

St. George Action Plan — A Senior Learning Community Civic Engagement Endeavor

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Abstract

Civic engagement projects not only benefit the community partners but also enhance student learning. This was evidenced through (1) the St. George Action Plan Assessment Questionnaire, by which specific skills were identified and quantified; (2) faculty evaluations, by which students' formal grading learning perceptions were measured; (3) students' reflective, unsolicited written comments, and (4) the Staten Island Community Questionnaire measuring interest in Wagner College students working in their community. Under all four methods, this project was a success.

Wagner College, ranked by the 2004 *Princeton Review* as the most beautiful college and top theater department, is on Grymes Hill on Staten Island, New York. Founded in 1883, it is a comprehensive institution offering 29 bachelors degree and seven masters degree programs.

Wagner's accolades include top tier ranking among the Northeast masters' universities and colleges by 2002 *US News*, and fourth ranking among all institutions for its work on learning communities. Additionally, Wagner's first year program is nationally ranked in the top 23 among all of the 3,500 colleges and universities and in the top seven among all small liberal arts colleges.

In 1998, Wagner instituted campus-wide the "Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts." The focus of the plan was on "learning by doing," a curricular approach that centered on the learning community concept and field-based experiential learning. Initially, this consisted of a freshman learning community and as of 2001, the plan included three prongs: a freshman, intermediate, and senior learning community.

All entering freshmen enroll in a first year learning community of two thematically linked courses in two disciplines along with a reflective tutorial course. In the reflective tutorial course, students not only reflect upon the link between the two disciplines, but upon an assigned 30-hour field experience related to the students' learning community. In the field, students work with community partners on Staten Island. A few of the many agencies that serve as community partners are Junior Achievement of New York, Habitat for Humanity of Staten Island, Special Olympics, Staten Island Developmentally Disabled Services, Better Business Bureau, Staten Island Historical Society, National Museum of the American Indian, Project Hospitality and Seaman's

Society for Children and Family. The reflective tutorial course is students' first formal college-level exposure to social, civic responsibility.

During their sophomore or junior year, students enroll in an intermediate learning community, which consists of two thematically linked courses in two disciplines with no experiential component. The two faculty members who teach in the intermediate learning community discuss the links between the two courses and each instructor weaves these themes throughout his or her course of study.

Students join the senior learning community in the fall or spring semester of their senior year. It is discipline specific and consists of a senior capstone course and a senior reflective tutorial course with 100 hours of field placement in each student's area of specialization. The capstone course, the reflective tutorial course, and the 100-hour practicum, are required to be taken concurrently during the same semester.

The business senior learning community in the professional programs division offers a bachelor of arts in business administration in finance, accounting, marketing, management and international business. The ultimate goal of the senior program is that all business seniors merge a liberal education with specialized knowledge into a real world applied practice. The senior capstone course, business policy and strategy, focuses on the development of analytical as well as professional skills by engaging students in rigorous teamwork case studies. This arrangement allows them to synthesize various elements of the strategic process into a well-formulated plan that addresses all aspects of a firm's internal and external environments. The themes discussed in the capstone course are not only applied to their 100-hour practicum in their chosen concentration of study, but are also discussed in the reflective tutorial course. Included in these discussions are issues pertaining to all aspects of professional development, with emphasis on the challenges of the transition from student to civic-minded professionals. The purpose of these rigorous team-oriented classes is to prepare students for their chosen career or entrance to graduate school.

Six years after the implementation of its plan for the practical liberal arts, Wagner College is committed to civic engagement and to the formation of reflective, civic-minded professionals and citizen leaders. In this realm, for the academic year 2003-04, Wagner was chosen as one of seven schools from 137 applicants for a grant from the Center for Liberal Education and Civic Engagement, to assess and deepen the pedagogies and practices of civic engagement and campus-community partnerships. The grant for "Journey Toward Democracy: Power, Voice and the Public Good," a national dialogue project, combined democratic pedagogy and dialogues among an inter-institutional team of faculty, students and staff to strengthen the undergraduate experience, the campus community and the civic mission of the college.

In the spring 2004 semester, the department of business administration chose to further this mission by devoting one of the three business senior reflective tutorials to civic engagement and campus-community partnerships. The search for a community partner led to the Staten Island Economic and Development Center.

