A Comparative Case Study of Alumni of Two Multi-Term Civic Learning Programs

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a comparative case study of the alumni of two multi-term civic learning programs that combine academic service-learning with a series of other student experiences such as the creation of online portfolios and capstone experiences over at least four semesters of an undergraduate education. Findings of this study suggest that alumni perceive substantial impact on their civic and professional experiences after graduation because of their participation in such programs while undergraduates.

Keywords: undergraduate, service, civic learning, alumni, reflection

Growing interest in high-impact practices in higher education (Finley & McNair, 2013; Kilgo, Sheets, & Pascarella, 2015; Kuh, 2008) is encouraging researchers and practitioners alike to consider how various experiences associated with these practices intersect with and build upon one another. Bringle (2017) explored how service-learning could be combined with other pedagogies to create *hybrid high-impact pedagogies* that would enhance learning outcomes associated with service-learning, and challenged researchers to more fully investigate the learning and outcomes resulting from different combinations of experiences. This paper presents a comparative case study of the alumni of two civic learning programs that combine academic service-learning with a series of other experiences over at least four semesters of an undergraduate education, including those deemed high-impact such as

the creation of online portfolios and capstone projects. The study analyzes quantitative data generated by alumni of the civic learning programs related to the impact of the program, post-graduate civic and community engagement experiences, alumni current civic-mindedness, and their practices of reflection during the program and in their current lives. The study intends to extend the literature on civic learning and civic identity in college (Hatcher, Bringle, & Hahn, 2017; Weerts & Cabrera, 2015; Weerts, Cabrera, & Perez, 2014) and also on models for combining service-learning with other high-impact experiences (Bringle, 2017; Metcalf, 2010). The study design and analysis were guided by the following two research questions: 1) How do alumni describe their post-graduate civic and community engagement experiences, the impact of the program, their current civic-mindedness, and their practice of reflection in

both the program and their current lives?, and 2) How do alumni responses differ between the two programs?

LITERATURE REVIEW

From the founding of Campus Compact in 1985 to Ernest Boyer's (1994) call for higher education to "contribute to national renewal" (p. A48), American higher education has for some decades been struggling with its public purposes and the role it plays in educating the American population to be ready for healthy, full participation in a modern democracy. The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012) argued in *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* that*:*

> A socially cohesive and economically vibrant US democracy ... require[s] informed, engaged, open-minded, and socially responsible people committed to the common good and practiced in 'doing' democracy. ... Civic learning needs to be an integral component of every level of education, from grade school through graduate school, across all fields of study. (2012, p. 13-14)

Service-learning was designed and has grown as a practice and field largely as a response to these calls for more opportunities for civic learning and practice. Service-learning can be defined as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). Along with community-based learning, service-learning was identified as one of 10 high-impact educational practices associated with increases in a variety of educational outcomes that should be further studied and promoted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Kuh,

2008). It has been found to contribute to a wide variety of skills and outcomes related to civic learning and participation, such as critical thinking (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000), civic leadership (Warchal & Ruiz, 2004), political participation after college (Perrin & Gillis, 2019), and the decision to pursue careers related to public service (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2019). Bringle (2017) argued that many of these outcomes might be enhanced by creating hybrid high-impact pedagogies through combining service-learning with other high-impact practices.

One major and persistent challenge for the field, however, has proven to be the difficulty of precisely defining and evaluating civic learning. In her introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of College & Character* on the topic, Keen (2009) surveyed the various challenges with assessing civic outcomes in higher education—including the problem of the diversity of definitions of civic engagement and corresponding assessment tools—and existing efforts to address them. Around that time, a number of attempts had emerged to articulate approaches for measuring civic outcomes or civic learning, such as the Civic Learning Spiral (Musil, 2009) and the Civic Engagement VALUE Rubrics (AAC&U, 2009). Steinberg, Hatcher, and Bringle (2011) built on some of this earlier work and offered the Civic-Minded Graduate Model shortly thereafter as a "north star" for research and practice in identifying and measuring undergraduate civic learning that would lead to alumni civic-mindedness and engagement. It is based on their earlier research (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010) on measuring civic growth in students through service-learning courses and in connection to the Civic-Minded Professional scale (Hatcher, 2008), which was developed to measure how civic-mindedness can be documented in the lives and professional identities of adults well into their careers. Mitchell, Battistoni, Keene, and Reiff (2013) found that the civic identity students develop while in college has a strong impact on alumni civic identities.

