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## Evaluating Beyond the Ivory Tower: Lessons Learned from the Scholars Program

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### ABSTRACT

The University of Minnesota Extension Scholars Program is a competency-based, multidisciplinary, cohort-based faculty development program offering a “Learning Circle” grounded in adult learning theory paired with funding for community-engaged research. It aims to build capacity for community-engaged scholarship, catalyze institutional support, and benefit community partners. This article reports on the program evaluation of the first Scholars Program cohort and offers recommendations for future programs, as well as insights regarding evaluation of higher education community engagement efforts.

*Keywords:* community-engaged scholarship, community-engaged research, professional development, learning circle, adult learning, ripple effect mapping

In 2009, the Children, Youth and Family Consortium (CYFC) at the University of Minnesota created a professional development experience, the “Community-engaged Scholars Program” (Scholars Program), to build capacity on our campus for effective and respectful community-based participatory research (CBPR) and community-engaged scholarship (CES). The Scholars Program is a four-year, multidisciplinary, cohort-based program with two primary components. First, in the Learning Circle, scholars meet approximately bi-monthly over the four years to learn about CBPR and CES, examine disciplinary approaches to scholarship and engagement, provide peer mentoring, and learn to navigate career advancement as a community-engaged scholar. Second, an annual small grant for each scholar supports a research project addressing education or health disparities, or their intersection. This research project is the experiential component of the program, offering opportunities to apply

partnership formation, CBPR and CES skills to a real-life project. This program is described fully in the introductory article of this special issue.

The purposes of this article are to report on the approach and results of a program evaluation of the first cohort of scholars, to offer recommendations for future faculty development programs based on lessons learned, and to provide insights about evaluation of community engagement in higher education.

The Scholars Program aims to enhance the capacity of participants to effectively and respectfully engage communities; contribute to the advancement of participants’ careers as community-engaged scholars; generate new knowledge about educational or health disparities; create opportunities to apply knowledge to enhance the work of practitioners and policymakers; and contribute to greater acceptance and credibility of CES. The program evaluation therefore aimed to document the impact of

the Scholars Program at four levels: 1) individual professional development, 2) contribution to the field, 3) community benefit, and 4) institutional change.

### EVALUATING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Designing an evaluation around the four outcomes noted above required the use of creative methods for engaging a wide range of program stakeholders inside and outside the university. The literature on evaluation of community engagement efforts provides a context for the decisions we made about our evaluation approach. Few authors have written specifically on evaluation strategies for measuring the success of CBPR or CBPR training efforts. One notable exception is an article by DeHaven, Gimpel, Dallo, and Billmeier (2011), which describes an evaluation of a program very similar to the Scholars Program. The Community Health Fellowship Program offered a nine-week training in CBPR to medical students. Evaluation of the program included questionnaires conducted with the medical student “fellows” as well as representatives of community-based organizations. The evaluation found that the fellows gained skills in community-based research methods and an increased awareness of community needs, while community partners reported favorable attitudes about the program.

Most of the literature on evaluation of community engagement has focused on service-learning programs. Though the Scholars Program is not related to service-learning activities, we found the service-learning impact literature replete with lessons that informed our approach to evaluating this community engagement initiative focused on capacity-building for community-engaged research. A major study of service-learning programs nationwide, con-

ducted by the Rand Corporation (Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind, 2000), included a comprehensive analysis of student, community, and institutional outcomes. The study found that students’ impact on community-based organizations included improving the quality of their services, allowing them to provide more services to more people, and increasing awareness and support from community members. However, many studies of community outcomes have focused more on satisfaction with the work of student volunteers than on the outcomes or impacts that community organizations have been able to achieve with student support. Giles and Eyler (1998) identified the top 10 unanswered research questions regarding service-learning several years ago and found there was not much evidence of service-learning programs engaging community members in planning processes or assessing the effect of service-learning on communities. This literature highlighted for us the need to include community members in our evaluation process, and to evaluate community impact intentionally.

As lamented in a recent editorial in this journal (Paterson, 2012), trends in service-learning article submissions have continued to focus on educational outcomes for students, with relatively less attention to community outcomes. Cooks and Sharrar (2006) note that evaluation of service-learning needs to focus both on individual and collective/organizational outcomes. Coste and Druker (2001) suggest that evaluation of service-learning must interweave the student, client organization, and faculty perspectives. Swords and Kiely (2010) describe service-learning as a tool for movement building and institutional change, yet offer little insight into the ways that evaluation activities related to service-learning may be used to promote these change strategies. These studies stressed for us the importance of evaluating at four levels: indi-

vidual development, contribution to the field, the community benefit, and impact on the institution.

It is ironic that while there has been a stream of evaluative thinking on the effect of community engagement on communities, little of this evaluation work has been truly participatory or engaged in nature. Participatory evaluation strategies (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002) move beyond thinking of program stakeholders as recipients of evaluative information and integrate program stakeholders in the evaluation process. This participatory approach dramatically increases the potential for evaluation results to be useful for program stakeholders such as community-based organizations (Patton, 2012).