SIEDC had been approached by many business leaders in the community, now called the Bayview Community Council, to elicit an action plan on the revitalization of the St. George area of Staten Island. Because of other priorities and lack of manpower, SIEDC had not acted on the request. When Wagner's department of business administration approached SIEDC with six seniors who had obtained academic knowledge in accounting, management, marketing, finance and internal business, and said it was willing to devote 100 hours per student to this project, the partnership was quickly formed. The partnership resulted in the civic engagement project called the St. George Action Plan. SIEDC hired a project manager solely devoted to the implementation of this plan.

Mechanics of the Project

In complying with this grant, the business department made adjustments to the "traditional" reflective tutorial course.

Wagner's business students traditionally were allowed to complete a field placement of their choosing, according to their interest or field of specialization. With this reflective tutorial course devoted to civic engagement, the students were not allowed to do a practicum of their choice. Instead, the business students were partnered with the SIEDC. They were required to maintain a log or diary of their field work, including at least the dates they attended the site, a brief description of the duties performed on each date, and the signature of the SIEDC's project manager to verify the dates and work performed. Completion of the 100-hour practicum, constituted 30 percent of the students' final grade for the reflective tutorial course.

Students in the "traditional" reflective tutorial course were allowed to choose a research topic of their choice for their comprehensive research paper. For the course devoted to civic engagement, the required senior thesis project was a needs-assessment plan of the St. George area involving applied and research-based learning. The expectation was of a well-defined and rigorous document that would ideally encapsulate the students' field experiences and personal reflections, integrating them into a larger academic theme and body of literature. The senior thesis constituted 50 percent of the students' final grade for the course.

The weekly reflective tutorial meetings included class discussion of assigned readings, class discussion of students' field experiences and progress on their senior theses; a discussion of professional, career, and civic development issues through guest speaker presentations; field trips; and other suitable on- and off-campus events. This third component of the course did not differ drastically from the "traditional" reflective tutorial course except that the guest lecturers discussed their research and best practices with field-based projects. Participation in these specialized events completed the remaining 20 percent of the students' final grades.

From February through April of the spring 2004 semester, the six business students, working as business consultants, tried to accomplish their goal of identifying the

economic, social and civic problems of the St. George area. Collaboratively, they wrote an 18-question open-ended questionnaire and interviewed more than 60 community members, including public officials, government leaders, workers, property owners, business owners, school administrators, staff and students, and residents of the area. The culmination of their efforts was the St. George Action Plan, which reflected the needs and wants of the St. George community, and offered solutions to the issues that many believed hindered the development of the area. Bound copies of the final needs-assessment plan were distributed to all members of the community and made available at Wagner's library. The assessment identified 10 key concerns of the community, included short and long-term solutions, and identified the agency that should be responsible for the implementation of each revitalization component.

Additionally, the students had to make public appearances. They held a press conference on March 10, 2004. They also made two formal presentations of their findings. The first was to the Wagner College community on April 20, 2004. The second presentation was at the Sixth Annual Staten Island Economic Development Conference at the Hilton Garden Inn on April 27, 2004. Among the many attendees and speakers at this conference were Staten Island Borough President James P. Molinaro; former Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato; Mayor Michael Bloomberg; Barbara Corcoran, Founder of the Corcoran Group; Kevin Burke, president of Consolidated Edison; Greg David, editor of *Crain's New York Business*; and Vernon Hill, founder chairman of Commerce Bank. Four articles, written on March 9, March 11, April 27, and April 28, 2004, appeared in the *Staten Island Advance*, mentioning Wagner College students' work on the St. George Action Plan.

Notwithstanding the positive exposure and many compliments received, this civic engagement project, for pedagogical purposes, was assessed in terms of learning goals.

Learning Goals and Assessment

Learning goals for the senior reflective tutorial and the business department's senior learning community were previously discussed. However, these learning goals can be assessed in many ways, including examination of the final product (in this case the St. George Action Plan); one-on-one discussions with students as to their perception of attained learning objectives, and comments from our community partner, the Staten Island Economic Development Center (especially its project manager attesting to student performance).

The challenge was to choose an assessment method or system of methods that could truly capture and measure the learning skills attained through this process. In order to assess the efficacy of this senior learning community endeavor, and in particular this reflective tutorial devoted to civic engagement, my assessment methodology included four steps:

- Identify and quantify specific skills measured by the St. George Action Plan assessment questionnaire.

- Formally grade learning perceptions measured by the students' faculty evaluations.
- Receive un-graded, unsolicited comments measured by the students' reflective papers.
- Measure interest by the community in having Wagner College students work in their community, also measured by the Staten Island community questionnaire.