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In addition to developing models to measure civic learning in college and its connection to alumni civic-mindedness and participation, researchers have also explored the specific elements or models of programming over multiple terms that may be associated with specific outcomes. In their study of three multi-term civic learning programs at Stanford, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Providence College, Mitchell et al. (2013) found that the cohort model used in these programs reportedly played a substantial role in student learning and experiences. Mitchell et al. (2015) found that programs providing structures for continuous critical reflection are likely to produce alumni who continue their reflective practices well after graduation, aiding in the continued development of their civic and professional identities. Similarly, Keen and Hall (2008) found that students who participate in a four-year program of co-curricular service and reflection through the Bonner Scholars Program are more likely to continue to perform service and be more civically engaged as alumni than comparison groups. The authors also determined in a second study that it was not the service itself but specifically the opportunities for sustained dialogue across perceived differences that made the strongest impact in the lives of Bonner Scholars Program alumni (Keen & Hall, 2009). Building upon these findings, Richard, Keen, Hatcher, and Pease (2016) provided more evidence that dialogue across difference, as well as both structured and informal reflection, contributed most significantly to civic outcomes in Bonner alumni. They developed the Pathways to Adult Civic Engagement model to describe how integrated elements of a program can contribute to alumni civic engagement.

While the positive long-term impact of civic learning programs on alumni is well documented, most of the research on multi-term civic learning programs has focused on highly structured, intensive programs (Keen & Hall, 2008; Keen & Hall, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015; Mitchell & Rost-

Banik, 2019; Richard et al., 2016). Few studies have explored multi-term civic learning programs that do not include such elements as a strong cohort, structures for continuous reflection, or sustained dialogue across difference. In this paper, we present a comparative case study of civic learning programs at two large public research universities. Both programs are larger in size than cohort-based programs such as those described by Mitchell et al. (2013). These two programs also combine credit bearing and non-credit bearing training and experiences in service, including academic service-learning and other high-impact practices such as capstone projects and online portfolios. Opportunities for reflection are provided in different forms and with varying degrees of emphasis. The study of the long-term impact of these two programs on alumni civic engagement experiences sheds light on alternative formats of such programs and ways to engage in collaborative research across campuses. This exploratory study not only provides further data to support the efficacy of these types of multi-term programs, but also points to key questions to guide future research.

PROGRAM CONTEXTS

This study focuses on two well-established, multi-term civic learning programs at public research universities: the Buckley Public Service Scholars program (BPSS) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) and the Community Engagement Scholars program (CESP) at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities (UMN). Kuh (2008) recommends that every college student should participate in at least two high-impact practices, and the structures of each program ensure that participants who complete either will have engaged in at least two of these high-impact practices before graduating. Both programs combine academic service-learning coursework with, among other components, at least one other high-impact practice (online portfolios for BPSS

and capstone projects for CESP) and could be considered hybrid high-impact practices (Bringle, 2017). In this section, we provide an overview of both programs. Table 1 provides a comparison of program components across the two programs.

BPSS Program at UNC

Launched in 2003, BPSS provides a framework for undergraduate students committed to making a positive impact through service in their state, the nation, and throughout the world. The goal of BPSS as articulated by the Carolina Center for Public Service is to strengthen the culture of service and engagement at UNC by (1) challenging students to increase the breadth and depth of their involvement in North Carolina communities and beyond; (2) fostering connections between the university, its students, and the community; (3) promoting student participation in varying dimensions of public service: direct, organizational, and policy; and (4) developing students' capacity for engaging in their communities in meaningful ways. To achieve this, students participating in BPSS pursue a number of required program components over at least four semesters and also have access to non-required opportunities that may enhance their learning and experiences.

After enrolling in the program, participants begin to build online portfolios that document their gradual completion of program components and reflection on their unique experiences. To complete the program, a graduate's portfolio must include an orientation session, at least 300 service hours, one academic service-learning course, at least

Table 1: Comparison of Program Components

	BPSS at UNC	CESP at UMN
Enrollment	Open to all undergraduates with four semesters left	Open to all undergraduates with four semesters left
Length of program	At least four semesters	At least four semesters
Service or Community Work	300 hours	400 hours
Academic service-learning	One course (at least one credit)	Eight credits
Reflection	Senior reflection	Six themed assignments
Trainings	New participation Orientation and four non-academic skills trainings	Workshop for New Scholars and, in most cases, pre-service training through a service-learning class
Capstone experience	Not applicable	Integrative Community Engagement Project and one-credit seminar
Final cumulative GPA	3.0 (or 2.5 for "Special Recognition in Public Service")	Not applicable
Online tracking system	Online portfolio system	Online hour-logging system
Graduating class size	216 (2015-2016) and 226 (2016-2017)	16 (2015-2016) and 37 (2016-2017)

four non-academic skills trainings, a senior reflection, and a final cumulative Grade Point Average of at least 3.0 (or 2.5 for "Special Recognition in Public Service"). Students who successfully complete the program components receive a notation on their academic transcript and wear a cord that identifies them as graduates of the program at commencement. Additional opportunities associated with the program include a first-year service group experience; scholarships to participate in outdoor expeditionary courses; and more structured experiences in the arts, philanthropy, and mentoring youth.