Over the years, Cousins and colleagues (1998, 2014) developed increasingly sophisticated ways of understanding what they refer to as collaborative inquiry in evaluation. At one end of the continuum, practical participatory evaluation strategies involve key stakeholders in evaluation design, data collection, and data interpretation, but the evaluator maintains some level of control over the process (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). More collaborative approaches (Ayers, 1987) share control more evenly with program stakeholders, while transformative participatory evaluation or empowerment evaluation emphasize participant control and self-determination, usually with a goal of transforming power relations and promoting social change (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007).

As described below, the evaluation design for the Scholars program strove to engage multiple program stakeholders—the scholars themselves, administrators in their departments, community partners, and program facilitators—in the evaluation process.

## EVALUATION METHOD

Evaluation of the Scholars Program included two methods. An annual questionnaire, developed by the first author (the program facilitator), was intended to capture, from the scholars' perspectives, perceptions about impact of the Scholars Program at the individual development and contribution to the field levels, and to a lesser extent and indirectly, the community benefit level. An impact evaluation method called "Ripple Effect Mapping" (REM), implemented by the second and third authors (program evaluators) after the final year of the program, was designed to capture, from the perspectives of the scholars, their community partners, and their administrators, perceptions of impact at the individual, field, community, and institutional levels. The two evaluation approaches tapped different information about what impact occurred at what level of influence for which audiences. Both are presented in this article to provide a comprehensive picture of the outcomes of the Scholars Program.

REM is a group participatory evaluation strategy for developmental and impact evaluation (Kollock, Flage, Chazdon & Higgins, 2012). REM engages program participants and stakeholders to retrospectively and visually map the chain of effects resulting from a program or complex collaboration. As a participatory evaluation approach, it treats program stakeholders as integral, active participants in the evaluation process, rather than as passive recipients of program evaluation results. REM employs elements of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007), interactive group interviewing, mind mapping, and qualitative data analysis. Appreciative Inquiry is "a process that inquires into, identifies, and further develops the best of what is in organizations in order to create a better future" (Coghlan, Preskill, & Tzavaras Cat-

sambas, 2003, p. 5). REM is particularly useful for complex initiatives such as the Scholars Program because it allows engagement of key stakeholders in the evaluation and typically motivates participants and stakeholders to continue community development work.

Two sets of participants are invited to REM sessions—direct program participants and those not involved in the program but with knowledge of and interest in the program. As a qualitative method, REM employs the principles of “purposeful” sampling (Patton, 2015). Compared to probability sampling, which emphasizes generalizability, purposeful sampling emphasizes depth of understanding. Participants are recruited for REM sessions based on the richness of information and range of perspective they can provide to the group conversation. The energy that comes from pairing people who are close to an intervention with people who are more distant is often productive and highlights the connections between the direct activities of program participants and the “ripples” to broader activities beyond the scope of the program.

REM sessions can include anywhere from 12 to 20 participants, approximately equally divided between the “participant” and “other stakeholder” categories. After an initial Appreciative Inquiry interview process, all members of the group report out the impacts of the program they heard in the interviews and all comments are recorded on a mind map displayed on a screen. Two REM co-facilitators then work with the group to organize the disparate effects into themes, and then probe more deeply into the reported effects to create perceived causal chains that display how the effects came about, as well as what additional effects may have arisen.

Consultation with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that this

evaluation did not meet the definition of human subjects research and did not require IRB approval.

### Participants

The four scholars were the respondents for the annual questionnaire. When one scholar left the University to take a job abroad after year 2 of the program, his mentee, a physician who had returned to school for a graduate degree, became a scholar and became the questionnaire respondent. As the questionnaire inquired about the scholar as an individual, she responded with information about herself. Information was no longer collected from the scholar who withdrew participation. The final group of four scholars were all female, included two individuals of European American descent, one from China, and one of African American descent. Additional characteristics of scholars are described in the introductory article of this special issue.

Participants in REM included the four scholars, eight administrators from the scholars’ departments or colleges as well as the University of Minnesota Office for Public Engagement, and eight community partners from community-based organizations and local government units. In addition, the first author (who served as the primary program facilitator) participated in the entire REM process, and her colleague, who had served as a co-facilitator for the first year of the program, participated in part of the REM process.

### Design

**Questionnaire.** The questionnaire was sent to scholars via email at the end of each year to document progress toward their research and community engagement goals and professional development plans; revised goals for the coming year; grant writing efforts; community and scholarly dissemination achievements; expanding

networks and collaborations; and perceived benefits of the Scholars Program. Though some questionnaire items asked for counts (i.e., of scholarly products), scholars were also asked to provide a detailed narrative response to open-ended questions related to the evolution of their scholarly and community engagement goals and impact of the program on their development as community-engaged scholars.

