

The SUNY Journal of the Scholarship of Engagement: JoSE

Volume 1

Article 1

February 2020

JoSE: Mapping civic engagement in the SUNY System

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Recommended Citation

Suarez, John (2020) "JoSE: Mapping civic engagement in the SUNY System," *The SUNY Journal of the Scholarship of Engagement: JoSE*: Vol. 1 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/jose/vol1/iss1/1>

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JoSE: Mapping civic engagement in the SUNY System

The *Journal of the Scholarship of Engagement* (JoSE) enters an environment populated by impressive journals that map the course of civic engagement globally. In addition to *The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* are publications such as *The International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, *The Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education*, *The Journal of Experiential Education*, and *The Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*. JoSE, focusing on the development of effective civic engagement and applied learning in the State University of New York, is honored to join this community.

SUNY is dedicated to developing civic engagement in general, and applied learning in particular, as ways of nurturing SUNY students' commitment to civic engagement and their strength as valued employees in an ever-changing competitive work environment. JoSE supports these goals by serving as a platform for faculty to design, test, and refine civic engagement and applied learning pedagogies.

A map metaphor is instructive: Scholars, like explorers in new terrain, discover new "territory," new issues and ideas. They also invent new tools to assess those ideas' resources, risks, and opportunities. JoSE is a tool that SUNY scholars can use to explore SUNY's uncharted civic engagement territory and to describe civic engagement's challenges in, and potential for, improving students' learning and our communities' quality of life. As one of its operating principles, then, JoSE focuses on the pragmatic.

Another of JoSE's principles is reciprocity, mutual respect. Civic engagement practitioners form alliances with students and community members to help them design, deliver, and assess applied learning projects. JoSE believes that this ethic of reciprocity is another principle in civic engagement research.

The maps that we create mirror our thinking, in part by the phrasing of our labels, in part by what we place in the center of those maps. Maps also inform our thinking as we use them to decide on courses of action. JoSE serves a similar role by helping us determine how to develop civic engagement resources, especially those that the SUNY System has identified as "applied learning."

The System's leadership has defined and described thirteen kinds of applied learning experiences (<https://www.suny.edu/applied-learning/about/definitions/>). Through its *Umbrella* publication, SUNY's Office of Applied Learning showcases SUNY campuses' civic engagement work. SUNY's online *Workplace* sites nurture an ecosystem of civic engagement and applied learning communities of practice. JoSE is a site for civic engagement professionals to apply scholarly rigor to the ideas described in the *Umbrella* and at *Workplace*.

Listed below are examples of possible civic engagement and applied learning scholarship. They illustrate reciprocity and pragmatism, hallmarks of civic engagement reflected in JoSE.

On behalf of JoSE's Board of Directors, our Contributing Editors, our Peer Reviewers, and my co-managing editor, Dr. Laura Dunbar, we invite you to submit your work to JoSE, SUNY's *Journal of the Scholarship of Engagement*.

John Suarez

Co-Managing Editor, JoSE

Director, Institute for Civic Engagement, SUNY Cortland

Examples of possible civic engagement and applied learning articles include, but are not limited to:

Action Research

- Faculty, students, and community partners could design, test, and evaluate a program through which all participants – including not-for-profit agencies' guests – address racist, sexist, and homophobic ideas expressed during students' and faculty members' interaction with people during applied learning projects. This issue was recently posted in the Applied Learning *Workplace*.
- Students in Mathematics and Philosophy classes join with their college's Institutional Research office to determine the quality and the ethics of the college's smart-phone-based surveillance of students. Their study could convince the college's Risk Management Officer to work with some of those students to develop a campus policy on the administration's use of such activities.

Editorials and Letters to the Editor. Those letters include practitioners' observations regarding their application of proposals and of research results.

Longitudinal Studies

- Across three years, students in Community Health classes collect and use data to assess the effectiveness of SUNY's Hunger and Homelessness effort.
- A coalition of not-for-profit community partners, Psychology majors, and Education majors evaluates the effectiveness of a campus/community program that addresses conditions that contribute to Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Mixed Method

- A Kinesiology professor teaches a service-learning Fitness course. The students coach adults who have cardiovascular conditions. The professor's study of health outcomes contrasts the quantitatively-measured mild health improvements with the adults' perceptions of dramatic health improvements,

reported in narrative form. The study's conclusions suggest ways of improving the adults' health while keeping the positive impressions of their enhanced fitness.

- Geography majors, Geology majors, and the city's Zoning and Floodplain division report on their use of qualitative data to explain city residents' selection of specific flood prevention projects for their river-front properties. Residents referred to a trio of GIS maps, received via smart phone, to make their decisions. Measured quantitatively, most residents' decisions were supported by experts.

Proposals

- Economics majors partner with their county's *NYS Climate Smart Community task force* to design a renewable energy financing mechanism for projects in government-owned buildings.
- Two vice presidents for Academic Affairs detail a set of faculty-recognition proposals for applied learning expertise that can help colleges earn Carnegie Civic Engagement classification.
- A team composed of VP's for Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Institutional Research describe a measure for applied learning courses' "return on investment" (ROI), which is a major concern for SUNY administrators, among other people.

Quantitative Research

- A service-learning learning-community of Adapted Physical Education and Visual Arts majors assesses the effectiveness of wall graphics for children in multi-sensory teaching environments.
- Communications Studies and Geography majors evaluate a campus/county *Complete Census Count Committee's* project that is designed to convince typically under-counted populations to participate in the federal Census.
- Students in an Education Administration program assess the effectiveness of a distance-learning learning-community course in which the two professors were in two urban environments, while many of the students were in rural areas. SUNY is working on a process by which students can complete academic programs through online courses from a variety of SUNY campuses.

Qualitative Research

- A group of Political Science and Performing Arts interns assesses the effectiveness of participatory drama as a method for convincing undergraduates to participate in after-hours political discussions. Such discussions are part of their campus's *Campus Compact Action Plan*.
- Students in Biological Sciences and Psychology classes test suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of reflection. Those suggestions are based on neurological revelations described in Henning Beck's *Scatterbrain: How the*

Mind's Mistakes Make Humans Creative, Innovative, and Successful (2019. Greystone Books. Translated by Becky L. Crook).