BPSS is open-enrollment for all UNC undergraduates with at least four semesters left on campus. Since the program's inception, more than 2,700 students have graduated with the distinction. During the 2015-2016 academic year, 226 students graduated from the program, and 299 graduated in the 2016-2017 academic year.

CESP at UMN

CESP offers structure and formal recognition to students who make significant commitments to community engagement during their undergraduate careers. UMN's Center for Community-Engaged Learning describes its goals as providing students with a structured approach to making a difference in the community; opportunities to connect with other students, community organizations, faculty, and staff; quality skills development including critical thinking, decision making, flexibility, and intercultural competency; opportunities to design and actively participate in their undergraduate course work; and career exploration and development.

The program encompasses curricular and co-curricular engagement. Through structured reflection themes, participants articulate their ethic of service and sense of self; address issues of diversity, power, and privilege; consider their own agency to effect change as well as the importance of collaboration and community building; and create digital stories that integrate and contextualize their academic and community

experiences. In order to complete the program, students must attend a Workshop for New Scholars, perform at least 400 hours of community work, complete eight credits of academic service-learning courses and six reflections on community-engaged experiences, take a one-credit capstone seminar, and implement an Integrative Community Engagement Project.

CESP is open to all UMN undergraduates with at least four semesters left on campus. The CESP launched in 2005, and more than 370 students have graduated since that time. Sixteen students graduated from CESP in the 2015-2016 academic year, and 37 graduated in the 2016-2017 academic year.

METHODS

The research team decided to undertake a comparative case study (Campbell, 2012) to explore the long-term impact of these two programs with the expectation that differences between their alumni populations might point to programmatic differences that should be further studied. The collaboration between staff from UNC and UMN started in 2004, when BPSS was in its first year of implementation and CESP was being developed, as program leadership at UMN were interested in learning how a similar program model was approached at a large, public research university in another part of the country. Over the years, staff from both programs have exchanged ideas and insights, and staff from the two institutions have occasionally collaborated on conference presentations. Program staff initiated this project to explore the long-term impact of these two multi-term civic learning programs in summer 2016. Through an iterative process of separately defining and then comparing goals, potential methods, and specific items of interest, the team from the two universities decided to employ a descriptive, comparative design for this study to explore alumni perception using an online survey. This study

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was submitted for review by the Institutional Review Boards separately at UNC and UMN and was determined to be exempt by both institutions.

Survey Instrument

The jointly designed survey included a large number of shared as well as campus-specific questions and utilized both quantitative and qualitative items. The analyses reported in this paper are limited to the quantitative data. Specific items included demographics, current and previous postgraduate occupations and other pursuits, current and previous postgraduate civic engagement, measures of current civic-mindedness, experiences in the programs, and the perceived personal and professional impacts of participating in the program.

The survey was developed with reference to items from the Civic-Minded Professional Scale (Hatcher, 2008) and from the surveys used in existing studies of other multi-term civic learning programs (Mitchell et al., 2015). The Civic-Minded Professional Scale is composed of five factors: voluntary action, citizenship, social trustee, identity and calling, and consensus building. In addition, the survey utilized the Helpfulness of Program Reflection Scale discussed in Mitchell and colleagues' (2015) study on alumni reflective practice. The items of the Helpfulness of Program Reflection subscale were combined into a single scale where higher scores indicate greater helpfulness of program reflection activities. Helpfulness of Program Reflection should be viewed as an indication not just of the number of reflection activities, but the quality and helpfulness of those activities to provide a context for framing and understanding community and civic engagement activities within the program (Mitchell et al., 2015). The survey was piloted in summer 2016 by a few selected alumni from each program and subsequently refined based on their feedback.

In an effort to establish the internal consistency of the instrument, reliability estimates were computed using Cronbach's alpha. Internal consistency describes the extent to which all the items in a survey measure the same concept. The overall reliability of the instrument as measured by Cronbach's alpha was 0.95, suggesting an adequate internal consistency (Cortina, 1993). The subscale developed from the Civic-Minded Professional Scale had an alpha of 0.89, and subscales related to Impact of Public Service Engagement and Impact of Reflection had alphas of 0.88 and 0.93, respectively.