All scholars responded to the annual questionnaire. After year 1, scholars were asked to update their responses (i.e., in year 4, scholars were given their previous year's responses and asked to add to both their quantitative and qualitative responses.) Productivity tallies were therefore cumulative and the scholars' personal description of their program experience and development as a community-engaged scholar was constructed over time, resulting in a narrative paragraphs or pages long. The program facilitator often followed up annual questionnaires by phone to clarify comments and add details to the narratives. The questionnaire data presented in this article is based on year 4 data, which summarized the cumulative productivity and perceptions of each scholar over the course of the program. As a result of the change in scholar participation when one scholar left the University, the questionnaire data presented in this article reflects four years of participation for three scholars and two years of participation for the newest scholar. The questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

#### **Ripple Effect Mapping methods.**

For purposes of this evaluation, the evaluation team decided early on that two separate REM sessions would be needed to accommodate the full range of program stakeholders. At one session, focusing on the intended program outcomes related to the faculty, institution, and the health and educational disparities research field, the "participant" group included the scholars and the

"stakeholder" group included administrators from the scholars' academic departments and the Office for Public Engagement. In the second session, focused on community outcomes, the "participant" group was once again the scholars, but the "stakeholder" group included their partners in the community-based organizations and local governmental units that had collaborated on CBPR projects.

The two REM sessions were held in the summer of 2013. Each session began with an Appreciative Inquiry exercise that grouped individuals from the "participant" and "stakeholder" categories to interview each other about program highlights and successes and connections made. Appreciative Inquiry questions are provided in Appendix B. After everyone in the room reported out on these changes, the mind mapping process continued as described earlier. By the end of each session, rough drafts of two mind maps were created. The REM co-facilitators then conducted follow-up interviews with key participants who were unable to attend the REM sessions and added their reported effects to the mind maps.

#### **Analysis**

**Questionnaire.** Responses to Year 4 questionnaires regarding outputs—numbers of grants received, publications accepted, presentations delivered, community partnerships formed, and faculty and students involved—were tallied across the four scholars. Narrative responses were reviewed by the first author for themes related to perceived improvements in skills or knowledge or other benefits realized as well as future goals for community-engaged research.

**Ripple Effect Mapping.** After all interviews were completed, the data from both REM sessions were combined into one composite mind map. The REM co-facilitators reviewed the map with the pro-

gram facilitators, organized it into five core themes, and returned the map to the program facilitator for vetting with REM session participants. These participants were given an opportunity to revisit map content and suggest changes. Finally, the data in the map were exported to Microsoft Excel and coded using the four categories of intended program outcomes: benefits for the scholar, benefits for the educational and health disparities field, benefits for the community partner organizations, and benefits for the university or institutionalization of CES.

## EVALUATION RESULTS

### Questionnaire Results

Scholars were asked to list scholarly products stemming from their Scholars Program research, including publications, presentations, and grants. At the end of year 4, scholars had published eight peer-reviewed publications and four invited articles in university publications. Numerous additional articles were in review or in preparation. Scholars had also made 12 refereed presentations and many invited presentations for campus and community audiences. Scholars had garnered over \$738,000 in federal, foundation, and university-based funding. Several additional grants had been submitted but not funded, were in review or in preparation at the time of the questionnaire. Some scholars were more focused on scholarly productivity and grant writing than others. For example, one had not yet had time to garner additional funding or publish findings. However, she didn't need to raise additional funds to complete her project or advance her work at the time. She was also most focused on expanding her partnership and dissemination to the community rather than publishing in peer-reviewed journals.

To assess the effectiveness of the Scholars Program in expanding scholars'

access to community and academic networks, scholars were asked to list community partners and faculty and students engaged in their research. Scholars reported working with a variety of community partners. Although one scholar worked with a single community partner, the other three collaborated with 7, 15, and 20 partners through their Scholars Program research. Through research, scholars also meaningfully involved faculty (range = 2 to 14) across 10 disciplines as well as undergraduate and graduate students (range = 0 to 20). Three of the scholars also developed a new research partnership among themselves and sought grant funds together.

In detailed narratives, scholars reported realizing a range of benefits as a result of the Scholars Program. The following benefits, each reported by at least two of the four scholars, represent the primary themes noted in analysis of questionnaire narrative responses. For several scholars, the research they proposed to conduct as scholars represented a new line of inquiry. The funds provided to support the work over four years added capacity to the projects, contributing to the ability to complete projects and produce scholarly products. For example, "I was able to use resources to provide incentives to participants to increase our response rates for the health survey. Second, I was able to use scholar funds to support data entry staff for both the health survey but also the data collected by the outreach workers. Without incentives or data entry support, we would not have been able to publish the paper." Several scholars were able to leverage the funds provided through the Scholars Program to apply for federal, foundation, and internal funding. One scholar, in expressing what several had noted, was particularly clear in presenting the role the Scholars Program played in leveraging funds: "With Scholars Program funding, I built a research and engagement foun-

dation that was a springboard for projects that have received over half a million dollars in grant funding since 2010.”

Scholars’ knowledge of CBPR, partnership formation approaches, and strategies for producing scholarship as a result of community-engaged research were enhanced. One scholar stated, “The Scholars Program has been instrumental in my personal research career development and in my abilities to promote and disseminate community-engaged scholarship in the academy and in communities.” Another scholar commented, “community-engaged scholarship is now a defining feature of my work.”

