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Accent on Student Success: Engaged Together for Service (ASSETS) Initiative, 2010 Report

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Community College National Center for Community Engagement

Accent on Student Success: Engaged Together for Service (ASSETS) Initiative

Learn and Serve America Higher Education Grant
Corporation for National and Community Service

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External Evaluator
June 2010

Overview

This report is an analysis of survey data from a grant involving community college campuses who received funding from the Community College National Center for Community Engagement (CCNCCE) through a Learn and Serve America Higher Education grant as part of the Corporation for National and Community Service in an effort to expand the field of service-learning and civic engagement in diverse communities nationwide.

The Accent on Student Success: Engaged Together for Service (ASSETS) grant intended to develop an intergenerational approach of service through projects that incorporated baby boomers, K-12, and community college students; promoted academic and civic engagement opportunities for disadvantaged youth by engaging middle and high school students in service-learning projects in their communities; supported previous LSAHE grantee work on service-learning homeland security projects; and facilitated professional development to all sub-grantee colleges, especially those initiating service-learning courses and programs.

Survey data indicate overwhelming project success with **nine out of ten college students** reporting ***improved attitudes for academic learning*** and ***increased likelihood of involving themselves in community service in the future.*** In particular, the service-learning experience significantly increased students of color plans for completing their college degree. Nearly **90%** of American Indian, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students **agreed** that after participating in service-learning, they are now **more likely to complete a college degree.**

For additional information, please contact CCNCCE, www.mc.maricopa.edu/other/engagement or Dr. Christine Cress, cressc@pdx.edu.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With support from the Community College National Center for Community Engagement, colleges collaborated with community agencies to develop service-learning experiences designed to enhance student academic engagement, increase interest in using student capabilities to address community issues, and improve community homeland security. The majority of these efforts were conducted as academic courses where college students applied their knowledge and skills in providing educational service-learning to their communities. Below is a summary of the learning outcomes of college students and outcome data for community partners.

COLLEGE STUDENT OUTCOMES

- Of over 1000 **College Students**, **90%** reported that the service-learning experience *improved their attitude toward academic learning*.
- Nine out of ten **College Students** reported an *increased understanding of*:
 - how to use their knowledge and skills to improve community (93%)
 - how their college education can benefit both themselves and society (93%)
- Over eight out of ten **College Students** reported that they are now more likely to complete their college degree (88%) and an increased capacity for how to use their course readings and information to gain insight into community issues (89%).
- In addition, **College Students** reported that they have enhanced capacity to create positive community change (91%), are more likely to be involved in community service in the future (88%), and have an increased capacity to become a community leader (84%).
- **Students of Color** were **significantly more** likely than White students to indicate that the service-learning experience *increased their likelihood of completing a college degree*. In fact, **87%** of Asian/Pacific Islander American students, **91%** of Black/African American students, **95%** of American Indian

Students, and **88%** of Hispanic/Latino students ***agreed*** that they are ***now more likely to complete their college degree.***

COMMUNITY PARTNER OUTCOMES

Those institutions with a focus on Homeland Security/Domestic Preparedness were required by the grant to distribute a survey to their community partners.

100% of partners at community agencies, as a result of their collaboration with the service-learning college, ***agreed*** that they:

- **contributed to student knowledge and learning**
- **felt valued by the faculty for their knowledge and expertise**
- **would be willing to participate again in another service-learning partnership**

Additionally:

- Three-fourths of community partners agreed that that the service-learning project contributed to improving community emergency preparedness.
- Three-fourths agreed that students were committed to improving community emergency preparedness.

In sum, the ASSETS grant initiative substantially exceeded its goals in terms of both student learning outcomes and community partner collaboration.

ASSETS GRANT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

This summary report focuses on three of the ASSETS grant initiative performance measure goals:

1) College students participating in the service-learning activities will demonstrate an improved attitude toward learning for academic engagement. Specifically, at the end of the grant year, **75% of college service-learning students will indicate an improved attitude towards learning for academic engagement** as reported on a survey.

2) College students participating in the service-learning activities will demonstrate an increased interest in community service after college. Specifically, at the end of the grant year, **75% of college service-learning students will indicate interest in continuing community service after the project and/or after graduation** as reported on a survey.

3) Community partner agencies working collaboratively with Homeland Security/ Emergency Preparedness sub-grantee colleges will report that the ASSETS grant had an impact on education preparedness. Specifically, at the end of the grant year, **60% of the partner agencies will report that ASSETS service-learning projects improved community awareness of homeland security/emergency preparedness** as reported on a survey.

Following is an overview of the evaluation process and descriptive statistics of learning outcomes by college students and outcomes data from community partners.

Survey Development:

In collaboration with grant directors at the community colleges, two surveys were developed to measure performance goals. Emphasis was placed upon creating surveys that could be easily administered, efficiently completed, and quickly tallied while accurately measuring dimensions of the core concepts of interest.

The College Student Survey, in an attempt to measure “***improved attitude towards learning for academic engagement***”, contained seven items which students were asked to rate on a Likert-type scale (1-4) from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Students were requested, as a result of their participation in the service-learning experience, to rate their level of:

- 1) increased understanding of their knowledge and skills to improve the community;
- 2) increased understanding of how to use course readings and information to gain insight into community issues;
- 3) increased understanding of how their college education can benefit themselves and the community;
- 4) increased likelihood to complete their college degree;
- 5) increased likelihood to involve themselves in community service in the future;
- 6) increased capacity to become a community leader; and
- 7) increased capacity to create positive community change.

The college student survey also included some basic demographic questions: gender; race/ethnicity, and year in school. Institutions that collected the data also indicated whether the service-learning was conducted as part of a course, single experience (e.g., MLK day), or extended service-learning experience (e.g., Alternative Spring Break).

The Community Partner Survey, in an attempt to measure “***impact on education preparedness for homeland security/emergency preparedness***”, contained 5 items which partners were asked to rate on a Likert-type scale (1-4) from

Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Partners at community agencies were requested, as a result of their collaboration with the service-learning college, to rate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- 1) I felt that the students were committed to improved community emergency preparedness;
- 2) I felt that I contributed to student learning about community needs;
- 3) I felt valued by the faculty for knowledge and expertise;
- 4) I felt that the service-learning project contributed to improving community emergency preparedness;
- 5) I would be willing to participate again in another service-learning partnership.

Summary of Outcomes:

Over 1000 College Students responded to the service-learning experience surveys (Fall 2009 and Spring 2010). Demographic representations are summarized below (note that approximately 10% of students did not respond to demographic questions).

Demographic data are followed by descriptive statistic charts for each item of the college student survey. Additional data graphs are highlighted where statistical differences (t-tests, $p < .01$) exist between groups of respondents (e.g., race/ethnicity). These graphs are followed by community partner data.