Data Collection and Analysis

The survey was sent to all program alumni who had graduated before spring 2016 for whom contact information was available. The BPSS survey was sent in Qualtrics over email, first in the name of two alumni of the program, with two follow-up emails sent by staff who support the program. An update on the response rate of the graduating year of the recipient and the response rate of the class with the highest response rate was included in both follow-up emails with an invitation to compete for the highest response rate. The Carolina Center for Public Service at UNC independently maintains its alumni records and contact information and was able to cross-reference and update some records with another, larger UNC alumni database system. The CESP survey was also sent through Qualtrics but was administered by the UMN Alumni Association, the department that maintains alumni records and contact information at UMN. The CESP survey was implemented later in part because the researchers did not have direct access to contact information for all program alumni. CESP alumni received two email reminders from the program's official email address, and the UMN Center for Community-Engaged Learning staff also sent a personal message to alumni whose contact information they had. For the purposes of this program case study, CESP staff counted as "alumni" all students who completed the capstone seminar and project requirements, even if they did not fulfill other program requirements and thus

did not receive the transcript notation of program completion.

Out of the 1,947 BPSS alumni who had graduated before spring 2016, we sent the survey to the 1,749 alumni for whom contact information was available. Of the 471 CESP alumni, we sent the survey to the 397 alumni for whom contact information was available. The survey was sent to BPSS alumni in the fall of 2016 and to CESP alumni in the spring of 2017. Response rates were 32.2% (N=563) and 24.9% (N=99), respectively. BPSS alumni respondents were 79.93% female and 68.2% White compared to the alumni population's makeup of 82.4% female and 58.8% White. CESP alumni respondents were 79.8% female and 76.8% White.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS to address the two research questions. Descriptive analyses were conducted to summarize responses based on the survey data. Comparison across respondents from two universities was conducted using t-tests.

RESULTS

In this section, we report survey results to address the two research questions based on survey subscales. For each of the constructs reviewed, we provide a summary of the alumni responses and discuss comparisons across the two programs.

Service, Civic Action, and Occupation

Sixty-six percent of BPSS and 58% of CESP alumni respondents indicated that they are "regularly involved with service today." Among those regularly involved with service, most (80% BPSS, 76% CESP) were involved in the same areas of focus as when they were students.

When asked about their civic action in the past 12 months, nearly all indicated that they discussed social or political problems with friends (98.8% BPSS, 98.5% CESP).

Alumni of both programs were also likely to have volunteered or participated in some kind of community service (75.2% BPSS, 86.4% CESP) and bought a certain product or service because they liked the social or political values of the company that provided it or the conditions under which it was produced (61.1% BPSS, 78.8% CESP). Respondents were least likely to have organized a petition online or in-person (2.02% BPSS, 3% CESP). Results are shown in Table 2.

In terms of employment since graduation, three sectors were the most commonly reported by respondents from both programs: nonprofit/social service (BPSS=23.1%, CESP=27%), health care (BPSS=20.9%, CESP=20.1%), and/or education (BPSS=19.9%, CESP=23.3%).

Impact of Public Service Engagement and Program

Alumni of both programs reported that their service engagement while in college had a high impact on a variety of areas, with "Current community and civic engagement" being the highest rated category on average (M_{BPSS}=4.0, M_{CESP}=4.1) and "Educational decision" being the lowest (M_{BPSS}=3.2, M_{CESP}=3.9) for both programs. Alumni of CESP reported significantly higher impact for four of the six items: "Depth of knowledge or understanding in an issue area" (p=0.006), "Career trajectory" (p=0.002), "Formation of values or political views" (p=0.001), and "Educational decisions" (p=0.000). Results are shown in Table 3.

In terms of opportunities provided by the programs, alumni of both institutions rated "Build my résumé" (M_{BPSS}=6.2, M_{CESP}=6.3), "Learn new skills" (M_{BPSS}=6.0, M_{CESP}=6.0), and "Think about social and ethical responsibilities involved in my chosen profession" (M_{BPSS}=6.0, M_{CESP}=6.3) as their top three, although the order differed for the two groups. Results are shown in Table 4.