Scholars’ conceptualization of “impact” was expanded in several ways. One stated, “impact should be broader than just publications.” Others noted the importance of prioritizing community benefit in addition to impact on the disciplinary field. One scholar reported, “I previously had unsuccessful attempts to partner with communities. Through the Learning Circle, I learned the language of mutual benefit and how to think about community impact and communicate that to potential partners.” Several scholars gained an increased understanding of their own disciplines or constructs within their field and the role of community engagement in enhancing the impact of their discipline. Scholars’ sense of identity, as a researcher, as a community-engaged scholar, and as a disciplinary expert, was strengthened. One scholar commented, “The Scholars Program solidified my commitment and ability to conduct community-engaged research and scholarship more broadly.”

Several scholars advanced their careers while in the program, accepting new positions as faculty, administrator, or research director. One scholar believes that because of her Scholars Program participation, her position was spared when funding

cuts resulted in layoffs among her colleagues. Another credits, at least partially, her success in securing a new position at another institution to her participation in the Scholars Program. “The Scholars Program provided me with training, opportunity, and flexibility and advanced my knowledge around community-engaged research, all of which contributed to my successful acquisition of the new job.” These scholars suggested that participation in the Scholars Program provided them with enhanced credibility. One scholar, primarily a clinician, reported that the Scholars Program had given her the impetus and structure to develop a research program, which enhanced her credibility within her academic medicine department. Other scholars commented on credibility and legitimacy, but in different contexts. One scholar noted, “The learning cohort.... provided me the intellectual and personal support to turn my engagement and inquiry through connection into scholarship—scholarship that holds legitimacy in the academy AND within the communities with which I work.” Another scholar, noting that she is not a faculty member, reported that the program gave her the credibility as a researcher necessary to secure a national foundation grant.

The expanded network of community partners and relationships with community organizations and local government units was seen as a lasting benefit, as were the knowledge and insights they acquired through interaction with community partners. One scholar noted that through her interaction with the community partner she was introduced to through the Scholars Program, her definition of health had expanded and she was now able “to think about how this expanded conception may be honored at the clinical services level.” Finally, several scholars came away from the Scholars Program experience with a sense of agency, wanting to serve as ambassadors for CES or



to work to change thinking about CES within academia. For example, one scholar noted that she is “committed to changing how we think about knowledge production.”

### **Ripple Effect Mapping Results**

The composite Ripple Effect Map featured five core categories of program effects: 1) provided professional development opportunities for scholars; 2) expanded relationships; 3) provided tangible benefits to community-based organizations; 4) enhanced evidence base for organizations working to address health and education disparities; and 5) promoted scholarship on health and educational disparities. Findings from the session were mostly positive, but important conversations took place about challenges or improvements that should be made to the program. Examples of the resulting mind maps for two of the five areas are presented in Appendix C.

#### **Provided professional development opportunities for scholars.**

- Scholars Program participants felt like stronger and more capable scholars as a result of the program. One scholar noted, “Training through the Scholars Program helped grow skills in forming quality community partnerships.” Another reported, “I am able to broker relationships to do things in ways that are authentic and in community-based ways.”
- Program participation strengthened one scholar’s position as a lead researcher, and eventually as Director of Research, at the Urban Research Outreach and Engagement Center in North Minneapolis.
- The program taught scholars to articulate engaged work in University promotion vocabulary.
- One scholar’s scholarly productivity resulting from program participation allowed her to make progress toward tenure.
- The program provided scholars with a pathway to integrate research and outreach.
- Scholars learned how to be a Principal Investigator doing engaged research.
- Scholars learned new tools and methods, such as conducting qualitative interviews.
- Scholars gained the ability to be ambassadors of CBPR within the institution.
- One scholar, noting that community members had changed her thinking about her research agenda, stated, “The connection with the community partner to explore culturally relevant healthcare models is a success because it led to another project that will be the focus of my dissertation.”

#### **Expanded relationships.** Three specific types of relationships were expanded:

- Relationships internal to the university: A strengthened connection with the University of Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs helped one scholar identify and build bridges to relevant community partners. One scholar’s strengthened connection to CYFC and its approaches enhanced her understanding of the interconnectedness of issues in the community and influenced the development of her research questions.
- Relationships between scholars and community partners: One scholar’s community partner noted that as a result of the scholar’s humility, trustworthiness, and willingness to learn from others, she was invited by community members to expand her focus to hospice care. Another scholar was able to draw on her relationships with community partners to request that they guest lecture in her course.
- Relationships within and among partner organizations: The Minneapolis Park

and Recreation Board built relationships among staff and built capacity of staff to engage youth in survey research projects on parks usage. A leader of Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ), commenting about NAZ's relationship with the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), said, "Now I have a formal relationship with MPS... More pathways to get families knowledge of ECFE (Early Childhood Family Education) and MPS parenting programs."

- A challenge identified during the community REM session was that the Scholars Program did not create opportunities for community partners to build relationships with each other, or with the scholars with whom they were not partners.