COLLEGE STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender

Gender Answer Options	College Students (N=980)
Male	39.5%
Female	60.5%

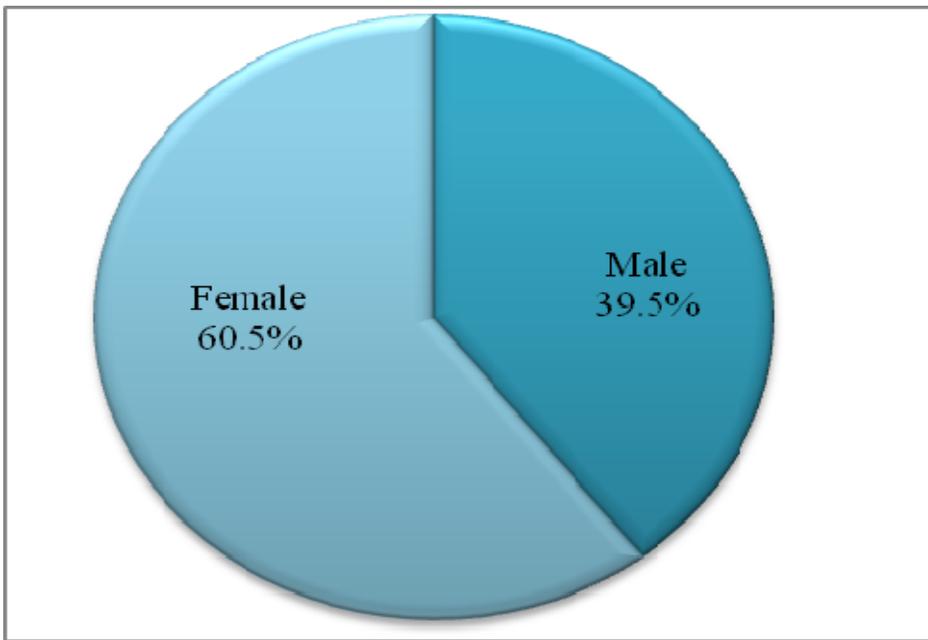


Figure 1: Demographics: Gender – College Students

Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity Answer Options	College Students (N=966)
White	35.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.6%
Black/African American	19.3%
American Indian	15.6%
Hispanic/ Latino	18.4%
Other	5.3%

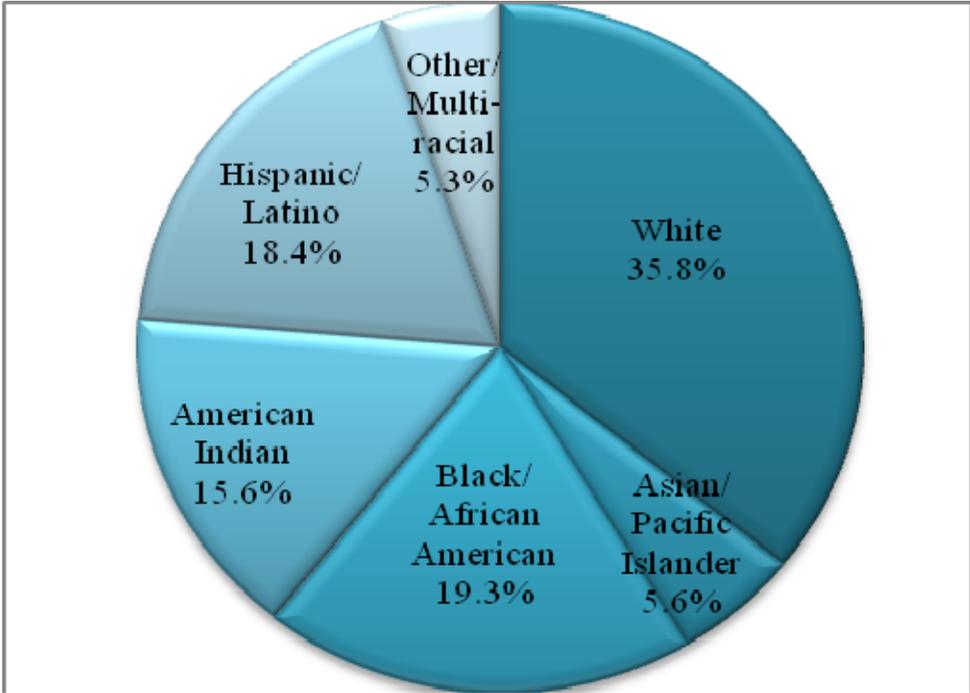


Figure 2: Demographics: Race/Ethnicity—College Students

College Year

While all students attended community colleges, about one-fourth of the students had enrolled for more than two years.

College Year Answer Options	College Students (N=719)
1st year	34.1%
2nd Year	42.3%
3rd Year	13.6%
4th+ Year	10.0%

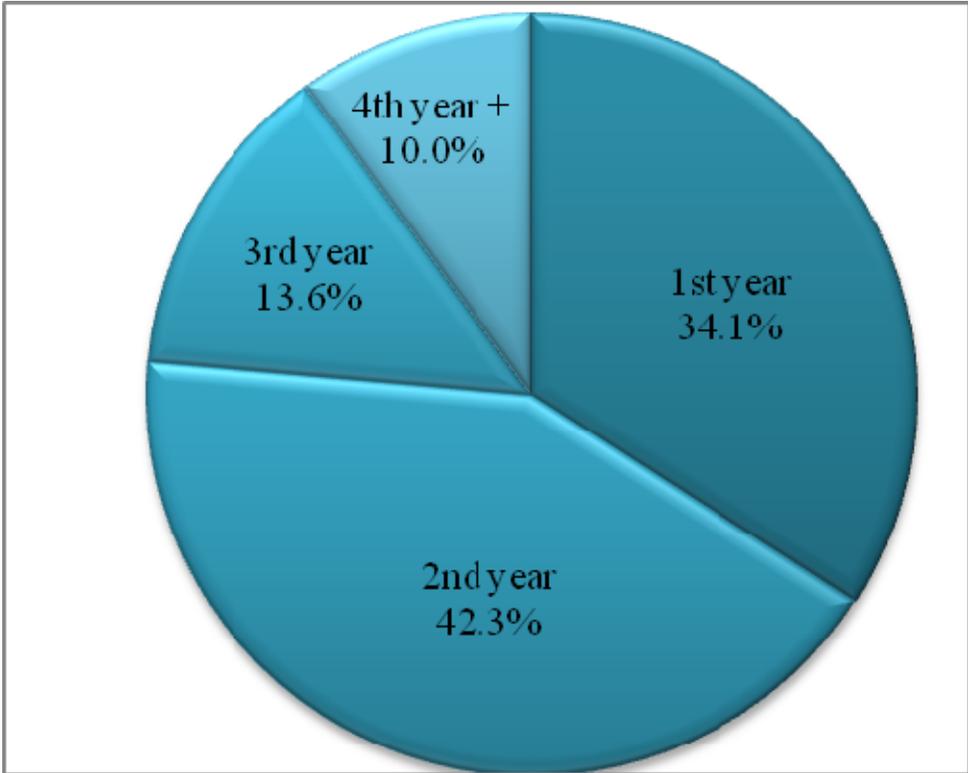


Figure 3: Demographics: College Year—College Students

Type of Service Learning Experience

Type of Service Learning Experience Answer Options	College Students (N=754)
Course	78.0%
Single Experience	22.0%
Extended Experience	0%