Table 2: Civic Action in Past 12 Months *[Click on link to return to text.]*

	BPSS		CESP	
	N	%	N	%
Discussed social or political problems with friends	315	98.75	65	98.48
Volunteered or participated in some kind of community service	261	75.22	57	86.36
Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it, or the conditions under which it was produced	212	61.10	52	78.79
Tried to change a friend's or acquaintance's mind about a social or political issue	209	60.23	43	65.15
Posted on social media concerning a social or political issue that you care about	174	50.14	43	65.15
Confronted jokes, statements, or innuendoes that opposed a particular group's cause	173	49.86	50	75.76
Expressed your views in front of a group of people	170	48.99	45	68.18
Not bought something or boycotted it because of conditions under which the product is made, or because you dislike the conduct of the company that produces it	169	48.70	50	75.76
Tried to change a relative's mind about a social or political issue	166	47.84	29	43.94
Engaged in some kind of civic or community activity as a part of your work	164	47.26	42	63.64
Worked together with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live	154	44.38	38	57.58
Organized and ran a meeting	121	34.87	24	36.36
Worn a button or t-shirt, put a sign or sticker on your backpack, car, or other property, with a political or social message	108	31.12	41	62.12
Fundraised for a charitable organization	103	29.68	20	30.30
Attended a public meeting where people discussed community issues	101	29.11	27	40.91
Contacted someone you had never met before to get their help with a problem	98	28.24	17	25.76
Given money to a political candidate or cause	98	28.24	30	45.45
Contacted or visited a public official—at any level of government—to inquire about or to express your opinion about a public issue	84	24.21	40	60.61
Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration	53	15.27	35	53.03
Sent a letter or email to the media to express your opinion about an issue	41	11.82	9	13.64
Volunteered to work on a political issue or campaign	40	11.53	12	18.18
Organized a petition (online or in-person)	7	2.02	2	3.03

Table 3: Public Service Engagement Impact *[Click on link to return to text.]*

	BPSS		CESP		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*Sig*
Current community and civic engagement	3.99	0.904	4.11	0.960	0.305
Leadership ability/skills	3.92	0.944	4.00	0.960	0.516
Depth of knowledge or understanding in an issue area	3.78	0.970	4.11	0.960	0.006**
Career trajectory	3.61	1.228	4.09	1.105	0.002**
Formation of values or political views	3.6	1.118	4.07	0.960	0.001**
Educational decisions (major, course selection, research)	3.23	1.256	3.87	1.166	0.000***

Note. 5-point Likert scale, 1="Not at all" to 5="Very much"

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4: Program Opportunities *[Click on link to return to text.]*

	BPSS		CESP		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig
Build my résumé	6.21	0.937	6.29	1.013	0.515
Learn new skills	6.01	0.905	6.00	1.101	0.960
Think about social and ethical responsibilities involved in my chosen profession	5.95	1.116	6.31	1.146	0.017*
Gain relevant experience in my area of interest	5.35	1.297	5.92	1.219	0.001**
Explore career options	4.94	1.482	5.55	1.422	0.002*
Network and meet potential employers	3.66	1.629	4.71	1.665	0.000***

Note. 7-point Likert scale, 1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .00$

The lowest categories rated for both programs were "Network and meet potential employers" (M_{BPSS}=3.7, M_{CESP}=4.7) and "Explore career options" (M_{BPSS}=4.9, M_{CESP}=5.6). Other than "Build my résumé" and "Learn new skills," CESP alumni rated each item significantly higher than BPSS alumni (0.000 < p < 0.017).

Reflection in Program and Current Life

Asked about the helpfulness of reflection in the programs, the highest rated item for alumni of both programs was "Clarify your sense of civic responsibility" (M_{BPSS}=5.5, M_{CESP}=6.0), with "Challenge you to think

more critically" (M_{BPSS}=5.3, M_{CESP}=5.9) and "Clarify your personal values" (M_{BPSS}=5.27, M_{CESP}=5.75) second and third, while the lowest was "Understand course content" (M_{BPSS}=4.2, M_{CESP}=4.9). CESP alumni indicated that reflection was significantly more helpful in every area than did BPSS alumni. Results are shown in Table 5.

Alumni of both programs were most likely to reflect in their current lives through dialogue with a partner or close friend (M_{BPSS}=6.5, M_{CESP}=6.6) and private reflection (M_{BPSS}=6.1, M_{CESP}=6.1), and the least likely to reflect through writing in a journal

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(M_{BPSS}=4.1, M_{CESP}=4.9) or online tools or social media (M_{BPSS}=4.3, M_{CESP}=4.3).

Although there was a trend that CESP alumni indicated that reflection was more helpful in all of the areas, the only significant differences between groups were "Discussions with community partner or community mentor" (M_{BPSS}=5.2, M_{CESP}=5.7; p=0.025) and "Writing in a journal" (M_{BPSS}=4.1, M_{CESP}=4.9; p=0.012). Results are shown in Table 6.

Analyzing by the Reported Helpfulness of Program Reflection Activities and Reported Benefits of Current Life Reflection subscales (Mitchell et al., 2015) reveals statistical significance in the reported helpfulness of program reflection activities but not in the reported benefits of current life reflection. Results are shown in Table 7.