**Provided tangible benefits to community-based organizations.**

- A scholar's work and influence within the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board resulted in the creation of five new positions because the Board changed its service delivery model to incorporate community-engaged research.
- A scholar's inclusion of community residents' writing in the final report of a Health Action Team led residents to the conclusion, "We can write too."
- A scholar's work with NAZ identified members of the community to serve as facilitators and co-facilitators for their programming efforts.
- Wellshare International reported numerous ways that their programming with Somali mothers was more effective as a result of the evidence-based approach brought to the partnership by the scholar.
- One scholar became actively and meaningfully involved in the work of the Cultural Wellness Center and the Center, seeing the benefit the scholar

brought to the organization, created a formal role for her within the organization.

- Many examples were shared about capacity-building and increasing confidence within the community to conduct CBPR itself.

**Enhanced evidence base for organizations working to address health and education disparities.**

- The Metropolitan Council began to request evidence in support of proposals. The scholar, after sharing the evidence base with the organization, created an appetite for more evidence and research.
- A scholar's work with a program on obesity resulted in a rigorous research and evaluation component, which resulted in publishable information and increased support from third party payers and continued funding for the program.
- Survey research instruments were validated with non-English speaking communities and published, informing future research.
- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board now has data to demonstrate accountability to taxpayers.

**Promoted scholarship on health and educational disparities.**

- CYFC's financial investment in scholars' research leveraged grants and promoted creation of scholarly products, including grants from the university, federal agencies, and private foundations.
- The scholars' capstone project resulted in submission of seven articles for this special issue.
- Most of the scholars produced scholarly manuscripts related to their CBPR work.
- One scholar leveraged funding from the Scholars Program to secure a grant from a national foundation. As a part of that

funded project, an early childhood parent education program model was developed and validated with the NAZ. This then led to additional grants.

- A Scholars Program facilitator noted, “One challenge is that scholars had to deviate from their plans and have not yet met certain goals, such as, reaching the goal of acquiring a body of knowledge (about educational and health disparities) to share with the community.” By year 4, several scholars had not completed their projects or had had to change course and make changes to their project direction based on funding issues or community conditions.

Lastly, several session participants spoke about the manner in which the Scholars Program was shifting the way the University researchers do research, as well as the ways that researchers and their research are perceived by community-based organizations. Overall, there was a sense that community-based organizations were truly partnered with faculty in designing and conducting research; in other words, research

was conducted “with,” not “for” community.

The data from the mind map were copied into an Excel worksheet and coded according to the four categories of intended program outcomes: impact on 1) Effects for the scholar, 2) the field of educational and health disparities, 3) the community, and 4) the university. Table 1 reports the frequency with which comments made in the REM sessions were aligned with these four levels of intended program outcomes.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation of the Scholars Program offered the opportunity to document program impacts at four levels—the scholar, the field, the community, and the institution. The Scholars Program appears to have made the greatest impact at the level of the scholar. Most scholars leveraged program funding to secure small and large internal, foundation, and federal grants. Several scholars demonstrated a high level of academic productivity. All scholars reported

**Table 1.** Findings from the REM sessions, coded according to intended program outcomes

Outcome	Count of Effects*	% of Effects*	Examples
Benefit Scholar	86	56%	Grant funding; collaboration skills; more relevant research questions; CBPR skills; partners as guest lecturers enhanced scholars' courses; better prepared for tenure or job change; scholarship; collaborations; community mentors
Benefit Field	17	9%	Expanded boundaries of discipline; public health model to improve education; schools seeing role in health; scholarship; instrument validation
Benefit Community	62	40%	Relationships to University & Extension: policy makers now demand evidence; input into research and policy; created jobs; evidence-based practices; trust; new skills
Benefit University	32	21%	Interdisciplinary collaborations; enriched students experiences; enhanced sponsoring unit's campus connections; trust; decreased silos; tapped community expertise; scholars as CES ambassadors; grant funding

\*Out of 153 reported effects.

numerous ways the program contributed to their knowledge and skill base, their internal and external networks, and their career development or advancement. In fact, the contribution to scholars' professional development was clearly the most robust impact of the program.

Though the Scholars Program was, in part, intended to contribute knowledge to the fields of educational and health disparities, this area represents the weakest impact. This is likely the result of two factors. Scholars were at various points of completion of their projects at the time of evaluation and several had experienced uncontrollable challenges resulting in the need to change direction during the course of the Scholars Program. Therefore, there was insufficient time to make impact on our knowledge base in the educational and health disparities fields. Secondly, the primary contact between the program facilitator and the scholars was in the context of the Learning Circle, which focused primarily on professional development. The emphasis of the program on professional development resulted in the expected finding that more impact was made at the scholar level than at the contribution to the field level.

Although community partners were not active participants in the Scholars Program, other than as partners to scholars for their research, community partners noted numerous ways they benefited through the program. Each scholar brought something to the partnership that had lasting impact on their community partner, including the impetus for program changes that better aligned programs with research evidence; motivation to adopt participatory approaches that resulted in jobs for community members; access to methodological tools, research, and evaluation findings that enhanced capacity of partners to document impact for funder and community accounta-

bility; and knowledge and skills that built the capacity and self-efficacy of community organizations, particularly to conduct their own future research. Though community partners articulated these impacts as direct benefits of their relationships with their scholar partner or the specific project, scholars noted that their enhanced CBPR and partnership building skills gained through the Learning Circle contributed to their ability to benefit the community.