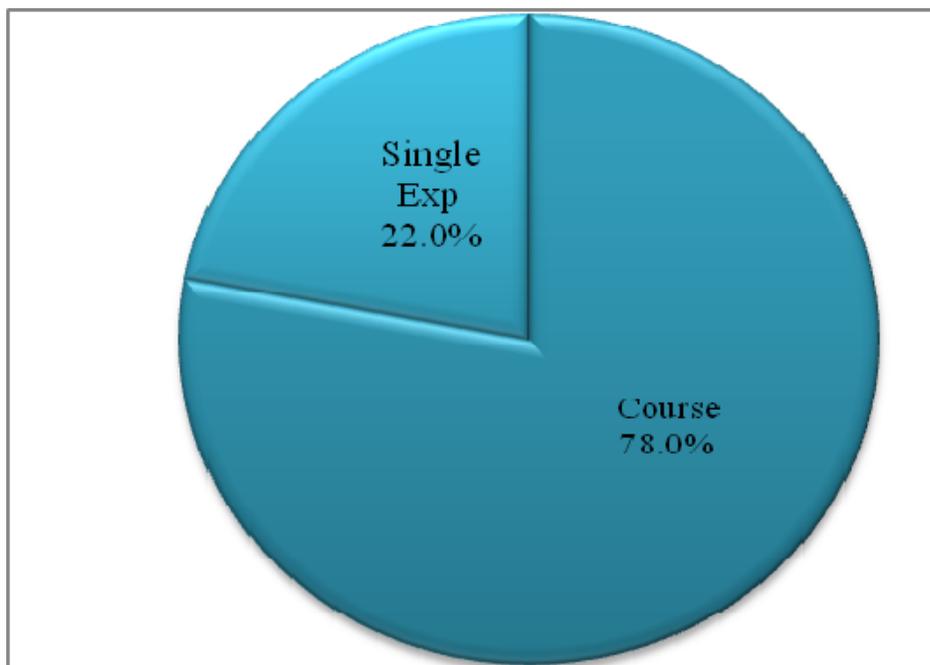


Figure 4: Demographics: Type of SL Experience—College Students

College Students: Service-Learning Survey Questions

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #1: I increased my understanding of how to use my own knowledge and skills to improve the community.

<i>Question #1:</i> Increased understanding of how to use knowledge and skills to improve the community. Answer Options	College Students (N=1031)
Strongly Disagree	4.8%
Somewhat Disagree	2.8%
Somewhat Agree	33.9%
Strongly Agree	58.6%

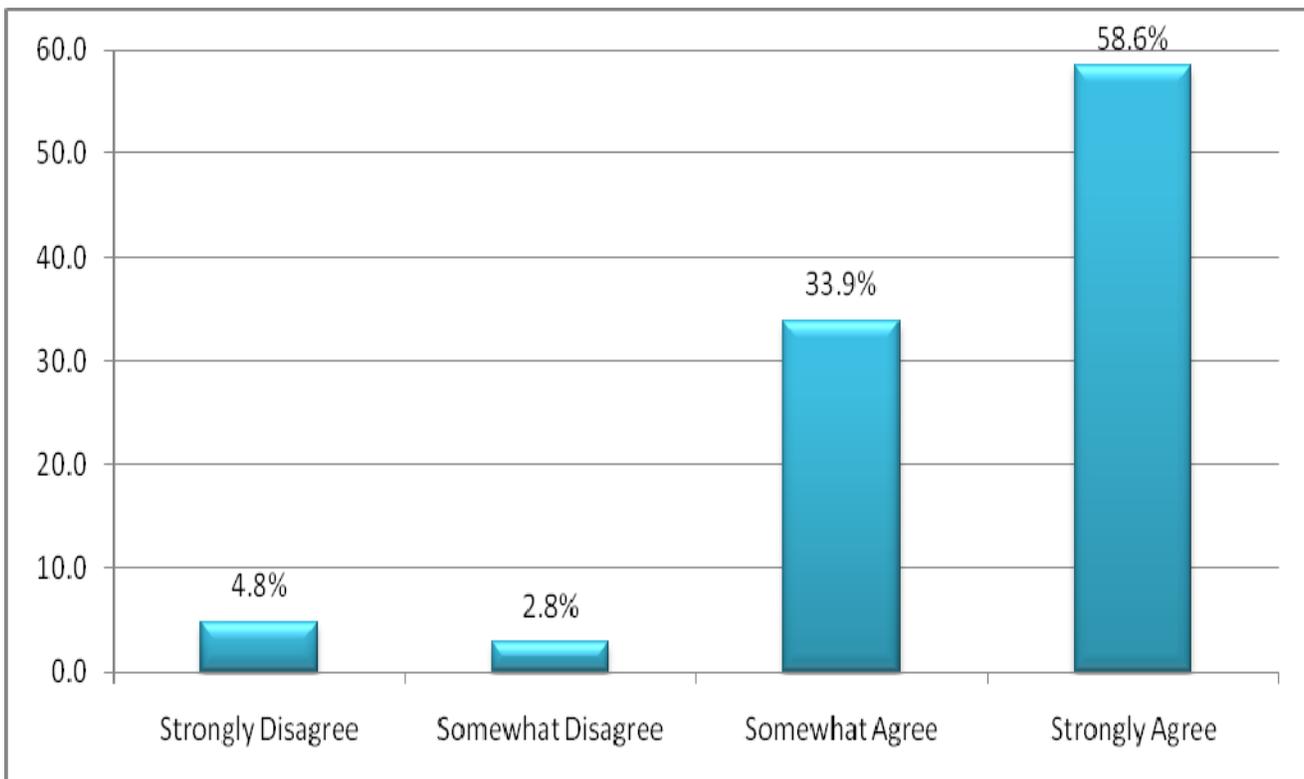


Figure 5: Question 1: Increased understanding of how to use knowledge and skills to improve the community—College Students

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #2: I increased my understanding of how to use course readings and information to gain insight into community issues.

<i>Question #2:</i> Increased understanding of how to use course readings and information to gain insight into community issues. Answer Options	College Students (N=1014)
Strongly Disagree	5.1%
Somewhat Disagree	5.7%
Somewhat Agree	39.8%
Strongly Agree	49.3%