In May 2004, at the completion of the St. George Action Plan project, in order to assess and quantify specific learning skills, each student and the SIEDC project manager were asked to complete the St. George Action Plan assessment questionnaire (see Table 1). Anonymity was offered to the students but the questionnaire completed by the project manager was not anonymous.

The questionnaire was designed with 17 evaluative skills and two open-ended questions. Each evaluative skill was ranked from 1 to 4. A score of 1 meant students felt they achieved an above average level of competence in that skill set. A score of 2 meant students felt they achieved an average level of competence. A score of 3 meant students felt they achieved below average competence. A score of 4 meant students felt the evaluative skill was not applicable to the project.

In order to capture the perceptions of the students and project manager and to compare the two scores (The first step of the assessment methodology mentioned above), Table 1 lists the composite scores of the six students, the project manager's and the total score. The following three scores, for each of the 17 evaluative skills, are in ascending order of the total score.

Table 1: St. George Action Plan Assessment Questionnaire

Evaluative Skills	Student	SIEDC	Total
Interpersonal & Oral Communication Skills	1.000	1.000	1.0000
Ability To Work As A Team-Teamwork	1.000	1.000	1.0000
Civic Awareness	1.166	1.000	1.1429
Ability To Listen Effectively	1.166	1.000	1.1429
Public Speaking	1.333	1.000	1.2857
Ability To Analyze Situations & Information	1.333	1.000	1.2857
Ability To Critique Situations & Information	1.333	1.000	1.2857
Sense Of Professionalism	1.333	1.000	1.2857
Ability To Make Decisions	1.333	1.000	1.2857
Creativity	1.500	1.000	1.4286
Strategic Development	1.500	1.000	1.4286
Ability To Organize-Organizational Skills	1.500	1.000	1.4286
Sense Of Leadership/Ownership	1.500	2.000	1.5714
Ability To Problem-Solve	1.833	1.000	1.7143
Ability To Think Things Through In Steps- Methodical Reasoning	1.666	2.000	1.7143
Ability To Prioritize	1.833	1.000	1.7143
Written Communication	2.000	1.000	1.8571

None of the respondents checked box 4 in any of the 17 categories. This was very reassuring because all respondents felt the skills listed on the questionnaire (the same skills this reflective tutorial experience was supposed to enhance) were indeed applicable to this project.

Thirteen of the 17 skills were evaluated between average and above average and received a composite score of less than 1.5. The evaluative skill, “Interpersonal & Oral Communication” and “Ability to Work as a Team” received a perfect score of 1 (above average) This was not surprising because the students almost always worked in groups, were in constant contact with the community, and made many presentations.

Additionally, all the composite scores in Table 1 were rated below 2 (average) or better in each skill set. Note that the project manager gave a perfect score of 1 in every evaluative skill except “Sense of Leadership” and “Methodical Reasoning.” Those were scored 2 (average).

All considered, the level of the students’ perceived competence in these 17 skills attained through this senior learning community reflective tutorial dedicated to civic engagement and community partnership is truly remarkable.

The two open-ended questions in the questionnaire were, “Please explain how this experience has deepened your knowledge of business and your particular area of concentration (accounting, finance, marketing, management and international business),” and, “Any other comments?” See Tables 2 and 3, respectively for student responses.

The purpose behind the first open-ended question (Table 2) was to measure the students’ perception of how this experience enhanced their own fields of specialization as is done in other traditional business senior reflective tutorials. As mentioned previously, in the traditional business senior reflective tutorials, students are allowed to choose their 100-hour practicum placement. Most students continue work they started in a previous internship related to their field of study or work closely with the director of internships in the business administration department to select a company and type of placement that will enhance their skills in their chosen fields of study. With this reflective tutorial devoted to civic engagement, the students were required to work with the community partner, in this case the Staten Island Economic and Development Center, and were required to work on the St. George Action Plan. They had no choice as to placement and type of project. Thus, the first open-ended question was vital in the assessment of this endeavor because it provided a measurement of whether the students felt this reflective tutorial added value to their specific field of specialization (i.e., accounting, finance, marketing, management and international business). Negative feedback on this question would have meant that the students would have preferred a traditional reflective tutorial course.

Table 2: Open-Ended Question #1 of the St. George Action Plan Assessment Questionnaire

Question: Please explain how this experience has deepened your knowledge of business and your particular area of concentration (accounting, finance, marketing, management and international business).