As noted in the overview article for this special issue, the Scholars Program's approach to making institutional impact included increasing the visibility and credibility of the Scholars Program, the work of the scholars, and CES generally through internal communications and relationship-building, and encouraging scholars to be ambassadors for CES within their campus networks. Compared to investment of the program in the other categories of impact, these strategies represent more passive or more intermittent activities. It is not surprising, therefore, that relatively few program impacts were noted at the institutional level. Overall, the strengths of the program documented in the questionnaire and through REM were in the area of professional development and the impact scholars' research projects and enhanced capacity for genuine community-engaged research had on community partners. The primary suggestion for program improvement came from community partners. They recognized the opportunity for even greater community impact if they could participate more fully in the Scholars Program and through that participation, network with other community partners and the other scholars. The challenges scholars faced in implementing their projects, sometimes resulting in the need to abandon their original plans and pursue a new line of inquiry or a different methodological approach, significantly limited the capacity of the Scholars Program to contrib-

ute to the educational and health disparities knowledge base.

Strengths of the Scholars Program evaluation included use of a mixture of formative and summative approaches, as well as regular assessments to accurately document participants' developmental trajectories. The evaluation was limited to some degree by the change in cohort composition in year 2. The capacity of the new scholar to contribute to program impact through scholarly productivity, for example, was limited due to length of time in the program. One possible misunderstanding of REM is that, in its reliance on Appreciative Inquiry, it only focuses on the positive. As suggested by Bushe (2007, p. 4), "a focus on the positive is useful for Appreciative Inquiry but it's not the purpose." The purpose is not to create bias by focusing on the positive but rather to create the opportunity for a group to uncover the potential of a program (Busche, 2012). Indeed, specific probing about areas for improvement led to important critical feedback by community partners, offered in the spirit of helping the program realize its future potential. As a result of this process, in combination with insights gained through questionnaires and the experience of the program participants and facilitators, we gained numerous insights that will improve the Scholars Program and that may inform other professional development programs. We offer the following recommendations for leaders planning, implementing, and evaluating faculty development efforts aimed at enhancing capacity for CES.

### **Recommendations for Program Development and Implementation**

- a) Take advantage of multidisciplinary. A multidisciplinary cohort provides participants diverse theoretical and conceptual perspectives as well as an expanded toolbox of methodological approaches that can be transferred to another discipline or inspire innovation.
- b) Take a participatory approach to program development and implementation. Encouraging participants to give input about program direction and session content increases the likelihood that the program will address the specific needs and interests of the cohort.
- c) Prioritize impacts desired and focus energies on aspects of the program that are likely to result in those impacts. Faculty development programs have the potential to make impact at multiple levels. However, the impact is likely to be greatest in areas where the program spends the most time and intentionally provides content or experience.
- d) Consider how community members, organizations, and contexts can receive direct benefit through program activities (e.g., through CBPR projects), as well as indirect benefit through enhanced engagement skills of program participants.
- e) Include community partners in the program, as participants, consultants, guest speakers, or attendees at events to enhance the educational impact of the program for participants, and provide benefit to the community partners through enhanced networks and knowledge gain.
- f) A combination of professional development content and activities as well as funds to support the application of learning to an actual research project provides experiential learning opportunities effective in adult learning.
- g) Recognize that plans can be disrupted, and in community research in particular, a host of challenges can arise that can derail progress. One function of the program needs to be to support participants in navigating these hurdles.

- h) Provide regular and relatively frequent meetings over a sustained period of time to create a meaningful and memorable learning experience.

### Recommendations for Evaluation

- a) Though it is recommended above that program activities be designed with high priority impacts in mind, we realized many benefits, at multiple levels, not targeted through program content. It is therefore important to measure both anticipated and unanticipated outcomes. This can be accomplished through use of open-ended questions in evaluation questionnaires as well as in open-ended group discussion processes, such as Ripple Effect Mapping.
- b) Evaluation efforts need to attend to community outcomes for multiple reasons. First, an ultimate goal of community-engaged activities is community benefit. It is important to understand if our attempts to prepare faculty and staff for engaged activities actually results in community benefit. Second, community members have unique and critical perspectives that can provide a different angle on program effectiveness. And third, as noted earlier, the tendency in most evaluations of higher education community engagement efforts is to measure outcomes for students, faculty, or the institution, but less often are outcomes documented at the community level. This is an important gap to fill. The REM approach employed in this study was a useful approach for documenting community agency outcomes, such as building new relationships, using research to inform practices and evaluation tools, and increasing capacity to implement new initiatives. Interviewing or questionnaire methods may also be appropriate. The key insight is that the focus of the evaluation needs to extend beyond the walls of the higher education institution.
- c) Find the right match between participatory depth of the evaluation and participatory depth of the program. By participatory depth, we mean the degree of participant control (vs. evaluator control) over the evaluation process. The depth of engagement of the evaluation effort must match the intended depth of engagement of the programming effort. If the engagement effort is more about informing or consulting with community-based partners, it may be appropriate to use practical participatory evaluation strategies. If the engagement effort is intended to be collaborative or empowering, the evaluation effort must be more transformative in nature. If the programming effort is more about involving the community-based partner, the evaluation strategy may need to be a hybrid of the practical and transformative approaches.