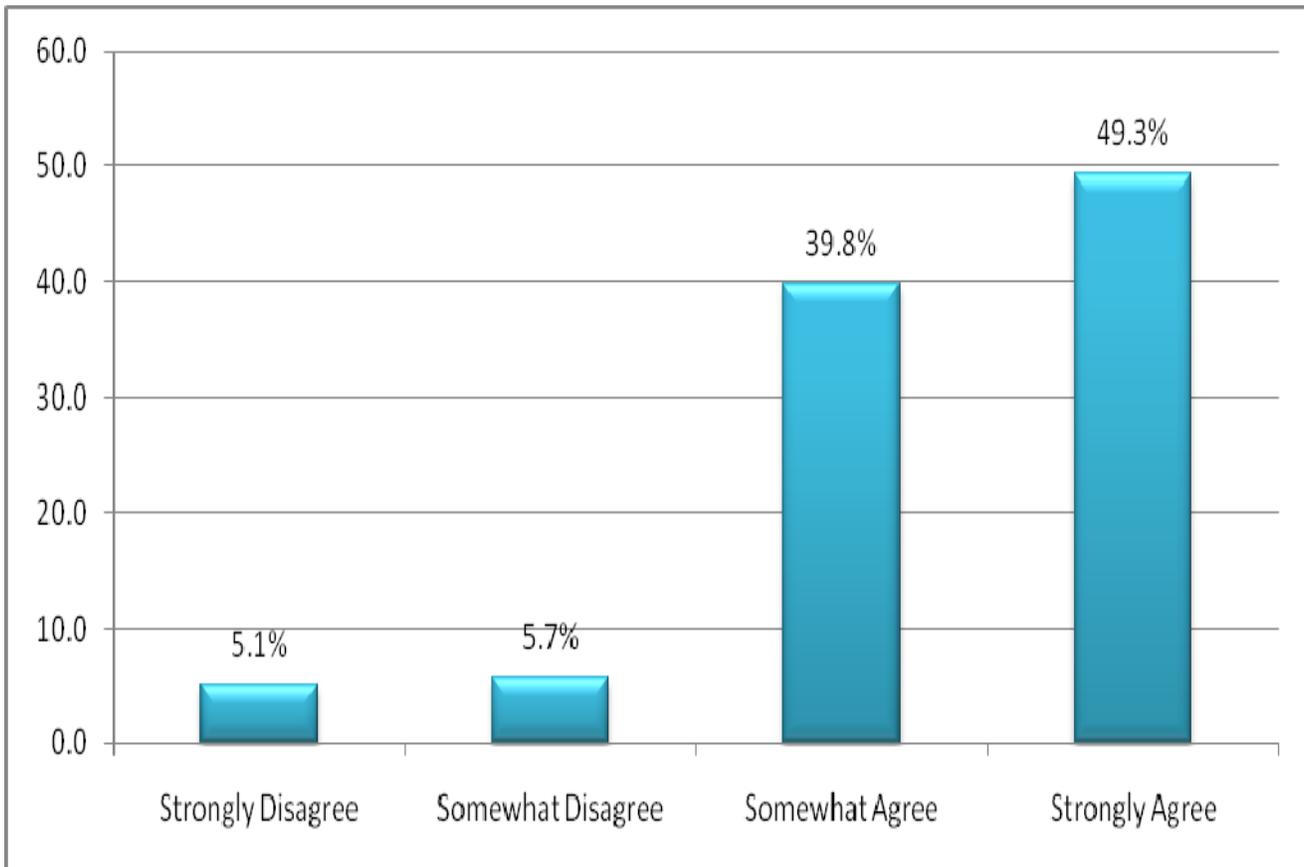


Figure 6: Question 2: Increased understanding of how to use course readings and information to gain insight into community issues—College Students

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #3: I increased my understanding of how my college education can benefit both me and my community.

<i>Question #3:</i> Increased understanding of how college education can benefit both me and my community. Answer Options	College Students (N=1025)
Strongly Disagree	5.2%
Somewhat Disagree	2.2%
Somewhat Agree	25.6%
Strongly Agree	67.0%

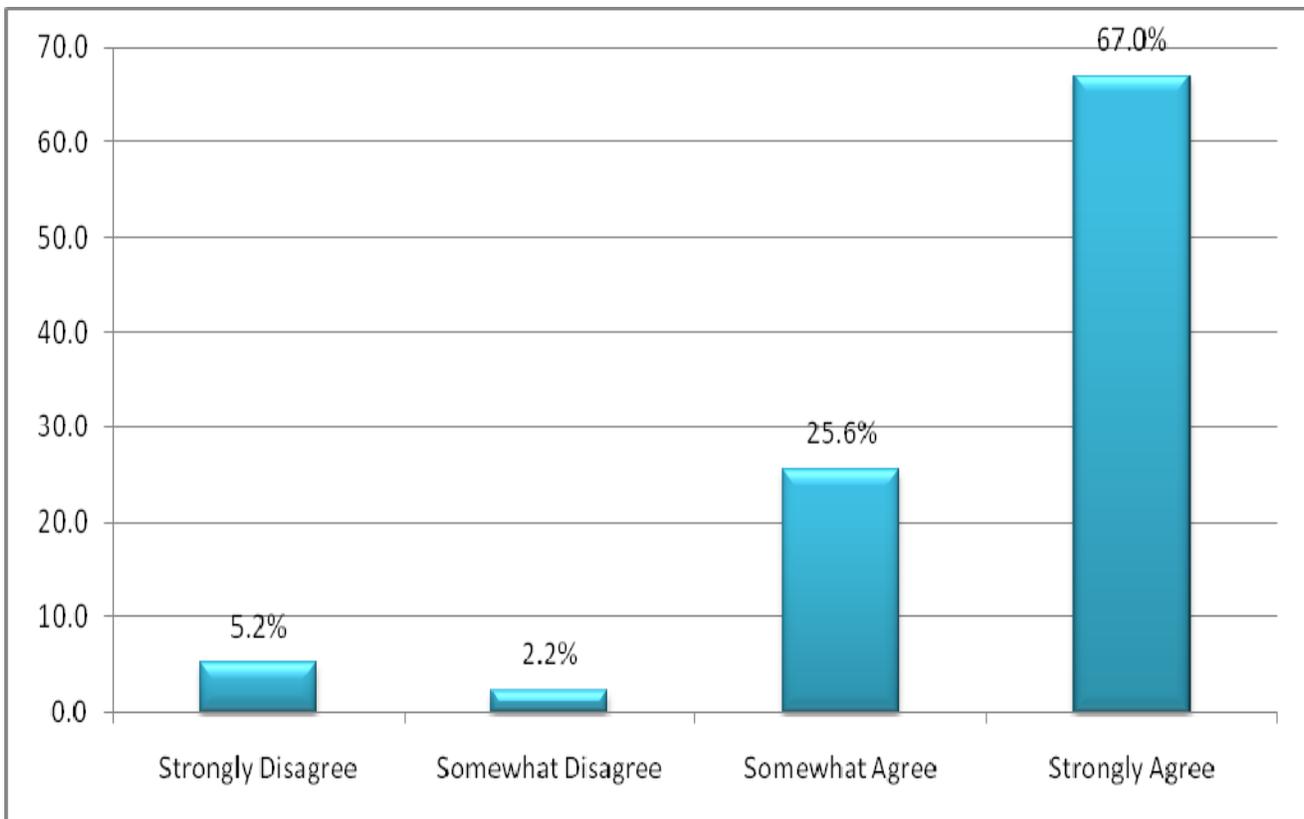


Figure 7: Question 3: Increased understanding of how college education can benefit both me and my community—College Students

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #4: I am now more likely to complete my college degree.