Responses:

“This experience was wonderful for me because I am going into business growth and development. Now I feel I have adequate experience. I truly understand what goes into an economic plan.”

“In a way we were marketing and advertising ourselves when we would do interviews and made public presentations.”

“I don’t feel this experience deepened my knowledge of finance but I do believe I gained a great deal of knowledge about public speaking, oral communication skills and teamwork.”

“It helped me to make decisions that will benefit a team not just myself. It also gave me more confidence in the business world.”

“This project had nothing to do with accounting but it has definitely deepened my knowledge of the business world in general. I learned how important it is to be able to listen to what people are saying and the importance of getting out there and getting to know the community around you. Also, it improved my public speaking skills and increased my sense of professionalism.”

“I have increased my social skills within the business world. I have learned how finance relates to all aspects of the world by working on the St. George Action Plan. I have realized how finance can make or break an area.”

“There are certain skills and experiences taken from this internship that are useful for every area of concentration, such as teamwork, public speaking and dealing with professionals in the business atmosphere. Each student also was faced with analyzing data and developing marketing strategies in an effort to market the plan in the most effective way.”

As seen in Table 2, on average, all students and the SIEDC project manager offered positive feedback to this question. Even though some of the students may have felt that this project did not directly add value to their specific field of specialization, they all felt it added value to their business acumen.

The second open-ended question was designed to offer the students the opportunity to give unstructured feedback on the experience that may not have been captured in the closed-ended questions. Responses to the second open-ended question are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Open-Ended Question #2 of the “St. George Action Plan” Assessment Questionnaire

<p>Question: Any other comments?</p> <p>Responses:</p> <p>“This was a great opportunity. Thank you for creating this special RFT.”</p> <p>“It was a good learning experience and it will hopefully look good on my resume. I would definitely recommend this type of project in the future.”</p> <p>“This experience taught me how important civic engagement is to learning.”</p> <p>“We should keep this project going. It’s both positive for students and Wagner College.”</p> <p>“I really feel this project should be continued by Wagner College students and if not this particular one, definitely something like it.”</p> <p>“I truly feel this was a great learning experience for all. I hope to see more projects of this nature in the future.”</p>

The second step of my assessment methodology stated previously was to be able to formally grade student learning. This task could be accomplished through the use of students’ faculty evaluations. Student evaluations of this reflective tutorial course devoted to civic engagement and community partnership offered during the spring 2004 semester were compared to the faculty evaluations of the traditional business reflective tutorial course I taught during the spring 2003 semester. On the faculty evaluations that were anonymously completed by the students at the end of the semesters, students were asked to respond to statements on the form using a five-point scale: 1 meant strongly agree; 2, agree; 3, neutral; 4, disagree, and 5, strongly disagree. Table 4 compares responses both semesters to five questions that addressed learning skills.

Table 4: Faculty Evaluations of Senior RFT courses

	Spring 2003	Spring 2004
After this course, I am better able to understand how the subject is related to other subject areas.	1.56	1.00
I have become more self-confident as an independent thinker as a result of the course.	1.44	1.17
I have increased my ability to think critically and improved my problem solving abilities.	1.67	1.17
I have increased my knowledge of the subject matter.	1.22	1.33
I have improved my communication skills (written and oral).	1.11	1.33
Number of Students/Respondents	9	6

Notable in this comparison is the students' overall rating for the spring 2004 course, which was devoted to civic engagement. In that semester's faculty evaluation, students gave substantially higher ratings in response to three of the five statements compared with those in 2003 (In interpreting the scores in Table 4, the lower the number, the better the rating). Those three statements were:

- After this course, I am better able to understand how the subject is related to other subject areas.
- I have become more self-confident as an independent thinker as a result of the course.
- I have increased my ability to think critically and improved my problem solving abilities.

A possible reason why the 2004 students rated their responses lower (better) to the statement, "I have increased my knowledge of the subject matter," may be because the students strictly interpreted the knowledge of the subject matter to mean the knowledge of their field of specialization and not the general knowledge of business practices.

As for the last statement, "I have improved my communication skills (written and oral)," I can see from their reflective papers and the questionnaire that they certainly felt they had improved their oral communication skills. Thus the lower (better) rating would have to apply to the written communication skills. A possible reason for the lower rating in 2004 compared to 2003 may involve the required research paper for the course. As previously mentioned, the 2004 reflective tutorial devoted to civic engagement was altered to include not a research topic of the students' choice culminating in a comprehensive research paper, but a needs-assessment plan of the St. George area. Although equally rigorous, the kind of writing differed. However, the students may have perceived a difference and since they collaborated on the needs-assessment plan, they may have felt their written communication skills were not tested in the same way as required in the traditional reflective tutorial. A score of 1.33 is not that different from 1.11 and still means that the students felt their writing skills were improved because of this project.