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## APPENDIX A

### Survey Template

Scholars, It's been a pleasure to work with you this year. As we wrap up this year and plan for the next, I would appreciate you completing this 15-item survey so that we can better understand the program's impact and areas for program improvement.

Some definition of terms: "Proposed project" refers to the work you are doing under the auspices of CYFC (even if the nature of that project changed since you applied to be a Scholar). We also use the phrase "very similar work." Sometimes you may also be working on a project that was not specifically part of your proposed project, but is very related in terms of its theme, may be a spin off of your proposed project, and could be considered, at least indirectly, an outcome of your involvement in the Scholars Program and part of the body of work CYFC is attempting to promote to address the interaction of health and education.

NOTE THAT WITH THIS SURVEY, WE WISH TO COLLECT CUMULATIVE DATA (NOT JUST ANNUAL DATA) FOR GRANTS AND SCHOLARLY PRODUCTS. HOWEVER, PLEASE PROVIDE DATES TO COMMUNICATE WHAT OCCURRED IN EACH YEAR. OTHER ITEMS SHOULD BE ANSWERED WITH RESPECT TO THE CURRENT YEAR ONLY.

1. Name:
2. Please provide a very brief update on the status of your project with respect to the goals and expected timeline that you originally proposed? What's going as planned? What's not?
3. What are your goals for the coming year with respect to the research project you proposed to CYFC?
4. In what ways can CYFC assist you in your work on your project?
5. Do you have grant proposals in preparation, pending, rejected or awarded for funding the proposed project or very similar work?

\_\_\_ YES                      \_\_\_ NO

**IF YES, CONTINUE TO Q 6. IF NO, SKIP TO Q 10.**

6. Please list grant title, approximate date submitted, amount, funder, and proposal status.
7. Do any of your proposals include collaboration with another Scholar?

\_\_\_ YES                      \_\_\_ NO

- a. If yes, please indicate that person's name, their role and the budgetary arrangements made with that collaborator.

8. Do any of your proposals include collaboration with CYFC?

\_\_\_ YES                      \_\_\_ NO

- a. If yes, please indicate CYFC's role and the budgetary arrangements made with CYFC.

9. Do any of your proposals include collaboration with a community partner(s)?

\_\_\_ YES                      \_\_\_ NO

- a. If yes, please provide the partner's name, role, and the budgetary arrangements made with that partner.

10. Please list any faculty (other than Scholars) and their affiliations involved in your proposed project or very similar work.

11. Please list any students (other than Scholars) and their affiliations involved in your proposed project or very similar work.

12. Please list any scholarly products (articles, innovative products, presentations, etc.) produced related to your proposed project or very similar work. Please note status (in press, under review, rejected, etc.)

13. Please summarize any skills, knowledge or other benefits you have gained by participating in the Scholars/Fellows program.

14. What would you like to see us do together as a group in the coming year?

15. What are your goals with respect to the Scholars Program?

## APPENDIX B

### Ripple Effect Mapping Appreciative Inquiry Questions

#### ***Session focused on effects for professionals, institution, field***

##### **Scholars:**

- What is a highlight, achievement, or success you had based on your involvement with the Scholars Program?
- What is something about your involvement in the Scholars Program that you are proud to share?
- What connections with others—new and/or deepened—have you made as a result of the Scholars Program?

##### **Department administrators:**

- What is a highlight, achievement or success of the Scholars Program?
- Is there something about the work of a scholar that you are proud to share with others?

#### ***August session focused on effects in community***

##### **Scholars:**

- What is a community-based highlight, achievement, or success you had based on your involvement with the Scholars Program?
- What connections with others in the community—new and/or deepened—have you made as a result of the Scholars Program?

##### **Community Participants:**

- What is a highlight, achievement or success of the Scholars Program in your community or with your organization?
- What connections with others in the community or the university—new and/or deepened—have you made as a result of the Scholars Program?