<i>Question #4:</i> Increased likelihood to complete college degree. Answer Options	College Students (N=998)
Strongly Disagree	6.1%
Somewhat Disagree	5.7%
Somewhat Agree	24.9%
Strongly Agree	63.2%

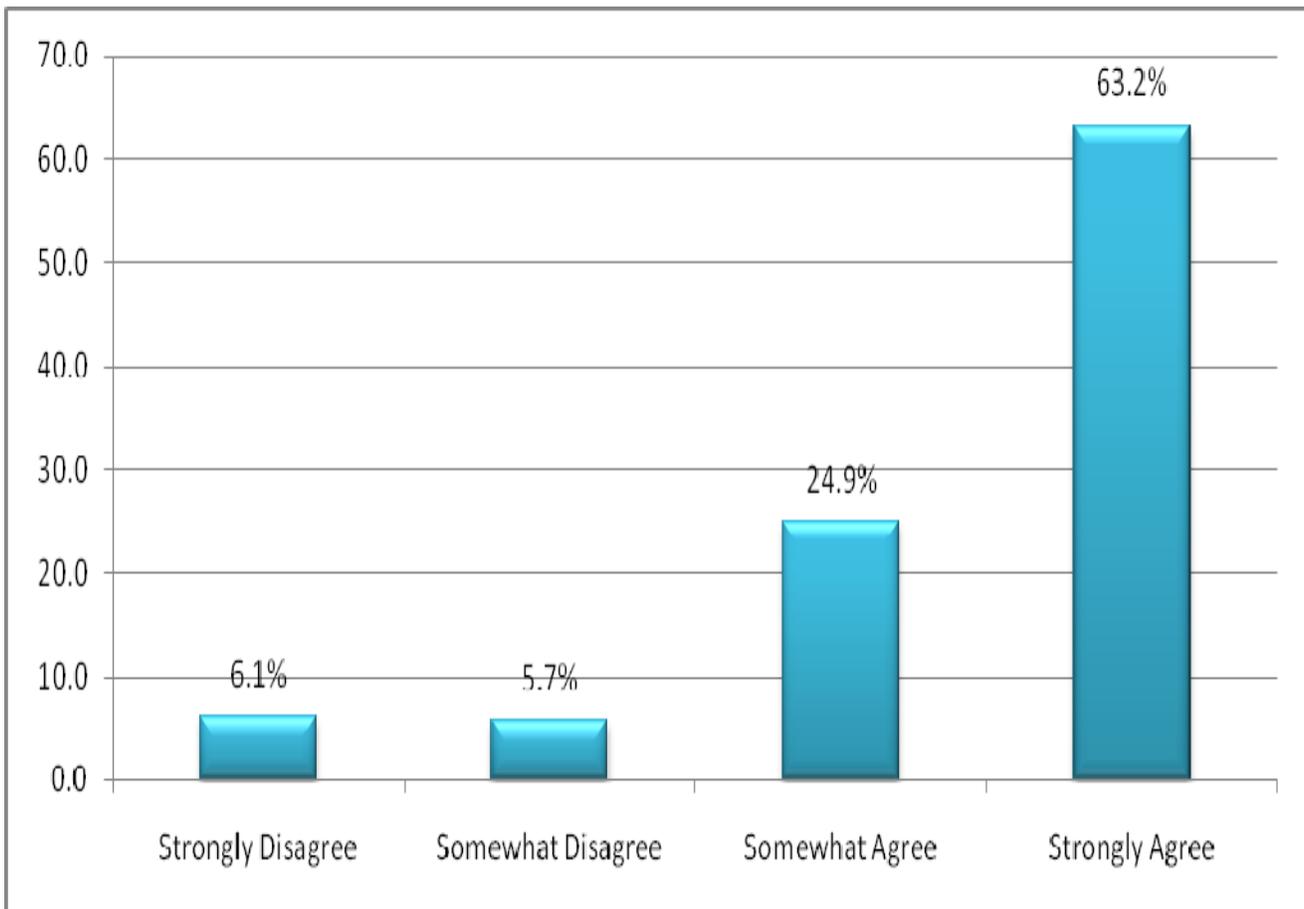


Figure 8: Question 4: Increased likelihood to complete my college degree—College Students

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #5: I am now more likely to involve myself in community service in the future.

<i>Question #5:</i> Increased likelihood to involve myself in community service in the future. Answer Options	College Students (N=1022)
Strongly Disagree	5.2%
Somewhat Disagree	6.6%
Somewhat Agree	32.3%
Strongly Agree	56.0%

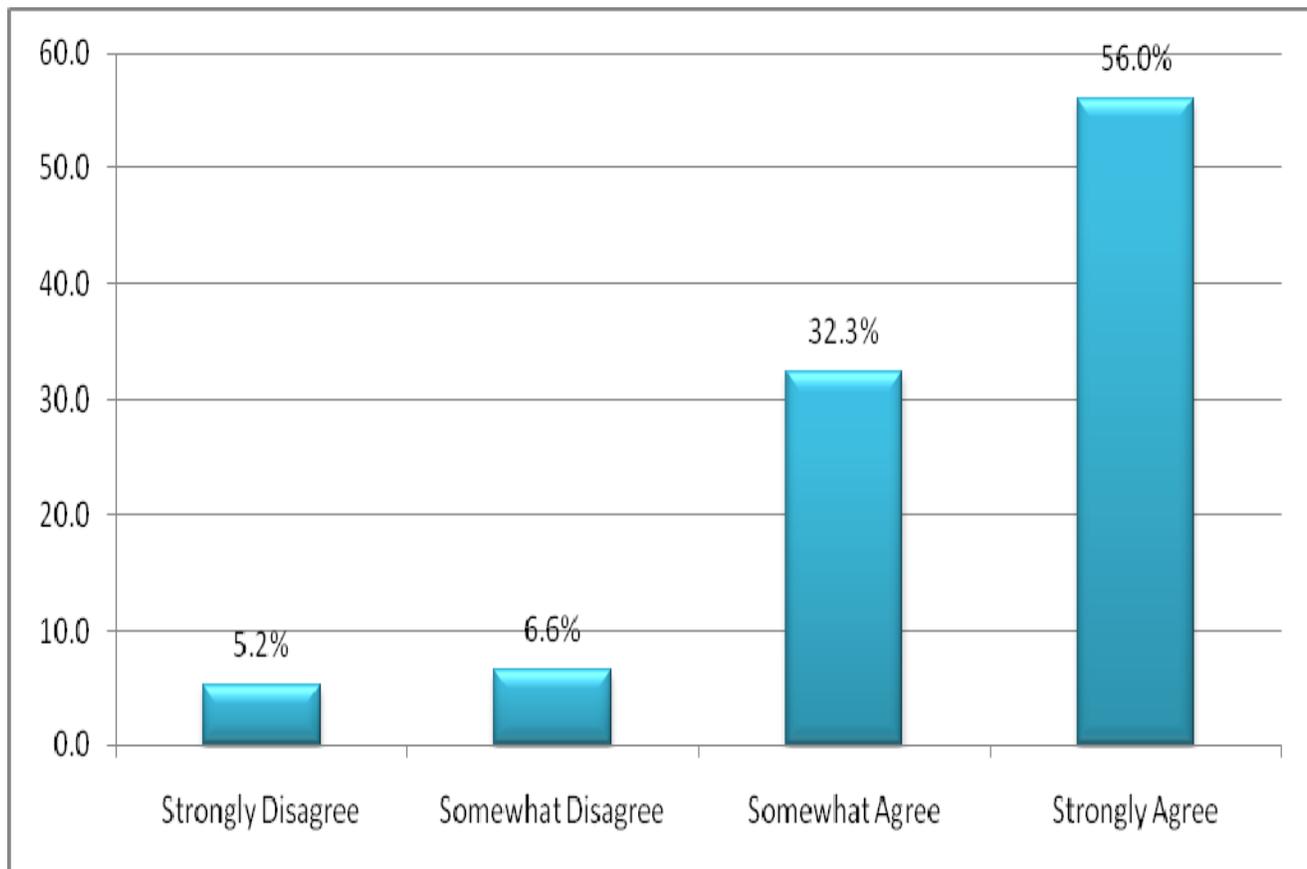


Figure 9: Question 5: Increased likelihood to involve myself in community service in the future—College Students

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #6: I now see myself as having increased capacity to become a community leader.