Alumni Civic-Mindedness

On average, alumni of both programs rated items from the Civic-Minded Professional Scale (Hatcher, 2008) with notable similarity. All items were rated with high scores on average (5.13<M_{BPSS}<6.00; 5.33<M_{CESP}<6.07). Analyzing by subscale produced no statistically significant result in the responses between BPSS and CESP alumni. [See Table 8.]

Of the 21 items used in the survey, there was statistical significance in the difference between BPSS and CESP alumni response on only one item: "I am well connected to a number of people who are active in their communities" (M_{CESP}=5.7, M_{BPSS}=5.3; p=0.020).

Table 5: Helpfulness of Program Reflection *[Click on link to return to text.]*

	BPSS		CESP		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig
Clarify your sense of civic responsibility	5.53	1.432	6.00	1.035	0.009**
Challenge you to think more critically	5.26	1.479	5.90	1.365	0.001***
Clarify your personal values	5.27	1.447	5.75	1.297	0.010**
Understand the foundations of social problems	5.20	1.46	5.71	1.080	0.005**
Raise new questions for you to explore	5.20	1.424	5.76	1.250	0.002**
Improve your skills and/or competencies	4.92	1.412	5.31	1.411	0.037*
Clarify your career goals and/or professional identity	4.85	1.675	5.38	1.587	0.017*
Understand your own social identities (such as your race, ethnicity, gender, social class, etc.)	4.89	1.678	5.61	1.262	0.001***
Make decisions about taking new action and/or changing your practices	4.79	1.466	5.31	1.296	0.006**
Gain feedback from others about your experience	4.59	1.595	5.22	1.416	0.002**
Understand course content	4.15	1.581	4.90	1.611	0.000***

Note. 7-point Likert scale, 1="Not all helpful" to 7="Very helpful"

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 6: Forms of Reflection in Current Life [Click on link to return to text.]

	BPSS		CESP		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig.
Dialogue with a partner or close friend	6.47	0.819	6.61	0.630	0.198
Private reflection	6.05	1.119	6.06	1.355	0.929
Dialogue with colleague(s) at work	5.77	1.225	6.03	1.222	0.116
Discussions with community partner or community mentor	5.19	1.504	5.68	1.378	0.025*
Dialogue with work supervisor	5.10	1.587	5.22	1.818	0.601
Retreats or other structured reflection activities at work (or school, if enrolled)	4.87	1.661	5.09	1.822	0.376
Online tools or social media	4.26	1.774	4.29	1.759	0.908
Writing in a journal	4.11	2.154	4.92	1.979	0.012*

Note. 7-point Likert scale, 1="Not all helpful" to 7="Very helpful"

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 7: Analysis by Subscales [Click on link to return to text.]

	BPSS		CESP		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig
Reported Helpfulness of Program Reflection Activities	5.28	0.8711	5.511	0.8118	0.044*
Reported Benefits of Current Life Reflection	5.80	0.886	5.67	0.963	0.291

* *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001

Table 8: Comparison of CMP Subscales [*Click on link to return to text.*]

	BPSS		CESP		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig
Voluntary Action	5.13	1.048	5.33	0.885	128
Identity and Calling	5.90	1.072	6.00	1.1464	482
Citizenship	5.55	1.044	5.49	1.296	647
Social Trustee	6.17	0.706	6.07	0.991	328
Consensus Building	6.00	0.720	5.82	0.906	071

$* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001$

DISCUSSION

This study was undertaken as a collaborative effort to explore 1) how alumni of multi-term civic learning programs describe their post-graduate civic and community engagement experiences, the impact of the program, their current civic-mindedness and reflection in both the program and in their current lives, as well as 2) how alumni responses differ between two programs. The literature suggests that simply offering multi-term programs that connect and structure student participation in two or more high-impact practices would be expected to have a significant impact on student outcomes (Bringle, 2017; Kuh, 2008). Findings of this study suggest that alumni perceive their participation in such programs while undergraduates as having a substantial impact on their civic and professional experiences after graduation, and this study thus contributes to a growing body of evidence about the effectiveness of these programs. While previous research has pointed to the importance of the cohort to student experiences in similar multi-term programs (Mitchell et al., 2013), these findings suggest that attention should also be paid to programs that do not rely on a cohort model.