## APPENDIX C

### Examples of Ripple Effect Maps

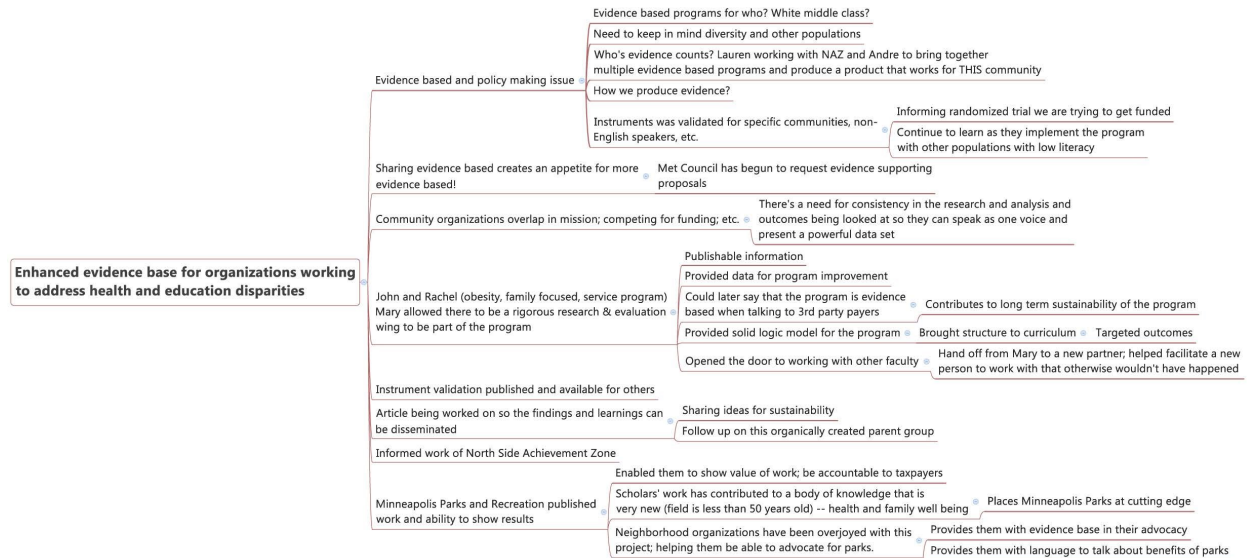


Figure 1. Ripple Effect Maps

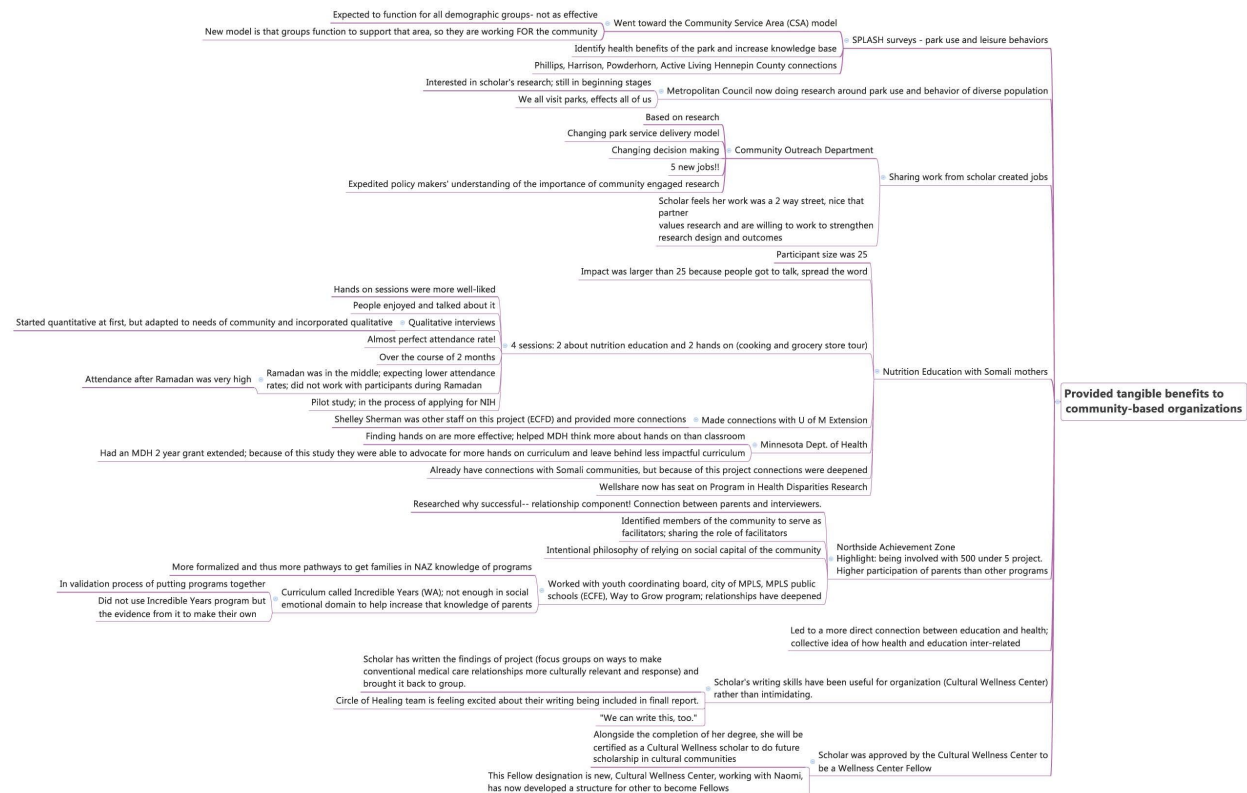


Figure 1. (continued) Ripple Effect Maps