<i>Question #6:</i> Increased capacity to become a community leader. Answer Options	College Students (N=1017)
Strongly Disagree	5.2%
Somewhat Disagree	11.0%
Somewhat Agree	39.1%
Strongly Agree	44.7%

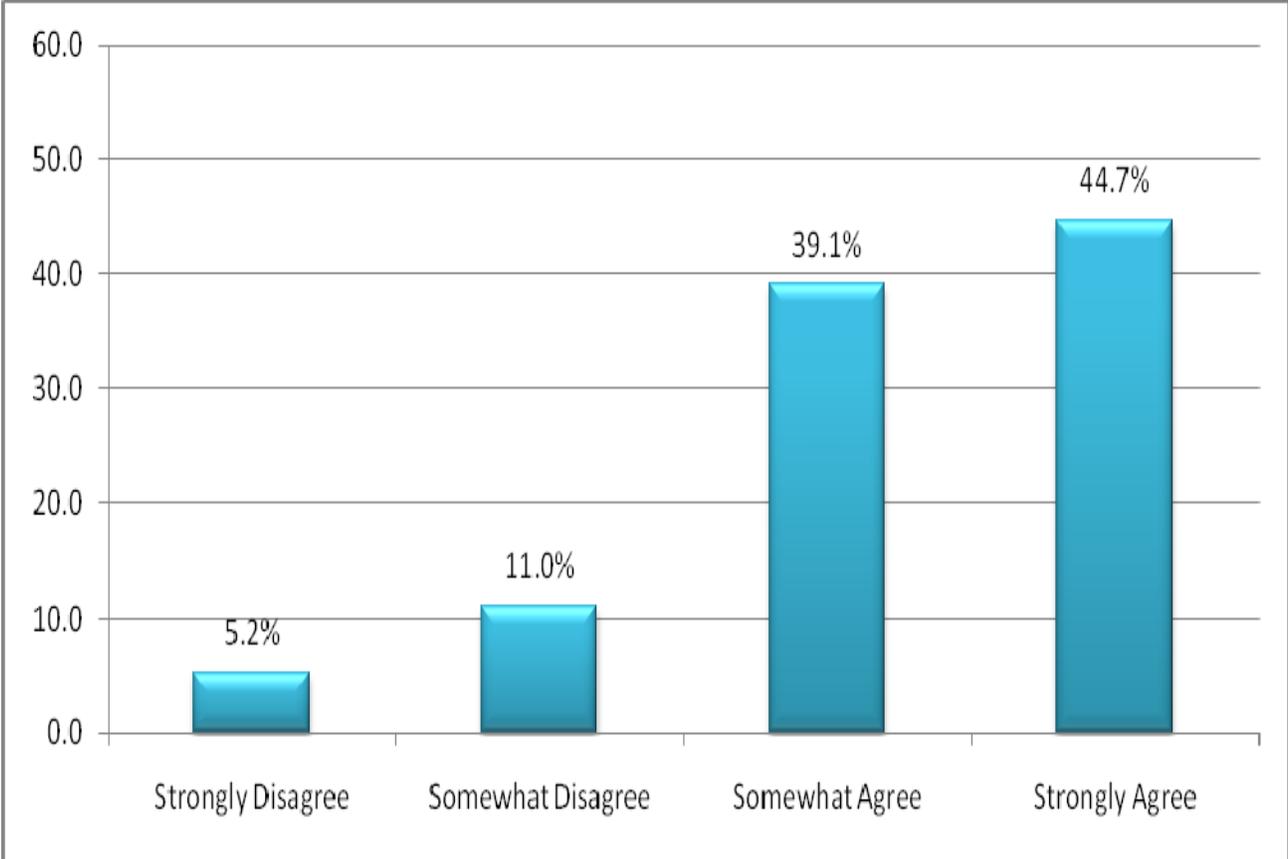


Figure 10: Question 6: Increased capacity to become a community leader—College Students

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #7: I now see myself as having increased capacity to create positive community change.

<i>Question #7:</i> Increased capacity to create positive community change. Answer Options	College Students (N=1019)
Strongly Disagree	5.1%
Somewhat Disagree	4.0%
Somewhat Agree	32.0%
Strongly Agree	58.9%