The results from the student evaluation further prove that civic engagement enhances student learning.

In addition to the St. George Action Plan assessment questionnaire and the student evaluations, each student was asked to write a reflective paper on this specific practicum. These un-graded, unsolicited comments were used as the third tool in my assessment methodology in ascertaining the academic rigor of this reflective tutorial endeavor and measuring attained learning skills.

All of the papers were extremely positive and expressed appreciation for this unique opportunity. The following words and phrases are from these papers (Written permission was obtained from the students to use any and all of their written material associated with this project. Full copies of their reflective papers are available upon request):

- *Improve communication, presentation, interviewing, computer (and) public speaking skills*
- *Effective group work*
- *Opportunity to become decision-makers, creative thinkers*
- *Exposure to contacts in the business field, networking, high visibility*
- *Work with different personalities*
- *“Read” people*
- *Professionalism*
- *Personal input valued and taken seriously*
- *Telephone etiquette*
- *Learned not to take rejection personally*
- *Respond to difficult questions on feet*
- *Learned importance of compromise*
- *Became more open to suggestions*
- *Learned necessary everyday tasks are just as important in order to successfully complete a project*
- *Gains in marketing relation as well as real world experiences*
- *Benefit students in future, looks good on résumé, open doors to future jobs*
- *Able hold an intelligent conversation.*

These comments show that these students were able to look upon this experience as a springboard to their next step after graduation: working in a corporate setting or going to graduate school.

The following words and phrases were used by students when describing their overall experience with the project:

- *Found experience rewarding, fulfilling, has truly enriched my life both personally and career wise*
- *Continued interest in the community, opened up a new sense in me, may look at economic development center in home area*
- *Forced me to look deeper into the area surrounding*
- *Broadened my education in a way that no other internships would have*
- *Worked on real project with real results*
- *Became emotionally involved (and) attached*
- *Excited about the project when realized significance of the work*
- *Made me feel part of something*

The “traditional” reflective tutorial experiences do not offer the students the same attachment and sense of ownership of their practicum.

Lastly, the fourth step of my assessment methodology, in measuring the level of interest by the community in having Wagner College students work in their community, I distributed the Staten Island Community Needs Questionnaire to participants at the Sixth Annual Staten Island Economic Development Conference at the Hilton Garden Inn on April 27, 2004. Table 5 is a copy of the questionnaire that was distributed.

Table 5: Survey of the Staten Island Community Needs Questionnaire

Name: _____ Title: _____

Company Name: _____

Company Address: _____

Phone # (_____) _____ Best time to call: _____

E-mail address: _____

In what capacity can Wagner students serve your company's needs?

How many students would you or your company be willing to work with during a semester?

Preferred #: _____ Minimum #: _____ Maximum #: _____

Would you like us to contact you to discuss possible mutual collaborations?

Is there any other Staten Island Community(ies) you believe may benefit from a similar service?

Thank you for taking the time to fill this out and we look forward to working with you in the future.

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Many inquiries were received, indicating an interest in repeating this type of project. In fact, we were asked by the Small Business Association to apply for another grant promoting civic engagement, community partnerships, and the restructuring of the areas surrounding St. George. The proposal for the grant has been written and we are awaiting confirmation at the time of this writing. If our proposal is accepted, I will be teaching a senior learning community reflective tutorial course in the spring 2005 semester devoted to civic engagement, focusing on the development of a commercial redevelopment and revitalization program in Northfield, West Brighton and Bayview, Downtown Staten Island.

Specifically, this new endeavor will be divided into two phases. Phase I, the planning phase, will run from October through December 2004. Wagner College will meet with the three community partners, Northfield Community Local Development Corporation, West Brighton Local Development Corporation, and the Bayview Downtown Staten Island Council, to research, identify, plan and organize the details of the project. Phase II, the implementation and data collection phase, will run from January through April 2005. The 12 to 15 senior students majoring in business who will be registered in the spring 2005 reflective tutorial devoted to civic engagement each will devote 100 hours to work with their assigned community partner on the actionable plan formulated in Phase I. The focus of the spring 2005 reflective tutorial will be centered on, but not limited to, organizing special events; storefront improvements; Green Market and waterfront revitalization, and business attractions and retention programs. We are excited about this new prospect as we expand the civic engagement mission of the college, forge new relationships with our community partners, and create new opportunities for learning for our students.

