

Research University SPACES

THE SERU SURVEY AND THE MULTIPLE PURPOSES OF
UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

THE PROBLEM

- * Previous theories of the student experience have focused primarily on academic knowledge and skills development (see, e.g., NSSE Engagement Indicators)

- * These academic purposes remain central, but what educators, students, and the public want from the undergraduate experience is broader and multi-dimensional.

OUR SOLUTION: 5 EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES + CONTEXTS

Social Skills

Personal Development

Academic Development

Civic Engagement

Economic Opportunity

Settings (in and outside the Classroom)

Social Skills Purposes

* **Interpersonal Skills**

- Engaging and communicating with others effectively
- Collaboration and teamwork skills
- Interaction with people from diverse backgrounds
- Conflict management and mediation

* **Social Network Development**

Personal Development Purposes

- * **Exploration of Life Purposes** (experimenting with different visions of oneself)
- * **Developing a sense of agency** (as opposed to passive consumerism)
- * **Fostering of conscientiousness**
- * **Creation of a Commitment to Health and Well-being**

Academic Purposes

- * **Advancing General Cognitive Skills** (analytical & critical thinking, information literacy, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, written expression)
- * **Deepening Knowledge of a Specialized Field**
- * **Opportunities to Develop Research Skills**
- * **Engagement with Study and Classroom Life** (as opposed to utilitarianism)

Civic Engagement Purposes

- * **Preparation for Democratic Citizenship**

- Knowledge about domestic political issues
- Participation in the political process

- * **Opportunities to Learn from Community Service**

- * **Global Awareness and Knowledge**

Economic Opportunity Purposes

- * **Affordability and Mobility Opportunities**
- * **Work-related Skills Development** (e.g. chairing meetings, marketing events, preparing budgets, recruiting, creating websites)
- * **Career Awareness and Knowledge**
- * **Connecting College Experiences to Post-College Plans**

Settings

* **Academic Settings** that are supportive, respectful, challenging, and at least occasionally collaborative

* **Campus Settings** that are inclusive, respectful, and safe

The Mapping Project

* The SERU Design and Content Workgroup (DCW) is currently mapping SERU items to these multiple dimensions of a research university education.

* A subgroup of DCW is conducting exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis to determine whether factor structure parallels the SPACES conceptual model.

The Research University: A Learning Environment Like No Other

- * Students are surrounded by world-class authorities who ideally challenge them to meet high standards.
- * They also foster mobilized learning environments outside the classroom (in student organizations, coffee shops, arts performances, residence halls) with daily opportunities for growth
- * They are “exposed” spaces where students encounter people from a wide variety of backgrounds, collaborate and compete with them, and are required to show initiative to succeed.

The Challenge

- * Public research universities face the challenge of building and, where desirable, integrating the multiple development and learning purposes they encompass.

- * The SPACES model conceptualizes the multiple dimensions of undergraduate education and allows administrators, faculty, and staff to consider how best to maximize the effectiveness of these special educational institutions.