Service, Civic Action, and Program Impact

The data from these surveys generally suggest that the majority of alumni from both of these programs remain regularly involved with service, work in service-related fields, and participated in some form of civic activity in the past year. While a lower percentage of CESP alumni than BPSS alumni reported being regularly involved with service today, higher percentages reported that they both "Volunteered or participated in some kind of community service" and "Engaged in some kind of civic or community activity as part of [their] work" in the past year. CESP alumni were also more likely to report that in the past year they had "Confronted jokes, statements, or innuendoes that opposed a particular group's cause;" "Worn a button or t-shirt, put a sign or sticker on [their] backpack, car, or other property, with a political or social message;" "Given money to a political candidate or cause;" "Contacted or visited a public official—at any level of government—to inquire about or to express your opinion about a public issue;" and "Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration." However, while BPSS alumni received the survey during the 2016 election season, CESP alumni did not receive it until spring 2017, which complicates

any effort to connect these activities to program participation. Researchers have studied how political and civic engagement can change during election years (Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2018; Levy, Solomon, & Collet-Gildard, 2016; Powers, Moeller, & Yuan, 2016), and the divisive 2016 presidential election may have actually increased civic and political engagement (Liu, 2017). In an effort to account for this, CESP staff added a question to the survey directly asking alumni if their participation in these activities was influenced by the election, and 80% responded that their activity had increased "a little" (37.1%) or "a lot" (42.9%).

Alumni of both programs generally ascribe a high degree of impact to their public service activities in college, especially on their current community and civic engagement, and they suggest that these programs provided them with valuable opportunities. Both sets of alumni indicate a high degree of civic-mindedness and suggest that reflection played a notable role in both of the programs and in their current lives.

The many points of agreement in respondents' ranking and prioritization of certain items on the survey may provide valuable insight into the commonalities between the experiences of participants and later alumni in similarly structured, multi-term civic-learning programs. Alumni of both BPSS and CESP, for instance, agree that the programs provided opportunities for résumé building, learning new skills, and thinking about social and ethical responsibilities in a chosen profession, but offered less opportunities to network and meet potential employers, explore career options, or even gain relevant experience in their area of interest. This may suggest that many students see the experiences offered through these programs as generally beneficial to their professional development or building transferrable skills, but sense that the programs less often provide experiences in the field or direct engagement with the type of employment they planned to pursue. This could have significant programmatic implications for recruitment and the articulation of program goals. However, it is important to note that these responses are indications of what alumni perceive retrospectively as the impact of the program and not necessarily what motivated them as participants.

Reflection and Civic-Mindedness

The fact that both alumni groups indicated that reflection in the program helped least in understanding course content and gaining feedback from others while indicating it was most helpful in items related to their own self-understanding or ability to think critically may reflect what type of reflection is most prevalent in these programs and also highlight areas for improvement. While Mitchell et al. (2015) found that programs providing structures for continuous critical reflection are likely to produce alumni who continue their reflective practices well after graduation, these data reflect the importance of critical reflection also in the experiences of alumni of programs such as CESP and BPSS that don't rely on a cohort model for continuous critical reflection. The finding that the reflection was most beneficial in developing students' own self-understanding may point to the more individual nature of programs that do not involve cohorts. Further, because these programs extend past and beyond the scope of any particular academic course, it may also make sense that students saw reflections as contributing least to their understanding of course content. If these civic learning programs have the priority of integrating academic course content, structures may need to be put in place to more explicitly ask that of students, outside of the context of reflection within their academic service-learning courses. Similarly, if gaining feedback from others through reflection is a priority, programs that do not involve cohorts or regular critical reflection with the same people may need to create both other structures to build relationships necessary for such feedback to be given and also explicit prompts for doing so. Prior research (Keen &

Hall, 2009; Richard et al., 2016) would suggest that structures that focus on creating opportunities for reflective dialogue across perceived differences may create the most lasting impact.

The cases where statistically significant differences can be observed between the responses of CESP and BPSS alumni raise questions that may point to important differences between the programs. CESP emphasizes structured reflection throughout the program more explicitly and strongly than BPSS, and CESP alumni consistently indicated a significantly higher degree of usefulness of reflection in the program on each item rated. While more research would be required to make a causal statement about the effect of CESP's emphasis on reflection, this observation suggests that a program's explicit emphasis may have a high degree of impact on alumni perceptions of usefulness of program components; a program that more consistently and explicitly emphasizes reflection (such as CESP) may be more likely to produce alumni who understand reflection as having been more significant or useful in the context of the program than a program that doesn't (such as BPSS). The CESP alumni group also indicated significantly higher averages than the BPSS alumni in the majority of items related to the opportunities the program provided and the impact of public service activities in college, potentially pointing to differences in the program population, size, and/or component emphasis to explore.

The alumni groups' current practices in reflection, however, reveal less significant differences (two out of eight items), and there is no statistical significance between alumni groups in their average indication of the usefulness of reflection in any of the items used; in fact, the BPSS alumni on average indicated a higher degree of usefulness of reflection on nine out of the eleven items. The fact that there is no statistically significant difference in civic-mindedness as indicated in the Civic-Minded Professional subscales may suggest that the differences between these programs have little impact in creating different attitudes toward civic engagement in their alumni.