Lessons Learned

Reflecting on the lessons learned from this project and teaching a course with a civic engagement component, I would have to stress the following points:

- **Build a relationship with your community partner** – This would definitely not have been such a rewarding experience for the students had it not been for the relationship they built with the SIEDC's project manager. They worked very closely together and even though they knew she was in charge, the students felt free to express their opinions and spearhead new ideas. And they knew their opinions were valued. Furthermore, it would definitely not have been such a rewarding experience for SIEDC and members of the Bayview Community Council, had it not been for the relationship built between them and Wagner. As a group, we formally met three times prior to the project. They invited us to visit their place of work. Our students were offered accommodations, including use of a computer, desk, telephone, FAX and mail at one of their business sites in the St. George area. Our community partners were invited to the students' presentation of the project delivered to the Wagner community and SIEDC's project manager was invited to attend a few of the weekly class sessions.

- **Keep the lines of communication open** – Conflicts are bound to arise when dealing with multiple stakeholders. If a rapport has been established, they can be quickly resolved. A particular situation occurred on the St. George Action Plan project where my students were not comfortable with two solutions being proposed by SIEDC. This plan was to be presented as work submitted by Wagner students. The students did not concur on these two solutions to the revitalization of the St. George area. I spoke with SIEDC. It was decided to note in the document and presentation that those two suggestions “were created specifically by SIEDC.”
- **Be flexible** – When dealing with multiple stakeholders, you may have to compromise, shift priorities, or make allowances due to time constraints. This does not mean you have to sacrifice your personal beliefs or lower your academic standards! As an example of flexibility, one student had personal obligations preventing him from starting the 100-hour practicum when scheduled. In speaking with the project manager and the student, we were able to come up with ways in which he could still be an active member of the group and complete his 100 hours.
- **Be prepared to turn over control** – A different relationship may develop between you and your students because your students are now working with a community partner and are not restricted to the information you are trying to impart on them in your course. If you accept it and embrace that, the relationship will be less strained. You can still be in charge without controlling every aspect of the project.
- **Be prepared to do more work** – When I first agreed to teach this course, I did not realize how many additional hours it would require of me. As students become more engaged, the instructor becomes more engaged. However, unlike the many hours spent on grading, these hours are more fun!
- **Obtain the support from your chair and administration** – At Wagner College, the faculty is fortunate in that the administration not only supports our efforts, but it is part of Wagner’s civic mission statement. However, this type of support needs to be more than, “Okay, you can teach this course.” Allowances need to be made in the instructor’s course load to reflect the number of additional hours spent on a civic engagement project or for some equitable remuneration. Furthermore, discussion should occur among the faculty, the chair and administration, with respect to scholarship. If a faculty member wishes to write a rigorous scholarly paper on a civic engagement project and that paper is accepted in a peer-reviewed journal, that paper should be accepted by the college’s Faculty Personnel Committee as evidence of scholarly work, regardless of the faculty member’s field of specialization. This is especially important for untenured faculty members. My biggest fear is that if civic engagement writing is not treated in the same manner as discipline-specific scholarly writing, then civic engagement projects will be reserved primarily for tenured faculty members. This would be an educational travesty as this study clearly shows that civic engagement projects not only benefit the institution and the community partners, but also enhance student learning.

Conclusion

The St. George Action Plan — A Senior Learning Community Civic Engagement Endeavor has been a wonderful and educational learning experience for our former Wagner College business seniors, the Staten Island Economic Development Center, the Staten Island community and the Wagner community, as demonstrated by the four learning-assessment measurements above.

This project provided the students with a foundation for active social and civic involvement and instilled in them the conviction that the processes and institutions of our democracy offer each person the best opportunity to improve the condition of society and the opportunity to make a difference. Of equal importance, civic engagement endeavors enhance student learning.

It is the students' hopes, and ours, that the culmination of this project will serve as a springboard to the actual implementation of some or all of the proposed changes, as monitored by the Bayview Council and the Staten Island Economic Development Center, reflecting the needs and wants of the St. George community and its partners. And, in keeping with the mission of Wagner College, it is our further hope that we will be able to forge partnerships with other community leaders on Staten Island to develop successful learning-experience projects for all participants.

Author Information

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