse: How to Support and Sustain Educational Innovation* (2001) augmented the understanding of student engagement by proposing that it is not an all or none phenomenon. According to Schlechty, one is not simply engaged or non-engaged but rather one can function at different levels of engagement. Students who participate in activities that have a clear meaning and an immediate value demonstrate *authentic engagement*. Those assigned work that has little or no perceived meaning or inherent value but is associated with extrinsic results of value engage in *ritual engagement*. *Passive compliance* is the position taken by students who are willing to do what is necessary to avoid negative outcomes, regard less of whether students see this activity as having value. Students who are disengaged and who expend little effort in task performance are said to occupy a *retreatant* level of engagement. Finally, the *rebellious* student is one who refuses to participate in the activity, disrupts others, and/or tries to substitute other activities for the assigned task.

Conscientious teachers strive to teach effectively and often seek new strategies and alternatives to improve their current instructional approaches. The ability of individual instructors and the institution as a whole to engage learners on these three levels (i.e., doing, feeling, and thinking) will contribute to educational experiences that lead to higher level learning, retention, and satisfaction.

Groccia's model (Burns et al. 2004; Groccia and Hunter 2012), presented in Figure 1.1, illustrates a multidimensional conception of student engagement that proposes ways that learners can be engaged during their academic experience: in teaching, learning, research; with community, students, and faculty. Additionally, student engagement within these six dimensions can occur on cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels.

Engagement with faculty and staff suggests that opportunities be supported for learners to participate with instructors in and outside the classroom in such things as undergraduate research experiences, curricular development activities, tutorials, professional activities (e.g., attending

Figure 1.1. A Model of Student Engagement (Adapted from Burns et al. 2004; Groccia and Hunter 2012)

professional conferences and meetings), as well as contact with instructors serving as advisors to honor societies and academic and social clubs. Instructor participation in co-curricular activities and learning communities are other ways to foster student–faculty engagement.

First-year seminars offer a prime setting to introduce the concepts of campus engagement and integrated learning to new students. Engagement with other learners suggests that students be encouraged to create community with others in residence halls as well as seminar contexts through the use of learning teams and learning communities, base study groups, peer tutors, intramural sports, or academic clubs and societies. There is ample evidence that social fraternities and sororities encourage engagement and contribute to satisfaction and retention (Debard and Sacks 2010).

Students can be integrated into teaching activities functioning as peer teaching assistants, peer mentors, peer tutors, or undergraduate grading assistants. According to Svinicki and McKeachie (2014, 193), "The best answer to the question 'What is the most effective method of teaching?' is that it depends on the goal, the student, the content, and the teacher. The next best answer may be 'students teaching other students'." First-year seminars, which often facilitate greater learner engagement by using discussions and group projects as opposed to traditional lecture, engage students in teaching one another in both formal and informal ways. Miller, Groccia, and Miller (2001) presented more than thirty examples of ways that faculty in different

disciplines from universities around the world have integrated undergraduate learners as instructional assistants.

Active and engaged learning activities that move learners from passive recipients of knowledge to participants in elaborating, discussing, sharing, questioning, and problem solving increases motivation and learning (Bonwell and Eison 1991; Hake 1998). Cooperative/collaborative group learning, problem-based learning, jigsaw learning activities, learning cells, individual and group projects, critical thinking activities, case studies, think-pair-share (for descriptions of these and other active learning techniques see Ismail and Groccia, this volume; Nilson 2016; Silberman 1996; Svinicki and McKeachie 2014), and the use of remote response systems (commonly referred to as "clickers") are teaching techniques that more fully engage learners in their own as well as their peers' learning.

Learning can be enhanced by developing teaching techniques that engage learners with organizations and individuals in the community beyond the institution. Using service activities to support in-class learning is effective and often supports the development of a sense of civic responsibility that encourages a life-long habit of service among participants. Participation in outreach activities can provide faculty opportunities to engage students in scholarship and community engagement that provide benefits to all participants.

Learners can be encouraged to engage in undergraduate research and inquiry activities in the form of the National Science Foundation-funded Undergraduate Research Experiences or other instructor-supported research. Lopatto (2004, 2007, 2010) cited numerous studies that highlight the following positive impacts of engagement in undergraduate research: increased interest in careers in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; increased persistence in the pursuit of an undergraduate degree; increased levels of pursuit of graduate education; alumni retrospective reports of higher gains than comparison groups in skills such as carrying out research, acquiring information, and speaking effectively; increased retention rate of minority undergraduates; and increased rate of graduate education for minority students.

Student Engagement in the Online Environment

The rapid growth of social networking tools and online teaching and learning environments has presented challenges to our understanding of and ability to provide student engagement activities. Face-to-face interaction is being increasingly replaced by virtual, synchronous and asynchronous, blended, and hybrid instruction. The need for online learners to engage with the content, instructor, and other students is not minimized by lack of contact with and within traditional learning spaces. Learning, online or classroom-based, is still an interactive community event (Conrad and Donaldson 2012) whose success rests upon the instructor's ability to create a

sense of presence and engage students in the learning process. Conrad and Donaldson (2012) emphasized that online engagement is related to participation and interaction. Presence can be defined, however, as "the dynamic interplay of thought, emotion, and behavior" (Lehman and Conceicao 2010, 4). The key to online learner engagement according to Conrad and Donaldson (2012) is for students to be engaged and supported to take increased responsibility for their own learning.

Student Engagement and Institutional Quality

Building upon the importance and impact of student engagement as illustrated by the various definitions and research presented, I suggest that institutional quality can be directly tied to the depth and breadth of engagement opportunities provided to students. As Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 610) stated, "one of the most inescapable and unequivocal conclusions we can make is that the impact of college is largely determined by the individual's quality of effort and level of involvement in both academic and non-academic activities." The multidimensional model of student engagement presented in this chapter provides a guide for administrators and faculty and student affairs professionals to better design engagement activities, thereby increasing the quality of student learning and overall institutional quality. Institutions differ however in the degree of engagement provided to students. Pike, Kuh, and Gonyea (2003) found that policies and practices adopted by institutions were directly related the degree of student engagement experienced by students. Pike and Kuh (2005, 187) stated that the influence of institutional characteristics on student engagement "extends well beyond global characteristics such as size and institutional mission." The Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) project (Kuh et al. 2010) provided examples of student engagement policies and practices from twenty institutions that create a success-oriented campus culture and learning environment. Despite differences in history, mission, resources, size, and other characteristics, each of these institutions had created opportunities for student engagement spanning the six dimensions presented in Groccia's model. Pike and Kuh (2005) developed a typology of student engagement institutions that highlights seven types of engaging institutions: Diverse, but interpersonally fragmented; homogeneous and interpersonally cohesive; intellectually stimulating; interpersonally supportive; high-tech, low-touch; academically challenging and supportive; and collaborative. This study also found that institutional engagement types were related to Carnegie classification yet, "counter to conventional wisdom, institutional type and engagement did not favor liberal arts colleges and universities" (p. 203). Master's degree as well as doctoral level institutions provide a variety of student engagement opportunities reflecting the diversity of students, faculty, and institutions.

Conclusion

Student engagement has been a focus of efforts to understand and enhance student learning and higher education for over 70 years. Seminal work by Astin, Kuh, Pace, Pascarella, Terenzini, and others mentioned in this chapter has laid the foundation for on-going efforts to actively involve students, faculty, administrators, and institutions. Student engagement takes many forms and operates on multiple levels (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) in and out of the classroom. The multidimensional model of student engagement described in this chapter can further guide efforts to sustain higher education improvement in an integrated, holist manner.

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