If there are differences in consistency and emphasis of reflection that substantially alter the impact of the program, it appears that this impact may show up more on the alumni perceptions of the impact of the program on their experiences as participants (impact of public service engagement while in college, opportunities provided by program, helpfulness of reflection in program) and less on their current civic-mindedness, their current reflective practices, or their perceived helpfulness of reflection in their current lives. Since analyzing these data, staff of both programs have undertaken careful reviews of the opportunities provided by each program and the role of reflection. BPSS, for instance, has been actively experimenting with models for creating optional, smaller, issues-based learning communities within the larger structure of BPSS that would provide some participants with more opportunities for focused critical reflection with the same group of people over time.

The Collaborative Research Process

Undertaking this collaborative study presented both benefits and challenges, some expected and others not. While BPSS and CESP are notably similar in their structures, they ultimately differ in both their goals and components as well as their institutional and cultural contexts. The fact that the instrument was developed in conversation not only with the literature but also between staff of both programs shaped what items were included and what items were proposed but left out. Because BPSS does not emphasize reflection as explicitly and strongly as CESP, a survey of BPSS alumni alone would have included less of an emphasis on reflection. Had this been an evaluation focused specifically on BPSS alumni, a stronger emphasis may have been placed instead on assessing the perceived impact of skills training in the program, for instance.

As practitioner-scholars ultimately charged not only with studying programs but also running them at the same time, scheduling times to meet and discuss progress on a project like this is always a challenge. This challenge is more exaggerated when collaborating with colleagues on a different campus located in a different time zone. The most notable timing challenge that may have influenced the data relates to variance in the timing and form of survey distribution. In retrospect, we see that sending a survey dealing with civic engagement to one group during a campaign season and another after the election likely impacted the results and should have either been avoided or considered as a more specific focus of the study.

From the practitioner perspective, the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues doing similar work on another campus always provides opportunity to see the work from a new and fresh perspective and ask questions that might not otherwise have been considered. The deepened and nuanced understandings of the particularity of each program's design and perceived impact on alumni through this study being approached in collaboration will likely continue to show up and inform the future of each program in key and sometimes subtle ways and clearly outweighs the challenges posed in undertaking such an effort.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with any study, there are limitations to what can be concluded. Although comparisons can be made within and between the two programs, there is no comparison group of students who did not participate in the programs. Although a study that involved a comparison group would be ideal for providing evidence of impact, it would also involve changing the nature of the survey utilized here for purposes of this study, as many of the items are program-specific and designed to provide important information for programmatic review and enhancement. These

likely would not be relevant to a comparison group. Additionally, alumni who responded may differ from those who did not in important ways, including potentially being more likely to be involved in service or being employed in service sectors. The fact that the two surveys were administered almost six months apart during a time of significant change in the political environment may also have had an effect on who responded and made a difference in their responses. The retrospective nature of the self-reporting also adds to its limitations; the findings would be strengthened by comparing this data with other data gathered before or during program participation.

In addition to future research addressing some of the above limitations, analyses of the qualitative data from these surveys may provide further insight into these findings and identify additional areas of exploration to pursue. Additional topics to investigate include the relationship between civic learning programs and career choices, the significance of a program's scale on its impact, the role of service-learning courses and skills trainings, relationships between reflection in-program and after graduation, and the role of election cycles on alumni civic engagement. Understanding these programs as hybrid high-impact practices (Bringle, 2017) also offers new avenues of research in considering the literature and outcomes associated with the other embedded high-impact practices (online portfolios and capstone projects) and potential other avenues for experimenting with the integration of other high-impact practices. More investigation is warranted regarding the impact of these programs on outcomes typically associated more closely to the creation of online portfolios and capstone projects in addition to those associated more with the service-learning outcomes considered in this study.

The qualitative data gathered through this survey may also provide important and guiding insight into possible programmatic enhancement, such as development of more explicit career planning and networking

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components to the programs. The staff leading both BPSS and CESP are actively exploring this data from a perspective of program evaluation and improvement, inspiriting, for instance, the BPSS inviting postgraduate service corps recruiters to attend and provide information about their programs in a senior dinner and also developing joint programming with the university's career services office. CESP is more closely investigating its curriculum and structures for reflection. Each programmatic tweak that occurs as a result of this comparative case study offers new opportunities for further inquiry and evaluation.

Despite its limitations, the overall similarities of findings between the two groups of alumni is striking and indicate that programs such as those studied can be effective in large public research universities and likely other institutions of higher education and that these programs can be tailored in a variety of ways. The findings provide a strong indication of the potential of variously structured multi-term civic learning programs that do not rely on a cohort model having a strong impact on alumni experiences.

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