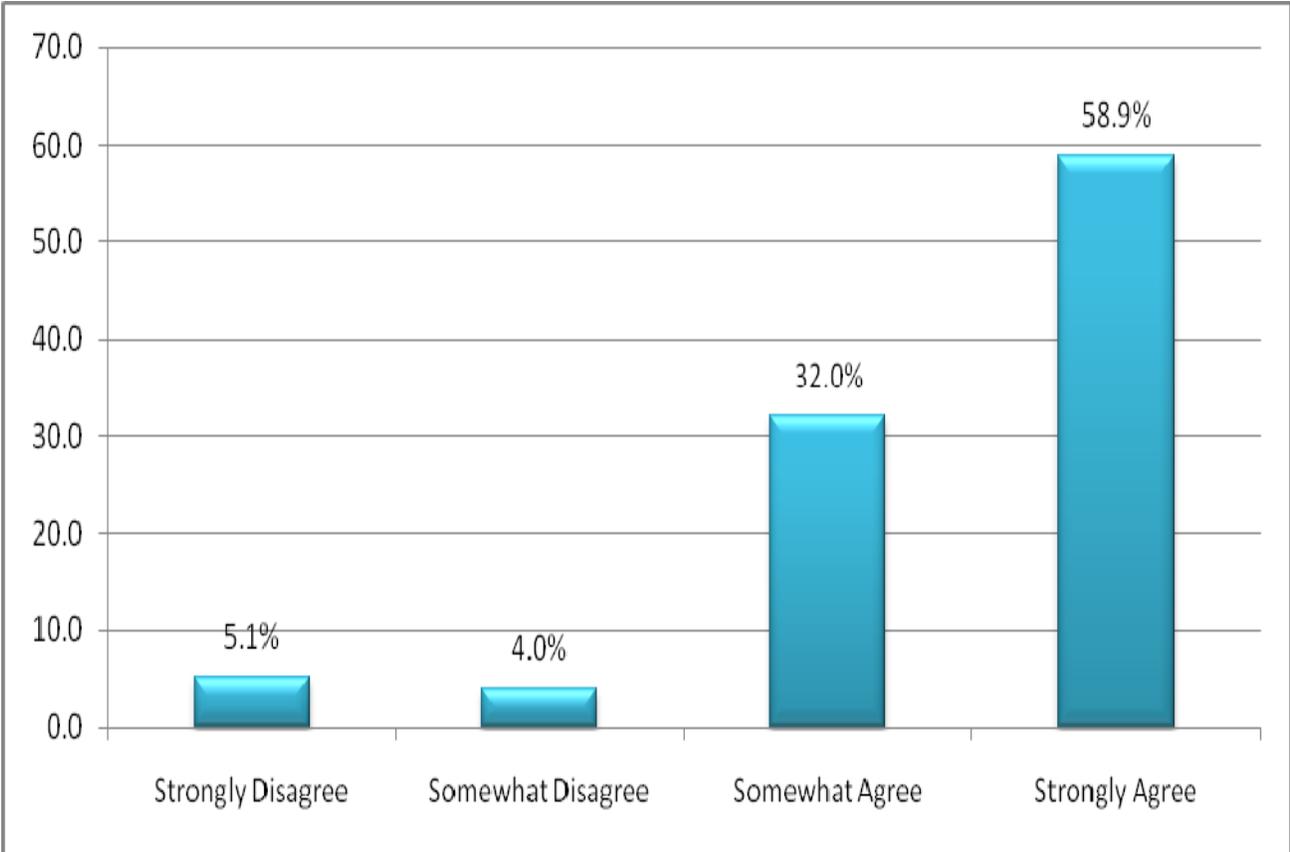


Figure 11: Question 7: Increased capacity to create positive community change—College Students

COLLEGE STUDENTS: SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

Gender

Women are significantly more likely ($p < .01$) than men college students to indicate that as a result of the service-learning experience they **increased** their:

- **Likelihood to complete college degree**
- **Understanding of course readings to gain insight into community issues**
- **Likelihood to involve themselves in community service in the future**

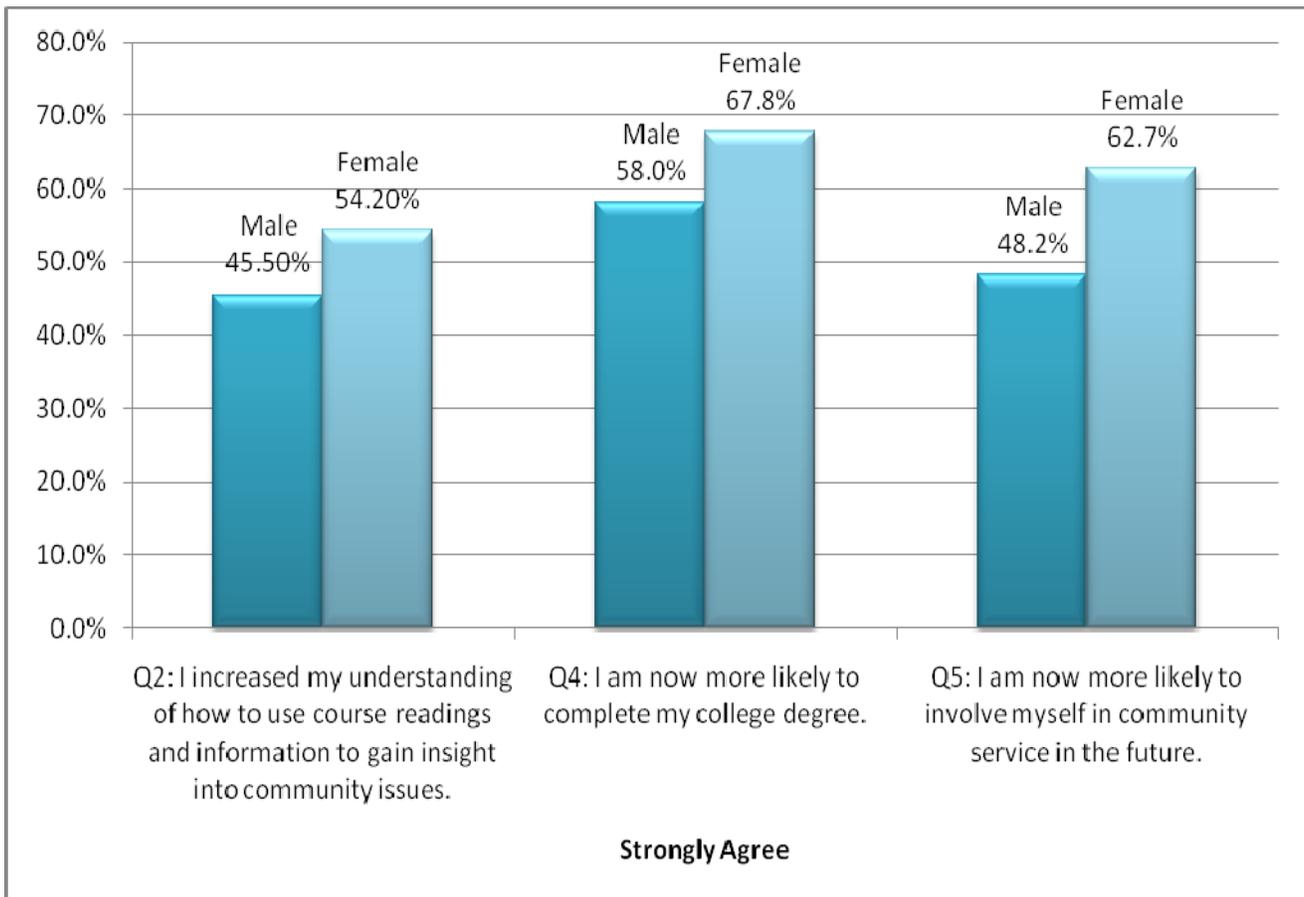


Figure 12: Significant Differences: Gender, ($p < .01$)—College Students

Race/Ethnicity

Students of color were significantly more likely ($p < .01$) than white students to indicate an **increased likelihood of completing their degree** as a result of the service-learning experience.

In fact, **72%** of Asian/Pacific Islander American students, **74%** of Black/African American students, **64%** of American Indian Students, and **68%** of Hispanic/Latino students **Strongly Agreed** that they are **now more likely to complete their college degree**.

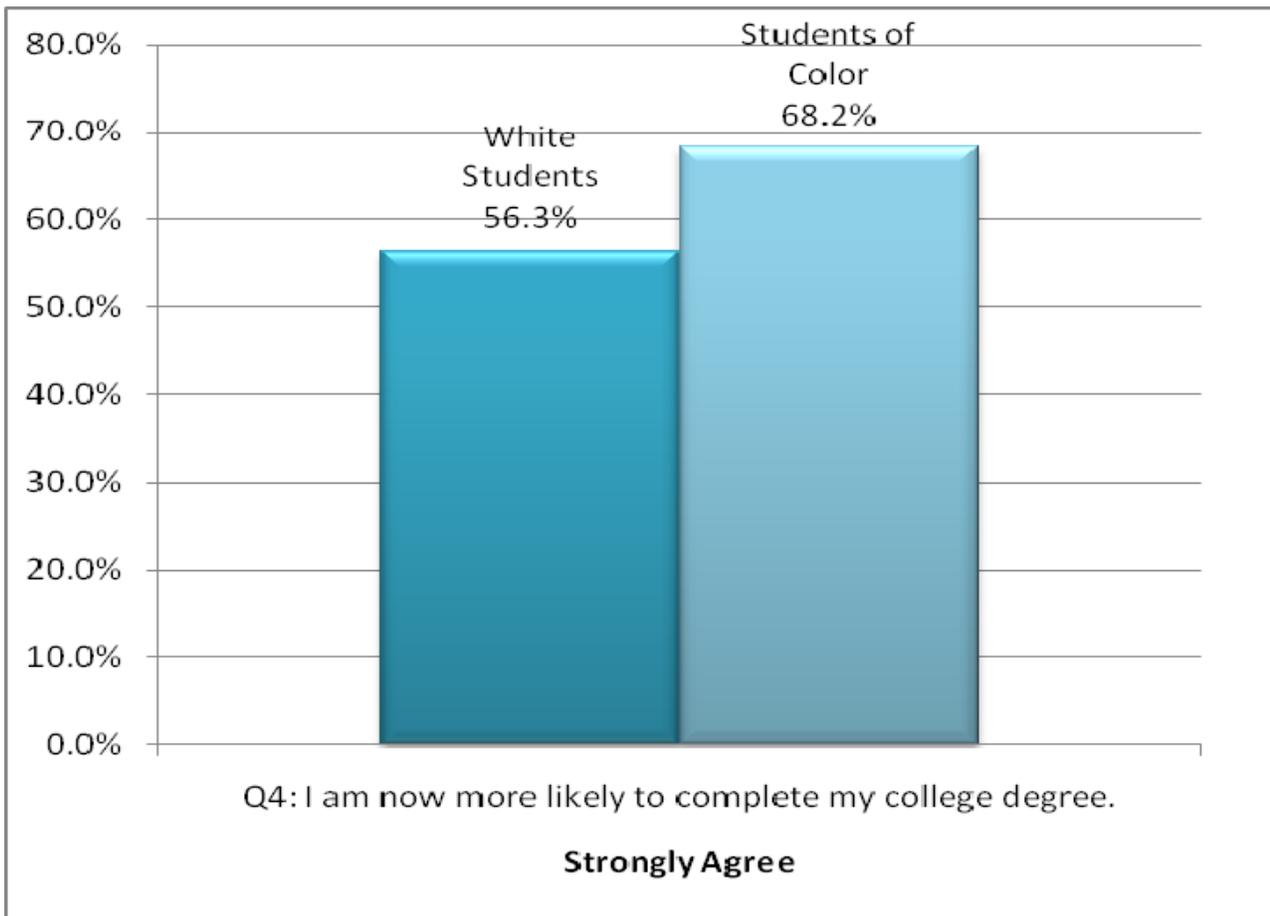


Figure 13: Significant Differences: Students of Color ($p < .01$)—College Students

GRANT INITIATIVE DIFFERENCES

There were no substantial statistical differences between institutions regarding the type of primary grant initiative. In fact, all four facets (Baby Boomers; Disadvantaged Youth; Homeland Security; and Service-Learning Start-up) of the ASSETS grant initiative demonstrated tremendous success.

1) **Baby Boomers**: Nine out of ten college students who participated in these service-learning experiences reported that they *increased* their *understanding of how their college education can benefit both themselves and society*.

Similarly, nine out of ten college students reported that the service learning experience *increased* their:

- *understanding of how to use their knowledge and skills to improve the community*
- *understanding of how to use course readings and information to gain insight into community issues*
- *likelihood of completing their college degree*
- *capacity for creating positive community change*
- *likelihood of involving themselves in community service in the future*

In addition, eight out of ten students indicated that they now have an *increased capacity to become a community leader*.

2) **Disadvantaged Youth**: Nine out of ten college students reported that the service learning experience *increased* their:

- *understanding of how to use their knowledge and skills to improve the community*
- *understanding of how their college education can benefit both themselves and society*

- ***understanding of how to use course readings and information to gain insight into community issues***
- ***likelihood of completing their college degree***
- ***likelihood of involving themselves in community service in the future***
- ***capacity for creating positive community change***

In addition, eight out of ten students indicated that they now see themselves as having the ***capacity to become a community leader***.

3) **Homeland Security/Domestic Preparedness**: Over 90% of college students who participated in these service-learning experiences reported ***enhanced growth*** and development on each of the 7 survey items:

1) ***increased*** understanding of how their college education can benefit both themselves and society

2) ***increased*** understanding of how to use their knowledge and skills to improve the community

3) ***increased*** understanding of how to use course readings and information to gain insight into community issues

4) ***increased*** likelihood of completing their college degree

5) ***increased*** capacity for creating positive community change

6) ***increased*** likelihood of involving themselves in community service in the future

7) ***increased*** capacity to become a community leader

4) **Start-up Service-Learning**: The data indicate overwhelming project success. Over 80% of the college students agreed on all 7 survey items that their ***academic learning for engagement and civic capacity improved*** as a result of participating in the service-learning experience: 1) ***increased*** understanding of how their college education can benefit both themselves and society; 2) ***increased***

understanding of how to use their knowledge and skills to improve the community; 3) **increased** understanding of how to use course readings and information to gain insight into community issues; 4) **increased** likelihood of completing their college degree; 5) **increased** capacity for creating positive community change; 6) **increased** likelihood of involving themselves in community service in the future; and 7) **increased** capacity to become a community leader.

COMMUNITY PARTNER RESPONSES

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #1: I felt that the students were committed to improved community emergency preparedness.

<i>Question #1:</i> Commitment to community emergency preparation. Answer Options	Community Partners (N=17)
Strongly Disagree	7%
Somewhat Disagree	21%
Somewhat Agree	14%
Strongly Agree	58%

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #2: I felt that I contributed to student learning about community needs.

<i>Question #2:</i> Increased student knowledge regarding community needs. Answer Options	Community Partners (N=17)
Strongly Disagree	0%
Somewhat Disagree	0%
Somewhat Agree	12%
Strongly Agree	88%

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #3: I felt valued by the faculty for my knowledge and expertise.

<i>Question #3:</i> Community partners felt valued. Answer Options	Community Partners (N=17)
Strongly Disagree	0%
Somewhat Disagree	0%
Somewhat Agree	18%
Strongly Agree	82%

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #4: I felt that the service-learning project contributed to improving community emergency preparedness.

<i>Question #4:</i> Increased community emergency preparedness. Answer Options	Community Partners (N=17)
Strongly Disagree	0%
Somewhat Disagree	27%
Somewhat Agree	27%
Strongly Agree	46%

As a result of participating in this Service-Learning experience:

Question #5: I would be willing to participate again in another service-learning partnership.

<i>Question #5:</i> Willing to participate again. Answer Options	Community Partners (N=17)
Strongly Disagree	0%
Somewhat Disagree	0%
Somewhat Agree	0%
Strongly Agree	100%

CONCLUSION

The ASSETS grant initiative was extremely successful in meeting its academic learning and community enhancement objectives. College students who participated in the service-learning projects evidenced an ***improved attitude in learning for academic engagement*** and ***interest in continuing community service after the project and/or after graduation***. Concurrent, community partners reported that students had a very positive ***impact on educational preparedness for homeland security/emergency preparedness***.

Of special note, the service-learning experience had a statistically significant and exponentially positive effect on **Students of Color** who indicated more enhanced likelihood to: ***complete their college degree; involve themselves in future community service***; and ***become future community leaders***.

Certainly, the ASSETS initiative has demonstrated a major accomplishment in providing new growth and development opportunities for college students and a positive impact on current and future communities across the United States.